Studies in Modernity and National Identity examine the relationships among modernity, the nation-state, and nationalism as these have evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Titles in this interdisciplinary and transregional series also illuminate how the nation-state is being undermined by the forces of globalization, international migration, electronic information flows, as well as resurgent ethnic and religious affiliations. These books highlight historical parallels and continuities while documenting the social, cultural, and spatial expressions through which modern national identities have been constructed, contested, and reinvented.

Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic,
Sibel Bozdoğan

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THE LEGACY OF OTTOMAN REVIVALISM

Since young poets started to compose in the modern meter and since some novelty fans started to conduct Turkish saz music with a baton, a notorious medrese architecture, which we do not know what to call, has proliferated among our architects. Domes reminiscent of the turban taken off the head of the religious fanatic have started to mushroom under the Turkish sky. Hotel, bank, school, ferry landing, all are now a caricature of a mosque, missing a minaret on the outside and a minber inside. ... This kind of return to the past is a degeneration, a reactionary architecture [mürteci mimari].

—Ahmet Hajić, Kurâbahâne-i Lâlkân, 1928

Completed in 1909, the Central Post Office in Sirkeci on the tip of Istanbul’s historical peninsula is an impressive monumental building designed by the Turkish architect Vedat Bey (fig. 1.1). It incorporates a number of stylistic references to classical Ottoman architecture (pointed arches, ornate tile work on the spandrels above the arches, domes over the corner towers) in an otherwise conspicuously European building. The use of the tall Corinthian order on the upper floors of the main façade and the symmetry and axiality of the plan follow a distinctly Ecole des Beaux-Arts parti testifying to the European training and cultural references of its architect, like those of many other educated Ottoman elites of the time. The building’s most spectacular feature is a reinforced concrete and iron truss structural system that allows a large span over a spacious central hall lit by a glass roof. This central space evokes a feeling not unlike that of comparable European buildings of the time, such as Otto Wagner's Postal Savings Bank in Vienna (1906), one of the canonic buildings of early modern architecture, completed only three years before the Sirkeci post

Fig. 1.1. The first major National Architecture Renaissance building in Istanbul—the Central Post Office, Sirkeci (1909), by Vedat Bey. Top: Front elevation showing the symmetrical, axial arrangement and the use of pointed arches, corner domes, and the tall Corinthian order on the upper floors. Bottom: Interior view of the main hall showing the reinforced concrete structure and the glass roof of the skylight hall.
office. Like Wagner's bank, Vedat Bey's post office was a modern urban structure in a busy, imperial, cosmopolitan, and rapidly changing city.

The design and construction of the Central Post Office coincided with a major event in the history of modern Turkey: the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, which brought the European-educated "Young Turks" to power during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. On 23 July 1908, the constitution and the parliament, suspended some thirty years earlier by Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909), were restored. After the brief euphoria of 1908, however, the revolution's dreams of liberal reform turned into authoritarian politics, and power was consolidated in the hands of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the military and political organization of the Young Turk movement. Leaders of the CUP deposed Sultan Abdulhamid II in 1909, suppressed their conservative and liberal opponents in the next few years, and ruled the country until the First World War, while Sultan Mehmet Reşat V (1909–1918) remained on the throne as a figurehead. At the same time, they initiated important urban modernization, sanitation, and transportation projects in the hope of reviving the empire and breathing life into the "sick man of Europe." As Bernard Lewis, the prominent historian of modern Turkey, remarked, "Young Turks may have failed to give Turkey constitutional government; however, they gave Istanbul its drains. They also gave a new face to public buildings, as exemplified in the architecture of the Sirkeci post office. Between 1908 and 1918 a new architectural style emerged in Turkey, symbolizing many of the ideological aspirations and cultural complexities of the late empire.

Retrospectively labeled by historians of architecture the "First National Style," but known to its contemporaries as the "National Architecture Renaissance," this rather eclectic Ottoman revivalism dominated architectural discourse and practice in Turkey from about the turn of the century well into the 1930s. The basic idea was to combine decorative elements derived from classical Ottoman architecture (especially semispherical Ottoman domes, wide roof overhangs with supporting brackets, pointed arches, and ornate tile decoration) with beaux-arts design principles (symmetry and axiality, in particular) and new construction techniques (reinforced concrete, iron, and steel). Like classical and Gothic revivals in nineteenth-century Europe and the United States, it was used extensively for banks, offices, cinemas, and other public buildings in the imperial capital. In a manner also reminiscent of the use of stylistic revivals in industrial and utilitarian buildings in the West, it was adopted for smaller utilitarian structures of modern life such as the ferry stations built in Istanbul between 1913 and 1917 (fig. 1.2). After the nationalist War of Independence and the proclamation of Ankara as the new capital of the republic in 1923, major public buildings continued to be built in this style in Ankara and other Anatolian cities.

In spite of the visible mark that the National Architecture Renaissance left in many Turkish cities, it has been largely neglected in architectural historiography and design education until quite recently. Historians of Ottoman and Islamic architecture have typically focused on the sixteenth-century classical period epitomized by Sinan's
work. For many of them, the turn-of-the-century Ottoman revivalism was too stylized, too Westernized, and too modernized to be discussed within the Ottoman tradition—it was too much a departure from the tradition's "purity" and "authenticity." On the other hand, historians of modern Turkish architecture, especially those with professional training as architects, have tended to approach Ottoman revivalism with the biases of a doctrinaire modernism that took shape in the 1930s. From this perspective, modern architecture was identified with the formal canons of the Modern Movement, and Ottoman revivalism was seen as modern architecture's academic, stylistic, and anachronistic "other" that had to be left behind in order to capture the zeitgeist of the modern age. The idea of "dressing up" modern building types, modern materials, and modern construction techniques in ornate historical "envelopes"—the basic idea behind nineteenth-century revivalism everywhere—was criticized as "untruthful" and "deceptive" from the vantage point of a modernist ethic. The stylistic unity of all Ottoman revivalist buildings, "from hotels and banks to schools and ferry landings," as the prominent author Ahmet Hayati observed in 1928, was seen as a violation of the functionalist and rationalist principles of modernism, which mandated a programmatic differentiation of exterior form.

From a less stylistic and more historical perspective, one can talk about the National Architecture Renaissance as the first "modern" discourse in Turkish architectural culture. It was the first systematic engagement of Turkish architects with new building types, construction techniques, and design principles. Above all, it was the first large-scale mobilization of architecture for identity construction and nation building. Or one can talk about the National Architecture Renaissance as the last breath of Ottoman-Islamic architecture before its final eclipse in the republican period—a last reference to the architectural heritage of the empire even in that dramatically transformed, Westernized, and stylized form. Both are accurate descriptions of Ottoman revivalist architecture at the turn of the twentieth century. By the same token, the architects who designed and built in that style were at once the last Ottoman and the first republican architects; their careers coinciding with important institutional transformations toward the making of a modern architectural profession in Turkey. Most important of all, it was this ambiguity of cultural signification—the ambiguity of a style that could accommodate modern functions yet refer back to a glorious Ottoman-Islamic past—that lent itself to different readings and interpretations that have shifted over time.

To begin with, turn-of-the-century Ottoman intellectuals, artists, and architects were concerned primarily with preserving the Ottoman state, which they identified with the sultan and the empire. For most of them, an Ottoman revivalist architectural style symbolized, before everything else, the patrimony of the Ottoman state: it was a "patriotic" architecture for an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous Ottoman "nation." This interpretation was short-lived, however. As many historians have pointed out, the last vestiges of this Ottomanism were shattered during the catastrophic losses of the Balkan Wars and especially the First World War, when Turkish nationalism emerged from the trenches of Gallipoli as the victorious ideology to carry Turkey into the republican period. For the Turkish nationalists of the CUP and their followers in the early republic, the National Architecture Renaissance was primarily a Turkish national style. Its Ottoman forms and motifs were recharged with "Turkish" rather than Islamic or imperial cultural meanings. It was this "Turkishization" of Ottoman architecture in the final years of the Ottoman Empire that sanctioned its continued use during the first decade of the Kemalist republic, a time when everything else Ottoman was radically rejected. Furthermore, the republican leaders, in search of legitimacy at a time of competing ideologies, tacitly (and strategically) accepted that this style's implicit references to Islam and to the sultan would appeal to a traditional population still loyal to those symbols.

By 1931, however, once the single-party regime of the Republican People's Party (RPP) was consolidated and the secular, Western-oriented cultural politics of the republic firmly established, Ottoman revivalism was rapidly abandoned in favor of an imported "New Architecture" (Yeni Mimari), as the Modern Movement came to be called in Turkey. This was the beginning of an ideologically charged binary way of thinking, based on contrasts between the old and the new, the traditional and the contemporary, the reactionary and the progressive—in terms of which the entire architectural discourse of the 1930s was constructed and legitimated. Ahmet Hayati's views on the National Architecture Renaissance are representative of official republican sentiments toward this style in the heyday of Turkey's radical transformation along Western lines under the auspices of Kemalism. "This reactionary architecture [mertepe mimari]," Hayati wrote in 1928, "dressed in a robe and a turban, this imitation of a tomb or a medrese [madrasah, or school for Islamic religious instruction], does not deserve to be called an 'architectural revolution.' What they call a 'newborn' is in fact a very old man." What is especially significant in this characterization is the association of Ottoman revivalism with reactionary forces (trtca), signifying a resistance to progress. It captures how, in that dramatic period of transition, architecture was viewed through the perspective of an ideology that presented itself as a unique, progressive, and radical break with the nation's own imperial, "anachronistic," and "backward" past.

In the light of these shifting interpretations, one concludes that Ottoman revivalism, the prevailing architectural idiom between 1908 and 1931, was far from being a clearly delineated style with a fixed ideological meaning. Rather, it was the architectural expression of a process through which the cultural significance of Ottoman forms was negotiated and transformed over a few decades. The rest of this chapter traces the legacy of the Ottoman revivalist National Architecture Renaissance through the three phases just outlined: its origins in Ottoman patriotism, its appropriation by Turkish nationalism, and finally its rejection by the Kemalist revolution. It also highlights the corresponding institutional, educational, and professional transformations in art and architecture before the radical switch to European modernism in the 1930s. The premise is that for a critical understanding of the architectural culture of the early republic, it is necessary to begin with Ottoman revivalism—which
was in fact a constitutive aspect of the modernist architectural culture of the 1930s, albeit in the form of its stylistic and ideological "other."

Patriotism and Ottoman Revival

One can talk about Ottoman revivalism as a "modern" discourse in a historical sense if one makes a basic distinction between "modernism" as a particular artistic and architectural trend of the early twentieth century and the broader term "modernity." The latter involves, among other things, a clear self-consciousness, on the part of nations as well as individuals, of history and change and of one's own position with respect to change—a claiming of one's subjectivity and a recognition of one's need for self-representation and self-transformation. In this latter sense, the term "modern" does not have a narrowly fixed historical reference, nor is it the exclusive monopoly of European history; there can be different "moderns" in different places and times. Although Western Europe has been the historical source and geographical locus of this modern self-consciousness, the rest of the world was intimately connected to it, either as colonial extensions of Europe or as old empires caught in Europe's expanding sphere of economic and cultural influence. For these societies, modernity was, by definition, a process of catching up with a historical phenomenon the parameters of which were delineated elsewhere.

The National Architecture Renaissance and the idea of Ottoman revival on which it was predicated represent the first self-conscious and systematic attempt to codify Ottoman architecture as a rational aesthetic discipline. It was a contrived response to the new and unprecedented programmatic requirements of modern life, as distinct from a predominantly craft-based building practice limited to traditional building types such as the mosque, the tomb, the medrese, and the hamam (public bath). Although its stylistic vocabulary was derived from the traditional types, it was precisely the progressive disappearance or transformation of the "life-worlds" represented by these types under the impact of modernization that made the idea of an architectural "renaissance" based on Ottoman precedents conceivable in the first place. "Where old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented," observed the historian Eric Hobsbawm. As such, the National Architecture Renaissance can indeed be seen as an "invented tradition" in the way Hobsbawm formulated it, arising from the desire to construct an identity that is "unchanging and invariant" in a rapidly changing modern world. It is the historical self-consciousness implied in the very idea of "revival" that makes the National Architecture Renaissance a "modern" discourse.

Above all else, the idea of Ottoman revival entails an aspiration to claim a place for Ottoman architecture among the "modern styles" or revivalisms of the nineteenth century. This was, in effect, a repudiation of the classification of Ottoman architecture as a "non-historical style," which was the norm in classic architectural texts of the nineteenth century, informed as they were by orientalist and Eurocentric visions. As we know today, after at least twenty years of critical theorizing on orientalism and the politics of representation, the very constitution of the discipline of architecture in the West was based on this nineteenth-century distinction between the "Western tradition" in architecture and its non-Western "others." The Western tradition was thought to represent a dynamic historical evolution from classical antiquity to modern revivalism, whereas non-Western traditions were regarded as frozen in their golden or classic ages, incapable of modern transformations. In that context, the National Architecture Renaissance was not only the first self-consciously "modern" discourse in Turkey but also, by the same token, the first "anti-orientalist" one, claiming its historicity and refusing to be a "nonhistorical style," as Sir Banister Fletcher classified Ottoman architecture in 1896.

The historical roots of this anti-orientalist and modern self-consciousness go back to the Young Ottoman movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. Young Ottomans, mostly intellectuals, bureaucrats, and journalists educated in Europe, were the first to begin thinking about the empire as a political community or an "Ottoman nation." It should be immediately added that many scholars characterize the Young Ottoman movement as a "proto-nationalism" movement in which Islam and the patrimony of the Ottoman sultan, rather than ethnicity and language, still constituted the primary elements of social cohesion and solidarity. Nevertheless, many of the elements that Benedict Anderson, in his classic work on nationalism, has identified as playing a major role in "imagining a nation"—maps, the census, the first novels, and especially the first newspapers—had in fact emerged in the Ottoman Empire in the 1800s. It is no coincidence that the stylistic vocabulary of the National Architecture Renaissance goes back to the seminal text Usul-i Mimar-i Osmani (Principles of Ottoman Architecture), produced in 1873, in the heyday of the Young Ottoman movement. This volume compellingly reflects the desire of educated Ottoman elites to recast the balance of excess Westernization in the preceding Tanzimat period and to install a new sense of patriotism that included pride in the artistic and architectural heritage of the empire.

Commissioned to Ibrahim Edhem Pasha, the minister of public works during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz (1861–1876), Usul-i Mimar-i was prepared for the empire's participation in the Vienna International Exposition of 1873 and was published in three languages (Ottoman, French, and German). Founded upon the "realization that the progress [of Ottomans] in the exalted realm of Fine Arts is possible only by recourse to the resplendent works of their past," this massive volume was the result of a systematic study and documentation of classical Ottoman buildings, monuments, and decorative details. The idea was to abstract from them the underlying system of architectural orders, compositional principles, and geometric rules that the authors of the text claimed to possess universal validity and practical applicability for different programs and sites. The universalist aspirations of the text are of particular importance: the principles of Ottoman architecture were offered to the rest of the world as alter-
natives to it and of no less importance than the principles behind neoclassic or neo-Gothic styles.

The theoretical models, analytical methods, and representational techniques informing the 1873 text were unmistakably European, particularly French, reflecting the educational background of the Ottoman artists and intellectuals involved in its production. In the manner of Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879), who looked for rational principles underlying historical precedents, the authors of Usul-i Mimari studied Ottoman precedents as the possible sources of a contemporary Ottoman architecture, "modern" and infused with "national character" at the same time. In the manner of Claude Perrault (1613–1688), who codified the "correct" orders of classical architecture to demonstrate the superiority of the "moderns" over the "ancients," they codified the three Ottoman orders: the comic, the diamond, and the crystalline, roughly corresponding to the Doric, the Ionic, and the Corinthian, respectively. The extensive use of these Ottoman orders in National Architecture Renaissance buildings of the 1920s demonstrates that they constituted a solid vocabulary upon which a "national style" could rely half a century later (fig. 1.3). Finally, in the manner of Owen Jones (1806–1870), they classified Ottoman decorative patterns, abstracting them out of tiles, woodwork, mother-of-pearl inlay details, and so forth, and making them available for use in the ornamental programs of Ottoman revivalist buildings.

This representation of Ottoman forms and details in the format of European architectural discourse is symptomatic of what is, in essence, the profound ambiguity of national consciousness in non-Western contexts. At the same time the authors of Usul-i Mimari sought to restore the dignity of Ottoman architectural heritage and claimed its theoretical equality to European styles, they simultaneously confirmed the superiority of the European constructs of knowledge from which they borrowed their analytical frameworks, methods, and techniques. They were "anti-orientalist" to the extent that as Ottoman intellectuals and architects they claimed a historical subjectivity—that is, an active role in the making of a modern Ottoman architecture which, they implied, was not outside the progressive historical evolution of architecture. At the same time, as rationalist, self-knowing, post-Enlightenment subjects in the European sense, they adopted the same objectifying constructs of knowledge—the same systematic study, classification, and ordering of knowledge—that European orientalists had applied to non-Western "others."

As many scholars have pointed out in discussing this phenomenon, nationalist thinking outside the industrialized West was an inherently contradictory project. "It reasoned within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponded to the very structure of power that nationalist thought sought to repudiate." As we will see in chapter 3, this profound dilemma would reach its crest under the Westernizing impetus of the 1930s, to be captured by the Kemalist slogan "being Western in spite of the West." As profound as the contradictions of nationalist modernization might be in the non-Western world, however, the adoption of Western constructs of knowledge need not always and necessarily mean a total submersion to

Fig. 1.3. Top: The "crystalline order" (tasavvîr-i minârî) from the book Usul-i Mimari-i Osmani, 1871. Bottom left: Use of the crystalline order in the entrance portico of the Ethnography Museum, Ankara (1925–1926), by Arif Hikmet Koyunoglu. Bottom right: Detail of the column capital.
Western powers. Nor does the wholesale repudiation of these constructs need be the only conceivable form of resistance. After all, power is not only about oppression, even if this was the dominant feature of the colonialism and imperialism through which non-Western others encountered Western power. Power is also about “empowerment”—the possibility of people’s becoming active participating subjects rather than passive objects of history. A text like Usul-i Mimari suggests how the appropriation of European architectural theories by non-European “others” and the reprocessing of those theories toward self-representation could actually mark a critical moment.

Nothing illustrates this critical moment more explicitly than the paintings of Osman Hamdi Bey (1841–1910), a prominent Ottoman artist, intellectual, and public figure, founder of the Istanbul Archaeology Museum (1881) and the Academy of Fine Arts (1882), where the first architectural school was located. Closely connected to the authors of Usul-i Mimari and himself a French-educated member of the Young Ottoman generation, Osman Hamdi Bey was shaped in both life and career by the same modern and anti-orientalist self-consciousness that informed the 1873 text. In many of his paintings, Osman Hamdi Bey employed the European orientalist genre of painting that he learned in the atelier of Jean Leon Gerome in Paris, reversing, however, the stereotypical image of the orient represented by the exotic (and erotic) scenes of the harem, the bazaar, and the hamam. These paintings of the 1890s and 1900s depict a different, rational and dynamic orient where people, including women, stand upright, read, debate, stroll in the streets, and engage in productive activities—that is, they depict a progressive Muslim society engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, science, and progress (fig. 1.4).

Not surprisingly, in the context of recent critical debates concerning the Western canon in art, Osman Hamdi Bey’s paintings have drawn the attention of many scholars in the West. Some commentators use them to salvage the term “orientalism” from the negative connotations that have been attached to it since Edward Said’s work first appeared. The more critical and sophisticated analyses, however, observe the potential in these paintings for exposing the biases of the Western orientalist canon and hence for complicating and expanding it, more in the way Said himself intended. In spite of their consciously oriental surroundings, the characters in Osman Hamdi Bey’s paintings resist being categorized as essential, unchanging, stereotypical “others.” They are characters with personalities and temporality, depicted in scenes of learning, daily life, and domestic bliss. They maintain their “difference” from European identities, but no longer as “inferior others”: difference is rendered neutral rather than hierarchical.

There are interesting chronological and ideological parallels between Osman Hamdi Bey’s “corrective enterprise” and the emergence of the National Architecture Renaissance around the turn of the century. Like Osman Hamdi Bey, the proponents and leading designers of the National Architecture Renaissance were educated in Europe but were at the same time deeply committed to the welfare of the Ottoman state and its artistic and architectural heritage. For them, Ottoman architecture was not something frozen in the mosques and medreses of the classical age, incapable of adapting to the modern world. Nor was it something “exotic” and trivial like the orientalist and pseudo-Islamic styles popular in Europe throughout the nineteenth century. Ottoman architecture was a rich tradition (already documented in Usul-i Mimari-yi Osman in 1873) that contained the necessary stylistic vocabulary for the creation of a “modern” and “national” architecture for the late empire. Thus, they argued, would be an architecture capable of reflecting not only the contemporary needs and technological developments of the turn of the century but also the pride and patriotism of the Ottoman nation. It would be a rebirth—a National Architecture Renaissance.

There was much in the nineteenth-century architectural scene at large to justify these sentiments of patriotism and the desire for an Ottoman renaissance. First, some of the orientalized and pseudo-Islamic styles that had been feeding the European imagination in the public spectacles of the great expositions had also made their way to Istanbul throughout the century. For example, the onion domes of the Taksiyarh Köşk gatehouse by Kirkor Balyan (c. 1850) and the large horseshoe arch of the Ministry of Defense gatehouse by the French architect Marie-Auguste Antoine Bourgeois (1867) were orientalized designs that defied historical appropriateness in favor of an exotic effect. The Young Ottomans must have especially resented that in these examples, stylistic references to the more exotic Alhambra and Taj Mahal had been selected over references to local Ottoman precedents. More percussive, however,
was the profusion of European styles and influences (neoclassic, baroque, and French Empire styles in particular) that had dominated Ottoman architecture, especially after the beginning of the Tanzimat period (1839). When Young Ottoman thought was fermenting during the reigns of Sultan Abdulaziz (1861–1876) and Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909), the architectural scene in Istanbul was indeed a cosmopolitan mix of eclectic and revivalist styles, from neoclassic to Art Nouveau, mostly the work of European, Levantine, and non-Muslim Ottoman architects. In principle, the National Architecture Renaissance was the patriotic reaction of Ottoman architects to this cosmopolitan mix of styles. At the same time, it was itself informed by the same eclectic and cosmopolitan architectural culture of the late nineteenth century that was institutionally reproduced through the training of the architects. The other dimension of the “modernity” of Ottoman revival (the first being the rise of a patriotic, proto-nationalist consciousness) had to do with the institutional and educational setting within which this style emerged.

The radical modernization of Ottoman architectural and engineering education along European lines dates to the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Office of Royal Architects (Hassam Mimari), the traditional training ground of Ottoman architects in the classical period, was dissolved. In 1883, through the initiative of Osman Hamdi Bey, the Academy of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi-àlis) was established as a royal school with four main sections: architecture, painting, sculpture, and calligraphy. A year later, the Civil Service School of Engineering (Harbi-i Mülkiye Mektebi) was established and offered courses in architecture. Until after the turn of the century, architectural education in these schools was conducted by European or Levantine architects, among whom Alexandre Vallaury and August Jasmund were the two prominent names. Both had designed major buildings in Istanbul, including Vallaury’s Public Debt Administration Building (1897) and Jasmund’s Sirkeci Railroad Station (1880–1890)—both of them stylistically oriented designs with an eclectic mix of Ottoman and Islamic references. The National Architecture Renaissance entailed an implicit critique of the work and instruction of these teachers by younger practitioners, among whom two Turkish-Muslim architects assumed leadership as both practitioners and educators: Vedat Bey and Kemalettin Bey.

Vedat Bey (1873–1942) was a well-connected, Ecole des Beaux Arts-trained architect who, upon his return from Paris in 1898, worked for the Municipality (Sehitlarnesi) as well as the Ministries of Postal Services and War. He occupied the post of royal chief architect during the reign of Sultan Mehmet Resat (1909–1918) and designed major public buildings of the Young Turk era in Istanbul before moving on to work in Ankara during the early years of the republic. In addition to his seminal role as a teacher in the architectural section of the academy, he offered job training to his students and apprentices in the construction of his own buildings. For example, Mimar Muzaffer (1881–1920), chief architect of the city of Konya and designer of important buildings in the Ottoman revivalist style during the 1920s, was initially an apprentice to Vedat Bey during the construction of the Sirkeci Central Post Office.

Kemalettin Bey (1870–1927) was a graduate of the Civil Service School of Engineering, where he later held a teaching position. He studied at the Charlottenburg Technische Hochschule in Berlin at a time when Germany and the Ottoman Empire were drawing increasingly closer on economic and political issues. Kemalettin Bey’s extensive knowledge of Ottoman precedents was derived from his restoration work as chief architect for the Ministry of Endowment’s Scientific Commission for Repairs and Construction (Evkaf Tezkeret-i İmam Hâret-i Fenniyesi). Under his leadership, this office became an important educational institution, training architects, engineers, and craftsmen who then disseminated the National Architecture Renaissance to remote corners of the country. His small mosques in Istanbul, such as the Bebek Mosque (1913), bear testimony to his mastery of and passion for Ottoman architecture, the revival of which, he believed, would restore the lost glory of the empire. A passionately religious and conservative man, as Yıldırım Yavuz characterizes him, Kemalettin Bey was deeply disturbed by the decline and imminent disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

That Vallaury and Jasmund initially taught and mentored Vedat Bey and Kemalettin Bey, respectively, underscores the continuity of an academic method and eclectic pedagogy that emphasized the blending of local traditions with contemporary techniques. The prevailing architectural curriculum that constituted the pedagogical premises of the National Architecture Renaissance was modeled after that of the Academy of Fine Arts, where a classical training program for artists was established in 1883.
French École des Beaux Arts system. Classical composition, drawing, and rendering constituted the core of the curriculum; façade composition took precedence over the plan, and axiality and symmetry dominated the designs. After an emphasis on art education in the first year, the second year was devoted to the study of classical Greek and Roman styles, with a specific focus on monochrome studies of light and shadow. In the third year, neoclassic and neo-Renaissance projects, almost exclusively for large institutional buildings, were assigned to be rendered in watercolor (fig. 1.5). The final year requirements were measured survey drawings of classical Ottoman buildings and a final project to be designed according to the precepts of the National Architecture Renaissance. Architectural courses in the Civil Service School of Engineering followed a similarly academic program based on the study of classical orders and their artistic rendering (fig. 1.6).

The launching of the National Architecture Renaissance as the official style of the Young Turk era became possible in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, when important new initiatives and staff changes were undertaken at the Academy of Fine Arts. A conspicuous change was the emergence of Turkish Muslim artists and architects on a cultural scene traditionally dominated by Europeans, Levantines, Armenians, and Greeks. In the architectural studios, Vedat Bey succeeded Alexandre Vallaury as head of the section. A Milan-trained Italian architect, Giulio Mongeri (1873–1953), who was the third major name of the National Architecture Renaissance in Turkey, worked with him as the other influential teacher in the archi-
In the Civil Service School of Engineering, where Jasmund had taught, Kemalettin Bey took over the architectural courses offered to engineering students. In the painting studio of the academy as well, European and Levantine teachers were replaced by younger Turkish-Muslim artists educated in Europe. The academic instruction of Salvatore Valeri and Varna Zarzecki was taken over by members of the so-called 1914 generation—a group of Turkish painters who studied in Paris and upon their return in 1914 introduced impressionism into Turkey.23

Also in 1914, in order to accommodate female art students, a sister school to the Academy of Fine Arts was established (İnşas Sanayi-i Neşfine Mektebi) under the directorship of Mihrı Müşfık Hamam (1886-1954). She was a talented artist and a colorful personality, "herself a living testimony to the mixture of the "alafra" (Western) and "alatunka" (Turkish) ways, sometimes veiled, sometimes elegantly dressed in high heels and straw hats adorned with flowers."24 Although architecture remained an exclusively male profession until the 1930s, women started making their appearance in other arts, literature, and some professions, and a Turkish women's movement was initiated in the atmosphere of freedom that came with 1908. Further illustrating the "modernity" of this period at the academy, the practice of working with nude models in the painting and sculpture studios was established in 1917—an unprecedented step in a traditional and predominantly Muslim society.

The first attempts toward modern professionalism in art and architecture were also made in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, which encouraged the establishment of independent associations and professional societies.26 The Society of Ottoman Painters (Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti) was established in 1909, and more systematic annual art exhibitions were organized in the Galatasaray Lycée after that date.27 Again in 1909, the Society of Ottoman Engineers and Architects (Osmanlı Mühendis ve Mimar Cemiyeti) was established, to remain active until 1922. It published a journal and propagated the ideals of scientific and technological progress. In general, however, professional boundaries between painters, architects, and engineers were blurred in those years, and the establishment of a separate professional organization exclusively for architects had to wait until the arrival of European modernism in the late 1920s.28 In her comprehensive analysis of the professionalization of Turkish architects, Gulsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu points out the difference between the Society of Ottoman Engineers and Architects and Western professional associations, which were interested primarily in setting professional standards and monopolizing the construction market. Unlike their Western counterparts, she argues, members of the Ottoman society saw their alliance predominantly in idealistic terms. "Their technologicalism was consistent with the political ideology of the modernist constitutional government, and the product of a political consciousness more than a professional one."29

There is no doubt that the numbers and prominence of Turkish-Muslim artists and architects increased dramatically in the Young Turk era and even more dramatically after the War of Independence. Celal Esat Arseven (1873-1971), a leading art his-

torian and public figure of the early republic, related that, defying his family's desire to see him a military officer, he attended painting classes at the academy in 1890 as one of only three Turks among many Greeks and Armenians.29 Arif Hikmet Köyunoğlu (1888-1982), a younger architect of the Ottoman revivalist "national style," wrote that when he entered the academy in 1908, architecture was not a respectable profession among Turkish-Muslim families, who did not want their sons to be "master masons," a vocation associated with Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Levantines.30 Some two decades and many wars later, among the 39 architects registered in the recently established Fine Arts Association (Güzel Sanatlar Birliğ), in 1931, there were 22 Turkish names, 10 Armenian, 6 Greek, and 1 Italian.31 Still later, in the 1940 roster of the Turkish Architects Union (Türk Yüksel Mimarlar Birliği), 171 Turkish names were listed, three of them belonging to women, along with the names of 18 Armenians, 11 Greeks, and 4 others (Jews and Italians).32 It is important to add that of these non-Muslims, all but 2 Armenians and 6 Greeks had graduated before 1923. The displacement of Armenians during the First World War and the exchange of populations with Greece after 1922 were without doubt the primary factors in the changing demographics of the architectural profession. The 1940 roster suggests, however, that there were still considerable numbers of non-Muslim architects in Istanbul who, compared with provincial non-Muslims, were relatively unaffected by these dramatic historical events.

In spite of the increase in the numbers of Muslim-Turkish architects, the term "nationalism" needs to be used cautiously in relation to the architectural culture of 1908-1918. Unlike the Kemalist nationalists after them, turn-of-the-century Ottoman intellectuals, artists, and architects were concerned primarily with preservation of the Ottoman state through identification with the sultan and the empire. For most of them, the primary bond for holding the Ottoman "nation" together was still the patrimony of the Ottoman state rather than ethnicity and language. Ottoman-islamic art and architecture were the shared culture of the Ottoman state and belonged to all the peoples of that state. The idea of "nation" was still an inclusive concept designating a political community or "commonwealth" that represented the ethnically and religiously heterogeneous, cosmopolitan character of the empire. Hasan Kayalı compellingly argues that "Young Turk" is an unfortunate misnomer for the turn-of-the-century Ottoman modernizers and liberal constitutionalists, since not all of them were Turks.33 Architecture presents an analogous picture at the level of individual designers. Many non-Muslims contributed to the making of the National Architecture Renaissance, and architects such as Giulio Mongeri (see fig. 1.10), Alessandro Valeri, and Mihran Azaryan produced some of the most remarkable designs in this style (see fig. 1.12).

This patriotic Ottomanism, however, within which the National Architecture Renaissance was born, gave way to the nascent ideology of Turkish nationalism somewhere around the First World War, with corresponding shifts in architectural culture. Especially the younger generation of Turkish architects, who received their training
from Vedat Bey, Kemalettin Bey, and Giulio Mongeri between 1908 and 1918, embraced Ottoman revival as primarily a Turkish national style, above and beyond its function in representing the Ottoman state and its Islamic culture. Although they largely shared the Ottomanist commitment to the empire as the protector of all Muslims, most of them perceived the "Turkish nation" to be the essential core of Ottoman society. Some of the most important and prolific architects of this generation were Tahsin Sermet, who graduated from the academy in 1909, Arif Hikmet Koyunbaloğlu (graduate 1914), Necmettin Emre (1913), and Sedad Efe (1918). It was through their work that the National Architecture Renaissance was refined. "Turkified," and carried over into the republican era (literally to Ankara and other Anatolian towns) with a new ideological bent.

"Turkification" of Ottoman Forms

The efforts of the Young Turks to modernize the Ottoman state, its institutions, and its buildings went hand in hand with the emergence of Turkish nationalism in the first decades of the twentieth century. Whether we follow scholars who portray nationalism as a product of modernity or those who see modernity as defined by nationalism, the latter part of the Ottoman Empire was marked by a strong relationship between the two phenomena. Whereas during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the relationship between the idea of Ottoman revivalism and Islam was analogous to that between Gothic revivalism and Christianity, increasingly after the turn of the century Ottoman forms were symbolically recharged with "Turkishness." This was not unlike, for example, the manner in which the later Victorians looked at Gothic revivalism as a symbol of "Englishness" as much as or more than a symbol of the good Christian society that Pugin and Ruskin had advocated earlier. By 1918, Ottoman revivalism in architecture unequivocally meant Turkish national style.

It should also be added that in the case of the late Ottoman Empire, a complementary development in Egypt around the same time—the emergence of an Arab-Egyptian nationalist consciousness—was another important factor in the increasingly nationalist perception and portrayal of Ottoman revivalism. The "Turkification" of Ottoman architecture, especially the rejection of Arab-Islamic motifs in favor of classical Ottoman ones, was paralleled in Egypt by a corresponding appeal to Mamluk rather than Ottoman precedents as the basis of an "Egyptian national style." Two buildings compellingly illustrate the Egyptian case. In the early nineteenth century, the Mosque of Muhammad Ali in Cairo (1830–1848) had been designed with a conspicuously Ottoman monumentality, a central-domed plan, and slender "pencil minarets," reflecting the imperial ambitions of its patron, who modeled himself after the Ottoman sultans. As Nasser Rabbat explains, some forty years later, at the time when an Ottoman revivalist "national style" was in the making in Istanbul, the Rifa'i Mosque in Cairo (1869–1911) was built in the neo-Mamluk style—the new symbol of Egyptian national identity, which distanced itself from any Ottoman references. This parallel suggests a great deal about the reciprocities that operate in identity construction, which is by definition a differentiation of the "self" from similarly delineated "others." Şerif Mardin, the leading scholar of Ottoman-Turkish modernization, has written extensively about a progressive undermining of religion by the imposition of Western notions of nationhood that overlooked the significance of Islam as the primary basis of social cohesion and as people's existential foothold in a fast-changing world. As he argues, the roots of this gradual undermining of religion extend back to the Tanzimat reforms of 1839. It was after the consolidation of power of the nationalist wing of the CUP in 1913, however, that the primacy of Islam in the official definition of Ottoman identity was replaced by an emphasis on Turkishness. The emerging definition of nationhood on the basis of shared cultural, historical, and linguistic heritage, rather than shared religion under the patronymy of the Ottoman sultan, differentiated the nationalist ideology from the earlier patriotism of the Young Ottomans. The classical texts of Turkish nationalism were written in this period, especially after the founding of the nationalist organization Turkish Hearth Society (Türk Ocağı) in 1912 and the publication of its journal, Turkish Homeland (Türk Yurdu).

The well-known distinction between culture and civilization (a distinction central to the classical theories of modernity as a transition from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft) was a significant theme in preparing the context within which the idea of a national style in architecture was elaborated. The leading ideology of Turkish nationalism was Ziya Gökalp, whose theories provided ample ideological justification for the making of a "national style" out of Ottoman revivalism. Before everything else, Gökalp differentiated "nationality" (the Ural-Altaic group of Turkic peoples) from "religion" (the Islamic community, which was supernational), although both were constitutive of Turkish identity. As much as Ottoman culture (and architecture) represented the Islamic community to which Turks belonged by religion, it was nonetheless a specifically Turkish culture, distinct from the cultures of other nationalities within the Islamic community. Second, on the basis of the sociological theories of Emile Durkheim and Gabriel Tarde, who identified the locus of social life in "culture groups" and "civilization groups," respectively, Gökalp formulated his well-known distinction between "culture" (bars) and "civilization" (medeniyet). This was a distinction between "beliefs, moral duties, aesthetic feelings, and ideals of a subjective nature," on one hand, and on the other, "scientific truths, hygienic or economic rules, practical arts pertaining to public works, techniques of commerce and of agriculture—all of an objective nature." From this he observed that whereas civilization could be borrowed from the West, culture had to reside in the nation's own people and history. He wrote in 1918:

As there is no contradiction between the ideals of Turkism and Islamism, there is none between these and the ideal of modernism. The idea of modernity necessitates only
the acceptance of the theoretical and practical sciences and techniques from Europe. There are certain moral needs, which will be sought in religion and nationality, as there were in Europe, but these cannot be imported from the West as if they were machines and techniques... Culture is national, civilization is international. 49

The Turkish nationalism of Ziya Gökalp (ironically himself of Kurdish origin) was anticosmopolitan in cultural terms. From his perspective, it was not the high culture of Ottoman sultans but the folk culture of Turks that could be the real source of "national culture"—as it would indeed be in the late 1930s. Nonetheless, aside from being an already established building practice since 1908, the National Architecture Renaissance seemed to offer a literal translation of his eloquent arguments into architectural terms. Elements derived from classical Ottoman architecture (i.e., Turkish culture) were combined with European academic design principles and construction techniques (i.e., Western civilization).

This recharging of Ottoman forms and details with "Turkishness" coincided with major wars and historical transformations in Turkey. The First World War concluded with the Ottoman capitulation to the Entente powers and the organization of the independence struggle in Anatolia under the nationalist leader Mustafa Kemal. Such events, especially heroic battles such as Gallipoli defense and defeats such as the Arab revolt during the First World War, reinforced the unleashing of a process of national self-identification, primarily self-identification as a nation of Turks, distinct from other Muslims whom the patrimony of the Ottoman Empire had traditionally embraced. Nationality thus replaced religiosity as the primary signifier of identity. The National Architecture Renaissance made its way to Ankara in the midst of these dramatic historical events. Many Turkish artists and architects, distressed by the occupation of Istanbul, identified with the nationalist cause of Mustafa Kemal, some of them actively joining the War of Independence.49

The small CUP headquarters in Ankara, with a prominent overhanging roof, pointed arches, and other Ottoman details, was one of the first examples of the National Architecture Renaissance in an otherwise insignificant Anatolian town (fig. I.7). It was designed in 1917 by Ismael Hasif Bey (1878–1920), who was then killed in the War of Independence, and it was transformed into the first National Assembly building in 1920. Today it is the Museum of the War of Independence. In the collective consciousness of the republic, it is the symbol of the historical awakening of the nation to self-consciousness. Literally it has been the backdrop to many paintings and photographs showing the opening day of the National Assembly, with Mustafa Kemal giving his speech in front of the building (fig. I.7). After the proclamation of Ankara as the new capital of the republic, the construction of major public buildings in the Ottoman revivalist "national style" was undertaken in a very short time and under the most unfavorable conditions, with serious shortages of funds, materials, and labor. Concentrated in what is today known as "old Ankara," near Ulus Square (literally,
Nation Square), these buildings bear strong associations with the nationalist sentiments of the first decade of the republic.

One of the earliest examples (with a symmetrical façade, wide overhangs, and blue tiles) is the Ministry of Finance (1925), designed by Yahya Ahmet and Mühendis Irfan (fig. 1.8). Adjacent to the first National Assembly building, Vedat Bey's RPP headquarters (1926) was built with a rusticated stone façade, blue glazed tiles at the top, and a three-arched loggia on the second floor overlooking the entrance plaza. It was used as the second National Assembly building for a large part of the early republican period and is today the Museum of the Republic. Across from it, the Ankara Palas (1924–1927) was constructed as a luxurious hotel to host foreign dignitaries and the higher bureaucrats of the new regime (fig. 1.9). The joint work of the two leading architects of the National Architecture Renaissance, Vedat Bey and Kemal Eytan Bey, it is arguably the most paradigmatic structure of the Ottoman revivalist national style in Ankara. Its symmetrical design, pointed arches, and ornate entrance portal topped with a nonstructural dome illustrate the classical and academic design precepts of the National Architecture Renaissance. It was "a monument to modernity and civilization," as two architectural historians put it, "with its grand ballroom, pressurized water and central heating systems, its Western type toilets and bathtubs and its powerful electric generator—a unique feature in this rural Anatolian town accustomed to dim kerosene lamps."

Not far from these buildings, the more ornate bank buildings by Giulio Mongeri are located along the Bankalar Cdaklesi (Avenue of the Banks), representing the National Architecture Renaissance at its most mature (fig. 1.10). These buildings still evoke the more cosmopolitan and imperial feeling of the architecture of the late empire in Istanbul. The most prolific architect of this period in Ankara, however, was Arif Hikmet Koyunoglu (1888–1982), from the younger generation, who was a student of Vedat Bey's and Giulio Mongeri's. He rose to prominence with the construction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1927), the Ethnography Museum (1925–1928), and the Türkocag (Turkish Hearth) building (1926–1930), which were among the last paradigmatic works of the National Architecture Renaissance before the switch to European modernism (fig. 1.11). As recorded in the architect's memoirs, an enthusiastic Mustafa Kemal periodically visited these buildings during their construction, illustrating the endorsement of the National Architecture Renaissance by the national hero himself. The design and construction of the Türkocag building was a major nationalist event, earning admiration and praise from Ziya Gürcan himself, the ideologue behind the Turkish Hearth organization. The closing of this nationalist organization and the replacement of its function by the new cultural and ideological program of the RPP later in 1932 (see chapter 2) were events that Arif Hikmet remembered in his memoirs with "deep sorrow."

Throughout the 1920s, lesser-known buildings of the National Architecture Renaissance were constructed in Konya, İzmir, Kütahya, Afyon, and other cities of the republic, especially for government buildings, municipal palaces, schools, and post offices.
Fig. 1.10. A view of the Avenue of the Banks in Ankara, circa 1930. The Ottoman Bank (Osmanlı Bankası, 1926) is in the front, with the Agricultural Bank (Aşırat Bankası, 1926–1929) visible behind it on the right. Both buildings by Giulio Mongeri. Fig. 1.11. Contemporary postcard showing “national style” buildings by Ahmet Hikmet Köyunoğlu in Ankara: the Turkish Weath building (1927–1930) in the foreground and the Ethnography Museum (1925–1929) in the background. The Turkish Weath building was used as a “People’s House” after 1932 and today houses the National Gallery of Art (Devlet Resim ve Heykel Müzesi).

Fig. 1.12. Proliferation of the Ottoman revolustionist “national style” in provincial towns throughout Anatolia. Top: Municipal offices in Hanı, with characteristic pointed arches and wide eaves, circa 1933. Bottom: A domed corner building in Bandırma, today used as a hotel.
Schools were particularly important building types representing the ideals of the new regime, and in the 1920s they were built according to an Ottoman revivalist prototype design produced by the Ministry of Public Works (Nafia Ve kale). All were based on the same plan: a symmetrical layout with entrances on the central axis and three-window bays projecting on the elevation at each end; two stories; pointed arches for windows; and a wide, overhanging roof. Some examples are the Gazi and Latile schools in Ankara, designed by Mukbid Kemal (1924), the Gazi Mustafa Kemal Elementary schools in Konya (1926–1928) and Denizli (late 1920s), the Republic School (Cumhuriyet Mektebi) in Yozgat, and the elementary and high schools in Afyon (fig. 1.13).

Konya and Izmir were particularly proud of their public buildings in the national style. In Konya the city architect, Mimar Muzaffer, a protégé of Vedat Bey’s, and Mimar Fahîh Ülki, who continued the practice after Muzaffer’s death, built the impressive Konya Central Post Office building. In Izmir, the ideological appeal of the National Architecture Renaissance was particularly strong after the liberation of the city from Greek occupation in 1922. The term millî (national) was used extensively in conjunction with new public buildings, as in the case of the Millî Sinema (National Cinema, 1926) and the Millî Kürtîphane (National Library, completed in 1933), both by the architect Tahsin Sermere. Another graduate of the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts, Necmeddin Emre, was the other prominent architect of the Ottoman revivalist style practicing in Izmir; he was particularly known for his Izmir Tırkocagi (Izmir Turkish Hearths) building of 1925. Although the works of Vedat Bey and Kemalci Bey and other major national-style buildings in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir are covered in monographic studies, there is no comprehensive survey covering the extent of construction in this style in the provinces and by lesser-known architects.

In order to understand the significance of the National Architecture Renaissance during the first decade of the republic, it is necessary to consider the specific historical, political, and ideological context of the transition from an Ottoman-Islamic identity to a nationalistic Turkish one. This issue frequently eludes architectural historians who, viewing the stylistic Ottoman references of the National Architecture Renaissance through the post-1931 biases of the Modern Movement, consider it an anachronistic style for a modern, secular, Western-oriented nation. Thus, the fact that construction in this style continued throughout the 1920s, in the midst of the most radical Westernizing institutional reforms of the Kemalist republic, is often assessed as a temporary aberration to be explained by circumstantial factors and later rectified in the 1930s. What is missing in this assessment is that it was the profound ambiguity of this style—that is, the simultaneity and interchangeability of the Turkish and Islamic connotations of Ottoman forms—that made it especially appropriate. An Ottoman revivalist national style was capable of symbolizing the glory of the Ottoman-Islamic past of the Turkish nation and thus of legitimizing the new nationalist regime in the eyes of a traditional population loyal to the religious patrimony of the Ottoman dynasty. Apart from the obvious practicality of continuing an already established building practice, it was the symbolic ambiguity of the National Architec-

Fig. 1.13. Prototype elementary schools designed in the Ottoman revivalist “national style” of the 1920s: Gazi and Latile elementary school (top) in Ankara (1924), photographs 1930s; Cumhuriyet (Republic) elementary schools in Yozgat (middle) and Afyon (bottom), photographs circa 1933.
ture Renaissance—its capacity to signify both the old empire and the new nation at once—that made it a politically and ideologically convenient choice in a volatile period of transition.

This ambiguity of the National Architecture Renaissance can be likened to the ambiguity of the word millet, which, as many scholars have pointed out, was used increasingly to mean “nation” as defined on the basis of a shared historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage. Nonetheless, for a long time the word still carried the religious connotations of its older meaning in the Ottoman period, when it designated the different religious communities of the empire. In the 1920s, when the population’s primary allegiance was still more to Islam and the empire than to the new nation, Mustafa Kemal must have seen the power of this religious symbolism to make the secularizing reforms more palatable. Especially in the aftermath of his radical decision to abolish the Ottoman dynasty (1922) and the office of the caliphate (1924), which was the supreme religious authority for all Muslims, it was a particularly effective symbolism. After all, the nationalist War of Independence had been won with the overwhelming support of religious leaders from various parts of Anatolia who had mobilized the population around Mustafa Kemal. Many of these religious figures were members of the first National Assembly in 1920, as portrayed, for example, in the famous photograph “Prayer for Victory” (1921) showing Mustafa Kemal praying with open hands in front of the National Assembly, next to deputies in turbans and religious garb. The sentiments of these people and their constituencies (as well as any possibility of opposition from them) had to be handled carefully through, among other things, reverence to the symbols of Islam and the sultan. It is for this reason that the Ottoman references of the National Architecture Renaissance were not an aberration in the 1920s. They were an appropriate architectural expression of the specific circumstances of these crucial years when many religious codes were semantically recharged in what Serif Mardin calls “the vibrating of an important traditional chord with the people.”

As Mardin has pointed out on many occasions, this representation of the nation as a secular religion is best illustrated by the title gazi—literally, “a fighter for the Islamic faith”—adopted by Mustafa Kemal in this period. A 1923 painting by Tahızade Hüseyin titled “Gazi Büyük Mustafa Kemal Paşa Hâzretleri” (The Great Gazi, His Highness Mustafa Kemal Pasha) is particularly illustrative (fig. 1.14). Mustafa Kemal’s portrait is framed by angels in the same representational genre as that of miniature paintings depicting the life of the Prophet. That many of the National Architecture Renaissance school buildings of the early republic were named after the “Gazi” further strengthened these symbolic associations. The last building designed by Kemalettin Bey before his death was the Gazi Teachers College in Ankara (1926–1930), after which the National Architecture Renaissance gave way to modernism. It may be interesting to add that, like the Ottoman-Islamic motifs of this national style, the poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy (who also wrote the lyrics of the Turkish national anthem) are full of such religious codes adapted to the new nationalist consciousness.
For example, in these poems the soldiers who fought in Gallipoli or in the War of Independence are “as glorious as the lions of Bedr,” a reference to the holy wars of the Prophet, and the Kaaba, the holiest structure of Islam, becomes their gravestone.

The overly religious terms in which the new nationalist spirit was cast in the first decade of the republic were also evident in the nationalist press coverage of the opening of the Teokoca building in Ankara in 1930. Türk Yurdu, the official publication of the nationwide Teokoca organization, published a special issue on the building with twelve pages showing exterior views, the marble entrance hall, the ornately carved ceiling, interior views, and other details. With allusions to the holiest places of Islam, the commentary said: “This building in Ankara, the Kaaba of the Turk, rising on a small hill—a national aṣraf—is a magical work combining matter with spirit.”

In this “Kaaba,” however, cultural and social events were to take place—art exhibitions, lectures, concerts, operas sung in Turkish with all-Turkish casts—not unlike other republican spatial practices of replacing the mosque complex with secular public spaces of cultural, educational, and recreational functions. Other nationalist newspapers hailed the building as the “work of pure Turkish sons: architect Hikmet Bey, masons Kayseri Hakku and Hüseyin Usta,” emphasizing the “Turkishness” of this stylistically “Ottoman” architecture. That these sentiments were voiced at precisely the same time the new architectural establishment was growing increasingly critical of the National Architecture Renaissance bears testimony to the complexity and conflicting undercurrents in Kemalism culture in this first decade of the republic.

In the institutional setting as well, the increasing grip of Turkish nationalism on young artists and architects was evident during and after the First World War. Gulsun Baydar Nabanoğlu writes that as early as 1913, Academy of Fine Arts students rebelled against Giulio Mongeri and demanded “to learn Turkish architecture from Turkish instructors inspired by the Suleymaniye and the Selimiye [mosques] rather than St. Peters in Rome.” Yet in the turmoil of the transition from empire to nation, the importance and self-esteem that Turkish-Muslim architects enjoyed as practitioners of the National Architecture Renaissance were to be glorious but brief. As the old generation of eclectic and revivalist foreign architects—the Jasmundis and Vallaurys of the empire—gave way to Turkish architects at the academy and in practice, more radical changes were in the making. By the late 1920s, the academicism of Ottoman revival was already under attack, and the new republican regime was initiating an era of construction by a new group of foreign architects, this time bringing German and central European modernism to Turkey. While Kemalettin Bey was working on the Gazi Teachers College in Ankara in 1927, the National Architecture Renaissance was already a subject of intense debate and criticism, causing Kemalettin Bey much despair just before his death. The same year, the academy curriculum was radically reformed along modernist lines, preparing the way for the demise and ultimate rejection of the National Architecture Renaissance. As for its three leading practitioners, Kemalettin Bey died in 1927 and Giulio Mongeri resigned from the academy in 1928, to be followed by Vedat Bey in 1930.

Rejection of Ottoman Forms

From an architectural point of view, the proliferation of the National Architecture Renaissance in the first two decades of the twentieth century can be seen as a belated revivalism at a time when early modernist experiments were already under way in Europe. Particularly interesting in terms of Turkey’s encounter with these experiments was an ill-fated architectural competition for the German-Turkish House of Friendship in Istanbul in 1916. The project was intended as a celebration of the strategic alliance between the two nations, especially after a much-celebrated visit by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1889—an alliance that eventually drew the empire into World War I. Many of the prominent early modernist architects in Germany participated in this competition, including Peter Behrens, Theodor Fischer, Paul Bonatz, Martin Elsaesser, and Germaine Banelmeyer (who won). Notably, there were two unconventional schemes, by Hans Poelzig and Bruno Taut, respectively, who were both associated with the expressionist movement in Germany. Poelzig’s cascading terraces towering above Istanbul’s historical peninsula and Taut’s domed structure with allusions to Byzantine architecture are remarkable projects in the history of early modern architecture. What is worth pondering is the complete absence of any exchange or influence between the designers of these visionary projects and Ottoman architects of the time. This absence is curious, especially in the light of Suha Ozkan’s observation that both Vedat Bey and Kemalettin Bey, the two leading architects of the National Architecture Renaissance, participated in the jury deliberations in Berlin as representatives of the Ottoman Empire. It is likely that, immersed in the emerging Ottoman revivalist “national style,” the two Ottoman architects took little interest in the new modern trends, which departed radically from classic and revivalist traditions. The interruption of this competition by the war was another reason for the absence of a sustained dialogue around these projects—an interruption that would be rectified after 1927, when the modernization of Turkish architectural culture would be entrusted to the Germans once again. A few of the same German architects who participated in the House of Friendship Competition in 1916 (notably Paul Bonatz, Martin Elsaesser, and Bruno Taut) would later come back to build important public buildings in republican Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s.

The demise of the National Architecture Renaissance started around 1927 and was completed by 1931. With the RPP’s assertion of an unambiguously Western-oriented and secular cultural politics and the suppression of all opposition and debate in matters of national identity, references to Ottoman architecture rapidly became anathema for republican architects. Construction in Ottoman revivalist style came to a near end, and the “New Architecture” (Yeni Mimari)—the unadorned cubic compositions of European modernism—was enthusiastically received. In some cases, existing classical, eclectic, and Ottoman revivalist buildings were razed in a new modern façade, as, for example, in Atillah Ziya’s conversion of the Teachers’ School in Adana, which
was published in the journal "Minar" in 1933 with "before" and "after" photographs."

Today the physical fabric of Ankara bears the traces of this shift in the architectural style of its major public buildings. Whereas the National Architecture Renaissance buildings of the 1920s are located in the older section of the city to the north, the austere German and central European modernism of the 1930s characterizes the newer southern extension of the city, appropriately called "Yenikapı," the "New City." Atatürk Boulevard, the prestige axis running north-south, joins the two sections of the city. In a small stretch at the center one can simultaneously observe the domes, Ottoman orders, pointed arches, and ornate tile and marble decorations of the National Architecture Renaissance buildings adjacent to the distinctly modernist aesthetic of the work of foreign architects, all of it built around the same time. For example, two ministry buildings, both dating from 1927 but displaying different stylistic choices, mark the two ends of this stretch: to the north, Arif Hikmet Koyunoglu's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to the south, Theodor Post's Ministry of Health (fig. 1.15). On closer inspection, however, one can see that apart from the former's ornate façade of Ottoman motifs and the latter's unadorned façade, both buildings are symmetrical with formal, monumental entrances, testifying to the classical training of their architects. I will return to this issue later.

Even in the older section of the city, contemporaneous photographs of İstasyon Caddesi (Station Avenue) show the conspicuously modern forms of the Court of Financial Appeals (1928–1930), by the Swiss architect Ernst Egli, across from the ornate and domed Ankara Palas (fig. 1.16). Construction on Egli's building began only a year after completion of the Ankara Palas. The temporal simultaneity and physical proximity of the two styles suggest much about the actual complexity of the cultural and ideological scene during the first decade of the republic. A contemporaneous postcard testifies to the fact that, until the intensification of the polemical confrontation between the National Architecture Renaissance and the New Architecture, early republican Ankara was equally proud of its Ottoman revivalist and European modernist buildings (fig. 1.17). For a brief period, stylistic discrimination on ideological grounds seems not to have been an issue, compared with the larger pride of constructing a capital city from scratch. Even for the 1930s there is evidence in popular publications that outside architects' professional circles, no one particular style, but "architecture" in general, symbolized the constructive energy of the republic, the act of "nation building" in the literal sense (see fig. C.1). The official architectural culture of the republic, however (as represented by schools, publications, professional associations, and practice), propagated and reproduced the critique of Ottoman revivalism forcefully and effectively. After 1931, architecture became a major aspect of the larger republican revolutionary discourse and its claim of "a radical break with the Ottoman past."

In reality, the transition from the final decades of the Ottoman Empire into the new republic was far more complex and overlapping than what is often polemically presented as a radical break. The National Architecture Renaissance of the 1910s and
1920s and the republican modernism that replaced it in the 1930s shared some common political and ideological grounds that underline the stylistic opposition in terms of which the two periods are often discussed in architectural history. Both were self-conscious attempts at identity construction through architecture, and both flourished under state-sponsored modernization programs. Both were closely identified with authoritarian state power under single-party rule respectively, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which eliminated all opposition in 1913, and Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party (RPP), which consolidated its power in 1931.

Perhaps most significantly, both Ottoman revivalism and republican modernism were shaped, to a large extent, by a distaste for the stylistic eclecticism and cosmopolitan character of late-nineteenth-century Ottoman architecture, the work of Armenian, Greek, Levantine, and European architects living and working within the empire. Whereas the architects of the Young Turk era sought to combat the late-nineteenth-century "contamination" and "degeneration" of Turkish architecture by turning to the true principles, or "golden age," of Ottoman architecture in its classical period, their republican successors chose to abandon Ottoman architecture altogether in the 1930s. The difference was one of form and style. In 1934, in an important piece titled "Nationalism and Art," young republican architect Apollonial Ziya (Kozenoglu) outlined what he called "the historical process of contamination since the Tulip Era." This process, he argued, robbed the arts of the empire of their purity and their "Turkish character" and enslaved them to elements of Arab and Persian culture, as well as of the neoclassic, baroque, and empire styles of the West. He directed his anticommunist criticism and contempt at foreign architects ranging from Ignace Melling, who, he claimed, "introduced foreign taste to the country at the end of the eighteenth century" to Alexandre Vallaury at the end of the nineteenth. Of Vallaury's Public Debits Administration building (Diyanet-i Umumiye İdaresi), Apollonial Ziya had only this to say: "[It is] a building itself unsure of what it wants to represent, other than perhaps what its name stood for—namely the capitulation of the empire to foreign powers." What underlay Apollonial Ziya's nationalist and anticommunist discourse was something more than simply a critique of the orientalist distortions of Ottoman architecture: it assumed the essential "Turkishness" of Ottoman architecture, categorically rejecting any non-Turkish influence from either Europe or from other Muslim cultures. As already discussed, the Ottoman architects of the National Architecture Renaissance were, by comparison, less "nationalist" than patriotic (or "protonationalist") and far more cosmopolitan in their culture and upbringing, with a number of prominent non-Muslims in their own ranks. When it came to architectural style, however, they, too, shared the view that eclectic and orientalized styles contaminated the original purity of classical Ottoman architecture, and they sought to restore it to its classical grandeur and dignity.

In other words, beyond the obvious formal and stylistic contrast, the National Architecture Renaissance and the New Architecture of the 1930s were two different expressions of the same project of modern identity construction at a dramatic historical

Fig. 1.16. View of Station Avenue in Ankara, 1930s. On the right is the recently completed Court of Financial Appeals (1928–1930), by Ernst Egli. Across from this modern building can be seen the dome of the Ottoman revivalist Ankara Palace (1924–1927).
who believed that ‘if you make a good design it will fit any site.’ Sedad Hakki Eldem, a graduate of 1928 and arguably the most prominent Turkish architect of modern Turkey, attributed his accomplished career to his early determination to break away from what he was taught at the academy by Vedat Bey and Mongeri.

By contrast, the older architects who graduated in the 1910s, the most prolific designers of the National Architecture Renaissance, expressed deep gratitude and praise for their teachers for instilling in them a love and appreciation of Ottoman architectural heritage, even after they switched to modernist designs in the 1930s. And many of them did switch. Of these, Arif Hikmet Koynonoglu moved back to Istanbul in the 1930s and designed and built a number of modern, undecorated apartment buildings with no traces of Ottoman stylistic motifs. Sedad Cerintaç (1889–1965), who had a deep reverence for classical precedents and even published a book titled Turkish Architectural Monuments: The Ottoman Period, designed a modern building for the RPP in 1934 (see fig. 2.25). Similarly, Necmeddin Emre, the prominent practitioner of the National Architecture Renaissance in İzmir, designed the Gazi Elementary School in a conspicuously modern form in 1934 (see fig. 4.7). There are still no comprehensive studies of or monographs on these architects, whose careers spanned the most dramatic transformations in modern Turkish history. Many interesting and still unexplored questions can be posed by such studies: Which architects, among those who made their reputations in the National Architecture Renaissance, disappeared from the scene in the 1930s, and which ones tried to adapt? When they tried to adapt, was their modernism different from that of the younger architects educated in the anti-academic and empirical methods of the European Modern Movement? Was their modernism perhaps more comparable to art deco or the moderne style of the 1930s elsewhere—a form of stripped-down classicism combining the beaux-arts precepts in modernist disguise?

Although these important questions are beyond the scope of this book, there is ample evidence to suggest that the “radical break” proclaimed by the architectural discourse of the 1930s was not, after all, that radical, even in architectural terms. In a 1937 interview, long after his teachings had been abandoned at the academy, Vedat Bey said that during the transition period he had seen few irreconcilable conflicts between his generation’s notions of architecture and the new modernist emphasis on undecorated simplicity. Refusing to dismiss modernism as a whole, he argued that “modernism coming out of the hands of architects well versed in classicism is well suited especially for buildings such as schools, barracks, etc., which by their very nature should be simple and plain.” There is the suggestion here of a more pluralist understanding of architecture in which architects can have more than one stylistic choice, depending on circumstances and program, and by implication a less ideological approach to architecture. Indeed, a number of student projects from the architectural course at the School of Engineering dating from the early 1930s illustrate this coexistence of academic and modernist approaches to design, rather than a total replacement of the former by the latter. Next to renderings of classical orders there are plain
modern designs for schools, hospitals, and villas (see fig. 4.5), as well as a cinema project for which the student work can best be characterized as art deco or moderne rather than either eclectic-revivalist or functionalist-modernist.

Whether or not they acknowledged any formative value in the teachings of Vedat Bey, Kemalettin Bey, and Mongeri, it can be argued that the work of the transition generation carried some of the old sensibilities, if not the old stylistic Ottoman motifs. Many public buildings of the 1930s display a concern with symmetry, proportions, axiality, and façade detailing characteristic of academic teaching. Colonnades (but not arcades), loggias, tall columns (but not Ottoman orders), stone basements, axial entrances, borders around windows and doors, and the detailing of reinforced concrete as if it were masonry are some of the features that evoke a feeling of classicism. One also finds this feeling of classicism in the work of modern architects from Auguste Perret, whom Sedad Hakki Eldem and other 1928 graduates greatly admired, to Theodor Post, whose Ministry of Health was one of the first buildings of German modernism in Ankara. It is possible to say that in a stripped-down and "modernized" way, classicism never totally disappeared from the architectural culture of the early republic, and if anything, it became even stronger at the end of the 1930s and into the 1940s.

One example of the National Architecture Renaissance in Ankara illustrates what else might have been possible in the evolution of Turkish architecture if the abrupt and ideologically charged break of the 1930s had not separated a generation of architects from the classical sensibilities of Ottoman revival. The Vakif Apartments (Vakif Apartmanları), designed by Kemalettin Bey for the Ministry of Endowments in the final years of his life and completed in 1928, after his death, were a remarkable project covering an entire urban block (fig. 1.18). Residential units occupied the perimeter of the block on the upper floors, with the ground floor reserved for shops and access to a theater-auditorium located at the center of the block. The affinities between Kemalettin Bey's design and a well-known icon of early modern architecture—the Auditorium Building by Adler and Sullivan in Chicago (1887-1889)—are difficult to miss, especially in the plan's concept of locating the theater within the block. Like the landmark Chicago auditorium, the Vakif Apartments were a distinctly modern urban type equipped with the latest technological amenities of their time (central heating, electricity, elevators, and modern sanitary fixtures that were successfully incorporated into the design) yet not entirely cut off from history and culture. Kemalettin Bey's evocation of an "Ottoman feeling" without any direct use of Ottoman motifs and precedents resembles Adler and Sullivan's evocation of the Romanesque in an otherwise modern building.

This comparison suggests that an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, path to modern architecture could have been a real historical option in Turkey. This option, or any other possibility of smoother transition and exchange between revivalism and modernism, was aborted with the "arrival" of the Modern Movement as the official architectural expression of the Kemalist revolution.

Fig. 1.18. A modern urban type in Ankara: apartments for the Ministry of Endowments (Vakif Apartmanları, 1928) by Kemalettin Bey. A theater is placed in the middle of the block with street-level access, and residential units are located along the perimeter on the upper floors. Top: Photograph circa 1930. Bottom: Ground floor plan and longitudinal section.