Between Two Empires
A portrait of Ağaoğlu in the 1920s, while he was serving as Director-General of Press and Information for the new republic.
Between Two Empires

Ahmet Ağaoğlu
and the New Turkey

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Part of what makes any history interesting and worth reading is simply that it is a good story and, even better, a real story—a story that really happened. That gives the whole project a peculiar fascination. This is especially true with biography, even intellectual biography. The focus of this work, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, lived in turbulent times and was an interesting and not insignificant figure in his own milieu. As this work will show, he was involved at a high level with the majority of the intellectual movements and with many of the political movements that shaped the Russian Caucasus and the Ottoman Empire in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Yet for all that, he was not a pivotal figure. A major player, yes—someone virtually everyone of importance knew, whose ideas and opinions were seriously considered and who contributed original ideas and expressed himself with force and persuasiveness. But, in the final analysis, not a statesman of the first rank, a prominent military man, a charismatic religious leader, or an inventor or discoverer. His ideas were his own, they were compelling, influential and served a useful politico-ideological purpose in their moment, but they did not and do not constitute a great heritage for future generations.

So then, why this life? Because it is in so many ways both remarkable and representative. It is the career of a man of talent, conviction, initiative and some means, who lived in very unusual and interesting times. He was involved directly or indirectly in three revolutions (1905 in Russia, 1908 in the Ottoman Empire, 1917 in Russia), a world war and a war of resistance to foreign occupation (the Turkish War of Independence). He was a man who functioned absolutely fluently in at least five languages (Azerbaijani, Ottoman, Russian, Persian and French) and possessed multiple university degrees; who wrote books, published articles, edited newspapers,
taught university and high school courses in the fields of foreign language, literature, law and history; who was elected to public office in three states and who held political appointments as well. Thus he is interesting simply in the diversity of his experiences and in his scope.

He is also interesting in another and more specific way. His life embodies the struggles of late nineteenth-century Ottoman and Transcaucasian Muslim intellectuals to somehow resolve the tension between the need for self-strengthening and the need to maintain an intact and authentic identity. It is a life that reveals the wide variety of materials and possibilities available for the forging of a usefully ‘modern’ identity, while also exposing how the subsequent establishment of new nation-states has hidden that variety from view. In the course of his career Ağaoğlu characterizes himself in a number of ways that will perhaps strike the modern Western interlocutor as contradictory. Early in his career he seems to think of himself as Persian, later he is definitely prepared to say he is a Turk. In the intervening period he uses all kinds of epithets from simple Muslim to Russian Muslim, Caucasian Muslim, or sometimes Turkish Muslim. At some points in time he seems to emphasize his Shi’ite background, at other moments this becomes something that is minimized. The question arises: ‘Who is this man?’ All his changes could appear as twisting and turning, as a kind of gross opportunism and lack of conviction.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Throughout his life, Ağaoğlu showed a very constant dedication to a primary group who can be characterized, for lack of a better term, as ‘his people’ or ‘his community’. In an important way, the significance of what is enclosed in those words lies in not defining them. He knew whom he meant, he knew what circle of people were lodged in his heart and were the object of his concern and effort across the years. Ağaoğlu was a man of considerable sophistication and experience who lived in a very dynamic period and was exposed to a wide range of influences. He could not help but perceive that ‘his people’ were in a disadvantaged position in terms of institutional disabilities within the Russian Empire, in terms of technological and material development and in terms of raw power. His life and intellectual development represent a search for systems and ideas that might facilitate an amelioration of those conditions for his people. This goal remained absolutely steadfast and consistent in him over the course of long years.

If one were to use the terms of our own era to attempt to delineate this group, it would include the native Muslim population of
Transcaucasia, consisting largely of Azerbaijani-speakers whether Sunni or Shi’i. Moving out from that core, Ağaoğlu’s interest and identification spread out beyond immediate loyalties to the place of his birth to take in non-Caucasian Muslim communities of the Russian Empire, cultural cousins in Iran, linguistic cousins in the Ottoman Empire and co-religionists in the Middle East generally. Nevertheless, it is clear that his own people, the people back home, remained at the centre of his concern. Naturally, his interest in the Ottoman Turks was greatly enhanced once he settled in the Ottoman Empire, but to say, as some writers have, that when Ağaoğlu left the Caucasus at the close of 1908 he abandoned the Caucasus forever and closed the door on that epoch of his life, is to profoundly misunderstand him.

 Ağaoğlu left the Caucasus fleeing police persecution and the possibility of imprisonment or internal exile and he returned with the Ottoman Army in 1918 to help in the creation of the new Republic of Azerbaijan. He took up Azerbaijani citizenship, was elected to the new parliament and was chosen to represent the new state at the Paris Peace Conference. His imprisonment by the British in 1919 prevented his carrying out that mission and when he was released in 1921, Azerbaijan’s moment of independence had already passed. Perforce his efforts then focused on the Anatolian Turks and he joined Mustafa Kemal and the nationalists in Ankara.

Thus it is not right to characterize Ağaoğlu as opportunistic from the point of view of the cause to which he dedicated himself, but neither is it correct to characterize him as an opportunist in terms of his intellectual positions. Ahmet Ağaoğlu lived in a place where the bits and pieces of what we think of as identity were extraordinarily fluid. To begin with, state boundaries in that region had been shifting in the period leading up to and including the years under consideration here. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ottoman and especially Persian influence in the Crimea and Transcaucasia had been giving way to Russian dominion, so that a man like Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde (a well-known man of letters and social critic) could be born under Persian rule and find himself suddenly some years later under Russian rule. It was a time and a region of moving populations with Armenians coming into Russian-controlled territory to live under Christian rule and Persians, especially at the turn of the century, crossing into Russian Azerbaijan in search of industrial employment. Merchants travelled the whole region widely and intellectuals, too, moved back and forth among the three states as the situation in one or other of them seemed favourable to their political activities. Men like Mehmet
Emin Resülzade lived and worked as publishing intellectuals in Russian Azerbaijan, Iran and the Ottoman Empire; as the political circumstances changed, so did their residences – whether out of fear of persecution or from attraction to historical opportunities in that era of wars and revolutions. Resülzade was by no means alone and the traffic was by no means one way. The famous Ottoman intellectual Abdullah Cevdet, for example, spent some years in Baku working with Ali Hüseyinzade, the Azerbaijani intellectual who had studied at the Military Medical Academy in Istanbul.

It was a fluid era, one of shifting borders and populations on the move. And ideas were on the move in that time and place as well. Modernizing publications like *Tercüman*, *Türk Yurdu*, *Türk*, *Molla Nasrettin*, *Mizan* and *Irşad*, which were published in Bahchesarai (in the Crimea), Istanbul, Cairo, Tiflis and Baku, were read all over Muslim Russia, in the Ottoman Empire and, to varying degrees, in Iran.

There is the appearance of something remarkably unsettled and changeable in the shifts in residence and terms of identity among intellectuals such as Ağaoğlu, but this is largely a misapprehension. Their world was quite cosmopolitan, their political and intellectual consciousness spreading out in ways that did not respect imperial frontiers or narrow communal, cultural, or linguistic boundaries. The borders and ethnic identities, which seem so clear today, were much more open, permeable and fluid then. However, part of what makes this class of men – men who lived in that particular time and place – interesting and worthy of study is that increasingly, precisely in their era, the fluidity I have described was diminishing. By the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century the divisions had become quite defined, quite hard, shaped in the rigid mould of ethno-national identity and nation-states.

Before that took place, however, revolutions would sweep all three of these dynastic states, two of them would suffer the bitter pangs of a world war and two great multinational empires would utterly collapse. One, the Ottoman, would be dismembered into national states. The other, the Russian, would reconstitute itself as a multinational empire, but would give at least superficial recognition and encouragement to ethno-national identity. Decades prior to those great tumults and upheavals, however, Western ascendancy and penetration had awakened the first stirrings of the identity question among the élites of the region. Or rather, these phenomena had awakened in them the self-help question: ‘What has happened to us and what can we do about it?’

For the Muslims of the Russian Empire, this process had some special characteristics. First, of the two aforementioned
multinational empires, only in the Russian Empire did the Muslims live as a subject people and therefore have no special pre-commitment to the multinational model. Second, Russia’s Muslims had especially strong exposure to the West and to Western ideas through the Russians themselves, and through the Russians’ strongly Francophile intellectual traditions. In Transcaucasia, the presence in the region of a substantial number of Europeans involved in oil and associated industries also contributed to this. Moreover, the Russians themselves had gone through, were, in fact, still going through, a profound soul-searching vis-à-vis Europe and their own identity. Third, inclusion in the Russian Empire and the region’s vast oil resources meant rapid and extensive industrialization and social dislocation in Transcaucasia.

Thus, the intellectual trajectory of Ahmet Ağaoğlu arrests our attention for three reasons. First, he is interesting in and of himself as a substantial figure in the intellectual and political life of turn-of-the-century Azerbaijan, the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. Second, as a very significant but not pivotal figure in those places, he can stand for a class of intellectual elite at the turn of the century, positioned at the nexus of three historically great states at a critical moment in history. How such figures, arising out of a culturally, ethnically and religiously very mixed milieu, responded and adapted intellectually to the enormous economic, social and political changes which shook the region is a fascinating matter. Third, the special role that the Russian background played in the development of attitudes towards identity among Muslim Turks is significant to the history of Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. This background had an impact on their stance towards multinational states and, in Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s case at any rate, on their attitude toward Islam and reform-minded Islamism.

The bare facts of Ağaoğlu’s life are available from a wide array of published sources. When this work began its life, no one had yet assembled the information available in those sources. In 1999, however, Fahri Sakal’s Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey appeared, which has helped to fill that gap. I have used a range of secondary, and some primary, material to supply the details of Ağaoğlu’s life and activities and Dr. Sakal’s book has been a useful source for the Republican period particularly.

My object is to analyse Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s intellectual development through an examination of some of his published works. As his primary professional activity throughout his life was that of publicist and as he lived in many lands and functioned in many languages, the written record is immense. I have not attempted to make an
exhaustive study of all Ağaoğlu’s production, but to use a careful examination of some representative pieces within his historical context as a way of illuminating some of the dynamics of identity construction for Middle Eastern reformers at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth. I have therefore limited the parameters of my research in several ways. First, this work focuses primarily on Ağaoğlu's activities and development up until his arrest by the British and internment on Malta following World War I. I have chosen this as a convenient cut-off point because it represents a major watershed both in the history of the Middle East and in Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s life. After 1921 (when Ağaoğlu was released by the British), the lands of the old Russian Empire were out of the picture for the moment and in Anatolia the question had shifted from the old ‘What is to be done?’ to ‘How can the national movement be served?’.

Even with the parameters outlined above, however, the journalistic output of Ahmet Ağaoğlu, who was tremendously prolific, is daunting. At different moments in the period prior to 1919, he edited four daily newspapers and contributed extensively to a large number of newspapers and journals. His journalistic production over a period of many years was in the order of more than one article per week. Therefore, I have selected articles for examination using several criteria. First of all, the early French material has all been examined in detail, because it forms a baseline or point of departure as his first published work, and also because it provides insight into the early French influences on his thought. After the French period, I have tried to select pieces that were more oriented towards intellectual questions and less towards the reporting of news. Among these, I have focused especially on works that deal with questions of identity and modernity, in particular, pieces that deal with nationality and nationalism, religion, the status of women, inter-ethnic relations (especially with the Armenians) and education. While Ağaoğlu did also write articles in Russian immediately after his return to the Caucasus in 1893, I have concentrated largely on his works in French, Ottoman and Azerbaijani. These materials have provided more than sufficient information to form a picture of the man, his times and his mind.

Questions of Structure and Intention
Some summers ago while in Baku, I was asked to give a paper on Ahmet Aghayev or Ağaoğlu, a man considered instrumental in the formulation of Turkmism and generally also viewed as a key figure in the Azerbaijani awakening of the early twentieth century, a ‘father’
INTRODUCTION

of the first Republic of Azerbaijan. The conference’s theme was historical precedents for Azerbaijan’s transition to independence and democracy in the post-Soviet era. In the course of my talk, I discussed the great scope of Ağaoğlu’s career and mentioned that between 1891 and 1893 Ağaoğlu had referred to himself as a Persian in a series of articles published in Paris. These remarks aroused a storm of protest both on the panel and in the audience. One after another my interlocutors rose to Ağaoğlu’s defence, for in their eyes I had maligned him. For them, the import of my comments was either that Ağaoğlu was an Azerbaijani who had at times denied his ‘true’ origins, thus making him an opportunist, if not, indeed, a traitor; or that, in fact, he was not ‘really’ an Azerbaijani, thus destroying his authenticity. Either way I was attacking Ağaoğlu’s credibility and heroic status as a ‘father’ of his people.

Such an attitude takes as its point of departure the existence of clearly defined national groups and then measures individuals in terms of the degree to which their lives and activities conform to those categories. Men like Ağaoğlu are imagined as having belonged to a pre-existing nation and their genius lies in their having recognized this fact and worked tirelessly both to bring that fact to the level of consciousness in the mass of the population and to promote the nation’s fullest realization in the form of an independent state. The struggles of turn-of-the-century reformers who equated nationalism with modernity are thus perceived as simple manifestations of a rather obvious, maybe even inevitable, historical process.

If one looks more closely, however, the reality is far more fluid – one of shifting international boundaries, changing systems of government, massive population movement and substantial economic and social dislocation. In this context the constant was not identity, but a sense of instability and an uncertain future. The reality was also weakness in the face of pervasive European encroachment.

A more accurate and more interesting picture emerges if we examine the life and times of the Muslim intelligentsia of the Russian Empire, of men like Yusuf Akçura, Ali Bey Hüseyinzade, or Ahmet Ağaoğlu. Like Ağaoğlu, Yusuf Akçura is known as a Turkist ideologue, and more than that of any other early Turkist his work has been studied in the West. His fame derives principally from the fact that he authored one of the earliest and most celebrated calls for the Ottoman government to adopt a policy of Turkish nationalism. This piece, published in the Cairo journal Türk in 1904 and entitled ‘Three Policies’, argued that basing the state on ethnic bonds was the possible Ottoman policy with the fewest obstacles facing it.
Akçura shocked the Ottoman world by saying that Ottomanism, the policy of redefining the polity of the Ottoman Empire on the basis of an Ottoman national sovereignty, more or less along the lines of the American model, was not practicable because neither the Ottoman Christians nor the Ottoman Muslims desired it, while the European powers actively opposed it on account of both state interests and religious prejudice. He stated that he saw ethnically based nationalism as a more ‘accurate’ interpretation of nationalism than the Ottoman model and he added that while the Powers would be divided on the question of Turkish nationalism (which some of them would see as a weapon against Russian power), they would implacably oppose any notion of Islamic unity (which would pose a threat to the interests of them all). At the same time, Akçura argued, since most Turks were Muslims, Turkism would certainly benefit from Islam, which would act as a further unifying factor. That Akçura had come to such a conclusion in 1904 was electrifying because no one in the Ottoman Empire at that moment could have so distanced himself from the fate of the Empire within its existing borders as to make such an assessment.

And yet, just a few years before, in 1902, Akçura had attended a meeting of the Ottoman opposition group, the Committee of Union and Progress and had joined in discussions precisely on how to implement Ottomanism as a means of reviving the Empire. Moreover, a few years later, in the period between 1905 and 1907, he would be living in the city of Kazan and working hard to organize the İttifak-ı Muslimin (Muslim Union), a cultural and political organization meant to represent the interests of Muslims within the Russians’ new constitutional government. Ağaoğlu in the same period would also be engaged with the İttifak, whereas just a few years before he had been placing great emphasis on his Iranian national identity. By 1911 the two men would find themselves in Istanbul founding the premier journal of Turkist ideas, Türk Yurdu. Understanding that the careers of such men were characterized by creation, not recognition – that their point of departure was not an effort to bring about the self-realization of a pre-existing nation, but rather an attempt to create a sense of community solidarity, the attempt to forge a commonality of purpose that would be effective in the struggle for self-preservation given the particular historical circumstances, sheds light on these apparently abrupt changes of course. In this way we can see that national identity was the product, not the project.

Examining the process by which Ahmet Ağaoğlu constructed an identity for himself will point up the extent to which identity
formation was, for him, a means of availing himself of tools for the strengthening of his community. In essence, he came to view modernity and progress as intimately tied up with a particular conception of national identity. Moreover, he absorbed this sense of the interconnectedness of modernity with a particular model of historical development and national identity before he had lighted upon a clear-cut sense of his own national identity. Beyond this, Ağaoğlu’s career will reveal that the specific circumstances of Muslims under Russian rule predisposed them to adopt a particularly ethno-national interpretation of the modern society and state and that, significantly, these conditions were lacking for Muslim Turks in the Ottoman Empire, thus explaining the pre-eminent role played by émigrés from the Russian Empire in the development of a specifically Turkist ideology in the Ottoman Empire.

Before entering into a discussion of Ağaoğlu’s intellectual evolution and its interaction with political developments in Transcaucasia, the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, however, it will be useful to discuss some other issues more generally. These fall into two categories. The first of these is a set of interrelated questions about the nature of nations, nationalism (or national movements), national identity and nation-states and how ideas about these have coloured perceptions of Ottomanism, Turkism and Turkish nationalism, as well as of the careers of nationalist activists like Ağaoğlu, careers which spanned the imperial and republican periods and encompassed more than one state. The second relates to the ‘modernity’ of the cultural nationalist project; that is, the modernizing nature of its goals and the mechanisms by which nationalism was construed as ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’.

NATIONAL IDENTITY, NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In asserting that figures such as Ağaoğlu had many possible identities open to them, rather than a single, underlying ‘real’ ethnicity or nationality waiting to be recognized, and that their nationalism developed within the specific context of late nineteenth-century conditions in the Russian and Ottoman Empires, I am adopting what Anthony Smith and others have termed the ‘modernist’ analysis of nationalism that has been so vigorously developed in the literature over the last 20 years at least. That is to say, I accept the notion that national identity is a creation of modern conditions of capitalism, communications (especially the spread of print), the erosion of older feudal or patrimonial relations and the development of what Benedict Anderson has described as homogeneous time, horizontal rather than vertical cosmologies, ‘seriality’ and the
explosive combination of capitalism, print technology and a polyglot Europe (and, I would add, a polyglot Middle East); that cultural phenomena such as religious beliefs may be very old, but their conversion into markers of nationhood and national solidarity is quite new. This view contains two essential points: first, that there are certain material, institutional and intellectual preconditions to the formation of national consciousness and nationalism; and second, that the materials used to shape a national consciousness are not purely arbitrary or invented.

The work of Miroslav Hroch has shed particular light on the question of the preconditions of national movements, especially as related to examples other than the Americas, France and Britain. His work also has the value of keeping the concepts of national/popular sovereignty and national identity together, since he does not see the politics of the ‘bourgeois’ revolution as standing in opposition to movements imbued with questions of ethnic or cultural identity. As he puts it, ‘there is no modern nation without national consciousness, i.e., an awareness of membership in the nation, coupled with the view that this membership is an inherently valuable quality’. Such awareness grows out of national sovereignty, out of the declaration that the third estate is the nation, out of the moment when national consciousness became an element of social consciousness. In other words, what differentiates this new phenomenon from an older type of patriotism or from older regional or religious stereotypes is the fact that these sentiments are now carried by the body of formally equal sovereign citizens.

Beyond this, Hroch gives us three processes for nationalism and nation building:

I. The ‘great nation’ case where national consciousness spreads gradually through all layers of society without resistance (England, France and the United States) either because there was relative cultural homogeneity already, or because the ‘subject peoples’ in question were confronted with an accomplished modernization with insufficient mobility and communications available to them to produce an effective counter-national movement.

II. The ‘small-nation’ case of peoples undergoing conditions of transition to modern capitalist economy while at the same time lacking 1) a full class structure/ruling class of their own, 2) territorial unity and 3) a literary language of their own.

III. An intermediate case where the nation has all the above characteristics except territorial unity (Poland, Italy, Germany).
The account of the second type of national movement, the ‘small-nation’ case, is particularly relevant for understanding the development of national movements among Muslims of the Russian Empire, especially in Transcaucasia, the Crimea and the Volga – that is, among those Muslims that had been longest under Russian rule and were most deeply integrated into the Russian economic, administrative and communications systems. Hroch’s delineation of these ‘small-nation’ movements, occurring ‘usually on the territory of an imperial state’, as having certain special characteristics, including a foreign ruling class, administrative units whose territorial boundaries do not coincide with the distribution of the ‘subject’ people or ‘small nation’, and the absence of ‘a continuous tradition of cultural production in their own literary language’, describes the situation of those communities very well. Further, his division of such national movements into three phases, scholarly investigation, national agitation and mass national movement, is also obviously applicable. The career studied in this book belongs primarily to the phase of national agitation, that is, Ağaoğlu’s career can very well be described as a struggle ‘to provide the missing attributes of full national existence’, and one can say that he saw his mission as the spreading of national consciousness among the people.

Further, Hroch’s observation that the presence of an ethnically or nationally relevant social conflict is decisive in a national agitation’s catching hold and becoming a mass movement accounts very well for the events in the Caucasus in 1905–09 and again in 1917–1921, including particularly the bloody Armenian-Tatar aspects of these, where differential treatment of the two communities by the Russian regime and competition in the new industrial and commercial economy, played a role. It is an approach that has much more explanatory power than ‘age-old’ ethnic or religious hatreds, in that the social conflicts or conflicts of interest arise from historically specific developments connected to the transition to capitalist society within an imperial context.

Hroch’s account of small-nation national movements or nationalism, then, proposes the existence of structural transformations in economy and communications, the linkage of social struggle to cultural struggle. In ‘small-nation’ communities, the assertion of the third estate that it is the nation, the demand for equal rights and popular sovereignty, takes place in a context in which there is debate about who belongs to the third estate, in the sense that some people are being excluded either formally or de facto along lines that are culturally relevant. Thus, the ability of national agitation to mobilize support is bound to the degree to which the
national agitation corresponds to real interests. Furthermore, there is a dual process – transition from imperial identity to national identity, then choice of which competing national identity. For, as Hroch points out, in the case of the small nations, national consciousness arose in a ‘confrontation of alternatives’, in a situation where the inhabitants had at their disposal at least two possibilities for national identification, with the ‘small nation’ or with the ‘large nation’.

But despite this recognition of competing possible loci of identity, Hroch’s work does seem to assume that the content of nationality is pre-existing. When he talks of ‘large’ or ‘ruling’ nations and ‘small’ or ‘subject’ nations, or when he says that group stereotypes are not new, it is simply the segment of the population carrying those stereotypes that is new, he seems to feel that it is nevertheless clear or self-evident what those stereotypes are – what goes to make them up and who can be included in them. One of the crucial characteristics of the national identification of Ağaoğlu, however, was precisely that he had available not two national identities, but multiple identities. Indeed, to conceptualize the imperial context in which he grew and worked for the first half of his life as ‘multinational’ is in some sense wrong. Rather, within such empires, people had imperial identities that encompassed an array of facets. As the imperial order began to break down, these facets, now disjointed, were the available materials from which to shape identities, whose specific content and parameters were less than self-evident, anew.

This is not to say, however, that the ‘construction’ of a new identity was made in a completely arbitrary fashion. In the case of the Muslim Middle East, the defining parameter in this process was the need to preserve one’s self and one’s community from Western encroachment, a need for what Nikki Keddie has called ‘self-strengthening’. As a result, the identity choices made by Ağaoğlu and others like him at this time reflected heartfelt views not only about the nature of one’s own identity, but also about the effectiveness of particular identities in this life and death struggle. Understood in this way, identity formation is not exclusively, or even primarily, about one’s sense of self, rather it involves a complex range of factors, including one’s understanding of such ideas as civilization, progress, modernity, community and individuality and their interaction with one another. If Ağaoğlu’s ideas changed with time and with alterations in the larger material and/or geopolitical context, such changes do not imply insincerity. And if the development of a national identity was not arbitrary in terms of defining and naming it, neither was it so in terms of the symbols enlisted to forge the new solidarity.
In *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, John Hutchinson has analysed what he terms ‘cultural nationalism’ or ‘ethnic revivalism’ and has pointed out that the symbols employed by ethnic revivalists are not entirely ‘invented’ and arbitrary. He notes that no one symbol or marker, not even language, is paramount in defining the nation. Cultural nationalists, he says, employ constellations of symbols and markers, each reinforcing the others. The meaning of the symbols employed may be quite new and distinct from their former content, but the symbols themselves must be grounded in some cultural reality that has resonance and the new content given to these old symbols must also resonate with some contemporary social reality (what Hroch might refer to as a nationally relevant social conflict); if not, there will be no social or political reflection of the particular nationalist project. The effectiveness of revivalism ‘rests on its ability to evoke and appropriate genuine communal memories linked to specific homelands, cultural practices and socio-political organizations’ in order to promote ‘a novel historical vision of an integrated and distinct political community’ and in order to define it in relation to other groups. This is why religion and folkways often feature prominently in these movements.

While Hutchinson has recognized the importance of picking symbols that resonate culturally, he has failed to adequately distinguish the uses of history in a modernizing project from history, so that at times he seems to imagine that it is the history that resonates, rather than the resonance of popular symbols giving life and power to new historical narratives. Whereas he recognizes that symbols are pragmatically selected and can change over time and that the selection and the changes reflect evolution in the conception of the national identity, he doesn’t quite recognize the full range of options, the scope of the cultural capital, available to individuals and groups at a moment of imperial dissolution.

For instance, in his example of early Slovak nationalism, Hutchinson mentions that it did not fully distinguish between Slovak and Slav and gives this as one cause for that movement’s lack of early success. But perhaps the point here is that the Slovak/Slav nation of those early nineteenth-century Catholic priests was not really the same, either in symbolic terms or in terms of its proposed membership, as the Slovak nation defended by schoolteachers against Magyarization in the 1870s. Issues of what vernacular dialect was selected as the basis of a proposed literary language, of Catholicism versus Protestantism, of the existence (or not) of a class of schoolteachers literate in Slovak, the attitude of the state toward the vernacular and its practitioners – all these determined
the failure of early attempts at Slovak revival relative to later ones, much more than did questions of the historical or ethnographic precision with which Slav and Slovak were defined, or the degree to which there was any general memory of a Moravian kingdom.  

We have already noted that Ağaoğlu and his compatriots had at their disposal quantities of cultural material from which to fashion a new identity: Islam generally; Shi’ism; cultural, religious and previous territorial ties to Iran; and linguistic ties to the Ottoman Empire and to other Turkish-speaking Muslims in the Russian Empire. They could and did choose symbols from this array according to an evolving sense of how to define the community and that sense had everything to do with an evolving social and political reality that included administrative reforms, strikes, revolutions, economic developments and international war and diplomacy, as well as with the ideologue’s internal intellectual dynamics. Thus, at an early moment in his career, surrounded by Europeans who put great stock in ‘Aryan character’ and at the historical moment when the Tobacco Protest in Iran was at its height, Ağaoğlu could make the institution of the mujtahid an important national symbol. An institution of real popular force, he set it in a historical narrative so that it linked the Shi’a of Transcaucasia to Iran, to rationalism, to Aryanism, while firmly placing Shi’ism in an evolutionary rather than eternal framework. In later years, however, seeking to develop solidarity and ties among Muslim speakers of Turkish dialects, he would downplay the special character of the mujtahid and the differences between Shi’ism and Sunnism and emphasize instead their similarities in recognizing the one God and his Prophet.

All of this provides a very useful framework for understanding why strong, clear Turkist national agitation, as opposed to proto-nationalism, landespatriotismus, developed among the Turkic-speaking Muslims of the Russian Empire earlier than it did among Turks of the Ottoman Empire. However, these accounts fail to deal with the problem of disaggregation from the other end of the stick. That is, what is the process of a ‘ruling’ nation when it fails to integrate smaller nationalities? Hroch, for instance, can talk about Romanians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Finns, he can talk about France, Spain, England, he can even talk about Germany and Italy, but conspicuously, he does not talk about Austria, Russia, or Turkey. This is because he is talking about situations where the emerging bourgeoisie identifies either with a successful existing state, or sees itself in opposition to an existing state or states.

The nationalism of ‘dominant’ peoples in imperial states is missing from the analysis. No doubt, one could argue that they fall into Hroch’s
transitional category in the sense that their territorial unit is not co-extensive with their national map, while, however, they do possess the other preconditions of nation building. It might also be argued that the older political map corresponds to the interests of the aristocracy, not to those of the new order, the bourgeoisie, who presumably might be less invested in the old imperial state. Anderson has pointed out that under such circumstances, if an imperial state adopts one of its vernacular languages as an official language, this is not usually a sign of nationalism and indeed, the favoured language group is usually the last to develop a national movement. This can be justly said of Turks in the Ottoman Empire when Ottoman Turkish, in a simplified form, was established as the official language of the Empire.

On the other hand, many authors have interpreted these policies, particularly in the post-1908 ‘Young Turk’ period, as a policy of ‘Turkification’, that is, as an ethno-nationalist policy of enforced assimilation or, as Anderson would call it, official nationalism. Since many of the early Turkist thinkers were from the Russian Empire, an analogy is often made to Russification. The characterization of these policies as ‘Turkification’ or as examples of official nationalism are both mistaken. First, the ‘Turkification’ policies of the Second Constitutional period had to do with the desire to create a state of formally equal citizens with strong loyalty to the Ottoman state, regardless of background and to do this in the context of a fully constitutional and representative regime, that is, to do it in the context of popular sovereignty. In this respect, the program of the ‘Young Turks’ can not be considered a program of ‘official nationalism’ as defined by Anderson, namely, an attempt to naturalize and shore up an illiberal dynastic regime. On the other hand, the insistence on the use of simplified Ottoman Turkish as the official language of the Empire cannot be seen simply as a matter of convenience in a process of governmental centralization and rationalization for the same reason; the policy was adopted as part of a larger effort to liberalize and legitimate government through the creation of the Ottoman citizen, an attempt to generate a new polity and a new basis for solidarity.

Fatma Müge Göçek has argued that as a result of the reforms of Mahmud II and the subsequent Tanzimat period, new types of knowledge became a kind of intellectual capital that escaped the control of the Sultan and palace and in that sense allowed for the bureaucracy to become a bourgeoisie. At the same time, the capitulatory regime in the Ottoman Empire caused the commercial bourgeoisie to emerge unevenly, favouring the Christian millets (non-Muslim religious communities) and encouraging their
transformation into separate national communities rather than their dissolution into an Ottoman citizen-state. In a sense then, the rise of these two bourgeoisies and their failure to integrate with one another, led to the ultimate demise of the Empire.\textsuperscript{15} (One is reminded here of Hroch’s observation about the small-nation bourgeois, that at a certain moment he has a choice as to which nation he wishes to adhere to and the outcome is not at all certain.) Nevertheless, for Göçek, the drive for a constitutional and representative form of government in 1876 and 1908, led by members of the bureaucratic and military classes, represented bourgeois revolutions, albeit of a particular type.

In any case, the point here is surely that the Ottoman bureaucratic and intellectual ‘bourgeoisie’ were deeply tied to the Ottoman state.\textsuperscript{16} Despite structural transformations and even after the liberal revolution of 1908, Ottomans of new or old mint had no interest in promoting Turkish national identification, well understanding that such a course was centrifugal in a context of mixed languages and creeds and strong outside pressures.

Hasan Kayalı has argued most effectively that the distinction commonly made in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire between the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks is confusing and a disservice in the sense that it tends to imply that the goals and composition of the latter group were distinctly more Turkish national than those of the former.\textsuperscript{17} He points out that the designation of Turkish (Türkçe) as the official language of the Ottoman Empire was written into the 1876 constitution and was left unaltered after the 1908 revolution, and he further notes that in educational policy the governments of the Second Constitutional period stipulated only that Turkish be taught as a subject in the elementary schools, while strongly encouraging its use as the language of instruction in institutions of secondary and higher education, where students were normally being prepared for government service. In other words, it was not a program of coercive ‘denationalization’ of the ‘minorities’. In general, Kayalı’s research on the relationship between the Arab provinces and the Ottoman centre in the Second Constitutional period has shown that the major bone of contention was much more that of centralization versus decentralization than that of Turkish versus Arab nationalism, or Turkism versus Arabism. Indeed, he has shown that even in the post-1913 period, after the Balkan Wars and the Committee of Union and Progress coup – a period that has generally been viewed as one when Ottoman government policy became increasingly ‘Turkist’ – in fact, the government had recourse to Islamist arguments to shore up the unity of the Empire.
It is true that, during the war years, the Ottoman government sent agents provocateurs into the Russian Empire, Afghanistan and even India and that these agents used Turkist, as well as Islamic, appeals to try to stir up anti-Russian, anti-English, pro-Ottoman sentiments and activities in those regions. This, however, is a very insufficient basis for arguing that the Ottoman government was ideologically committed to Turkism. The history of Central Asia in the nineteenth century is replete with such agents in the service of a variety of empires, their rhetoric on the ground clearly instrumental to their governments’ strategic ends. Or, to take another example, the British did not feel great ideological commitment to Arab nationalism and self-determination when they supported and encouraged the Arab Revolt.

Something more complex is called for in understanding the policies of the Ottoman government in its last decades than two polar interpretations – the traditional ‘Turkification’ view versus the revisionist version that maintains that the Ottoman government followed a policy of Ottomanism, that is a (doomed, it is often said) policy of trying to create a civil or political nation in which the basis of solidarity was solely loyalty to a political system, devoid of any cultural belonging. The inverse case to that of the Ottoman Empire – Britain – sheds light on this problem.

In her work on British nationalism and patriotism, Linda Colley has pointed out how much it relied on Protestantism understood in opposition to the Catholic Continent (often in combination with the story of the ‘Norman yoke’), on a long series of victorious wars and on the profits of trade, as well as on a passionate defence of the English constitution and liberty. She has noted that it also depended very importantly on the desire of the ‘subject’ peoples or ‘small’ nations, that is the Scots, the Welsh, the Anglo-Irish, to share in the fruits of a lucrative and apparently ever-expanding overseas colonial empire. She points out that, from the late eighteenth century, these non-English Britons played a large role, indeed she claims a disproportionate role, in the forging of Britain’s overseas empire and that the élites of all these groups (including the English), began to intermarry and to share a broad common outlook. And yet, Scotland never lost its own cultural and legal institutions and the majority of the Welsh continued to speak their own language far into the nineteenth century. Thus, she admonishes:

We need to stop thinking of Britishness as the result of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures... What most enabled Great Britain to emerge as an artificial nation and to be superimposed on older alignments and loyalties, was a series of massive wars between
1689 and 1815 that allowed its diverse inhabitants to focus on what they had in common rather than on what divided them and that forged an overseas empire from which all parts of Britain could secure real as well as psychic profits.\textsuperscript{19}

Conversely, she notes that with the end of profitable empire in the post-World War II era, there has been a resurgence of Scottish and Welsh nationalism and even separatism.

It seems then, that in examining the nationalism of ‘ruling’ peoples in imperial states, there are two questions to be considered. First, whether the state in question has an absolutist dynastic form of government (in which case it is perhaps wrong to speak of a ‘ruling nation’) or a representative form of government. Second, whether or not the state is successful, i.e., whether or not it has the wherewithal to defend its territorial integrity and to make association or identification with it attractive to commercial and emerging new political classes.

In lamenting the fragmentation of Ottoman studies and the tendency to investigate the various provinces of the Empire, especially the Arab provinces, apart from their relationship to the centre, Hasan Kayalı has pointed out that this phenomenon arises from a pervasive ideological and methodological commitment to the nation-state on the part of historians and he has further noted that this commitment has tended to lead them to focus on the dissolving rather than integrating qualities of liberal revolution and mass politics in an imperial context.\textsuperscript{20} But this commitment is, in addition, a Whig commitment; it doesn’t extend to failed states or failed nationalisms. Thus, Ottomanism is so often described as a repressive ‘Turkification’, or else as an idealistic and hopeless attempt at ‘civic’ or ‘political’ nationalism on a false basis. And yet, Turkish nationalism in the Republican period is viewed as positive civic nationalism, often by the same authors. The commitment to successful nation-states and their nationalisms occasionally goes so far that historians have read the supposed distinction between Turkish nationalism and Turkism into the pre-Republican period.

This phenomenon, I think, the result of a confluence or interaction between a Whig vision of nations and nationalism and what I, following Rogers Brubaker, will call the ‘Manichean’ interpretation of nationalism.\textsuperscript{21} According to the Whig interpretation, nationalism leads to nation-states, therefore, \textit{ipso facto}, where there is a nation-state there must have been a preceding nation/nationalism. The Manichean view, on the other hand, affirms that there are two kinds of nationalism: ‘good’ or ‘political’ nationalism, which is civic and assimilative, and ‘bad’ ethnic nationalism, which is exclusionary,
chauvinist and expansionist-irredentist. We can see how these two concepts of nationalism are connected if we realize that ‘bad’ ethnic nationalism is usually said to have originated in Eastern Europe and to have spread to non-European countries (i.e., ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘backward’ countries) because such countries lacked a bourgeoisie, but also because they lacked a state – that is, the national movements took shape across existing state boundaries. Once a nation of this type succeeds in possessing itself of a state, the idea is that it may ‘progress’ into the more ‘mature’ stage of civic nationalism. I say ‘once’ because the underlying assumption here is that all ‘real’ nations do attain statehood.

The effects of these notions for understanding and interpreting Turkism have been important. The very existence of the modern Republic of Turkey requires that there must have been a pre-existing Turkish nationalism. However, the historical fact that many of the early exponents of Turkism were, like Ağaoğlu, from the Russian Empire and the further fact that many others, like Ziya Gökalp or Halide Edip, although Ottomans, wrote about a larger Turkish world, presents a problem. If we are to assume that all nationalism aims at an inclusive territoriality, then Turkism has failed and represents a ‘false’ nationality (or, it can be read in reverse: if Turkey has succeeded then ‘Turkish’ is different from ‘Turk’ in the Turkist sense, therefore, ‘Pan-Turkism’ is based on something that is not real. This is something like Hutchinson’s Slav/Slovak problem, discussed above). But a ‘false nationality’ cannot be the basis for a successful state. The solution is to imagine that there was always a distinction between ‘real’ Turkish nationalists and ‘Pan-Turkists’, and though the former might have momentarily been fellow travellers with the second, deep down they were different. In this view Ottoman Turkists are seen as something really different from the Russian émigrés in terms of their territorial ambitions.

The Manichean vision of nationalism, for its part, sees in the modern Republic of Turkey mature or good nationalism – not irredentist, formally embracing the notion that a ‘Turk’ is a citizen of Turkey, a NATO ally, among the most democratic regimes in the Middle East. But if all of this is so, Turkey must be shown to be removed from any ‘bad’, ‘immature’ ethnic type of national feeling. Here again, however, it is obvious that Turkism was ethnocultural in its outlook. The answer in this case is to emphasize the newness of the ‘national’ movement in the post-World War I period, to show that Atatürk inculcated a new idea of nationalism that was really territorial patriotism, not ‘Turkism’. The fact that the new Turkey exists within the boundaries of the old Ottoman Empire means the story can be read as follows.
The Ottoman Empire, an unnatural (or outmoded) multi-ethnic construction, was in its death throes at the close of the nineteenth century, and from its ruins the Turkish nation would emerge triumphant, in the shape of a more ‘natural’ state whose boundaries would coincide with the ethnographic frontiers of the Turks (that is, Anatolia!) – a state that would be modern, mature and civic in its political structure. In the last decades of the Empire, a Turkish intelligentsia was beginning to emerge and to articulate the new Turkish identity. Unfortunately, the project was thrown off course by a group of ‘opportunists and adventurers’, Pan-Turkists from the Russian Empire, who were able to catch the ears of many of these nascent Turkish nationalists and of the leadership of the CUP, especially Enver. These Pan-Turkists, of course, were false nationalists in the sense that their nationalism did not lead to a state and therefore it is convenient that all the negative qualities of Manichean nationalism be attributed to them. Their nationalism is said to have been racist, irredentist and exclusive. Because of their influence, the last Ottoman governments undertook a mistaken policy of ‘Turkification’ within the Empire and secretly sent agents into Transcaucasia and Central Asia in hopes of creating a ‘Greater Turkey’. And here, it is often implied, lie the origins of the deportation and massacres of Ottoman Armenians. The results of these adventures and this false nationalism were disastrous, nearly fatal, indeed, for the Turkish nation, but at the crucial moment a great leader, Atatürk, came forward and made a radical break with both the Ottoman past and the false Pan-Turkist nationalism of the Unionists. Nascent Turkish nationalists like Ziya Gökalp or Halide Edip, who had been misdirected by Pan-Turkism, saw the error of their ways and came back to the fold. The ‘opportunists’ either fled, like Enver, or cynically accommodated themselves to the new order of things, like Ağaoğlu and Açura.

This is what Jacob Landau and Niyazi Berkes are implying when they say that Tekin Alp caused confusion about the distinctness of Turkism and Pan-Turkism, or that intellectuals of the Second Constitutional period were confused as to the differences between the terms Türklük and Türkçülük. It is why they insist that 'Atatürkist' nationalism is modern, while pre-Independence Turkism was not; it is also why Berkes asserts that Gökalp’s Turkism was cultural, while the Pan-Turkism of the émigrés was racial.

In fact, Turkism was a movement of cultural nationalism that grew up in the context of empires, i.e., in a context where there were no Turkish states. What Turkism might lead to, then, in territorial terms, was a completely imaginary and open-ended question. On
the other hand, even hardened Turkists understood the unrealistic quality of the idea of a ‘Greater Turkey’; their program was more one of national regeneration and functioned on the level of a struggle for national awakening and modernization throughout the Turkish world without that, however, necessarily implying a struggle for political union. (The term union was indeed used in the period, but most commonly to urge the union of all Ottomans or the union of all Muslims in the Russian Empire – İttihad ve Terakki, İttifak-ı Muslimin – i.e., union within the existing imperial borders.) As Ağaoğlu put it:

We are not of those who dwell on the daydream that all the Muslims or all the Turks, having unified and joined together, will form a single political entity. When we say ‘Islamist current’ (İslamiyet cereyanı) we mean the invigoration, renewal and establishment of a civilization peculiar to Islandom (İslamiyet). And again, when we say Turkist current (Türklük cereyanı) we mean a civilization peculiar to the Turks, that is, coloured with a Turkish tint, animated by a Turkish spirit, cut out and established to the Turkish measure and way of life.24

At the same time, since self-strengthening did lie at the core of the movement, Turkists, whether from the Ottoman Empire or the Russian Empire, were concerned with the fate of the Ottoman Empire because it was the only really independent Middle Eastern Muslim state (Iran having been virtually partitioned by Britain and Russia). This is not to deny that the émigrés from the Russian Empire were naturally more emotionally involved with the fate of Russia’s Muslims (which is why many of them went back to the Caucasus, the Crimea, etc., in 1917 or 1918). For their part, the Ottoman Turkists were naturally more emotionally invested in the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. For many reasons, including this one, it was easier for Turks from the Russian Empire to begin to think of themselves in ethno-national terms, a fact that helps to explain their striking numbers among Turkists in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey.

Up until 1917, at the earliest, Turkist writers and intellectuals were not, as we have said, really talking about anywhere; there were no Turkish states at that time, only the Ottoman and Romanov Empires. Before the Russian Revolution, Turkishness was being formulated out of a wide array of elements, mostly cultural, but was definitely not territorial in any pragmatic sense. As a matter of states and territories, Turkishness didn’t have to define itself, indeed, could not define itself, until the Russian Revolution and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (and later the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire) opened up the possibilities for massive territorial
reorganization. Then we see not the declaration of the great unified state of all the Turks, but attempts to create a Republic of the Crimea, a Başkır Republic, a Republic of Azerbaijan, etc.

Turkism as it related to Turkey took a distinctive course at this time simply by virtue of the emergence and survival of the Republic. The language of national self-determination and national sovereignty, the abolition of the sultanate and the caliphate, served both to legitimate the claims of the Ankara government to being the sole representative of the country before the world and to reassure the Powers (including the Soviet Union) that the new government harboured no irredentist claims to former Ottoman lands. For very particular, contingent historical reasons, not ideological reasons, it was essential for the Ankara government to renounce all claims to lands under foreign occupation at the time of the Armistice. The choice was between a truncated, independent national state and an Ottoman state under foreign tutelage. Anatolia, then, would be the territorial base of the new state, but taking the above steps also constituted an important break with the imperial and Islamic past. A new basis of political solidarity was required, one that combined the principle of national sovereignty with Anatolian territories.

Under these circumstances, Turkism would serve as an ideology for binding together the many and varied Muslim populations living in the new Republic, populations that, in 1918, had found themselves without a viable political identity. That the identification with the new state could more easily be Turkism than Anatolianism is made clear by the vast numbers of inhabitants whose claim on the new state was purely ethnocultural. It is estimated that during World War I and the War of Independence, 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims died, while at the same time, hundreds of thousands of new immigrants or refugees arrived from the former Ottoman lands, the Russian Empire and Greece.²⁵

If geopolitical necessity dictated that the new polity be limited to the boundaries of Anatolia, all of the old-guard Turkists (some of whom had gone back to Russian-held lands in 1917 or 1918) were quite willing to harness themselves to the project of creating a Turkish state within this formulation. Men like Ağaoğlu, Akçura, Hüseyinzâde and Gökalp became members of the Grand National Assembly, helped to write the 1924 constitution and taught law, Turkish history and Turkish civilization at the Universities of Ankara and Istanbul. If they had a falling out with the new regime, it came about because Mustafa Kemal perceived them as rivals, not because of their Turkism. A quick look at their subsequent careers confirms this.
Of the four, all except Akçura were held in the British internment camp on Malta until 1921 and immediately joined the nationalist forces in Ankara upon release. Akçura also went to Ankara in 1921. Hüseyinzâde Ali was active in the Türk Ocakları, but was put on trial for treason in 1926 and, though acquitted, this ended his political life. As Erik Zürcher has shown, his crime was participating in a 1923 meeting where the revival of the Committee of Union and Progress was discussed. Gökalp spent a year in Diyarbakır, but was brought back to Ankara in 1922, elected to the Assembly (1923) and employed in the Ministry of Education until his death in 1924. Ağaoğlu served in the Assembly, was Director-General of Press and Information and taught first at Ankara and later at Istanbul. In 1930 he founded the Free Republican Party with Ali Fethi Okyar and when that party received unexpectedly strong support, it was closed down in 1930 ending Ağaoğlu’s political life. In that year also, the Türk Ocakları, in which he had held key positions, was taken over by the Republican People’s Party, its potential as a political base having been made clear by the Free Party experiment. Akçura was elected to the Assembly, served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and helped to found the Türk Tarih Kurumu.

And yet, the contributions of such figures to the creation of the Turkish Republic and to Turkish nationalism have been largely erased and disqualified. Frequently their post-1921 positions and attitudes are characterized as opportunistic, or as examples of how the new regime co-opted the ideologues of the old. This has occurred for reasons having to do with the history and internal political dynamics of Turkey specifically and with the Whig-Manichean construction of nationalism.

The first reason has to do with Atatürk’s consolidation of power. In his book *The Unionist Factor*, Zürcher has shown convincingly how much the success of the National Struggle owed to the organization and leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress and how, after purging opponents and possible rivals in 1925, Atatürk was at pains both to justify his actions and to make invisible the contributions of others. He demonstrates that those purged in 1926 and sidelined in general since 1923, had in common not ideology, but the possibility of forming alternative power bases and challenging Atatürk’s leadership. Atatürk’s great *Speech of 1927* is, above all, an apologia for those purges, in which all the calamities of the war years are laid at the feet of the Unionists. Though Atatürk had been a Unionist himself, the claim is made that these ‘corrupt’ leaders from the past had been part of a great Unionist plot to destroy the Gazi (Ottoman Turkish title for a victorious soldier).
The implication was, of course, that had they succeeded, they would have led the nation once again into catastrophe. This recasting of Atatürk as the sole architect and saviour of the new state makes possible the transformation of nationalism into Kemalism and the denial of the latter’s connections to the past. In this way Turkists within the Committee of Union and Progress could be transformed into irresponsible adventurers or deluded idealists, purveyors of a ‘Turanian’ dream, now characterized as being quite distinct in origins and content from ‘Turkish nationalism’.

Geopolitical considerations, much more than ideological ones, motivated Atatürk and the nationalist leadership to construct the new state within Anatolia, that is, more or less within the Armistice lines. Generally, scholars have cited passages from Atatürk’s addresses made in the period of the early Republic to demonstrate the opposite, to show that Atatürk’s nationalism was ‘modern’ because it was secular and renounced multinational empires and ethnic nationalism. Atatürk’s clear intention in these addresses, however, was to urge people to identify with what could realistically be held, that is lands not occupied at the time of the Armistice, on terms of national sovereignty and independence and to abandon any sense of commitment to larger enterprises. It is for this reason that he often made a point of the poverty, devastation and relatively small population of the new state. Insisting that the people had been dragged most unwillingly, to calamitous effect, into all such ‘adventures’ as the World War, casting the blame on the previous regime and claiming that this had been possible because the principle of popular national sovereignty had not guided the state – these were all a part of the same process.

There are relatively few passages where Mustafa Kemal speaks of ‘Pan-Turanism’, and seems explicitly to renounce ethnocultural identification. Closer examination reveals they do not constitute a rejection of ethno-national identification; rather they form part of a more general insistence on limited borders. In fact, the selection from Atatürk’s Speech often cited in this regard belongs to a larger passage that embraces and validates ethnocultural considerations and specifically questions the notion of civic polities based on ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘brotherhood’. The insistence on Anatolian borders and national sovereignty, the repeated criticisms of Ottoman multi-nationalism and Islamic unity and the minimizing of the role played by Unionists in the National Struggle, however, did make it easy for later historians to assert that the new regime represented an absolute break with the Turkism of the previous era and constituted the emergence
of a completely new kind of national ideology. The reason they were moved to do so lies in that ‘Manichean’ vision of nationalism discussed above, a vision typical of historians of the post-World War II era, like Hans Kohn, for whom, as Anthony Smith has noted, it was naturally very important to analyse and classify the varieties of an ideology associated with the French Revolution, national sovereignty and self-determination, but also with Nazism.31

A clear example of this dichotomous view of nationalism and how it plays out in writing the history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey is found in The Emergence of Modern Turkey by Bernard Lewis:

The Western European concept of the territorial and political nation had proved difficult of application to the Ottoman Empire. There was, however, another kind of national sentiment in Europe, which was to have far greater impact on the people of the Ottoman Empire. In Eastern Europe there were no well-defined and well-established territorial nation-states such as England and France, the visible and external criteria of nationhood – land and state – were insufficient. In the continental Empires, there were Germans, Czechs, Poles and Hungarians, but no Germany, no Czech-land, no Poland and only a shadow of Hungary. None of these nations could be defined in terms of sovereign states; none could even be defined, with any precision, by their territorial limits. In place of the patriotism of Western Europe, a different sentiment arose – nationalism, romantic and subjective in its criteria of identity, all too often illiberal and chauvinistic in its expression.

This kind of sentiment corresponded much more closely to the ethnic confusion of the Ottoman Empire...

He concludes these observations a few pages later with the following remarks on Atatürk and the emergence of a new sentiment, which he classifies as patriotism:

This new idea of a territorial nation-state based on the Turkish nation in Turkey makes it first appearance in the early days of the Kemalist revolution.32

Brubaker notes that these categories have a normative as well as an analytical aspect to them. They often serve as a too ‘handy tool for classifying incipient processes of state- and nation-building’, and for ‘keeping score’ on such processes, most recently with respect to the new states of post-Soviet Eastern Europe and Central Asia.33 In other words, these are categories that have been, and are currently, in use by scholars and statesmen to judge countries’ degree of ‘Westernness’. And yet, Brubaker has pointed out the inadequacies of these formal types, both analytically and normatively, since any careful study of
nationalism shows that virtually all ‘civic’ nationalism contains some elements of cultural identification and almost none of the ethnic nationalisms are wholly racial or descent-based. Moreover, the fact that a state adopts an assimilationist, rather than exclusionary, stance towards national identity does not necessarily tell us anything about how coercive it is likely to be. And, finally, as he says, it is hard to deny the defensive power of ethnocultural nationalisms under certain conditions, such as colonialism.

Now, as we have said, to the extent that the Republic of Turkey was and is not at all expansionist or irredentist, to the extent that it did not side with Germany in the Second World War, or with the Soviet Union in the Cold War, to the extent that it has resolutely defined itself as modern and secular, it has been necessary for scholars who categorize nationalisms in this way to see Turkey’s as a good, Western-style nationalism. But conceptualizing nationalism with this Manichean typology has also necessitated a break with earlier Turkism and with the nationalism of ‘Outside Turks’. Good nationalism cannot be associated with an unbordered ethnic/organic nationalism, or a nationalism that regards Islam as an ally, or with intercommunal violence. In other words, dissociating Kemalist nationalism from Turkism is part of asserting that the Turkish Republic is a modern, Western state. Berkes’s language makes this explicit when he says that one of the features of Kemalist nationalism is ‘the affinity of Turkey with the nations contributing to the formation of modern civilization’.

Evidently, as articulated above, the demise of the Russian and Ottoman Empires did radically change the situation, and the nationalism developed during the early years of the Turkish Republic did differ from the Turkism of the preceding era, above all in its concrete territoriality. Nevertheless, the retrospective commitment to the unique role of Atatürk and to the classification of Turkey-centred Turkish nationalism with good, patriotic nationalism, helps to explain how Landau can say that ‘Pan-Turkists’, among whom he includes early Turkists, demonstrated ‘much less concern for modernisation or world civilisation’. Similarly, we can understand why an author like Frank Tachau, though very well aware of the presence of old-line Turkist currents in the new regime, nevertheless insists that Atatürk worked to contain the ‘Pan-Turkism’ of the Türk Ocakları by altering its constitution in 1927 and by closing it down in 1931. And yet, he himself notes that the 1927 changes were probably made to mollify the Soviet Union, that the Halk Evleri continued to perform much the same activities as the Ocaklar and that leading officers in the Ocaklar, like Ağaoğlu,
held high government positions throughout the period.36

The firewall between pre-Republic and Republican-era nationalism, the anachronistic division into ‘Turkish nationalism’ and ‘Pan-Turkism’, prevents us from seeing fully the reality and nature of that Turkism, its broad trans-state milieu, its engagement with Islam, its liberalism and modernism. It obscures the role that Turkists played in shaping the Republic of Turkey and hinders our ability to analyse how the accession to state power affected their ideas. Finally, it prevents our distinguishing between expansionist state-sponsored imperialism and cultural nationalism, so that we are left with facile statements that make ‘Pan-Turkism’ a reaction to and mirror image of ‘Pan-Slavism’, and lump the territorial ambitions of a Nikolai Ignatyev or an Enver Paşa in the same conceptual framework with the national revivalism of an Adam Mickiewicz or an Ismail Gasprinski.

Interpretations of nationalism which see the nation as primordial, or which regard political nationalism and ethnocultural nationalism as standing in either oppositional or developmental relationship to one another, or both, have given rise to a number of distorted images of the late Ottoman period. These include our understanding of the allegiances and sincerity of men like Ahmet Ağaoğlu; the meaning of the restoration of the constitution in 1908 and subsequent Ottoman policies with regard to rationalization, language and education; and the aims and development of Turkism, particularly its relationship to Turkish nationalism in the Republic of Turkey. The preceding discussion has attempted to show that national movements arise in specific conditions of modern communications and the alteration of social and economic relations as a result of capitalism and, especially, industrialization. National identity, as pieced together by cultural nationalists, is composed of a mélange of cultural markers combined in new ways to give them new meaning. In order to speak effectively to a wide public, however, these markers must have been drawn from people’s real experiences and backgrounds and must speak to their real grievances. In Transcaucasia, nationalism had a distinctly defensive component, constituting part of a process of self-strengthening, in which, however, various identifications were possible, including non-national identifications and an array of distinct national identifications. Whiggish interpretations of Turkish nationalism, Azerbaijani nationalism, Arab nationalism, etc., have obscured matters such as the difficulties of Ottoman officials (whose efforts at Ottomanization are often read as Turkification) in embracing Turkish nationalism; or the multifarious activities of men who moved (with their ideas) easily and often among the
Ottoman Empire, Russian Transcaucasia and Iran; or the way that individuals who once spoke of ‘Türklük’ found no difficulty in putting themselves at the service of Anatolian Turkey. They have also hindered to some extent a consideration of Ottomanism, when not viewed as ‘Turkification’, as a nevertheless plausible attempt at national construction. The nation-state oriented perspective that produced many of these distortions is now under revision, particularly in the area of Arab nationalism and its relationship to the Ottoman Empire, as we see in the works of Hasan Kayalı and William Cleveland, and in the area of Iranian-Transcaucasian interactions, notably in the work of Mangol Bayat on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and of Houri Berberian on the role of Armenians in the same events.

MODERNIZING INTENTIONS, PERCEPTIONS OF MODERNITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

After these essentially structural and historiographical considerations, however, we are still left with the question of motive and intention. If the motive for Ağaoğlu was self-strengthening, as we have said, then in what way did he see nationalism as promoting that end? Far from a rejectionist stance or a retreat into tradition, Ağaoğlu’s stance was modernizing, an attempt to embrace change. As the discussion below will show, this is not unusual in cultural nationalists. What is more unusual is the way Ağaoğlu saw nationalism as intrinsic to modernity.

Of the many recent discussions of nationalism, among the most illuminating and useful for the purposes of this study has been The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism by John Hutchinson.\(^{37}\) Hutchinson sees cultural nationalism as a kind of synthesis in a dialectic between modernizers, or ‘Westernizers’, and traditionalists:

Cultural nationalism regularly crystallizes as a movement in times of social discord between traditionalists and modernists generated by the impact of external models of modernization on the established status order and it promotes the reintegration of the community at a higher level by means of a return to the inspiration of its national past.\(^{38}\)

This perspective has enabled Hutchinson to make some revealing points about the nature of cultural nationalism. Most importantly, perhaps, he has called into question what he terms the ‘regressive thesis’ of the post-World War II generation of historians, which tended to view cultural nationalism as a retreat by groups or nations into a mythic past and organic solidarity that served to compensate for their perceived weakness and backwardness \(\text{vis-à-vis}\) the West. While it is surely right to consider such movements defensive in
the sense that they are responding to real social changes and real external pressures, they are not rejectionist; they are not simply attempts to oppose ‘authentic’ and ‘indigenous’ organic and spiritual solidarities to Western ‘materialism’ and ‘individualism’.

On the contrary, cultural nationalists, or ethnic revivalists, as he also terms them, admire in traditional society its ‘rootedness in nature, family, locality, and religion, but they reject its otherworldliness’. At the same time, they are committed to ‘a mobile, meritocratic social order and contact with a wider humanity’. They accept the notion of directionality in History, an idea of progress, and they aver that it corresponds not to ‘the imposition of alien norms on the community’ but rather to ‘the reformation of the traditional status order’. They present what Hutchinson calls a polycentric vision of the world and of history and they give new meaning to the terms modernity and tradition, where the former is ‘particularized... as a local manifestation of a universal drive for progress found in all peoples’, while the latter is ‘undermined by demonstrating it to be the product of a mobile society whose glories sprang from an interchange with other cultures’. Such thinkers blame the weakness of their society in relation to the Western world on ‘an ossification of [society’s] traditions’, which they see as having led to a loss of identity, to cosmopolitanism and corruption. Far, then, from rejecting change or retreating into a supposed spiritual or cultural superiority, ethnic revivalists are engaged in mediating between modernizers and traditionalists and see themselves as leading the nation to a new synthesis of modern world civilization and national particularity, as getting the nation back on the rails of progress.

Another important contribution in Hutchinson’s analysis of cultural nationalism is his discussion of the role of the past and of history in the formulation of the new synthesis. We have already mentioned that the effectiveness of revivalism ‘rests on its ability to evoke and appropriate genuine communal memories linked to specific homelands, cultural practices and socio-political organizations’ in order to promote ‘a novel historical vision of an integrated and distinct political community’ and in order to define it in relation to other groups (my emphasis). Political symbols are pragmatically selected and can change over time, but the selection and the changes reflect evolution in the conception of the national identity. In other words, picking resonant symbols gives the project effectiveness, while placing those symbols in an historical framework defines their new content and gives them their modernity.

The importance of the last point has to do with the use of particular history (i.e., the ‘history’ of mujtahids and divine
kingship in Iran or the ‘history’ of how the Turks uniquely protected and promoted Islam) to create a narrative that identifies a certain group of people and sets them inside History. The point here is that this locates the nation in the stream of progress, not that it reflects any continuity of historical memory. This is an aspect of cultural nationalism that Hutchinson fails to fully articulate, because, as noted earlier, he fails to fully distinguish between the uses of history and history itself. To take one of his examples, the Great Idea (Megali Idea) resonated with Greek peasants because it made use of the symbols and imagery of the Orthodox Church, not because the peasants had any continuous historical consciousness of themselves as descendants of the Eastern Roman Empire. But, if one way to cast Greece as a modern nation was to situate her as the once and future bulwark of the West, then using Byzantium to do so made more sense than using Hellas’ resistance to the Mede, precisely because, in the absence of any meaningful memory of either, Orthodoxy forged a powerful symbolic link to the one and not the other. It is a case of new wine in old bottles.

Therefore, whereas Hutchinson argues that ‘historical memory rather than language as such serves to define the national community’, I would rather say that language and religion, and to some extent folk traditions, are identified as markers of the community and then fitted into an historical framework that gives them a particular meaning as part of a project of modernization that includes a challenge to an existing ‘status order’. These markers are present and powerful in people’s lives, but cultural nationalists lift them out of existing, for them false, histories, i.e., ‘ossified tradition’, ‘corruption’ and ‘alien interjection’, and reset them in a ‘true’ history that connects to modernity and progress. In this way language, religion and folkways, chosen in fact for their broad recognizability and power, delimit the community and an historical account imbues them with significance, explaining how these old cultural items now denote a new order of things.

The markers, then, that go to make up the new historical identity, must themselves be stripped of history, must be essentialized so as not to compete with the new story. Folk traditions, generally lacking any ‘high culture’ account of their origins and past, are easily put to such use. Religion, among the most powerful and widespread varieties of social glue, becomes a set of eternal truths, denied an independent history. The truths are unchanging, but religion in history becomes the history of nations in their interaction with religion, not the history of religion. Hutchinson acknowledges the particular importance of religious reformers in formulating
the cultural program of cultural nationalism and goes so far as to indicate three forms of it: pre-modern reformists, modern reformists and 'full-blooded' ethnic revivalists 'who believe the essence of religion is to be found in a[n]... evolving historical community... and who regard the regeneration of this community as the necessary foundation for religious and secular progress'. As for language, ethnic revival movements very often include language reforms that touch on vocabulary, literary styles and sometimes grammar and constitute a substantial break with tradition, that is, with recent history. One of the goals in this is certainly popularization or accessibility; however, another goal is de-historicizing the symbolic markers so that they can be freely re-historicized.

The above account necessarily raises the question of why history, per se, is the crucial field upon which the meaning of national symbols is defined and the life of the nation validated. The obvious answer is defensive; because the present is a picture of relative weakness which makes real or imaginary past greatness all the more attractive and because the concept of a multi-stranded or polycentric history allows for the projection of a stronger future in which a given nation or society can assimilate the benefits of modernity without itself being assimilated. This polycentric view of nations or societies, each with its own history, moving through a unidirectional time, corresponds rather well with Benedict Anderson's account of the discovery of comparative civilizations and the substitution of a horizontal world full of types or serialities set in homogeneous, empty time for a prior vision of a hierarchical, centripetal world set in a telescoped or messianic time of prefiguring and fulfilment. This polycentric view of nations or societies, each with its own history, moving through a unidirectional time, exists in a mundane, as opposed to a metaphysical, place and time. Multi-stranded and diverse as this vision may be, therefore, it nevertheless understands all phenomena as existing in one world and one stream of time. Objects in the world (including humanity), are no longer unique identities or metaphors, they are types or exemplars of categories: the Byzantine Emperor is no longer the Shadow of God on Earth; he is ‘an emperor’. As Anderson notes, this new way of apprehending reality, and particularly time, is connected with the development of science. And just as every falling apple exemplifies and embodies a single law and a single Nature, so too, by analogy, all histories exemplify and embody one History. The placement of the community within an overarching narrative of History and Progress is thus not merely defensive in the obvious way of creating an account of the local culture in the larger stream of history and projecting it into the modern world;
the appropriation of the category of multi-stranded history and of typological thinking is itself genuinely, not only instrumentally, part of a project of modernization. This is the secularism of cultural nationalists, ethnic revivalists and, indeed, religious modernists; not (necessarily) the denial of religion or its importance, not unbelief, but the placement of, in our case, Islam, within a History containing categories of distinct yet commensurable religions, societies and histories. Thus, Namık Kemal could view the Şeriat (Islamic law) as the equivalent of natural law, see the religious injunction to consultation, mesveret, as opening the door to representative government in the form of a constitution and compare fıkıh (Islamic jurisprudence) to Graeco-Roman law.\(^{45}\)

Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s thought easily fits into all the patterns and characteristics of an ethnic revivalist or cultural nationalist as so far described. The whole thrust of his work is modernist, aimed at a ‘higher synthesis’ of community identity and solidarity, on the one hand, and ‘modern’ rational thought and institutions, on the other, in order to get the nation back into the main stream of progress. Thus we learn that the decline of the Turks is attributable to their lack of national consciousness and their overzealous attachment to ossified traditions, that the real nature and strength of Islam is in its ability to adapt itself to a variety of historical and cultural circumstances and that women’s lack of personal freedom is a result of the corruption of genuine Islamic precept and early historical experience.\(^{46}\) We are told that a strong literary tradition in vernacular Turkish is necessary to produce the geniuses that will inspire the nation and that Islam is one of three great world religious traditions.

But Ağaoğlu’s modernism is deeper than this: his historicism is such that he views his own nationalism self-consciously as part of a larger historical process of modernizing reform in the Middle East and he views nationalism in general as an integral part of the historical emergence of the modern world everywhere. In his extended essay ‘Türk Âlemi’ (‘The Turkish World’) he describes how the Islamic world undertook various movements of reform in an effort to strengthen itself in the face of Western encroachment, and he divides these into two kinds: first, early reformers who saw weakness as the result of spiritual corruption and deviation from true religious practice and who therefore advocated stricter adherence to the sources of religion (among these, he mentions the Wahhabis and the Senussis); and second, modernizing reformers, who recognized the need to assimilate the material advances of the West and who blamed Islamic weakness on intellectual stagnation.
and on bad government. These thinkers argue that the science, technology and responsible governmental institutions of Europe all originated in the Islamic world, or were at least compatible with the teachings of Islam and ought to be adopted without more ado (he mentions Afghani as the first of this category of reformer).

Later in the same essay Ağaoğlu goes on to note that the French Revolution gave birth to the idea of nationalism and that it has proved a remarkably powerful force for generating national solidarity and mobilization, spreading rapidly across Europe. He specifically discusses the role of the new social sciences and of folklorists and philologists in generating the necessary materials to fuel nationalism in countries like Germany, and he comments that nationalist ideas have in general taken root more quickly and spread more broadly among Turks in the Russian Empire because of their greater exposure to Western ideas. In other words, he provides an account of the development of nationalist and reformist movements of self-strengthening in the Middle East quite like those available in many standard histories of the Middle East today.

However, Ağaoğlu’s convictions about the importance of national consciousness in the modernizing process go beyond the observation that since the French Revolution national sentiment had effectively generated social mobilization and proved a useful tool of resistance. It is worth noting that in associating nationalism with the French Revolution, Ağaoğlu is very explicit about the importance of popular or national sovereignty in the process. The generation of national sentiment in and of itself, or alone, does not result in power and progress. National sentiment and national sovereignty are, he claims, the joint products of national consciousness, which is itself part of a larger process.

As a nationalist, Ağaoğlu of course viewed nations as having some sort of primordial existence. But a careful examination of what might be meant by this is revealing. Nation as a category has a kind of objective, unconditional reality for him, but that category is in some sense outside of history or like a Platonic essence; it is a category in potentia. The category gets realized in history, within a particular progression that, if successful, leads to national consciousness and modernity. According to his account, a condition of primitive tribalism is overcome through a universalizing ethic (religion), which is then in turn overcome by a challenge to authority, which is also a challenge to the universal. In Europe, this means that humanists and monarchs challenge the authority of the papacy, one intellectually, the other politically. From this process emerge national vernaculars, centralizing
monarchies and national consciousness, followed in due course by the Enlightenment, individualism, constitutionalism/national sovereignty and industrialization. In other words, he regards the emergence of national consciousness as a phenomenon that should lead to national movements or revolutions and full modernity. The real key in his thought is the challenge to authority, because it frees both individuals and groups to adapt to particular circumstances.

Now this concern for adaptability, the attention to and accounting for particularity, is something that comes up over and over again in Ağaoğlu’s writing as an essential feature, indeed the essential feature of modernity. He was not alone in this concern and perspective, however. As I have discussed in detail elsewhere, in France during the latter part of the nineteenth century, this was a common preoccupation of historians and social scientists, who saw it as the hallmark of a truly scientific method – for them it was synonymous with empiricism and inductive reasoning.

This preoccupation manifests itself on two levels, methodologically in terms of identifying objects of study and substantively, in terms of the account given of those objects. First, the social scientist or historian must, as a good scientist, account for all human phenomena; no human manifestation, no matter how ‘irrational’, ‘emotional’, ‘primitive’, or ‘unjust’ may be dismissed as an object of analysis by virtue of being ‘unnatural’. Anything that exists is natural and must be accounted for. This, of course, is an implicit, sometimes explicit, critique of the philosophes, whose method was seen as deductive and overly abstract, and who were accused of being too ready to dispose of existing institutions and practices on the basis of their supposed irrationality and hence unnaturalness. Second, in the study of men, history and societies, the ability of these to embrace local conditions, to give a rational, empirical account of them and to fashion their institutions accordingly, becomes the measure of progress. The beauty of this for cultural nationalists is that it insists, at every level, that progress can be universal, but not ‘cosmopolitan’.

Critiques of the ‘overly abstract’ approach of the philosophes and the ideologues of the French Revolution, of their ‘utopianism’ and radical disregard for history and tradition, were common in France and in the rest of Europe throughout the nineteenth century. But a simple countering assertion that ‘whatever is, must be’, a ‘reconciliation with reality’, quickly proved unsatisfying because of the denial of human agency that it supposed.

By the mid-nineteenth century, this problem was already being addressed in Europe by thinkers such as Alexander Herzen and
August Cieszkowski, through their development of a philosophy of action, or what Walicki terms the rehabilitation of matter. Rejecting Hegel’s absolute Idealism as ‘philosophical Buddhism’, they posited a dialectic of human history composed of natural particularism or immediacy, overcome by rational abstraction (Reason) overcome by a rational return to the particular (Spirit). What they do not do is base any of this on the subconscious. The problem of the particular and the general (or abstract) is dealt with through the mechanism of ‘overcoming’ and the tension between them is resolved through the temporal dimension, i.e., ‘becoming’. In other words, they start with the immediate or the particular, then Reason (a function of consciousness) ushers in abstraction and opens the dichotomy in nature between the particular and the general and, finally, the spirit (a function of the heart) reuniates the two and creates the possibility of useful action (agency). The consciousnesses of the individual and the group alike move through these stages.

What was special about French thought in the last third or so of the century, especially following the trauma of the Prussian defeat and the Commune, was the way the standard criticisms of the Enlightenment, formulated as a call for a more truly ‘scientific’ method, amalgamated with the newly emerging social sciences of sociology, psychology and crowd psychology and their formulation of the unconscious, to produce a deeply reactionary vision. Through the creation of the unconscious, they provided a properly ‘scientific’ and ‘empirical’ means for resolving a fundamental cosmological problem in the rational account of mankind, namely agency, and did so in such a way as to create a space for traditions, rootedness and élites (both within the nation and in the community of nations).

Late nineteenth-century French thinkers like Gustave Le Bon or Georges Sorel used the social sciences and the unconscious, especially the collective unconscious, to deal with this problem. They put the unconscious and the group at the level of the particular or immediate and the conscious and rational at the level of abstract laws. The two levels are seen as absolutely necessary to each other – the unconscious alone is a senseless chaos; the conscious without the unconscious is an empty, meaningless vessel. An innovation here, however, is not to see every individual as existing on both levels. Rather, only certain types of individuals rise to the abstract, rational level: men as opposed to women, educated élites as opposed to the ‘common man’. The former are the agents who give direction to the concrete materials of society, who shape the adaptation of those materials in accord with ever-changing circumstance. By the
same token, those ‘unconscious’ group characteristics, manifested as religious practices, folkways, language, etc. and duly stripped of both agency and history, are the soil that the élites need in order to lift themselves onto the stage of History and begin the process of overcoming. Some societies never fully succeed in producing the upper, rational level, or their upper level somehow becomes separated from their unconscious, group level, and in such cases the societies in question fall out of the train of progress, are unable to move through all the stages of becoming and are doomed to extinction. And what determines this? According to these men, some essential difference in the character or nature of the ‘unconscious’ group.

This way of looking at humanity allowed for all kinds of local diversity, accounted for, indeed created an indispensable role for, all kinds of local practices, institutions and traditions and at the same time disposed of the notion of the equality of man – whether individually or as societies. On these terms, direct universal suffrage appeared questionable and domination of more ‘primitive’ societies natural. And this is the concept of nations and progress that Ağaoğlu encountered when he arrived in France to begin his university studies. It is the basis for the rule of colonial difference that Partha Chatterjee’s Indian nationalists encountered precisely at the end of the nineteenth century and which they reproduced in the reification of their women, masses and religious traditions, as the middle classes began assimilating a sanitized popular culture upward, in an ongoing attempt both to nationalize themselves and to ‘find nourishment in the popular’. In inventing a spiritual realm in order to resist the foreign oppressor, they also reproduced the intellectual structure of inequality, difference and essentialism used both at home and abroad by their colonizers as a means of lifting themselves onto an equal playing field with them.

In this light, one of the most interesting things about Ağaoğlu’s view of history and modernity is that he makes individualism coeval with group or national consciousness, the two overcoming abstract, stagnant universalism together. Thus, he can, with consistency, criticize overwhelming state intervention in the economy and insist upon the importance of representative institutions in the Republic of Turkey, but also protest, following the 1905 revolution in Russia, against the principle of one-man, one-vote in the new constitutional order, a principle that doesn’t take into account the particularities of the various communities. He also weaned himself away from any discussion of intrinsic national qualities. Whereas he had begun by accepting implicitly the Renanian idea
of Semites as universalists and Aryans as particularists, he later abandoned these ideas in favour simply of the formulation that nations are particular and that achieving the consciousness and freedom to adapt to concrete conditions is the essence of becoming modern. Ağaoğlu saw the rights of the individual and the rights of the community as indivisible, as growing up together out of the same causes and as leading together to a flexible, adaptive, modern and progressive society. His liberalism and his nationalism are inextricably intertwined and his writings often link the two.

In discussing the need to improve the condition of women, for example, he rails against women’s ignorance of the world and lack of learning because it makes them unable to usefully rear the sons of the nation. But he also rails against the authoritarian nature of the patriarchal household because it denies women personhood and individuality and leads to the inculcation and reproduction of that most deadly of all characteristics – authoritarian thinking – in the breast of the family, thereby posing the greatest possible impediment, in Ağaoğlu’s view, to progress.

In this respect, one can say that Ağaoğlu’s nationalism was as much political as national. National cultural revival was one half of the equation and political reform was the other; together and only together, could the regeneration of the community (and the individual) be achieved.

To return again to his very fruitful discussion of these matters, Hutchinson maintains a strict distinction between what he terms cultural nationalism and political nationalism. In effect, this is the usual distinction made between civic or citizen-based nationalism and ethnic nationalism, though Hutchinson does not endorse the Manichean ‘good’ and ‘bad’ characterizations of each. For Hutchinson, political nationalism is the total rejection of the existing political order by a disgruntled group seeking to replace the old order with a new system or new political community, to be based on the sovereignty of formally equal citizens. Hutchinson emphasizes that such movements are state-oriented and rationalist (‘universalist-statist’ as he puts it at one point), normally reject the past rather than attempting to integrate it and tend to be centralizing in their goals and methods. By contrast:

- cultural nationalism is normally a decentralized educational movement.
- It has emerged first as the dominant national force attracting a rising intelligentsia, in communities where other formal political channels are lacking because of the poverty of the group, the hold of the traditional rulers, or the distribution of the group between many states.51

Hutchinson argues that these two types of movement are not separated,
as Kohn would assert, spatially, with the first model being typical of Western Europe and the second being typical of Eastern Europe and Asia; nor yet is cultural nationalism a ‘stage’ that can prepare a nation for the process of creating a modern, rational nation-state, but is incapable of directing that process. Rather he asserts that political and cultural nationalism exist in a recurring dynamic, where the two types of nationalism – cultural and political (or communitarian and state-oriented) – compete with each other and elicit each other. Quite often, he notes, cultural nationalist movements fail ‘in terms of their own communitarian goals’, that is, they fail to engender the new synthesis and national spiritual revival they advocate and they fail to reach or to mobilize the mass of the people, and so they have recourse to a state-oriented politics that seeks to seize power in order to ‘institutionalize their programme in the social order’.

In this moment of political activism, the language and symbols of cultural nationalism do help to mobilize traditionalist élites and masses behind a modernizing political project, but political nationalists merely use ‘ethnic sentiments instrumentally in order to muster diverse groups in order to secure a representative national state’. Once this has been achieved, however, the political movement has a unitary and rationalist structure that will inevitably re-open the rift between traditionalists and modernizers and ‘re-ignite’ the process. The on-going tensions between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, between the worlds of ‘religion’ and ‘science’ in an ‘age of continuous innovation’ mean that cultural nationalism will continue to find a place even in highly industrialized liberal states.

Now this account has many merits. First, it overcomes the ‘Orientalist’ dichotomy that places ‘advanced’ civic nationalism in Western Europe and the United States, and irrational, organic, ethnic or racial nationalism in the East, or in the ‘non-Western’ world. It also allows us to see cultural nationalism in a relationship to political nationalism that is different, deeper and longer-lasting than one of mere lack, i.e., that lacking a bourgeoisie, a compact territory, a literary language, etc., a given people or nation ‘substitutes’ spiritual solidarity and ties to the land.

But the careers of men like Ağaoğlu belie this strict division. As this book will show, Ağaoğlu both fits and does not fit into these categorizations. He is certainly a cultural nationalist according to much of what Hutchinson has to say about cultural nationalism. He was engaged in a modernist project of national regeneration that absolutely did see the nation in evolutionary and progressive terms within an overarching History, that did condemn blind adherence to tradition as the death of nations and the cause of
Turkish weakness and that did try to integrate religion with the nation via history. He was clearly wearing the hat of a cultural nationalist when he wrote in ‘Türk Alemi’ that he did not seek the illusory dream of a Turkdom united in a single state, but only its cultural renewal. He was active in a large number of cultural and educational organizations like the Türk Ocağı (‘Turkish Hearth’) and Türk Yurdu (‘Turkish Homeland’) and he gave lectures on the History of Turkish Civilization at the Darülfünun, the future Istanbul University. At the same time, he was very much a political activist: he edited numerous newspapers, belonged to political parties and held elected and appointed office in both countries, more or less from his return to Baku in 1893.

This would not surprise Hutchinson, who recognizes that cultural nationalists sometimes also have periods of political nationalism in their careers. Nevertheless, it seems strained to require them to undergo ontological change at these moments; can it be right that suddenly ethnic or national revival is no longer genuinely important to them, but merely instrumental in a political project that has no necessary connection to, may indeed be finally hostile to, their cultural projects? Hutchinson does not find cultural nationalists ingenuine in changing which cultural markers they emphasize, because, he says, this represents a genuine change in their conception of the community. Why, then, accuse them of instrumentalism when the almost limitless imaginative possibilities of an oppositional movement are forced to adapt themselves to exigencies of power? The change from the defence of an imagined Turkdom to the defence of a material Republic of Turkey is immense, but the sincerity of engagement with the project does not seem to me to be less, nor utterly discontinuous with the first.

But Ağaoğlu is no respecter of these categories in another important way, as we have already seen. He views representative government, constitutionalism and the formal equality of citizens as fundamental to the creation of a strong, modern nation. His bridging of the traditional and the modern is not limited to an evolutionary view of the nation in constant flux and struggle staying abreast of progress. Rather, he had a very specific view of progress and modernity, not just as a collection of characteristics, but as a single, concrete process. In that process, national consciousness and the revolt against authority arose together and their dynamic interaction gave rise to science, technology, material prosperity, individualism and constitutional nation-states. This makes an interesting and instructive contrast with the ideas of a Namik Kemal. Kemal naturalizes modernity by showing how constitutionalism is contained
in the Islamic notion of consultation (mesveret) or how science really originated in the Islamic world and thus its accomplishments need not be treated as unholy. In other words, constitutionalism, which is to be the bearer of modernity and progress and the focal point of loyalty, is naturalized and legitimated by something, Islam, which, while compatible with responsible government, stands completely outside it in logical terms. Ağaoğlu, on the other hand, doesn’t just naturalize progress; he makes nationalism and national identity, his legitimating principle, a fundamental stage in human progress, an integral part of the whole complex of modernity.

Moreover, since he fundamentally sees modernity as the freedom and ability to adjust institutions and behaviour to local conditions, his vision of a polycentric History also differs from the model of cultural nationalism articulated by Hutchinson in that not only does he not imagine any special role or destiny for the Turks on the stage of world history, neither does he embrace the idea of a nation of parts, each with its own distinctive, yet equally valuable role to play. Though Ağaoğlu was acutely conscious of differences in education and sophistication in the population and he therefore saw a special role for a leadership cadre to help guide the masses and raise their consciousness, he nevertheless remained a firm believer that individualism and individual initiative are the qualities to be striven for throughout the nation. All in all, Ağaoğlu’s nationalism simply imagined his community, individually and collectively, as capable of re-entering the mainstream of progress through the development of a modern national consciousness, with all that entailed. Ağaoğlu, I think, must be understood as a modernizer, a nationalist and a liberal, as a kind of man of ’48, in fact.

However that may be, Ahmet Ağaoğlu did not come to all of these ideas in an instant. His awareness of the need for self-strengthening came to him in the specific context of Russian Transcaucasia in the final years of the twentieth century. This was a context that combined military defeat and foreign domination with a rapid expansion of communications, industrialization and integration into world markets and with a dramatic shrinkage in opportunities for men of his background to exercise authority either in traditional roles or within the Russian imperial administration. This confluence of conditions prepared Ağaoğlu to abandon a more traditional, imperial identity and opened him to taking different approaches to the situation. But the journey to a particular historical understanding of nationalism and modernity, and to Turkish identity, would be long and complex.
‘We must borrow willy-nilly from others. We’re sick says Lermontov, and I agree with him; but we’re sick because we’ve only become half European; we must cure ourselves with more of what’s made us sick’... ‘Among us,’ he continued, ‘the best minds – les meilleures têtes – have long been convinced of this; all nations are in substance the same; you have only to introduce good institutions, and that’s the end of the matter.’

_Panshin to Lavretsky, Home of the Gentry,_
_Ivan Turgenev, 1856_

_Cosmopolitanism is nonsense; the cosmopolite is a cipher, and worse than a cipher; apart from nationality there is neither art nor truth, nor life; there is nothing. Without a distinctive physiognomy there is no such thing as even a distinctive face; only a banal face is conceivable without a distinctive physiognomy._

_Rudin, Ivan Turgenev, 1855_
Ahmet Ağaoğlu was born in the city of Şuşa in the Karabagh region of Russian-controlled Azerbaijan in 1869. For his early life and family history we have three principal sources: Ağaoğlu’s own incomplete memoirs which were published in the Turkish journal Kültür Haftası (Culture Weekly) in 1936 and which were later reproduced in a memory book, Babamdan Hatıralar (Memories of My Father), which his son Samet brought out in 1940 shortly after his father’s death; the second is Yusuf Akçura’s segment on Ağaoğlu in his essay ‘Türkçülük’ (‘Turkism’) which appeared in the Türk Yılı (Turkish Annual) of 1928; the third is his oldest child Süreyya’s autobiography together with some unpublished notes by her on her father’s life and career. Both Akçura and Süreyya Ağaoğlu made extensive use of Ağaoğlu’s memoirs when writing about him and Akçura evidently had access to the manuscript of those memoirs, since, as he himself notes in the segment, they were unpublished at that time. In general, all three sources concur, but there are a few discrepancies. The biographical information about Ağaoğlu incorporated below is derived principally from these sources.

Ağaoğlu’s father, Mirza Hasan, was a large athletic man, who spoke Persian and Arabic as well as Turkish and who occupied himself with the family’s cotton holdings, with the hunt and with traditional music and epics, to perform which he imported troupes to his summer residence in the mountains each year. Of his father, Ahmet Ağaoğlu recalls:

He lived and died a happy man... He didn’t know what it was to worry... When he mounted his horse he donned a jerkin with long, slit sleeves and large, loose-fitting pants made of silk. He knew how to read and write, he understood Persian and he knew the poetry of Fuzuli. If someone were to ask him ‘Who are you?’ he would reply ‘I am of the community of Blessed Mohammed, I am a devotee of Ali, my father is Mirza Ibrahim and his father is Hasan Ağa of the Kurteli [tribe].’ It never occurred to him that he was a Turk. He did not reflect
that the Russians had come and spread their wings in the land of the Kurteli. The Russians did not bother the great estates. Rather they gave estate-holders titles of nobility... So, why should my father, son of Mirza Ibrahim, son of Hasan Ağa of the Kurteli, have worried or reflected? He ate, he drank, he hunted with dogs and falcons.  

This passage, taken from Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s 1936/1940 memoirs, is immediately interesting to the modern reader in that it directly discusses the question of identity and asserts that for the generation of upper-class Muslims preceding his own in the Russian-controlled Caucasus, primary affiliations were tribal and communal (religious) and not ethno-national or even linguistic in nature. Mirza Hasan was his father’s son, a notable in his tribe, a Shi’ite. He dressed in the traditional way and engaged in the pursuits traditional to his people and class. The coming of Russian dominion had disturbed none of this – Mirza Hasan continued to know who and what he was. The passage is thus as notable for what it says about the security of his father’s identity as for what it says about the content, or more specifically the lack of ethno-national content, of that identity.

Standing in contrast to his assessment of his father’s sense of self are the many passages contained in Ağaoğlu’s memoir concerning himself. These passages are filled with a sense of longing, one may even say loneliness; with a sense of things lost and of belonging nowhere. The following description of his departure for St. Petersburg and the university is quite representative:

Now we were descending a great mountain. With every turn of the wheels I was growing a little more distant from these lands where I was born and raised, from the people who had given me life and breath. I was growing more distant not only physically but spiritually. But to draw near to whom? to what? It is as unclear on this day as it was on that... I was to lose the wholeness with which history and nature had endowed me. But I was not to acquire a new wholeness. I was to become a half-way patched up thing. This patched-up quality is an endless drama. It is an inner drama, it is a spiritual tragedy. At no time now do I feel complete and whole. And you know, it is a torment of Hell to feel half-patched. I enjoy both European and Eastern music, but at the same time I see and I feel that I do not experience the first as completely and fully as a European, nor the second like an Easterner.

The contrast between the two descriptions could hardly be more stark. The father is a man secure in his world, untormented by any doubts as to his role and proper place; the son is a jury-rigged contraption, a mishmash of acquired tastes and views and habits, rattling around the world in search of something, but of what? In the first instance, we may attribute the son’s condition to his broader exposure to the wide world and, in particular, to his time spent in
the very alien culture of Western Europe. The quotation seems to encourage this view, talking as it does of the appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural productions and describing a torn feeling of alienation in both societies. The broader question, however, is what brought all this on? Men like Ağaoğlu’s father did not seem to feel the need to travel and to obtain Western educations and even men of his father’s generation with broad exposure to Russia and the West, with modernizing zeal, like Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde,4 do not seem to have experienced this sense of loss of self. There is for the men of this generation a sense of lack, not only in the status of their society as a whole, but in themselves. Enough has changed in the life of the Russian colonies in the Caucasus to make young people question their traditional roles in society, question their place and utility if they simply remain in the old patterns.

These changes were brought about by economic developments, by changes in the Russian administration of Transcaucasia, by political and educational movements among the Russians themselves. The customary model for an Azerbaijani Muslim tribal leader and member of the gentry had been fulfilled by a certain type of education based on religion and Persian poetic tradition taught in mosque schools or mekteps; by the management of the land and the production of cotton along with the herding of animals; by the pursuit of certain noble and manly entertainments like hunting and hawking; by respect for the authority of and loyalty to, in the context of respect for this way of life, the Tsar. The family environment and early education of Ağaoğlu fit this pattern well.

His father’s family came from the Kurteli, a tribe which, Akçura speculates, emigrated to Karabagh from the Erzurum region in the eighteenth century. His mother, Taze Hanım, was of the semi-nomadic Sarıcı Ali tribe. Both families were powerful, educated families, respected in Şuşa. On the paternal side, his grandfather Mirza Ibrahim had been a locally known poet and âlim, or doctor of Islamic knowledge. The head of the family was the father’s older brother Hajji Mirza Mehmet. This man lorded it over the extended family household of 40 or 50-odd souls in Şuşa. He was extremely zealous in his religion and regularly, virtually on a daily basis in fact, entertained the local ulema – mullahs, ahunds, etc. – who were to be found gathered round the hearth on the rich carpets and cushions of the family’s salon, passing round the water pipe or nargile and disputing theological and metaphysical points:

The Sheykhi would assert that the Imam was directly and without any intermediary of God, the possessor of hidden knowledge, the Provider of the World, the Intercessor on the Day of Punishment, etc., while the orthodox jurist would deny this and the Zoroastrian would put out that, together with the Imam, the Noble Lord of
Zend possessed these virtues and so, cursing and anathematizing one another as blasphemers, they kept on arguing.\(^5\)

Ağaoğlu tells us that he sat in on these discussions, which were conducted in a Turkish so erudite and obscure he could not understand a word (though he longed to master it and to become like the religious scholars he observed there).

That he should acquire such knowledge was also the desire of his uncle Hajji Mirza Mehmet in whose hands the boy’s education had been left. Hajji Mirza Mehmet envisioned his nephew’s future in Kerbala and Nejef studying to become a mujtahid. According to Ağaoğlu’s memoirs, as quoted by Akçura, in pursuit of this goal the boy was enrolled in the traditional mahalle or sibyan school, that is, in the local mektep, which taught in Turkish and Persian. In addition he received lessons from a tutor at home in Arabic.\(^6\)

He recalls of this instruction at school that it was conducted under fear of the rod, as was common at that time.

There were no desks, etc. The male children of the area between the ages of six and fifteen, kneeling on the floor, swayed back and forth yelling and shouting; the teachers, with long canes in their hands, would sit in an attitude that inspired fear. Nearby, the *falak* [wooden rod used to secure the feet prior to beating the soles] was hanging…

In the schools only classes [in] Persian and Turkish were given. The Turkish [lessons] consisted of learning Fuzuli’s *Leyla and Mecnun* and Mullah Cami’s *Ferîste* by heart. All of the other classes were [in] Persian. Among those lessons what was there not? Sadi’s *Bostan* and *Gülistan*, Hafız’s *Divan*, even Mirza Mehdi Han’s *Inşa* and Nadirşah’s *Tarih* were included.\(^7\)

In the 1936/1940 version of his memoirs, Ağaoğlu gives a different account, stating that his uncle Mirza Mehmet hired ahunds (a kind of Shi‘ite cleric, of lesser status than a mujtahid) to teach him Persian and Arabic at home, starting from the age of six.

I was taking Persian and Arabic classes from an ahund who came to our house. It was the fourth year. I still hadn’t managed to master Fuzuli’s *Leyla and Mecnun*. When it came to *Gülistan* and *Bostan*, the teacher would still read out a segment each day, explain its meaning and then I would read it, sounding it out, after him.

As far as Arabic declensions, I still hadn’t managed to understand anything. However, I mastered Russian writing in three months. I was already able to read any type of book which was put into my hands. Then too, those Russian books were so appealing; they were all diagrams and illustrations and oh so strange stories and tales... while the others [i.e., Persian and Arabic books] were a bone dry set of things that rattled around in my brain. They didn’t entice me at all.\(^8\)
These descriptions reveal the sort of primary school that was typical of the Islamic lands of the Middle East at that time, as well as of the Muslims of the Russian Empire. The mekteps were associated with a mosque and were maintained by a vakf, that is by the revenues derived from pious endowments set up to support the mosque and its associated institutions and by the contributions of the students’ parents and of the community at large. The teacher was usually the mullah, a man learned in religion who also led prayer, preached the Friday sermons and interpreted the risales (written religious opinions) of the mujtahids. The curriculum included Qur’an recitation, Persian grammar, standards of the classical poetry repertoire in the Persian and sometimes Turkish languages and a certain amount of Şeriat (religious law). In addition, the history of Iran and perhaps some simple arithmetic was taught. The students (all boys) were grouped together all in one room and the mullah would read off the text to be learned with the students repeating it aloud and in chorus. Later he would quiz each student individually. Little emphasis was placed on explanation or comprehension. Fluent recitation, learning texts by heart and the ability to read text aloud smoothly and with proper pronunciation tended to eclipse questions of real understanding. Students who were found lacking in their performance were often punished by beatings on their hands and on the soles of their feet. The practice of falaka, that is of using a rod with a rope (the falak) attached to tightly, painfully bind a boy’s legs while the soles of his feet were caned, was widespread.

So-called modern topics such as modern languages, mathematics, geography, natural sciences, etc., were not taught at these schools. Furthermore, the alphabet itself could be an impediment to learning. The Arabic alphabet was difficult enough, but the fact that it is not especially well adapted to the phonetic demands of Turkish made it especially difficult for Turkic speakers to acquire literacy in their native tongue. The great emphasis placed on learning to correctly pronounce Qur’anic Arabic meant students could spend years mastering that skill without learning much about how the Persian-Arabic alphabet functioned in their own language. As an adult, Ağaoğlu often discussed the deficiencies of this system of education. Even when attempts were made to reform this system, many of the problems persisted: the emphasis on theory and memorization endured even when the curriculum was reorganized. Moreover, the poor educational level of many of the mullahs themselves meant they often did not fully understand that which they were imparting.

An article that Ağaoğlu wrote in 1908, shortly after his arrival in Istanbul, describes the educational conditions he found following a series of visits to that city’s primary and middle schools, schools which had, after all, been undergoing a process of reform since
The teacher, for his part, after having previously taught 'A,' 'B,' 'C,' etc., for a full six months, labours for years to remove that which he has taught from the minds of the children and to make them understand that while these [letters] each have a name in principle, they have to be pronounced in a different manner. At the same time books written in plain Turkish are not used in elementary and middle schools and so, because of this, the teachers don’t understand either the curriculum statement or the things which are written in the teachers’ manuals. A student in the second grade of middle school responded, to a question posed him about the catechism, ‘the Holy Book that was revealed by the Almighty Lord.’ Yours truly then asked, ‘What is the meaning of the words “Almighty Lord”; “revealed,” and “holy”? ’ Not one of the children in the class was able to answer. When the movement of the earth on its own axis was being discussed in a geography class, I showed a book I had in my hand to another student and asked him where on the book its axis was. The child said it was the book’s binding. During another geography class a student gave the answers ‘Northern Hemisphere’ and ‘Western Hemisphere.’ I asked what the word ‘hemisphere’ meant. Some of the students said that it meant ‘street,’ others ‘hot,’ and one even said ‘the heavens.’ The same situation subsisted in the arithmetic and geometry classes. These subjects are taught and imparted in a strange way. No attention or care at all is given to the practical aspects, it is sufficient merely to instill principles and precepts. For example, in the primary schools when the arithmetical places are shown, they are taught as ‘ones,’ ‘tens,’ and ‘hundreds.’ However, the children don’t know what these things are and if you have them write a three digit number and ask them how many ‘tens’ and how many ‘hundreds’ that number has, they remain unable to respond. The children have learned the four operations and their proofs beautifully in theory and in principle, but what if you were to set them a problem based on those four operations, for example, ‘Eight friends go into an orchard; half of them take five apples each and the other half take four apples each. How many apples did they take all together?’... In the teaching and instruction of the Arabic, Persian and French languages the same mistaken principles are even more vigorously adhered to. The practical aspects have been completely neglected and from the grasp of theory alone what a result there will be!!

The mullahs themselves were often not of the highest learning. In order to qualify as a mullah they had attended a medrese, a Muslim institution of higher learning, supported by a vakf. None of the medreses in the nineteenth-century Russian Empire, however, were of a level high enough to produce the more sophisticated type of scholar or Muslim doctor known as an âlim, much less to produce mujtahids. This meant that they produced only lower ulema, mullahs
and ahunds. By tradition, Shi‘i students from all countries who aspired to higher rank went to cities that were centres of learning in Iran, or more commonly, to the great Shi‘i holy cities in Ottoman Iraq – Kerbala and Nejef. The lower clergy, i.e., the mullahs, were a very different breed from their more exalted brethren, even in Iran. Ağaoğlu provides a vivid description of these men in his 1891 article ‘La Société persane: le clergé’. “These quasi-omnipotent personages, whose power over Persia is immense and who use it for her ruin, are generally drawn from the lower strata of society. They are ordinarily the sons of peasants or labourers, or even of mullahs. During their studies they lead the most miserable of lives,” he rails:

[T]hese hard privations are not always endured solely for [the sake of] a disinterested love of knowledge and for piety. They know that some years of patience will secure for them the greatest power to which an ordinary mortal can aspire… The estate of mullah is no longer an end, it has become an instrument of exploitation and domination. To assure his prestige and pre-eminence, the mullah seeks to subdue the spirit of the faithful, to keep it within limits from which it can never escape. To this end he introduces them to the most absurd ideas, making them acceptable by dressing them up in Arabic formulae; he attributes the most scandalous actions to the Prophet; he beats his students in the name of religion. The justice he renders is completely off the mark: both the plaintiff and the defendant lose; the process only benefits the mullah… A hypocrite and a formalist, he cares only about upholding the exterior forms of religion.  

Moreover, as Audrey Altstadt has pointed out, for scholars with a higher level of training many more opportunities existed outside the Russian Empire than in it. Since the Russian reforms to the administration of the Caucasus in the 1840s, the Muslim ‘clergy’ had been organized under state-controlled religious boards or administrations (one for the Shi’a and one for the Sunnis) with, in the case of the Shi’a, a Sheikhulislam at its head. The high-ranking jobs associated with these boards were hard to come by and the foreign-trained would not have been favourably viewed. Another traditional role for the âlim, that of qadi (Islamic judge), had been severely restricted in its authority in the Russian Empire, with only family law being left under the qadi’s jurisdiction. Finally, in the Russian Empire, after their medrese studies, mullahs were required to return to their home districts to take up a post. In order to receive a teaching post the mullah was further required to take a loyalty oath to the Tsar and swear he was not a member of any forbidden sect or a member of a sufi order. On the other hand, in Iran during the same period, the power and authority of the ulema in matters both moral and political was ever growing. In addition, there were other options for bright, well-born young Muslims in the Russian
Empire – they could receive Western or Russian educations and enter state service or take up a career in commerce. This tended to mean that the mullahs were domestically trained which also meant under-trained; that their outlook was provincial; that they were personally very pious; that they came from less than well-to-do backgrounds (many mullahs in the Caucasus came from bazari families) and were probably interested in the maintenance of the status quo. Many of them violently opposed educational reform; they wanted to keep up the separation of the religious communities that had subsisted up to that point. Traditionalism and quietism, a desire to maintain Islamic values and to maintain their own positions and an ideological commitment to respect for authority, led them to oppose modernizing reforms or any attempts at greater integration with Russian society. It also led them to oppose nationalism or other revolutionary threats to the Tsar’s authority. A vivid passage from Ağaoğlu’s memoirs illustrates these attitudes on the part of the ulema and defines the nature of their relationship to the Russian administration.

Our teacher of religious studies, Ahund Hüseyin Kulu, received word of the assassination [of Tsar Alexander II] in the teachers’ lounge. He was wounded to the very core of his being and he came into our class under the influence of his feelings. No sooner had he seated himself than he drew out pen and ink from his sash, demanded a piece of paper from us and, having removed his very tall hat, he began to stare at the paper, rapt in thought. A short time later he set himself to writing. He wrote, he crossed things out, and finally he addressed us. ‘On your feet and face the Kaaba,’ he commanded. We all stood and turned to the south. ‘Now listen,’ he said and he read us the eulogy he had written for Alexander II... I well remember that the crux of his composition consisted of two Russian words whose meaning was ‘vile sons of dogs.’ The ahund cursed the perpetrators, praised the Tsar and read a prayer for his soul. At the same time he admonished us, telling us that the Tsar was chosen and appointed by God and he added, ‘Whoever has raised his had against him [the Tsar], it is as though he has raised his hand against God and his death is required; he is absolutely a cursed infidel. Beware, my children and conform yourselves to this kind of guidance. Otherwise, God, having become angry, will annihilate not only you, but your fathers, mothers, and relatives; he will destroy you, root and branch.’

Later on I heard that the ahund had sent the eulogy to the Governor General of the Caucasus in order that it be presented to the new emperor in St. Petersburg and that in return for this he had been favoured with a gift of money.15

That many Muslims in Azerbaijan were well aware of the shortcomings of the traditional Islamic education and wished to
change the nature of education for Muslims in the Caucasus cannot
be doubted. Many prominent men of the generation born early in
the century, like Ahundzâde, advocated young Muslims’ attendance
at Russian schools. They felt it was fundamentally important for
the students to receive a Western-style ‘rational’ education and to
learn the language of state. These would open the doors both of
higher education and government service to them, not to mention
make them more viable and competitive in the areas of finance
and commerce. The Russians also favoured this as they saw it as
promoting assimilation. However, there was substantial resistance
to this on the part both of the mullahs and of the parents. Parents
did want modern subjects taught, but they were opposed to sending
their sons to schools where they would never learn anything of
their native language and traditions and where, it was feared, they
would be Christianized. The mullahs thought the same and also
opposed the new subjects which would be taught at the expense
of the old ‘Islamic’ ones. And of course they opposed the loss of
their clientele.

As the century progressed and it became clear that Muslim
parents were very reluctant to send their children to Russian
schools, the Azerbaijani intelligentsia, following the lead of the
Crimean Tatar Ismail Bey Gasprinski, developed the idea of creating
reformed schools for Muslims. The basic language of instruction in
these schools would be Azerbaijani Turkish, but Russian would also
be taught instead of the classical languages of the Islamic world.
The Qur’an would be studied, but memorization discouraged. The
‘modern’ topics of mathematics, science and geography would be
introduced. History would be more than the history of Iran, which
alone had been taught in Azerbaijan’s traditional Muslim schools
and it would be taught more critically. In general, in all subjects,
emphasis would be placed on developing an analytical approach.

The Russian administration, however, opposed these ‘New
method’ (usul-i cedid) schools because they had the potential to
create well-educated, well-informed Muslims who would not be
identified with Russian culture and the Russian Empire. The
mullahs opposed them for the same reasons they had opposed the
sending of Muslim students to Russian schools. The two groups
made common cause and significantly impeded the propagation
of Cedid schools. Muslim parents were faced with the difficult
question, ever more pressing as the century progressed and the
Russian and Christian presence in commerce and industry as well
as administration increased: the choice between an education
that would reinforce the traditional identity and values of their
community, or one that would open the doors of the modern world
and all its opportunities to their sons. This dilemma certainly played
itself out in Ağaoğlu’s family as they debated his future.

His mother’s ideas about her son’s future were very different from his uncle’s. She came from a semi-nomadic background, which, Ağaoğlu claims, led her to despise the mullahs’ soft-living ways and obscure disputations as unmanly. She had a relative who had served with the Russians in Poland (the Polish insurrection of 1863?) and had returned to Karabagh with an impressive uniform and great local prestige – all the visiting dignitaries would call on him when they came to town. Determined that this was a more fitting future for her son, she arranged for him to receive Russian lessons in secret. Akçura tells us she did this by helping her son to attend Russian classes that her brother, an assistant to the city vali, was giving to his own boys. The 1936/40 memoir relates a more colourful story: his mother found an Armenian tutor through the agency of an old family nurse who lived in the neighbourhood. The tutor would meet the boy each day on the sly in the nurse’s house and teach him Russian, arithmetic, geography and history. Ahmet’s mother paid this man at the end of each month by cutting a gold coin off her skirt and sending it by means of the old nurse. According to this version, the secret lessons were carried on over a three-year period, at the end of which time Mirza Hasan agreed to enrol his son in the newly created Russian gymnasium at the urging of the Karabagh vali, who wanted the leading Muslim families to do so as an example and encouragement to other Muslims. Akçura simply relates that the father and uncle discovered Ahmet’s attendance at his maternal uncle’s classes, and after heated exchanges between the three men it was agreed the boy should be enrolled in the Russian school.

It is over this period of his life and education that some perhaps interesting discrepancies begin to arise in the various accounts of Ağaoğlu’s early life. According to the 1936/40 version, Ağaoğlu enrolled directly in a Russian gymnasium, which had been newly created at the behest of the local Armenian community. The Russian officials wanted the sons of prominent Muslims to attend as well and strong-armed Ahmet’s father into enrolling the boy. He relates that he tested into an advanced class in this new school due to his three years of secret tutoring in Russian and modern topics. His account of this school and its teachers is very positive, especially in the upper grades. He recalls that both students and teachers at this time were full of the new revolutionary ideas sweeping Russia in the 1870s and 1880s, that he first learned from his gymnasium instructors of the Narodnichestvo (Populist) movement and obtained from them, like all the students, forbidden literature like Chernishevskii’s What is to Be Done? or pamphlets about historical materialism. The teachers were all opposed to the autocracy and

at that time every school was a nest of revolutionary propaganda. In
fact, it was forbidden to discuss revolution and to read works about revolution. However, since most of the teachers were themselves revolutionary propagandists, the prohibition had no force. In truth, the intellectual trends, revolutionary ideas, and various theories of revolution which were moving in Russia reached as far as the Karabagh Mountains only by means of these teachers.\textsuperscript{16}

Ağaoğlu also relates in this 1936/40 version that, although only three of the 45 students in his class at the Russian school were Turks, while the rest were Armenians, he already knew 40 of them and did not feel at all uncomfortable.\textsuperscript{17}

However, the account of these same years offered by Yusuf Akçura and accompanied by quotations from Ağaoğlu’s memoirs, at that time as yet unpublished, is different in some respects. Going back to the story of his mother’s resistance to Ahmet’s receiving a purely religious education, the 1928 account, as we have noted, shows the young Ahmet studying Russian under his maternal uncle and then, when the paternal relatives discover these secret studies, a somewhat heated debate between the uncles results in an agreement to send the boy to the local Russian school. But he is not enrolled directly in the new gymnasium, as he states in the 1936/40 memoir. Rather, he is first sent to the city’s only modern middle school, namely the official Russian middle school. This school was located in the Armenian quarter and there were only four other Turkish students enrolled in it:

The things those five persons endured from the Armenian children for years during the course of their education are beyond description. During recess we five Turkish children deemed it a great success to act quickly and lean our backs up against a wall. Armenian children by the hundred would throw themselves on us all at once and one of them would snatch the \textit{kalpak} from off our heads and throw it. The others kicked the Bukhara leather which was worth four or five pieces of gold around on the ground. Some of them asked for our clothes which were valuable and generally made from camel hair, and when they had gotten them they would tear them up and rip out the embroidery. If we tried to object, they would pulverize us with punches, slaps, and kicks. Sometimes they would unite and hurl some false accusation at us, vouching for one another, and causing us to receive punishment unjustly. The majority of my friends could not endure this and left the school. Of the Turks, I was the only one who made it to the last grade.\textsuperscript{18}

After finishing this city middle school, he entered Şuşa’s Russian \textit{realschule} in 1884, where he encountered dedicated teachers and all the intellectual stimulation of a period of great intellectual ferment in Russia. However, the 1928 fragments, in discussing the influences of this period on Ağaoğlu, put greater emphasis on more idealistic,
less revolutionary writers:

I still cannot escape a profound feeling of thankfulness and gratitude whenever I remember those unpretentious, dutiful, dedicated people. By engendering in me and all my friends a deep belief in and love for knowledge, culture, right and truth they were each a bright beacon which illuminated life’s path for us. At that time Russian illuminati were inspired by the idealists, especially [figures] like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev. They were implacable enemies of the crown, of autocracy, of cruelty and force, of religious zeal and ignorance. Despite all the vigilance and all the efforts of a tyrannical Tsar like Alexander III, these teachers found a way to inculcate in the students a love of learning, culture, beauty and freedom. They showed their students how to gain education and maturity on their own.19

Of course, the most notable feature of the two passages which discuss the Russian secondary schools is their emphasis on the way the teachers were conduits for the ideas of the Russian intelligentsia. Though the two passages seem to describe very different intellectual trends, the difference is perhaps not so great as first appears. First of all, though he talks of Hegelian Idealism, only Turgenev can really be said to have been greatly influenced by or a part of that movement. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were quite a different matter. On the other hand, although their views were religious and visionary in nature, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy imbued peasant life and the village commune with a kind of romantic redemptive power which was also an element of some part, at least, of the Populist movement. The Populist movement itself had started out in the late 1860s and early 1870s. With a strong belief that capitalism was evil and destructive and must be prevented from fully taking root in Russia, the movement asserted that social, not political, revolution was what was wanted. It was an ideology that

combined bourgeois democratic radicalism with opposition to capitalism as a social system. This opposition was expressed in various forms of ‘socialism,’ but in fact was closer to something that Lenin labelled ‘economic romanticism’ – a backward-looking Utopia idealizing precapitalist social and economic relations.20

Populist methods were at first those of propagandizing the peasantry and led to the ‘going to the people’ campaign of 1873–74. This campaign, though successful in terms of the enthusiasm and participation it aroused among the youthful revolutionaries themselves, who donned peasant attire and took to the countryside in droves, was less than satisfactory in terms of the acceptance, or lack thereof, it encountered among the peasants. This led to a second, redesigned, ‘going to the people’ campaign in 1876 under the auspices of the Land and Freedom Party. It was much
more organized and centrally controlled and sent young people
to settle in villages to work as doctors, teachers, or artisans and to
do the work of revolutionary propaganda by making the message
relevant to the lives of the people. Though the Populist movement
had moved on by the end of the 1870s and early 1880s to greater
political activism and violence, many young teachers continued to
work in the provinces and to carry out the mission of spreading
enlightenment and revolutionary propaganda.

The 1880s were also a period when literacy was spreading in
Russia. Great efforts were being made to expand the reach of primary
education and to increase the quality and quantity of secondary and
higher education. Village communes and provincial *zemstva* were
involved, as well as the Ministry of Education. Though the teachers
themselves might not have always had the most sophisticated
educational backgrounds and though many of the texts used,
especially the elementary primers, were quite conservative in
nature and emphasized God, Tsar, country and acceptance of
one’s lot, many of the teachers were quite dedicated and there
was a broad belief that education and literacy would lead to great
social improvement. Despite the imposition of requirements for
the teaching of religion and of liturgical chanting, the teachers put
great emphasis on reading for comprehension and the imparting
of an education that would teach analytical thought.  
While some teachers may have been mere ‘*zemstvo* rabbits’, cringing and
concerned only for holding on to their ill-paid, low-status positions,
we know that groups like the Socialist-Revolutionaries also targeted
teachers as possible cadres. It is clear that some, at least, were
dedicated educators and revolutionaries whose influence reached
even to Muslim students in the far-away Caucasian town of Şuşa.

In the 1928 account, Ağaoğlu finished the *realschule* and passed
all the examinations necessary for admission to the Polytechnic
Institute in St. Petersburg. The 1936/40 version of events has Ağaoğlu going to Tiflis to finish his last year of *gymnasium*, which
was not offered in Şuşa (this probably relates to the Ministry of
Education’s addition of an eighth year to the *gymnasium* program
in 1872 as a means of improving the quality of students and
reducing the drop-out rate at the polytechnics and universities).  
This year had an important effect on him quite apart from his
formal studies. Tiflis was the first really big city he had ever visited
and the first predominantly Christian one. Here he observed a
plethora of revolutionary activities and secret societies organized
along national as well as ideological lines. There were Hunchak
and Dashnak Committees among the Armenians and Georgian
groups as well. He was aware that the Turks and other Muslim
ethnicities were not particularly active in this way and were ‘loyal
The Muslim quarter of the city was known as ‘Satan’s Bazaar’ and was the poorest, most miserable quarter in the city. When people from other quarters visited it, they treated its inhabitants disrespectfully while the inhabitants themselves adopted an abject stance.

It was the first time I had ever seen two peoples living side by side but yet not mixing and adopting ‘superior and inferior’ attitudes towards one another. I well remember that this first sight [of it] disturbed my mind and made my stomach churn.

He also witnessed the wealthy Muslim boys from all over the Caucasus who came to sample the cultural opportunities and other diversions of the city, with many of them losing their lands due to the resulting indebtedness, and this experience made a strong impression on him.

At school, as the only Turk, he was both flattered and annoyed by the constant attention and scrutiny to which he was subjected by school inspectors and visiting officials. It was through schoolmates that he was taken to his first secret meeting, a talk by a narodnik down from St. Petersburg who denounced landowners, government authorities and the autocracy. And it was through the good offices of the school’s director that he became a tutor to an Armenian girl of aristocratic family who needed help with her geometry and algebra. This experience had a great impact on Ahmet Ağaoğlu as it was his first encounter with a highly educated, articulate woman who was not subject to the limitations, at least not in the same degree, on her activities and associations as the women of his own family and region. He notes that this girl was known for spending her time with a notorious Russian coffee circle from the gymnasium and that her Russian was wonderful, far better than his. He tells us that this experience made him wonder about the treatment and position of women in his own society. At the end of the year he passed all his examinations with distinction and received a 300 rouble prize.

Ağaoğlu returned home and passed the summer in the mountains with his mother’s nomadic people. Then, in 1887, as he set out for St. Petersburg and the Polytechnic Institute there, he took an emotional parting from his mother at the stagecoach:

A number of friends and relatives, male and female, had come to see me off. I was saying good-by to everyone beside the coach. When my mother’s turn came, she drew me aside, opened her veil and brought out her two breasts from inside her blouse. She took my head between them and in a tearful voice said, ‘Go, my son. May God be with you. But swear me this oath – say “if I ever marry a Christian girl, may the milk which I sucked from these breasts be poison to me.”’... I was so affected that I wanted to cry and hug my mother and, forgetting all about the coach, stay where I was without lifting my head from
her breasts. In a soft voice my mother said, ‘Come, my son. People are waiting for us. Swear.’ ‘I swear,’ I said. ‘No, say it the way I said it!’ I repeated her words exactly. She kissed my brow one last time, then she closed her blouse, arranged her veil and walked away from the coach.26

This highly-charged parting scene with his mother reflects the dilemma facing Azerbaijani parents mentioned above. If Ahmet was headed for St. Petersburg and higher education, it was above all because of his mother’s insistence on the boy’s receiving a Russian education, because of her plotting and scheming to overcome Hajji Mehmet’s opposition to it. She clearly saw that the real path to the kind of power and position she desired for Ahmet led through the Russians. Yet the oath she caused her son to swear as he departed for the future, a future on whose path she herself set him, clearly demonstrates her fear that this contact with Russian society will lead to a loss of identity and an abandonment of traditional values. A relative’s service in the Tsar’s army and the mother’s desire to see a similar prestige accrue to her son express both tradition and change. On the one hand the uncle’s willing service in the Polish campaigns, like the willingness of Ahmet’s uncle to take a loyalty oath on behalf of the Muslim community in 1877, reflects loyalty to the Tsar and the attitude that service to the Tsar and ways of life befitting well-born Caucasian Muslims are not at all incompatible. On the other hand, the fact that the mother sees certain advantages and prestige accruing to her relatives based on speaking Russian and service in Russian institutions – and that she views this as preferable specifically to a traditionally very well-regarded Muslim clerical path – demonstrates how things are changing in the period of Ağaoğlu’s youth.

The old, easy ways of adherence to the Tsar were largely based on the life and standing of the old élites not being interfered with. However, structural changes in the Russian Empire were altering both circumstances and attitudes. These changes in attitude were taking place in Russia proper, as well as in the Caucasus and other parts of the Empire. Jeffrey Brooks describes the shift in his discussion of fiction from the penny papers at the end of the nineteenth century:

The shift in thinking evident in the popular literature of the last two decades of the old regime was linked to a general change in outlook. The ideas propagated in the literature represented a more individualistic form of national identity than the earlier loyalty to the Tsar and the Orthodox Church – and a freer one. To be truly Russian in the earlier sense was to accept the political authority of the Tsar and the spiritual authority of the Church. In practical terms this meant obedience to local officials and priests who represented
the autocracy and Orthodoxy.

The newer idea of Russianness allowed the common people to distance themselves somewhat from the political authority of the old regime. Obligation to Church and state still remained, but they no longer served as the primary expression of national identity. The emphasis on the enormity and diversity of the empire required a more complex and reflective conception of the relations among the peoples who comprised it than did the traditional linear relation between the Tsar and his subjects. Moreover, under the old conception of nationality, the common Russian was the last in the pecking order. In the newer view, the most humble Great Russian was invited to think of himself as generously assisting the smaller and culturally backward nationalities that comprised the empire. This provided a sense of pride and status congruent psychologically with the other changes that were part of the greater geographic and economic mobility of common Great Russians at the end of the nineteenth century.27

Beginning in the 1860s, but especially in the 1880s, the rapid rhythm of industrialization and the intensification of policies of Russification – now founded on the conception of nationality outlined above – had much diminished the possibilities of success based on the older, patriarchal model.

When the Russians had first come to the region early in the century, Transcaucasia was an overwhelmingly agricultural society ruled over by khans who were tribal leaders as well as sedentary rulers.28 The aghas and beys were most often relatives of the khan endowed with broad privileges and powers, among them a hereditary role as the khan’s tax collector in a particular region. Over time this tended to give these men a sense of proprietorship over the lands they administered, although in theory they all belonged to the khan. When the Russians came and the khanates began to vanish, the ties of the beys and aghas to these lands were often allowed to stand. The earliest decades of Russian dominance were characterized by military governorships that coincided roughly with the old khanates they were replacing. Local institutions including religious courts and existing systems of landholding and water distribution largely remained. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, attempts to integrate the Caucasus into the civil structure of the Russian Empire under a governor-general and to confiscate some lands from beys for Russian settlers, together with the dismissal of many Muslim officials, backfired, leading to rebellions. This resulted in the region's being made into a viceroyalty under its own special regime. One of the early acts under this new policy was to grant the landholding aghas and beys titles of hereditary nobility ensuring their status in the new order and attempting thus to co-opt them to the cause of the
Tsar’s empire. Nicholas I’s Imperial Rescript of December 1846 conferred these rights on the Muslim beys of Transcaucasia. In this way land that had once belonged to the khan and thus to the state, was transferred into private ownership at the stroke of a pen. For the Muslim peasant this meant that enserfment – obligations of payment for land use and of corvée – was added to his already great dependence on his bey in respect of such vital matters as water distribution. In this period also it was the policy of the Russian government to assure training and civil service posts to the sons of beys and aghas, thus creating a new class of bureaucrats with some, often extensive, Western education. On the other hand, the creation of the Muslim ecclesiastical administrations led to the subsuming of Muslim clerics to Russian authority and throughout the various changes in Russian policy in Transcaucasia, the purview of Muslim religious authorities was curtailed.

The policies of support and incorporation of the native élites were not long-lived, however. After the retirement of Viceroy Vorontsov, integrationist Russification policies that inclined more toward centralized administration, toward a further weakening of indigenous governing institutions such as Islamic courts and toward relatively fewer Muslims being taken into the civil service, were implemented. For example, reorganization and redrawing of the *guberniias* to produce a more centralized structure in 1859 also led to the massive dismissal of low-level native officials. By 1882, the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus reverted to a governor-generalship and the authority of the departments of the central government was restored.

The emigration into the region both by Russians and by Armenians from Persia and the Ottoman Empire was encouraged, exacerbating the pressing problem of the unavailability of land. In fact, Transcaucasia was experiencing one of the typical side-effects of colonial status – a massive population explosion (the population virtually doubled between 1851 and 1897) – a problem which was especially hard to bear in an arid land. Large Armenian immigrations, initiated following the 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchay and Russian settlement in the rich land of the Mughan Steppe which began in the 1860s and picked up speed in the 1880s, put pressure on available land and on nomads who still constituted 30–40 per cent of the population at the end of the century.

The Great Reforms were implemented piecemeal in Transcaucasia and sometimes not implemented at all. The serfs were liberated in eastern Transcaucasia in 1870, but the tiny land allocations of five *desiatiny* per adult male left them at the mercy of landlords from whom additional land had to be rented. The fact that the allocation for Christians and immigrants was larger caused great resentment.
Most of the bey's themselves were in difficult straits, possessing average holdings of only 6.3 desiatiny, while a mere four per cent held lands of 1,500 desiatiny or more. In respect of the political aspects of the Great Reforms, the 1866 judicial reform simply consisted of the final dismantling of local courts and laws for all civil and criminal matters; the jury was never introduced. The 1874 municipal reform proved a frustration since property and wealth qualifications and a rule that not more than one half of the city Duma could be Muslim severely limited Muslim influence in those institutions. Zemstvo assemblies were never introduced in Transcaucasia.

The growth of trade, industry and urban centres in the second half of the century also tended to erode the position of the Muslims. The first steps in economic modernization were the introduction of paper money and uniform Russian measures, together with the elimination of old regional trade tariffs and barriers from the time of the khanates. This was accomplished fully by mid-century. But the real change came with oil. As early as 1859 the first kerosene refineries were built in the Baku area. Then in 1872 the Russian government decided to change the method of distributing oil rights on crown lands from concessions to long-term leases based on open bidding. This meant that oil exploitation was in the hands of those who could muster the most capital, and many foreigners were attracted, among them the Nobels and the Rothschilds. Oil and the industries associated with its elaboration became the preserve of Russians, foreigners and Armenians. Large-scale mechanized methods were introduced, land values skyrocketed and kerosene plants grew enormously. The population of Baku surged (1863: 14,000; 1870: 15,000; 1903: 206,000; 1913: 214,600) due to the rapid influx of Russian officials and of Russians, Armenians and Persians attracted by jobs and commercial opportunities in oil, shipping, construction and the railroads. This resulted in the local Muslim population's becoming a minority in cities like Baku (the 1897 census, the first comprehensive census of the Caucasus, shows 63,415 Tatars, 77,681 Russians and 52,233 Armenians for the city of Baku). The Muslim segment shared little in the new wealth this growth generated. Muslims constituted the bottom of the labour pool, unskilled labourers living in shanty-like bunk houses on the outskirts of town near the oil fields themselves. Prior to the great expansion of the sector, Tatars (as the Russians referred to all their indigenous Muslim populations) controlled most oil production. But, by 1870, while Tatars still held 88 per cent of wells, they accounted for less than half of production. After 1872, although a few Azerbajianis, like Zeynelabidin Taghiyev, did make fortunes and go on to be instrumental in financing Azerbajani cultural and political activities, only 13 per cent of wells were held by Tatars and
their investment in new leases represented a mere five per cent of the total.

Trade blossomed as well as industry, but just as the big oil leases tended to be dominated by foreigners and Russians, so too did large-scale trade. Government posts also tended to be dominated by Russians and other non-Tatars, especially Armenians who were the most urbanized population of Transcaucasia. For example, in the census of 1897, Tatars constituted only 12.2 per cent of the class of officials and personal nobles in the cities of the Baku guberniia, while Armenians constituted 21.2 per cent of the same group, with Russians making up 52 per cent. The large Armenian presence in the middle class tended to hinder the development of the Azerbaijani middle class who found opportunities limited.

It is obvious from all these developments that from roughly 1860 onward and at an accelerating pace, the position of the Muslims in general, and of the Muslim élites (historically land-owning beys) in particular, was being eroded. The possibilities for entering government service or for wielding significant influence in the community as a landlord/tribal leader or religious doctor/judge under Russian rule had greatly diminished. In order to compete in the new environment it was necessary to obtain Western or Russian training and to enter the new socio-economic system. As is typical of such situations, it was the very sense, aroused by these conditions, of weakening and of chafing against the growing influence of outsiders, the very desire to defend one’s own identity and place, which forced the Azerbaijani Muslim élites to adopt Russian and Western ideas and ways most fully. The young Azerbaijani élites coming of age in the 1880s and 1890s felt not only the weakness of their communities, but also the growing irrelevance of the roles they had thought themselves destined for. Their search, traversing different educations, ideologies and countries, was a search for the strengthening of their community as a whole, but it was also a search for an effective role of their own.

Ağaoğlu describes his arrival in St. Petersburg as a moment of great excitement, filling his lungs with the new air that flooded in through Peter the Great’s ‘window on the West’. At last he beheld the streets and garrets of the student life that he had romantically dreamed of, reading Turgenev and Dostoyevsky. In a short time he was staying in a rooming house for Caucasian students and he notes that although only three or four of the 35 to 40 persons staying there were Turks or Tatars, still there was a great feeling of solidarity and brotherhood among all the residents, who generally felt very lonely and cut off from their homelands. It was during this period that Ağaoğlu also met for the first time two men who were to play key roles in his life, Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde and Ali
Mardan Bey Topçubaşı. He describes how he began to take part in the intense intellectual and political student life of the city. He was inducted by a fellow student and resident of the boarding house into the Revolutionary People’s Party almost casually: all the students belonged to some secret society or other and they simply asked which group he preferred. Ağaoğlu’s intention was to study at the Polytechnic Institute, but according to his son’s notes, he was deliberately made to fail an examination (the examiner asked him questions outside the purview of the course) and leave the school by an anti-Semitic instructor who mistook him for a Jew. Thus, his student career in St. Petersburg ended. Ahmet Bey tells us that, enraged by the injustice of his treatment, he conceived a great hatred of all things Russian and decided to finish his studies in Paris. He wired his father for money and with a paltry sum in his pocket mounted a fourth-class carriage bound for the West. In his momentary rejection of all things Russian he fell back on his high school fascination with the Enlightenment, the Encyclopaedists and the French Revolution and he determined to put the St. Petersburg faculty to shame by becoming the first Caucasian Turk (as he describes himself in 1936, though he certainly would not have done so in the 1880s) to go to Paris to study.

Finally, the version of this period in Ağaoğlu’s life given by Akçura makes no mention of a final year of gymnasium in Tiflis. It briefly states that although Ağaoğlu passed all the examinations to enter the Polytechnic Institute in St. Petersburg, some sickness or weakness of the eyes forced him to abandon the project and return to the Caucasus. No description of his impressions of St. Petersburg is given, no note is taken of his having formed connections at this time with men like Ali Hüseyinzade, who would be close friends and associates for the rest of his life and certainly there is no indication of academic ‘foul play’ in regards to his failure to pursue higher education in Russia. Akçura tells us that in 1888, having recovered from his eye ailment, Ağaoğlu set out for Paris to complete his education.

 Ağaoğlu set out on that journey to the West a product already of a wide array of complex influences. The effects of increasing administrative, cultural and economic penetration of Azerbaijan by Russians; of the growth of modern industry and commerce, especially following the 1872 restructuring of oil concessions; of the marginalization of the landed beys; of the increasing importance of Armenians and other non-Muslims in the new economic arenas and in government service; of the Great Reforms which shook Russia following the Crimean War (and their non-application in the Caucasus); of the reform movements which arose among Caucasian Muslims; and of the revolutionary ideologies which were sweeping
Russia at that time – the effects of all of these went with the young seeker as he boarded the train for Paris. They gave rise to a sense of urgency in him, a quest to find something – something that would strengthen and improve the position of his own community, something that would define his place and provide him with a useful role in that community. The questions remained: was he a Rus Musliman, a Shi’i, a Tatar, a Turk, a Persian, a Cedidist, a bey, a socialist revolutionary, or perhaps the Tsar’s loyal Muslim subject? Should he become a mujtahid, an engineer, a teacher, a bureaucrat? Were answers to be found in Islam, in historical materialism, in liberalism, in Hegelian Idealism? In France he would add to these influences, gaining awareness of the importance, in the minds of the leading intellects of the Third Republic, of national identity to civil society and meeting and becoming aware of liberals in the Ottoman context. He would return to the Caucasus six years later having studied Law and Oriental Languages, to take up the roles of French teacher and publicist. The effects of his wanderings would have been such as to earn him the epithet Frenk Ahmet (Ahmet the Frank) among his compatriots.
Ahmet Ağaoğlu arrived in Paris by train from St. Petersburg via Berlin in January of 1888. He was alone, knew no one in Paris, spoke virtually no French and had almost exhausted the meagre supply of money his father had provided him at the outset of his journey. His published memoirs provide the following sketch of his first half-year in Paris.1

The good offices of a French acquaintance from the train trip secured him a cab with instructions to take him to one of the Parisian hotels that catered to Russian tourists and émigrés, the Hotel de Petersburg. After spending one night in the hotel, Ağaoğlu learned that a night’s stay in such a place cost almost half his supply of funds. The concierge, a reasonably sympathetic Russian man, helped Ağaoğlu to locate some Georgians who were attending the university. These Georgians initially took him to be a Georgian himself, but when they found he was an Azeri, they were nonetheless warm and helpful. They took the bewildered young Ağaoğlu in and helped him find a room for rent in a building near their own lodgings, and they had him over fairly regularly for meals and visits. Ağaoğlu, however, was in increasing financial distress. He had sent to his father for more money almost immediately upon his arrival, but weeks and months went by and nothing arrived. His father had not been pleased with his decision to study in France and Ağaoğlu began to fear that additional parental support would not be forthcoming. His rooms were provided with a spirit lamp, which he used to cook eggs, make tea and prepare simple vegetable stews. He was living on one and a half francs’ worth of food per day, which he purchased from the grocer located below his apartment. By mid-March his meagre reserve of money was exhausted and he was forced to live on credit, receiving modest supplies of foodstuffs from the grocer on faith. His embarrassment soon caused him to avoid his Georgian friends and after several months his pleasant and patient landlady was forced to ask him to move out as she relied on
the income from those rooms for her own livelihood. She agreed to let Ağaoğlu live in her attic while he continued to write home more and more frantically and waited for funds to arrive.

During this difficult period Ağaoğlu’s activities were naturally very restricted. He tells us that during his first three months in Paris he memorized five to ten of the satires of Alfred de Musset each day using a French-Russian dictionary. This effort at linguistic acquisition he augmented by attempting to converse with his landlady who spoke only French. He did not go out to restaurants, cafes, or theatres, for lack of funds. The only outings he made besides picking up his daily ration of food from the grocer were to the Observatory, the Pantheon, the library of St. Genevieve where he found new books to read, the Odeon gallery and, above all, the Luxembourg Gardens where he came every day with his books and dictionaries to read and memorize more works by de Musset, Lamartine, Hugo and Gautier. Besides these works, the neighbourhood news vendor continued to supply him with the newspaper each day on credit. Finally, in mid-May, 400 roubles arrived from his father. Ahmet Bey tells us that he exchanged this for 1,000 francs, of which sum almost half went to pay off his debts.

Following this he contacted his Georgian friends and changed lodgings, establishing himself in the south end of the Latin quarter in a pension which was inhabited largely by Middle Eastern and Balkan students. His fellow lodgers encouraged him to strike out more, assuring him that his French was now sufficiently good to attend lectures at the university and his language abilities would profit much more now from such activities than from staying home and reading. They recommended either the College de France or the School of Oriental Languages to him. Finally one day, Ahmet Bey plucked up his courage and walked over to the College de France. He recalls that the street in front was full of expensive carriages as all the fashionable society of Paris had converged that day to hear the weekly lecture by Ernest Renan. Ağaoğlu, however, addressed himself to the schedule board in the courtyard of the building. Seeing that the History and Language section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études was housed in the building, and that a Professor James Darmesteter was lecturing on the *Shahname* and the *Zendavesta*, he decided to attend. When he entered the lecture hall, Darmesteter had just finished reading a poem by Firdousi and was entering into a long disquisition on the origins, development and significance of the word ‘gül’ (flower or rose). Ağaoğlu was enormously impressed by this exposition.

At this point Ağaoğlu’s published memoirs come to an end. The rest of the story is to be gleaned from the account of Yusuf Akçura, with its otherwise unpublished fragments of Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s
autobiography, from Süreyya Ağaoğlu’s autobiography and from the various articles Ağaoğlu wrote and published while in Paris. Ağaoğlu studied under and was taken up by James Darmesteter, who was a noted French Orientalist specializing in Persian texts. This was probably his closest academic association. Through him he was introduced to Ernest Renan and to the circle and salon of Madame Juliette Adam. This woman was herself the editor of a bi-monthly journal, *La Nouvelle Revue*. Through these connections Ahmet Bey embarked upon his writing career. He began with the first instalment of a seven-part article in Madame Adam’s journal entitled ‘La Société persane’, which appeared in the March–April issue of 1891. This was followed by a second instalment in the May–June issue. Then in the same year, on 27 September, an article entitled ‘Confession du derviche’ appeared in the *Journal des débats*. November–December saw the publication of the third segment of ‘La Société persane’, and the subsequent segments continued to appear at various intervals until the last one appeared in the September–October issue of 1893. While working on ‘La Société persane’, Ağaoğlu also attended the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists in London in 1892 and delivered a paper on the Mazdean origins of Shi’ism, ‘Les Croyances mazdéennes dans la religion chiite’, which was printed in 1893 in the *Transactions* of the Congress. In addition, he published two reviews of books dealing with the Middle East in *La Revue bleue* in the fall of 1892. According to Bennigsen and Lamercier-Quelquejat, Ağaoğlu was also sending articles back to the Caucasus for publication in the Azeri-owned Russian-language newspaper *Kaspîi* on a regular basis at this time, while Yusuf Akçura mentions a similar arrangement with the Tiflis-based *Kavkaz*.

Darmesteter, Renan and Adam, then, formed the circle of Ağaoğlu’s French connections during his stay in Paris. What sort of people were they and what sort of atmosphere and influences did he come into contact with through them in that period? We will first consider the generally accepted public reputations of his three prominent French patrons and then look more specifically at the Parisian context in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and at the particular activities of the three in that era.

James Darmesteter was born in Chateau-Salins in 1849 and died in Maisons-Laffitte in 1894. He was Ağaoğlu’s professor of Persian at the College de France and the École Pratique des Hautes Études. The brother of the famous philologist of French, Arsène Darmesteter, he is best remembered for numerous extensive and detailed works on ancient Persian philology and religious history, particularly a large body of work relating to Zoroastrian and Mazdean texts and beliefs. His translation of the *Avesta* with commentary remains the
standard today. According to Süreyya Ağaoğlu’s account, Ağaoğlu worked with Darmesteter on this translation. He was married to the Englishwoman, Mary Robinson Darmesteter (later to become Madame Duclaux), who wrote poetry, criticism, and history in English and French, including an intimate biography of that close friend of herself and her husband, Ernest Renan. Darmesteter had a license in letters and in law, and a bachillier in sciences, in addition to his doctorate in Indo-European languages and old Persian which he received from the École Pratique.

Renan himself was among the most famous Frenchmen of his age. Born in Brittany, he started out intending to be a priest, studying at seminaries in Brittany and Paris. In the mid-1840s a crisis of faith caused him to leave the seminary, but not without having received a first-class education in mathematics and the physical and natural sciences; philosophy and metaphysics; Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Biblical commentary. Having left the seminary, he entered the university at Paris and his book of 1852, Averroes and Averroeism, derived from his doctoral dissertation, shows what an accomplished scholar of Arabic language and philosophy he had become. This work was followed in short order by collections of essays, which had first appeared in the Revue des deux mondes and which consolidated his fame: Études d’histoire religieux (1857) and Essais de morale et de critique (1859). Among his numerous works one of his most famous and controversial was his Vie de Jesus, which was an examination of the historical Jesus and treated Jesus exclusively as a man. Its appearance in 1863 around the time of his appointment to the College de France created such a furore, and such intense opposition from the Church, that it contributed to the government’s forcing him to resign his chair in Hebrew. He was not reinstated until 1871. His fame as an ‘impious’ man and as a liberal was based on these and other writings on religious history, on his oft-repeated insistence that separation of church and state was the only sound arrangement and on his advocacy of constitutional monarchy in the period of the Second Empire (though the real meaning of this last was rather mixed).

Madame Juliette Adam, to whom Ağaoğlu was introduced by the good offices of Darmesteter and Renan, was a child of the provinces and of the century. Born in 1836, she would live until 1936, her views subject to as many changes as the era itself. She had come to Paris after her first marriage and, widowed, had married M. Paul Adam, a financier and well-known politician of republican cut. He had been active in the republican cause in 1848 and lain low after the proclamation of the Second Empire, avoiding political life until the sudden rise in new republican sentiment starting in 1868. From that moment on, he would play an active role in the turbulent events
surrounding France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the end of the Second Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic. Elected to the Assembly as a representative of the Republican Union in 1871, he voted consistently with his party in favour of the Republic and he opposed the peace with Germany. Nevertheless, he supported the moderate and realistic Thiers against the royalist MacMahon and voted to ratify the constitution of 1875. He was made a senator for life in the same year. During the troubles surrounding the Commune he and his wife served as liaisons between the government and those who were proscribed. He, and particularly Juliette, became close friends and associates of Gambetta, an association that continued and deepened after she was widowed a second time. From the mid-1870s on, her salon was a focal point for republicans and it was understood that she had great influence in the government. It was whispered that she had an entanglement with Gambetta and that it was his refusal to marry her after her husband’s death that caused a rupture between them. In 1879 she founded the *Nouvelle Revue* with her own money and with support from her close friend the famous publisher Calmann Levy, brother and heir of Michel Levy, who had been the publisher of Renan and of her dear friend, Georges Sand. The dual purpose of her journal was to support new young talent (most famously represented by Pierre Loti) and to implacably oppose the German interest. The *Nouvelle Revue* was viewed as a journal of moderate republican tendency with a strong dose of *revanchism* and patriotism.

Ahmet Ağaoğlu arrived in Paris in 1888 as the Boulangist crisis was developing and left in 1894 as the Dreyfus crisis was taking shape. He came to Paris with a head full of the Great Revolution and found precisely the ideals of that revolution under attack in the very land of their birth. The years of his Paris sojourn were years of labour actions, anarchist provocations and, above all, growing nationalist sentiment. It was an era which seemed to those living it an endless crisis. The terrible year of 1870–71, with France’s defeat at the hands of the Prussians and the emergence and bloody suppression of the Commune, had deeply affected most French people and had created in them a strong nationalist sense and a desire to recuperate lost land and lost honour and at the same time a suspicion of decadence, a fear that some deep moral weakness had brought them to defeat. The stream of crises and political and social violence could not but serve to reinforce such fears. The defeat of 1871 opened the floodgates for these sentiments, but, in fact, they did not originate in 1871.

Zeev Sternhell has compellingly described the confluence of intellectual and ideological trends that led to the creation of a new, revolutionary right in France during the 1880s and 1890s. On the one hand there was an ideological crisis provoked by the problems
of adapting liberal democracy to mass society. Not only the unrest of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but also the defeat of 1871 and, before that, the excesses of the revolutions, led many noted and supposedly liberal intellectuals to question the ideals of liberal democracy and the Great Revolution. Simultaneously, the spread of Darwinian ideas in the last decades of the century and the acceptance of the notion that they could be applied to societies as well as biological entities, and the effect of this on the social sciences, contributed to the attack on democracy and to the development of a rightist ideology for mass society. There was a reassessment, in works such as Renan’s *La Reforme intellectuelle et morale de la France* or his ‘Lettre à un ami d’Allemagne’, of majority rule and universal suffrage, with a fear of ‘the tyranny of the masses’, of levelling. The following passage is a good example:

The system of election cannot be taken as the sole basis of a government... Applied to the choice of sovereign, election encourages charlatanism, destroys before hand the prestige of the elected, and obliges him to humiliate himself before those who ought to obey him. These objections apply with even greater force if the elections are by universal suffrage. Applied to the selection of representatives, universal suffrage, as long as it is direct, will never produce anything other than mediocre selections... Essentially limited, universal suffrage will never comprehend the necessity of science, the superiority of the noble and the wise.

It is incontestable that if one is obliged to have a single method of selection, birth would be better than election. The hazards of birth are fewer than those of the ballot. Birth usually brings with it certain educational advantages, and sometimes a certain racial [i.e., genetic] superiority.¹⁰

After 1871, a further call for greater attachment to the traditions (including religion) and history which bind a country together, for greater national sentiment and attention to the motherland in place of internationalist adventures and the notion of fraternity is added. A great many respected scholars of the second half of the century began to accept and employ the theories of social Darwinism, placing the individual in the context of a biological and social evolutionary process over which he had no control. This put the old theory of races on a new, ‘scientific’ footing. Furthermore, the idea of the unconscious and the emergence of social psychology at the hands of men like Gustave Le Bon at the end of the century combined with these ideas to attack in a very basic way the Enlightenment concept of rational men making rational choices based on self-interest. Men were now often seen as irrational, motivated by the unconscious and by hereditary and environmental factors. Significantly, these anti-liberal,
anti-Enlightenment positions were developed by thinkers who were often seen as great exponents of liberalism by the positivists themselves. As Sternhell so piercingly notes, it was the very fact of some of these theories acquiring a positivist, ‘scientific’ basis which made them enormously popular and successful. From this type of determinism it is but a short stride to out-and-out racism.

On the basis primarily of these writings of the 1870s, but also pointing out that comments of this type and tone were present in Renan’s ‘La Monarchie constitutionelle en la France’ of 1869, Sternhell states that:

there is no doubt that in contemporary France the real antidemocratic reaction begins with Taine and Renan. More than anyone else in the France of the eighties, these intellectuals have been the propagators of the double theory according to which democracy constitutes mediocrity by levelling and the French Revolution constitutes the beginning of French decadence. More than anyone else it was they who... inculcated in the men of their own generation and in those who followed the idea according to which it was the French Revolution, the men of the Enlightenment, liberalism, individualism, and materialism which were defeated at Sedan.  

We may join with Sternhell in wondering how a man of such sentiments could be regarded as a pillar of liberalism.

Robert Byrnes in his work on anti-Semitism in France tells us that while Taine and Renan were among the most influential figures in the intellectual life of nineteenth-century France from 1860 on, Renan ‘represents the scientific, positivist, materialist second half of the nineteenth century at its very best’, whereas Taine ‘represents the seeds of the anti-rational, anti-intellectual romanticism which was to prepare France for the various violent anti-republican movements which have appeared since’. He tells us that Renan’s *Histoire du peuple d’Israël*, though it appeared in the mid-1890s amid the rising tide of French anti-Semitism, contained nothing the anti-Dreyfsards found useful, and he asserts that Renan helped formulate the criticism of Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inegalité des races humaines*, which had appeared between 1853 and 1855. Yet, as Jacques Barzun has shown, Renan was influenced by Gobineau’s notions about Iran (something Renan openly acknowledges in his essay ‘The Zeaziehs [sic] of Persia’) and had read Gobineau’s *Essai* closely.

Is it the case then, as Sternhell speculates, that Renan’s anticlericalism was enough to keep him on the lists of good republicans? But if Renan was anticlerical in the sense of insisting on the separation of church and state, he remained nevertheless a deeply religious person and one convinced of the important role that religion had to play in the development and stability of a society or civilization. Renan had a vision of ‘Truth’ and ‘Beauty’
which he regarded as fundamentally religious, in the sense that he saw these as the manifestation of God and he abhorred any vision of the world that did not include a ‘spiritual’ approach of this type. He saw the church as problematic because of its insistence on what he termed ‘supernatural’ phenomena, i.e., miracles. Therefore, he advocated the separation of church and state as the only means of assuring freedom of conscience, but he also believed that the common man needed traditional religion because he was incapable of the intellectual demands of the more elevated type. Further, he felt that the future of France depended upon good relations with church and clergy, albeit of a reformed and progressive nature.  

So what kind of influence was Ağaoğlu exposed to, during his association with Renan? The 1880s and 1890s were primarily occupied for Renan by weekly lectures at the College de France (where he had been re-installed by Jules Simon in 1871); by ceremonial speeches for the Académie Française (to which he was elected in 1878); and by the preparation and publication of numerous monumental works more or less in his own field of religious history and Hebrew (Origins of Christianity completed in 1883, History of the People of Israel of which vol. 1 appeared in 1887 and the last volumes were published posthumously, New Studies in Religious History in 1884). In addition to these purely scholarly works in his own speciality, he also produced, among other things, his Recollections of Childhood and Youth (1883), Scattered Leaves (further memoirs published in 1892) and essays on the history of French literature. This was also the period of his famous lecture ‘What is a Nation?’ (1882). And, significantly, his book of 1848, The Future of Science, was published in 1890 for the first time. The last two are a re-articulation of the liberal ideas for which Renan is normally remembered. ‘What is a Nation?’, written, as it was, in the context of the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, is a work of distinctly patriotic tone with much talk about a shared history of glory and sacrifice and shared hopes and ideals for the future tying a nation together. Nevertheless, it addresses many of the notions of what constituted a nation current at that time, criticizing and discarding them on both ‘scientific’ and moral grounds. It specifically rejects racial, philological, religious, or historico-territorial arguments and insists that ultimately it is the free will of the people residing in a particular region that must determine their national allegiance. In a phrase that became almost immediately famous, Renan asserts that ‘the existence of the nation is... a daily plebiscite just as the existence of the individual is a perpetual affirmation of life’. It is thus an affirmation that the claims of individual liberty and will are just. The Future of Science is an expression, par excellence, of Renan’s positivist faith in science and reason, in which he asserts:
by every way open to us we are beginning to proclaim the right of human reason to reform society by means of rational science and the theoretical knowledge of existing things. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that science contains the future of humanity, that it alone can give us the explanation of its destiny and teach it the way to attain its object.\textsuperscript{16}

Though he wrote it in 1848, Renan published this work for the first time in 1890 with a new preface in which he avowed, ‘I was right at the outset of my intellectual career firmly to believe in science and to make it the object of my life. If I had to begin again I should do exactly as I have done and during the little time that remains to me I shall go on as I began.’

Thus we see that there were three ‘Renans’ active in France in the 1880s and 1890s, all of whom must have had an important impact on Ağaoğlu. First, there was the serious and respected Orientalist, noted especially for his philological prowess with respect to Hebrew and for his penetrating discussion of the development and spread of Christianity in its early centuries. Second, there was the increasingly conservative commentator on modern French politics and society, against the legal enshrinement of any church, or indeed any return to absolutism, but also convinced of the natural inequality of man and opposed to democracy of the ‘one-man, one-vote’, ‘majority rule’ variety. Third, there remained, almost in contradiction to the second personality, a ‘liberal’ Renan, a man still convinced of the rationality and perfectibility of mankind and dedicated to the notion of individual liberty, at least in such arenas as religious conscience, intellectual life and education; a fierce defender of the critical faculty as mankind’s highest and distinguishing trait (yet also convinced that the spiritual, the ‘longing for the divine’, is an innate and irrepressible human impulse). In his work \textit{Dante, Pascal et Renan}, Barrès says of Renan:

he awakened curiosity for things religious in an ignorant generation that had carried disbelief to the point of absolute indifference... Renan evoked the sadness, the reprobation, the anger of the Catholic world; well and good, but he made us love Catholicism. He was the archetypal enemy of religion, the Antichrist: he brought us to rediscover religious thought.\textsuperscript{17}

These words, spoken narrowly about religion, may serve to describe Renan in a broader sense. Enormously controversial and popular in his own time, he was the embodiment of his century in the sense that his work contains all the anxieties of his age and attempts to reconcile them and if his reconciliations seem forced to us today, they were serviceable to many in the last century. As Perez Gutiérrez points out, it was Renan’s oft-noted ambiguity on any number of questions, rather than the actual bases of his analysis,
which frequently held his contemporaries’ rapt attention. And so, in the case of Renan, we see a quite varied influence being brought to bear on Ağaoğlu.

Madame Juliette Adam may also be said to be a figure representative of the century, or at least of France in the nineteenth century. Indeed her life (1836–1936) spanned it. She is, however, representative in a different way. Her opinions and positions changed with the changing times and she thus rather mirrors than embodies them. A girl from the provinces, she began her Paris career as a figure of the republican left, the wife of another such figure, and in all probability the mistress of a third. She began also as an anticlerical; she ended as a rabid nationalist and anti-Semite and a devout Catholic. Her trajectory in this, as observed earlier, is not unusual; her long-time friend and associate Henri Rochefort pursued a similar course. In the 1870s her close association with prominent men in politics and the government, such as Thiers and especially Gambetta, made her a powerful and influential woman and her salon a gathering place of France’s power elite. Starting around 1868, her salon was the focal point, the central meeting place, of leading republicans and her influence with those figures was great. She survived the siege of Paris (her memoir of which was later a great success) and was sufficiently sympathetic to the Commune to lend Henri Rochefort the money he needed to escape afterwards. Throughout the 1870s, when the form of government France was to have was a matter of bitter debate, her husband belonged to Gambetta’s Republican Union and Juliette’s salon was the rallying-place of all influential republicans fighting to install a republican regime and give it content. It was in this time that her close association with Leon Gambetta was formed. Edmond Adam died in 1877, in the midst of the constitutional crisis of 16 May, and Madame Adam was forced to close her salon for mourning at that crucial moment. Further, a growing distance between Juliette and Gambetta becomes more and more apparent from 1878 on, which her biographer Saad Marcos attributes to her being disappointed in the expectation that Gambetta would make her his wife now that she was widowed.

In any case, the blow dealt to her political salon by its enforced closure at the critical moment and by the lack of frequent attendance by Gambetta once it re-opened, led her to reconstitute her salon in the 1880s as a broad social and cultural meeting place, rather than as one narrowly attended by politicians. In its new role her salon triumphed as hugely as it had in earlier days in the political arena. When Ağaoğlu arrived in Paris and was introduced to the salon of Juliette Adam, he was introduced to one of the most brilliant
social milieux of French society in that era. This was a salon that included fabulous costumed soirées for five and six hundred guests; select weekly dinners followed by the reception of a much larger group of guests in the ‘antechamber’ for conversation and musical recitals; extravagant country picnics and hotly pursued invitations to performances, in her ‘petit théâtre’, of new works in particular, with pre-announced themes which were then discussed and debated at length. Great figures of the day and of the Third Republic, both political and cultural, like Gustave Flaubert, Anatole France, or Paul Déroulède, eagerly attended her events.

More or less simultaneously with her social exertions, Madame Adam was bringing out her journal *La Nouvelle Revue*, which she had founded in 1879. This was a bi-monthly publication in which she and her closest personal friends held the majority interest thus assuring her control of the journal. The rest of the shares were held by a variety of individuals, none of them actively involved in politics and many of them bankers and capitalists; an important number of them were also involved in de Lesseps’ Panama Company, others were landlords or practitioners of the liberal professions. In short, the backers were republicans of the conservative, liberal type. The journal began by supporting Gambetta, but quickly broke with him and the ‘opportunists’, so that by 1881 her journal was violently opposing Article 7 (the amendment that would have prevented members of certain religious orders from teaching in schools) on the grounds that such restrictions on education were anti-liberal in limiting individual liberty, were anti-religious, not merely secular, and in general failed to concede to the opposition the same rights and freedoms accorded the party in power (a criticism which Darmesteter also levelled against the ruling party). The journal also objected to the proposed ‘scrutin de liste’ (that is, election by *departement* instead of by the smaller *arrondissement* and from a list of party candidates instead of for an individual local candidate).

When the *scrutin de liste* was introduced in 1887 a few years after Gambetta’s death, it opened the door for Boulanger and the most serious threat to the republican order since 1876–77. Though the Boulangist phenomenon had supporters both on the right and on the left, it was always opposed by Madame Adam and *La Nouvelle Revue*, despite the support it received from old friends and comrades like Rochefort and Déroulède. She immediately saw in Boulanger the threat of the ‘man on horseback’, the new Bonaparte prepared to overthrow the republican order in favour of a populist tyranny. That she herself had ridiculed the parliament and its activities earlier on, between 1883 and 1885, in *La Nouvelle Revue* did not soften her reaction to Boulangism.

*La Nouvelle Revue* wanted a more responsible, coherent and
effective parliamentary actuation, but it did not support the more radical formulation that true ‘democracy’ arose from direct election of the head of state by the populace, circumventing the ‘oligarchic’ dominance of a representative body. Nor did it support the kind of solidarist socio-economic vision advanced by the Boulangists, with strong protectionism and worker participation in corporate profits.

Her attitude towards the Dreyfus Affair, especially after 1897, reveals Madame Adam’s further move to the right, away even from the arms of the conservative republican parliamentary group termed Center Left and into the arms of the extreme nationalist right and the Action Française. When the Dreyfus Affair first burst on the scene, Juliette and her Revue showed little interest in the matter, but when the question of overturning the court martial was seriously raised, all her militarist affinities came to the fore and she adopted a fiercely anti-Dreyfusard position on the grounds of protecting the ‘honour of France’.

On the one hand, this is not surprising. The trauma of the defeat of France by the Prussians seems to have been the defining event for most of Madame Adam’s points of view thereafter. From that moment she became a hot patriot, a diehard revanchard, whose journal bore the dedication ‘Pour la Revanche’. She believed strongly that one of the first tasks facing France was to rebuild and strengthen the army, to recuperate the ‘honour of France’, and to prepare the revanche. In her journal there was always room for generals and officers to write about military matters: strategy, equipment, organization of the armed forces. More than that, Juliette’s republican principles were as nothing to her in the search for an ally to protect France from the German menace; she was a strong advocate of a Russian alliance and neither the absolutism of that regime nor her association with reform-minded Russians like Turgenyev (who wrote for her journal) dampened her enthusiasm at all. She was hostile to liberal movements or minority national movements in the Russian Empire. Indeed, besides openly working in support of the Russian interest in France, she appears at times to have accepted money for her journal from the Russians or their agents. It is possible that this attachment on the part of Madame Adam to the Tsar’s regime may have given a certain impetus to Ağaoğlu’s choosing to write about ‘Persian society’ in the pages of her journal. In questions of foreign policy Juliette Adam looked to the strengthening of France and the increase of the country’s prestige on the world scene to define her positions. Thus, in addition to her anti-German crusade, she generally opposed the British interest both in European alliances and in colonial expansion (a position which made her a supporter of Mustafa Kamil in Egypt).

Her hatred and fear of Bismarck and of all things German led her to reject all manifestations of German culture and was connected in
her mind with the anti-Semitic feelings she later developed – many French Jews were Alsatian and flooded into central France after the Franco-Prussian war, creating a strong and distinct cultural presence for the first time. Nevertheless, her post-1897 extremism has its surprising aspects. Prior to that time it appeared that Juliette Adam was dedicated to the liberal Republic and its ideals. While she had certainly been moving to the right since 1879, her conservatism was that of a woman positioned on the republican right, a defender in her own way of the principles of 1789 who believed in the liberal Republic of the rule of laws, the Republic of civil and political liberties (but not of equality of conditions), of gradualism, of the bourgeoisie. She saw herself as defending this Republic against the extremes on right and left. For all her revanchist feelings and expostulations, she had opposed not only Boulanger himself (whom, as mentioned earlier, she feared as a ‘man on horseback’), but also his very belligerent attitude towards Germany. Even so dedicated an anti-German as she could see that France was not prepared for a European war and that such a course would be foolhardy. Similarly, despite her later anti-Semitism, many prominent French Jews figured among her close personal associates or simple acquaintance, people who were all the more patriotic and loyal to the liberal Republic because the principles of ’89 had led to their emancipation and recognition as citizens of France.

Calmann Levy, the great French bookseller and publisher, was an important backer of her review; he had bought 5,000 francs’ worth of shares at the outset and continued to provide the enterprise with invaluable advice throughout Madame Adam’s association with it. He had introduced to the lady, and made available for publication in the pages of her Revue, one of the most successful of all her literary protégés, Pierre Loti. This author came to lend enormous popularity and success to the pages of La Nouvelle Revue. Calmann’s son Georges was a special favourite of hers, while Calmann’s wife Pauline and their other children frequented her salon with increasing regularity and intimacy from the early 1880s on.

The enormous success that Loti’s works, set in the Ottoman Empire, obtained in the pages of the Nouvelle Revue in the 1880s is of special interest to us. It is probable that their success helped to convince the editor that discussions of the exotic life of the East made attractive reading and might increase subscriptions, a circumstance tending to encourage her acceptance of a series of articles about ‘Persian society’ by a young Muslim student in Paris. The Calmann Levy connection seems to have been a literary nexus for a certain group of Madame Adam’s literary associates: he was the publisher of Loti, of Flaubert, whose writings also appeared in the pages of the La
Nouvelle Revue (although the author’s relations with Levy were less than perfectly cordial), of Georges Sand, who had been Madame Adam’s dear friend and whose letters appeared in La Nouvelle Revue posthumously, and of Renan, who frequented her salon and whose collaboration in her Revue Madame Adam pursued hotly, but without great success. It was Renan’s introduction in a letter of 2 February 1891 (at Darmesteter’s behest) which first brought Ağaoğlu to Juliette Adam’s attention as a possible contributor:

Dear Madame,

Will you permit me to introduce to you for La Nouvelle Revue Mr. Ahmed Bey Agheff, a young Persian of great worth who is studying in our program and who has been recommended to me by Mr. James Darmesteter? I believe that Mr. Agheff could furnish you with very interesting studies about his country. He knows it extremely well and Mr. Darmesteter tells me that his French style won’t require more than slight work to become remarkable for its originality. Let me add, dear Madame, the expression of my best wishes.

E. Renan

Ağaoğlu’s association with Madame Adam’s salon made him familiar with the most brilliant cultural and political circles in France at the close of the century. There he was exposed to all the most fashionable currents in French intellectual life and to a very conservative kind of classical liberalism of the great bourgeoisie. It was the kind of liberalism that put great stock by civil and personal liberties like security of life and property, or opportunity and promotion on the basis of merit, but it firmly held that ‘the masses’ needed to be guided and that people with a greater ‘interest’ in society should have a greater voice. This was also a point of view that in general opposed intervention in economic matters. Furthermore, in the group around Madame Adam and La Nouvelle Revue, he witnessed France’s return to a sentimental religiosity and veneration of tradition and of those things which could somehow be viewed as hallmarks of the French psyche. The cry that individualism and rationalism had become too dominant at the expense of the finer feelings and the national interest became prominent. That is, Ağaoğlu saw how those who had once espoused a kind of liberal nationalism headed more and more down the road of a sentimental, emotionalist and often distinctly un-liberal nationalism.

Of the three French figures we have identified as influences on Ağaoğlu during his Paris sojourn, James Darmesteter was probably the one with the most immediate personal contact with him. As noted earlier, Darmesteter was the professor of Persian at the College de France and also held the position in Zend at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. At the time of Ağaoğlu’s studies,
Darmesteter was also Director of Studies at the École Pratique. It was he who Ağaoğlu heard at that first lecture he attended at the École, it was under him that Ağaoğlu studied Persian letters and addressed himself to the question of Mazdean elements in Shi’ism, the thesis he presented in his paper to the Ninth Congress of Orientalists at Oxford. It was through his influence that Ağaoğlu obtained the introduction to Madame Adam, which allowed him to write for La Nouvelle Revue.

Darmesteter was the scion of a modest family, although his mother was a member of the Brandeis family originating in Prague, who traced her ancestry back to famous Talmudic scholars of the Middle Ages. In 1858 the family moved from Lorraine to Paris in hopes of improving its fortunes and providing a better future to its children. Though the family fortunes did not improve, the children nevertheless did very well. Darmesteter first attended the Talmud Torah like his older bother, but later obtained a scholarship from a Jewish community organization to live at a famous boys pension run by the Orientalist M. Durenbourg, and to attend a lycée. At the Talmud Torah he had learned Hebrew and the method of Talmudic exegesis; at the French lycée he was taught Classics and French style, both in written and spoken expression. Upon graduation he took his bachelor’s examination and his license, and drifted for a number of years. Finally, following the advice of his older brother Arsène who had been one of the first students and later lecturers there, he entered the École Pratique des Hautes Études. There he studied first a general programme in Oriental philology under men such as Barbier de Meynard and Breal, and then he specialized in Ancient Persian language, literature, and religion.

Darmesteter was known as a painfully shy man, who nevertheless had strong and well-formed opinions on a wide range of topics, including politics. Sickly since childhood, he died relatively young at the age of 45, but this did not keep him from a very active professional life. He published numerous important works on Persian religion and philology including translations of the Avesta into French and English that are still the standard, edited the French political and literary journal La Revue de Paris, produced acclaimed criticism and translations of English literature and edited the Revue asiatique – all this in addition to his regular teaching responsibilities.

Of the three French nationals who took an interest in Ağaoğlu while he was in Paris, Darmesteter was in many ways the most serious. His scholarship was very careful and painstaking so that, unlike Renan’s, it has withstood the test of time. Thoroughly trained in comparative linguistics and Indo-European philology, he had also studied Hebrew and Arabic. His strictly philological writings had included not only pieces on old Persian, but on Latin and Greek and
comparative pieces that traced the development of Indo-European roots from Sanskrit to Latin or Persian. In addition to this strictly historical linguistics with its etymological approach, however, he was also interested in interpreting and really understanding the texts he worked on, especially the Mazdean texts. Thus he brought to the study of these not only the tools of historical linguistics, but information gathered on trips to India and Afghanistan to visit Parsi communities and careful study and analysis of interpretations contained in later tradition and texts regarding this religion. The interpretations he formulated ultimately came to dominate the field, but what is interesting to note here from our perspective, is a more modern approach. Darmesteter rigorously applied all the tools of nineteenth-century historical linguistics, but he also understood the shortcomings of this purely philological approach and tried to introduce the careful assessment of historical information and local tradition, of cultural context, in fact, to his analyses. This is in rather stark contrast to Renan, who liked to address large historico-philosophical questions and formulate broad general theories, but who did not do the detailed, specific historical or linguistic work to back up his speculations in a meaningful way.

In other areas of life, Darmesteter was a religious, though not dogmatic, man and a conservative, middle-class liberal. That is, he was anti-revolutionary and preferred gradual reform and stability, and he gave importance to continuity and tradition, but he did really believe in the liberal ideals, including careers open to merit and equal political rights for citizens. He was deeply committed in that sense to the ideals of the Revolution, not least because it had emancipated the Jews, and he was deeply patriotic and aware of himself as a Frenchman. The French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War affected Darmesteter profoundly and led him to publish a textbook of patriotic readings for schoolchildren under the pseudonym ‘J.D. Le Français’. This book contained stories about heroic French figures like Joan of Arc. In fact, though a liberal in a certain political sense, his was a nationalist not internationalist liberalism. Darmesteter felt there was such a thing as a ‘national mentality’ (though he thought it a product of historico-cultural, not racial, processes) and for France he identified its roots already in medieval literature. He viewed the maintenance of this national spirit and mentality as being of primary importance. Still, for all that, Darmesteter remained a true liberal in that he believed in a nation of citizens, not blood. In his essay ‘Race and Tradition’, he carefully debunks the notion of race and racial mentalities and says that while religious and linguistic affiliation may indeed represent a world-view, these are learned, not biologically inherited.

One can attribute to Darmesteter several important elements of
Ağaoğlu’s Paris experience which he carried with him all his life. Darmesteter, like Ağaoğlu, maintained a broad range of interests and activities and he was well trained and rigorous in the pursuit of all of them. In particular, Darmesteter, in his scholarly works, tried to trace a history of mentalities, to bring all kinds of evidence to bear on a text or problem in order to really reveal something about how people in a given time and place thought about something and how those ideas evolved over time. He addressed such questions with a careful step-by-step approach. In later life, Ağaoğlu’s writings reveal something of this influence. He often cites a large and diverse body of French (as well as Russian and sometimes English) literature and the attempt to discuss social and political institutions and attitudes, especially when they touch on religion, through detailed historical analysis of their development is an Ağaoğlu trademark. Though Ağaoğlu is not primarily a scholar, that is to say, he is generally writing to achieve political and social ends and not for the sake of the knowledge itself, Darmesteter’s approach to scholarship stays with him. Moreover, Darmesteter’s ability to articulate nationalist and patriotic viewpoints without resorting to racial explanations probably helped to make racial arguments relatively infrequent in Ağaoğlu’s writings. Like his mentor, he tends to rely more on arguments that draw on cultural traditions and mentalities.

The years in France and association with this group of French intellectuals appears to have produced a number of influences both lasting and transitory on Ahmet Bey. The free-market variety of liberal republicanism which surrounded him in those years immediately following the Boulanger affair apparently made a deep impression and stayed with him always; Ağaoğlu remained a lifelong opponent of the statist economy. The views of Renan, Adam and even Darmesteter, that an obscurantist clergy should not be allowed to interfere with government affairs or freedom of thought but at the same time that religion did constitute a fundamental part of the human condition and a unifying aspect of identity, also remained an important part of Ağaoğlu’s view of national development and modernization. That is, like his mentors, he felt the clergy should not be allowed a free hand, but he did not advocate complete separation of church and state either and he certainly didn’t advocate the suppression of religion. Indeed, his conception of what goes to make up a national identity was to a very great degree influenced by the writings of these men who focused on language and religion and a whole constellation of factors that would tend to go to make up mentality, as opposed to a simple racial theory of the nation. Ağaoğlu took the notion of civilizational groups based on ‘the great religions’ from Renan, but did not in his subsequent career incorporate the idea that these
had a racial basis. At the same time, the kind of Aryanist ideas that were prominent among the Orientalists of that time and that were common to Darmesteter and Renan, whether they identified that concept with ‘race’ or ‘tradition’, may have combined with Madame Adam’s hostility to nationalist and reform movements in the Russian Empire to encourage Ağaoğlu to speak as a Persian. In sum, the three eminent French figures who befriended him showed him a non-radical liberalism that was national and not cosmopolitan in nature; that put great stock in religion, religious feeling and tradition; and that rejected the older Voltairian vision as cold, lacking in heat and humanity and overly sceptical, materialistic and individualistic. In addition to the values of merit, rationality and progress, one must have ideals and faith and keep a covenant with the past that is based on conserving a ‘mentalité’, which, however, must not intrude in such a way as to prevent freedom of thought.
While living in Paris and pursuing his studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Ahmet Ağaoğlu contributed a series of seven substantial articles entitled ‘La Société persane’ to La Nouvelle Revue which appeared between the years 1891 and 1893. They covered a variety of cultural and political topics and contained both a wealth of descriptive material and the author’s analysis of a range of situations and institutions. Since the years of publication of these articles happened to coincide with the events surrounding the British tobacco monopoly in Iran and the subsequent protests against it, these events influenced Ağaoğlu’s views and opinions and are commented upon in his writings from this period.

One of the most striking aspects of these articles arises almost immediately from the series title: the author considers himself a Persian writing about his native culture. Since he later became a noted Turkish nationalist and since, by modern standards, he would be categorized as an Azerbaijani Turk, this identification must seem surprising. There are two possible explanations: the first is that as a Shi’ite from the Caucasus he came from a strongly Persian cultural milieu with which he identified; the second is that as a Middle Easterner, moving in academic circles in a Western capital in the late nineteenth century, he saw some value to identifying himself with an ‘Aryan’ nationality. Both these motives could have been compelling in some respects and since these Paris articles represent Ağaoğlu’s first published works and do not discuss the issue, it is difficult to know the truth with any certainty. It is true, as he tells us in his memoirs, that he grew up in a family where his father and uncle would have identified themselves by clan, location and devotion to the cause of Ali, not by any ethno-national appellation, certainly not as Turks. Shi’ism, however, might easily be identified with Iran. Moreover, comments in these essays make clear that Ağaoğlu had other contacts with Iran. He spent time, while he was growing up in
the Caucasus, close to the Iranian border, where he also had contact with Iranian labourers who crossed over into Russian Azerbaijan to work. Add to this the fact that the languages of instruction and culture in the Caucasus of his youth were Persian and some Arabic; of Turkish there was little. These factors tend to militate in favour of an interpretation that at this period he genuinely viewed himself as a Persian, or at least they favour the notion that at this period he identified himself more by religious than by linguistic community. Moreover, in these French essays he not only praises (and criticizes) many things Persian, he absolves Persian society of the responsibility for some ‘negative’ characteristics, such as the oppression of women, by laying the historical blame on the Turks. This would seem to indicate a lack of sympathy or identification with Turkish culture and would tend to discount the idea that he ‘really’ saw himself as a Turk or Azerbaijani and was adopting another, ‘Aryan’, identity for the purposes of gaining prestige in the European cultural environment in which he was moving.

The second motivation, that of assuming ‘Aryanness’, is not, however, so outlandish as it might first appear, for Ağaoğlu was studying under men like James Darmesteter and Ernest Renan. In his book *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (1855) and in subsequent articles, Renan in particular had contributed significantly to the development of the theory of the fundamental characterological opposition of ‘Semite’ and ‘Aryan’. Darmesteter had written in his essay, ‘Race and Tradition’, that it was necessary to be careful not to confuse race with tradition. That distinction would only have served to help Ağaoğlu identify with the Persian culture that was deemed to be superior. In his 1928 memoirs concerning his time in Paris, Ağaoğlu comments that when he first heard Darmesteter’s lecture on the history and development of Persian language and poetry, he was bowled over and amazed by the depth and quality of the scholarship and immediately wondered if work of this kind existed for Turkish. While we must take with a large grain of salt Ağaoğlu’s claims in 1928 concerning his reflections in 1889, the comment is telling. It is telling because in fact nothing similar did exist in the way of Western scholarship for Turkish/Ottoman language and literature. While enormous study had been dedicated in the West in the nineteenth century to Persian and Sanskrit philology and literature, relatively little had been done for Turkish. Renan’s comment on Altaic languages in his 1848 *De l’origine du langage* is emblematic:

> It is not permitted us to speak of other races whose primitive ties with the Aryans and Semites have not yet at all been determined. We will only say that the Mongol races also trace their origins to the Tien Shan and the Altai, and that if the Finnish races appear to point
to the Urals instead, it is no doubt because that chain of mountains obscures their view of another, more distant one. The Aryan race and the Semitic race, in any case, have been destined to conquer the world and to lead the human species to unity... [other races] do not count, in the face of that, as more than an essay, as a hindrance or a help [in that process]... To have found [the] origins [of the Semites and the Aryans] is truly to have found those of humanity.

If it seems most unlikely that Ağaoğlu came to France with a Turkish identity which he suppressed in favour of a more ‘acceptable’ Persian one, it is also unlikely that he came to Paris with a Persian identity which he later exchanged for that of a Turk on his return to the Caucasus. It seems rather more likely that he left Russian Azerbaijan with a religious-imperial identity, i.e., as a Rus Musliman (a term which he was still using interchangeably with ‘Turk’ as late as 1905), a Muslim subject of the Russian Empire and if something more were required, as a Muslim who belonged to the party of Ali. He had been exposed to much of the ideology of the French Revolution through the reading of French Enlightenment works and to Western ideas generally through exposure to Russian intellectual trends. (Throughout his life he always mentions the importance of Russian authors to his development and the name of Turgenev, in particular, recurs.) So perhaps he came to the West imbued already with a liberal spirit that made much of the need for modernization in the form of liberation from ‘backward’ or ‘obscurantist’ traditions, that valued merit above place and that was even aware of the problems posed by a modernization that separated itself from the popular roots. However, in all likelihood, he had not yet been exposed to what he found in the Third Republic – a new emphasis on the nation and a national spirit, linked to national historical roots and joined in a state, as the engine and prerequisite for all real advancement and progress. In such an environment, confronting the question of his nationality for the first time, it would be easy to focus on Persia, the spiritual home of the religion which had always been one of his identifying affiliations and the object of so much attention and praise on the part of the European society in which he circulated.

Ağaoğlu’s principal concern, like that of other reform-minded Muslims and indeed of reform-minded Russians, was the self-strengthening of his community. As I will show, Ağaoğlu hit upon one of the previously existing elements of his identity, that is, a communal identity as a Shi’ite and transformed it into a Persian national identity. He did this by making extensive use of already existing arguments, articulated by Renan and Darmesteter as well as by Gobineau, about Shi’ism as an expression of Persian resistance to the Arab conquest and of the persistence of Aryan character in
the face of a Semitic onslaught. Such a transformation not only provided Ağaoğlu with a national identity, it provided him the kind of national identity that was optimal for his objectives, since the arguments he made use of, particularly those of Renan, specifically associated the genius for individual liberty and well-ordered government with Aryanness. Finally, as this Persian national identity is, in Ağaoğlu’s case, essentially a constructed identity built around a desire for self-strengthening and a concern for a community that is actually broader than the narrowly Persian world, Ağaoğlu takes up certain assertions of Renan’s about the civilizing qualities and mission of monotheism as modified by Aryans/Indo-Europeans. He then uses these ideas to cast Shi’i Iran in a redemptive leadership role vis-à-vis the rest of the Muslim Middle East.

In examining the manner in which Ağaoğlu built up this national-religious vision of Persian identity and its role in the future of the Muslim Middle East, it is important to understand that he was not simply influenced by his French mentors in some general way. He had accepted the theoretical framework and system of values expounded in their writings and the elements of their thought which he incorporated were not a piecemeal selection or hodgepodge. On the contrary, a careful analysis of his arguments shows a selection that was purposeful and moved in a systematic way towards a concrete end. That end was the construction of a Middle Eastern identity for himself that was not hopeless – that was capable of self-strengthening and advancement, that was capable of success within his adopted framework.

An analysis of how Ağaoğlu constructed his arguments will therefore require a detailed look at the discussions by French authors of the period, particularly Renan, Gobineau and Darmesteter, concerning Persian history and religion, Shi’ism, the character of Aryans and Semites and the history of Judaism and Christianity. Further, the connections these authors made between Aryanness and Christianity on the one hand and the development of civil society and liberal regimes on the other, must be investigated. By comparing and juxtaposing Ağaoğlu’s views with those of these French authors, a picture emerges of how a young Muslim student built up a national identity for himself which not only accepted the categories of the Europeans who surrounded him, but also enabled him to formulate a response to European expansion and influence in the Middle East. The following discussion will examine how the French Orientalists and Ağaoğlu treated, first, the question of the national, Persian character of Shi’ism, then, the qualities of Aryanness, especially as they relate to liberty and good government. Finally, their views of the formation and destiny of Judaism and Christianity, of how these relate to Shi’ism and of Shi’ism’s role in the larger Muslim world, will be explored.
In much of what he writes about Persian society, particularly about the history and role of Shi’ism, Ağaoğlu is directly following the works of Gobineau (*Trois ans en Asie, Les Religions et les philosophes dans l’Asie centrale*), Renan (‘Les Téaziés de la Perse’, ‘L’Islamisme et la science’) and Darmesteter (*Ormazd et Ahriman, ‘Sketch of the Literature and History of Persia’*). What follows is a summary of Ağaoğlu’s arguments.

**SHI’ISM AS AN EXPRESSION OF PERSIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY**

For Ağaoğlu, Shi’ism is the national religion of Persia. After the Arab conquest Persia converted rapidly to Islam due to the unpopularity of the official practice of Mazdaism under the Sassanids. However, Persia was defeated, not annihilated and soon sought a way to express her identity. Over time, she not only detached herself from the Arab empire, but completely transformed the new religion. This is why Persia is the only schismatic Muslim nation. She has preserved her nationality and her own characteristics. Ağaoğlu notes that ‘according to one master she is more Shi’i than Muslim, we would say more Persian than Arab’, and he asserts that ‘Arab domination has left almost no traces in Persia’. He further strongly asserts that Persian ‘worship, beliefs, popular festivals, poetry, the art of government and administration, in a word all the things that crystallize the spirit of a people, go back to an already established civilization’.

Ağaoğlu sees Shi’ism as serving as the receptacle of Persian national identity in two ways. First, as regards the succession to the caliphate or Imamate, the people of Persia take the part of Husein, supposedly in his role as the son of Ali and descendent of the Prophet, but really as the son-in-law of the last Sassanid monarch. In so doing they are rebelling against the very power that had conquered them and are carrying on the pre-Islamic conceptions of the divine hero-king:

[Persia] needed a name that, in order not to upset the susceptibilities of the conquerors too much, had to have close personal ties with the founder of Islam, but at the same time would be linked by familial bonds to the last Persian [Sassanid] dynasty...

She [Persia] found that name in Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. Everything came together to lead Persia to this choice: honour, bravery, justice, uprightness, unreserved devotion – Ali combined all of these positive qualities which are the necessary attributes of Persian heroes. Further, the animosity between Ali and the first three caliphs, under whom Persia had been conquered and against whom public feeling... never ceased to harbour memories which, even today, engender feelings of hatred, led to Ali’s being viewed in Persia as having been as unjustly deprived of his rights as the last Sassanid king. Finally, the most important factor in
inclining Persia towards Ali was the marriage of his son Husein with the daughter of... the last Sassanid.⁵

Second, Shi’ism is also an expression of Persian national identity in that its ideas about the mediation of the divine-mortal relationship and the characteristics of the Imams and mujtahids are really Mazdean beliefs and practices re-emerging under cover of Islam. This is true of many popular Shi’i festivals as well. This set of assertions is most clearly stated in Ağaoğlu’s 1892 paper entitled ‘Les Croyances mazdéennes dans la religion chiîte,’ presented at the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists in London.⁶ In it he affirms that the Persian who played the greatest role in establishing the prestige of Ali in Persia and in building a following for him there was one Salman-i Farsi who, significantly, was both the son of a Mazdean priest, or mobbed, and a scion of one of those noble country houses, the dehkans, who were the repositories of Persian tradition. He goes through the story of how the lines of Ali and the Sassanids were joined (pointing out that the line of the elder son Hasan was passed over in favour of that of Husein, husband of a Sassanid princess). Then Ağaoğlu notes that in Mazdean belief the king is the incarnation of a divinity, Khshathra Vairya, linking this to the Shi’i belief that the Imam (a descendant of Ali) is ‘the representative here below of divinity and higher reason and as such has sole right to direct the world spiritually and temporally’.

With the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam, one also sees the emergence of the idea of the Mahdi ‘who is to come’. All existing monarchies now become simple usurpers who hold sway in the world until his coming. The very learned, virtuous and pious become the representatives of the Imams on earth charged with guiding the faithful during the Imam’s absence – these are the mujtahids. Thus, in Ağaoğlu’s interpretation, the Imams, the Mahdi and the mujtahids are the three points which bridge the immense gap that exists for the Sunni between God and man; this is the essence of Shi’ism and it is born of the Mazdean ‘belief in man’s participation in the divine nature, a belief so contrary to the spirit of orthodox Islam’.⁷ Thus Ağaoğlu not only demonstrates the persistence of pre-Islamic Persian beliefs in Shi’ism, he also emphasizes their distinctness from Sunni Islam, which he views as principally Arab and therefore Semitic, in nature.

These ideas had been previously outlined by Ağaoğlu, though less clearly, in the third segment of the La Nouvelle Revue series, ‘La Religion et les sectes religieuses’, which had appeared in the winter of 1891. In this earlier work Ağaoğlu not only discusses the connection between the Sassanids and the Alids and the role of the mujtahids, he also talks about old Mazdean dualism surviving in Shi’ism and implies, using terms very similar to Gobineau’s, that the pre-Islamic beliefs regarding time-without-limits survive in the cult of Ali who has an ‘omniscient, uncreated, eternal, enveloping
nature, for whom time and space do not exist’. Moreover, the notion of the Imams receiving the firiyesdan of royalty in Mazdean belief is also expressed here.⁸

With such arguments Ağaoğlu makes the case that Shi’ism is the national religion of Persia and as such represents the reassertion of Persian independence from the Arabs; an ancient tradition like that of Persia could not be snuffed out and held captive. The explanation for this, for Ağaoğlu and his mentors, turns out to be the respective natures and characteristics of Semites and Aryans or Indo-Europeans.

**Characteristics of Aryans and Semites**

Although Ağaoğlu generally avoids using specifically racial terminology, all of the traits he attributes to Shi’ism and to the Persian national character are those attributed to Aryans, in direct contrast to Semites, by writers like Gobineau and particularly Renan. Furthermore, many of the traits with which these authors endow the Aryans are the very traits they deem necessary for modernity – traits such as an inquiring spirit, tolerance, a penchant for civil institutions and orderly, limited government.

According to Renan, there are two races which are utterly different with respect to spirit, language and mores: ‘the Indo-European race embracing the noble populations of India, Persia, the Caucasus, and all of Europe’, and the Semitic ‘encompassing the native populations of western and southern Asia below the Euphrates’. To the Indo-Europeans belong ‘almost all the great military, political, and intellectual movements in the history of the world; to the Semitic race, religious movements’. Renan sees the Indo-Europeans as too engaged with the world and its variety to come up with monotheism, while the Semitic race, on the contrary, strips divinity of its trappings and ‘without reflection or reasoning attains the purest religious form humanity has ever known’.⁹ Monotheism is intolerant by definition. Thus, Semites are naturally intolerant, while Indo-Europeans, prior to their adoption of Semitic ideas, ‘never took their religion as an absolute truth... this is why one only finds freedom of thought and the spirit of individual examination and research among these peoples’. Thus the Semitic race,

an incomplete race by virtue of its very simplicity... has never contained civilization in the sense we attach to the word. One will not find in it any great organized empires, nor any public spirit, nothing that recalls the Greek city, nor yet anything that recalls the absolute monarchy of Egypt and Persia.

Aristocracy, democracy and feudalism, discipline and military organization, are all Indo-European traits.¹⁰ Political life is the single most representative characteristic of Indo-Europeans
and they are the only ones who have ‘known liberty and who have accommodated both the state and the independence of the individual at the same time’. The Semitic East, by contrast, ‘has never known an intermediate milieu between the complete anarchy of desert nomads and bloody and unmitigated despotism’. It lacks ‘the idea of public matters, of the public good’. Ağaoğlu is referring to these arguments and theories when he comments on the Prophet’s dying injunction that the most worthy should succeed him as leader of the Muslim world. In Ağaoğlu’s view this is a conception of sovereignty suitable only for

a formless mass of populace, always at war, constantly contradicting one another, lacking any common memory of the past as well as any desire to draw together in the present, unable to group together as a nation except through the prestige of someone chosen by the representatives of that populace... Such a concept... cannot be imposed upon a nation like Persia with a past full of glory behind it, with memories, dear to the national imagination, in which the names of kings have been constantly mingled with that of the people...

Similarly, when he tells us that the spirit of orthodox Islam, ‘its absolutism and intransigence’, drove Persia towards the creation of a religion more expressive of its own nature, namely Shi’ism, we hear echoes of the theory of Aryanness current in the writings of men like Renan. This is all the more apparent when in the subsequent passage he explains that this absolutism of orthodox Islam is a product of the desert.

The French Orientalists not only emphasize the putative lack of tolerance, organization and political skills of the Semitic peoples, but also their lack of creativity and imagination. For the Orientalists, they lack colour, sentiment, pathos – they are cold, hard and dogmatic. As Renan puts it:

In the Arab or Semitic conception, nature is not alive. The desert is monotheistic. Sublime in its immense uniformity it reveals from the first day the idea of the infinite, but not that feeling of fertile activity which a constantly creative nature has inspired in the Indo-European race... Nature does not play any role in the Semitic religions... The extreme simplicity of the Semitic religions, without breadth, without diversity, without plastic arts, without philosophy, without mythology, without political life, without progress, has no other cause: there is no variety in monotheism... the Semites have seen in the development of things only the accomplishment of the will of a higher being... Such was not the conception of that other race, destined to draw on all the facets of life, which from India to Greece, to the far north and the far west, has animated and deified nature... For them the distinction between god and non-god has always remained undecided.
Thus, Semitic nations have a monotone conception of the divine and it is characteristic of them that they have never had either mythology or epics. Their clear and simple way of conceiving of God does not provide scope for the poetic works on divine and heroic themes like those composed in India, Greece, or Persia. ‘The mythology that represents pantheism is only possible in the imagination of people who allow the limits between God, man and the universe to float, undefined’.

A blending of the human and the divine is one of the traits that appears over and over again in these passages as tied to Indo-Europeans. We have already seen that Ağaoğlu emphasized the presence of that trait among the Persians in his discussion of the Mazdean roots of Shi’ism. He also emphasizes that all the mythology of the pre-Islamic kings was transferred to the house of Ali and to the Imams. The Shahname is taken as the proof and example of the survival of the mythological and epic tradition in Persian society by Ağaoğlu, as it was earlier by Renan, Gobineau and Darmesteter. This survival of the mythic imagination is of importance, for as the passage above from Renan makes clear, it is tied to mysticism and pantheism, and pantheism in Renan and the others is the seed of the spirit of rationalism. Indeed all these authors spend a great deal of time talking about the openness, the spirit of free thought, which existed in medieval Islam when it was Persian-dominated. Under the Abbasids and the Ghaznavids one has the likes of Avicenna and Firdousi – open, rational, optimistic, heroic. Later, the destruction of that golden era by the barbarian onslaught, first of Seljuks, then Mongols, led to a different outpouring of creativity whose ‘character is predominantly mysticism or pantheism’. Examples of this type are Omar Khayyam or Hafiz, the Anacreons and Voltaires of Persia, ‘pantheists, mystics and theosophists by turns, their manner and ideas recall pantheists like Spinoza and mystics like Fénelon’. However, the tragic events to which these men of letters were witness led them to turn their eyes away from the world in a way that unfortunately engendered quietism, discouraged individual initiative and activity and fostered indulgence in the type of pantheist attitude which became current in the mystical Sufi and dervish movements in Persian society. In Ağaoğlu’s words:

These poets and philosophers had almost all witnessed so many political changes, so many violent invasions, they had seen so many heads adorned with crowns one day lying in dust and blood the next... that they came to conceptualize the universe and the laws of nature in the image of their homeland and became convinced of the sinister nature of basic forces and of the futility of life... Powerless to move in any other way against the evils which afflicted their society,
they wished to eliminate them or at least guard against them in the future by violently attacking anything which might in the future engender [conflict] between individuals or groups: wealth, power, ambition, prejudices, tradition, religion, faith... they subjected them to ridicule, thereby depriving the society of its only solid basis, namely the one that rests on individuals strongly bonded together by the survivals of the past and a common tendency towards the future... [The European] has rightly understood that hope and ideals are two things almost as necessary for life as air and bread; they are the motive forces which push forward both the individual and the society... The goal which he assigns himself always demands activity, energy, progress...  

Yet these movements, though debased in modern times, prove that Persia belongs to that Aryan tradition which is the home of free thought – free thought tied to the spirit of patriotic devotion to the nation and a well-ordered state.

The highly charged representations of the death of Ali and his sons, especially that of Husein, are further evidence of the civilized and Aryan character of Persian society. First, their very emotionalism is a testament to Indo-Europeanism of the most elevated kind, as Renan informs us in comparing them to Christian passion plays.  

Ağaoğlu goes to some trouble to emphasize that emotionalism, describing the uncontrolled tears of a Shi‘i official of the Russian government who was attending one of these representations. Second, the plays are an expression of Persian national feeling against the conquering Arab and are a metaphor for one of the keys or wellsprings of the Persian national psyche. It is this that makes these plays the equivalent not only of Christian passion plays, but of that most Indo-European of all Indo-European monuments, of that icon of European identity, the classical Greek theatre. Collective entertainment is a powerful tool for the creation of bonds among people and for the forging of nationalities. The development of the collective life of a society can serve as an index of the level of civilization and development of the national idea in it. From this perspective, Ağaoğlu can cast the Athenians in ancient times, the French in the West and the Persians in Asia as the most advanced nations. The national idea is highly developed in these three societies and it is from it that theatre springs. It is here above all that we get a clear statement from Ağaoğlu, following particularly the comments of Gobineau, that in adopting a Persian identity he is claiming an equal footing with Europe: ‘If the European takes the trouble to look beneath the surface... to penetrate to the very heart of Persian nature... in a word to find the essence of the Persian spirit reduced to its natural expression, he will be able to discern the double of his own personality’.
Thus Shi’ism is not only the national religion of Persia, it is the expression of the indomitable identity of an ancient Aryan people, and Aryans are the ones whose traits have given rise to great civilizations and states. However, as Renan points out in his essay ‘Le Judaïsme comme race et comme religion’, national religions are patriotic and purely local in character. Virtually none remains in the world today, for humanity has exchanged such limited notions of divinity for the larger moral vision of universal religions. Of these, monotheistic religions are among the most important and monotheism in the right hands, that is Indo-European hands, has a great civilizing and universal mission. If one examines Renan’s views on the assimilation of monotheism by Indo-Europeans and its role in the future of civilization, a particular vision of liberal society emerges, which Ağaoğlu takes up. He casts Shi’ism vis-à-vis orthodox Islam in a role parallel to that outlined by Renan for Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism. By adapting Renan’s ideas in this way Ağaoğlu not only establishes Shi’ism as Persia’s national religion and the container and expression of her national identity, but emancipates it from the limitations of purely local patriotism, imbuing it with a progressive mission.

**ARYANS AND MONOTHEISM, OR, CAN SHI’ISM DO FOR ISLAM WHAT CHRISTIANITY HAS DONE FOR JUDAISM?**

Renan was concerned throughout his career with the question of the relationship between church and state and its effect on liberty, which his writing tends to identify with intellectual freedom. In his essay ‘L’Avenir religieux des sociétés modernes’, Renan discusses three basic models for church-state interaction: that in which religion is a matter of personal conscience and asks nothing of the state; that in which the church dominates the state; and that in which the church and state exist as independent and rival powers. For Renan, the first type is represented by early Christianity prior to its adoption by Constantine; the second by Eastern Orthodoxy; the third is the type developed in medieval Europe, i.e., particularized states in confrontation with a centralized religious authority. The notion is that the first type is the best and ideal; the second type is generally the worst, the more so according to the degree of centralization of the state regime; and the third kind is better than the second in that it begins to allow for some room for freedom, at least in some areas of life. He shades this view by adding that while in theory the medieval system should have been much better, it was full of cruelty. This was due not to the church-state relationship but to the absolutist and proselytizing zeal of Christianity, which, more than other religions, does not allow for the existence of unsaved souls. He notes that this is in contrast to Islam. But the excesses of the
Middle Ages brought on the Protestant Reformation and while this at first produced its own excesses and seemed to be headed only toward the creation of state religions, it nonetheless had several beneficial results. First, in well-guided and decentralized states like the German principalities, the effects of state religion were not so pernicious – indeed, the creation of universities where freedom of thought was really protected, and where competition among universities also existed, led to the development in Germany of truly great institutions dedicated to rational thought. Second, despite the tendency in Protestantism to create state religions, a strong ‘non-conformist’ tradition persisted even in the face of persecution. This resulted in the recreation of the early Christian ideal of religion as a matter of individual conscience. In this view, the emergence of a strong clergy, outside the framework of the state and prepared to defend its rights and privileges, is primary to defining the civil authority and creating a separation between the temporal and secular spheres. When church and state are one, either the religion is debased and servile (he gives the Russian church as an example) or it is overpowering and tyrannical. He gives Islam as a specific instance of this last case:

Islam does not know the distinction between the two powers; the Muslim world is dying; it has not had a St. John Chrysostome, or a Gregory VII, or a Thomas Becket. One can mention some good examples of resistance on the part of the Imams, but an independent clergy, jealous of its privileges, has never been formed, nor has a well-defined civil state ever been constituted in opposition to the religious estate... If Islamism had come upon this fruitful division, there could never have been a monster like the Caliph Hakem and Arab science would not have been snuffed out...

Renan goes on to say that in his view ‘national’ religions are backward-looking and are a thing doomed to die out. What he means here by ‘national’ is a union between church and state or a state religion; when he speaks of ‘national religions’ in other contexts, such as his essay ‘Le Judaïsme comme race et comme religion’ he means something rather different, as noted above.

In ‘L'Avenir religieux des sociétés modernes’, Renan sets up his discussion of church-state relations in the context of the history of Christianity; the few words he expends on Islam are by way of illustrating a point he is actually making about the development of church-state relations in Christian societies. In ‘De la Part des peuples sémitiques dans l’histoire de la civilisation’ his context is much broader and we get a better picture of what he attributes Islam’s lack of spiritual and temporal separation to. Here Renan informs us that the philological and historical work of the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrated the existence of two utterly
distinct elements, Indo-European and Semitic, whose mixture in unequal proportions had shaped the course of history. He says that these discoveries have been augmented by the science of comparative mythology. The Indo-Europeans are given to tragedy and epic in literature; their religion is ‘the cult of the forces and phenomena of nature transformed through philosophic development into a kind of pantheism’. Political life and organization are their special forte and they alone have experienced liberty and combined both the state and the independence of the individual. The Semites (or Semitic cultures) are just the opposite of this in Renan’s view. Monotheism is their invention, an expression of their tendency towards the absolute and the dogmatic, and intolerance is the heritage of monotheism. Their vision is dry and hard and lacks the emotive richness of Indo-European belief; their politics are anarchic or despotic; their laws are patriarchal. However, the pagan cults of the old Indo-Europeans – colourful, but naïve, essentially local, often associated with a particular family or caste – were inadequate to the spiritual and intellectual needs of the increasingly civilized and intellectually demanding populations of the ancient Indo-European states. To fill that need they began to look to the East; there they found Judaism with its morally elevated code and its more universal conception. They came to adopt a new Jewish sect, Christianity, which they then began to modify, eliminating more and more its ‘bad’ or Semitic qualities and keeping only its elevated morality and universal outlook. A lengthy quotation is most instructive:

Apart from some exceptions of secondary importance, the world has, in some sense, been completely conquered by the monotheistic apostolate of the Semites.

Does this mean that the Indo-European peoples, in adopting the monotheistic dogma, have completely given up their own individuality? No, certainly not. In adopting the Semitic religion we have profoundly modified it. Christianity, as most people understand it, is in reality our creation. Early Christianity consisted primarily of the apocalyptic belief in the Kingdom of God which is to come... The victory of Christianity was not assured until it broke completely out of its Jewish envelope... Those delicate souls, sensitive and imaginative, like the author of The Imitation of Christ, like the mystics of the Middle Ages, like all the saints in general, professed a religion born in reality from the Semitic genius, but profoundly transformed by the genius of modern peoples, above all Celts and Germans. The depth of sentimentality, the species of morbidness of the religion of a Francis of Assisi, of a Fra Angelico, are exactly the opposite of the Semitic genius which is essentially dry and hard...

For the future, Gentlemen, increasingly I see the triumph of the Indo-European genius... The European genius has a developed and
incomparable grandeur; Islam, on the contrary, is slowly decomposing; in our days it is heading for utter disaster. At the moment, the fundamental reason for the expansion of European civilization is the destruction of that essentially Semitic thing, the theocratic power of Islam and therefore the destruction of Islam. For Islam cannot exist except as an official religion. Once it is reduced to the status of a free and individual religion, it will die. Islam is not just a state religion... it is religion excluding the state... Islam is the most complete negation of Europe. Islam is a fanaticism the like of which even Spain in the era of Felipe II or Italy in the time of Pius V hardly saw. Islam is disdain for science and the suppression of civil society; it is the terrifying simplicity of the Semitic spirit. Taking control of the human mind it closes it to every delicate idea, to every fine feeling, to every rational investigation, in order to confront it with an eternal tautology: ‘God is God’.

Therefore, Gentlemen, the future belongs to Europe and to Europe alone. Europe will conquer the world and spread its religion of rights, liberty, and the respect for men, the belief that there is something of the divine in man. In all matters, progress for the Indo-European peoples will consist of distancing themselves more and more from the Semitic spirit. Our religion will become less and less Jewish, more and more it will reject all political organization applied to matters of the soul. It will become the religion of the heart, the intimate poetry of each person. In morality we will pursue fine points unknown to the vulgar natures of the Old Alliance; we will become more and more Christian. In politics we will reconcile the two things the Semitic peoples still don’t know of: liberty and strong state organization... In all things we will pursue the nuance, the fine points in place of dogmatism, the relative in place of the absolute. And there you have, according to me, the future, if the future belongs to progress. [emphasis mine]²⁵

I have quoted the preceding passage at some length and highlighted certain phrases because it is so revealing of Renan’s views and, I think, also gives us insight into Ağaoğlu’s thought process in regard to Persian nationality and religion in the Nouvelle Revue articles. Renan basically attributes every positive aspect of society and civilization to his ‘Indo-European peoples’, except monotheism, which is both Semitic and largely negative to begin with. It only achieves its great universalist and moral potential after being enriched and adapted by the northern races. In this view, Judaism is the root form of monotheism and Christianity is the developed form it takes on after its Indo-European, specifically European pilgrimage. The key points in Renan’s theory are that monotheism is a Semitic invention and is by nature intolerant; that Semites in general lack all the hallmarks of civilization; that Semitic monotheism lacks sentiment and emotionality, as well as the power and colour of myth. Therefore, although monotheism is a great moral advance, it is the product of a race or society that lacks all
the necessary attributes for the development and freedom of the individual intellect. And those are the prerequisites of progress. Thus, it is only by deep modification that the monotheistic vision is transformed into something positive and beautiful. Once again, Islam is discussed only as a foil.

For a man in Ağaoğlu’s position such devastating assessments of the Islamic world must have been disheartening. Yet there was hope. There was hope because the Persians were Indo-Europeans and they had transformed the essentially Semitic character of Islam, making of it a more flexible and progressive tool. In essence, in his comments on Shi’ism, Ağaoğlu sets Shi’ism up to be to Islam what Christianity, in its Europeanized form, was to Judaism according to Renan. Thus its role is both national and international – it is a national religion, the preserver of Persian identity, but at some moment in the near future, under the right kind of leadership, it will re-animate and guide the whole Islamic world to a better, more powerful and more progressive day. As he puts it at the conclusion of ‘Le Théâtre et ses fètes’:

Among the Shi’ites, religion encompasses the soul and life of the people, the feeling which presides at the religious ceremonies is spontaneous; each person adapts it to his own tastes and preferences so that the realization and enactment of ceremonies vary, not only from region to region, but from city to city and neighbourhood to neighbourhood. The result of this is a more intense and broader actuation on the part of religion, religion which is in reality a compromise between the past and the present and which, adjusting itself therefore to the tastes and penchants of each, guarantees the spiritual unity of Iran in the future all by reconnecting its present to the most remote periods of its history. In the future, the importance of this religion will be immense not only from the point of view of the Shi’ites, but from that of the Muslim world as a whole. If capricious Fortune ever takes the side of the Muslims and if they, for their part, are reborn, everything leads one to believe that the light will come from the very place where Islam has found its true death, that is, from the Shi’i world. A mujtahid, venerated by the people, endowed with a will of iron, but understanding thoroughly the spirit and demands of his times, will find in the Shi’i religion powerful tools for the renewal of western Asia.26

But how does Ağaoğlu construct Shi’ism so that it can serve as this more flexible tool? In the beginning of the segment entitled ‘La Société persane: le clergé’ Ağaoğlu quotes from Renan’s essay ‘L’Islamisme et la science’, in which Renan comments that the union of state and religion in Islam and the supremacy of dogma in the Islamic world have led to the decline and backwardness of that world. Ağaoğlu finds this comment inexplicable since, he says,
the great tolerance in the Islamic world of other sects and even
religions has spared the Middle East the bloody wars of religion that
have torn the West. He points out that though religious sentiment is
much stronger in East than West, the East has undergone very many
changes in religious practice over the years with less bloodshed in
general than in the West and today recognizes a variety of sects.
He claims the reason for this is the lack of an established religious
hierarchy. In Islam the relationship between God and man is direct;
the religion does not sanction the creation of a religious caste.

These comments give the appearance of contradicting Renan,
who, after all, attributes the first step towards individual liberty
precisely to the development of a religious caste which exists in
opposition to the state and thus allows for the emergence of the
concept of a differentiation between spiritual and secular life
and, moreover, frees the church from being an agent of the state
– which is to say, relegates it over time to the purely spiritual. On
the other hand, for Renan this is clearly a stage leading towards
a more perfect development such as that seen in Protestantism,
where conscience is indeed a matter between the individual and
his God. And as we shall see, Ağaoğlu moves immediately into a
discussion of the Shi‘i clergy and carefully sets about making the
case that Islam, in its Shi‘i form, can meet many of the desirable
standards of Protestantism.

Ağaoğlu tells us that in Persia the position of mullah or ahund
is a liberal profession, i.e., it is neither supported nor controlled
by the state and is open to all on the basis of approving public
opinion. In describing the preparation and function of the lower
clergy, this is all the good he has to say. He strongly criticizes the
pattern of their student years in the holy cities where corruption
of those entrusted with the shrines and their endowments leaves
the students in a life of penury and where the training is at any rate
medieval and scholastic in nature. He criticizes even more severely
their unfettered powers over all manner of social institutions upon
their return to Persia – their control over religious ceremonies per
se, over the administration of justice, the collection of religious
taxes, the imparting of education and so forth. He further accuses
them of corruption in the exercise of these exorbitant functions,
which to some extent he blames on the terrible conditions they
endure as students with only the vision of this future wealth and
power to encourage them. The worst aspect of the functioning
of the lower clergy is that it is they who are entrusted with the
interpretation of the risales of the mujtahids. He accuses the lower
clergy of a narrow, self-serving and unpatriotic outlook, of being a
group that obstructs all attempts at reform and deliberately keeps
the populace in ignorance simply to preserve its own privilege.
This he attributes to the lack of a strong hierarchy or any authority over them. In speaking of the benefits of free entrance into the clergy he asserts:

This freedom of recruitment for the clergy, which was logical as long as the caliphate lasted, seems to me one of the most rational institutions of Islam, despite the enormous harm it is wrecking on our society today. To it the Arab civilization owes most of the progress it has been able to make in the past. In effect, allowing anyone the hope of becoming a mullah, that is to say a person charged with the direction of the most important affairs of society, if only he be educated, is to attract unlimited intellect, to permit the development of all an individual’s faculties and the expansion of the most diverse personal abilities – necessary conditions for all advancement and progress. Unity and harmony having been established by a head, a caliph, who is the most learned or who is advised by those who are, assures social peace by containing the individual passions and ambitions loosed by that liberty and does so without snuffing out the spirit of research and progress.28

Ağaoğlu goes on to cite instances of the great open-mindedness that existed under the caliphs, using particularly Abbasid examples. Then Ağaoğlu tells us that the situation is otherwise in modern times, that after the fall of the caliphate, the lower clergy was left unsupervised to run wild; anarchy reigned and these mullahs, actuated by base motives and unrestrained by any authority, used their position as an ‘instrument of exploitation and domination’ and ‘sought to confine the spirits of the faithful, to keep them within boundaries from which they would never be able to escape’. This lower clergy has enormous influence over the mass of the people and, convinced that any reform will weaken their own power, they oppose all attempts at change and create all kinds of difficulties for the government:

During the Arab domination the caliphs were at once the spiritual and secular leaders of their subjects; their advice on religious matters came to be followed both by the clergy and by the rest of the faithful. The prestige of their name and the origin of their tribe assured them real influence over the clergy. When the Seljuk Turks invaded the Muslim world and power fell into the hands of the emirs, the caliphs fell to the rank of simple spiritual advisors and no longer possessed the physical force to bring about the execution of their decisions concerning religion and the clergy...

In Persia ever since the national rebirth, the separation of the powers spiritual and temporal has been completely decided. The head of the civil authority assumed the titles of the pre-Islamic national kings, and was endowed with their powers, except that of overseeing the clergy. The shah became the inheritor of the throne of Noshiravam,
but the clergy continued to be Arab in its spirit and organization. [emphasis mine]29

As a solution for these ills Ağaoğlu asks whether it wouldn’t be worthwhile for ‘His Majesty [the shah] to attempt to reform the clergy itself once and for all and establish a hierarchical organization’. He points out that in this way ‘the civil authority would be delivered of the yoke of ecclesiastic power and there would no longer be two opposing states within the breast of the same nation’. For such a project the shah would find support ‘not only in the past of Islam but also in the national traditions of the era preceding the Arab invasion’.

There are several important points to note about Ağaoğlu’s analysis here. First, he makes a point of the ‘old Persian’ influence on modern Persian institutions; second, he attributes the ills of the present system essentially to the weakness of the government – the state is unable to impose order; third, the defective system of clerical organization (or lack thereof) is Arab in origin; fourth, the problem really develops after the advent of Turkish dominance; fifth, the shah is portrayed more or less sympathetically as an agent, albeit an ineffective one, for change and progress – an attitude that changes radically as the tobacco crisis progresses; and sixth, the problem is one of the lower clergy, i.e., he proposes greater systematization and control for them, not for the mujtahids.

Bearing in mind that Renan defined the two elements of political life unknown to the Semite as liberty and a strong state, Ağaoğlu’s analysis sets about laying the blame for religious obscurantism on a lower clergy who are base both in birth and motivations, whose real stock of learning is quite limited and whose form of organization is historically Arab, i.e., Semitic. The responsibility for allowing this lies with a central government which is weak – in later articles he will be less forgiving and will point out that the administration is corrupt and that the dynasty is foreign. The mujtahids, however, are for Ağaoğlu a genuinely Persian institution, inheritor’s of the old Persian cult of the king by way of their special connection with the Hidden Imam, representative of the house of Ali and so also representative of the old Sassanid line. They are a disinterested meritocracy whose organization gives them complete liberty (from official pressure or financial concerns) and whose method of analysis allows for the free play of thought and the development of progressive interpretations in harmony with the demands of the times. Furthermore, there is no orthodoxy, in that the interpretations of the individual mujtahids do not have to be compatible with one another. The mujtahids are the bearers of the great Persian tradition and if their views were not transmitted through the skewed veil of the obscurantist lower clergy, but were taken up by a strong and
visionary government, Persia would be reborn. So we have a model of a strong state paying and regulating the lower clergy on the one hand, while on the other hand, there is a strong, independent higher clergy able to develop progressive and rational ideas in complete freedom, and whose teachings will gain currency on their merits since people are free to choose whom they will follow. This sounds remarkably like the system Renan lauds in the German principalities and their university system, or the system he advocates for the French universities—a system wherein the state supports higher education but leaves it completely free and open, while lower education is in the hands of a clergy, but not one given free rein. In ‘La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France’ he says:

Nobody would be excluded from university chairs because of his opinions... Further, the _privatdocent_ system would allow for all doctrines to emerge in addition to the endowed chairs... The state in such a system does not pay for certain scientific or literary opinions; it works for great fields of contest, for vast arenas where diverse sentiments can emerge, struggle with each other and compete for the attachment of the youth, a youth which, already prepared by reflection, pays attention to these debates.

To form a rationalist head of society that reigns by science and that is fiercely devoted to science and not disposed to let its privileges perish for the sake of an ignorant mob... [and] at the same time to lift up the people, to re-animate their somewhat weak faculties, to inspire in them, with the help of a good clergy devoted to the homeland, acceptance of a superior society [class], respect for science and virtue, a spirit of sacrifice and devotion, that would be the ideal...

Freedom, above all intellectual freedom, and an environment that permits and supports the fullest development of the individual’s capacities are Renan’s standard of human civilization and progress, but these, as the above quotation states, must be tied to an outward-looking spirit of dedication. Ağaoğlu fully accepts this standard and judges all endeavours and aspects of society by the degree to which they foster the development of the individual and the intellect. Thus, the particular evil that arises from the ignorant and submissive condition of women in Persia, especially upper class women, is that it annihilates them as individuals, undermines the family and prevents the raising of young boys in such a way as to make them fully-fledged individuals. Similarly, the methods of instruction in the mekteps are insidious, because they tend to destroy any sense of individuality and initiative in the students.

Lest it be thought that Ağaoğlu was elaborating all these complex notions of Persian nationality and identity and of Persia’s ‘role’ in the future renewal of the whole Muslim world as some kind of abstract exercise, one has only to look at his final instalments in the
series dealing with the administration of government in Iran and with foreign, that is Russian and British, intervention in Iran. From the increasingly strident tone of the criticism directed at the Shah and his government and from the spirited denunciations of British policies in general and of the tobacco monopoly in particular, it becomes more than clear that the object of all this progressive potential in the Shi‘i clergy must be the strengthening of Iran and the Muslim world at large in the face of an immediate threat. The following passage is representative of the tone of his comments:

I wish that my fine English friends, especially the gentlemen of the Times, could see the tears of the children combined with the despair of the father and the agony of the mother when the governor extorts the peasant’s last cow... If these children of Albion, who did not hesitate to decapitate a king whose sole crime was to profess a religion different from their own, have any heart at all, surely they will recognize the right of the Persians to protest in a most loyal manner against a hateful government that is literally selling the country to foreign money... The fate of a Muslim peasant, woman, or small businessman is a thousand times worse than that of an Armenian in Kurdistan who is constantly protected by powerful foreign consuls while the former group are left completely to the mercy of grace and favour; and whenever a Middle Eastern Christian wants to improve his lot – how enthusiastic, how approving, how sympathetic all the European papers are! But when it’s a Muslim that aspires to progress – what sarcasm, what irony!

Let the gentlemen of the Times feel reassured, the tobacco monopoly has been nothing more than a pretext in the hands of a people worn out by the tyranny of their rulers and ready to throw themselves into any kind of venture to shake off the yoke. It is another link in that series of revolts which, beginning with the Bab and taken up again by Sheikh Abdullah, will explode one of these days in a deadly civil war whose consequences no one can now predict.34

His comments on recent or contemporary figures and movements in Iran reflect these concerns. An enlightened leadership, probably religious, will lead Persia to necessary reforms and renewal and Persia’s own enormous intellectual and spiritual resources will make her the leader of a united Muslim world. Foreign powers should take a more enlightened view of their own self interest and assist the reforming efforts of men like the Bab or Afghani or Malkom Khan. If they do not, they may just find that Persia has set the Middle East aflame.35

In summary, through an elaborately constructed series of arguments, Ağaoğlu forged a useful national identity for himself. His only link to Persia was Shi‘ism; by showing Shi‘ism to be a national religion, he demonstrated his connection to a nation,
an essential element of modernity and progress. Since Persia was an Indo-European nation, Ağaoğlu had connected himself to a nation that had certain strengths that would make for success in the modern world. However, his argument had a problem, since, in the Renanian scheme which he was following, Ağaoğlu had doomed Shi’ism to irrelevance precisely by showing it to be a national religion. He overcame this difficulty by showing that Shi’ism had imbued Islam with those universalizing characteristics which Aryan influence always contributes to Semitic religions. Thus Shi’ism, while the expression of Persian national history and character, was also a universal religion with a mission to the larger Islamic world, a mission to be headed by Iran due to its intimate connection to that religion. Ağaoğlu’s Parisian productions reveal a young man who has been deeply influenced by the teachings and intellectual theories of his mentors, who has also been traumatized, as his comments on Middle Eastern intellectuals in Paris show, by his treatment and status as a Muslim in Europe and who is deeply disturbed by the relative weakness of the Muslim world vis-à-vis Europe and deeply stirred by the unfolding events of the Tobacco Protest. Combining all these elements, he constructs for himself and his world an identity capable, according to the intellectual terms of the aggressors, which he has accepted, of defending itself.
A reform-minded intellectual like Ağaoğlu does not emerge on the scene, springing forth Athena-like, fully equipped and self-sufficient. He is the product of a society and an intellectual tradition. We have already mentioned that as a child and young man Ağaoğlu was trained in traditional Islamic and especially Shi‘i learning. In those same years he came into contact with the various trends in the Russian intelligentsia while attending Russian schools. But he was also part of a tradition of reformist and modernizing Muslim intellectuals. The first half of the nineteenth century had produced important anti-traditionalist figures in the Crimea and Transcaucasia. These include Ismail Bey Gasprinski (1851–1914), Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde (1812–1878), Seyyid ‘Azim Şirvani (1835–1888) and Hasan Bey Melikov Zerdabi (1837–1907). In addition, the Persian intellectual figure Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) had an important impact on Muslim intellectuals of the Russian Empire.

Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde has been called the Voltaire, or sometimes the Molière, of the Middle East. Born in the Azerbaijani city of Şêki (Nuha) in 1812, when that city was still under Iranian sovereignty, his father was a native of the Tabriz area who had come to Şêki to pursue trade.¹ His mother was the niece of a well-known Shi‘i cleric and teacher of that city, Ahund Hajji Ali Asgar. After the death of the Khan of Şêki in 1814, the family returned to the Tabriz area, but conflict between his mother and his father’s first wife erupted, and Mirza Fethali and his mother returned to her uncle, Ali Asgar, then residing in Erdebil. Hajji Ali Asgar raised Mirza Fethali thereafter, and Mirza Fethali always regarded him as his second father. Mirza Fethali moved around to various cities in the Caucasus with his uncle, as Asgar entered the service of the region’s Khans and his uncle educated him rigorously in the Persian and Arabic languages. While residing in Ganje in the year 1825–26,
he witnessed a great battle between Russian and Persian forces in which the Persians were vanquished and the city plundered. Like everyone else in the city, his uncle lost everything in the sack. They proceeded to Şeki, where Asgar’s older brother still lived and settled there. Under the 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchai, the whole region came under Russian rule. In 1833 Ahund Ali Asgar went on the hajj and left Mirza Fethali in Ganje with another âlim with whom he studied logic and fikh (Islamic jurisprudence). Here Ahundzâde came into contact with the poet Mirza Şaфи’ Vazeh, who introduced him to Western secular thought and discouraged him from pursuing a religious career. Mirza Fethali returned to Şeki that year and entered the Russian school. A year later, in 1834, his uncle took him to Tiflis and procured him a job as interpreter to the Viceroy of the Caucasus, a post he held to the end of his life.

Aside from his official duties as a translator, Ahundzâde authored a considerable body of literary work – especially plays and social criticism. He wrote six satirical plays, which were the first plays ever written in Azeri Turkish, employing a simple, elegant style intended to be accessible to the ordinary person. These plays were written and published in the 1850s, a good 20 years prior to the appearance of the first Ottoman play, Namik Kemal’s Vatan yahud Silistre. The Russian administration supported these efforts because in this period it wished to encourage developments that would tend to weaken Persian cultural influence in the region. Thus, the plays were translated into Russian and German and performed on the stage in Tiflis, Petersburg and Berlin. They were not performed in their original Azeri, however, until an 1870s production in Baku.

As part of his interest in education and concern for elevating the general educational level among Muslims, Ahundzâde developed schemes for reforming the alphabet. He believed that changes such as writing the Arabic letters separately would make learning to read much easier and would boost rates of literacy and with them the general level of education. In the 1860s Ahundzâde travelled to Iran and Istanbul to meet with leading educators and government ministers to discuss alphabet reform, but conservative opposition to altering the language and script of the sacred revelation was too great, so nothing ever came of it.

Ahundzâde’s plays were interesting from the literary point of view in the formation of an Azeri literary language, but they were also important in their content. They satirized the ‘Eastern’ way of life, criticizing religious fanaticism, harmful superstitions and the position of women in Muslim society, and they pointed up the need for the development of the individual in the Western, liberal sense of the word. Very often, ignorant and corrupt members of the religious classes were the butts of these satires. Ahundzâde was a
liberal who believed that in order for the Muslim world to progress, Islam must reform itself along the lines of Protestantism. He was harshly critical of the Shi‘i clergy, whom he characterized as ignorant and self-interested, and he advocated the enrolment of Muslims in Russian schools where they would learn Western languages and have access to modern subjects and the benefits of science and technology. He differed from the men of the Tanzimat, however, in that he had already made the analysis that Muslims could not acquire Western technology without acquiring the Western frame of mind and without the implementation of sweeping social changes. In this he was more like the Young Ottomans in his beliefs.

Unlike them, however, he was deeply hostile not only to the religious classes, but also to religion itself. He actually dared to put into print his conviction that belief in God and an afterlife was irrational and it was his feeling that Protestantism was really rationalist atheism in disguise. Significantly, he took the position that rationalism and revelation were not two roads to the same thing, were not even compatible. Among his most famous and influential works were his Letters of Kemalüdddevle and Cemalüdddevle (Kemalüdddevle‘nin Cemalüdddevle ile mukâtebesi), an essay on the state of Persian society written in the form of a correspondence between an Indian prince and a Persian prince. In them, Ahundzade criticizes both the Shi‘i clergy, for its ignorance and obscurantism, and the oppressiveness of the autocratic regime. He advocates liberty and parliamentarism, urges feelings of patriotism and national unity and advocates modern learning, rational thought and science. He ascribes the roots of the problems of backwardness and poverty to lack of freedom:

Complete liberty consists of two types of liberty, one type is spiritual liberty, the other type is physical liberty. The leaders of the religion of Islam have taken our spiritual liberty from us and made us into complete abject slaves in spiritual affairs... As for our physical liberty, despotic rulers have taken it and loaded us with heavy burdens and taxes. On this point we are indeed slaves without rights and the lowly servants of tyrants, and we are deprived of the benefits of liberty.

Ahundzade wished to combat the backwardness he perceived in his people through education and profound social and political change. He placed emphasis on rationalism, which for him also implied secularism, and liberalism. In a very clear statement of position in the Letters he insisted:

One cannot acquire science unless accompanied by progress. Progress cannot be envisioned without Liberalism. Liberalism is possible only when one gets rid of superfluous beliefs.

In the postscript to the Letters, he said that he wished to ‘plant the
seeds of patriotism, justice, and solidarity in the heart of his nation’ and ‘to do away with abasement and poverty among them’. He saw religion and autocratic rule as obstacles to the development of the kind of educated society necessary for progress. He also saw religious influences as undermining feelings of national identity and solidarity, which, again, he viewed as necessary to the kind of liberal regime he imagined. Quite interestingly, he promoted the notion of continuity in national identity for Persians from pre-Islamic times, and he also viewed Twelver Shi’ism as important from the point of view of Persian nationalism because he thought it had helped provide a national identity for Persians separate from the rest of the Muslim world. Thus we see that in Ahundzâde’s thought and work a number of the important themes that recur among Transcaucasian reform-minded intellectuals are already defined – the problems of education (and language), religious obscurantism and rationalism, divisions in the community and autocratic rule are all already established as central issues in his thought.

Although Ahundzâde wrote his Letters about Iran, they were written in Azeri. Some authors have speculated that his directing his criticisms at backwardness and autocracy in Iran was a ruse to circumvent the Tsarist censorship. Be that as it may, Ahundzâde was unable to get the Letters published either in Europe or in the Middle East for political reasons. They remained in manuscript form, passed from hand to hand, until the 1920s when they were at last printed in Baku. Nevertheless, they were widely known and influential in intellectual circles in Iran and in the Caucasus.

Ismail Bey Gasprinski was another reformer who always protested his loyalty to the Russian Empire and the Tsar and who felt that the association with the Russians was a progressive factor in Muslim society. However, his attitudes towards education and religion were very different from Ahundzâde’s. Ismail Bey Gasprinski was a Tatar born in the Crimea in 1851. After finishing some basic studies in reading, writing and Qur’an recitation, he attended the Moscow Military Lycée. There he became familiar with the famous Russian Pan-Slav thinker M.N. Katkov, whose home he frequently visited. Clearly, Katkov’s Pan-Slavic ideas deeply influenced Gasprinski and directed his thoughts along similar lines, in terms of the issues that concerned him and the community he identified himself with. From the beginning of his career as a publicist, he always made the whole Turko-Tatar world the focus of his attention. Katkov’s virulent anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim rhetoric at the time of the Cretan rebellion also had a strong impact on Gasprinski. In 1861, while still a teenager, Gasprinski ran away from the lycée with the intention of going to Crete to join the Ottoman Army which was then confronting a rebellion there. He was prevented
from boarding the boat, however and returned to his family in the Crimea. He taught Russian in Bahchesarai until 1871 and then he went to Paris to perfect his French preparatory to going to Istanbul in hopes of entering the War College. In 1874, he arrived in Istanbul, where he remained for one year, but, failing to achieve his goal, he returned to the Crimea. In 1878, he was elected mayor of Bahchesarai and in 1879 he applied for the first time for a licence to publish a newspaper in Turkish. It took several years of work to obtain permission; *Tercüman (The Interpreter)* did not begin to appear until the spring of 1883.

*Tercüman* was probably among the most influential publications ever to appear in the Turkish world. It appeared for more than 30 years and was distributed all over the Turkish-speaking world, inside and outside of the Russian Empire. In keeping with Gasprinski’s Turkist ideology it was written in a language that was somewhat simplified syntactically and which had some of the weight of foreign elements removed from it, but which was based on Ottoman Turkish. This language was meant to be intelligible to Turks of all kinds despite dialectal differences and to a large degree it was successful in that aim among the educated classes. Like Ahundzâde (and Afghani), Gasprinski felt that the development of a native literary language, fully equipped to express all the modern and scientific ideas, was a necessity for the strengthening and improvement of the community. However, Gasprinski defined that community very broadly and tried to develop a literary language that was both suited to the demands of modern times and convenient for all the Turkic-speaking peoples. In pursuit of this goal he chose Ottoman Turkish as a base because it was the most developed of the various dialects, with large numbers of Western and scientific works already having been translated into it.

Gasprinski’s Turkist views are most famously summed up in his slogan ‘Unity in Language, Thought and Deed’. A loyal subject of the Tsar, who never advocated independence and always described the Russians as a good and progressive people from whom the Turks could learn much, he nevertheless advocated an ethno-national awareness and unity of action among Turks. He was strongly opposed to the Russification policies of the Imperial administration and he maintained that the Turks of Russia could never advance unless they learned modern subjects taught through modern instructional methods in their native tongue. Thus, education was a very important part of Gasprinski’s programme, and his efforts galvanized a whole educational movement among the Muslim Turks/Tatars of the Russian Empire, a movement known as the usul-i cedid (new method). Schools of this type were founded throughout the Muslim communities of Russia in the second half of
the century. Their language of instruction was the local language and in addition to teaching traditional subjects like Qur’an recitation, Persian and Arabic, they also taught mathematics, geometry, history other than just the history of Islam and modern Western languages like Russian. Equally important was the fact that in these schools blind memorization and recitation were supposed to be replaced by a more comprehension-based method of instruction. The scholastic and memory-based approach of the traditional schools was always seen as a source of backwardness. This was not only due to its deficiencies as an educational system, but also because it was seen to inculcate a spirit of authoritarianism that sapped the youth of initiative and the capacity for creative thought, combining with the similarly evil effects of living under autocratic rule.

In many ways, then, Gasprinski shared Ahundzâde’s concerns as to the stultifying effects of traditionalism and tyranny. However, he differed from him in that he preferred the ‘new method’ schools to Russian schools for Muslim students. He also differed in that he viewed Islam as a valuable tool for promoting a sense of group solidarity – he did not see religion as inherently inimical to rational thought or national identity. The view that Islam, rightly understood, promoted women’s rights, scientific thought, etc., was one which he supported in Tercüman. He also saw Islam as a useful prop for group solidarity. Nevertheless, his emphasis was more worldly than religious and he advocated a rational intellectual approach based on the observation of facts.

Gasprinski’s impact on the Muslims of the Russian Empire was great. His ideals of cultural and educational modernization in the context of a Turkish ethno-national identity deeply influenced the whole region. Indeed, the non-political reform movement (that is, it didn’t advocate independence) that was very strong all over Muslim Russia until it was politicized at the turn of the century, is known as Cedidism in reference to his ‘new method’. Gasprinski also regularly travelled all over the Muslim world, even as far as the Muslim Turkish communities of China and he maintained close personal contacts with leading intellectual figures in all those communities. Indeed, Tercüman was partially funded by the great Azerbaijani oil magnate Taghiyev, while Yusuf Akçura regarded Gasprinski as his mentor. Furthermore, Gasprinski contributed from time to time to Türk Yurdu when that journal began to appear. (Significantly, Ağaoğlu wrote a lengthy obituary of Gasprinski for Türk Yurdu when the great man died in 1914.) Thus, Gasprinski exercised an important influence on Russia’s Muslim Turkish intellectuals both through the printed word and by personal means. His work brought into sharper focus than ever before the questions of a national language and of national identity for
Russia’s Turks. The theme of unity was re-emphasized and it was unity along ethno-national, not confessional lines. His work was not characterized by Ahundzâde’s virulent hostility to religion and the religious classes. Nor was there any question of a Persian connection or identification. The absence from Gasprinski’s thought of this consideration was probably due in large part to his being a Crimean Tatar and a Sunni.

With regard to the question of religion it is useful to consider briefly two other Azerbaijani reform-minded intellectuals whose attitude towards religion and clerics are revealing of special conditions in Azerbaijan as opposed to other Muslim areas of the Russian Empire. Seyyid ‘Azim Şirvani, born in 1835 in Şemahi, was the scion of an ulema family. He was trained as an âlim in the most traditional Shi’i fashion, spending years of study in Nejef, to which he added additional years of study in Baghdad and Damascus.

Upon his return to the Caucasus, he began to do battle with what he viewed as the benighted condition of the populace. He wrote many poems critical of ignorant superstition, obscurantist practice and sectarian strife. In 1869 he founded an usul-i cedid school in Şemah, which he ran for almost 20 years. He also wrote a textbook for use both in his own school and in the Russian government’s new primary schools in the region. This text was both a Turkish primer and a methodological and literary discussion on how to teach Turkish literature. He submitted this book to the Russian Ministry of Education, but it was never published.

The interesting point about Şirvani is that he devoted considerable amounts of ink to criticizing the ignorance and corruption of the religious classes and advocating the reform of Islam. He, like Ahundzâde, was very concerned with the divisive impact of sectarian differences and inveighed against it in his poems and essays. This is in contrast to another great Azerbaijani modernist, Hasan Bey Melikov Zerdabi who edited the first Turkish language journal in Transcaucasia, Ekinji. His activities were very broad – he was involved in the founding of many schools including a girls’ lycée in Baku, as well as of Azerbaijan’s first theatre and the first opera, also in Baku. His views were strongly influenced by Russian populism and he put great emphasis on reaching the common man. The language he used for Ekinji was simpler even than the simplified syntax used by other publicists like Gasprinski. Zerdabi was much more radical about extirpating foreign terms, especially those of Persian origin; he tried to substitute new words based on Turkish elements. The focus of his work was much more local than that of someone like Gasprinski, who wished to reach the whole Muslim Turkish world, and Zerdabi criticized the language employed by Gasprinski as too Ottomanized and for introducing
alien constructions into the local language. Zerdabi’s publication was often full of strong criticism not just of the Shi’i clergy, but also at times of Shi’i practice itself, which inflamed many Shi’ites, as Zerdabi was a Sunni. On one occasion Ekinji even published criticisms of the Muḥarrəm observances. In his ‘Société persane’ series, Ağaoğlu criticizes Zerdabi very harshly, saying that his strongly pro-Western positions and new language were causing the people of the region to lose their sense of self.

The question of religion and the clergy is one which seems to have had particular characteristics for Azerbaijanis, especially Shi’i Azerbaijanis. All the Azerbaijani writers were especially concerned with both the debased state of the religious classes and the divisive effects of sectarian strife. Gasprinski, on the other hand, concentrated much less on these questions, while Zerdabi, an Azerbaijani Sunni, attacked the Shi’i clergy and Shi’i religious practice without injecting the reformist content about how ‘real’ Islam minimizes these differences. Further, he went to greater lengths than other Muslim reformist intellectuals of Russia to undermine the Persian influence. It seems that the Shi’i Azerbaijanis were very aware of sectarian conflict within the Azerbaijani community and were concerned with finding ways to minimize sectarian schisms. The Sunni Azerbaijanis had a special concern with minimizing Persian cultural influences, while the Shi’ites were wrestling with divided cultural loyalties. But for Gasprinski, coming from the Sunni Crimea, none of these issues was pressing and his concern with them was minimal.

Aside from that difference in attitude, several common themes emerge in the concerns of these Muslim intellectuals who are Russian subjects. They are strongly interested in community rights, not just the rights of individual Muslims within the Russian state, though they are ambivalent or at least circumspect about any question of independence. The development of a rationalist attitude, a strong sense of group identity and solidarity and the creation and implementation of a modern educational curriculum and a literary language to serve these are themes that run through all their works. Other important issues are the relationship to authority both as an intellectual and a political question (i.e., in the arenas of intellectual endeavour and of government) and the question of the interrelation between the position of women and the development of a free and modern society. All of these concerns also appear in Ağaoğlu’s writings and he was certainly aware of the solutions proposed by this earlier generation of reformers, with many of whom he was personally acquainted. Ağaoğlu, however, belonged to that later generation of Russia’s Muslim modernizers for whom nationalism was the dominant ideology. National consciousness, rationalism, liberalism, political rights, representative institutions
and material and social progress were viewed as inextricably linked. In that context one area that was always of special concern to Ağaoğlu was the harmonizing of nationalism with Islam. The thought of the Iranian intellectual Sheykh Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani was very important for Ağaoğlu in that regard.

Sheykh Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani was not a Russian Muslim nor did he spend any significant amount of time that we know of in the Russian Caucasus. Nevertheless, he is a central figure for the defence of Islam in the modern world and his work was well known to the Muslims of Transcaucasia and of the Russian Empire generally. Throughout his career he travelled broadly in the Muslim Middle East and Europe and engaged in a wide variety of political activities and intrigues aimed at strengthening the Muslim world vis-à-vis European encroachment.

His many activities and peregrinations are too various and too complex to give a full account of them here. Briefly, Afghani was born in the Iranian city of Asadabad in 1838 or 1839 and was educated in the traditional Shi'i institutions in Iran and then in Iraq. Leaving Iraq in the mid-1850s, he travelled widely and was very active in many contexts. Of special importance is the fact that he was in India at the time of the Mutiny and those experiences probably informed his strongly anti-British views. In 1869–70 he was in Istanbul and involved in educational projects for the Ottoman government. From 1871 to 1879 he lived in Cairo, where he schemed against the Khedive and engaged in anti-British public speaking. More importantly, however, a circle of young Egyptian disciples developed around him (including Mohammad ‘Abduh), with whom he led discussions on matters relating to the reform of Islam and especially on Islamic philosophy. In 1879, he was expelled to India, where he remained until travelling to France in 1884. While in India he wrote several important treatises, including ‘The Refutation of Materialists’ and ‘The Philosophy of National Unity and the Truth about the Unity of Language’. During his sojourn in Paris, Afghani developed his Pan-Islamic ideas in the journal he produced with ‘Abduh, al-'Urwa al-wuthqa, and at this time he also wrote his famous refutation of Ernest Renan’s attack on Islam. He spent a short period in England in the mid-1880s and then briefly returned to Iran. Between 1887 and 1889 he visited St. Petersburg and Moscow at the invitation of M.N. Katkov. Following this, he returned to Iran and began to denounce the tobacco monopoly granted by the Shah’s government to the British. This led, in 1891, to his expulsion to Iraq, where he remained for a time, carrying on his campaign in ink against the monopoly. In 1891–92 he was back in London, criticizing the Shah in Malkom Khan’s newspaper Qanun. In 1895, he accepted an invitation from the Ottoman Sultan,
Abdülhāmid II, and went to Istanbul. There the Sultan sought to use Afghani to garner support among the Shi'i clerics of Iran for his claims as Caliph at the expense of the Shah. Afghani is implicated in the assassination of Nasreddin Shah in 1896, in that he encouraged a former follower of his to carry out the deed. Following this, the scope for activity allowed Afghani in the Ottoman Empire was quite limited and he died in Istanbul of cancer in 1897.

As Nikki Keddie has shown in her extensive studies of Afghani, it is wrong to regard him as an Islamic reformer in the sense of one who evolved a well-developed program of religious reformation dealing with theological questions and religious practice. Afghani was primarily interested in political questions and he addressed himself to the matter of the 'real' meaning and content of Islam in that connection. The essential problem he wished to confront was that of how to oppose Western incursions into Muslim lands and garner from the West the sciences, military technology, modern education and political institutions necessary for self-strengthening, while at the same time promoting patriotism and a sense of pride in one's identity and discouraging any feelings of inferiority or helplessness with respect to the West.

Group solidarity was, in Afghani's view, first and foremost for resisting the West. Religion could play a crucial role in this regard, as could language or national feeling. The point was to engender a feeling of pride, zeal and loyalty that would have a unifying effect on a given group. In his early writings, as for example in India, Afghani focused more on promoting these feelings among national groups than among Muslims as a whole, a position which he developed later.

After solidarity, the next issue was opening the mind to rational thought which was the basis of modern progress. In pursuit of this goal Afghani developed a vision of Islam that emphasized an idealized conception of the age of the Prophet and an interpretation of the Qur’an in keeping with the tenets of rationality and the advances of science and technology. Scripture should not be interpreted literally, but should be seen metaphorically or allegorically if its literal expression seemed to be at variance with scientific knowledge or contemporary demands. Afghani had been exposed during his education to the Islamic philosophical tradition, which was still alive in Iranian Shi‘i circles, and through it he adopted the notion that revelation and reason were two paths to the same truth. Revelation provided to the ignorant mass of people through symbol what reason alone would cause the elite thinker to discover. By these sorts of arguments, science and scientific thought were made compatible with religion.

Together with the medieval Islamic philosophers, however,
Afghani claimed that while the educated man might interpret scripture allegorically and apply reason and the test of proof to whatever questions confronted him, the ordinary man was incapable of this, and encouraging him in it would likely only lead to his becoming confused and going astray. The evil results of such wandering would be moral and social breakdown and the springing up of all kinds of religious schisms and sects. So here one sees that one of the primary functions of religion for Afghani was as a coercive social force that tended to breed community cohesiveness and group solidarity – things that should be promoted along with modern learning. Afghani also saw religion as an important civilizing force raising peoples, the Arabs in the case of Islam, out of barbarism. Once this was accomplished, the road was open to them for the development of philosophy, by which he meant reason and empirical thought. In his ‘Answer to Renan’, he openly argues this evolutionary approach to religion in general, saying that religion first raises people out of animalistic barbarism and teaches them a higher ethic. This new environment, then, provides the context for the emergence of philosophy. However, as religion has established its moral order by arguing from authority, it poses an obstacle to reason and progress because of its dogma and its insistence on an authoritarian approach. Eventually it will seek to stifle philosophic endeavours and it is only by overcoming this that societies progress. Thus Afghani regarded Luther very highly because he viewed him as the originator of that critical spirit in Europe which led to the liberation of the scientific spirit from the shackles of dogma and argument from authority.

On the other hand, as Nikki Keddie has pointed out, Afghani’s political objective of strengthening the Muslim world led him to eschew anything that might promote divisions in the community. Thus, despite all his ideas about Islam’s encompassing reason and empiricism or governance by consent, he was never willing to undertake a positive program of religious reform that would anger and alienate the traditional ulema. He hoped that reform would come from above without dividing the Muslim community.11

It is clear that Ağaoğlu knew and admired Afghani’s thought. In his autobiography he claims to have met Afghani while he was a student in Paris and to have entertained the Sheykh as a guest in his house for several weeks. While there appears to be no evidence of Afghani’s having visited Paris at this time, it is just possible that he met Afghani in England in 1892 while Afghani was living there and Ağaoğlu had crossed the channel to participate in the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists.

Ağaoğlu’s writings in this period indicate that he had been actively following the question of the tobacco monopoly and the ensuing
protests, which might also have made him aware of Afghani. In any case, Ağaoğlu wrote a laudatory article concerning Afghani for Kaspi in 1899, and it is possible that the anonymous piece on Afghani which appeared in Türk Yurdu in 1914/15 was also written by Ağaoğlu. In his series of articles entitled ‘ Türk Âlemi’, Ağaoğlu discusses the Islamist movement and attributes the development of its modern form to Afghani, saying that it was Afghani who got the Islamist movement away from looking at Western pre-eminence and Islamic decline as a primarily moral question. Many of Afghani’s views are reflected in Ağaoğlu’s positions, as will be evident from a later, more complete discussion of Ağaoğlu’s writings. For the moment we may briefly point out that he shared Afghani’s belief in the unity of truth, namely that revelation and reason lead to the same things. Ağaoğlu, too, had been exposed to the Shi’i philosophical tradition in his uncle’s home and as his French articles show, he was well aware of a rationalist tradition in Islam and in Iran particularly. He also shared Afghani’s evolutionary view of religion, where religion was a civilizing impetus that lifted people from barbarism and set them on an historical path towards reason and progress. Like Afghani and many other Muslim modernists, he saw the future in a kind of Islamic Protestantism that would break the back of dogmatism. However, Ağaoğlu came to see nationalism and national consciousness as an integral part of that process. Like Afghani he valued unity and solidarity and abhorred sectarian strife in the Islamic world, sharing Afghani’s view that such strife arose from false interpretations of religion. On the other hand, he did not fully share Afghani’s lack of faith in the common man, nor his unwillingness to alienate the conservative ulema. He was ready from the days of his first French publications to criticize the ulema, especially the lower clergy, very harshly. On several occasions he even advocated that the state take control of the education of the lower end of the religious class, the mullahs and ahunds, to ensure that ignorance and corruption should not prevail. He viewed it as one of the obligations of a nationalist movement to see to it that a true and reformed understanding of Islam be inculcated in the populace.

In many ways Ağaoğlu’s work attempts to meld nationalist and Islamist analyses by talking about the important ways in which religion reinforces group solidarity and cultural identity. Indeed, he gives the two factors of language and religion pride of place in respect of their role in creating identity. Conversely, he notes that the strength and well-being of the various parts of the Islamic world go to make up the strength and well-being of that Islamic world as a whole, so that if individual Muslim nations grow strong, this is to the good of the whole ümmet (the community of Muslim believers). It is suggestive to compare these views of Ağaoğlu’s with the argument
made by Afghani in ‘The Philosophy of National Unity and the Truth about Unity of Language’, in which he says first that ‘there is no happiness except in nationality and there is no nationality except in language’. To this he later adds: ‘In the human world the bonds that have been extensive... have been two. One is this same unity of language of which nationality and national unity consist, and the other is religion.’

That Ağaoğlu was aware of this article of Afghani’s is beyond doubt since a Turkish translation of it was printed in 1912/13 in Türk Yurdu, an Ottoman journal with which Ağaoğlu was closely connected.

What Ağaoğlu really shared with Afghani was his political nature. Ağaoğlu’s approach was different in that, even though he placed strong emphasis on the crucial role of the intelligentsia in bringing about the changes he desired, his focus was more on revolutionizing the minds of the mass of people and he never attempted to pursue his aims through consorting with despots. Nevertheless, like Afghani, his discussions of religion were more ideological than theological – he was more interested in developing a framework that would support and accommodate his political ends than in working out a new system of religious belief and practice. As a closer examination of Ağaoğlu’s works will show, he basically removes the whole theological content of Islam from discussion before looking at the practice and spread of Islam in an historical light as a means of making his arguments.
In addition to his Oriental studies and sojourns in the fashionable salons of Paris, Ağaoğlu also took a licence in law and met and associated with Young Turks in exile like Ahmet Riza. In fact, Ahmet Riza had come to Paris in 1889 and had begun publishing the Union and Progress organ *Mesveret (Consultation)* in 1895, while also writing articles which appeared in the French positivist periodical *Le Journal occidental*. Ağaoğlu’s daughter, Süreyya, records that her father often mentioned having spent hours in conversation and debate with him in the Luxembourg Gardens. Then, early in 1894, having completed his studies at the École Pratique and a few months prior to the death of his mentor, Darmesteter, Ağaoğlu received word of the death of his father and set out on the return voyage to the Caucasus. This time he went by way of Istanbul and spent four months there with liberal-minded intellectuals and statesmen, some of them associates of the Young Turks with whom he had consorted in Paris. These included Mizanlı Murat and Münif Paşa. Münif Paşa was a former Minister of Education, mildly liberal and something of an encyclopaedist. He was flirting with the Committee of Union and Progress at the time of Ağaoğlu’s Istanbul sojourn, as were many upper-level Ottoman bureaucrats at that juncture. Murat Bey, too, was beginning his association with the Young Turks, though he was still an advisor to Sultan Abdülhamid and was hoping either to influence him to reform, or to be present for a *coup d’état*. Akçura relates that Ağaoğlu and Murat Bey engaged in lengthy discussions while Ahmet was in Istanbul. The significance of this lies in the fact that in the early and middle 1890s, just when the activities of the Committee of Union and Progress were really starting to heat up and take shape, Ağaoğlu had relatively extensive contacts with its two principle leaders, Ahmet Riza and Mizanlı Murat Bey. Furthermore, Ağaoğlu’s old friend from Petersburg days, Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde, was in Istanbul at that time as a student at the Military
Medical School, having enrolled there in 1889. Hüseyinzâde was one of the original founders of the Committee of Union and Progress and had considerable responsibility for organizational matters. He almost certainly helped to put Ağaoğlu into contact with leading members of the Committee. Later, after his return to Baku in 1904, Hüseyinzâde would work closely with Ağaoğlu and when other Unionists, Abdullah Çevdet and Ahmet Kemal, also came to the Caucasus and began to work with Hüseyinzâde, they would provide even closer ties to the Committee of Union and Progress for Ağaoğlu. This certainly influenced his thinking and no doubt made it easier for Ağaoğlu to resettle in Istanbul a few years later.

Upon reaching the Caucasus, Ağaoğlu went to Tiflis where, according to Akçura, he took up an appointment as a French teacher in the gymnasium. Other sources say he first worked for a time as a bureaucrat in the records office of the Governor of Baku. In his first year back in the Caucasus he wrote a couple of brief columns relating to political events in Iran which he sent back to Paris and which were published in the Journal des débats. He also continued to write articles for Kavkaz (The Caucasus). He requested permission at this time to publish a periodical to be called Meşrîk (The Orient), but this was denied. In 1896, he went to his hometown of Şuşa and took up a post teaching French at the realschule, which he held for one year. It was probably at this time that he met and decided to marry the daughter of Abdurrahman Veziroğlu, Sitare Hanım. Sitare’s mother was opposed to her daughter’s marrying a man with such new-fangled ways that the whole town called him ‘Frenk Ahmet’, but after her death the match went forward. The Vezirovs were a noble and wealthy family of the Şuşa region and the marriage made Haşim Bey Veziroğlu, the master of the city’s Russo-Tatar elementary school, his brother-in-law. Veziroğlu later became an active journalist like Ahmet Bey himself and the two even collaborated on the newspaper Irsad (Guidance) for a time. During these years in the Caucasus, the first four of Ağaoğlu’s five children were born: Süreyya, Tezer, Abdurrahman and Samet (the last, Gültekin, was born after the move to Istanbul).

After the year in Şuşa, Ahmet Bey returned to Baku where he taught French in the realschule and in the Higher School of Commerce, while also publishing in Kaspii (The Caspian). About 1901, he published a monograph in Russian entitled Women According to Islam and in the Islamic World, in which he argued that the seclusion and the subordination of women were detrimental to society and un-Islamic as well. Three years later, he published İslam va Akhund, a play in Persian inveighing against the harmful effects of clerical corruption. After the 1905 Revolution, he became...
the co-editor or sole editor of a number of Azeri-language Baku dailies – Hayat (Life), Irşad and Terakki (Progress). In addition to his writing and publishing, Ağaoğlu was very active during these turbulent years in politics and government; he was elected to the Baku City Duma, served on many committees dealing with administrative reform and land rights and helped organize political parties and guerrilla resistance groups. On the cultural level he tirelessly toured the Caucasus, helping to establish schools and educational foundations throughout the region. Finally, early in 1909, increased repression by the Russian government forced him to flee to Istanbul where he later brought his family and settled.

The first issue of the Baku daily Hayat (Life), dated 7 June 1905. Ağaoğlu co-edited this newspaper with Hüseyinzâde Ali (Turan).

The Caucasus Ağaoğlu returned to in the 1890s was a world in rapid flux, soon to explode into revolutionary and sectarian violence. It was a period of enormous activity for the people of Russian Azerbaijan in every area – politics, culture, intellectual life, publishing, journalism. Ağaoğlu quickly became involved in a great many arenas, and the volume and importance of his activity increased with the increasing volatility of the situation. Between 1894 and 1909, when he emigrated to Istanbul, Ahmet Ağaoğlu passed through many fundamental moments in his life and development. He would publish his first books, become involved in the editorial aspects of journalism for the first time, do his first work as a political organizer, get elected to public office, have his first taste of real violence, marry and have children. It is also during this period that his thoughts on the question of identity would start moving towards the Turkish world.
IDENTITY REVISITED

At the turn of the century there were a great many structural factors, which we will discuss below, which lent themselves to the fostering of national feeling in the Russian Caucasus. The interesting question in Ağaoğlu’s case is the transition away from the basically Persian identity he had espoused in France, towards embracing a Turkish identity. There are several factors here that are probably active. First it is important to note that the Persian identification was one not only of religion, but also of culture – high culture. Persian had been the language of high literary expression and of the law courts in the region for a very long time, but it was not the spoken language nor was it the language of the common man. For the Muslim élites of Russian Transcaucasia, there was a growing sense as the century progressed that one of the most basic keys to the improvement of the community was increased modern education. This implied the removal of harmful superstitions, the introduction of non-religious subjects of study and, above all, an increase in literacy. It became more and more evident that if one wanted to achieve large-scale literacy or reach large numbers of one’s countrymen, it was far quicker and easier to do it in their native language. Even Ahundzâde, who belonged to an earlier generation and who really had been born in Iran, the son of an Iranian subject, wrote his great plays, stinging social commentaries, in Azeri Turkish (see Chapter Four). That is, while there was a tradition of intellectuals identifying with and taking an interest in Iran, while indeed there was a tradition of Azerbaijanis writing critiques of Persian life and religion, nevertheless there was a clear and growing tendency throughout the century to develop an Azeri literary language as a fundamental instrument of reform. Growing concern for the awakening and improvement of the population as a whole, coupled with the acceptance of the Western curriculum, that is, a non-religious curriculum, led to a move away from the traditional religio-cultural languages of Persian and Arabic towards the increased use of the local language and Russian.

Second, developing a sense of unity in the Muslim community was a significant goal of the reform-minded, particularly in the face of increasing competition and pressure from Russians and especially Armenians. Sectarian differences between Shi’a and Sunni had long been a source of conflicts and disunity and so the minimizing of these differences was viewed as desirable – the move toward an ethno-linguistic identity tended to downplay such sectarian differences. For Azerbaijanis, any identification with Persian culture and with Iran contained a sectarian element. Moreover, from a purely practical point of view, most reform-minded Russian Muslims in this period saw the Russian Empire as their field of
action. First, it was where they lived and, second, Russia probably appeared to be a more advanced society than either Iran or the Ottoman Empire. But, as the vast majority of Russia’s Muslims were speakers of Turkic languages, the Russian focus was also a contributing factor in a move towards a more Turkish identity for Azerbaijanis.

Finally, between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, it was the Ottoman Empire that had been undergoing a much longer and more profound process of reform and modernization. Furthermore, despite its many profound problems, the Ottoman Empire was in a stronger position in the world power game than Iran. When Ağaoğlu was writing his ‘Société persane’ articles in France, Iran was in the throes of the Tobacco Protest and it must have seemed a glorious and hopeful moment for the reform-minded patriotic devotee of Iran. The foreign interloper was repulsed, the autocratic ruler forced to open his ears to the will of the people. Since that moment, however, foreign influence in Iran had only increased and efforts at reform seemed to have failed or been stifled. While the Ottoman Empire had won a war against Greece in 1897–98 and had succeeded in avoiding a foreign intervention in regard to the Armenian question, Iran had been divided into spheres of influence by Russia and Great Britain in 1907. Abdülhamid’s autocratic ways might be hated, but his arms were at least minimally victorious and his Empire possessed a substantial number of Western-oriented, highly educated and patriotic intellectuals who were a significant force for change, as later events were to demonstrate.

All of these considerations probably contributed to Ağaoğlu’s move towards Turkism, not to mention the fact that Aryan associations would not have had the cachet in the Caucasus that they did in Paris. It is important to understand, however, that the central issue remained self-strengthening and that the whole question of identity – be it based on Islam, Iran, or Turkishness – was enormously fluid at that time. Moreover, it was not only the intellectual abstraction of identity that was fluid; populations and ideas moved with considerable ease across the borders and the borders themselves had been known to move in the not-so-distant past and would do so again in the not-so-distant future.

The Revolutionary Context and Political Activities
As was discussed in some detail in Chapter One, the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of rapid structural and economic change in the Caucasus. Russian rule had meant the increasing administrative and commercial integration of the Caucasus at the same time as it had brought an influx of non-indigenous population and a decrease in the political power
of Muslims. Muslims saw their traditional avenues to power and achievement marginalized and they found themselves in stiff competition, often on unequal terms, with other groups for access to the new avenues. These conditions naturally led to a process of self-questioning, which, in one of the paradoxes of such quests for the self in the context of modernization, was increasingly conducted and answered in terms of the very outside influences that had provoked it in the first place. What began in the third quarter of the century as a programme of cultural awakening – a call for ‘modern’ education, for the development of the local literary language, for the popular spread of education, for the introduction of ‘modern’ (i.e., Western) literary forms – burgeoned at the end of the century into a movement that included specific political as well as cultural goals. It also led to the creation of political parties and labour movements and constituted the beginnings of a sense of specifically national identity.

Miroslav Hroch, in writing about the development of nineteenth-century European national movements, postulates that nation-formation and national movements have a number of definable characteristics. In the first place there must be a process of modernization that breaks down old feudal and patriarchal relationships. This would especially include increased contacts in the form of better lines of communication, expanding markets, increased administrative presence, industrialization and increased mobility. At the same time the process must involve the emergence of a ‘subjective need of a growing number of individuals to find a new object of identification after the loss of their traditional social and political ties to the village, to the feudal lord or to the guild’. He further points out that the difference between a modern national attitude and other forms of patriotism is that the object of the former is the sovereign people, a community of equal citizens. Hroch goes on to note that there are two models of nation-building: a ruling-nation model and a small- or subject-nation model. The second type is relevant here to our discussion of conditions in Russian Azerbaijan. In the small-nation type there are three preconditions:

1. The absence of a ruling class of the same ethnic group;
2. The absence of an administrative unit coincident with the extent of their ethnic population;
3. The absence of cultural production in their own literary language.

Under these circumstances, Hroch notes, capitalism and modernization tend to result in the group’s being dominated by the bourgeoisie of another ethnic group. The patriots of such groups ‘struggle to provide the missing attributes of full national existence’, i.e., equal rights, national language and culture, fair economic
share, political autonomy. But the success of their movement, of their agitation with a broader public, depends upon the presence of a nationally relevant conflict of group interests, that is, social conflict that also cuts along ethno-national lines.\(^{19}\)

Russian Azerbaijan in the period we are concerned with met all these criteria admirably. In particular, the fact that ‘Tatars’ tended to make up the lowest, least skilled ranks of industrial workers;\(^{20}\) that government posts in administration and schools, especially at the higher ranks, were virtually closed to Muslims; that the oil industry and large-scale trade were dominated by Russians, Armenians and foreigners; that publications and instruction in Azeri were limited; that Muslim religious texts were subject to the review of the censors in Odessa while the Armenian Church was allowed to censor itself – all these tended to create in Russian Azerbaijan the kind of nationally relevant social conflict described by Hroch.

At the time of Ağaoğlu’s return to the Caucasus this process was reaching a head. The twentieth century in Russian Azerbaijan opened with labour unrest and political demands respecting the rights of individuals that quickly transmuted into ethnic conflict and political demands respecting the rights of ethnic communities. Labour unrest in the industrial centres, notably Baku, Tiflis and Batum, was sparked by the depression in the petroleum industry of 1901–1903 and politicized by social democratic groups of diverse ethnicity who established committees in those centres. The Bibi-Eibat oil fields outside of Baku were particularly well organized. The unrest consisted of strikes, as well as some acts of violence and sabotage, and had improved working conditions as their goal. These strikes were quite successful and resulted in the signing in Baku in December of 1904 of the first labour contract in Russia following a general strike. Though there were political demands such as freedom of expression and association, convocation of a constituent assembly, manhood suffrage, etc., the sense of this movement was basically economic and the collective agreement with the consortium of oil producers granted higher wages, a nine-hour workday, compensation for strike days, half-salary sick-pay and other such benefits. At this time one sees worker solidarity triumphing over ethnic divisions, with Armenians, Georgians, Russians and Tatars standing together. This was the highpoint of the Revolution in the Caucasus from the worker’s point of view. There were further strikes in various sectors in Baku in May 1905, and by 1906 Transcaucasian workers had the best conditions of employment anywhere in the Empire. However, starting in February of 1905, much of the activity in the Caucasus began to focus on ethnic and communal divisions and the labour movement’s unity was undermined.
At the same time, there was a general atmosphere of rising and uncontrolled violence in the Caucasus. Since 1896 the Russian administration of Nicholas II had been represented in the Caucasus in the person of Governor-General Golitsyn who had been responsive to Muslim demands for better and more equal treatment for their community and who had gradually been pursuing a policy of Russification towards the Armenian community of Transcaucasia. Then, in 1903, the strikes, attacks, kidnappings and industrial sabotage of the labour unrest were augmented by a sudden upsurge in Armenian national sentiment. This was brought on by the government’s attempt to confiscate the property of the Armenian Church in June of 1903. It resulted in a strong, spontaneous anti-Russian reaction among the Armenians, beginning with peaceful demonstrations and quickly escalating to violent protests. The Dashnaksutium organization began to form self-defence committees throughout Transcaucasia in the summer of that year and took over leadership of these protests. The Hunchaks meanwhile carried out terrorist attacks and in October three Hunchaks attempted to assassinate Golitsyn and succeeded in severely wounding him. The Dashnaks, at their third congress, held in Sofia in early 1904, formally defined the defence of the Armenian community in Russian Transcaucasia by means of propaganda, armed struggle and terrorism as one of their missions. This represented a major change from their stated goals since their inception in 1900, which had focused on the improvement of living conditions and the attainment of liberty for Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. Throughout 1904 and 1905 the Dashnaks assumed leadership of the Armenian national movement in Russia and continued to carry out terrorist attacks.

In February of 1905 these tensions erupted into interethnic violence in Baku, rapidly extending to the other cities and into the countryside. The so-called Armenian-Tatar War – a terrible outbreak characterized by massacre, reprisal and counter-reprisal both in the city and in the countryside, with the local authorities apparently unable or unwilling to restore order – was later said by political activists on both sides to have been connived at by the central government as a means of diverting the revolutionary cause aimed at governmental reforms and improved labour conditions. It is unclear how the rioting and bloodshed began in Baku – European accounts from the period seem to indicate that a vendetta between an Armenian and a ‘Tatar’ family led to the death of the ‘Tatar’, and that rioting broke out in the wake of the dead man’s funeral cortège. The massacres of Armenians in Baku went on for days and the Russian authorities made only half-hearted attempts to halt it. Finally, Cossack regiments were mobilized and brought in and a precarious order was restored. An attempt was made to pacify the population by calling on the Eparch of Yerevan, the Shi’i Sheikulislam and the Sunni Mufti, who paraded through the
streets of Baku and then harangued the faithful in the churches and mosques of the city.\textsuperscript{22}

This was the first of a number of such ‘peace gatherings’ and ‘peace commissions’ held over the coming year as violence continued to erupt and re-erupt throughout the Caucasus. The Dashnaks organized the Armenians, arming the villagers, imposing revolutionary taxes, creating quick-response defence forces and terrorist attack squads. The Governor of Baku, Prince Nakashidze, was assassinated in late spring by Dashnaks, for what they viewed as his complicity in the February pogroms.\textsuperscript{23} A second and even more dreadful orgy of violence took place in Baku in late August of 1905, resulting in the burning of the oilfields, and the trouble also spread to Şuşa at this time. There was unrest in Ganje and Tiflis in November and the troubles continued in the Caucasus until the spring of 1906. While it is difficult to know the numbers of the fallen, they clearly rose to the thousands.

Both the labour unrest and the ethnic conflict took place, of course, in the wider context of the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution of 1905. In general, the highly industrialized character of parts of Transcaucasia, especially Baku, but also Batum, Tiflis and other centres, made Transcaucasia, together with Poland, one of the most active revolutionary areas. The general strike in Baku in 1904 and the victory of organized labour on that occasion took place even before Bloody Sunday. There was new unrest in the region when news of the massacre got through and, as we have noted, that was followed by the first salvo in the Armenian-Tatar War in February. The city had been placed under a state of exception in 1902 and under martial law in February of 1905. The events of 6–9 February had demonstrated the pressing need for reform in the Caucasus, even without taking account of the preceding labour and political unrest.

Then, on 18 February, following the Bloody Sunday massacre, the Tsar issued three decrees meant to pacify his subjects. One was the ‘Bulygin’ Rescript, which promised elections for an empire-wide legislative body which would develop and discuss legislative reform projects (these, however, were to function on the basis of the autocracy and Russia’s historical tradition and were to address specific needs and issues, not broad theoretical ones). This was accompanied by a proclamation calling on loyal subjects to aid the government in rooting out seditious elements and reinforcing the autocracy. Finally, the Tsar issued an ukaze, in which he invited his loyal subjects to submit any recommendations as to how to improve the well-being of the populace or the functioning of the government. Despite the limited nature of the legislative reforms proposed by the Rescript, it was the first step towards any
kind of popular participation in government and was received with optimism by the liberals. The ukaze was interpreted as the granting of the long-denied right of petition and led to a flood of such documents being submitted to the regime.24

The landed classes and bourgeoisie of the Caucasus were not slow to respond to these developments. However, just as the worker’s movement had largely split along ethno-national lines by early 1905, so too the liberals tended to present their demands by national community. Thus the Georgians sent a petition from the Assembly of Nobles in Kutais to the Ministry of the Interior in February, while the Armenians met in the Yerevan Duma in March and held a congress in Tiflis in April, resulting in two sets of demands. The Azerbaijanis were no less forward and the Baku City Duma decided in March to send a delegation to Interior Minister Bulygin. The delegation was intended to represent the whole Caucasus, not just the city of Baku and requests were sent out for other cities to select their representatives. Ahmet Ağaoğlu was among those chosen from Baku, as were Ali Merdan Bey Topçubaşı and Ferruh Bey Vezirov (a close friend and in-law of Ağaoğlu’s). The representatives put together a petition which included economic, cultural and political demands on behalf of Transcaucasian Muslims, including greater representation in the city dumas, trading privileges similar to those vouchsafed Russian merchants, access to high office in the civil service and military, the right to publish and educate in Azeri, reform of the courts and provision for landless peasants, among others. The delegation departed for Petersburg in April and was received by the Minister.25 At the same time other Muslim delegations were arriving in Petersburg from all over the Russian Empire. Reşit Ibragimov, a former qadi at Orenburg, together with Yusuf Akçura, had been very active in 1904, travelling around Russia’s Muslim communities trying to organize a unified front. Their request for permission to organize a Muslim congress was denied, but when Muslim delegates from all over the Empire began to arrive in Petersburg to present their petitions, they got together and talked about the desirability of meeting and discussing matters together. Many of the representatives were also received by the Prime Minister, Count Witte, at this time. Ahmet Aghayev (to use his Russian name), Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde, Ali Merdan Bey Topçubaşı and others met in the Petersburg home of Reşit Ibragimov and settled on the forming of a political organization for the Muslims of the Russian Empire, the İttifak-ı Müslüman (Muslim Union). At the same time, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov was appointed viceroy of the Caucasus. Topçubaşı was able to obtain an audience with him and got the Count to grant him permission to bring out a daily Azeri newspaper in Baku, Hayat.26 All the Muslim delegates who had come to Petersburg to present petitions were invited at this
time to attend the wedding of the daughter of one of their number on 20 May in Çistay. Additional invitations were sent out all over the Empire. It was here decided that the first congress, as opposed to planning session, of the new group should take place in Nijni Novograd in August.

That meeting took place from 15 to 20 August on board a boat, as the local governor refused to grant permission for the congress. The congress formally accepted the notion of the creation of the İttifak-i Müslimin and adopted a resolution calling for Muslims of the Russian Empire to unite to achieve social, economic and political goals; for the equality of Muslim and Russian subjects; for freedom of association and press; for security of life and property; for constitutional monarchy; and for distributions of land to landless peasants. In the fall of 1905, Ağaoğlu and Topçubaşı again travelled to Petersburg where, together with Ibragimov they drafted the proposals for the new party’s constitution and platform.

The second All-Russian Muslim Congress was held in Petersburg from 13 to 23 January 1906. Again official permission was denied. At this congress the proposed constitution and programme were read and debated and the decision was made to associate with the Russian Kadet Party. Ibragimov, on behalf of the All-Russian Muslim Congress, took a quite moderate tone, stressing its loyalty to the Tsar in letters requesting permission for the third congress. He specifically denounced Pan-Islamism in this request. Yet despite this professed lack of interest in Islamic solidarity, one notable action taken by the first two congresses was the recognition of Shi’ism as a fifth mezhep of Islam. The third congress would finally be held in August of 1906. This one was officially recognized and at it the İttifak-i Müslimin first came into official existence (despite the fact that some of its members, like Topçubaşı, had already been elected to the first Duma as Kadets and had even signed the Vyburg Declaration). In fact, there was some opposition to its establishment from older delegates, who wanted to focus on the cultural agenda. Nevertheless, the younger members overcame the reluctance of the older men and the new party, not surprisingly, adopted a platform quite similar to the Kadets’. Ağaoğlu participated in this congress at which Ibragimov was taken to task for having denounced Pan-Islamism in his letter to the government. Topçubaşı was named chairman of the congress and Yusuf Akçura secretary. A certain tension was manifest between Topçubaşı and Ağaoğlu due to the fact that Topçubaşı had organized the selection of the official Baku delegate to the congress by the procedure of calling together 15 leading men of wealth in Baku and having them choose one of their number. Ağaoğlu denounced this method of proceeding in his newspaper at that time, İryad.
In the meantime, while all this was going on, Ağaoğlu was very active back in Baku. Topçubaşı had obtained permission to publish an Azeri newspaper in April of 1905. The millionaire Taghiyev agreed to fund it and it went into print in June of the same year. Ağaoğlu and Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde were its editors-in-chief and it carried many stories in its pages covering the various all-Muslim congresses.

In Baku and in other cities and villages of the Caucasus the Azerbaijani-Armenian violence escalated throughout the summer and fall of 1905. After the first bloody round in February and a second outbreak in May, a peace committee was formed to investigate the causes of the inter-communal violence and to make recommendations for securing the future peace and tranquillity of the city. Leading men from both communities came forth to serve as guarantors of the peace, taking on responsibility for any future damages caused by members of their community. Ahmet Ağaoğlu was one of these guarantors for the Azerbaijani Muslim community of Baku (as his uncle before him had assumed the role of guarantor to the Russians for the good behaviour of Şuşa’s Muslim community during the Russo-Turkish War). In roughly this same period, Ağaoğlu travelled to Ganje, where severe violence had erupted, to address the populace. Speaking at the mosque one evening he pleaded with the local people to restore calm and peace to the city. He reminded them that ‘The animals of God’s creation, be they ever so savage and wild, will tear apart other animals, but they will never harm members of their own species’.

Yet despite his urging calm and an end to bloodletting, we know that at the same time (i.e., the second half of 1905), Ahmet Bey was actively creating an illegal secret society called Difâî, a kind of Muslim ‘self-defence’ organization, in response to armed Dashnak activities in the Caucasus. Naki Keykurun states in his memoirs that this organization was founded in Ganje and that Ağaoğlu played a key role in its creation on that very same visit to Ganje during which he made his plea for peace. Hüseyin Baykara claims that Difâî was actually started in Baku by Ağaoğlu who then helped to set up cells in Ganje and other cities. In any case both sources claim that Difâî practised terrorism against officials who were seen as acting in a manner hostile to Azerbaijani Muslim interests, or favourable to Armenians. Difâî organized the assassinations of a number of Russian officials including the chief of police at Ganje, the Russian general Galashchapov while he was visiting Tiflis, a military court prosecutor in Şuşa and others. The purpose of Difâî and the perceived pressures which gave rise to it are laid out in its beyannname, or manifesto:

The Dashnak Party, structured as a military force and at the same time equipped with modern arms and even cannon, is pressuring all
the Armenians on the one hand with armed force and the Caucasian government itself on the other. And it is pursuing its most fundamental goal; and that is, after they have crushed all the Muslims in the Caucasus and finished them off, to occupy their lands. The plan of the Armenians, after achieving their ends, is to create in the Caucasus a national (millet) independent administration for the Armenian people. Our party’s goal is to create sincere brotherhood and unity among the separate Caucasian peoples. Any time the Dashnak Party clearly states with honesty and sincerity the real agenda of their movement and activities and if that program does not include points that would violate the freedom and independence of the separate Caucasian nations (milletler), then we will always be ready to extend our own united hand to them. But if, on the contrary, (the Dashnak Party) continues deceitfully and cruelly in its attacks on the Muslims, as it has before, it will get a suitable answer from us and the Caucasus will become the scene of endless, unremitting bloodshed.

Let the Dashnak Party be sure that at no time will we give way to the foundation of the happiness and well-being of the Armenian nation (millet) on the ruination and ashes of our own nation (millet).^33

Difâî remained active until the end of 1908 when some of its members were picked up by the police under Stolypin’s regime and deported to Turkistan and its other members were basically absorbed into the new Musavat Party. But by that time Ağaoğlu was already feeling the Russian government’s pressure and was preparing to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire. Besides his publishing activities, his work with the All-Russian Muslim Congresses, the petitions of the Muslims of the Caucasus, Difâî and the peace committees, Ağaoğlu also travelled to Petersburg with three other Azerbaijanis in 1907 to represent the interests of his community at hearings which were considering a project for the expulsion from some lands in the neighbourhood of Baku’s oil wells of the Muslim population who lived there. After 35 days of strenuous representations on all sides with the Armenians and a number of Russians favouring expulsion, the project was finally rejected.^34 Many considered this among the most important of Ağaoğlu’s contributions during this time.

All in all, it was a period of extraordinary political activity, unrest and violence in Baku and in the Caucasus generally and Ağaoğlu was crucially involved in almost every aspect of it.

Azerbaijani Publishing at the Turn of the Century

and Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s Journalistic Endeavours

The period from 1905 to 1908, besides being one of great political and social movement, was also one of greatly increased openness which saw an explosion in the Muslim press. The Muslims of the
Caucasus, and of Azerbaijan specifically, were at the forefront in this regard. But what appeared to explode onto the scene in 1905 actually had its roots in a more modest (but nonetheless impressive, relative to the preceding quarter century) upsurge of the press among Russia’s Muslims which had begun in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Ağaoğlu began to play a role in this almost at once, and when the press in Azerbaijan really took off following the disturbances of 1905, he played a central role.

The first note of the charge had been sounded by the appearance of Ekinji (The Ploughman) in 1875. This was an Azeri-language serial published thrice-weekly, in principle, out of Baku. It was the first Azeri-language periodical approved by the Tsarist government, and was produced by Hasan Bey Melikov Zerdabi, who had to travel to Istanbul to obtain the Ottoman-character type, the first of its kind in Transcaucasia. The journal was published irregularly over a period of two years and carried articles on all manner of subjects. To begin with, Zerdabi and his wife did all the work of the journal alone, but later some noted literary figures became contributors to it.

Both in form and content, Ekinji tried to reach a wide audience. The paper carried many pieces of general educative value and was written in a very clear, simple style that had considerable influence on other Azerbaijani intellectuals. Indeed, this style helped shape the new Azeri literary language which was then evolving to replace Persian as the language of learning in the region. In keeping with the tradition of Ahundzâde, the paper also carried strong attacks on the Shi’i ulema as a self-interested force for backwardness. (Indeed, Zerdabi had established Azerbaijan’s first theatre and it was through his efforts that Ahundzâde’s plays were first staged in Baku.)

Ekinji was shut down by the Tsar’s government in connection with the Russo-Turkish War and for a considerable time the Transcaucasian Muslim community was left without much of a voice. Between 1877 and 1903 the sole Azeri-language publications available were three monthly journals Ziya (Light), Ziya-i Kafkasya (Light of the Caucasus) and Keşkül (The Beggar’s Bowl) produced in Tiflis and Samiha by the highly religious brothers Unsizade. These periodicals used Persian, Arabic, and a very hybridized Azeri, treated religious and literary topics, and had very little diffusion, though Keşkül did have connections with the West. They appeared one after the other between the years 1879 and 1891 and were augmented by the Russian-language Kavkaz out of Tiflis, which, although a publication of the governor’s office, printed articles by writers from the various subject communities.

The next real step in the development of a Transcaucasian Muslim press came with the creation of the Russian language daily newspaper,
Kaspî, in 1881. The Azerbaijani oil millionaire Zeynalabidin Taghiyev bought both the press and the paper, and when the original Russian editor died he put it into the hands of Ali Merdan Bey Topçubaş, who was the brother-in-law of Zerdabi and a friend of Ağaoğlu’s from Petersburg days. The paper quickly took on a modernist tone and many leading Azerbaijani intellectuals contributed to it, including Ağaoğlu who wrote for it regularly, even after he became editor of Hayat. In its heyday it had a circulation of as much as 10,000, a not insignificant achievement for a daily paper.

In 1883 the Crimean Tatar, Ismail Bey Gasprinski, began to publish Terüman (The Interpreter), which had a clear Turkist vision. A bi-monthly published in Bahchesarai in the Crimea, Gasprinski’s journal focused mostly on cultural issues such as education and religious reform and advocated the creation of a common literary language for all Turkic peoples, for which the language of the journal itself was supposed to be a model. Relying heavily on Ottoman Turkish, it employed a simplified syntax and eliminated much of the Persian and Arabic vocabulary. It was broadly circulated not only in the Caucasus but also in the Ottoman Empire, among Muslims all over the Russian Empire, in Iran and in Egypt. At the beginning of the twentieth century it counted some 5,000 subscriptions, quite apart from the production for sale on the streets. Although it received substantial support from Taghiyev and other wealthy Muslim subjects of Russia, its enormous success also contributed significantly to sustaining it. It drew notable contributors from all over Russia and from the Ottoman Empire as well, though Ağaoğlu was not one of them. Along with the Paris-based Union and Progress publication Mesveret, it was long the most influential Turkish-language publication. Later, the Istanbul journal Türk Yurdu (Turkish Homeland) also became an important, widely circulated periodical.

The last representative of this opening round of publications was Şark-i Rus (The Russian East), a thrice-weekly publication out of Tiflis. In Azeri, it began to appear early in 1903 and went out of print towards the end of the following year. Owned and operated by the Western-educated Mohammed Ağa Şahtahtinski, this publication was not terribly impressive and had as its major theme its editor’s ideas about reforming the alphabet using numbers to represent the Turkish vowels. Nevertheless, Ağaoğlu and some other noted figures of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia did write for it from time to time.

In 1905, with the liberalization of the regime that came about as a result of the revolutionary disturbances that had begun in 1903, the real press explosion in Transcaucasia began and Baku became the centre of this new phenomenon. Ağaoğlu played a key role in this from the start. As we have seen, he was involved with many of the earlier press enterprises in Tiflis and Baku and now he
became chief editor, together with his close friend and associate Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde, of Baku’s first Azeri-language daily, *Hayat*. In April of 1905, Ali Merdan Bey Topçubaşı had been able to get permission for this paper from the newly appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus, Vorontsov-Dashkov, and he had quickly returned from St. Petersburg to get the project under way. However, his real involvement in the paper was rather nominal. The money to back its publication came from the ubiquitous oil magnate Taghiyev; witness the fact that it was housed in the same building as the other newspaper he owned, *Kaspii*. The real editors, that is those who headed up the paper’s redaction, were Ağaoğlu and Hüseyinzâde. The first issue appeared on 20 June 1905. This was prior to the new law on censorship of 24 November 1905, which abolished pre-publication censorship, opting instead to bring editors up on criminal charges after the fact if their publications were deemed to be seditious, incendiary, or libellous under the criminal code. However, as Louise McReynolds notes, the censorship laws had been stretched and pushed and in general had been increasingly difficult to enforce since 1903. In this environment of greater latitude and supercharged ethnic, religious and political tensions, *Hayat* asserted its loyalty to the Tsar, but took a strong, protective stance with reference to the rights and position of the Muslim community of the Caucasus and thus gained quick acceptance among that population. Its daily printing reached as high as 2,500 in its first year. Ağaoğlu wrote many articles in these daily issues, demanding equal rights for Muslims and denouncing Armenian ‘intrigues’. Hüseyinzâde wrote a number of long, serialized pieces about the language question and about Turkish origins and identity. Both authors forcefully came forward in defence of the community, but Hüseyinzâde demonstrated a greater propensity for theoretical writing and a clearer sense of Turkishness. Within the year Ağaoğlu came into conflict with Topçubaşı, perhaps because of the other’s greater conservatism and, by 16 November 1905 (Julian)/29 November 1905 (Gregorian), Ağaoğlu’s name is no longer listed on the editorial staff of the newspaper.

Very little time had elapsed, however, before Ağaoğlu had secured both a licence to publish on his own and the financial backing of a liberal landholder, Isa Bey Aşurbeyli. The result was the appearance of another Azeri-language daily paper, *İrşad*, which was somewhat more radical than *Hayat* (while maintaining its pro-Muslim attitude) and even contained such things as debates on the preferability of socialism and nationalism as ideologies. It continued publication for one year, with considerable success, reaching publication figures of 3,000 and was closed by the Russian government in 1907. Not to be silenced so easily, Ağaoğlu got yet another licence, sold shares
and brought out a third Azeri-language daily, *Terakki (Progress)*, starting in 1908 with substantial backing from the Aşurbeyli family again. The paper was well received (it attained a circulation of 3,600), but suffered financial difficulties which seemed destined to bring it down. Ağaoğlu was able, however, to interest another Azerbaijani oil man, Murtaza Muhtarov, in investing in *Terakki*, having previously persuaded him to put up the money for the paper’s Russian-language edition, *Progress*. This saved the paper and set it on a stable footing. Aside from having a wide circulation in the Caucasus and a Russian edition, *Terakki* achieved exposure in Iran as well. Early in 1909 however, Ağaoğlu fled to the Ottoman Empire, and *Terakki* struggled on for only a few more months, closing in November of 1909.

When *Hayat* began to appear in June of 1905 there were no other Azeri-language organs being published in the Caucasus and one of the results of this was that members of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia of every stripe contributed to the paper – Nariman Narimanov, Ali Hüseyinzâde, Ali Ibragimov, Haşim Vezirov – some quite conservative, others socialists, others more intellectual and abstract. Later, a plethora of newspapers and journals began to appear, mostly out of Baku and this tended to allow for somewhat greater specialization, though there was still significant crossover. Ali Hüseyinzâde began to publish his aesthetic journal *Fuyuzat (Abundance)*, with its highly Ottomanized and very elevated language, in 1906 and the satirical and very popular *Molla Nasrettin* began to appear in the same year. Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s brother-in-law Haşim Bey Vezirov produced a string of conservative nationalist publications from 1907 on. In this context, *İşad* and *Terakki* came to represent the liberal, and at times socialist, tendencies among the Western-oriented intelligentsia.
Through this period, Ağaoğlu addressed the same basic set of issues in all his pamphlets and newspaper essays. The concerns he manifested in his writings related to the single goal of unifying and strengthening the position of the Muslim community of Russian Transcaucasia and basically of Azerbaijan. These concerns can be classed into three large groups: religion, which encompassed the questions both of obscurantism and of unity; communal rights, which was essentially the pursuit of equal status for the Muslim community in the Russian administrative structure; and defence of the community, which had to do with the perception that the Muslim community needed to protect itself from the attacks and encroachments of the Armenian community.

Religion was an issue which Ağaoğlu took up very early on. He dealt extensively with the question of religion and of the ulema and its role in his ‘Société persane’ articles in the early 1890s, as was discussed in Chapter Three. Some themes that appear in these early articles remain constant over time: that the Islamic world was strong and advanced until the late Abbasid period, when it seemed to stagnate; that the lower clergy is ignorant and self-serving; that the methods as well as the contents of traditional education are detrimental.

Although Ağaoğlu asserts in his French articles that the decline of the Muslim world in the Classical age was due to the growing influence of the Turks and Mongols, while in later works, as we shall see, he lays the blame at the door of the Persians themselves, there is a significant point of continuity. That point is that the Islamic world was once a rational and progressive milieu and therefore there is nothing in it that is an inherent obstacle to progress. What Ağaoğlu wanted was the creation of some kind of standardized institutions for training lower clergy that would include a substantially modern curriculum and a ‘correct’ (i.e., reformed) understanding of Islamic ‘truths’. Starting as early as 1893 with an article written
for Kavkaz while he was still in Paris, Ağaoğlu began publishing articles espousing this kind of modernist Islam. They appeared in newspapers like Kaspîi and Hayat, as well as in the form of short books or pamphlets.\(^1\) As a part of this, once he returned to the Caucasus, Ahmet Bey dropped much of his focus on the special role of Shi’ism for the Islamic world, which to a significant degree had been tied to European notions about Aryan superiority, and began to exert himself to minimize sectarian differences in Islam. The need for the Muslim Turkish community to become united, and thereby self-conscious and active, is expressed in the names of organizations like the İttifak-i Müslimin (Muslim Union), or even, to take an Ottoman example, İttïhad ve Terakkï (Union and Progress). Ağaoğlu’s writings of this period (and later too) are full of words like ‘birlik’ (oneness) and ‘vahdet’ (unity).

It is the issue of the ignorance of the lower ulema, however, that dominates in the satirical drama Ağaoğlu produced in Persian in 1904. Entitled Islam va Akhund,\(^2\) the play takes the form of a dramatic dialogue between the personification of Islam and an ahund who personifies the religious classes. The ahund is described as fat and richly dressed while Islam appears in the guise of a starving wretch about to breathe his last. A third presence in the drama is the Conscience, who functions, however, more like the chorus in a Classical Greek tragedy than as a true character; the Conscience interjects a series of commentaries which do not form a part of the dialogue between Islam and the ahund and are really directed at the audience. These comments are almost always critiques of the ahund’s claims or statements and are usually cast in a bitingly sarcastic tone.

The dialogue between the ahund and Islam reveals how the true moral meaning of the Islamic faith has been lost in a sea of sophistic argument and immoral practice. Its main thrust is toward denouncing moral and spiritual degeneration, and it differs somewhat from other pieces written by Ağaoğlu in that it does not offer practical solutions for the problems it identifies as confronting the community – for example, it makes no suggestions for how to better educate and train the ulema.

In the style typical of turn-of-the-century modernizing Islamists, Ağaoğlu argues that what the community needs is a firmer attachment to the spirit of Islam (ruh-i islamiye), rather than to verbal and intellectual tricks that have made it possible for a person with a certain scholastic facility to clothe immoral behaviour in the robe of ‘the permissible’ (halal). Ağaoğlu focuses a great deal on the notion of commanding the good and gives a broad interpretation of what it means to be a Muslim – any person who commands the good, avoids the bad and has a just and mild demeanour towards his fellow man can be classified as ‘a human being, that is to say, as a Muslim’.
The piece does speak out against sectarian divisions and obscurantism, but it is clearly directed primarily at a Shi’ite audience. Much of the harshest criticism in the play is aimed against the way the lower clergy uses the practice of *taqiya* or defensive dissimulation. This, combined with the fact that the play is written in Persian, would seem to indicate that his Turkish orientation had not yet fully crystallized.

In fact, the whole piece seems to reflect an older orientation and approach. The work’s use of Persian, its dramatic format and its anti-clericalism recall the work of Ahundzâde and his generation. And yet, as we have noted, Ahundzâde wrote in Azeri Turkish, and his anti-clericalism was part of a broader laicism, and indeed anti-religious outlook. Ağaoğlu’s play, by contrast, reflects a genuine concern for the moral and spiritual well-being of the Islamic world and its brutal critiques of the ulema are, as we have said, aimed at the lower clergy or ahunds. In other works Ağaoğlu often expresses admiration for the higher ulema and particularly for the institution of the mujtahid, whom he identifies as an intellectual who has been vouchsafed the freedom to be truly innovative and enlightened. Hamid Algar has pointed out that a broad application of the title ‘ahund’ in late Qajar Iran led to its ‘devaluation and [it] came gradually to signify not a religious leader, but on the contrary one who had failed to reach the degree of *ijtihad*.’

There are, however, two aspects to the play that foreshadow some of Ağaoğlu’s nationalist and more practical modernizing concerns. First, the language of the play at many points tries to emulate natural, even popular speech – it is not an example of elevated language, even if it is in Persian. In other words, it reflects his interest in communicating with a broader public as part of a project of fostering the creation of ‘individuals’ or ‘citizens’ in society. In this respect it mirrors his writing style in Azeri and Ottoman. Second, when, early in the play, Ağaoğlu has Islam accuse the clerical classes of having fostered sectarian divisions within Islamdom, he then has Conscience ask whether, under these circumstances, a *millat* can be united and progress. ‘Millat’ is a term which can be construed as ‘confessional community’ or as ‘nation’. In later, Turkish-language writings, while he does often speak of *milliyet* (nationalism), Ağaoğlu usually employs the term *kavm* (people) to refer to a nation, thus leaving some room for ambiguity in this instance. In this work it is unclear, not whether Ağaoğlu views himself as a Persian or Turk, but whether he views himself nationally or confessionally.

In railing against sectarian divisions in the Islamic world (a topic he will take up on numerous occasions during his career) Ağaoğlu claims that the ahunds have effected these divisions through their excessive emphasis on the *Hadith* and the Traditions, at the
expense of the Qur’an. Tellingly enough, he brings the language question into his discussion by attacking the, in his view, false and benighted teaching that the Qur’an may not be translated out of Arabic. He asserts that this practice causes confusion and lack of understanding of the true meaning and intention of the Qur’an (and thus of God) and so cannot be consonant with God’s design. On the other hand, one thing Ağaoğlu is not doing in this play, by contrast with many modernizing Islamists such as Namik Kemal, is arguing that anything desirable from the West can be shown to have its roots first in Islam or Islamic civilization. Yet, the serious moral tone argues for a more sincere commitment to religion than is often ascribed to Westernizers (and with the nickname ‘Frenk Ahmet’, Ağaoğlu was clearly viewed as such in his community).

Another area in the arena of Islamic reform that was of special interest to Ağaoğlu was the question of the position of women. As one who had been deeply influenced by the ideals of Western liberalism, not to mention by the radically different mores of relations between the sexes in the West, Ağaoğlu felt strongly that the cornerstone of a modern society was the free and independent, responsible, initiative-taking individual. And just as the presence of paternalistic and/or tyrannical governmental or societal institutions tended to structurally crush and impede the emergence of such a being, so too an atmosphere of paternalism, violence and brute force, isolation and ignorance at home in family life posed psychological impediments to the development of whole persons, of individuals. Thus Ağaoğlu, in his 1901 book, Women According to Islam and in the Islamic World, set out to demonstrate that these repressive family institutions did not originate in Islam and were not compatible with the true spirit of Islam.

THE WOMAN QUESTION, OR QU’EST-CE QU’UN INDIVIDU?

Women According to Islam and in the Islamic World appeared in Russian. It was not longer than his work on Persian society, which had appeared in France in serialized form, but it differed from that work in that it was much more unified in theme.

The piece contains a great deal of interesting information about Ağaoğlu’s intellectual propensities and development. In some sense, despite the fact that it talks endlessly and in detail about women, his treatment of the woman question is the least interesting aspect of this work. As I hope to show, though his expressed views on women were certainly sincere, they were a vehicle for other issues which were far more central to Ağaoğlu’s world view and agenda in the long run. There are three important intellectual stances which emerge from his writings on women as expressed in this book, as well as in some of the articles he wrote in France:
1. The choice of a national identity;
2. The adoption of a fundamentally liberal attitude toward individuals and social development;
3. A positive attitude towards Islam justified by a particular kind of historical treatment. (He uses this treatment on other subjects too, at times, but he uses it very consistently when discussing Islam.)

The structure of the monograph follows its title. Its introductory pages are dedicated to proving that European attitudes towards Islam and in particular the notion that Islam per se is responsible for women’s unfortunate condition in Asia, are based on the remnants of medieval religious bigotry. It goes on to say that religions are really abstractions and in their abstract form they all basically stand for the same things: life after death, the rewarding of good and the punishment of evil, etc. Furthermore, any objective observer would be forced to admit that there are great similarities between Islam and Christianity. Therefore, as religious passions have cooled in the second half of the nineteenth century, scholars have at last been able to study religions properly, as manifestations of the universal human spirit, which can only be understood by examining the constant interactions between the theory of the faith and their historical expression in a given time and place.

The main body of the work begins by discussing the rights and position of women according to the Qur’an and the actions of the Prophet and his companions. It takes these up in the context of the treatment of women and the condition of society in general in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam. In this way it seeks to make two fundamental points: first, that the rights accorded women in ‘real’ Islam are very broad and liberal and, second, that when taken in context, they reveal the Prophet’s attitude towards women as quite favourable overall.

In the first chapter Ağaoğlu addresses the question of the condition of women in pre-Islamic Arabia and in the surrounding societies of the Middle East. He argues that in Iran women could be bought and sold; were subjected to what amounted, by Islamic standards, to incestuous relationships; led strictly segregated lives; and so on. Among the Arabs the situation was just as bad, if not worse: girl children were considered bad luck and exposed at birth; daughters could be sold or bartered by their fathers; women had no property rights or rights of inheritance either from male relatives or husbands; marriage was not binding, so women could be cast off at any moment; and polygamy was widespread and completely unchecked.

Mohammed, he asserts in the second chapter, was always concerned for the weak and defenceless in society and for this reason he took special interest in improving the lot of the women around him. The fact that the Qur’an recognizes women as moral entities equal to men
was revolutionary for the Arabs of that day. The Qur’an, he claims, forbids the exposure of girl children and recognizes the right of women to administer and dispose of property, to inherit, to enter into contracts, to obtain lawful employ. On the question of marriage and divorce, Ağaoğlu is at pains not only to quote the Qur’an, but also to cite scenes from the life of the Prophet to show the special concern he felt to secure the well-being of women, particularly in a material and physical sense. Ağaoğlu emphasizes that by sacralizing marriage and condemning (though not forbidding) divorce the Prophet was trying to secure the material position of women. They could not be given save in adult consent and once given they could not be lightly cast off, as marriage had the character of a contract. Attempts at mediation were first required and if divorce were inevitable, husbands owed their wives maintenance and child support as well as return of the dowry. Further, marriage placed no obligations on women other than childcare and fidelity. Accusations of infidelity had to be thoroughly proven and if proven should be met with clemency, not killing rage. Interestingly, unlike many other reformers and apologists for Islam of his day, Ağaoğlu does not mention that women, too, have the right to seek divorce in some circumstances. He clearly views strong social and religious pressures to strengthen marriage as a protection for women, not as oppressive. In this he is stressing the historical context in which women, in his interpretation, could be used and discarded without any provision for their survival and well-being.

Similarly, he emphasizes the historical context when discussing two other issues that particularly command his attention: polygamy and the veiling and segregation of women. Ağaoğlu views both these institutions as negative and retrograde, and of course they were aspects of Muslim life that had long excited much comment and criticism in the West. Thus, his discussion of them attempts to distance Islam from them as much as possible. In the case of polygamy he makes the case that unrestricted polygamy was an old, established institution all over the pre-Islamic Middle East and was also tied to the climate of the region and the temperament of its people, so that it could not be eradicated at a moment’s notice. Thus, by restricting the number of wives to four and by insisting that equality of treatment is both a requirement and a virtual impossibility, Islam did much to rein in the practice and obviously had its abolition as the ultimate goal. It is therefore wrong, he insists, for Western scholars to say that Islam sanctions polygamy and degrades and oppresses women; on the contrary, Islam promotes monogamy and elevates the status of women.

On the question of the veiling and segregation of women, Ağaoğlu takes a two-pronged approach. First he asserts that the pre-Islamic Arab nomads were virtual barbarians who ran around
in a state of nakedness or semi-nakedness. Thus the Prophet was forced to urge and command them, men and women both, to cover their private parts for modesty. Furthermore, the covering of heads and shoulders was a matter of health in the burning desert sun. However, nothing was ever said to the effect that women must cover their faces or hands; in fact, there is good evidence to the contrary. He cites episodes from both the Qur’an and the Traditions to show that men and women freely associated and that furthermore, while immodestly revealing attire was discouraged, adorning oneself and making oneself attractive were not. He characterizes people who make use of certain verses from the Qur’an to argue otherwise as dirty-minded people who are obsessed with sex and who are taking those verses out of context of the Qur’an as a whole and of the social context of early Islam. Second, Ağaoğlu asserts that the severe restrictions on women’s attire and social contacts were historically present among non-Arab Middle Eastern peoples prior to Islam and insinuated themselves into the Islamic world from those peoples at a later date. This is the transition that launches him into the third chapter of his work: a discussion of the historical changes and developments in the position of women in the Islamic world through the centuries.

The third chapter is rather a hodgepodge of information that aims at making the general point that in its glory days the Islamic world accorded positions of great respect and influence to women and allowed them to play an important role in society. He portrays the early days of the Rashidun and Umayyads as days of stern Arabo-Islamic virtue and energy when women took the field of battle for the faith, preached in the mosques and trained great Muslim jurists. The Abbasid period he characterizes as one of increased cultural sophistication in which women played an important artistic and intellectual role by creating salons which gathered together and patronized the leading poets and intellectuals of the day and by commissioning and subsidizing great urban building programmes. He views the increased sophistication of this period as the product of growing Irano-Syrian influence in the caliphate, but he also sees that influence as energizing to the Arab virtues. Thus, as the period draws to a close one sees the ascendency of vile Persian institutions such as the increasing segregation of women and the growth of the role of harem aghas. Women in their seclusion become ignorant, petty and intriguing. Intellectual life stagnates, family and social life deteriorate and the impact of the plots of ignorant women and harem aghas ushers in a debased era in political life, an era full of assignation and palace revolts. The implication is almost that the fall of the caliphate at the hands of the Turks and Mongols was a result of the decline in the position of women and its social effects.
At this point in his discussion Ağaoğlu launches into a kind of apology for the Turks. He both glorifies their nomadic qualities with a kind of romantic ‘noble savage’ approach, claiming that women always lived in perfect freedom among them when the Turks maintained their pristine state, and he extols their intelligence as being quick to assimilate all that the high culture of the caliphate had to offer. Here he allows himself to rhapsodize over the cultural heights attained by captured Turkish concubines and how they came themselves to captivate their lords and masters and thus exert great influence over affairs. It was only after the Turks became Persianized that women’s rights were restricted and society deteriorated.

The rest of the piece consists of a few perfunctory passages about the chivalrous attitudes and high status accorded women in Muslim Spain, the Maghreb and Muslim India. They are unconvincing bits of window dressing meant to re-emphasize the destructiveness of the Iranian influence; free from the debilitating effects of Persian luxury, al-Andalus continued to value and respect women. In India, women were cultural leaders and were often the power behind the throne and so forth.

Ağaoğlu concludes the work with a quick statement to the effect that women’s enforced physical idleness is having a degenerative effect on the physical well-being of the community while the alphabet and the large-scale illiteracy that its difficulty promotes are eating at its mental capacities. In order to progress, Muslim society must experience profound change brought about by passing rapidly through a number of developmental stages and this can only be effected through the vision and charisma of a strong leader. Islam and the Şeriat are no impediments to this process. If anything is an obstacle, it is the self-serving hidebound attitude of the clerics.

The work as a whole presents a number of interesting considerations. It shows substantial concern for the attitudes of Western scholarship towards Islam. The introductory passages, with their attribution to medieval religious fanaticism and ignorance in the West of the notion that Islam is the cause of the backward state of Muslim women and of the Islamic world, display a kind of confusion as to the audience for the essay. Is Ağaoğlu speaking to Western public opinion when he asserts that the more objective and scientific observations of late nineteenth-century scholars have at last dispelled wrong ideas fostered by ancient religious prejudices and demonstrate that Islam and Christianity have more similarities than differences? What begins and ends as an exhortation to the Muslim world itself seems, nevertheless, in these early passages, to be directed at a European audience, as if the notion that Islam itself would be the impediment to change and progress is one that does not need to be addressed with Muslims – for them such a notion is patently wrong. The whole essay is based upon
a kind of historicism and relativism which is non-scriptural and which is an approach Ağaoğlu attributes to European scholars of the late nineteenth century. Thus, even when he seems to be demonstrating to Muslims and non-Muslims alike the essentially positive content of Islam in respect of the position of women or of progress in general, he is doing so in terms which differ fundamentally from those commonly adopted by Islamic reformers, as we shall see. Though he accepts the eternal nature of Islam at some level and tries to distinguish between the faith and its practice, he really sees a kind of symbiotic relationship between the two from the very first moment.

His essay on women goes to great lengths to show how Islam is not only compatible with but also supportive of women’s rights and freedom in society. Yet the type of historical arguments he uses to make this point serve to undermine the inviolable, eternal quality of revealed scripture. Mohammed’s project is described as an historical event whose content has to be understood in that specific historical cultural milieu. This is different from saying that true Islam was favourable to women, but later, false accretions took their toll. Ağaoğlu at times claims to be saying this last and in fact he does engage in that type of argument as well, insofar as the late Abbasid and post-caliphal periods are concerned, but at other times the actual structure and content of his arguments belie him. This historicism, that includes the revelation itself, is what makes his writing so different from other Muslim reformers who wrote on the topic. If we compare what Ağaoğlu says on women’s rights and position in Islam to what the Egyptian reformer Qasim Amin said in his work *The Liberation of Women*, which had appeared just two years before, these differences become obvious. For instance, when addressing the issue of polygamy both men disapprove of it and both men see it as discouraged by the Qur’an, noting that the Qur’an tells men a second marriage is permissible only if they can be fair and that is unlikely. But Ağaoğlu also addresses the question of why the Qur’an allows polygamy:

> [I]n the time of Mohammed’s becoming Prophet, there was a custom of unlimited polygamy both in Arabia and in the neighbouring countries. *It was virtually impossible to bring down at a blow this tradition,* this institution which had taken root over the course of centuries and which was peculiar to the East. Because it was based on the ancient temperaments of the peoples of the East and because it was based on the climatic conditions of the Eastern lands, *the destruction of this tradition presented special difficulties.* But again, Islamism in this material did very important things for the East. At the same time that it limited the legal number of wives to four, it linked this limitation to conditions that were so difficult to put into place that these conditions of necessity led to the result of monogamy. [emphasis mine]
Amin does not:

In considering these two verses [Qur’an IV:3 and IV:129] one may conclude that polygamy is prohibited, an interpretation not too far from their intent. However, Prophetic traditions and customs have necessitated the legitimation of polygamy.

These verses have made polygamy permissible, but God has made it dependent on what each person finds within himself.⁶

As these paragraphs show, in many ways the treatment and intentions of the two authors towards polygamy are the same. They both use the same Qur’anic quotation to show that Islam, properly understood, favours monogamy. However, whereas Amin is limited to stating that the Qur’an does not approve polygamy, but simply allows it, Ağaoğlu ventures an historical explanation as to why the Qur’an should allow what it does not approve. In fact, what appears to be quite similar in object and content turns out to be profoundly different in conception. Ağaoğlu was suggesting that God’s revelation was conditioned by social realities, which made full and immediate implementation of God’s intention impossible; that man has not strayed from the truth, he has influenced it.

His statement about his methodology implies the importance of historical context in understanding the intent of the religion in its original form and this implies a certain malleability of content – the real content is perhaps not in the texts or the actions themselves, but in their thrust.

Before anything else let us point out that without going back and examining the conditions of life of the Arabs prior to Islam (Islamiyet) and without understanding the condition of women living in that period among the peoples surrounding them as well as among the Arabs themselves, we will be unable to discuss the attitude of Islam (Müslümanlık) towards women. Only thanks to such a method of investigation – which is the sole correct and rational way of investigating – will we be able to give a judgement regarding the role which Islam (Islamlık) played in the development of womankind (kadınlık). And on the other hand, by means of the same method we will be able to understand what Mohammed did regarding women generally and regarding Arab women in particular.

A number of researchers belittle this method. For this reason their judgements, which are wrapped in a tissue of knowledge and seriousness, are superficial at their core. These people, taking in hand the present-day condition of Muslim women, attribute it to the effects of Islam [Müslümanlık].⁷ [emphasis mine]

Even though in this passage and others Ağaoğlu asserts it is Islamic practice, not Islam, which has been harmful to women, still he also asserts that we cannot understand the attitude of Islam (not Islamic
practice) towards women outside of its historical context. This approach is basically descriptive; Ağaoğlu is showing the proper meaning of Islamic doctrine through historical contextualization just as he is showing how practice changed historically. The procedure serves to demonstrate that there is nothing inherent in Islam contrary to progress or to the advancement of women. However, it is a procedure that does not treat scripture as a normative document. There are Islamic truths, but they are to be found in looking at the intent of the revelation and the Traditions of the Prophet as clarified by their historical context.

This makes the whole tone of Ağaoğlu’s writings different from that of other reformers. For example, he never asserts, as Qasim Amin does, that particular Islamic laws are in harmony with natural law because, after all, they are the same thing. For Ağaoğlu, Islam is perhaps some mixture of ethical system and cultural identity. The fact that he often stresses similarities with Christianity and talks about the characteristics of all great religions seems to reinforce this: there are general religious truths found, perhaps, in all great religions and Islam is one historical expression of them.

His historical approach to the material is also used to describe changes in the position of women in various temporal and geographical settings after the establishment of Islam. In general, the most convincing parts of his discussion are those dealing with the caliphate, which are designed to give evidence that in Islam’s golden age women were active and important. When it comes to discussing the problem of decline and looking at the causes of the deteriorating situation for women, Ağaoğlu’s discussion becomes forced and confused. The historical arguments he has used to provide a context for the creation of Islam, freeing it of any anti-progressive associations, must now be used again to lay the blame for unfortunate changes at one door, while freeing another from taint. Throughout the essay and particularly in the sections dealing with the late Abbasids and the Turks, Ağaoğlu reveals a kind of schizophrenia towards ‘nature’ and ‘civilization’ in general on the one hand and towards the Turko-Tatars and Mongols on the other. He clearly harbours some romantic notions about the purity and vigour of ‘primitive’ nomads which are reflected in many of his comments about the Turks, but also about the early Arabs, yet at the same time he views both groups as culturally inferior to other, sedentary Near Eastern civilizations and as desperately in need of the moral uplift provided by Islam. At one moment it is the onslaught of Turkish and Mongol hordes that brought down the great caliphal civilization and the rights of women with it, the very next moment it is the enervating luxury and decadence of Irano-Syrian civilization which strips the two nomad groups of their purity and vigour and leads to the downfall of women and the decline of society.
This tension seems to stem from two places. The author is concerned first to show the negative importance of the subjugation of women in the overall condition of Muslim societies and second to demonstrate that this subjugation is in no way attributable either to the Turks or to Islam. Islam *qua* Islam cannot be shown to be retrograde, so evils that can not be portrayed as having developed in the later Islamic period (such as polygamy) have to be attributed to negative traits in Arab nomads or ancient Near Eastern civilization prior to the rise of Islam. After Islam they have to be cast at the door of external elements such as unconverted barbarian Turks and Mongols, or conquered but unassimilated elements like the Iranians. Once Islam has appeared and taken hold in Arabia, the Arabs are essentially synonymous with Islam and cannot be characterized as being at the root of any evil trend or trait. So at an early historical moment the Arabs are shown as half-naked barbarians who need God’s revelation to teach them even to protect their bodies from the burning desert sun or to show them that the love of a girl child might be a wonderful thing. After their adoption of Islam these crude savages are transmuted into a noble, active people full of a stern uprightness and piety. Ağaoğlu’s best discussion deals with the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods where he shows the stern virtues of then Arabs ornamented by the cultural achievements of ancient Irano-Syrian civilization. These discussions seem the least forced; the characterization is uniformly positive and he is able to describe the Abbasid period as one in which Iranian cultural elements are dominant, but are held in check and to some extent shaped, by the Arab presence and influence – the Arabs provide strength and manliness, the Iranians sophistication and artistic achievement. But then in the late Abbasid period unfavourable developments begin to appear and present a problem as to attribution. Some external factor is required by way of explanation and that means either demonizing the Turko-Mongol invader or casting the blame on some internal, yet non-Muslim, rot.

It is here the argument becomes strained. He seems to want to make the case that gradually the Irano-Syrian influences grew and overpowered the Arab element, so that evil pre-Islamic customs like the closeting of women in the harem gained in force and led to the mental, physical and spiritual degradation of women. This in turn led to a weakening of Muslim society in general, so that the caliphate was ultimately corrupted with political intrigue from within and overcome from without. At other times it is the general sensuality, love of luxury and lack of energy among these Near Eastern peoples that brought on all evils, as opposed to the specific problem of the position of women. At one point he says the Genghisid invasion ruined Muslim society and the situation
of Muslim women with it. Later he characterizes Central Asian nomads (Turks and Tatars) as lovers of freedom and knowledge, among whom women lived in perfect liberty while they maintained their nomadic state. Yet, they were also quick studies and seekers after learning; captured women made prized concubines because of the astonishing rapidity with which they acquired cultural graces; Turkish rulers of the Middle East and even the heirs of Tamerlane, fostered scholarship and patronized the arts.

There is a clear tension, if not outright contradiction, in his explanations, of which the following passage is an example:

And now let us pass on to the period of the Abbasids who came to power after the Umayyads. In this period Arab civilization reached its zenith and it had developed steadily until its absolute and unexpected decline which came about with the entrance into western Asia from the East of the wild Genghishid hordes... This fall came about as the result of the rapid acquisition of wealth and the destruction of morals associated with it, particularly under the influence of Iran and Syria and as a result of the loss of the old simplicity in lifestyle. It should not be forgotten that the Abbasid period is especially the period of the dominance of Iran... The Abbasids, who were set on the throne of the caliphate by the Iranian army tried, necessarily, to conceal their sympathy and affection for the Iranians... Iranian language, Iranian music, Iranian character, Iranian tradition and manners drew some because of their desire to get on at the palace and others because of their dislike of the Arab stock. In short, Iran took revenge for its loss of independence, strength and renown not only by creating Shi’ism which was a special national religion and by introducing into the breast of Islam a whole mass of brotherhoods (tarikat), but also by destroying the bases of that healthy way of life which had given half the world of that day into the hands of the semi-savage residents of the Sahara.

It is obvious that the author is not finding it easy to choose between the nomads on the one hand and the Iranians on the other. The Arabs, as has been explained, had become virtually sacrosanct after their adoption of Islam, and the Turks, as later passages make apparent, are the national group and must not be held responsible for decline. However, Ağaoğlu obviously admires and feels drawn to the higher culture and civilization of Iran. Though he cites Iran as the source of many evils including the segregation of women and, startlingly, the introduction of Shi’ism and sufism into the Islamic world, yet he waxes most lyrical about both the Arabs and the Turks when they are absorbing and patronizing Iran’s cultural tradition. Though he seems by this point in time to have made a choice in favour of Turkism, he clearly still feels a strong identification with Iranian civilization and culture, which he finds it hard to abandon.
This sense of conflicting loyalties, and the reasons for it, become crystal clear when we compare this work with Ağaoğlu’s earlier pieces on Muslim women written in France. In ‘La Femme persane’, virtually the same arguments as to the legal rights accorded women by Islam appear, though in a condensed form. Islam historically served to elevate, not abase women says Ağaoğlu. Their legal rights, at least in theory, exceed those accorded women by the French Revolution. This article differs from the larger, later effort, however, on a number of points. Among the most important is the question of decline. Just ten years earlier in France, decline is explained this way:

So therefore, Islam can not be made accountable for the present decadence of the Persian woman. It is since the Turks took the place of the Arabs, along about the twelfth century, as the ruling nation of the Muslim world that the real application of all the laws that protect women has become insignificant. They consisted of peoples who were still barbarians and didn’t know any way of life other than that of warrior and pastoralist, the two ways of life most contrary to the moral and intellectual development of women. In effect nothing matters there as much as strength and skill; the natural delicacy of women is despised, as are childhood and old age. Having accepted Islam without understanding it, the Turks did not, in changing their religion, change their way of life... From Genghis Khan to the Great Sofi – four long centuries – Iran was conquered, ravaged, and depopulated by the Turks until today fully one third of the population of Iran is Turkish. They brought with them the complete depreciation of women and all of their rights went down in the wreck of the Persian nationality.14

In the 1891 piece, as have seen in Chapter Three, Ağaoğlu glorified and identified with Iran and presented Iran, its religion and culture, as the only potential saviour of the Middle East. Now, in 1901, he has shifted his focus to the Turkish world, but old attitudes and orientations die hard. Thus, while he tries to make a virtue of nomadic barbarism, his essential sympathy for the great cultures of Iran and the Fertile Crescent shines through almost whether he wills it or not. In the 1891 articles, the arguments respecting the question of decline are all internally consistent, which is in contrast with those put forward in 1901. Ağaoğlu, coming out of the cultural environment of the Shi’ite Caucasus, can never really look on anything but the Iranian tradition as the high culture of the Islamic Middle East. Despite his adoption of Turkism and his advocacy of Turkish language education, this feeling never really changes throughout his life.

 Ağaoğlu shows a similar ambiguity between rhetoric and conviction, between primitive nobility and sophisticated appreciation when he deals with the popular classes versus the intellectual élites. Like other writers of the period, he imbues the populace (halk)
with certain virtues. In particular, he sees the relations between the sexes as much more egalitarian in that social stratum. Since, as will be discussed further, he views material independence as the real secret to women’s independence and individuation, the fact that the peasant requires his wife’s labour to survive gives her real standing in a way that is not true for the urban upper bourgeoisie of merchants and government officials. In 1891 he states it clearly:

[F]ortunately, the degradation of women is strictly limited to the bureaucracy and the nobility, to what is known as the ruling classes in France. The wife of the peasant, the labourer, the artisan, or the petit bourgeois remains unaffected, and is much freer in her marital relations than in any country of Europe, no matter which. In effect, in these classes the man needs the labour of the woman in order to maintain his family; that labour gives the wife a real personality vis-à-vis the husband. She is a moral being [i.e., a person in the moral sense] who lives and who makes herself felt…

Ağaoğlu then goes on to dedicate the rest of the article to these upper-class women, which makes sense since they belong, as he notes, to the ruling classes. One is left, however, asking what difference it makes that the lower classes do not suffer this malady, as the whole series of French articles makes clear his view of the abasement and powerlessness of those classes.

On the other hand, Ağaoğlu admires Western civilization and the whole point of reform is to take his own community further down that path. In this sense it has to be admitted that only the very élite classes have been exposed to such influences, so that their women have been educated or allowed to enter the professions. Thus, in *Women According to Islam and in the Islamic World*, he begins his discussion with the following qualification:

Without doubt in Istanbul and Cairo and in other Turkish and Egyptian cities, the impact of these voices [i.e., those of the reformist press] is seen in the opening of girls’ schools and in the growth of a generation of intellectuals and literary figures among Muslim women. But again, one comes upon these only among members of the high society who, through the European training they have received due to their having come into frequent contact with Europeans, have adapted themselves bit by bit to a Europeanized way of life. Wherefore, when we speak of the condition of Muslim women, we are thinking only about the common Muslim folk, that folk which looks with scepticism at the high society of their co-religionists who live *alafranga*. An alteration of the extremely pathetic conditions of women doesn’t even cross their minds.

Yet the entire monograph is dedicated to discussing the ruling classes, and every historical example he gives in it of an active,
free Muslim woman belongs to the very highest stratum of society. Indeed, at the end of the work he laments that the position of upper-class Muslim women in his own day is so miserable that it ‘doesn’t bear looking at’.¹⁷

The assertion that the situation among the lower classes must be different because of the greater economic interdependence of the sexes among them is common to other writers (like Qasim Amin). It also speaks to Ağaoğlu’s understanding of what tends to lend personhood to an individual, as will be discussed below. However, as his writings make clear, he is fundamentally uninterested in what he views as a benighted and helpless element of society. That is to say, he is concerned for the sufferings and plight of those elements, but sees them as passive.¹⁸

Ağaoğlu focuses on women in the upper classes because these are the élite classes that will spearhead or obstruct fundamental change. So, although he makes distinctions between the upper and lower classes, the real distinction of interest to him is that between the Westernized, educated élites and the conservative, traditionalist élites. His goal is the profound transformation of the entire society, top to bottom and despite any good qualities that the common folk may have, he sees that project as one that only a dedicated intellectual élite can carry out. Moreover, that progressive intellectual élite will need to have force at its disposal to overcome the opposition of other elements in the society who have vested interests in the status quo.¹⁹

All of Ağaoğlu’s writings, from his French writings on, demonstrate this focus on an intellectual élite leading the social revolution. In France, he talks about the enormous revolutionary potential of the mujtahids and frequently lauds figures like Sayyid Ali Mohammed (the Bab). In Women According to Islam and in the Islamic World, he starts by talking about the importance of the reformer Malabari in India and by questioning whether the absence of such a leader in the Muslim world does not signify that it is irredeemably lost; he ends with a paean to Mohammed Ali of Egypt and his bringing to heel of the competing leadership, the ulema.

Though he sees the individual development of each person as the key to the formation of a liberal society which is the foundation of a liberal political regime, he doesn’t in his heart believe that focusing one’s energies on projects of education, which would seem to lead to a greater level of personal development in all strata of society – projects like alphabet and language reform, female emancipation, widespread literacy and education for men and women – will be sufficient to effect a profound social transformation in the absence of leadership:
Women and the alphabet – behold the two main enemies of the Muslim world which are slowly dragging it to its death, the two incurable diseases. Only in the most recent times have Muslims begun to focus attention on these two issues. But the timid efforts which are expended in this arena in Istanbul, Cairo, Bombay, and Calcutta and which are realized in the form of assuring the enrolment of male and female children in school and of changing the alphabet, are insufficient. These are simply nothing more than fleeting and temporary remedies whose application is being recommended against a chronic and deadly illness. A strong shock is necessary to awaken the Muslim world and to introduce it to the society of civilized nations. The passing of the Muslims through their own evolutionary stages, and the emergence of an iron-willed, brave and selfless man from among them are needed.20

In fact, although he states in this essay and in earlier works written in France that the emancipation of women is crucial to the strengthening of modern Muslim society, throughout the rest of his career he hardly devotes any further attention to the question. Similarly with alphabet reform, he mentions its crucial importance in this work, but does so without discussion. In the earlier French works he even seems to argue that the difficulty of the alphabet has some positive aspects to it,21 while in later works he is much more focused on educational methods in general and with the problem of rote memorization versus real understanding and analytical thought. In that context he regards the alphabet and particularly the methods employed to teach it as detrimental. But the alphabet as an impediment to mass literacy is not as much of a focus for him as it was for some other reformers.

In examining exactly what he says about women – what their oppression consists of, what measures would constitute remedies and what the effects of their oppression and liberation are – we will clearly see what his underlying concern and vision are.

The terms that Ağaoğlu uses to discuss the status of women and its desired improvements are ‘rights’, ‘justice’ and ‘personhood’ or ‘individuality’ (kişilik). His discussion begins with ‘natural’ rights like normal physical development and physical freedom and moves on to legal rights in areas that might be termed civil rights. These are the areas of property rights, civil status and freedom of association. At the most basic level he is demanding that women be recognized as moral entities, that is fully as persons in the legal sense, and treated accordingly.22 ‘There are a number of Hadith and Traditions which have survived to our times which are attributed to Hazreti Mohammed and which are aimed at raising the importance of women in the eyes of the Arabs and at elevating their personhood,’ he tells us.23 This means that they can not be
bought and sold or otherwise disposed of against their will, that agreements with them have the binding force of contracts under law, etc.\textsuperscript{24} Persons are autonomous beings in this legal sense, but that autonomy and freedom depend upon the laws’ being enforced and the parties in question being in a position to make their claims good.\textsuperscript{25} That is why Ağaoğlu comments that lower-class women are freer in the modern Islamic world than their wealthy counterparts – in the absence of other legal recourse, the importance of their economic contributions to the household finances ameliorates their total dependence and elevates them to the status of personhood within the family. The absence of the conditions necessary for the development and exercise of real personhood has severe intellectual, moral and social consequences.

This conception is essentially a liberal one. It is one in which the rule of law replaces the rule of force. In Ağaoğlu’s view, it allows for the development in individuals of concerns and sensibilities beyond immediate personal, animal gratification. As he puts it in one of his French articles, ‘in a society where the admiration of force alone reigns, there is no place for the love of justice, of truth and of all those abstractions which do not speak to immediate individual interest and which are, therefore, the very sources of all progress’.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, the denial of personhood, of individual personal development, to women has a twofold impact. In the first place it is a wrong done to women themselves as it reduces them to petty, mean-spirited, ignorant, lazy and ultimately defenceless beings. In the second place, it is a great social evil with wide-ranging implications since it makes marriage into a travesty of one-sided power in which the woman is a mere sexual object. Under such circumstances the sensibilities of her children and even indeed her husband, are debased. The family is the fundamental building block of society, he believes, and such distorted families can only give rise to very distorted societies. If the Islamic world today lacks really visionary leaders it is because of this type of family environment in which the children of the upper class are raised. Ağaoğlu explains his view of this very explicitly in his French articles on women:

The alphabet, printing, and all the other agents of civilization are nothing more than tools, than secondary conditions. The primary and essential condition is that of having individuals in the fullest sense of that word, that is, beings capable of ideals and devotion; that is the key to Western civilization. No one, unfortunately, can deny that in the ruling classes of the Muslim world there is today a deplorable dearth of character and will, in contrast to the situation during the first four centuries of Islam. What is the cause of this death of the individual? … Among us… the woman of the upper classes, reduced to the condition of a passive instrument for the pleasure of her
husband, is, moreover, rarely in contact with her male children and is incapable of inspiring them with even slightly refined sentiments. And the child finds himself entirely under the influence of his father who... can not inspire in him anything but feelings of pure egotism and the worship of brute force.27

Everything he says about women, the alphabet and education make clear Ağaoğlu’s real interest – the creation of social circumstances that will produce persons of a particular character, whom he terms individuals. This is because, as he puts it in another dramatic passage:

> It is not with our dervishes that we will fight against the cannon of Krupp; something else is required and that something else is the individual capable of dedicating himself to exalted sentiments and possessed of the moral force to defend them materially; for the situation of women in the bosom of the Muslim family kills the individual by sapping all his initiative and personal energy.

Thus we see in this work on women of 1901, especially when interpreted in light of some of his earlier French writings, a treatment of three of the themes that remain central concerns for Ağaoğlu throughout his career. Those are the development of a civil society of individuals; the construction of a positive collective identity which he sees as tied to the first; and the challenge of getting Islam to accommodate the other two, which he usually approaches via the method of historical analysis, rather than scholastic argument using Islamic texts.

**Newspapers and Community Rights**

Ağaoğlu published in the pages of almost all the organs of the Azerbaijani press in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth and he concerned himself with the questions that had always concerned him and would always concern him: the internal renewal of his community and its external improvement and strengthening vis-à-vis the surrounding conditions. Thus, he wrote about the proper role of religion, about governmental reforms, about the Armenian-Tatar War and about various ideologies. Sometimes he combined these elements.

*Hayat* was the first publication for which Ağaoğlu assumed editorial responsibilities and a brief examination of some articles and commentaries he wrote for its pages gives a sense of his attitudes and interests. Starting with the very first issue, he began a five-part series of articles called ‘The Present State of the Caucasus’. This series covered almost all the questions of central importance to Ağaoğlu. In the spring of 1905, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov had been appointed to replace Prince Grigorii Golitsyn at the head of the
Russian administration in the Caucasus – he went as a viceroy not a governor-general, however, with greatly enhanced powers. His mandate was clear: he was to restore order to the Caucasus, which was one of the most troubled regions during the upheavals of this period. Early on in his tenure he offered reforms of the police, courts and organs of local self-government to pacify the local population.28 Ağaoğlu’s series takes these proposals as his starting-point for a discussion of what the reforms should look like, on the one hand, and of what the Muslim community should do to meet the challenges that the new and reformed institutions would pose, on the other.

Ağaoğlu begins by saying that the Count has promised a just and even-handed administration and freedom of conscience and worship on equal terms for all communities. He has also proposed the election of a council that will help him implement two other crucial reforms – the creation of local courts and of zemstva at the uezd and gubernia levels.

Now, according to Ağaoğlu, these proposed reforms bring up three important questions for the Muslim community of the Caucasus:

1. Why is greater local autonomy and self-government important and valuable?
2. What will the method of constituting councils be?
3. What type of persons ought to be chosen as representatives?

The first question has two elements to it. Ağaoğlu comments that the population of the Caucasus has been subjected to a kind of political tutelage or wardship for a long time. All kinds of local matters like infrastructure, schools and the administration of justice, have been in the hands of non-local police and courts. This has had a retarding effect on the moral, intellectual and material progress of the local people because the mechanisms of administration and justice have not been predicated upon local traditions and customs and therefore have not served local needs well. Now Count Vorontsov-Dashkov proposes the salutary measure of turning these matters over to councils and courts of local inhabitants. This will be a great improvement in the lot of the local peoples.

The second question refers especially to the preliminary advisory council. Since the various communities of the Caucasus are at different stages of development, their interests are not all the same and it is natural that the representatives of each group on the council would seek to further the interests of their own community. It is fundamentally important, therefore, that previous restrictions on the numbers of Muslims that can be elected to such bodies not be maintained. Otherwise, the Muslim community will simply go from being the ward of one community to being the ward of another. Rather, the proposed council should reserve a number of seats
for each Caucasian community proportional to the demographic weight of each community. At the least, the Muslim community should have half the seats reserved to it. Since the council, which will oversee all the other reforms, will make decisions by majority opinion, failure to obtain this proportion of seats will lead to the subjugation, yet again, of the Muslim community. Furthermore, Ağaoğlu is adamant that the mode of election for seats on the council should not be indiscriminate general elections. The elections of representatives must be by community, meaning that only members from the community may run for the seats set aside to that community and only members of the community may vote for those seats. (Interestingly, he explains this last stipulation by saying that the Muslims are so famously laggard that if the elections were allowed to be mixed, very few, if any, Muslims would ever succeed in getting elected.) He points out that while the doors to high civil, military and academic office have been opened to merit for members of other communities, this has not been true for Muslims. Though the most numerous community, Muslims remain grossly underrepresented in high-level posts, reinforcing the need for proportional representation.

The third question, ‘Who should we elect? What qualities should we look for in representatives?’, provides a forum for addressing a whole constellation of issues dear to Ağaoğlu’s heart. The kind of men needed for the new tasks ahead are men of learning and experience, with extensive knowledge of the world, awareness of contemporary issues and a strong sense service to the community (milletperverlik). Since the other communities have a sense of unity and purpose and are sending representatives of this calibre, the Muslims must do the same. But in fact, it may be difficult for such men to get elected; it may even be difficult to find such men. First, the Muslim community is a prisoner of the harmful custom of giving greater weight to wealth, age, or inherited nobility than to merit. Second, centuries of autocratic rule, under Muslim regimes as well as Russian, have long prevented the Muslim Turkish community of the Caucasus from participating in the management of the common interest. As a result, they have been deprived of initiative and they have even lost the will to defend the legality and liberties which are the birthright of intelligent and cultured peoples. And this has occurred despite the fact that both ancient Turkic custom and Muslim religious law support the principle of consultation in government.

Ağaoğlu concludes by saying that though the Muslim Turkish community may be but ill-prepared for it, it must rise to the occasion and take up the challenge of self-rule as best it can. Therefore, the first step must be to engage in the fullest possible debate over what the actuation of Muslim representatives on the Viceroy’s council
should demand. Once again, Ağaoğlu insists, the central, minimal demands must be proportional representation of communities and segregated elections.

Thus, we see a number of issues addressed: absolute rule and particularly alien rule, is harmful because it deprives people of their sense of initiative and social responsibility – that is, both of their sense of individuality and of their community awareness. Further, such regimes tend to impose systems ill-adapted to actual circumstances. Second, to get the kind of leaders necessary for self-rule requires a sense of communal unity, qualified representatives selected on the basis of merit and a clear mandate arrived at through full public discourse. Third, this system, which relies so heavily on liberal principles and individuality, will work only in the context of the community – that is, the unified community may have diverse opinions, but it has common interests. Diverse communities, however, have diverse interests. Therefore, individual rights only have meaning and can only be protected in the context of community rights.

In these articles, the terms Ağaoğlu uses to identify the social entity of which he feels himself a part are various. The term ‘Muslim’ is the most constant, but it is often used in conjunction with ‘Caucasian’, ‘Transcaucasian’ and ‘Russian’. The term ‘Turk’ is also used, but not as frequently. However, the term Turk turns up in the context of Ağaoğlu’s discussion of the roots of political consultation in the community – Islam enjoins it and it was an ancient custom among the Turks. The juxtaposition of these two bits of justification gives the point of conjunction where identity lies. It makes clear that when he speaks of Caucasian Muslims, Ağaoğlu thinks it self-evident that they are Turks. Thus we see in this series of articles the delineation of an agenda that is both liberal and ethno-religious in nature. In effect, his liberalism has a national rather than universal character.

In another group of articles Ağaoğlu dedicates himself to refuting statements which appear in Armenian newspapers. He claims that these newspapers accuse the Muslim community of the Caucasus either of being unwitting tools in the hands of the Russian administration, or of being Pan-Islamists and advocates of Muslim independence from Russia. The first and much less important accusation he proudly rejects, pointing out that Muslim Turks ruled over Armenians benevolently for centuries and that they are not mindless, honourless dupes. In the second charge he perceives something sinister. Ağaoğlu views the Armenians and other Christian minority communities as enjoying an unduly privileged position in the Caucasus due to institutional disabilities imposed on the Muslims. He asserts that the Armenians do not want the
Muslim Turks to attain legal equality, but they want them to remain disenfranchised and backward so as not to become a source of competition for the Armenians. Thus, says Ağaoğlu, the Armenians spread slanders about the Muslims and seek to impugn their loyalty to Russia in hopes of getting the Russians to deny them the benefits of reform. Ağaoğlu goes on to virulently assert the loyalty of Russia’s Muslims. He avers that not only the Transcaucasian Muslims, but also the communities of Kazan, Turkistan, the Crimea, etc. have proved historically loyal to Russia during her wars with Iran and the Ottoman Empire and they are bravely serving even now in the war with Japan. Moreover, Islamic law requires support for the legal government, while personal honour and loyalty, which are very strong values among the Muslim Turks, make them shrink from a betrayal of trust.

In other words, Ağaoğlu clearly sees his community as locked in very serious competition with the Armenian community and he also views the process of struggle and renewal as having to take place within the framework of the Russian Empire. These articles are noteworthy for their virulent and confrontational tone towards the Armenians, warning that the Muslim Turks are ready to meet any threat with equal force; and for a certain cynicism in their protestations of loyalty to Russia. To cite a certain quietism on the part of Russian Muslims as a positive trait indicative of love of country and to say that Islam enjoins obedience to the government, is pure sophistry on the part of a commentator who dedicates basically the whole of his career to denouncing quietism, passivity and the pernicious and indefensible nature of autocratic rule. One can only presume that these protestations are supposed to serve the paramount end of securing the Muslim position vis-à-vis the central government and thus to provide the political space in which to make forceful representation of Muslim Turkish interests in relation to competing minority communities.

The general trends that one sees in Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s writings of this period can be divided into two types of concerns. First is a liberal agenda that has to do with wanting to see the growth of certain liberal conditions among the members of his community – this means the development of the individual as the principle moral unit or being in society and is connected with restructuring the role of women, with reformed education, civil rights and freedom of thought (concurrently with an end to religious obscurantism and bigotry). Like Renan, he probably believes that the real religion will be found to be a kind of passionate rationalism – faith is good when the supernatural has been removed. Second, there is a concern for the rights and position of the community as a whole within the framework of Russian imperial rule. He is concerned that his
community should not be subject to any special disabilities. In this there is a mixture of adherence to the individual agenda of pure liberalism and concern for communal rights. The communal aspect of his concern is provoked to some extent by the communal structure of the Russian regime in its dealings with the minority communities as, for example, the rule that no more than one half and later one third, of the city dumas could be Muslim, or the different treatment of Muslim and Christian clergy and religious property.

When, however, one examines some of Ağaoğlu’s positions, his attitude clearly goes beyond such matters, for Ağaoğlu is not satisfied simply with the notion that the Muslim community should receive equal treatment as individuals – he wants certain guarantees for the community collectively. This is an important point, for it shows that whereas, as a practical matter, he may see the future of the community within the Russian Empire, while as an ideological matter he may equate modernization with a liberal regime, nevertheless modernization and liberalism are meaningless to him outside of the furtherance of his community as a community. This attitude is, in a sense, the rejection of the Ottomanist approach, only in the Russian context. No matter how much liberalism speaks to him, no matter how much he views himself as a loyal subject of the Tsar, Ağaoğlu will never accept an arrangement that leaves the Muslims of Transcaucasia as individual citizens in the Russian state, be it ever so enlightened. Liberalism and its concomitant individualism are all very wonderful, but their area of exercise has to be his own group of identification. Ağaoğlu in this sense is fundamentally a nationalist and not a cosmopolitan.
In late 1908 or early 1909, increasing repression on the part of the Tsarist government was making life in the Caucasus very difficult for Ahmet Ağaoğlu. On the other hand, the success of the Young Turk Revolution in the Ottoman Empire just a short time earlier made Istanbul an attractive destination. Ağaoğlu says of his last period in the Caucasus:

I was among those who were zealously followed. Matters came to such a point that not only my own peace of mind and repose, but that of my family as well, began to be compromised. In 1908 a revolution had taken place in Turkey [sic], some individuals I knew had risen to its head. At the same time Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, who had been appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus, had decided to seize and banish me no matter what. As soon as I learned this I decided to escape and I fled to Istanbul towards the close of 1908.1

Ağaoğlu left his family behind in the Caucasus, but things went well for him in Istanbul where he was warmly received. Positions were readily found for him by his Young Turk associates, now in power, and after about a year he wrote to his wife expressing his intention to settle in Istanbul and hoping that she would choose to join him there, though he acknowledged she might not wish to move so far from her relatives. His wife and children travelled to Istanbul shortly thereafter, and the family established itself in Istanbul in 1910.2

Political and Intellectual Activities, 1909–1919
Ağaoğlu’s Unionist connections first procured him a job as an inspector of schools and shortly thereafter he was appointed director of the Süleymaniye Library. He also taught Russian and Turko-Mongolian history at the Darülfünun, where he was the first person ever to teach the latter subject. Very quickly he became a frequent contributor to a number of Ottoman journals and newspapers, including the reformist Islamist Sırat-i Müstakim (The
Straight Path, later Sebilü’reşad) and the Young Turk-oriented Jeune Turc, which appeared in Istanbul in French. In 1912, after the death of its original owner-editor, the novelist Ahmet Midhat, Ağaoğlu became the chief editor of the Istanbul daily Tercüman-i Hakikat (The Interpreter of Truth).

In 1911 Ağaoğlu participated with other Turkic émigrés from Russia, notably Yusuf Akçura and Ali Hüseyinzade, in the founding of a Turkist journal, the highly influential Türk Yurdu. Shortly thereafter, Ağaoğlu also played an important part in the founding of another institution that played a central role in late Ottoman history, the Türk Oçaği. Türk Yurdu began life as the organ of the Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti, or Turkish Homeland Society, established in August 1911, by six noted intellectuals of a Turkist ideological bent. Of these, three, Ali Hüseyinzade (Turan), Ahmet Ağaoğlu and Yusuf Akçura, were émigrés from the Russian Empire. Akçura was a Tatar from Kazan, the other two were Azerbaijani. Akçura had earlier been involved in another nationalist organization that published its own journal; this was the short-lived Türk Derneği (the Turkish Association whose journal bore the same name). That association’s members, however, had all been Ottomans, with the exception of Akçura, and its focus had thus been more Ottomanist than Turkist, devoting limited space to matters relating to non-Ottoman Turks. So, in early 1911, Akçura met with a group of Russian émigrés and Ottoman intellectuals and organized the Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti (Turkish Homeland Society). The stated goals of the Society were to create a student dormitory and to publish a journal.

The journal itself, which began to appear in November of 1911, had an editorial policy that emphasized using a language intelligible to the largest number of Turks (meaning people all over the Turkish world), without sacrificing intellectual quality, and emphasizing topics that would tend to inform Turks concerning all their various brethren and promote a sense of solidarity and common consciousness among them. In the same year, a group of students from the Military Medical Academy held a series of discussions about the deteriorating condition of the Ottoman Empire and decided the solution was improved education. They therefore determined to contact leading members of the Ottoman intelligentsia for the purpose of founding a society or group that would promote higher levels of education through the creation of schools, public lectures and the publication of brochures. Their first statement was drawn up in May of 1911. By June, they were meeting with leading intellectuals in the homes of Akçura and Ağaoğlu. In July, they accepted the name Türk Oçaği (Turkish Hearth) and drew up the list of founders and officers. Ağaoğlu was one of the four founders, while Akçura was
listed as the vice-president. The Ocak’s stated aims were ‘Working for the national education of the Turkish people and raising its intellectual, social and economic level, for the perfection of the Turkish language and race’. There was a strong emphasis on the notion that the only way to improve educational and cultural levels was to awaken national consciousness in the population, especially the youth. But while its purposes and officers were agreed upon in 1911, the by-laws were not drawn up and the organization was not officially commissioned until the following year. In his account of the origin of the Türk Ocağı, Akgür makes clear that it came into existence at roughly the same time as the Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti and that there was considerable tension between the students and the older intellectuals as to the form the Ocak should take. In particular, the older intellectuals wanted the Ocak to open clubs as well as to function as an educational foundation. The students resisted this notion fearing it would turn the organization into a tool for a political party. In the end however, though it did always have a strong component that was involved in publishing and cultural activities, the clubs were opened and became highly influential in late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican history.

There is evidence to suggest, as Masami Arai has discussed in his book, that, in the period 1911–12, confusion existed about the
distinction between the Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti and the Türk Ocağı, as the correspondence between Akçura and various Türk Yurdu branches in Europe indicates. The Ottoman students in Europe corresponded both with Akçura and with the students from the Military Medical School and seemed to think of both groups as representatives of the same umbrella organization. The somewhat acrimonious discussions between Akçura and the European branches, and between the older Istanbul intellectuals and the medical students, indicate that there was a struggle for control of the organizations going on. It would appear that the older men wanted the organizations to have a political dimension, though not necessarily one that endorsed a given party. They saw the students’ focus on schools and lectures as too limiting. Furthermore, the Russian émigrés wanted to create organs and organizations that promoted interest in the larger Turkish world and had a nationalist, not Ottomanist, perspective. The journal Türk Yurdu fulfilled that goal, with as much space devoted to Turks in the Russian Empire as to Ottoman Turks. It received material support in the form of a legacy from Mahmut Bey Hüseyinov, a wealthy Tatar, and probably also from Enver Paşa. The struggle for control of the Türk Ocağı appears to have been indecisive, at first producing an organization with a mixed mission. As a result, the organization got off to a slow start and was not very successful in its first year. But as time went by its focus became more and more Turkist and its membership grew. The Türk Ocağı and Türk Yurdu were long two of the most important fora for the development of Turkist ideas and consciousness in the Ottoman Empire. Türk Ocağı clubs were quickly established throughout the Empire, especially in the primarily Turkish Anatolian regions. By 1914, the organization had 3,000 members, rising by 1920 to 30,000. Aside from their educational and propaganda activities, these clubs served as important nodes for the organization of national resistance in the post-First World War period. Türk Yurdu, which continued to appear until 1931, was the leading intellectual production of Turkists in the Ottoman and Russian Empires, with a readership of thousands.

The year 1912, when the Committee of Union and Progress moved its headquarters from Salonika to Istanbul, was also the year that Ağaoğlu joined the Central Committee of the Committee of Union and Progress and the year he was elected to the Ottoman parliament as the member from Karahisar. During his residence in the Ottoman Empire, Ağaoğlu was a well-connected member of the capital’s intellectual elite, who held civil service positions and elective office, published virtually constantly, was a member of the ruling party and was generally quite active in Ottoman affairs. At the same time, he never lost interest in the affairs of Russia’s Muslims,
especially in Azerbaijan. He worked tirelessly both to promote what he saw as their interests and to encourage interest and a feeling of solidarity or kinship for them on the part of the Ottoman Turks. His activities during and immediately after the First World War must be seen in the context of political and military developments in Azerbaijan as much as in the Ottoman Empire.

Once the First World War broke out and the Ottoman Empire entered on the side of the Central Powers, it became clear that the Ottomans, under Enver’s leadership, had ambitions in the Caucasus. In November of 1914 the Ottoman armies moved into eastern Anatolia with one group pushing towards Batum and another operating around Kars. The force around Batum met with initial success. The Ottomans had established secret contacts through the Teşkilat-i Mahsusa, or Special Organization, both with Transcaucasian Muslims (Azerbaijanis and others) and with the Georgians, seeking to incite them to rise and promising the Georgians recognition of independence in return for support. Now the local Lazes and Ajars did rise in support of the forces around Batum. At this point a second Ottoman force under Enver himself moved up to operate between Kars and Sarıkamış with initial success. The bulk of the original force was ordered to reinforce Enver’s. Fighting began in the area in December and went well for the Ottomans at first, but the Russians rallied and with the support of the local Armenian population had decisively defeated the Ottoman army by mid-January 1915. Slightly prior to this defeat, Enver had dispatched a small expeditionary force from the army consisting of troops belonging to the original forces that had operated around Batum, plus Iranian political refugees, to move against Tabriz. This force occupied Tabriz in early January 1915 almost without effort. The plan was to organize a drive on Baku, but the defeat at Sarıkamış put an end to that plan for the time being. The Russians returned to Tabriz and drove the Ottomans out again. That the Ottomans moved forces into Iranian Azerbaijan as well as fighting the Russians; that they never promised anything in respect of the future status of Azerbaijan although they promised to recognize Georgian independence; that they issued a propaganda statement at the outset of the war claiming to be waging it for the purpose of liberating their Muslim Turkish brothers – all these things led to the conclusion that the Ottomans had in mind a Turkist vision that included creating a greater Turkish state extending into Transcaucasia, under Ottoman leadership. Azerbaijan was to become a province or viceroyalty of the Ottoman Empire. However, 1915 and 1916 were years of defeat for the Ottoman armies in the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia. Russian forces captured Erzurum and then advanced into Anatolia as far as Erzincan. The Ajars and some Lazes who had openly supported the Ottomans were
massacred. The Azerbaijanis remained remarkably quiet and loyal to the Russians during this period prior to the 1917 revolution. Nevertheless, in 1915 Ağaoğlu and other Muslim émigrés from Russia joined in the creation of a ‘Defence of Rights’ organization for the Muslims of the Russian Empire called the Rusya Müslümanları Türk-Tatar Milletleri Müdafaâ-i Hukuk Cemiyeti (Society for the Defence of Rights of the Muslim Turk-Tatar Peoples of Russia). The Society, which probably received support from the Ottoman government, began by making demands on behalf of Russia’s Muslims including equal representation in the Duma, full economic rights, religious freedom and cultural autonomy. Then, in the summer of 1915 its members prepared a pamphlet and a memorandum which were submitted to governments and published in newspapers as the Society’s representatives travelled to Vienna, Budapest, Berlin and Sofia. The first of these writings gave historical and demographic facts about the groups in question, while the second demanded independence for Russia’s Muslims and appealed to the Central Powers to liberate them from the Russian yoke. In a similar vein the Society, which was affiliated with the League of Allogenes of Russia, sent an appeal in telegram form under the League’s auspices to President Wilson in May of 1916, signed by Ağaoğlu, Akçura, Ibragimov and Hüseyinzâde. In June of that same year the Society, again through its membership in the League, participated in the Third International Conference of Nationalities which was held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Conference required that the Society present the demands of each of the Muslim communities separately and thus the delegation was large. Ağaoğlu attended representing Azerbaijan together with Ali Hüseyinzâde; Yusuf Akçura represented the Tatars and a number of other Muslim minorities of the Russian Empire were also represented. The Russian Muslim émigrés maintained their propaganda activities both inside and outside the Ottoman Empire asserting the legal and national rights of Russia’s Muslim populations, while also emphasizing their cultural and historical ties to the Ottoman Turks.

The 1917 revolution changed the situation in the Caucasus. The absence of any real governmental authority from the centre now gradually forced the local populations to develop institutions of local government and move towards independence. Baku was in the hands of its mostly Russian soviet, but the rest of the area was under the control of the native population which tended to identify with the more moderate socialist-nationalist group, the Musavat, which set up an alternative centre at Ganje and united with the old Difâî Party. By May 1917 the avowed position of this group was unity with Russia within a democratic federative framework based on territory and nationality, but not on religion or disembodied nationality (i.e., not
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on the basis of widely geographically dispersed by ethnically similar populations). In that context a Caucasian federation was born joining the Transcaucasian regions of Azerbaijan, Daghestan, Armenia and Georgia. Especially after the October Revolution this federation was forced more and more to act as the sovereign government of the region with an elected legislative body and it rejected the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, entering into peace negotiations with the Ottomans on its own account. However, there were rising tensions between the different elements, and especially between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians, which were acting as centrifugal forces in the federation. In particular, the Armenians were reluctant to move towards real separation from Russia, which they regarded as their only safeguard, and they began to arm themselves as the Caucasian front began to collapse and the possibility of an Ottoman occupation seemed more imminent. Azerbaijanis, resentful of their lack of military training and weaponry and made uneasy by the Armenians arming around them, began to form marauding bands in the countryside, to disarm Russian troops returning from the front and to disrupt communication with soviet-controlled Baku. This led to a suppression of Azerbaijanis in and around Baku by Soviet and Armenian forces in the so-called ‘March Days’ of 1917. The Ottoman forces in the Caucasus were engaged in peace negotiations with a large and motley delegation sent by the Caucasian Federation, but the Ottomans insisted on adherence to the terms of Brest-Litovsk. Even the Azerbaijanis were reluctant to cede Batum, but they were far more conciliatory than the rest of the delegation and made it known in Tiflis that they could not promise the loyal participation of Azeri troops against an Ottoman force. Hostilities broke out briefly between the Ottomans and the Federation and the Ottomans took advantage of this to acquire Batum. When negotiations resumed the Ottomans demanded even greater territory than that awarded at Brest-Litovsk, mostly at the expense of Armenia and Georgia. Under these pressures the Federation broke down and the constituent elements declared their independence at the end of May 1918. The Ottomans again occupied Tabriz in June 1918.

At this time the Ottomans sent a force into the Caucasus called the Army of Islam, under the command of Enver’s brother, Nuri Paşa. The force included Ottoman troops, local Muslim irregulars and the all-Muslim cavalry unit of the old Tsarist army. Ağaoğlu accompanied the Army of Islam into the Caucasus as the political advisor. The army proceeded to Baku and took that city, failing for a period of a day or more after its fall to establish order there, a circumstance which led to massive butchering of the Armenian populace.

Until the end of the summer of 1918 the Ottomans were still not recognizing Azerbaijan as an independent state. They were,
perhaps, in hopes of using Russian Azerbaijan, Iranian Azerbaijan and Daghestan to create a kind of buffer area which, while not a fully integrated Ottoman province, would be under Ottoman administration. Thus, at first the Ottomans interfered with the internal political affairs of the new Azerbaijani republic very freely. In June, Ağaoğlu informed the National Committee, which had taken over the government of Azerbaijan after the dissolution of the Federation, that they were not an elected or popular body and that Nuri Paşa did not like them (presumably due to their leftist and Azerbaijani nationalist – as opposed to Turkist – attitudes). They should, therefore, step down and make way for a government composed of men selected by Nuri Paşa. Eventually the compromise was struck of forming a new cabinet with half of its membership composed of new men the Ottomans approved of, pending elections for a constituent assembly (which was duly elected and held its inaugural session in December 1918).

However, by the time of the fall of Baku to the Army of Islam, the Ottomans were forced to re-evaluate their position. Germany and Bulgaria were weakening on their west and the collapse of Bulgaria particularly would spell disaster for the Ottoman Empire in the World War. Early in September, Mehmet Emin Resulzâde, the president of the National Council and other members of the Azerbaijani government were invited to meet the Sultan as a kind of recognition of the new independent Azerbaijani state. The Union and Progress government in the Ottoman Empire fell in October and the new government signed an armistice with the Allies at Mudros that same month. Nuri was ordered to evacuate the Caucasus, but allowed his men and officers to transfer over to the Azerbaijani army before doing so. At this point in time the British expeditionary force in North Persia became the dominant power in the region and Ağaoğlu headed up an Azerbaijani government delegation that went to Enzeli to negotiate the terms of the occupation of Azerbaijan by British forces. The British commander of the force, General Thomson, informed the delegation that a force of British and White Russian troops would enter Baku and would control Batum and the railroads; the countryside would be left under Azerbaijani administration and the question of recognition of the Republic of Azerbaijan would be decided by the Peace Conference. When he entered Baku, however, he seemed to espouse very pro-Russian views. This prompted Ağaoğlu to enter into talks with the Russians liberals, or Kadets, and to advise other members of the government that as Azerbaijan could not survive alone in the world, the best thing was to seek federation in a democratic Russia. Over time, however, the British forces in the Caucasus came to view the government of Azerbaijan more positively. A democratically elected parliament had convened in December,
with Ağaoğlu elected as the member from the district of Zangezur, and the British authorities had found this government responsible and easy to work with. It was becoming increasingly evident that the Bolsheviks and not the White Russians were gaining the upper hand in the Russian Civil War and, furthermore, the British saw a strong Muslim state in Transcaucasia as a good buffer against Russian ambitions in India and Afghanistan.  

Thus, at the end of 1918, Ahmet Ağaoğlu was chosen along with the President of the Parliament and Head of State, Ali Merdan Bey Topçubaşı, to represent Azerbaijani claims at the Paris Peace Conference. Armed with a special diplomatic passport from the Republic of Azerbaijan and a letter of introduction from General Thomson, Ağaoğlu set out for Paris. The delegates arrived in Istanbul where French delays in granting them visas held them up for some time. Ağaoğlu came down with a case of the Spanish flu and, in March of 1919 while he was lying sick at home awaiting his visa, he was arrested by the Ottoman government, at the behest of the British, on charges of war crimes. He was deported with other leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress first to Lemnos and subsequently to Malta.

In this experience, Ağaoğlu was one of a select group of leading nationalist and patriotic political and intellectual figures whom the British arrested on general charges because they regarded them as a potential threat. Ağaoğlu was arrested on charges relating to atrocities against Armenians, but these charges seem to have been based solely on his nationalistic journalistic writings. The British government, in his case as in most of the others cases among the deportees, declined ever to lodge specific charges or bring the case to trial. Ağaoğlu was released in 1921 as part of a deal whereby the Malta prisoners were exchanged for British officers who had been captured by the Turkish nationalist forces. Following his release, Ağaoğlu made his way to Ankara where he put himself at the service of Mustafa Kemal and the nationalist cause.

**Writings on Türkism and Islam**

During the period between late 1908 or early 1909, when he arrived in the Ottoman Empire until his arrest by the British and internment on Malta following the First World War, Ağaoğlu occupied himself primarily as a journalist, or, more accurately, as an editorialist and writer of ideological harangues. He was associated with a notable number of Ottoman publications, either as the editor or as a regular contributor, and his bibliography for this period must amount to hundreds, indeed thousands, of pieces, which appeared virtually daily. As we have seen, he edited the newspaper *Tercüman-i Hakikat* and contributed regularly to the newspaper *Jeune Turc*. He also wrote
frequently for a number of journals, including the progressive Islamist journal *Sırat-i Müstakim*, where he discussed a variety of topics including education and the current situation in Iran. He also wrote an article for the first issue of the short-lived *İslâm Mecmuası* (*Islamic Review*) and a longer serialized piece for *Halka Doğru* (*To The People*). His work occasionally appeared in *Hikmet* (*Wisdom*) and in the more literary and artistic *Yeni Mecmua* (*New Review*, the creation of Ziya Gökalp), where he wrote, among other things, a long history of Russian literature since the eighteenth century. However, for the purposes of this work I have chosen to focus on his writings for the influential Turkist journal *Türk Yurdu*, because it was here, above all, that he really developed his ideas regarding national identity and its interface with religion. This was a journal that was widely read and respected all over the Ottoman Empire and among the Turkic populations of the Russian Empire as well. Although it certainly had propaganda as an element of its mission, *Türk Yurdu* was more a forum for serious exposition and discussion of ideas among the intellectual elite of the Turkish world than a medium for popularizing certain ideological notions among large masses of semi-educated people.19

Among the numerous writings which Ağaoğlu published in the pages of *Türk Yurdu*, there are two substantial efforts which are especially significant. One was a lengthy series entitled ‘Türk Âlemi’ (*The Turkish World*), which was a discussion of his vision of the
The causes of its weakness and the proper steps to take for effecting its renewal. The other was a long debate about the compatibility, or lack thereof, between Islam and Turkism, or nationalism generally; a debate which arose in part out of the publication in the pages of Türk Yurdu of the series of lectures on Turko-Mongol history and Turcology given by Ağaoğlu as part of his course on that subject at the Darülfünun.

Beginning in the year 1911 in the first issue of Türk Yurdu, Ağaoğlu began the publication of ‘Türk Âlemi’, an eight-part series, which appeared in the pages of the journal at irregular intervals over the next year. This piece represented a major statement of position for Ağaoğlu. In it he defined what he thought the Turkish world consisted of, what its problems were, what the historical roots of those problems were and a recipe for overcoming them.

The first two instalments are dedicated to defining the object of study and the problem. In terms of the object under consideration, the Turkish world, Ağaoğlu defines it in the broadest and most inclusive possible terms, spanning an area from the Balkans to China, from the Himalayas to Siberia – a vast area encompassing, as he says, some 80 million people. Their condition is less than satisfactory and this arises, he says, from three basic deficiencies: first, an over-zealousness and exclusivity in the Turkish nature; second, a too-great susceptibility to one’s surroundings; and third, the absence of national consciousness (maarifet-i kavmiye). It quickly becomes apparent that the first factor refers to bitter sectarian differences among the Turks and particularly to Shi‘i-Sunni divisions, though Ağaoğlu avoids mentioning them by name. The Turks, he says, are too monomaniacal; their differences of sect have made them lose sight of their common Turkishness and have set them against one another. The second factor, susceptibility to surroundings, turns out to mean assimilation. According to Ağaoğlu, the Turks have always conquered peoples more culturally advanced than themselves, like the Persians, and so have been culturally assimilated. Not only have they lost sight of their own Turkishness in this process, but also, in accepting education at the hands of the vanquished, they have been taught to hate themselves. Thus ‘Turk’ has become a term of disrespect. These two factors together have inhibited the development of a national consciousness among the Turks, while of course the absence of a national consciousness has reinforced the tendency to assimilate and to take on religious causes to the detriment of national unity. Furthermore, the intellectual class which is so crucial to national development and which might have been expected to limit the impact of the first two factors, has on the contrary, encouraged and endorsed them:
Our men of letters, poets, and historians deemed writing in Persian and Arabic an honour for them; the Turkish tongue reached the point of being forgotten. Our men of letters and poets, until the most recent times, did not search for anything at all in the name of a Turkish aspiration or Turkish ideal. In recent months some, in the height of their pride and arrogance have claimed that in Ottomandom (Osmanlılık), aside from the dynasty of the sultanate, there are no other Turkish families to be found!!! Naturally, in such a nation (kavm), there can be no trace of national consciousness (maarifet-i kavmiye). Naturally neither a material nor a spiritual bond is to be found among the various parts of a stock (unsur) that is not seeking after and moving with the same aspirations, ideals, or goals and [so] they are ever consigned to a state of dispersal. Is it credible that Germany or Russia could have been formed without a Goethe, a Schiller, a Herder, a Hegel, or even without a Pushkin or a Karamzin? It is the men of letters, the poets, the men of ideas, the intellectual lights that a nation has raised that introduce that nation to itself.

Given these problems, Ağaoğlu asks how the present situation of the Turkish world shapes up in comparison with other nations. He concludes that the Turks are doing better than any other Asian people, except the Japanese. The Turks have a well-developed modern literature (in addition to an ancient literary tradition) and this is true both of Ottoman Turks and of Caucasian and Central Asian Turks. He gives special attention to the highly developed state of journalism among non-Ottoman Turks, asserting that a number of their newspapers are even up to European standards. Education is comparatively widespread and the Turkish world is endowed with large numbers of educational and cultural institutions. Furthermore, Ottoman translations of scientific and technological literature are numerous and are the gateway to Asia for the bulk of that material. It is true that the Ottoman Turks are somewhat backward in the areas of commerce, crafts and trades, but, he asserts, ethnic Turks are quite forward in these arenas in Iran and the Caucasus, from which it can be deduced that the problem is one of sociology, not character. Thus, Ağaoğlu asserts at the end of the second article, the Turks are well positioned to stride fearlessly into the future.

In the third instalment, Ağaoğlu comments that in the previous 30 years, two ideological tendencies have emerged – the Turkist and the Islamist – and they have begun to give shape to the vision and aspirations of the Turks. Though they have not yet taken final form, an examination of these tendencies may yield some clues as to the Turks’ future direction. Ağaoğlu then launches into a sophisticated historical discussion of the awakening of the Muslim and Turkish world in the modern era. Islamism is common to all Muslim people (though, he claims, the Turks give it its concrete form) and, he points out, it was first engendered by Western encroachment in
the Muslim lands. Confronted by two centuries of Western military supremacy and Islamic defeat, Muslim intellectuals, who were 'not as aware of worldly knowledge as they were erudite about religious knowledge', saw the causes of decline in moral degeneration arising from wrong interpretation and loose application of the Şeriat. Thus, the only cure they imagined was embodied in legal codes for the proper implementation of religious commandments and strictures in accordance with the demands of the day. From this arose a number of movements, like the Wahhabis or the Babis, all over the Muslim world. All of them relied on moral reform and breathing new life into the Şeriat by interpreting it more in accordance with the times. But because these Muslim intellectuals 'looked at events from only one perspective and analysed them and criticized them from one point of view only', they were unable to recognize factors other than moral which contributed to decline. ‘For example, they basically didn’t pay attention to the fact that the West dominates the East not by morals and religion, [but] by science and technology, by the height of its civilization and by the advanced state of the weapons with which it is equipped.’ Thus, according to Ağaoğlu, the conclusions and courses of action arising from this flawed and unidimensional premise were inadequate.

Ağaoğlu outlines the next phase in the development of the Islamist movement, which he attributes to Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani. He says that Afghani (who, according to Ağaoğlu, was really a Turk) developed a multifaceted critique of Muslim decline, which he laid at the door of ignorance and misgovernment. Afghani, says Ağaoğlu, revealed in Classical Islam both a love of science and the injunction to rule by consultation and consensus. In this way, Afghani attempted to show that Islam was in no way hostile either to modern scientific achievement or to representative institutions. He felt the Islamic world could be revitalized through the adoption of new technology and through careful study of Islamic truths relating to politics, morality, economics, etc. Islam could be harmonized with new learning and with new political institutions. For Ağaoğlu, these arguments constitute the basis of the current Islamist movement and give Muslim intellectuals a new aspiration, ‘to invigorate the Islamic world by equipping it with Western science and technology and arming it with Islamic morals and habits’.

In article four, Ağaoğlu discusses the nationalist or Turkist movement. In this segment he notes that nationalism arose in Europe as an outgrowth of the French Revolution and was nourished by Romanticism and a century of research in new fields like comparative linguistics and ethnology. All these activities tended to give rise to national consciousness and form the basis of modern European states, institutions and the ‘pan-’ movements.
Nationalism entered the Islamic world, he concedes, from Europe. Independent Muslim countries were attracted to Western ideas and innovations because of their obvious strength and so many of their intellectuals read and studied in Europe. On the other hand, in conquered areas, the Europeans themselves established schools. Finally, the general growth in trade and communications made the penetration of Western ideas inevitable. Because of the method of introduction, nationalism is still confined more or less to intellectual élites who have extensive contact with the West. For the same reason it is an ideology that is more widespread among the Turks of the Russian Empire than among those in other places. The goals of Turkish nationalism are to raise the national consciousness and thus to galvanize Turks to work for their own salvation.

Ağaoğlu concludes the fourth instalment by reiterating that there are presently two important movements operating in the Turkish world – the Islamist and Turkist. Often, though they seem to have similar goals, conflict erupts between them. But can these conflicts not be removed and the two movements harmonized, he asks?

The remaining segments, 5–8, are the crux of the essay. They reveal Ağaoğlu’s historical understanding of Islam; his analysis of the causes of decline in the Islamic and more specifically the Turkish, world; and give his proposed remedies. His arguments are described below.

The major point of conflict between Turkism and Islamism is the nationalist question. The Islamists believe that nationalist feelings will sow conflict among Muslim brothers and destroy the unity of the ümmet. Those fears are all very fine on a theoretical level, but the ümmet has never been united in reality. It is an ideal that has never been borne out in life. Ethnic tensions and feelings of superiority exist among the Muslim nations today, as they always have. [Twelver] Shi’ism is virtually the national religion of the Persians, while Ismailism is localized in India and so forth. Thus it is clear that, as it spread, Islam adapted itself to local conditions and national tempers. In fact, Ağaoğlu says, it is this elasticity on the part of Islam which is one of its most notable characteristics and strengths. Through it, the Islamic truths have spread in a short time to millions of people around the world.

Turning to practical matters, Ağaoğlu argues that ‘the Islamic world’ is an abstraction, while the reality is a variety of Islamic peoples. If one’s goal were to strengthen the Islamic world, then the best course of action would be to undertake concrete measures to improve conditions among the specific people with whom one found oneself. The best way to do that would be to use the language, institutions and customs of the place, since the local people would be most likely to understand and respond to them. The Islamic world will be as strong as each of its constituent parts. As the individual
nations go, so goes the ümmet. Using this standard, Ağaoğlu constructs working for the nation as being the same as working for Islam. Furthermore, national feeling is naturally compelling and induces in people a willingness to sacrifice themselves. If these sentiments are combined with good education, they can produce talented and disinterested men in every area from art to science to statesmanship.

As to the notion that nationalism could take on a form contrary to the tenets of Islam, Ağaoğlu dismisses this fear with an historical argument. He says that the essential elements of nationality are shared language, religion, worship, history, homeland and aspirations. That is, religion is one of the primary factors in nationalism. Historically, he claims, in all modern nations, like France, religion played a key role in the emergence from particularism. In the specific case of the Turks, their 900-year history as the principal defenders of Islam has created a connection so deep between the nation and the religion that there is no element or institution of Turkish life that is not permeated by Islam and Islam may justly be called the national religion of the Turks. A nationalist always wants to inject a national flavour into every aspect of life; among the Turks this necessarily means an Islamic flavour as well.

Those who are partisans of nationalism have almost always been partisans of religion. Those of our partisans of nationalism who are against religion have not studied and examined what nationalism is at length and in depth; they have been deceived in their own feelings, in their way of thinking. He who repudiates the religion of a nation, which is its fundamental spirit and life, cannot be a partisan of that nation. Such people can be free thinkers, cosmopolitan, progress-loving, freedom-loving and even patriotic, but they cannot be partisans of nationalism... it is not possible while repudiating a nation’s religion to be a partisan of that nation. In short, a nation... is a unity, an indivisible whole.  

This does not imply, he hastens to add, that Muslims or Turks should be blindly bound to past custom and usage. Indeed a mindless reverence for the practices of one’s ancestors is to blame for getting the Turks and the whole Muslim world into the unfortunate position in which it currently finds itself:

The principle of conservatism which our ancestors and forebears have followed for so many centuries in so large a manner has piled up and loaded such weighty and important matters on our shoulders today that we, who are being crushed under them, are incapable of even thinking of a way to solve them. We just stagger and groan under this heavy load. Other nations, for their part, because they have gone along gradually resolving these same issues, are today free and at liberty in their movements and undertakings.
 Ağaoğlu is careful to clarify that religious truth in its abstract form is immutable; it is the application in society to which he refers. In this sense, all religions are susceptible to change and alteration once they come into contact with the world: different times, places and cultural contexts leave their mark on religious practice. It is certainly the case, according to Ağaoğlu, that when the Arabs came into contact with the more ancient civilizations of the Near East, not only practices but also beliefs were grafted onto Islam which were alien to it. Even more than that, given individuals, from time to time, for personal or political gain or other reasons, may introduce new and unorthodox practices and beliefs which nevertheless over time become broadly accepted. By these means many superstitions, un-Islamic practices and sectarian differences appeared in Islam. The results of these historical processes have been an obscuring of the basic truths of Islam, a degradation in Islamic morals and customs and the sowing of bitter sectarian conflicts among peoples of common religious and national heritage.

 Ağaoğlu concludes this long series with a diagnosis and a prescription. The Turks have been subject to all the effects of the evils that have beset the Islamic world. In particular, the development of sectarian differences and hostilities has acted like a poison, setting brother against brother, so that Ottoman Turks called the Shi’ite Azeris ‘Acem’ (Persian/foreigner), and bitter hatreds subsist even at the level of village and tribe, at the level of the very family itself. These conflicts, he insists, must be eliminated – not the schools (mezhep) and doctrines themselves, but the mistaken interpretations of them which prevent people from recognizing their fundamental similarities of belief and which inhibit the development of national unity among the Turks. The answer to the problem is a profound reform of the religious teachings made available to the common man and woman. Turkism cannot play this enlightening role because it only reaches a limited elite class and this is also true of the learned Islamic tracts. But a serious reform of the popular religious teachings would be the salvation both of Turkdom and Islamdom and would make clear that Turkism and Islamism are parallel, not opposing, tendencies. Such a reform is in the hands of the lower clergy, the schoolteachers and the writers. Ağaoğlu particularly focuses on the lower clergy and says that while they are the true spiritual guides of the masses, their level of learning is so low that there is hardly any difference between them and their charges. They tend to focus on trivial details and questions, while failing to impart the basic spiritual truths. In schools, young students are forced to memorize obscure and meaningless rules, in the total absence of any wider understanding. Among women, who are the first teachers of the children, the situation is even worse – they are
deemed virtual religious scholars if they know enough to get through a couple of prayers. The remedy for these evils, Ağaoğlu suggests, is governmental involvement in those institutions which train the clergy. Presently there is spiritual anarchy in the Islamic world, with virtually anyone able to set up his soapbox and begin to preach. This leads not to a vying for excellence, but a competition in pandering. The implications of this practice are grave:

This is a spiritual anarchy whose prolongation could lead to spiritual death and indeed to actual death. If we want to save ourselves from this situation, if we intend to ensure the unity and life of our nation, we must first of all get involved in the organizations of the spiritual class who are the representatives of religion. We must entrust the responsibility for the religious guidance of the people to scholars possessed of Islamic truths and illuminations, who would train only in serious schools. Thus, organizations and scholars of this type would be among the most effective factors in invigorating and unifying Turkdom.

For a nationalist tract, this essay is remarkable. It defines the Turkish world very broadly and says that the hope for its future resides in its becoming self-aware, unified and forward-looking. It defines nationality in terms of a complex of historical and cultural, and to a lesser extent racial, elements which combine to produce a common mentality (and also temperament). In these respects ‘Türk Âlemi’ can be seen as a rather typical nationalist manifesto. There is some glorification of the national past, but in general it is unromantic in its treatment of the Turks. What is startling is the degree of emphasis and importance given to Islam. It is explicitly and implicitly clear from this article that religion remains for Ağaoğlu a very basic, irreducible element of identity. His approach is not a Pan-Islamic approach – he is working first and foremost for the advancement of his people, Turkish Muslims. On the other hand, while for personal and practical reasons he favours a national approach to modernization and reform, he does view the improvement of the whole Islamic world as an important and parallel goal. Certainly the essay manifests a certain instrumental attitude towards Islam – he is quite open about the fact that it is a form of discourse that reaches the common man and as such can be effectively used to promote the goals of nationalism. Nevertheless, at no time does he suggest that the importance of Islamic reform is solely as a tool in the process of modernization. There is a note of genuine concern for the debased level of religious understanding in the populace. He sees Islam as containing real truths and as being of profound importance both morally and as an element of identity.

In this article, as in his writings on women in Islam and as in later articles we will discuss below, Ağaoğlu shows an historical approach to the problem of modernization and the question of religion. The
great, unchanging moral truths of revelation exist eternally, but *religion* does not exist in those terms. All religion exists in the world and as such is part of a complex and dynamic process of interaction between revelation and context:

> [W]hile spreading among the other various nations (*akvam*), it (*Islamiyet*) has been subject to the effects of the environment and the conditions in which those nations found themselves. If Shi’ism is followed by the greater part of the Persians, if the Ismaili sect particularly is adhered to in India and if among the other various nations only one of the four schools (*mezhep*) is followed, one should not view this as a chance circumstance. In political, social, religious, and historical matters nothing is chance, everything has its reason and, indeed, a whole chain of reasons. Whatever nation (*kavm*), race (*ırk*) and kin (*cins*) it penetrated, Islam took on a particular tendency in accordance with the requirements of the environment, social conditions and spiritual circumstances in which the nation found itself, together with preserving its own fundamental truths and essentials. And so, among the other good qualities and virtues of the religion of Islam, the quality that attracts the most attention is its power of elasticity. It is thanks to this elasticity that Islam, although it did not have any regular, planned propaganda, was able to attract to itself six or seven million inhabitants in India in the course of a hundred years... Islam, by conforming to the spiritual requirements of peoples and nationalities, has found strength and thanks to it has spread. 24

In many ways, this is the whole point Ağaoğlu wants to make. He wants to emphasize that the process has been dynamic and should remain dynamic, that there is never anything in religion that compels it to be at variance with development. The important thing is to embrace the past; to be able to look at the historical process and carry it forward, rather than getting bogged down in an uncomprehended history which is the blind adherence to inherited usage. He has a vision of history as a progress in which religion (as an historical force, not revelation) plays an important civilizing role, defining a wider consciousness and raising people above narrowly localized and purely animal concerns. Religion is, for Ağaoğlu, one of the earliest elements in the formation of a more elevated mentality. The national mentality emerges over time from the combination of narrow local concerns with a broader religious vision and once the mentality has been formed, its rise towards self-consciousness takes place in conjunction with the development of rational thought, rational government and institutions that protect and promote the individual:

> [R]eligion is one of the most important principles of nationality. The reasons for this are very simple and clear. For tying people to one another, especially in the days of nomadism, religion is one of
the greatest and most effective factors; and indeed after language it is a unique factor. All of the peoples living in the world and having reached the height of advancement with respect to nationality today, were formed first of all on religion, on the unity of religion. Religion always plays the role of leaven in the formation of nationalities and nationalisms; indeed religion has a great and primary effect even on the establishment of the national language, the national customs and convictions, the national mode of thought and way of life.25

Religion is a basic, inextricable part of this historical progress. However, religion is a protean element in this process, constantly and necessarily remaking itself. This is a necessary and natural phenomenon, not a manifestation of corruption:

If any nation attempts to preserve everything that exists within it just as it is, it will deprive itself of the right of life, because life means to live, to continually change and alter... The two-hundred year grief-provoking history of the Islamic world suggests the truth in all its nakedness and terror: we stopped, we believed life was in stopping. Others advanced, we froze; we stayed back, the others were constantly striving. And so today we look askance at the result of this painful situation... Time, which has altered and changed, is grinding us down and passing us by.26

For Ağaoğlu, stagnation is the real corruption. Thus when Ağaoğlu talks about a truer understanding of Islam, he is not trying to make the argument that problems of the Islamic world are moral in the sense that Muslims have strayed from the true path, but if they would return to it all would be well. Nor is he trying to ‘naturalize’ Western advances by saying they really all originated in Islam or are contained in the ‘true’ Islam. Rather, he is making a dichotomy between revelation and religion, and he is placing religion in the realm of the historical. He is then arguing that history has demonstrated a direction; that strength and advancement have accrued to particular kinds of societies constituted along national, liberal lines. He is saying that religion as an historical phenomenon has a fundamental role to play in that progress and that Islam as an historical religion can and must play its role in that development. That process has become arrested in the Muslim world over at least the last 200 years through a mistaken focus on tradition. Thus, Ağaoğlu discusses Turkism and Islamism as parallel and mutually supportive movements because if a modern national state or society is the ultimate goal, the freeing up of Islam and its reintegration in that historical process are necessary.

It is instructive to consider Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s emphasis on history in connection with Yusuf Akçura, who also had a strong sense of history and worked as an historian. In his monograph on the life and thought of Yusuf Akçura, François Georgeon devotes a section...
to Akçura’s historical thought. He points out that Akçura knew the theories of men like ibn Khaldun, Herder, Guizot, Buckle and Hegel; that when Akçura emphasized the role of the milieu in history one hears the voice of Taine; that he was familiar with the Introduction to Historical Studies written by the positivists Seignobos and Langlois at the end of the nineteenth century. Akçura, too, had a vision of history as a global affair, as something possessed of a unified evolution. He believed there was a ‘logic of history’. History was moving in a certain direction and everyone must try to get in step with this evolution or be left behind. Akçura also saw religion as a phenomenon within the flow of history. Well aware of the role that historiography had played in European nationalism, Akçura viewed the creation of a new, national history for the Turks as a central task. The kind of history he attempted was novel in the Ottoman Empire on two counts: first, it rejected Idealism as a motive force in history and placed much greater emphasis on material questions; second, it was a history that focused on ethnicity over Islam and harked back to pre-Islamic roots. In Akçura’s work, the history of the Turks does not begin with the Ottoman Empire as it did for most Ottoman historians who focused on the services of the Ottoman Turks to Islam. Akçura goes back to inner Asia, and he places special emphasis on the role of Genghis Khan and the melding of the Turks, Tatars and Mongols into one ethno-national group. Georgeon has pointed out how useful this approach was to someone like Akçura, in that it is this bit of analysis that allows one to speak of a Turko-Tatar people. He has also pointed out how provocative it was in the context of the Ottoman Empire, where the historical tradition was to treat the Mongols as a barbarian calamity which swept over the Islamic world and to whose evil influence many negative characteristics of Ottoman government and society were attributed.

In comparing Akçura’s attitudes towards history, and towards Turkish history, with Ağaoğlu’s opinions, one can see certain similarities. Ağaoğlu was equally familiar with sources which had a theory of history and treated history as a unified process; he often cited such authors in his essays. We have already noted that he, too, saw history as a current moving in a single direction and saw religion as also being carried on that current. Unlike Akçura, Ağaoğlu’s writings show a continued attachment to Idealism in history; that is, Ağaoğlu continued to place great emphasis on the role of ideas and therefore of intellectuals, as a driving force in history. This may perhaps reflect the fact that while Akçura studied political science in Paris, Ağaoğlu studied philology at a time when philologists saw tracing the history and development of ideas and beliefs as one of their principal activities. Men like Darmesteter
really tried to bring the worldview of ancient Persians to life for the modern student.

In the area of Turkish history and its relationship to Ottoman history, it is noteworthy that Ağaoğlu started teaching Turko-Mongolian History at the Darülfünun in Istanbul in 1909 and that this was the first time that subject had ever been taught there. Despite the heavy emphasis Ağaoğlu gave to Islam and Islamism in his first Türk Yurdu series, the definition that Ağaoğlu gave of the geographical limits of the Turkish world went well beyond anything that had then or ever been a part of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, he had identified the assimilation of the Turks into a greater Islamic civilization as one of the causes of Turkish decline and obstacles to renewal. In other words, while not reducing Islam to a secondary role in Turkish history, as did some nationalist thinkers like Yusuf Akçura, Ağaoğlu was not willing to limit all positive interpretations of history to Ottoman history, as many Ottoman historians did.

In 1913/14, Türk Yurdu published the text of some of Ağaoğlu’s lectures on pre-Ottoman history in a two-part series entitled ‘Türk Medeniyeti Tarihi’ (History of Turkish Civilization) This text provoked a strong response from Süleyman Nazif Bey who wrote an open letter to Ağaoğlu in the journal İctihat, in which, among other things, he said:

I, like every Ottoman Muslim, have two traditions and two social guidelines: the first is religious and the other is national (milli). My religious tradition begins ten years before the Flight of the Prophet, while my national (milli) tradition begins six hundred and ninety-nine years ago [i.e. with the Ottoman state].

His argument was that an Ottoman nation could be forged from the various ethnicities of the Empire in the way that European nations were originally forged from diverse elements; that Turkish nationalism would separate ethnic Turks from other elements like the Arabs and damage both the Empire and Islamic unity. Ağaoğlu responded that the Turkish world could not be divided in this way into pre- and post-Ottoman and he insisted upon the importance of earlier Turks like the Seljuks to Islamic history. He severely reprimanded Süleyman Nazif for grouping Shi’is together with pagans and questioned how someone who made such a statement could then say he was working for Islamic unity. He criticized Nazif’s proposed analogy between the Ottoman Empire and the French or the Germans, pointing out that while the English or the Germans had also partaken of the Roman heritage, only the Latin peoples referred to one another as compatriots because they shared a real bond of blood. Moreover, the amalgam that went to
make up what is now the French nation was arrived at as the result of centuries of intermarriage and cultural blending producing an entirely new ‘genius’. These conditions, he said, did not exist in the Ottoman Empire. Finally, he affirmed that each nation’s search for itself would ultimately lead to the Arabs and the Turks drawing closer together in friendship. Ağaoğlu, like Akçura, was adopting a Turkist vision as opposed to an Ottomanist vision and this was in contradistinction to most reformist Ottoman intellectuals of the period who tended to want to conflate the notions of Turkishness and Ottomanness. The debate with Süleyman Nazif also shows that often Ottomanism and Islamism could be viewed as one thing or as symbiotic by Ottoman intellectuals who viewed the Ottoman state as the defender of the Islamic world.

In 1914/15, Ağaoğlu produced a lengthy article in two parts for Türk Yurdu entitled ‘İslâmda Dâva-yı Milliyet’ (‘The Nationalist Question in Islam’). This article was written in response to a piece by Ahmet Naim Bey criticising Turkism as anti-Islamic, which had appeared in Sebilü’reşad (The Path of Righteousness). In it, Ahmet Naim categorizes the nationalists as falling into two groups: pure Turkists who openly advocate atheism, or lack of religion at any rate, and the Islamist-Turkists who can’t make up their minds between the two tendencies. Then, using Hadith and Qur’an citations, he attempts to show that nationalism is not permissible in Islam, that it harms the Islamic world by stirring up conflicts within the ummet and damaging Islamic brotherhood (ühuvvet-i islamiye).

Ağaoğlu sets out to defend Turkism and to refute these points. To do so he uses three types of argument: accepting Ahmet Naim’s scholastic approach, he examines the holy texts adduced against nationalism to show that in fact they say nothing against it; he criticizes the scholastic method itself; and he adduces historical evidence to show that Islam and nationalism are not only compatible, they are complementary. First Ağaoğlu summarizes Naim’s arguments and then he simply dismisses the charges that there are two types of Turkists and that some of them advocate atheism. Ağaoğlu insists the Turkist movement is an organic whole and he is going to show that religion is an integral part of a nationalist program and vision.

Ağaoğlu begins by pointing out that all of the sacred texts put forward by Ahmet Naim as critical of nationalism (kavmiyet, milliyet), actually speak of clannishness (asabiyet). It is a grievous error to confuse the two, for while asabiyet is a feeling of attachment to a group of agnates, nationalism is a feeling of attachment to a nation (kavm, millet), which he defines, following the Russo-French sociologist Jakob Novikov (Novicow) as ‘a group of individuals who resemble one another in their way of feeling’. (Ağaoğlu pauses
here to point out that this resemblance is the result of shared language and religion – other factors that might be mentioned like literature, customs, or race (ırk) in fact flow from the first two.) So, whereas asabiyet has as its object a narrow, concrete circle of individuals, nationalism has as its object ‘an ineffable spiritual group whose confines are sometimes very wide’. Asabiyet is typical of tribal societies that have not yet forged a sense of national unity (vahdet-i milliye).

Ağaoğlu then launches into an historical discussion of early Islam, in which he asserts that the Prophet worked tirelessly to overcome asabiyet among the Arabs because he knew that only by forging Arab national unity (vahdet-i milliye) and an Arab national sensibility (Arab vucudan-i millisi) would the natural genius and strengths of the Arabs be enabled to show themselves and carry Islam forth into the world on a victorious tide. As proofs of his assertion he points out that the Prophet insisted both that all inhabitants of Arabia, as well as all Arabs living outside Arabia, accept Islam. They were not accorded the option of becoming zimmis. That was because the Prophet was using the bonds of an Islamic consciousness to overcome asabiyet among the Arabs and give birth to Arab unity. Even the miracle of the language of the Qur’an served this purpose in that it codified and unified the Arabic language for all time. By this type of argument Ağaoğlu presents nationalism and Islam in a kind of symbiotic relationship – religion was needed to overcome asabiyet, but national unity was needed to create a worthy vessel for the transmission of Islam. Ağaoğlu goes further and says that later the conflicts that developed after the death of the Prophet and that resulted in deep political and sectarian rifts in the Islamic world had their origins in a resurgence of asabiyet or tribal feeling among the Arabs. ‘It is self-evident and obvious that had the Arabs remained true to that national unity [vahdet-i milliye], to that ideal of nationalism [kavmiyet mefküresi], which Islam had wanted to establish and secure above all else, the history of Islam would have run an entirely different [and he implies better] course’.

As far as the question of nationalism and the relations between different Muslim peoples, Ağaoğlu claims that the sacred texts only enjoin a sense of spiritual unity; they in no way require the abandonment of any of the national characteristics such as language or way of life. When a people accepts Islam, it enters into a bond of faith (rabita-yi imaniye), into a religious brotherhood (uhuvvet-i diniye) with other Muslim peoples, but ‘there is no injunction in the Şeriat to the effect that those who have accepted Islam should at the same time abandon their nations (kavm), their languages and the rest of their national particularities (hususat-i milliye)’. To make such a requirement would have been impossible in Islam.
simply because, since it would have been unnatural, it would have constituted an unbearable obligation, something the Qur’an specifically abjures.

Having thus refuted, using scholastic and historical arguments, Ahmet Naim’s claim that nationalism is positively prohibited by Islam, Ağaoğlu addresses the accusation that nationalism is implicitly prohibited in that it has harmed or will harm Islamic unity. He does this by criticizing the whole scholastic approach. He says that Ahmet Naim has made his argument against nationalism by citing Hadith or ayets that command or recommend the unity, brotherhood and solidarity of Muslims and then opining that as nationalism damages these, it is forbidden. But, Ağaoğlu says, Ahmet Naim does not cite any events to show that nationalism has injured or prevented unity or brotherhood in any way:

If the majority of ayets and Hadith can be [used as] supports for such personal and arbitrary interpretations, then, by linking a great many of the affairs of life to any given ayet, it would be easy to come up with strange conclusions. For example, one could say to Muslims, ‘Don’t get rich. Your wealth could excite envy and discord could arise among you. Our religion has commanded brotherhood and equality...’. In fine, one could say anything in the name of Islamic brotherhood.

In order to arrive at reasonable conclusions on the basis of the premise he has formulated, our esteemed opponent must prove to us, first of all, that until the appearance of the nationalist tendency, a complete brotherhood existed among the Islamic peoples and individuals. Then he must prove to us that after the appearance of the aforementioned tendency this brotherhood was replaced by discord.33

But in fact, Ağaoğlu concludes, Islamic brotherhood is an unrealized dream and there has never been a Muslim government that was not willing to go to war with another Muslim government. He sums up his essay by recapitulating his argument that if a nation is defined as a group of people who feel in the same way, then religion has always played a key role in the formation of nations and people who have dedicated themselves to a nationalist cause will always give weight to religion and seek to promote it. In the case of the Turks especially, their long and glorious association with Islam, much of it in the role of the principal protectors of the faith, makes it inconceivable that any Turkist would renounce Islam or prefer some pre-Islamic heritage to it; to say so is a grievous slander:

How could a Turkist wish to return to shamanism when the most glorious pages of Turkish history are constituted by the blood which they [the Turks] lavished unstintingly on the cause of Islam? How could a Turkist want to have recourse to the [pre-Islamic] past when it is among the Turkish peoples (akvam) who are today within the
circle of the Islamic civilizational basin that national unity as regards language, sensibility and way of life, that is as regards all the most solid bases of nationalism, [kavmiyet] has been preserved? ... The rest of [the Turkish world] has become so distant from us that in order to find a relationship between us, it has become necessary to have recourse to the most profound analyses of the science of comparative linguistics.34

On the contrary, he says, Turkists are convinced that the spread of Islam can only be good for the Turks and moreover they are dedicated to eradicating religious ignorance in the Turkish nation and inculcating in it the Islamic truths.

What we see in this article is, first of all, a continuing insistence on taking an historical perspective on religion. Ağaoğlu’s criticism of Ahmet Naim’s scholastic methodology is telling in this respect. While he does not reject the validity of the sacred texts per se, he does insist that their validity can only be determined by viewing them in an historical context. But while Ağaoğlu insists on seeing religion inside of history, he does not reduce it to an element of culture in the service of nationalism and nothing more as do Gökalp and Akcura, nor, obviously, is he arguing that nations like the Arabs or the Turks subsume themselves in Islam and derive their whole identity from their service to it. Rather, he is arguing that the relationship between nationalism and religion (Islam in this case), is a delicate and complex one in which each element both serves and feeds off the other. In the real world, he says, Islam exists in individual nations and states and the well-being of Islam depends upon the well-being of those nations. The creation of the early Islamic caliphate and its subsequent splintering into factions and sects are the proof of that. Conversely, the shared Islamic consciousness is an important element in the creation of national unity among Muslim peoples, as well as in giving that consciousness a particular shape. Thus, unlike many Ottoman modernizers, Ağaoğlu does not want to suppress or marginalize the spiritual class, he wants to influence them and enlist their help in the task of getting his people back on the track of history. Ağaoğlu never discounts either the usefulness or the goals of reformist Islam.

There are several points to be made respecting the characteristics of Ağaoğlu’s interpretations of the questions of Turkism and Islam as they relate to self-strengthening and the question of identity. First, on the question of Islam, we have noted above that Ağaoğlu viewed religion (not revelation) as an historically dynamic force in the process of becoming, interacting in important ways with other historical currents. Within that context he viewed the reformist Islamist movement as a compliment to the Turkist movement. In this also he differed substantially from the prevailing attitudes among
Ottoman modernizing intellectuals who tended to view religion as genuinely harmful. Young Turk intellectuals might couch some of their discussion in Islamic terms, but their use of Islam was instrumental—in private they viewed religion as the enemy. Science was the answer and talk of a ‘real’ Islam was for popular consumption to make reform more broadly palatable. Some of the reasons for this dramatic difference in attitude must lie in the differences in the experience of Russia’s Muslim Turks and those of Ottoman Turks. In Russia, clerics made up a goodly portion of the reform-minded and played a significant role in the modernization movement; men like Musa Carullah Bigiyev were at the heart of some of the most important developments like the All-Russian Muslim Congresses. The Ottoman Empire had undergone early and deep Western contact, commercial penetration and industrial development. So had the Caucasus, but for the Ottomans these events had occurred in the context of a Muslim state that, for all its faults and weaknesses, was still a great state, especially when compared to other Muslim lands. In response to the West’s impact and material superiority, Mahmut II and the men of the Tanzimat had undertaken a program of Western education and of wholesale annexation of Western technologies and institutions. Resistance on the part of the ulema or other conservative elements was met with often brutal suppression in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The dislocations produced by these modernization policies and by increasing European presence and pressure gave rise in the last third of the century to an opposition intelligentsia within the bureaucratic elite, the Young Ottomans. Though fundamentally modernists themselves, a feeling of wounded patriotism and a sense of injured dignity caused them to give an Islamic mantle to their reformism and critique of the regime’s autocratic nature. This is not at all to say that their religious sentiments were insincere. It is to say that, not surprisingly, these young men felt the need to make the powerful new science, technology and social structures their own and to regain for themselves and their society a sense of initiative. The rhetoric the Young Ottomans developed, however, to show that Western achievements and in particular representative government, were all contained within Islam, was used by the subsequent regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II to justify his repressive rule. This had the effect of deeply alienating future Ottoman intellectuals from the notion that Islam and reform were compatible. There remained a small number of purely traditionalist ulema who were deeply opposed to all innovation, but these were simply marginalized and ignored, at least among the intellectual classes, by the Young Turk period. There was a small number of reform-minded ulema like Musa Kâzım, but their
ideas never attracted a great following. In addition to the negative experience inherited from the Young Ottomans, another reason for this dearth of a strong reformist ulema was the official status of clerics in the Ottoman Empire. In contrast to the situation in other Muslim countries, the Ottomans had created an organized clerical hierarchy and members of the ulema received official, salaried posts from the government. This perhaps tended to hinder the development of a really dynamic reformist Islamist opposition in the Ottoman Empire comparable to what developed in Egypt or Iran. In the Russian Empire, by contrast, Western penetration, industrialization and modernization did not occur through the filter of a Muslim-led government. Nor, for that matter did the experience of autocratic rule. For Turks and Tatars coming out of Russia at this time there was a wider range of possible positions. Certainly anti-clericalism was not uncommon among them, as they often viewed members of the ulema as self-serving individuals with an interest in keeping the common man benighted. On the other hand, as we have seen in Ağaoğlu’s writings, this does not necessarily imply an anti-religious attitude.

Second, Ahmet Ağaoğlu is very clear that the modern liberal society he is aiming for is nation-based. He rejects the Ottomanist vision for ideological and emotional reasons. His whole vision of the modern society is based on the shared-mentality notion of identity, where a constellation of elements including language, literature, religion, history and, to some extent, blood play a role. Ağaoğlu does not as a general rule emphasize racial arguments in his discussion, but he clearly saw the various elements of the Ottoman Empire as too diverse, too different to constitute a sound basis for the society he envisioned. Especially in the period following the outbreak of the Balkan Wars it was difficult even for committed Ottomanists not to have some reservations about the real possibilities for melding a unified citizen-state out of a multinational empire. It was the case for Ağaoğlu, as for the other émigrés from the Russian Empire, that he had no prior personal investment in the survival of the Ottoman Empire as a multinational empire; no sense of patriotic pride in its continued integrity; no sense of personal, devastating loss such as many members of the Committee of Union and Progress suffered as their homes in the European provinces were severed from the Empire. What was more, having lived as ‘subject peoples’ of a distinct race and religion, the Russian émigrés had a nicer understanding of the probable level of commitment felt by the Ottoman subject peoples, especially the Christians, to the Ottoman state. Their own national awareness had been awakened and honed on the steel of ‘second-class citizenship’ and the nationally relevant social conflict.
Despite his many peregrinations and shifts in perspective on the question of identity, Ağaoğlu was not a cosmopolitan in his outlook. When Ahmet Ağaoğlu talked about Rus Müslümanları while he was living in the Caucasus, he really meant Muslim Turks who were Russian subjects. Once he got to the Ottoman Empire, his emphasis on the Turks became completely overt. Just as he was not interested solely in individual citizen rights when he was writing as a Russian subject, so, too, he was uninterested in developing a polity based on the citizenship rights of non-Turks in the Ottoman Empire. At a very practical level, it was only the emphasis on Turkishness which linked his primary community—the Turkish-speaking Muslims of Transcaucasia—to the Ottoman state and Ağaoğlu, as we have seen, never ceased to be interested in the fate of that primary community. More than that, or at least in addition to that, his vision of history situated the nation-state as the most modern form of political and social organization towards which the history of humanity was moving. It was necessary, in his view, for the peoples of the Muslim world to become part of that current. Finally, the fact that the Muslims of the Russian Empire stood outside the emotional pull of allegiance exercised by the Ottoman state on Ottoman Turks, meant that it was much easier for them to view the world from a national perspective and specifically to view history from a national perspective. Russian émigré intellectuals were sophisticated observers with substantial exposure to the West. Their emotional distance from the Ottoman Empire allowed them to view Turkish history differently and they were very conscious of the role played by Romantic historiography in the national movements of other peoples. Ağaoğlu had received a particularly strong exposure to the way historical and philological arguments could be used to ‘establish’ the existence of national outlooks, characters, or mentalities. Because the traditional Ottoman historiography emphasized Ottoman contributions to the Islamic world and subsumed Turkishness to Islam, Ottoman intellectuals like Abdullah Cevdet, Ahmet Rıza, or Ziya Gökalp used intellectual systems based on sociology, crowd psychology, or positivist philosophy to make their analyses and build their reformist programs, while the Russians tended to develop analyses that emphasized historical perspectives. Thus it can be said that in several important ways, the positions taken by Ağaoğlu and the other émigrés from the Russian Empire were deeply affected by their Russian background, that is, by their removal from Ottoman pre-commitments and historical experience.
Two years were passed in detention on Malta, in the company of other leading Turkists and members of the Committee of Union and Progress. During this period Ağaoğlu conversed at length with his fellow detainees, bombarded the British government with letters of protest demanding specific charges and a trial and penned one of his major monographs, Üç Medeniyet (Three Civilizations).

After his release, Ahmet Ağaoğlu continued to lead a very active life as a statesman, official, academic, publicist and public intellectual. He also continued to devote himself to the Turkist cause, adapting his words and deeds to the new, post-War realities. As we shall see, he played an important role in the establishment of the new republican regime, and in the shaping of a new Turkish identity grounded in that republic.

Set at liberty in April 1921, he arrived in Istanbul in late May. After spending about a month in Istanbul, he set out for Ankara; he had been invited there by his old friend from the Türk Ocağı, now Minister of Education, Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver). Through his friend he gained an audience with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and placed himself in the service of the nationalist movement. Later that year Ağaoğlu undertook a mission which lasted roughly seven months, stumping the Black Sea coast and eastern Anatolia on behalf of the nationalist government. He left Ankara in July, charged with countering anti-nationalist propaganda and heading up a daily newspaper and a teacher’s college that were going to be established in the city of Kars. His work as a nationalist propagandist in the east was so successful that Mustafa Kemal sent him telegrams of thanks and praise and Ağaoğlu was appointed Director-General of Press and Information on 29 October 1921 while he was still in Kars. In December he returned to Ankara to take up his new responsibilities, which included managing the Anadolu Ajansı press service and he combined them with serving as editor of the semi-official Ankara
newspaper *Hakimiye-i Milliye* (*National Sovereignty*). In this post he worked both to revitalize the press domestically and to promote views favourable to the nationalist cause abroad. Ağaoğlu continued to write a great many articles in this period and one series that appeared in *Hakimiye-i Milliye* was later published in book form under the title *İhtilal Mi İnkılab Mi?* (*Revolt or Revolution*).

In the fall of 1922, as the Lausanne negotiations were getting underway, Mustafa Kemal and the Grand National Assembly abolished the sultanate and separated it from the caliphate, stressing the purely spiritual and non-state, non-political character of the caliphate. Ağaoğlu, who in *Üç Medeniyet* had devoted considerable attention to the importance of separating spiritual and worldly matters, specifically criticizing the old Ottoman constitution for recognizing both sultanic and religious authority in the arena of politics and legislation, in this period formulated Islamic arguments to support the notion of the separation of the worldly from the spiritual, the election of political leaders and the idea of national sovereignty. He argued that early Islam had elected its caliphs and he asserted that the Islamic principle of consensus of the ümmet was tantamount to national sovereignty and to republicanism. These arguments were specifically taken up by Mustafa Kemal in early 1923, when he toured the country drumming up support for the nationalist negotiators at Lausanne and for the new political order. In his speeches, Mustafa Kemal defended the principle of national sovereignty and the abolition of the sultanate and intimated the need for the abolition of the caliphate and the declaration of a republic.

In the spring of that year, Mustafa Kemal dissolved the Assembly, in which some considerable opposition to his actions was evident and orchestrated new elections. As a result of these, a carefully vetted group of candidates deemed loyal to the nationalist cause, among them Ahmet Ağaoğlu for Kars, was elected to the new Assembly. Almost no members of the so-called Second Group (united, as Erik Zürcher has pointed out, mostly in their opposition to Mustafa Kemal’s growing power) formed part of the new body, especially not those religious conservatives who had shown reservations about the abolition of the sultanate. In August, as the new Assembly was seated, Mustafa Kemal completed the plan he had first articulated in December of 1922 and reconstituted the old ‘Defence of Rights’ parliamentary group officially into a party, the People’s Party. Fifteen members of the new Assembly belonging to the People’s Party were chosen to form a committee to consider the new party’s by-laws, and Ağaoğlu was among them.

Nevertheless, despite the consolidation of Mustafa Kemal’s hold on power that the elections of June–July 1923 represented,
there remained within the People’s Party some individuals with the political stature to compete with Mustafa Kemal for leadership roles, men who were, moreover, somewhat more gradualist in their approach to many questions of modernization and political change. When, in October, the Assembly elected one of these, Rauf (Orbay), vice-president of the Assembly, Mustafa Kemal provoked a crisis of government by persuading the existing ministers under the premiership of Ali Fethi (Okyar) to resign, while also convincing other prominent members of the Assembly to refuse appointment to ministerial posts. Mustafa Kemal then broke the resulting political deadlock by proposing changes to the political system, including the declaration of the Republic, a measure that was accepted and given effect on 29 October 1923. This took place while Rauf Bey and other prominent leaders known to have some disagreements with Mustafa Kemal were out of Ankara. Rauf (Orbay) and Kâzım Karabekir, among others, made angry statements to the press in Istanbul denouncing the move as rash and affirming that the forms of a republic were not so important and did not themselves guarantee democracy. Upon their return to Ankara, Rauf was subjected to harsh criticisms by Kemalist loyalists in a meeting of the People’s Party parliamentary group that took place on 22 November 1923. In this meeting Rauf Bey clarified that he was in favour of the Republic and that he too viewed unconditional national sovereignty as the greatest possible blessing. He said that he hoped he would be able to continue to work with his colleagues in the People’s Party for the good of the country. Ağaoğlu attacked Rauf Bey sharply on this occasion. He accused Rauf of having left Ankara and of having made unequivocally anti-republican statements to the press in anger. If Rauf really meant that the declaration of a republic was premature and the form of a republic not particularly important, it was an end to friendship and a parting of the ways. Otherwise, let Rauf recant. Ağaoğlu noted that Rauf had been privy to prior discussions that had taken place with regard to this issue and wondered why Rauf hadn’t raised similar objections to the abolition of the sultanate which had been decided upon even more quickly. Rauf, said Ağaoğlu, was like a man who says he wants a child and then laments that it has been born too fast – one can only take it to mean that he didn’t really want the child.

In the event, Rauf and his supports were not long allowed to continue within the People’s Party, but were forced into creating a party of their own, the Progressive Republican Party, in November 1924. In time, this party was banned, the Sheykh Sait rebellion in the Southeast serving as pretext (June 1925). The plot on the Gazi’s life uncovered in Izmir the following June created the opportunity to put many of the opposition leaders on trial, although no connection
between them and the plot was proven. The accusation levelled in those proceedings, that the members of the PRP were reactionaries and/or old Union and Progress men plotting to come to power and overturn the revolution, was in important ways a screen for the opportunity to remove from the political scene, and from the history of the National Struggle, major figures capable of offering Mustafa Kemal real competition at the top. It will be seen that some similar accusations were levelled against Free Party members a few years later, despite the fact that the latter had been created at Atatürk’s behest. It is also worth noting that some of the major points articulated in the Progressive Republican Party’s platform, like single-degree elections, protection of individual liberties and reduction of the role of the state were also prominent later on in the Free Party’s platform.

Be that as it may, in this first stage of Mustafa Kemal’s consolidation of his hold on power, we see that Ahmet Ağaoğlu supported the more radical positions advocated by the Gazi and his close associates and lent himself to that consolidation. However, he was uncomfortable with some of the activities of the Independence Tribunals and came to the aid of the families of friends who were accused by those tribunals. And though Ağaoğlu supported many of the regime’s measures in this period, he never got along well with İsmet Paşa. An early sign of this is Ağaoğlu’s replacement in 1923 as Director-General of Press and Information by Zekeriya Sertel through İsmet’s intervention. As the 1920s progressed and İnönü’s power and position within the Republican People’s Party (RPP) grew even stronger, Ağaoğlu’s criticisms of party and regime would also intensify.

The year 1923 was very busy for Ağaoğlu and, besides being elected to the Assembly, he served on its Foreign Affairs, Library and Internal Organization Committees and later on its Constitutional Committee. He was also active in the newly reconstituted Türk Ocakları society which he had helped found before the War and which had just opened its Ankara branch under the leadership of Hamdullah Suphi. At the inaugural session Ağaoğlu gave a talk on the topic of Idealism.

Ağaoğlu played an active role in the drafting of the 1924 constitution, which granted considerable power to the executive. During the parliamentary debates that took place surrounding the issue of the concentration of powers, Ağaoğlu criticized the notion of concentration of powers in the hands of the Assembly, saying that the 1921 constitution had granted virtual dictatorial powers to the legislative body. But the specific change which he advocated, namely that newly appointed members of the cabinet should submit themselves to the Assembly for approval not only as persons, but
that they should be required to make a statement of their platform and proposed policies for approval at that time as well is, in fact, an attempt to limit the power of the executive, given that it was the President of the Republic (elected by the Assembly) who named the Prime Minister who then in his turn named the members of his cabinet. This particular suggestion was also in harmony with Ağaoğlu’s more general critique of personalism in government, a critique he articulated in *Uç Medeniyet*, as well as in other writings. As the 1920s progressed, Ağaoğlu was generally in favour of the many radical social reforms proposed by the government, such as the adoption of the Latin alphabet (he had advocated alphabet reform while he was still a student in France), or the translation of the Qur’an and the *ezan* (the call to prayer) into Turkish.

Throughout the 1920s, in addition to his official governmental capacities, Ağaoğlu remained active in the Türk Ocakları. Indeed, at the first post-war general congress of the organization in 1924, he was appointed to the society’s central committee, its cultural committee and its science and technology committee. At the 1926 congress, shortly after the Sheykh Sait rebellion, Ağaoğlu advocated closer ties between the government and the Türk Ocakları. He proposed the creation of a regular administrative structure with its positions financed by the government, whose purpose would be to carry the ideas of Turkish nationalism to the people. That is, he argued that the Turkist movement of the earlier period had succeeded in its work in the sense that it had created an intellectual class with a strong national consciousness, a class that had begun to produce works (musical, literary, etc.) of a national character. It had also succeeded in getting the national ideal completely accepted in government and state circles and gaining acceptance for the posture that all official institutions should be based on the national principle. While further scientific investigation into the national heritage in areas like history, linguistics and anthropology was surely salutary, it should be carried out by scholars and specialists in a professional academic setting. The role of the Türk Ocakları in the new era should be the role of populist enlighteners, forging a link between the state and the people, their mission to take the essence of Turkish national identity to the people, to help them make it theirs.

These notions fit in very well with ideas expressed at earlier moments in Ağaoğlu’s career concerning the role and importance of the intelligentsia: if the revolution fails to reach the people, it has failed. The people are the source of authenticity because they are the nation, but on the other hand they do not know themselves and must be shown who they are – indeed, taught to be Turks. The teachers who bridge the gap between the enlightened élite and the common folk ought to be both supported and regulated by the
government (he had previously made these very comments with regard to the ulema). On the one hand, the intellectual élites must be left in freedom to develop their ideas; on the other, government and state must take an active role promoting the instruction of the popular classes. Thus, the members of the Türk Ocakları, in close co-ordination with the government, while yet remaining aloof and protected from day-to-day party politics, would teach the people the content of their Turkish identity. That is, in the period immediately following the Kurdish disturbances, Ağaoğlu was advocating an aggressively assimilationist policy on the part of the Türk Ocakları organization working in close concert with the government. He was not, however, urging that government interest itself in or attempt to regulate all areas of life, intellectual or otherwise.

In this same period, 1925–26, Ağaoğlu began to teach a law course at the newly opened Ankara Law School.¹⁶ That year, he submitted a report to the Gazi, in which he criticized the Republican People’s Party for corruption and lack of energy and responsiveness – for complacency, in fact. In this report he insisted that the revolution could not succeed under such circumstances. The report earned him the even deeper enmity of İsmet İnönü, who was head of the government and leader of the party (the Gazi was above parties as Head of State).¹⁷ The criticisms expressed in this report presaged the unexpected response that the Republican Free Party would garner in 1930–31.

The Free Party episode was in many ways a response to the economic crisis brought on by the worldwide crash and depression of 1929.¹⁸ In Turkey this coincided with the end of treaty restrictions on Turkey’s ability to set tariffs on foreign trade and with a sharp drop in the price of agricultural commodities on the world markets. This was compounded by a bad harvest in 1929 and the beginning of Turkey’s payments on old Ottoman era debts in 1928. The country thus approached the new decade deeply in debt, both in connection to the old Ottoman debt and with a negative balance of trade. Public works and infrastructure projects of the 1920s, such as railroad construction, which had been undertaken despite the lack of sufficient government revenue, had also produced budgetary problems and inflation, especially since the republican leadership was adamant in its refusal to seek foreign loans. The combination of all these factors induced the government to replace what until then had been more or less a free trade policy with protectionist tariffs and restrictions on the movement of capital. In short, there was inflation, unemployment, low agricultural prices and, from a businessman’s point of view, government interference in trade and finance. There were also widespread complaints about inefficiency and corruption in the government of the one-party state.
In this context, Ali Fethi Okyar, who had become ambassador to France after he was replaced as Prime Minister by RPP hardliner İsmet İnönü in March 1925, was approached by Atatürk about creating and heading a party of loyal opposition in Turkey. It was felt that such a party would provide a safety valve for growing discontent in the country, that it might serve as a spur to the RPP and jolt it out of its apathy and that the introduction of a controlled two-party system would be healthy for Turkey both from a foreign relations standpoint and in terms of strengthening (or rather moving towards) democracy at home. Fethi began to plan the new party with Atatürk in July of 1930. The creation of the Free Party was officially announced in August 1930 and Ahmet Ağaoğlu was the party’s first member. In important ways he would be the party’s principal publicist and one of its leading ideologues. Ağaoğlu published extensively in this period in all the major journals and newspapers expressing his views and the party’s position and engaging in increasingly heated debates with the opposition. Son Posta, opened just two weeks prior to the official announcement of the Free Party and edited by the left-leaning Zekeriya Sertel, became something of an organ for Ağaoğlu and the Free Party in this period. Although Ağaoğlu and the paper’s editor did not agree on all things, Son Posta was generally favourable to the opposition, though it was more leftist and socialist in its outlook. The party’s programme, set forth in a brief on 10 August and further elaborated three days later, asserted its republican, secular and liberal character. It addressed itself to the country’s economic woes by advocating lower and progressive taxes, an end to monopolies and importation of foreign capital (i.e., foreign loans and investment). Politically, it demanded greater freedom of expression, single-degree elections and greater political participation for women. The party started accepting members on 21 August 1930 and to begin with did not charge dues. Response to it was surprisingly large with people rushing to join all over Turkey and telegrams of support pouring in.

The creation of the party excited great interest in the public and in the media. Fethi and members of the Free Party were greeted by large and enthusiastic crowds almost everywhere they went. This was certainly the case when Fethi and Ağaoğlu came to Izmir on 4 September 1930 for the purpose of inaugurating the Izmir branch of the party and giving Fethi the chance to address the voters. Boisterous crowds hailed his arrival and bedecked the city in flags. The Republican People’s Party, reacting to the enthusiasm that greeted Fethi, planned a counter-rally for the day of Fethi’s speech, scheduled for 5 September. The morning of the speech, a pro-RPP paper, Anadolu, published an article that described
Free Party supporters in very insulting and denigrating terms. At the pro-RPP counter-rally, a shouting-match between supporters of the two parties broke out and later a procession of Free Party supporters passing by the offices of Anadolu attacked the premises and destroyed a good bit of property. They also stoned the RPP offices. The police responded harshly and a young boy was shot dead. The crowd then carried the body to Fethi telling him the lad was a martyr for his cause. Fethi postponed his speech for several days until it could be made in conditions of public order. He then proceeded to tour the rest of the Aegean region where he continued to be met by large crowds and great excitement.

To begin with, Atatürk was careful to express his support for the creation of an opposition party and his neutrality or lack of partisan affiliation given his role as President of the Republic. However, as the Free Party’s creation stirred up more and more public activity and bitter political debate – in the Assembly and in the press – and especially after the Izmir incident, Atatürk’s attitude gradually changed and he began to side more and more openly with the RPP, commenting that it was his creation, that naturally he agreed with its policies and that after he stepped down as President he would of course take up once again his role as head of the RPP.

Accusations began to fly meanwhile that the Free Party was not in control of its membership, both in terms of their actions and, more importantly, in terms of who was enrolling. Criticism were levelled that the whole experiment was leading the country into anarchy and also that the Free Party was becoming a cloak for anti-republican reaction, especially religious reaction. After the disturbances in Izmir, editors of local pro-Free Party publications were arrested and put on trial, though they were able to win their cases on appeal.

All this was taking place in the context of the Free Party’s having decided, despite its newness and disorganization, to participate in the municipal elections which began around the country on different dates starting in early September and continued until 20 October. Not surprisingly, the Free Party’s success in the elections was slight. It seems clear, however, that the Free Party would have had a very creditable showing if not for massive election fraud. In Samsun, where the Free Party was well organized and where really clean elections were held, the Free Party swept to victory. The government, which was basically synonymous with the RPP, controlled the election apparatus throughout the country and there were many cases of intimidation of voters, of voters being turned away at the polls, or of local authorities simply tampering with the final count. On 31 October, Ağaoğlu stated in San Posta that he believed that election fraud had not only taken place, but had also been sanctioned at the highest levels of government. He commented
to Atatürk that if all the municipal elections had been run as cleanly as those in Samsun, the Free Party would have carried three out of four locales. On 15 November, Fethi spoke in the Assembly, denouncing the election corruption and blaming the Ministry of the Interior. The government’s response was to lay the blame at Fethi’s door for allowing undesirable and reactionary elements into his party and for generally fomenting anarchy. But the government’s attacks did not stop there. Fethi’s record was impugned. His ‘failure’ to move immediately to heavy-handed tactics during the Sheykh Sait rebellion and his signing of the Armistice of Mudros at the end of the First World War were thrown in his face; within a few days Fethi’s statement disbanding the Free Party was published. It had been a short and brutish experiment for its members.

The object of the criticisms levelled at Fethi and the Free Party was clearly to discredit the opposition as counter-revolutionary, not really a loyal opposition. This is made even clearer if we consider how members of the RPP and journalists friendly to them manipulated Ağaoğlu’s statements in reaction to the events in Menemen. Ağaoğlu had commented in the Assembly that he felt a sense of responsibility for the outburst, because it demonstrated the benighted condition of the populace and thus the failure of the enlightened members of society to inculcate the new values of the Republic successfully. He viewed the tragedy as a reproach to all those who had made the revolution. The RPP members and their associated press, however, jumped on his phrase ‘feeling of responsibility’, and articles appeared to the effect that he, as a member of the now defunct Free Party, accepted responsibility for having stirred up this outburst of religious reaction.

In his landmark study of the Free Party and its aftermath, on which the above account relies heavily, Walter Weiker attributes the failure of the Free Party experiment, among other things, to the too-rapid growth of the party with all the attendant opportunities for ‘infiltration’ by counter-revolutionaries and the tendency towards extremism and polarization in debate. He further argues that the experiences surrounding the rise and demise of the Free Party galvanized Atatürk to undertake reforms of the existing political system and of the RPP, including the annexation by the RPP of the Türk Ocakları and their conversion into ‘Halk Evleri’.

Weiker argues that, after the events surrounding the life of the Free Party, the RPP came to recognize the need to take their case to the people and to truly inculcate the principles of the revolution at the popular level. He describes the Türk Ocakları as an organization that had fallen behind the times and was drifting towards marginality, ripe for the plucking and conversion into the RPP’s popular propaganda machine, its ideology too ‘Pan-Turkist’
for the current borders-oriented nationalism of the regime, its most dynamic leaders absorbed in government duties and unable to focus on the organization, its elite cultural and literary interests more suited to the rarefied air of pre-War Istanbul than to the pragmatism of Ankara. Hamdullah Suphi, however, the president of the Türk Ocakları at the time of its annexation by the RPP, bitterly commented that Atatürk ordered the takeover because he feared the power of a rival organization.

In fact, Atatürk had generally followed the work of the Türk Ocakları, often attended meetings and events and had frequently praised the organization’s efforts. The Türk Ocakları had had branches around the Empire before the surrender and after the War it re-grouped and continued to open branches all around Turkey, where lectures were given, classes taught (including, for example, instruction in the new alphabet, Western languages and shorthand for women) and libraries were made available. As we have noted above, Ağaoğlu had argued as early as 1926 that the role of the Türk Ocakları was to take the revolution to the people, because it had not yet reached the people.

Furthermore, many of the leading figures associated with the Free Party, including Ağaoğlu himself, Mehmet Emin Yardakul, Doctor Raşit Galip, etc., were active and prominent members of the Türk Ocakları and formerly of the Committee of Union and Progress, for that matter. Füsun Üstel has noted that beyond the ties between the Free Party and the Türk Ocakları at this high level, there was a strong coincidence of sentiment among supporters of the two groups, especially in the eastern and the southwestern regions, as well as in the cities of Izmir and Istanbul. This sympathy on the part of some Türk Ocakları members for the Free Party occasioned bitter debate at the time, with pressure being brought to bear on the Türk Ocakları organization to recognize or affirm its identity as the ‘cultural branch’ of the RPP and therefore make a decision that members could either be unaffiliated with any political party or they could be members of the RPP, but if they joined other parties they would have to resign from the Türk Ocakları. The President of the Assembly articulated this view on 9 September 1930, in answer to a question posed him by members of the Balıkesir branch of the Türk Ocakları, which he was visiting. This position was pursued within the organization, basing the argument on a point in the Türk Ocakları’s by-laws, adopted in April 1930, that affirmed that the organization adhered to the ideals of the Republic, nationalism, modern civilization and populism and that in state policy it joined with the RPP, which was realizing those ideals. It went on to say that the Türk Ocakları worked for these goals in the fields of science and culture and in social matters, adding that ‘no Ocak may be
used as a tool or avenue for personal or political ambition’. Like the requirement, imposed at the same time, that university professors give up either their posts or their party affiliations, the government was clearly applying pressure to prevent the Free Party from having the use of any significant or influential groups or bases.

Hamdullah Suphi, the president of the society, tried to walk the line: on the one hand he worked to prevent the Ocaks from developing closer ties to the Free Party, on the other hand he urged the RPP, of which he was a member, to refrain from interfering with the organization and with youth organizations generally, asserting that the opposition was secular, nationalist, republican and ultimately salutary. Many in the Türk Ocakları resented and resisted this governmental and RPP pressure. In Istanbul in September, one speaker addressed the danger of reaction raised by Hamdullah Suphi and said that he was obsessed with it and that further not only monopolies in the economic arena, but monopolies in the arenas of politics and ideas were harmful to the state. She then openly urged people to vote for the Free Party. After the closure of the Free Party, there were reports in October that Fethi would be made president of the Türk Ocakları and also reports that in Aydın, a strongly Free Party area, the members of the party had met at the local Türk Ocağı to discuss events.

The point is surely not so much that the Free Party was disorganized and lacked the means of mobilizing its followers and disseminating its message, but that there was a pre-existing organization potentially at its disposal and that the RPP recognized this, applied pressure to try to impede it with some success and after the closure of the Free Party immediately moved to annex the Türk Ocakları and deprive them of any independence. As Weiker points out, the Türk Ocakları were nationalist, had a prominent history and record and advocated many of the progressive measures that the RPP considered its own stock in trade. It can be credibly argued, then, that as much as the regime feared reaction, it feared a really viable modernist, nationalist competitor for power. The accusation of reaction was one employed widely at that time as a disqualifier and if Ağaoğlu and Fethi had to endure it at the hands of İsmet and their RPP opponents in the Assembly, Hamdullah Suphi received the same treatment from the left-leaning Zerkeriya Sertel in his newspaper Son Posta. In November 1930, Sertel published an attack on the Türk Ocakları head together with a picture of Hamdullah Suphi in the presence of Abdülmecl, calling into question Hamdullah Suphi’s republican credentials. Mehmed Emin Yardakul and Ahmet Ağaoğlu responded forcefully to this reminding everyone that those were different times, times when they all had shown allegiance to the dynasty. Ağaoğlu noted that at
that time no one dreamed of a republic and added that it wasn’t right to blame anyone for showing respect to the crown prince in those days. (Eventually, Son Posta’s continued attacks on the Türk Ocakları would lead Ağaoğlu to end his association as a writer with the newspaper.\(^{26}\)) One comment Ağaoğlu made on this occasion is worth noting: ‘to repudiate the past is to not think about the future’.

In his memoirs, Hamdullah Suphi recounts that he remonstrated with Atatürk that ‘there could be no nationalism without a history’ and also that it was not right to deny the reform and modernization efforts of many nineteenth-century sultans.\(^{27}\)

These attitudes do not reveal irredentism and reaction as is sometimes claimed; it can be reasonably argued that what these attitudes reveal, among other things, is a group of men with distinguished records of service that extended back before the revolution. Naturally, they were reluctant to acquiesce to a version of history that denied that continuity. This does not mean that they lacked pragmatism. In 1921, Ağaoğlu had declined the opportunity to return to Azerbaijan, in part because he did not share the Bolshevik ideology of the new regime and in part because he continued to believe that the future of the Turks resided in the Ottoman Empire (soon to be Turkey). Though he still believed in the ‘unity’ of the Turkish nation, meaning he did not shut his eyes to the existence of Turks outside of Turkey, or cease to care about their condition, neither did he harbour any ‘irredentist dreams’ about political union.

Though the consequences of having participated in the Free Party were far less grave than had been those of participating in the Progressive Republican Party, there are nevertheless striking similarities. In both cases the leaders of the new party had genuine nationalist and modernizing credentials and the creation of a new party around such figures galvanized opposition to the Kemalist group, or at least to its monopoly on power. This in turn led to increasingly strident demands from the hard line of the People’s Party – men like Recep Peker and İsmet İnönü – that the new political formation be more closely watched and subjected to greater limitations in its activities (viz. the Justice Minister’s demand that Fethi’s speaking date in Izmir be cancelled altogether after the events of 5 September). In the press and in official circles talk of anarchy and reaction (not to say actual rebellion) mounted and finally the new parties were closed down and their leaders removed from public life.

As Erik Zürcher has shown in *The Unionist Factor*, the official account of the rise and fall of the Progressive Republican Party, embodied in Atatürk’s *Speech*, had the effect of reinforcing a sense of discontinuity between the late Ottoman and National Struggle
periods and of casting Atatürk (and the party that had become his creature) as the unique modernizing and revolutionary actor of the post-1918 era. Times had surely changed by 1930 and the regime had much less to fear by way of competition in the Free Party than it had had when confronted by the senior statesmen and military heroes who led the PRP; Free Party members were accused of being the dupes of reaction, not of being reactionaries (though the eagerness to tar Ağaoğlu with the Menemen incident indicates that the latter tactic was not inconceivable). Nevertheless, the accusations of reaction and the characterization of the party as poorly organized and lacking effective organization and bases, as led by idealistic but impractical men, or, in like manner, the characterization of the Türk Ocakları as somehow a marginal and extremist ‘leftover’ from the CUP period, have had a similar effect of reducing any sense of continuity across the periods and of writing figures who played important roles in the foundation of the modern Turkish state into the footnotes, if not completely out of, Republican history. Many of the policies and stances of Atatürk and the nationalists – translation of the Qur’an and ezan into Turkish, an uncompromising call for secularism and abolition of the sultan-caliph’s political powers, emphasis on the concept of national sovereignty, Islamic justifications for national sovereignty, denunciation of the Sultan and his government (not the CUP government) as traitors – were articulated by Ahmet Ağaoğlu as one the major intellectual figures of the day, both during the National Struggle and in the early years of the Republic. Sometimes he did so, as in the case of Islamic bases for national sovereignty and republicanism, before they were taken up by the Gazi. On other more general issues as well, Ağaoğlu had long formulated positions that were later adopted by the regime, such as the need for ‘going to the people’ and the ineffectual nature of the revolution in the absence of that, such as the need to teach the people their identity as Turks, such as the notion that perpetual change and development are a condition of ‘life’ and ‘modernity’. Many of these ideas were ‘in the air’ in that period, but the point is that Ağaoğlu was a major force in systematically articulating and disseminating them.

After the dramatic and painful events surrounding the demise of the Free Party, Ağaoğlu served out his parliamentary term as an independent deputy, then left Ankara to take up a post as a professor of law at the Istanbul Darülfünun, where he had previously taught courses in the history of Turkish civilization. Though no longer active in government or party life, Ağaoğlu continued to be very active as a writer and commentator and engaged in lively debate about public policy. Among the liveliest and best remembered of these was the exchange he had with Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and
his journal Kadro, which took place in 1932–33. Aydemir and those in the Kadro movement were engaged in formulating a corporatist and statist ideology and especially economic posture. This was more or less in harmony with the statism that was now enshrined in the programme of the RPP as one of the so-called arrows of Kemalism. The government nevertheless looked on Kadro with some suspicion, in part, perhaps, because of Aydemir’s leftist history and some perceived ‘leftism’ in the publication’s orientation and in part because there was some uneasiness about non-governmental circles formulating ideology. Corporatism was then very much in vogue, constituting a kind of modernist revolt against liberalism and free markets that also rejected socialism. In fact, these ideas were sweeping Europe at that time; Mussolini in Italy, Salazar in Portugal and John Metaxas in Greece are examples. Ağaoğlu sharply disagreed with these ideas and in a series of published exchanges he articulated his view of modernity, progress and strength as flowing from individualism. That is, a strong and innovative society is composed of responsible, energetic, creative individuals who have the freedom to think and to act. Ağaoğlu argued that this had been achieved in the West as part of an historical process culminating in the French Revolution, and he lamented the fact that due to the emergencies of the First World War and the National Struggle, the state had involved itself in every aspect of society and life, with the result that people had become accustomed to such interference. These reflections were subsequently published in book form under the title Devlet ve Fert (State and Individual). Ağaoğlu also brought out another newspaper Akın (The T orrent), during 1933, in which he criticized the statism of İnönü’s government, as well as discussing cultural matters deemed important to the revolution. The paper was shut down in the fall of 1933 due to the government’s displeasure.

There is a story that Ağaoğlu was attending one of Atatürk’s famous gatherings at Yalova and the Gazi made comments intimating that he was not happy with Ağaoğlu’s publishing the paper. Ağaoğlu made it clear that he would not voluntarily close it down. Atatürk became angry and reminded Ağaoğlu that he was a refugee in the country, referring to his Azerbaijani origins. It seems that during times of political embattlement this was often thrown in Ağaoğlu’s face, as when, during Assembly debates in the Free Party era, deputies would yell out ‘Speak Turkish!’ to Ağaoğlu on account of his Caucasian accent. The irony, of course, is that this comment of Atatürk’s reveals a latent Ottomanism, since he himself had not been born within the boundaries of the Turkish Republic.

The year 1933 was a difficult one for Ağaoğlu. The Darülfünun was purged and reorganized as Istanbul University, and Ağaoğlu was forced into retirement. He nevertheless continued to write on
a wide variety of cultural, historical and political topics for an array of newspapers and journals. He also published several new books, including the fascinating *Iran ve İnkılabı (The Iranian Revolution)*, in which he analyses the causes for the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, with a particularly interesting discussion of the contacts between Iran and Russian Azerbaijan and the role of Azerbaijanis in the revolution. At the same time he also published the broader *1550 ile 1900 arasından Iran (Iran between 1500 and 1900).* Ahmet Ağaoğlu died in Istanbul on 19 May 1939.

In 1912, in his series ‘The Turkish World’, Ağaoğlu wrote:

> Nationalism cannot remain merely an abstract idea or inclination; *it also has an applied form, and the real nationalist current consists of those applications.* The supporters of the nationalist idea will naturally want to give a national colour and spirit to all the affairs of life, but whence will they draw the raw materials and inspiration for that national colour and spirit? It is self evident that [these will be drawn from] the nation; and for this they will study the language and history of the nation, its natural social, political and economic structures, its traditions, the literature and ideals of [its] common people (*halk*). And so, in this way they will strive for the introduction of those national elements that are to hand into all the business of life and [they will strive for] the arrangement of the lives of the people on [the basis of] these materials and [sources of] inspiration. **[emphasis mine]**

The task delineated above was precisely the task that presented itself to Turkish nationalist thinkers in the post-First World War era. Whereas in 1912 the matter was basically moot, in the sense that there were no Turkish states in existence and there didn’t appear to be great likelihood of any such emerging in the conceivable future, the Bolshevik Revolution and, subsequently, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War created for the first time the practical possibility of changing that reality. As the preceding account of Ağaoğlu’s post-1919 career indicates, Ağaoğlu undertook that task with dedication and energy until his death in 1939.

And yet, in the Republic of Turkey (at least until very recently), Ağaoğlu, a prominent reform-minded intellectual, publicist and statesman and a foundational figure of Turkish nationalism, has generally been best remembered as a liberal. A republican loyalist, his role as co-founder of the short-lived Free Party and his criticisms of the statist economic policies that were increasingly adopted by the Turkish government from 1929 onwards, have nevertheless somehow remained the defining aspects of his career in popular memory. The Turkist aspect of Ağaoğlu’s intellectual life is often either overlooked or it is explained that in the republican era he underwent a sort of conversion, leaving behind his Turkist ideas. (Conversely, his liberal credentials are occasionally overlooked...
and he is described as an ‘unreconstructed’ Turkist.) This curious dichotomy can be explained by the historiographical tendency, which I discussed in the Introduction, to divide nationalism into ‘good’ citizen-based or civic nationalism (sometimes termed patriotism to distinguish it) and ‘bad’ ethnic nationalism and also by the tendency to make these categories correspond with the Republican and late Ottoman periods respectively. This approach has the effect of making Republican-era Turkish nationalism the laudable civic kind – accepting of diversity and based on adherence to a common set of political principles, while pre-Republican Turkism or Turkish nationalism is suddenly labelled Pan-Turkist and understood to be anti-democratic, ethno-nationalist and aggressively expansionist. This is an approach, moreover, that reaffirms the sense of a radical break between the Ottoman CUP regime and the new Atatürk regime and denies continuities in personnel and ideological developments across the two periods.

But it is also true that at first glance there does indeed appear to be a stark contrast, if not a contradiction, between the liberal and highly individualistic tone of many of Ağaoğlu’s Republican-era writings and his earlier nationalist tracts. In 1912, in another instalment of the piece quoted above, he affirms:

> All of the peoples mentioned above [Germans, French, British] won their strength and might through nationalist movements – this sentiment is so compelling that it gives to the peoples and nations that are swept up on its wave a surprisingly increased solidarity, resolution, and feeling of self-sacrifice. These nationalist sentiments bring individuals, if only temporarily, to lose themselves in the nation… Peoples who are carried away by a nationalist current foster, thanks to it, men of honour and worthy civil servants, self-sacrificing soldiers and statesmen.34

Yet, in 1932–33, this same man would denounce the statist and corporatist ideas of Kadro in the following terms:

> The first aim of the Kemalist revolution consists of destroying every type of absolutism and securing the right of every person to think, believe and say what he wishes. In contrast to all the other systems, old and new, that have been dreamed up, the democratic system promotes in individuals the development of virtues like knowledge, experience, hard work, frugality, self-confidence, altruism, devotion to duty, initiative, and courage.35

How do we explain Ağaoğlu’s apparent shift, after many years labouring in the cause of what Nikki Keddie has termed self-strengthening, away from arguments about nationalism and identity in favour of questions concerning the individual and his relationship to the larger society and to the state? The answer is that
a close examination of his work reveals that, within Ağaoğlu’s system of thought, there is no contradiction. Ağaoğlu had broad training in European history and he basically accepted the narrative that attributed the development of constitutionalism and representative institutions, of capitalism and industrialization, to the revolt against authority (including especially religious authority) that began with the Renaissance and continued on through the Wars of Religion, the ‘triumph’ of Protestantism and the emergence of the principle of freedom of thought and conscience and culminated in the French Revolution, secularism and the nation state. A temporary ascendancy of absolute monarchies, in part a function of the revolt against religious authority, was useful in his view because absolutist regimes often coincided with and gave rise to national cultures and mentalities; it was under the aegis of such monarchies that national vernaculars gained sway and became national literary languages, for example. But eventually the very development of national identity and free thought led to a revolt against the formulation ‘l’état c’est moi’. Ağaoğlu notes that in the very century when French absolutism was at its zenith, the seventeenth, the historical developments enumerated above, prerequisites for the French Revolution, were producing a definite French national identity, of which the literature and philosophy of that period are the highest expression.

Above all, these transformations collectively gave rise to the individual imbued with an entrepreneurial spirit, a love of freedom and a sense of obligation and duty towards his fellow countrymen:

High individualism [as opposed to egoism] means working freely in a free arena, it is based on the foundations of a free environment and a free market. These principles began to be applied in the French Revolution and ever since then in the West all of the structures of family, state, and society have been based on taking their inspiration from these principles. For every right a duty, for every duty a right; that’s the meaning of these principles.

The transformation that these developments represented was, then, a profound transformation affecting all areas including political, social, economic and familial structures. It was a transformation that demolished older systems of social orders, tribalism, or theocracy. The individual thus created was far from an egoist; he was a self-sacrificing citizen and independent thinker and it is through the collective efforts of such individuals that societies progress. ‘Because, in order to be successful, in order to put out something new or better developed and to find and make this novelty, requires first of all creative thought and initiative and then the courage to risk self-sacrifice’.
Very importantly, these new individuals are citizens whose capacity for initiative is grounded both in their freedom and independence and in their adaptability (which in Ağaoğlu is equated with empiricism and rationalism). This last set of equations, by which adaptability to specific local and historical conditions is seen as a form of rationalism and empiricism is very important in that it also ties up with nationalism; adapting to the local, to that which exists on the ground, is the essence of nationalism in the sense that all institutions – social, political and cultural – will then reflect (and create and reinforce) the national mentality and consciousness.

Ağaoğlu expresses this view in many of his writings throughout the whole of his career, but in Üç Medeniyet, composed during his confinement by the British and in the bitter aftermath of utter defeat, he laid particular stress on the interconnectedness of progress and liberalism and trenchantly averred that there was one path to modernity and it lay through Western civilization:

Above all, we must be honest; do we accept and admit the superiority and supremacy of Western civilization, or do we not? ... Western life by means of its entirety has achieved dominion over the entirety of our life. Therefore, if we wish to be saved, to live, to continue our existence, we must adapt ourselves to it, not merely with our clothing and some of our institutions, but with our heads, our hearts, our way of looking at things, our mentality. Outside of this there is no salvation.

It is interesting that he rejects the solace of the culture-civilization dichotomy that was common in the period, notably in the work of Ziya Gökalp. Rather, Ağaoğlu insists upon the indivisibility of civilization and he attributes to the desire to mix elements of various civilizations and to take some things from the West while rejecting others, the failure of 100 years of attempted reforms in the Ottoman Empire. Civilization is, he says, a totality, a way of seeing things; when one tries to take hold of one aspect of it, one quickly discovers that it requires many other elements in order to be achieved.

But then Ağaoğlu immediately addresses the national question, asking rhetorically what is to become of the national character under these circumstances? Won’t the national character be lost in this process of total adaptation? The answer is unexpected: he calls into question the existence of any eternal national essence and points out that the historical record shows that the qualities most people point to in this regard, such as laws, morals, religion, even language, change on multiple occasions. Language is perhaps the closest thing to a stable quantity in the sense that it retains a certain essence and character even as it is constantly changing and adapting. But even this is complicated. Of what language is English a continuation? Which of its constituent elements can claim it? Ağaoğlu’s answer is simple. All things that exist in the material
world have differences among them and it is of these differences and distinctions that individual character or personality consists. This is simply the nature of things. Therefore a nation, simply by existing in the physical world, has a personality that is distinct from other nations. That personality is not conditional on any given custom or institution. At the same time, we are all human and therefore capable of appropriating and adapting any product of human invention. Naturally and inevitably, any nation will put its own stamp on whatever it appropriates from another source. This is what the Japanese have done with great success, he notes. No custom taken from others can pose a threat to that:

On the contrary, [appropriation] readies new arenas for [the national character] to manifest itself. Only immobility kills national personality. Whether in individuals or in nations, however strong and forceful life is, that’s how much the personality is increased. Societies that won’t speak of their heart’s excitement with new harmonies, who lack the capacity to render humanity productive with the fruits of their intelligence and brains, that are unable to bring the fruits of their labours to the general market, cannot be said to have any personality or essence.12

Ağaoğlu further points out that in Europe the principle of constitutionalism means national sovereignty. There the national assemblies have the right to act in any area of national life. And there, respecting the precept ‘times change and the rules with them’, legislatures are able to change any tenet or principle when it seems necessary.13

For Ağaoğlu, then, nationalism and liberalism are utterly symbiotic. They arise together historically and are necessary to each other’s existence and development, and they are also the definition of progress. A basic characteristic of progress was constant movement or change – i.e., adaptiveness to local circumstances in both a geographical and temporal sense. Ağaoğlu viewed the growth of national consciousness as the embodiment of this adaptiveness. Another way to think about this is to see adaptiveness as a kind of empiricism. Nations, he claimed, are located in time and space, they are not eternal truths like religion. National languages and institutions are locally responsive and adaptive to material requirements. At the intellectual level, this tendency is embodied in the challenge to authority or free thinking. So, for Ağaoğlu, national consciousness arises together with empiricism and free thinking. Taken together these two phenomena should engender individualism and initiative and they require for their existence and necessitate by their existence, representative institutions. All of this generates the sense of having a stake in the system, which leads to loyalty and altruism. Nation states, therefore, are free, not only in
the sense of being free from foreign domination or encroachment, but also in the sense of being free from authoritarian governance. Ağaoğlu makes this very clear in his 1925 address to the people of Adapazar entitled ‘Foundations of the Nationalist Movement’:

Terms like tribe and clan are applied to groups and societies that belong to an unconscious and directionless class of being who are moved by the pressure of wills not their own which dominate them. Sometimes a priest directs them in the name of religion, sometimes a king or sultan appears and in the name of his own honour and glory he makes things run as he wills. The term nation is not applied to human groups like this, consisting as they do of a flock of simple folk. The definition of nation is given only to societies that, having achieved community consciousness, are guided by their own wills and whose individuals, in so far as their thoughts and feelings are concerned, are united in their objects. Individuals belonging to groups of this kind cannot endure the actuation of external force or domination because the factor that is the basis of their harmony is precisely the unity of objects and goals that arises from their consciousness of community. Such societies are their own masters and direct their own fates.

Although the theme here is national sovereignty, ostensibly outwardly defined, i.e., the sovereignty of the new Turkey untrammelled by any foreign ambitions or claims, the focus of the example is clearly not about colonial powers, but rather home-grown authoritarianism.

All this elaborate theory of how national consciousness, representative institutions, civil society and national sovereignty grow up together symbiotically is very neat in an abstract logical sort of way, but it leaves open the problem of local fractures. National consciousness, as Ahmet Ağaoğlu was well aware, does not just consist of breaking out of a cosmological or absolutist way of thinking to a more local set of arrangements. There must be ties that bind and people must feel bound by those ties and be conscious of that fact.

In his 1925 Adapazar address, Ağaoğlu enumerates the ties that should bind: a common language, a common religion, shared principles, shared music, law, history, traditions, customs, way of life, government and state. But as he so poignantly points out elsewhere, people are often not, in fact, bound by these commonalties, or don’t share all these things. In specific criticism of the Ottoman state he says:

Right up to the end, Ottoman literature remained completely alien to the Turkish nation both in its content and in its mode of expression... far from being a unifying force, it was force for fragmentation... With respect to religion, because the translation of the Qur’an into Turkish was blocked, the ‘Turk was cut off from this most sacred source of religion, and was prevented from even understanding the meaning of
the verses he faithfully recited five times a day... And law, what is law? Law is the distillation into orderly and established principles of the fleeting moments of life which is [constantly] in motion. Therefore should law not be drawn from life and should it not be changeable and adaptable as life is? However, in reality, in Ottoman times, all of our laws were tied to a set of stagnant and unchanging principles... laid down seven centuries ago by some Abu Yusuf who lived in a completely different environment; [these laws] made life grind to a halt.45

Thus, he concludes, the Turks have remained alienated from their national consciousness, divided and dispersed.

We see implicit in these observations an understanding of Eric Hobsbawm’s famous formulation: states make nations. People must be taught to define their communities according to the criteria Ağaoğlu has listed. And this is why it is the role of a certain enlightened élite both to define the nation and to assimilate others into that definition as a practical matter. At the 1924 general congress of the Türk Ocakları, Ağaoğlu expresses this poignantly. The session has been discussing the rules for membership in the organization and having come to the conclusion that only Turks may join, they find that it is not so easy to know who a Turk is. There is discussion about racial background, or the ability to speak Turkish, or being ‘fully’ Turkish in a cultural sense. In the context of this heated discussion Ağaoğlu relates a number of anecdotes from his own experience. First, he asserts that if the answers to those questions of who is a Turk and what makes a Turk were known, an organization like the Türk Ocakları would be unnecessary. He goes on to add that it was only by dint of considerable effort that he learned that he himself was a Turk and he had had great difficulty in convincing his colleagues in Istanbul of this fact when he first settled there. He asks if, because of his dialect, someone were to say to him, ‘You are a foreigner’, what document could he produce to prove that he was a Turk? His father, he adds, never had understood that he was a Turk. If you asked him who he was, he would say, ‘I am a Muslim.’ The Armenians and Persians called him Tatar, the Russians called him Tatar, but he would never accept any of this and went through life saying ‘I am a Muslim.’ Ağaoğlu goes on to relate an incident that occurred when he was en route to Ankara after his release from Malta. While passing through Kastamonu, he met two boys and asked them, ‘Who are you? Are you Turks?’ And one responded, ‘I am a Turk’, the other, ‘I am a Muslim.’ Then Ağaoğlu asked the second boy whether he didn’t mean that he was a Muslim Turk and the boy replied that, no, that other boy was a Turk. Ağaoğlu recounts that he was very surprised and could not understand what was going on, but after some conversations with more local people he learned that the one who called himself Turk was a Sunni while the other
was an Alevi. Ağaoğlu concludes his remarks by saying that the Türk Ocakları have two goals, first, to be the bearers themselves of the national consciousness and then to unify and assimilate others and bring them into the circle of that national consciousness. There is a strange dualism in the position of the intelligentsia: they derive their authenticity from the people, but they must then re-transmit that authentic identity back to a people who do not recognize it (indeed, may not participate in it).

This is why, in a series of articles which he wrote in 1926 discussing that year’s congress of Türk Ocakları, taking place as it was in the context of the Seykh Sait rebellion, Ağaoğlu commented that it might seem strange to have to introduce a Turk to Turkishness, but Turks had been caught up for so long in Muslimness and Ottomanness, where the only vision was of serving the caliphate, that they were virtually without a concept of Turkishness. Ağaoğlu argued that by getting all the institutions of the state to accept fully the principles of nationalism, the nationalist movement had created the envelope and that it was now the function of the Ocakları, working in close co-ordination with the government, to fill or give content to that envelope – in fact he was arguing, as Frank Tachau has pointed out, for a policy of more or less aggressive assimilation to be conducted with the close support of the state.

Ağaoğlu, as the above passages should reveal, was not a constructivist (if I may be permitted to apply this term anachronistically), believing that national identity was purely a matter of social context – clearly he believes there are people out there who are Turks even though they don’t know it. Nor yet was he fixated on ‘blood’ – there are no documents or proofs of lineage that can verify one’s Turkishness, and as he had said himself as early as 1914, much of the so-called Turkish world had become so culturally distant that finding a relationship to it required ‘recourse to the most profound analyses of comparative linguistics’.

Nations are made, not primordial, but they are made out of something. And while he passionately insists in the Türk Ocakları debates of 1924 that the refugees of Iranian and Caucasian Azerbaijan living in Istanbul were ‘pure Turks’, he did not in the post-War period, during which he served on the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Assembly and on the cultural committee of the Türk Ocakları, make any irredentist pleas for unification with the Turks of Azerbaijan, much less those of Central Asia. In 1917, when the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was being debated in the Ottoman parliament, he did argue for annexation of Azerbaijan, pointing out that Russia was the Empire’s greatest historical enemy and that the Caucasus mountains could serve as an indispensable natural border between the two states. But in 1918, having travelled to Azerbaijan,
he took a seat in the parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan and was chosen to represent that government at the upcoming Paris Peace Conference. Again, upon his release from Malta, he worked for the consolidation of the Turkish nation and Turkish national consciousness within the borders of the new Republic of Turkey. States and enlightened élites made nations in Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s view and, in his words quoted at the beginning of this discussion: ‘Nationalism cannot remain merely an abstract idea or inclination; it also has an applied form and the real nationalist current consists of those applications.’ Thus, Ağaoğlu was ready to argue for a politics of heavy-handed assimilation in Anatolia, but not for the pursuit of an irredentist dream in the Caucasus or Central Asia.

Moreover, as we have seen, for Ağaoğlu, all of this national consciousness-building should be accomplished in the service of that individualism and political freedom that breed both creativity and patriotic devotion. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, the speeches and addresses he gave at various Ocak events bore titles such as ‘England’s Political Structure’. In his harsh criticisms of corporatists and corporatist thought, he says of them that they debase the concept of the state, conceiving it as the sole organ of society and seeking to concentrate all the functions of society in the state, that they falsely imagine the free individual to be completely separated from society and that they would be content to live in a country of slaves, if only those slaves had full bellies. The state can be active in cultural matters to help shape the national consciousness, but Ağaoğlu strongly opposed state intervention into wide swathes of social life. He saw individualism and national identity as synonymous with progress and he saw them as forming an evolutionary dynamic with one another and thus he was naturally unwilling to sacrifice either, an attitude that his writings clearly reflect.

There is indeed a real tension between individuality and community identity, between liberalism and nationalism, but it is a tension in some ways inherent in the whole concept of representative institutions and free societies. The oft-noted pluralism of the old dynastic empires, and the multi-faceted identities that many of their subjects carried, were possible precisely because most subjects were not called upon to participate in the political life of the state, because the polity was very restricted. But where participation is necessary, some shared basis on which individuals can debate issues is required. In fact, if not in theory, giving every individual member of society a voice necessitates defining and delimiting the community. Ağaoğlu saw no contradiction in his desire to foster individualism and his willingness to shape and even impose community identity, because, as a recent commentator on the US Supreme Court, quoting the philosopher Ronald Beiner, has noted:
'There must be underlying grounds of judgement which human beings, *qua* members of a judging community, share, and which serve to unite in communication even those who disagree... Judgement implies a community that supplies common grounds or criteria by which one attempts to decide.' To exercise judgement is thus to participate in the definition of the community whose standards validate the judgement.49

The question ‘Who is a Turk?’ arises for Ağaoğlu as much from his commitment to individualism and representative institutions (key, in his view, to modernity) as to anything else in his search for self-strengthening. Ağaoğlu was neither an unreconstructed ‘Pan-Turkist’ of the old regime, nor a relatively insignificant failed or premature liberal of the new one; he was a pragmatic liberal nationalist whose important public career spanned both the Ottoman and Republican eras.

The historiography of separation with its irredentist, racist ‘Pan-Turkists’ and its civic-minded ‘Turkish nationalists’, with its ‘doomed’ last days of the Ottoman Empire and its ‘modern’ Turkish Republic, does not only serve to enhance the mythology of the clean break with the Ottoman and especially CUP past, and of Atatürk as the unique founder of the modern Turkish Republic. It serves also to hide from view the complexity of the relationship between democracy and cultural consensus, allowing a continued facile division between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism—seeing them as two opposing types, rather than as positions that are in tension with one another precisely because they are connected.
Throughout his career, Ahmet Ağaoğlu was concerned with two central issues: the creation of a liberal, civil society, populated by ‘whole persons’, and the creation and maintenance on a conscious level of a shared mentality which would lend cohesion to that society of free men. In pursuing these goals for his own community he laid emphasis on liberal institutions – and he included in those not just the external trappings of representation and personal freedom, but also the freeing of the mind from having recourse to argument from authority – while at the same time he privileged language and religion as the two most important elements engendering and structuring that common mentality which was, for him, the essence of nationality.

Having come of age in Transcaucasia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Ağaoğlu should have come to focus on the question of the role of civil society in modernization, nor that he should have seen it in communal rather than strictly individual terms. Ağaoğlu was the scion of an old family of Azerbaijani beys, and as such he encountered a disorienting world in which his position was no longer clear. The economic occupations, political structures and even the ethnic composition of his homeland were changing with breathtaking rapidity. The role of his sort of person in the new structures that were emerging was, like the future of his community, far from clear. Like an earlier generation of Azerbaijani intellectuals, or indeed of Middle Eastern intellectuals or Russian intellectuals, he felt a pressing need to define his relationship to the West.

However, Ağaoğlu and the men of his generation were in a different position from their predecessors. They did not have at their disposal all of the personal options available to men of an earlier generation and era. Russia herself was changing, becoming a more modern and less dynastic state. In that process certain traditional
roles, like those of landed bey or âlim, were becoming increasingly marginalized from the actual life and administration of the region, while simultaneously government functionaries were increasingly expected to be members of a Russian state, not just servants of a dynasty. One does not see in this younger generation Ahundzâdes – men who, while they were distinguished reformers and leaders of their communities, were also life-long holders of important positions in the Tsarist administration of the Caucasus. Furthermore, as the state moved to better integrate the region’s populations, it did so differentially, favouring Christians over Muslims.

The young Muslim élites were forced to look elsewhere, outside their traditional roles and outside of government service, to make a place for themselves. Yet in these other arenas, too, they often found themselves thwarted by fierce competition from other groups in trade and industry and by legal disabilities and limitations on Muslims in many of the professions and in regard to holding elective office. Ağaoğlu’s experiences in the Russian colonial context, therefore, served to concentrate his attention not only on the role of a liberal social order in the achievement of progress, but to do so from a distinctly community-oriented standpoint.

What the emotional and historical bases of this community were to be, however, was a thorny issue in Transcaucasia, where the rich variety of cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds often seemed to be working at cross-purposes for those wishing to forge a new unity. Ağaoğlu was profoundly concerned with the divisiveness of the religious issue. As a Shi’ite he was aware of the problem of sectarian divisions and the way they could split up an ethno-linguistic unit, and he was also very sensitive to the argument that an ethno-linguistic identity base could create rifts in the religious community. In his career he expended a good deal of ink attempting to show that far from being opposed to one another, religion and nationality reinforced one another. His sojourn in France helped him in this endeavour, in that the prominent Orientalists with whom he studied were particularly interested in philological-historical investigations into how ‘mentalités’ were constructed, and they specifically saw the study of myth and religion as an integral part of this process. From them, Ağaoğlu learned to leave questions of revelation to one side and to look at religion as a dynamic socio-historical process.

 Ağaoğlu was also interested in religion because he was interested in freeing men’s minds. Since he saw religion as an invaluable component in the formation of the national mentality, and indeed in the process of civilization, he was not willing to reject it outright as Ahundzâde had. However, he was well aware of the argument that said that religion, especially Islam, was an insuperable impediment
to free thought. He was therefore always concerned to point out that religion was by nature an historical phenomenon that developed and adapted with the environment and this developmental and interpretative process was not wrong, was not a polluting of the pure revelation. Rather, from the very first moment, revelation had demonstrated its awareness of context. Thus, the important thing was to get people properly educated so that they would understand and practice this flexibility and not suicidally tie themselves to purely conjunctural usages. Finally, he argued that the strength of the whole was the strength of the parts; strong Muslim nations meant a strong Islamic world almost by definition.

As he moved through Europe and the Middle East – and through time – Ağaoğlu’s ideas on how to combine these elements shifted, as did his ideas of what to make the emotional focus of the proposed community – the basis of its hypothetical ‘mentalité’. However, certain points in his thinking remained constant – he never lost interest in the Muslim community of the place of his birth; his goal remained the creation of a non-cosmopolitan society which was liberal both in its official institutions and in the outlook of its people. These things were of interest to him because he believed they were the future – the road to progress, well-being and strength. In the context of those ideas, the perspectives he brought to questions of nationality and religion were deeply coloured by the fact that he was a native of the Russian, and not the Ottoman, Empire. While the Ottoman Empire survived, this gave him a different intellectual range of possibilities from those open to Ottoman intellectuals when addressing the problems and conditions of Muslim Turks.

The relationship between identity and modernity was at the root of those questions. At least since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Middle Eastern societies had been struggling with the realization of their relative weakness in relation to Europe and their need to acquire Western tools and Western traits as part of any project of self-strengthening and regeneration. By the third quarter of the century a deep contradiction inherent in this need had become apparent, a contradiction that might be succinctly summed up in the question: ‘How does one eat the enemy?’ To assimilate Western traits was imperative to survive as a people, but having done so, what would remain? How does a society reconcile foreign borrowings with its own culture? How does it acquire foreign tools and traits and yet remain itself? In some sense, to fail to make the necessary adaptations would mean death, but to be successful would also mean death. In the Ottoman Empire the very strength of the state conditioned and limited the possible responses. The notion of constitutionalism as the basis of the rational society of
individuals who underpin capitalist development and technological innovation had a particular attraction. It provided a hypothetical new foundation upon which to build loyalty to the Ottoman government, thus preserving the Ottoman state. But this model was lacking in an important way—it didn’t really address the problem of loss of authenticity and identity and when it attempted to do so, as when the Young Ottomans sought to give their constitutionalism a basis in Islam, or when the Young Turks insisted upon the use of the state language in public institutions and schools across the Empire, these attempts undermined the other goal of promoting a new citizen-based sense of loyalty to the state.

Turks and Tatars of the Russian Empire, however, did not experience Western penetration, autocratic rule, industrialization and modernization through the filter of a Muslim-led government, and they had no state to preserve. Rather, as subjects of the Tsar, they lived the realities of weakness and foreign domination, as well as the corrosive effects of modernization on traditional society, very intensely. More than many other Middle Eastern societies, Russia’s Muslims at the turn of the century saw how modernization could erode identity as well as promote technological advances and commercial growth, just as they had lived in their own flesh the kind of subordination that standing on the margins of those changes produced. Thus, they were especially susceptible to the model of human society and social evolution found in fin-de-siècle France, a model that made modernity and progress not only compatible with identity, nationally conceived, but an outgrowth of it.

However, it is important to note that émigrés from the Russian Empire like Ağaoğlu adopted the model before they had developed a clear-cut national consciousness. Moreover, the intellectual and practical considerations that were to draw a defining line around the sources of this authenticity were not immediately worked out. Thus Ağaoğlu could call himself a Persian at one time and a Turk at another, indeed a Rus Musliman and a Türk Musliman in the same article, he could serve in the Ottoman Parliament, the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in Turkey’s Grand National Assembly without this being a manifestation of incoherence. What his peregrinations reveal is not inconsistency in him, but the incredible fluidity of the times. Nor was he alone in this; men like Yusuf Akçura, Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde, or Mehmed Emin Resülzade were all active in both the Russian and Ottoman Empires and in some cases in Iran as well. These men did not slide from one national movement to another in a sly or fickle manner as the circumstances seemed more or less advantageous to them. Such a perception can only arise from a false image of ‘latent’ or ‘imprisoned’ national identities ‘rising to the surface’ and
liberating themselves at the first favourable moment. The reality, however, was that the content and limits of the identities were quite unclear until these ‘opportunists’ defined them.

Some of this difference disappeared with the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire. In his later life, living in the Turkish Republic, discussion of religion as a social force was severely curtailed and all the emphasis was put on language. Ağaoğlu concentrated in those years on the principles of liberal law and on the problem of what one might term the authoritarian mind. That is, he noted and was concerned by the fact that, though many liberal institutions had been put into legal effect, the social revolution had not taken place and men continued to live and think in many of the old ways. With questions of religion and nationality – of the establishment of the cohesive unit in which the free society will create itself – either resolved or removed, the question of the civil society and its members came to the fore.

The pragmatic decision to focus on the establishment and security of the new Republic of Turkey and the concomitant relative decline in attention paid to Turks living outside of Anatolia combined with the mythology of Atatürk’s unique role in the founding of the Republic to erase and distort the contributions of ‘old-line’ Turkists like Ağaoğlu to the development of a Turkish national identity. Thus, Ağaoğlu has tended to be remembered in Turkey as a liberal, his Republican-period writings rediscovered and lauded in the neo-liberal Özal period of the 1980s and early 1990s. In much historical literature on the end of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Republic, however, he is remembered as a ‘Pan-Turkist’, whose ideas on national identity were contrary to the liberal and citizen-oriented ideals of Republican or Anatolian Turkish nationalism. In the modern Republic of Azerbaijan, by contrast, he is remembered as an Azerbaijani nationalist (not a Turkist) of the period leading up to the establishment of the first Republic of Azerbaijan, and his connections with both Iran and the Ottoman Empire are downplayed. Such accounts and the commitments they manifest have made it virtually impossible to see the careers of men like Ağaoğlu in their entirety.

The success of nationalism as an ideology, its premises so deeply ingrained that they seem natural phenomena, has hidden the highly tentative and fluid development of national identity by turn-of-the-century statesmen and intellectuals. At the same time, the hardening of the lines of national identity along the lines of the states that emerged after 1917 and the subsequent, often bloody, enforcement and contestation of those lines, has led to attempts to classify ‘types’ or ‘stages’ of nationalism. This has further clouded the realities of the period of transition from
The gradual formulation of a Turkish national identity, the continuity in this regard between the late Ottoman and early Republican periods and the ways that ethno-national identity, liberalism and nation-states were profoundly enmeshed with one another and with the idea of modernity are all lost from view. In their place have come visions of primordial nations and ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalisms. The dualism and tension of the modernizing project that liberates, creating individuals and citizens, precisely through enforced standardization and normative identity, is lost.
NOTES

Introduction


3. For Anderson’s discussion of this new way of viewing the world, see Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (London: Verso, 1991), especially chapter 2 and the first part of chapter 5, and ‘Nationalism, Identity and the Logic of Seriality’ in his The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World (London: Verso, 1998). It seems to me that, as profound as his observations about ‘print capitalism’ are, this discussion of what one might call ‘serial’ or ‘horizontal’ or ‘typological’ thinking is even more revealing. As Anderson himself says, speaking of changes in people’s conception of time, ‘its emergence is certainly connected, in ways that have yet to be well studied, with the development of the secular sciences’ (p.24). The new way of seeing the world that he describes, a comparative yet uniform way of seeing, a world of homogenous, empty time and of series or types – a typist, a hospital, a farmer, a king – is, I would argue, basically scientific thinking, with its assertion that nature or the world functions according to laws apprehensible by the human mind through the sensory observation of phenomena. Its sphere is the world not the cosmos, its time is the unidirectional time of cause and effect, its particular phenomena are both the proof and expression of its truths and are thus meaningful only as types or series. If I may be allowed
to play on Anderson’s playful quotation, the (individual) tiger may have no need of tigritude, but the scientist does, because from his way of thinking tigritude is truth. He also needs the tiger to prove and embody tigritude. Belonging to a series is basic to a scientific understanding of the world. Scientific law is irreducible, essential, abstract, timeless, yet made up of exemplars that are contingent, embedded, specific, but also, at the level of law or generalization, interchangeable.

4. Anderson notes that when it comes to considering the human condition, this way of thinking drives a deep wedge between the history of the world and the history of man. The fundamental problem, so to speak, is this: each man is self-conscious, unique and possessed of a will, yet he is within nature, which should mean that his will is subject to natural law and his significance is as part of a general type or series. A person is who he is, not per se, but to the degree to which he is a representative of a type. This is equally true of ‘histories’. With respect to time, one might say that in the old cosmology there was no separation between time and story, that there was an identity of time and story. And because there was one true story, which, though it unfolds unidirectionally, can be read in any direction, it conforms to a complete and ever-existing design. Thus, in medieval stained glass, the nativity and passion are depicted in local and present terms (that is, local attire and local physiognomies), not in ‘historical’ accuracy. Thus too, the notion that the divine story is always playing itself out – that Isaac and Jesus are the same in some way, the lamb of God. Similarly, with the stories of Passover, John the Baptist (the ‘Forerunner’ as he is called in Greek) and Jesus, the connection is not causal – the hallmarks of modernity and of the ‘scientific’ view – rather the stories can be read backward and forward. However, empty, homogenous time allows for multiple stories within itself, but is, nevertheless, one time in one world. Each story or history thus becomes self-contained on one level, but also ‘modular’, an expression of type – if not, it is simply irrelevant. An example of this is the way we, as historians, care about the particularity of the events we write about and yet, our stories must be ‘representative’ of ‘larger’ trends or phenomena, they must illuminate larger frames or more general processes.

5. For both individuals and societies, this ‘scientific’ or ‘typological’ way of looking at the world (where particularities are both the ‘truth’ and exemplars of the ‘truth’) evokes the same tension between specificity or individuality and typicality, a tension that is ultimately about the problem of agency and freedom. What is the relationship
of the individual to the community or group or society? What is the relationship of the society to history? From this tension arise the apparent conflict between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism and also the many debates about ‘progress’ or the ‘master historical narrative’ and ‘modularity’. As Chatterjee has put it, for many writers, the problem with Anderson’s discussion of modularity (the notion that as various revolutions took place, they became possible models of action for other societies) is that this leaves the so-called ‘Third World’ little to imagine. And yet, the important point, it seems to me, is not that, say, the Young Ottomans had the French Revolution available as a model (it seems to me unobjectionable to say that educated worldly men were aware of and reflected on major events in the recent history of states and societies that were so fiercely pressing their own), but that thinking in comparative and typological or ‘modular’ terms was a deeply modern thing to do. The point is not that the French Revolution became a ‘plug-in’ module of revolution or modernity, but that it became a model, in the sense of being a viable example and point of comparison, within the framework of a new way of thinking and seeing the world. So that the important thing becomes not so much the specific content, but the form, that is, a form of thinking about the world and about time.


11. Ibid., p.12.
13. Ibid., p.20.
15. In Twelver Shi‘ism, the dominant religion of Iran, a mujtahid is one who may use his own judgement in interpreting the religious law and is therefore one of the highest rank among the ulema, or men of religion. Ordinary believers are expected to follow the example
and act on the opinions of a mujtahid, who thus exerts important influence on society.


18. Hroch also comments that ‘an interest in a bourgeois reconstruction of society could be represented by other social groups, above all from the ranks of the intelligentsia’. *Social Preconditions*, p.186.


20. See especially Linda Colley, ‘Radical Patriotism in Eighteenth-Century England’, in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, vol. 1, ed. R. Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.168–87 for a discussion of the traditional combination of chauvinist with political radicalism, and of how the American revolution undermined it, opening a space for the government of George III to attempt a kind of ‘official nationalism’ in Andersonian terms. The radicals responded by, among other things, pressing for an extension of suffrage. Her ‘Britishness and Otherness: An Argument’, *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992), pp.309–29 discusses the shaping of British nationalism (as opposed to English nationalism) more specifically. Interestingly, Colley notes, ‘In practice men and women often had double, triple, or even quadruple loyalties, mentally locating themselves, according to the circumstances, in a village, in a particular landscape, in a region and in one or even two countries. It was quite possible for an individual to see himself as being, at one and the same time, a citizen of Edinburgh, a Lowlander, a Scot and a Briton’ (p.315).

21. Linda Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness: An Argument’, *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992), p.316. The use of the word ‘artificial’ here seems gratuitous and implies that despite her own observations earlier in the same article on the multi-faceted nature of people’s loyalties and identifications in the early nineteenth century, the author herself still views nationality as something of a primordial category. But one might really question whether Britishness was a more artificial nationality than Scottishness, or whether the ‘resurgent’ Scottish nationalism of the present day has anything much to do with how people thought of themselves in those regions 300 years ago. Indeed, Colley herself has pointed out that in 1800 many Lowlanders did not see Highlanders as co-nationals.

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24. Of course, I am painting with a broad brush here, but all of these characterizations can commonly be found, in some combination or another, in the literature on late Ottoman history, the early Turkish Republic and, of course, ‘Pan-Turkism’.


27. Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish Nationalist Movement, 1905–1926* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), p170–172. Zürcher also calculates that, between 1913 and 1923, the population of Anatolia had declined by 30 per cent from all causes, that the number of Christians had declined sharply (Armenian population reduced to only about 65,000 persons, Greeks down to 120,000 from approximately 2 million) and that the relative size of the urban population had also declined sharply. At the same time, large numbers of Muslim refugees had entered the country, including roughly 400,000 from the ‘exchange of populations’ with Greece. He further notes that hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees had already settled in Anatolia after the Russo-Turkish War and the Balkan Wars. Justin McCarthy estimates that in 1923 as much as one fifth of the total Muslim population of the Republic of Turkey was descended from refugees who had arrived in the region after 1800. He also estimates that, between 1914 and 1922, over 5 million Muslims were driven from the Balkans and the Russian Empire and made their way to the Ottoman Empire, later Turkey. Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), pp.335–340. This situation is dramatically illustrated by Mustafa Kemal’s outraged reaction to a parliamentary motion to restrict election to the Assembly to those men belonging ‘to the population of those districts which are within the present frontiers of Turkey’, or in the case of immigrants, to those for whom ‘a period of five years has elapsed since their domicile’. In response the Gazi stormed, ‘Gentlemen, this motion pursues a special aim directly intended against my person’. He continued: ‘Who, then,
Gentleman, has given you the commission of depriving me of my rights as a citizen?’ Mustapha Kemal [Atatürk], *A Speech* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1929), pp.603–04.

28. Zürcher, p.134. Hüseyinzâde had been a founding member of the CUP and had the custom of being politically active without actually holding public office. Either of these two factors may explain why he held no public charge between 1921 and 1926.


30. For Gökalp’s career, see Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1985), pp.10–17. For Akçura’s activities in the Republican period, see François Georgeon, *Aux origines du nationalisme turc: Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935)* (Paris: Éditions ADPF, 1980), pp.81–88. It is worth noting that Georgeon, too, reproduces the notion of Kemalism as hostile to ‘Pan-Turkism’ and claims that Akçura was especially well received by the new regime because he had not joined the CUP and because he had not ‘attempted adventure in the period of the Russian Revolution’ (See especially pp.82–83). He does not explain in what way Akçura’s reception was warmer than, say, Ağaoğlu’s.


38. Frank Tachau, ‘The Search for National Identity among the Turks’, *Die Welt Des Islams* 8–9 (1962–63), pp.165–176. This fascinating article clearly recognizes that the sources of identification with the new state were still an open issue in the 1920s and further recognizes that the Turkism of the previous period played a role in resolving this issue. It is one of the few articles to do so, and yet Tachau too
makes a point of defining the cultural nationalism of the Turkists as ‘Pan-Turkism’ and of characterizing Anatolianist ‘love of country or patriotism’ as the ‘hand-maid of the modern sovereign nation-state’ (p.176, emphasis mine). He also speaks of ‘the Turkish state’, the Republic of Turkey being a ‘territorially diminished’ incarnation of this, the implication being that the Ottoman Empire was the earlier incarnation (pp.165–6). I am splitting hairs, of course, but I want to point out how deeply certain conceptions of ‘good’ nationalism and primordial nations have become embedded in the literature.

40. Ibid., p.33.
41. Ibid., pp.33–34.
42. Ibid., p.20.
43. For instance, on p.29, Hutchinson states that ‘Greek nationalists... could ignite deeply held ethnocentric sentiments of clergy and peasantry against the Ottomans, but they found great problems in integrating the Byzantine vision with their secular Hellenism’. But the point is rather that they had trouble integrating Orthodox symbols and identification with Hellenism, and Byzantinism was the answer – a combination of Orthodox faith and Classical antiquity.
44. Ibid., pp.37–38.
45. This is the point Hutchinson is making when he says that cultural revivalists look to heroes and geniuses to be emulated, not to prophets to be imitated.
48. In his ‘Persian’ period he blames this corruption on the coming of the Turks into the Islamic Middle East. Later, in his ‘Turkish’ phase, he blames it on fashion fads, the growing luxury of the Abbasid period and Graeco-Persian influences.
49. On this matter see Andrezej Walicki, *Russia, Poland and Universal Regeneration: Studies on Russian and Polish Thought of the Romantic Epoch* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), especially part II, ‘Alexander Herzen, August Cieszkowski and the “Philosophy of Action”’. He notes: ‘All main participants in the great controversy over Hegel reflected the crisis of his “absolute idealism.” This crisis found its expression above all in the irreducibility of being to thought and, hence, in a return to experience, in a defense of living
individualities against the “autocracy of reason,” and consequently, in various versions of opposing pure idealism in the name of “nature,” “matter,” or “life.”” (p.93).

50. Walicki, pp.83–89. Walicki notes that Herzen critiqued ‘formalistic Hegelians’ for resting ‘satisfied with raising individuality to the level of the universal; they annihilate personality and do not think in the least of restoring it – and raising it to a higher level – through historical action’ (pp.88–89). Walicki also notes that: ‘Both thinkers imagined the future epoch of action as that of reintegration, overcoming of dualism, reconciliation in a higher synthesis of being and thought, feeling and knowledge, immediacy and reflection, realism (or, materialism) and idealism, the world of nature and the world of ideas, antiquity and Christianity.’ For them, ‘the laws of history were identical with the laws of the development of the spirit’, and Cieszkowski felt that this process expressed ‘not only the universal law of the development of mankind, but also the law of the “phenomenological development of the consciousness” of all nations and individuals’ (p.84, my emphasis).


52. Hutchinson, p.41.

53. Ibid., pp.40 ff.

54. Ibid., p.39.

Chapter One: Family Life and Early Education

1. I am grateful to Ahmet Ağaoğlu’s daughter Gültekin Ağaoğlu, for providing me with her sister’s notes.


4. Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde, a famous Westernizing and reform-minded man of letters, was a Russian subject and high-ranking civil servant in the Caucasus. His father was a Persian merchant who transferred the family to an area of the Caucasus that was ceded to Russia by the Treaty of Turkmanchai. When Ahundzâde’s parents separated and his father returned to Persian-held territory, Ahundzâde remained in the Russian-held area under the care of his uncle, a Shi’i cleric. Though Ahundzâde seems to have identified strongly with Persian high culture, he spent his entire adult life in
Russian service. He was generally very pro-Russian in his attitudes, viewing Russia as more modern and progressive and favouring the teaching of the Russian language to Muslim students. He wrote scathing criticisms of Persian society and of the corruption and backwardness of Islam and of the Muslim religious classes. He is widely regarded among Azerbaijanis as one of the fathers of the modern Azeri literary language because of the many successful plays he wrote in that tongue using an elegant but popularly intelligible style.

7. Türk Yılı, p.422.


16. Babamdan, p.73.

17. Ibid., p.71. This despite his earlier comment in the same work that: ‘In our city Turks and Armenians lived mixed together. Many of the Armenians had been placed in Russian schools, were educated, had taken the local Russian administration into their hands and lived in a way utterly different from us. In my memory the old Armenians, men and women, dressed like us, spoke our language, and were not at all different from us. But the new ones, the young ones, were completely different. They didn’t speak our language, they wore different clothes, and they looked down on us.’ Babamdan, pp.68–69.

18. Türk Yılı, p.422.


25. ‘Turk’ is the term Ağaoğlu uses in his much later recollections of his schooldays. It is unclear that he would have thought of himself in those terms at the time. It is more likely that he would have said ‘Tatar’, the generic Russian term for its non-Persian Muslim subjects.


29. Swietochowski, p.15.


Chapter Two: The French Background


2. Many secondary sources claim that Ağaoğlu also enrolled in law school in Paris, and this seems plausible given that he later taught law in Turkey, but I have never seen any reliable evidence for it.


7. Süreyya Ağaoğlu, *Bir Ömür Boyle Geçti* [So Passed a Life] (İstanbul: İshak Basımevi, 1975) p.7. There is no other confirmation of this assertion, though it is not utterly implausible. Darmesteter’s first French translation of the *Avesta* appeared in 1893, which coincides with Ağaoğlu’s residence in Paris and association with Darmesteter. However, in the preface to the work Darmesteter acknowledges the help and contributions of many friends and colleagues, and Ağaoğlu is not among those mentioned.


14. For Renan’s views on religion, consult, among others of his works, La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France, chapter IV, in which Renan tells us: ‘In reality, the church and the school are equally necessary; a nation can not do without the one or the other; when the church and the school are at loggerheads, everything goes badly… The Catholic nations that don’t reform themselves will invariably be defeated by the Protestant nations. Supernatural beliefs are like a poison which kills if taken in large doses.’

In his La Chaire d’Hebreu au Collègue de France; explications a mes collègues of 1862 he gives us a view of his notion of true religion: ‘Religion is as eternal as poetry, as eternal as love. It outlives the destruction of all illusions, the death of the beloved object. But what am I saying? Its object also is eternal – man will never content himself with a finite destiny: in one form or another a set of beliefs expressing the transcendental value of life and the participation of each of us in the rights of the sons of God will always be an essential part of humanity… To transport religion beyond the supernatural, to separate the always triumphant cause of religion from the lost cause of the miracle is to do a service to religion… The scientific spirit is not, for religion thus understood, an enemy to be challenged. It becomes a part of religion itself, and without it, it is not possible to be a true believer.’ p.170.

His L’Avenir religieux des sociétés modernes and the preface to his Études sur l’histoire religieuse are also instructive in this area. Francisco Perez Gutiérrez discusses the nature and quality of Renan’s religious faith at length in the introduction to his Renan en España; in particular he demonstrates how even L’Avenir de la science (Renan’s youthful work of 1848, withheld from publication until near the end of his life), a paean to science and positivism, is full of religious sentiment.


22. Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite révolutionnaire, 1885–1914: les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris: Editions de seuil, 1978), p.93: ‘Against the parliamentary republic Déroulède invokes the authority on Montesquieu, Rousseau, Mirabeau, Danton, Saint-Just, and Gambetta, as well as the principles of ’89 and ’48, graven in the “immortal declaration of the rights of man,” which, based on the immovable principle of the sovereignty of the people, is every day cynically violated by that monarchist avatar, the parliamentary republic. Déroulède always defends himself from having wanted to attack the Republic: “To wish to free the republic from the parliamentary yoke is not the same as wanting to overturn it,” but on the contrary, it is simply to wish to install a “real democracy.” Not only does the republic have nothing to do with the regime, it [the regime] is in reality its negation: there is no republic that does not base itself on popular sovereignty, that is, on the plebiscite, there is no republic that does not base itself on the principle of the separation of powers and on the responsibility of the executive before the sovereign people. The duty of any democracy is thus to destroy any system that insidiously confiscates the sovereignty of the people in favor of the “collective dictatorship” of the legislative branch.’

23. For the opposition of the *Nouvelle Revue* to protectionism or socialism, and its attachment to free markets, see Morcos pp.232–235; once again, the defence of this conservative point of view was made on the basis of liberty and the defence of individual rights. For the solidarist content of the Boulangists’ ideas, see Sternhell pp.66–72.


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26. Maurice Agulhon, *The French Republic, 1879–1992*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford, England: B. Blackwell, 1993), pp.68–70, describes this among a variety of factors that tended to lead to an upsurge of anti-Semitism in France in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Sternhell, pp.201–13, discusses how Jews come to be viewed as the ‘anti-nation’, a political necessity for the new nationalist right. We know that Madame Adam came to identify Jews with Germany, socialism and cosmopolitanism (as an opposition to nationalism) generally (cf. Beautier, p.95–7; Bonneville, p.101; Marcos, pp.240 & 561 note 203). Though in 1870, as in the earlier part of the century, *patrie* had been identified with revolution and the left, and it was the republicans who had risen to the defence of France at that time (cf. Agulhon pp.13–14), the story of the end of the century is the story of how *patrie* moves to the right (cf. Sternhell pp.88–90). As was discussed earlier in relation to Renan, many people felt that the defeat of Sedan was the defeat of a decadent materialism and a foolish internationalism which were both outgrowths of the Enlightenment and the Great Revolution. By the end of the century, nationalism and liberal ideals stood in opposition to each other and Madame Adam turned out to be more of a *revanchard* than a republican.


Chapter Three: French Writings


3. Ernest Renan, *De l’origine du langage* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1922), pp.132–33. Translation of this and all subsequent passages is mine unless otherwise noted.


5. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘La Société persane: la religion et les sectes religieuses’, *La Nouvelle Revue* 73 (November–December 1891), p.525. These same ideas can be found in Gobineau, *Trois ans*, p.230: ‘The Persian nationality manifests itself by still another symptom: its attachment to the memory of the Imams... The reason for this is clear. It is that Ali, although an Arab by birth, found many partisans in Persia and was persecuted by the Arabs; it is that the eldest of his sons, Husein, married a princess of Sassanid blood who, having converted to Islam, became a saint; it is that the children of that sacred couple and all the survivors of the family of Ali took refuge in Persia and became Persians, and that the Arabs, in persecuting the nation, persecuted them too. Thus the cause of the Alids becomes that of a conquered Persia and in the misfortunes of that family the Iranians see the misfortunes of their own ancestors. This love of the Imams is, therefore, a kind of national sentiment’. See also pp.246–248, in which Gobineau talks about the role of the old Mazdean priests in the formation of Shi’a doctrine and the fabrication of *Hadith* and Traditions.


7. Ibid., pp.508–12.

8. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘La Société persane: la religion et les sectes religieuses’, *La Nouvelle Revue* 73 (November–December 1891), especially pp.526–27. Compare this passage with A. de Gobineau, ‘Les Religions et les philosophies dans l’Asie centrale’, in *Oeuvres*, ed. Jean Gaulmier (Dijon?: Gallimard, 1983), pp.446–47: ‘[In Shi’ism] God is infinite, eternal, unique... the Prophet is the most excellent of creatures. Is he a creature? It is possible to be confused, as he is mixed up on so many points with God... The Qur’an is uncreated, it has existed throughout eternity in the divine mind. In sum, God, the Prophet, the Qur’an have reconstituted very well an enveloping unity which represents the notion of...
Zerwanè-Akerené, time-without-limits... [In Ali resides] the all-divine, all-preserving, all-saving role of Ormuzd... In the Semitic Sheytan one can discern without difficulty Ahriman’. A very similar species of argument appears in Darmesteter’s ‘Sketch’, pp.197–99.


10. Ibid.


13. Ibid.


15. Ibid., p.179.

16. In ‘Mohomet et les origines de l’Islamisme’, Renan tells us that ‘Arabia lacks completely the element which engenders mysticism and mythology. The Semitic peoples have never taken in variety, plurality, sex in God... This characteristic trait is the reason why they have never had either mythology or epic... surely, the spirit which is furthest from pantheism is the Semitic spirit’ (p.179). Later in the same piece, he adds, ‘Persia, though conquered by Islam, never bowed to the actuation of the Semitic spirit. Despite the language and religion that were imposed on her, she claimed her rights as an Indo-European nation, and created for herself in the very heart of Islam a philosophy, an epic, a mythology’ (p.183). In his essay ‘Le Schahnameh’, in Oeuvres complètes, vol. 2, pp.421–423, he elaborates on these points: ‘Magic, so hostile to monotheistic peoples... is the basis of Firdousi’s theology as it is the basis of all Indo-European theology. Take the Indian Tantras... these singular recipes for forcing God all come from the same idea; namely that man can command nature and succeed, through certain procedures, in assuming a role which monotheism attributes to God alone. This is also the mental process of modern science... Firdousi’s supernatural is the result of a living nature dominated by the science of man, by the force of his will. His heroes are absolute beings, matchless in the universe, but subject to fate... Monotheism excludes the epic by replacing the great battle of the worldly life, understood as a struggle between the
fatal forces of nature and the free forces of the individual, with an all-powerful Providence. [Firdousi] is not an Arab, he is one of us; with Hafiz and Khayyam he characterizes the striking phenomenon of Persian literature, the obstinate persistence of the Indo-European genius weathering the saddest vicissitudes of Asian history.’

17. This type of argument is present in Renan’s ‘L’Islamisme et la science’, and in Darmesteter’s ‘Sketch’, pp.200–206 where one encounters the phrase: ‘Hafiz, the Anacreon, the Horace, the Voltaire of Persia’.


21. Ernest Renan, ‘The Zeaziehs [sic] of Persia’, in Studies in Religious History (London: Mathieson, s.n.), pp.245–46: ‘Thus the mystic genius of Persia knew how to give Islamism that in which it was lacking – the tender and suffering ideal, motives for shedding tears, lamentations, the Passion. The latter is an absolute essential to all religions. From the Adonia to Holy Week, recitals, scenes calculated to open fountains of tears, have not been absent in any cult.’

22. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘La Société persane: le théâtre et ses fêtes’, La Nouvelle Revue 77 (July–August 1892), p.525. Cf. Gobineau Les Religions, pp.663–65: ‘the creation of a theatre... merits a place of importance among the moral elements of a society... Dramatic representations were for [the Athenians] a great event, one of the most elevated manifestations of their life... dramatic works continued to preoccupy priests and men of state because their effects on the people were powerful and profound... It is the spirit of antiquity, it is the eternal spirit of humanity, it is the birth of the development of one of the greatest forms of human thought which Persia offers us the opportunity to observe close up today’.


28. Ibid., pp.797–98.

29. Ibid., p.800.

30. Ibid., especially pp.801–803, including: ‘Here now is that which is the origin of this institution of the mujtahid. As a masterly book by M. Darmesteter shows, Shi‘i Persia, while it is Muslim, continues to lead its own, national life as far as religion goes; the pre-existing mythology has simply been transplanted to Islam’. And: ‘It is the most beautiful institution of the Shi‘i religion and it is one of a kind among the Muslim religions. This institution is essentially Persian in its origin and necessarily progressive in its nature; it allows for variety in the interpretation of the Qur’an; it permits interpretations which respond to the ever-changing conditions of life... An intelligent government which was fortunate enough to understand all that it could draw from the institution of mujtahid in favour of progress and the rebirth of the nation, would find there a powerful tool of regeneration.’

31. Ernest Renan, ‘La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France’, in Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan, vol. 1, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1947), pp.397–98. Renan’s views on the success of the university model in the German principalities, and on Protestantism in general, are found in many of his works. For our purposes the following are particularly interesting: ‘In the small principalities of Germany, the dependence of the church... has had later some excellent effects... the theological education of the German universities attained a height unexampled in any century. The absence of centralization, which had brought about the success of Protestantism in Germany, bore here its usual fruit; by creating rivalry it created enlightenment and liberty’ (‘L’Avenir religieux des sociétés modernes’ Œuvres complètes, vol. 1, p.257); ‘Primary instruction is the most difficult to organize. We envy Germany its superiority in this matter... In Germany popular instruction is a product of Protestantism. Lutheranism, having made religion consist of reading a book, and later having reduced the Christian dogmatic to an impalpable quintessence, has given unbounded importance to the school house... Catholicism, on the other hand... puts school in second place... without the collaboration and good-will of the priest, the village
school will never prosper. What might we expect of a Catholicism that reformed itself, that relaxed some of its outmoded rules! What services a priest... could render, providing in each village the model of a well-regulated family, overseeing the school, perhaps serving as the master himself, giving the time he spends now in fastidious repetition of his breviary to the education of the peasants! In reality, the church and the school are equally necessary; a nation can no more dispense with one than with the other...’ (‘La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France’, Oeuvres complètes, vol. 1, p.392). This should be compared with the point Ağaoğlu makes in his article on public instruction in Persia where he emphasizes that the religion of Islam demands literacy and that literacy in Persia is probably higher than in any European country that doesn’t have compulsory education. In his ‘L’Instruction superieure en France’, Renan again mentions the special characteristics of German Lutheranism which produced a great intellectual outpouring (Oeuvres complètes, vol. 1, p.76.). In ‘Le Protestantisme libéral’ he points out how Protestantism did away with belief in the supernatural and ultimately brought textual criticism to the Bible, proving it the work of multiple authors (Mélanges religieux et historiques, Calmann-Levy: 1904, pp.83–85.).

32. Ernest Renan, ‘De la part de la peuples sémitiques dans l’histoire de la civilisation’, in Oeuvres complètes de Ernest Renan, vol. 2, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1947), p.324. Also: ‘These people [the Indo-Europeans] are the only ones who have known liberty and who have taken in the state and the independence of the individual at the same time. Certainly they are far from having always reconciled these two contrary necessities equally well. But one never finds among them those great unitary despotisms which crush all individuality, which reduce man to the condition of some kind of abstract function, as one sees in Egypt, in Babylon, in China, in Muslim and Tatar despotisms. Take up one by one the small municipal republics of Greece and Italy... you will always find there a vigorous moral element, a strong idea of the public good, sacrifice for a common goal’. In his ‘Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France’, Renan asserts that freedom of thought and high culture are the necessary conditions for the strengthening of a country, and intellectual and military superiority belong to the nation that thinks freely (Oeuvres complètes, vol. 1, p.394). Again, in ‘Philosophie de l’histoire contemporaine’, we learn that ‘good is not good unless it comes from the conscience of individuals’; that ‘man’s dignity is a function of his responsibility’; that ‘liberty alone gives individuals a motive for living and alone prevents nations from dying’ (Oeuvres complètes, vol. 1, pp.66–67).


35. Ibid., pp.523–24. In reference to the reforms undertaken by the Shah and then reneged on, Ağaoğlu muses, ‘I ask myself whether the ambassadors of the European states who helped set the Shah on the road of reaction have not miscalculated; ... the spread of railroads... will have, as an immediate result, the establishment of close relations among the different Muslim peoples... Who can guarantee that there will not then be produced one of those political-religious movements whose embers always lie beneath the smoldering ash?’ Similarly, in ‘La Perse et les anglais’, *Revue bleue*, vol. 51, no. 6, 11 February 1893 he warns Lord Curzon: ‘The day a foreign hand comes to rest on her... Persia, free of the chains that currently hinder her marvellous civilizational aptitudes, will put herself at the head of one of those political-religious movements which will set all western Asia aflame. The end of the independence of those Iraqi muleteers who seem so pitiful to Mr. Curzon will be the beginning of Muslim unity and also the beginning of the end for the eastern empire of Her Gracious Majesty.’ For the special cultural and intellectual gifts that will make Persia a leader of the Muslim world, see especially ‘La Société Persane: les Européens en Perse’, p.803.

36. Ahmet Ağaoğlu, ‘La Société persane: le théâtre et ses fêtes’, pp.526: ‘[T]o the great despair of the Persian... he does not dare – and this is truer today than a century ago – to avow his nationality in an European environment without being afraid of provoking an exchange of questioning glances among those present.’ Cf. also ‘La Société persane: le gouvernement de la Perse et l’état d’esprit des persanes’, p.526: ‘[In the Latin quarter] there are young men from almost all the nations of the Orient; in their correct deportment and distinguished manners they are perfect Parisians. But get to know them a little and you will find under their European varnish the soul of a degenerate Oriental, almost untouched. Once they return to their homes, they become either a kind of uncritical, ultra-Europeanized Asiatic, like that Caucasian Muslim fellow who
is trying with his journal $Ekindji$ to spread nihilist ideas among the peasants of the country, or they become ultra-Asiatic with European ambitions. Natives of the Orient call them ‘disabled’ or ‘lost men’, epithets which they deserve for their dissolute morals and the harm they do their countries. So, in order for European civilization to pass to the Orient in a way that is useful for both continents and does not cause that pitiful spiritual deterioration which leaves a man incapable of doing anything outside of the realm of dreams, it is necessary that [civilization] be filtered and made compatible with the Oriental spirit."

Chapter Four: The Middle Eastern Intellectual Context

1. My discussion of the life and thought of Ahundzâde is based largely on Hamid Algar, ‘Mirza Feth Ali Ahundzâde’, in $Türkiye\ Diyanet\ Vakfı\ İslâm\ Ansiklopedisi$, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu et al. (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi, 1989) and Hüseyin Baykara, $Azerbaycan\ Yenileşme\ Hareketleri\ XIX\ Yüzyıl\ [Azerbaijan\ Renewal\ Movements,\ the\ Nineteenth\ Century]$ (Ankara: Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitütü Yayınları, 1966), pp.149–170.
2. Quoted in Hüseyin Baykara, $Azerbaycan\ Yenileşme\ Hareketleri\ XIX\ Yüzyıl\ [Azerbaijan\ Renewal\ Movements,\ the\ Nineteenth\ Century]$ (Ankara: Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitütü Yayınları, 1966), pp.159–160.
3. Quoted in Mangol Bayat Philip, $Mirza\ Aqa\ Khan\ Kirmani:\ Nineteenth\ Century\ Persian\ Revolutionary\ Thinker$ (UCLA, 1971), p.79.
4. Mangol Bayat Philip, $Mirza\ Aqa\ Khan\ Kirmani:\ Nineteenth\ Century\ Persian\ Revolutionary\ Thinker$ (UCLA, 1971) contains an interesting discussion of Ahundzâde’s atheism and nationalist views, pp.70–82.
6. On Şirvani, see Hüseyin Baykara, $Azerbaycan\ Yenileşme\ Hareketleri\ XIX$
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10. Ibid., pp. 38–39.
14. Quoted in An Islamic Response, p. 56.
15. Türk Yurdu (1328–1912/13) 3.2, pp. 45 ff. The translation is by Mehmet Emin Resulzâde.

Chapter Five: Back to the Caucasus, a Time of Ferment

1. Both Akçura and Ağaoğlu himself also claim that Ağaoğlu met and hosted the famous Iranian Islamist Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani while living in Paris. Although there is good evidence to show that in fact this could not have been so, since Afghani was not in France at this time, the claim is most interesting as it shows the high regard Ağaoğlu had for Afghani and his views. In his article ‘Türk Âlemi’, he glowingly describes Afghani’s contribution to the awakening and progress of Middle Eastern Muslims in the following terms: ‘The Honourable Sheykh Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, who is originally a Turk, analyzed for the first time in a multi-faceted way the malady that afflicts all Muslims and in so doing he revealed its remedies.’ Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Türk Âlemi 3’ [‘The Turkish World 3’], Türk Yurdu 1, 3 (1327–1911/12).
2. In an afterword to the second of his ‘Société persane’ articles in 1891, Ağaoğlu notes that he had received strong objections from Ottomans in Paris to his assertion that the ascendance of the Seljuk Turks had been responsible for the decline in the status of Persian womanhood. It is conceivable that such protest came from members of the CUP or even from Riza himself.

3. Akçura gives May as the month of Ağaoğlu’s departure and says he spent four months in Istanbul on his way home. On the other hand, there is an article which appeared in the *Journal des débats* in the month of May signed ‘A.A.’, a signature Ağaoğlu habitually used, with Tiflis in the by-line. Thus it is possible he left Paris in January or February and arrived in the Caucasus in May.

4. Shortly after Ağaoğlu’s time in Istanbul, Münif Paşa was sent on an embassy to Iran, after which he retired from state service. As an interesting aside, it was with him that Mirza Fethali Ahundzâde met to discuss alphabet reform in 1863.

5. Mizanlı Murat, as he later came to be known, was actually a native of the Caucasus, having been born in Tiflis and educated in Russia. In 1895 he fled the Ottoman Empire for Paris, then Egypt, then Paris again and was the editor-in-chief of the principle Unionist organ of the day, *Mizan*. An intense rival to Ahmet Riza, he was leader of the Committee of Union and Progress from 1886 to 1897, succeeding in ousting Riza. He was more conservative than Riza in the sense that he was not so profoundly a student of the West and tended to take a somewhat more Islamist tone at times. He favoured action, not just writing petitions and critiques and in the critical years of 1896–97 he favoured foreign intervention as a way of deposing Abdülhamid and reinstating a system of responsible ministry. Unlike Riza, he did not favour bringing the constitution back into force and convening the Parliament. Later, after the Ottoman victory over Greece in 1897, Murat would accept the Sultan’s terms and return to the service of the Empire with a pardon and a generous cash consideration. For a detailed discussion of the Murat Bey-Ahmet Riza rivalry see M. Şükrü Hanoğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), chapter 4.

6. Hanoğlu, pp. 50 and 72.


9. [Ahmet Ağaoğlu?] A.A., ‘Lettre de Perse: la rupture diplomatique entre la Perse et l’Italie’, *Journal des débats*, 8 July (Soir) 1894 and
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[Ahmet Ağaoğlu] A.A., ‘Lettre du Caucase’, Journal des débats, 29 May (Soir) 1894. One of them gives Tehran in its by-line, which might suggest that he visited Iran during this period, but I can find no other corroborating evidence for this.

10. Kavkaz, according to Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, La Presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1929 (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1964), p.23, was an official Russian language journal published by the office of the Viceroy in Tiflis between 1846 and 1918. For many years it was the only organ Caucasian Muslims had access to. Akçura says that Ağaoğlu was getting articles published in it even while he was still living in Paris. See also Serge A. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960) p.96, note 17, where he cites an article by Ağaoğlu, denouncing religious obscurantism, as appearing in issue 179, 1893.

11. Again, Akçura, Türk Yılı, gives 1902 as the date for this; Aliyev seems to imply it took place a few years earlier and supplies the title Meşrük.

12. The children all led active professional lives: Süreyya was the first woman in Turkey to pass the bar; Gültekin became a paediatrician; Samet was a writer of short stories, an active member of the Democrat Party and a friend of Menderes; Tezer became a writer and intellectual; Abdurrahman was a medical doctor. A third son, born in Istanbul, died in infancy.


14. Akçura says he left the Caucasus late in 1908, but all the other sources, including the memoirs of Ağaoğlu’s daughter Süreyya, give the date as 1909.

15. On the life and thought of Ahundzâde see Hamid Algar, ‘Mirza Feth Ali Ahundzâde’, in Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu et al. (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1989) and Hüseyin Baykara, Azerbaycan Yenileşme Hareketleri XIX Yüzyıl [Azerbaijan Renewal Movements, the Nineteenth Century] (Ankara: Türk Kültürü Araştırma Enstitütü Yayınları, 1966) pp.148–170. Baykara quotes Ahundzâde about education on p.162: ‘If the people don’t get educated and if the whole society doesn’t become literate... all of the efforts which we expend on writing laws and setting up a new administration are going to be for naught.’

16. On the importance of education, literacy and the development
of the native language to Azerbaijani modernists, see Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.23–32. There was considerable debate among the intelligentsia about the form this new literary language should take, with some, like the editorial staff of *Ekinji* and *Molla Nasrettin*, favouring a very simple Azeri of strongly local flavour; others, like Hüseyinzade, adopting a highly ornamental and Ottomanized style; and still others, like Ağaoğlu and Gasprinski, taking a kind of middle road with a relatively simple syntax, but also a certain amount of Ottoman borrowing. Nevertheless, all three camps believed in the need for a literary language that was based on the local language and not a foreign language, no matter how cultured.

17. By the time the Constitutional Revolution broke out in Iran, the Revolution in Russia was already in full swing and that was more immediately interesting to Ağaoğlu. By the time he was forced to leave, things were looking bad in Iran again, but hopeful in the Ottoman Empire.


20. ‘Tatar’ was the term the Russian government used rather indiscriminately to refer to all its Muslim subjects.


23. Golitsyn had left the Caucasus in 1904, but Nakashidze, his associate, had continued his policies and had issued arms permits to the Muslims in January of 1905. There were also assertions that he had refused Armenian pleas for protection shortly before violence broke out and the response of the police and armed forces in Baku during the upheaval was seen to be lethargic and indifferent. See Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920: The Shaping


29. ‘Notes et nouvelles’, Revue du monde musulman 1, 2 (1907), p.266.

This incident seems to be indicative of a strained and difficult relationship between these two leading figures of the Azerbaijani awakening. They often worked closely together, founding Hayat, conceptualizing and shaping the İttifak. Ağaoğlu a member of the parliament of the Azerbaijan Republic when Topçubaşı was the parliament’s president, both chosen to represent Azerbaijan at the Paris Conference. Yet they often seem to have had difficulty getting along. Their early collaboration on Hayat ended badly, with Ağaoğlu angrily leaving the paper and accusing Topçubaşı of not sticking to his role as financial manager and trying to inject his opinions into editorial decisions. Then there were hard words over the question of delegates to the third All-Russian Muslim Congress. A prosopographical examination might prove useful in examining this issue – Ağaoğlu once harshly criticized Ekinji, the publication of Topçubaşı’s brother-in-law Zerdabi, accusing it of denaturing the population of Azerbaijan. Since Zerdabi’s paper often attacked the Shi‘i ulema and Shi‘ism, it is likely that Ağaoğlu, who could certainly be critical of the clerics himself, objected to the anti-Shi‘i character of the writings. One speculates as to whether some of these considerations might not have coloured the disagreements that arose between the two men. For information on Topçubaşı’s life and achievements, see among others, the obituaries and eulogies of him reproduced in ‘Ali Mardan Bey Toptchibachi’, Promété 96 (November 1934).


37. Bennigsen and Quelquejay give the date as January 1904, but issue 1 bears the dates 7 June 1905 (Julian)/16 Rebiyülâhir 1323 (Hicri-Kameri) which translates as 20 June 1905 (Gregorian). I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the eldest daughter of Ali Hüseyinzâde, Saide Santur, for her generous help with my research concerning *Hayat*.
Chapter Six: Caucasian Writings

1. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia, p.96, mentions articles in Kaspii (1899) and Kavkaz (1893), in which Ağaoğlu talks about the ulema ‘distorting’ religion. Altstadt, The Azerbaijani Turks, pp.68–69, mentions a series he wrote for Kaspii in the autumn of 1905 (when he was already in the Ottoman Empire), called ‘Islam and Despotism’, in which he makes the case that Islam is in no way inherently anti-progressive or anti-rational, noting that Christianity too was repressive and obscurantist in its Middle Ages. This argument is familiar as it recapitulates his comments on Islam made in the context of his 1901 treatise on the position of women, which is discussed below. Mangol Bayat, Iran’s First Revolution, p.83, cites three articles by Ağaoğlu on Islam which appeared in Kaspii in 1899, 1900 and 1904. She summarizes the articles as insisting that Islam was the most important factor in the life of the common people, and that the revivification of the Muslim community would have to come about through a renewal of the religion. The religious class must engage in a more accurate, up-to-date, and rational interpretation of the Şeriat and Qur’an. Based on these texts and on his ‘Société persane’ articles, Bayat concludes that Ağaoğlu was profoundly and categorically anti-clerical, and that he was especially hostile to the Shi’i upper ulema and to institutionalized religious hierarchy. I think this is really a misinterpretation of Ağaoğlu’s attitude towards the ulema. In respect specifically to Shi’ism, he really admired the upper clerics, the mujtahids, very much, and in particular because this institution allowed for great freedom of interpretation of the scripture, and thus made a rationalist and modern approach to religion possible. Like Renan, who admired German Protestantism, Ağaoğlu approved of the notion of educated individuals having the intellectual freedom to closely analyse and interpret religion. On
the other hand, Ağaoğlu was deeply distrustful of the lower clergy, whom he regarded as ignorant and interested in keeping the populace benighted and thus under their thumb. In their case, he strongly supported the idea of standardized training institutions and controlled, salaried appointments to ensure the quality and content of what was taught in the villages. In ‘La Société persane: le clergé’, Ağaoğlu says (p.798): ‘After the fall of the Caliphate... the basest passions, unrestrained by any power, were given free rein among the lower clergy; the mullah’s estate is no longer an end, but a tool to exploit and dominate.’ After discussing the evil repercussions of this, especially on the common folk, he asks (p.801): ‘Wouldn’t it be worth the effort for His Majesty to try to reform the clergy itself once and for all, by establishing a hierarchical organization?’ Ağaoğlu later pursued the question of more controlled, standardized formation of the popular clergy in the series he wrote for the Ottoman journal Türk Yurdu, entitled ‘Türk Âlemi’.

2. Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Islam ve Akhund (Baku: 1904). This work was published under the pseudonym Hadim-i Millat (‘Servant of the Nation’, or ‘Servant of the Community’), and can be located in the Azerbaijani Books section of the Akhundov Library in Baku.

3. Ahmet Ağaoğlu, İslâmlıkta Kadın [Women in the Islamic World], trans. Hasan Âli Ediz (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Yayınevi, 1959?). This work originally appeared in Russian, published in Tiflis in 1901. The original was unavailable to me, and my comments and English translation are based on the 1959 translation into Turkish cited above. Unless otherwise stated, all the English translations of the piece in this work are mine.

4. Qasim Amin (1863–1908), son of an Ottoman father and Egyptian mother, studied in Egypt (where he completed a law degree in 1881) and Paris, returning to Egypt in 1885. He was a friend and associate of other leading reformers like Mohammad ‘Abduh and Sa’d Zaghlul (with whom he served as a judge on the Court of Appeals). He wrote The Liberation of Women in 1899, just two years before Ağaoğlu penned his text.

5. İslâmlıkta, p.32.


8. Compare Ağaoğlu’s approach to Islamic law with this passage from Qasim Amin: ‘The legists devised for Muslims the general legal basis
of what was appropriate in specific incidents. They took the general regulations collected in the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition, and deduced from them what was appropriate for different conditions, places, and times. In doing this they did not make new laws nor add anything to religion... The Prophetic tradition prescribed these general rules, and the legists have explained the implications and details associated with them.

‘This is how our legal system was developed. That is from branches going back to one root. The Şeriat includes generalities and general boundaries. Had it been rooted in specific details, it could not have served as a law applicable in every age and every country.

‘These are the general principles that limit our work within the appropriate boundaries. The Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition are not susceptible to change or exchange. But the rules based on the predominant traditions and procedures are susceptible to change according to social conditions and historical time frame, so long as such changes do not offend the principles of the Şeriat.’

We see that here the scripture is indeed an absolute. There can be flexibility in procedure, but the texts themselves are absolutes, not to be understood by any process of historical analysis. Only the work of later jurists can be approached in that way. Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women: A Document in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1992), pp.103–104.

9. For examples of this type of thought see the following passage concerning Islamic learning and scientific learning from Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women: A Document in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1992): ‘In truth Islamic theology and jurisprudence are useless unless preceded by familiarity with scientific principles and knowledge. Is not Islamic theology the seal of all the sciences and the summary of all knowledge?’ (pp.69–70).

Or this: ‘Charles Darwin identified this process as the law of natural selection. God created all creatures on earth and destined all of them to advance toward the perfection of their species. The weak members, however, unable to compete successfully in the struggle for survival, are eliminated. On the other hand, every strong species in this struggle has been granted by God an obvious triumph.’ (p.63).

Or this: ‘However, God has created regulative laws for the world, an order for life, and rules for the creatures living in this world... The history of humanity from its creation on earth to the present
confirms the permanence and continuation of these laws.

‘One of the great reflections of God’s wisdom – may His cause be exalted – is the one revealed to us by science, namely, that all living beings, including humans, are nothing but replicas of the original forms from which they are reproduced. They contain the likeness of the species, especially the likeness of their parents.’ (p.23–24).

10. Islâmlıkta p.34: ‘We should say that the Arabs... in the time of Mohammed don’t go to great pains about their dress or attire. Wild, fiery, out of control nomads and nomad women used to come to the Prophet... and stretch themselves out on the ground in front to him in a variety of poses (in those days their bodies would be half naked)... This condition and behaviour of theirs were insults one and all to the moral sensibilities of Mohammed who was forced as a rule to get into all of the aspects of the lives of this passionate people, so that at every moment he had to appeal to God and ask Him each time for a verse [ayet]... This time a verse relating to head covering descended. This head covering which covered their hair was necessary to protect the throat and chest from the burning rays of the Arabian sun.’ See also p.29 for the episode of Kais ibn Asim’s conversation with the Prophet about the merits of cherishing or killing girl children.

11. For Ağaoğlu’s discussion of the causes of the decline of the caliphate see Islâmlıkta, pp.33, 41–42 and 47.

12. Ağaoğlu’s characterization of the Turks as freedom-loving nomads and prodigious scholars is to be found in Islâmlıkta pp.48–49.

13. Islâmlıkta, pp.41–42.

14. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘La Société persane: la femme persane’, La Nouvelle Revue 69 (March–April 1891), p.379. Compare this with the almost exactly inverted argument in Islâmlıkta, p.48: ‘Women among the Turks and Tatars prior to their acceptance of Islam enjoyed freedom at all times. This could not be otherwise for people who were constantly migrating, who always lived in tents, who were confronted by diverse occurrences at every moment. In these types of conditions women were the trusted helpers and road companions of men. Women, when they shared with [men] all the dangers of life, were necessarily possessed of equal rights with men... Islam [Islamlik] simply accepted the situation that tradition had created among Turko-Tatar women. This situation lasted until they were assimilated by the Iranians.’


17. *Islâmlıkta*, p.52: ‘Since the black outlook of upper class family life is well-known to everyone, we do not see the necessity of dwelling on it separately. And anyway, it is hard on us, as belonging to that group, to speak of them, and our strength is not equal to talking unconstrainedly of our mothers and sisters condemned for all time to suffer a black way of life that destroys the spirit and the body.’

18. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘Le Monde musulman’, *Revue bleue politique et littéraire* 50 (3 September 1892), p.320: ‘Fortunately for it, the rot has not yet reached the lower classes of society, where a woman is free, the equal of her husband, and all the miseries and humiliation it suffers proceed from the degradation of its ruling classes alone.’


21. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘Le Monde musulman’, *Revue bleue politique et littéraire* 50 (3 September 1892), pp.318–319: ‘But is it really true that the popular spread of reading is the *sine qua non* of a nation’s prosperity? Is France, for example, strong because her peasants can read obscene novels, or is it rather because her citizens are capable of devotion and abnegation... And on the other hand, the Arabic alphabet demands patience, will, and tenacity of the person who wants to grasp it... it can make an excellent tool for selecting men of talent.’

22. This is what Ağaoğlu means when he discusses the passage of the Qur’an relating to the creation of women (*Islâmlıkta*, p.28): ‘The chapter [sura] begins with the following bold and unexpected words which caused great wonderment among the Arab men of that time: “Oh people, fear God who created you from the same substance and who created also its mate from that and who also created and multiplied many men and women from that pair.’

‘For the idol-worshipping Arab of that era these words had a character of fearful newness, a character in and of itself revolutionary, which overthrown all of their traditions, all of their customary usages, their whole understanding of things, their world view. And also these words rebuked the idol-worshipping Arab of that time by clarifying that men and women were created of the same substance, of the same clay; that as a social unit they are equals; and that in respect to their behaviour they are equally responsible before God.’

23. *Islâmlıkta*, p.28. From this posture flow all the other rights accorded women in Islam, which he discusses at length in the
passages immediately following.

24. Islâmîkta, p.30: ‘According to the principles laid down by the Qur’an, girls can partake in the estate of their mothers and fathers. Henceforth mothers and fathers would not be able to sell their daughters... Weddings performed in their names without having previously obtained the consent of the girls would be accounted mismade and without force. Girls would be able to enjoy all of the rights of citizenship and to perform any work that was lawful. They would have the right to enter into contracts, to sign documents, to incur debt with others and to give credit to others. According to the Qur’an married women too were citizens possessing every right. They had the right to administer their property without depending on their husbands and they had the right to own property. The husband would not be able to make any demand on his wife other than that she breast-feed his nursing child. The wife was simply obligated to be faithful to her husband and to obey him. However this obedience was limited to a reasonable framework. A woman’s looking after a man and his supervising her property and goods remained a matter completely dependent upon her wishes.’

25. Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘Le Monde musulman’, Revue bleue politique et littéraire 50 (3 September 1892), p.19–20: ‘Establish serious courts of law in the Muslim world, guarantee to women the exercise of the rights which the Qur’an gives her, constitute, in a word, the family in the proper sense of the word, and you will see the Muslim world raise itself up and become a powerful element of civilization.’ See also Ahmet (Ahmed Bey) Ağaoğlu, ‘La Société persane: la femme persane’, La Nouvelle Revue 69 (March–April 1891), p.389.


28. According to Swietochowski (p.47), Vorontsov-Dashkov never made good on these offers.

29. Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Kafkaz’in Hal-i Hazîrî’ [The Present State of the Caucasus], Hayat, 29 June (Julian)/19 July (Gregorian) 1905: ‘This situation and conduct [i.e., autocratic rule] are absolutely opposed and contrary to the norms which are attached to our Turkish community from the most ancient times, and to the pillars of our revealed religion, Islam.’ More explicitly in Kaspiî, no.
57. 30 March 1904, Ağaoğlu says, ‘This whole society is not only a religious society, it also has at the same time an ethnic existence, because all of the Muslims of Russia, with very few exceptions, belong to the great Turko-Tatar race, speak with one general language, and bear the same religious beliefs.’ Cited in Hüseyin Baykara, Azerbaycan İstiklal Mücadelesi Tarihi [History of Azerbaijan’s Independence Struggle] (Istanbul: Azerbaycan Halk Yayınları, 1975), p.123.

30. The articles under discussion here are: Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Russia Müslümanları’ [Russia’s Muslims], Hayat, 26 July (Julian)/8 August (Gregorian) 1905; Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Bühtan ve İftira bir İntihası’ [An End of Calumny and Slander], Hayat, 24 June (Julian)/7 July 1905; Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Müslümanlar Barasında Taze bir İftira ve Bühtan ve bu İftira ve Bühtan üzere Olunan Korklu bir Entrika’ [A New Slander and Calumny about the Muslims and a Dreadful Plot Based on that Slander and Calumny], Hayat, 14 June (Julian)/27 June (Gregorian) 1905; and Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Müslümanlar Barasında Taze bir İftira ve Bühtan ve bu İftira ve Bühtan üzere Olunan Korklu bir Entrika’ [A New Slander and Calumny about the Muslims and a Dreadful Plot Based on That Slander and Calumny], Hayat, 16 June (Julian)/29 June (Gregorian) 1905.

31. Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Rusya Müslümanları’ [Russia’s Muslims], Hayat, 26 July (Julian)/8 August (Gregorian) 1905.


Chapter Seven: New Lands for Old?

1. Ağaoğlu’s unpublished memoirs in Yusuf Akçura, ‘Türkçülük’ [Turkism], in Türk Yılı (Istanbul: Türk Ocağı Yayınevi, 1928), pp.433–434. All other sources, i.e., Süreyya Ağaoğlu, obituaries, encyclopaedias, etc., give the date of Ağaoğlu’s immigration to the Ottoman Empire as 1909.


4. Since they were all in the military, they could not form such an organization by themselves.

5. Quoted in Jacob Landau, Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study in

6. According to Kenan Akyüz, Türk Ocakları (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu basımevi, 1986), it was a number of articles in the newspaper Jeune Turc that inspired these notions in the students. As we have already noted, Ağaoğlu was closely associated with that newspaper. The newspaper was licensed to Sami Hirtzberg, an Ottoman Jew, and edited by Celal Nuri and was felt to be friendly to Zionism.


9. François Georgeon, Aux origines du nationalisme turc: Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935) (Paris: Éditions ADPF, 1980), p.44ff. Enver always had close ties to the journal and was frequently praised by it. Türk Yurdu, in its first issue, thanked him for his ‘invaluable’ support. Ağaoğlu personally seems to have had a good relationship with Enver and his selection in 1918 to accompany Enver’s brother into the Caucasus as political advisor may be a reflection of this.

10. A number of sources discuss the founding of the Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti and the Türk Ocağı. There is the ubiquitous Yusuf Akçura, ‘Türkçülük’ [Turkism], in Türk Yılı (İstanbul: Türk Ocağı Yayınları, 1928), an account by one who actually participated in the events. Among secondary sources, consult Kenan Akyüz, Türk Ocakları (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu basımevi, 1986); François Georgeon, Aux origines du nationalisme turc: Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935) (Paris: Éditions ADPF, 1980); Hüseyin Tuncer, Türk Yurdu üzerine bir İnceleme [An Investigation into Türk Yurdu] (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990). Masami Arai, Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) gives a good account of the creation and development of both organizations, as well as of the Türk Derneği. I am following his discussion on early confusion and power struggles in the Türk Ocağı, as well as his analysis that in many ways Türk Yurdu was the outlet the émigrés created for their nationalist views, the expression of which was limited in publications like Türk Derneği by Ottomanist pre-commitments.


14. This was an intelligence and special operations type of organization created by Enver. At the end of the war, as Erik Zürcher has shown in his book *The Unionist Factor*, it was instrumental in organizing resistance to the Allied occupation by helping to establish caches of arms around Anatolia and Thrace, by participating in the creation of ‘Defence of Rights’ organizations and by working with the Türk Ocağı clubs throughout what would be Turkey.


16. The amount of information on the activities of the Society is limited. See Ahmet Temir, *Yusuf Akçura* (Ankara: Kultur ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1987), pp.49–56; François Georgeon, *Aux origines du nationalisme turc: Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935)* (Paris: Éditions ADPF, 1980), pp.78–80; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya* [Turkey and Russia] (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990), pp.501–505; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.83; Nadir Devlet, *Rusya Türklerinin Millî Mücadele Tarihi (1905–1917)* [History of the National Struggle of Russia’s Turks, 1905–1917] (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1985), pp.242–246. However, the information contained in these accounts is not extensive and is largely repetitive. According to Temir and Georgeon, the memoranda and pamphlets were composed primarily by Akçura, who then led the delegation that toured Europe’s capitals in 1915–1916. Other members of the Society also attended the Socialist International in Stockholm. At this time Ağaoğlu is not said to have formed part of the delegation, but is mentioned as representing Azerbaijan for the Society at the Lausanne conference. On the other hand, the *Compte Rendu* of the conference contains statements from many delegations of Russian Muslims – Tatars, Kamuks, Üzbeks, Kirghiz, etc. – but nothing concerning Azerbaijan. Conversely, several sources mention Ağaoğlu visiting Berlin in 1916 for a congress of Ottoman journalists. See Gültekin Emre, ‘300 Yıl młık Geçmiş Berlin’de Türkler’ [Turks in Berlin, A Three Hundred Year History], *Tarih ve Toplum*, 46 (1987), p.11. After the Lausanne conference, Akçura is said to have met with Lenin who was still in Switzerland. There is no mention as to whether Ağaoğlu was present or not.

17. The best general account of the history of Azerbaijan in this period

18. Bilâl N. Şiimsir, *Malta Sürgünleri [The Malta Exiles]*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınları, 1985), pp. 108, 263–269, 366–370. For general discussion of the Malta deportees see also Bilal N. Şiimsir, *The Deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question* (Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 1984). These works contain lots of interesting documentary evidence from the British Foreign Office Archives, though they are less than objective in their discussion of the Armenian massacres during the First World War. One interesting point is that during the years of his detention, whenever his case came up for review, British officials of the occupation force in Istanbul always urged that he was a political danger who ought to be held as long as possible. On the other hand, the British representatives in the Caucasus always urged his release asserting that he could prove very politically useful.

19. The nationalist cadre grouped around *Türk Yurdu* was interested in reaching the ‘common man’ and elevating his condition as a means of elevating the nation as a whole. The journal *Halka Doğru [To the People]*, founded in 1912 as an offshoot of *Türk Yurdu*, was created for this purpose. It is interesting to note that its title replicates the name of the Russian populist movement of the 1860s. For a discussion of *Halka Doğru* and populism in the Ottoman Empire, see François
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27. For Akçura’s historicism and attitudes towards pre-Islamic Turkish history see Georgeaon, Aux Origines, pp.46–53.


30. On the ambiguity of many Ottoman intellectuals vis-à-vis the relationship between Turkish awakening and the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire, see Masami Arai, Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), especially pp57–68 and 40–44. He points out that some Ottoman intellectuals used the terms Osmanlılık and Türklük interchangeably.

31. Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘İslâmda Dâva-yı Milliyet 1’ [The
32. Babanzâde Ahmet Naim Bey (1872–1934), born in Baghdad and educated in Baghdad and Istanbul, worked in the Translation Room of the Foreign Ministry and taught Arabic at the Galatasaray Sultanisi. He held numerous government posts over the years and taught philosophy, logic and ethics in the Faculty of Letters at the Darülfünun. Later he served as that institution’s rector. For information about his life and work, see Ismail Kara, ed. Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi Metinler/Kısırlar [Islamist Thought in Turkey, Papers/Personalities], vol. 1 (İstanbul: Risale Basım-Yayın Ltd., 1986), pp.273–308. The essay which elicited Ağaoğlu’s response was (Babanzâde) Ahmet Naim, ‘İslâmda Dâva-yı Kavmiyet’ [The Nationalism Question in Islam], Sebilâ’reşad, 293 (1330 – 1914/15).


34. Ibid., p.2388–2389.

35. It should be noted that Young Ottoman leaders like Namik Kemal were deeply revered by later generations of Ottoman and Turkish modernizers for their patriotism and for their ideas on representative government and the creation of a citizen-state, but their views about the role of Islam in these programs were quietly dropped.


Chapter Eight: Applied Turkism


4. On the topic of secularism and the need to deprive the sultan-caliph of temporal powers in the constitution, see Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Üç Medeniyet [Three Civilizations] (Ankara?: Türk Oçakları Merkez Heyeti Matbaası, 1927), p.157. Üç Medeniyet, according to Ağaoğlu’s preface, was written in 1919–20 while he was a prisoner of
the British. It was first published in serial form in Türk Yurdu shortly after his release. For a discussion of the compatibility of national sovereignty with Islamic tradition, see Ahmet Ağaoğlu, İhtilal Mi, İnkılap Mi? [Revolt or Revolution?] (Ankara: Alaeddin Kıral Basımevi, 1942), pp.11–18, that is, the third and fourth instalments of the series, which appeared in Hakimiyet-i Milliye on 11 and 12 May 1922. For a discussion of other works in which Ağaoğlu develops these ideas and of how they were picked up by Atatürk, see Halil İnalcık, ‘The Caliphate and Atatürk’s İnkılab’, in From Empire to Republic: Essays on ottoman and Turkish Social History, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995).

14. Hüseyin Tuncer, Yücel Hacaoğlu and Ragip Memişoğlu, Türk Ocakları: Açıklama Kronoloji, 1912–1931, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Yurdu Yayınları, 1998), pp.115–17. Ağaoğlu continued to be very active in the organization until its absorption by the RPP in 1931. He held official posts, too numerous to detail here, every year until at least 1927. He was also active as a speaker at various Hearth events throughout the decade.
16. The library of the Türk Tarih Kurumu has an undated publication, probably reflecting the course content he taught there, entitled Hukuk-i Esasiye. On the first page is the phrase ‘Professor: Kars Deputy Ahmet Ağaoğlu’, which means it must have been published after Ağaoğlu was elected to the Meclis in 1923, but before the alphabet reform of 1928, since it is in the old script.


18. This account of the events attending the creation and demise of the Free Party is based primarily on Walter Weiker, Political Tutelage and Democracy In Turkey: The Free Party and Its Aftermath (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973).


21. In Menemen, a town near Izmir, a local dervish led a demonstration demanding the return of the caliphate. When a local policeman showed up, the enraged crowd beheaded him and paraded his severed head around on a pike.


24. A perusal of Hüseyin Tuncer, Yücel Hacaoğlu and Ragip Memişoğlu, Türk Ocakları: Açıklama Kronoloji, 1912–1931, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Yurdu Yayınları, 1998), gives an idea of the truly impressive geographical extension, seemingly boundless energy and multiplicity of activities of the Hearths. This work also gives a clear sense of the importance of the Hearth organization in the government’s eyes. They are regularly visited by Atatürk and İnönü, not to mention other ranking officials. Atatürk’s wife even served as honorary chair of the central committee.


29. Although, as Feroz Ahmad has noted, the writers at Kadro insisted that their ideology was distinct from that of Italian fascism in that it did not seek to save capitalism from its own contradictions and in that it rejected colonialism, it is nevertheless justifiable to see it as part of a wider tendency of the period, particularly among less developed countries. On this issue, see Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), especially Chapters 5, 10 and 14.

30. See for example, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, *Devlet ve Fert [State and Individual]* (İstanbul: Sanayiinefise Matbaası, 1933), pp.28–35 and 46–47.


32. Ahmet Ağaoğlu, *İran İnkılabı* (İstanbul: Akşam Matbaası, 1934); see especially pp.15–18.

33. Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Türk Âlemi 6’ [The Turkish World 6], *Türk Yurdu* 1, 10 (1328 – 1912/13), p.296.

34. Ahmet Ağaoğlu (Aghayev), ‘Türk Âlemi 5’ [The Turkish World 5], *Türk Yurdu* 1, 7 (1328 – 1912/13), p.199.

35. Ahmet Ağaoğlu, *Devlet ve Fert [State and Individual]* (İstanbul: Sanayiinefise Matbaası, 1933), p.57.

36. In Üç Medeniyet, Ağaoğlu gives the example of Peter the Great who created new institutions of higher learning and scholarship whose faculty and fellows were almost all German speakers. Nevertheless, the Enlightenment they spread through Russia led in a short time to Russian’s becoming one of the major literary and intellectual languages of Europe. See especially pp.113–15.


39. Ibid., p.89.

40. I have discussed the linkage in Ağaoğlu’s thought between ‘adaptation’ and ‘empiricism’, and the French context of that linkage, in detail in ‘A Student Abroad in Late Ottoman Times: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and French Paradigms in Turkist Thought’, in Rudi Matthee and Beth baron, eds., *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2000).

'Secularism and the Limits of Liberal Opposition in Turkey', a paper delivered at the Thirty-first Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (San Francisco: 1997), p.40ff.
43. Ibid., pp.37–38.
45. Ibid., pp.391–93.
46. 1340 Senesinde Nisanında Toplanan Birinci Türk Ocakları Umumi Kongresi Zabıtları [Proceedings of the First General Congress of the Turkish Hearths Gathered in April, 1924] (Ankara: Yeni Gün, 1341 – 1925), pp.53–55. It is interesting to note that the story of the two boys appears again in Ahmet Ağaoğlu, ‘Ne Idik, Ne Olduk? 4’ [Who Were We, What Did We Become?, pt. 4], Hayat Mecmuası 1978, the version of Ağaoğlu’s post-war memoirs prepared for publication by his daughter Tezer Taşkiran. In this later version, however, the roles are reversed and it is the Alevi boy who calls himself a Türk, the Sunni who says he is a Muslim.


_______[Ahmet Aghayev]. 1905. Müslümanlar Barasında Taze Bir İftira ve Bühtan ve Bu İftira Üzerre Olunan Korklu Bir Entrika [A New Slander and Calumny about the Muslims and a Dreadful Plot Based on that Slander and Calumny]. Hayat, June 14 (Julian)/June 27 (Gregorian), 2.
_______[Ahmet Aghayev]. 1905. Müslümanlar Barasında Taze Bir İftira ve Bühtan ve Bu İftira Üzerre Olunan Korklu Bir Entrika [A New Slander and Calumny about the Muslims and a Dreadful Plot Based on That Slander and Calumny]. Hayat, June 16 (Julian)/June 29 (Gregorian), 2–3.
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