

**TRANSLATING AND APPROPRIATING FRENCH CUBISM INTO
TURKISH: THE CASE OF NURULLAH BERK, HALE ASAF,
ABIDIN DINO AND CEMAL TOLLU**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the emergence of Modern Turkish Cubism in Turkish painting after 1923, focusing on its links with French Cubism. It asserts that the connection with French Cubism is not the result of a passive influence but an active translation resulting from an ongoing dialogue between French and Turkish art which aimed to explore the traditional, national and local themes of Turkish culture using the Modern Cubist form to construct a Modern national art and identity. The results are evident in Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino's works, which are inherently Turkish. These three artists formed the avant-garde 'Group D' in 1933. An appropriation from French Cubism is seen in Hale Asaf's work, a self-reinterpretation of Lhote's work, which represented the French fashion in form and content. The activities of the aforementioned Turkish artists in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's time, between 1923 and 1938, and their works in Cubist form are explored and analysed in this study through the concepts of translation and appropriation.

Key words: Modernism, Turkish Cubism, French Cubism, Modernisation, Modern Turkish Painting, Translation in Art, Dialogue, Group D, Appropriation, National Identity.

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PREFACE

The first quarter of the 20th century saw the rise of modernism and contemporaneity in Turkish painting, which developed in parallel with political, economical and technological developments in Western European countries, particularly France, Germany and Italy. France was an important model for the art of the new regime of the Turkish Republic founded in 1923 as secular, democratic and nationally based republic established on the heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Paris was known as the center of Modernity in art among Imperial and Republican artists due to the presence of well-known pioneers of Modern movements such as Cubism, providing many opportunities for artists to study Modern artistic form and technique. It hosted a number of young Modern Turkish artists who trained and worked with Parisian Cubists Andre Lhote and Fernand Leger in order to construct a consciousness of the Modern Cubist form by translating the visual language of French Cubism into Turkish art with reference to the art of Leger and Lhote.

The purpose of this dissertation is to highlight how the Turkish painters established a dialogue with France and explore why they identified Modernism with France. The study also seeks to find out why they chose these particular artists' works to translate the form of Cubism in reference to Modernism related to national identity? Most importantly, why are their works assessed as a product of an active translation not a passive influence? Also how should their works be categorised in terms of the Kemalist regime's ideals and in terms of serving in favour of Atatürk's Revolutions in relation to Modern national art and identity? In order to achieve this the art of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' in 1928 and the 'Group D' members in 1933 and the works of their founding-members Nurullah Berk, Hale Asaf, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino between 1923 and 1938 will be analysed using the concepts of translation and appropriation so as to explore the dialogue between the two visual languages, French Cubism and Turkish Cubism in relation to Turkish Modernism perceived in the context of national identity.

In view of the fact that this thesis is intended to be a critique based on a personal analysis of the works, the evidence presented will mostly be drawn from both primary and secondary sources published in Turkish and English, most notably the writings of Nurullah Berk and Cemal Tollu in national newspapers and books as spokesmen of the 'Group D' on art and

Modern Turkish painting in Turkey during the time. Other data will be gathered from varied national publications, mostly books, and online sources, artistic magazines such as *Ar* which was published by Group D at that time, articles, dictionaries, encyclopedic dictionaries and archival documents.

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CHAPTER I- INTRODUCTION

Modern art movements developed in the world of art history in the 20th century, triggered by the speedy development of industry and technology in western countries. These developments affected the European painting scene which went into a rapid change process marked by the emergence of Impressionism and Cubism. There were two main influencing factors behind these changes: the developments in science and technology in Europe and the fact that pioneering European artists, such as Picasso, were incorporating elements they encountered in the art of the Far East and Africa and Islamic art into their work.

Generally speaking, in the beginning of the 20th century all aspects of European culture were affected by the wave of modern thought which stemmed from the works of scholars such as Einstein, Freud, Markoni and Kandinsky, whose theoretical standpoints and practical discoveries opened up wide new areas to be analysed. The challenge was not only to extend and refine existing knowledge but also to generate new dimensions of knowledge, opinions and experience.¹ Due to this modern way of thinking, urban life assumed new attributes and the concept of communicating over time and distance was drastically changed. New political idealism and optimism were integrated with an aggressive and pessimistic materialism which arose in the second half of the First World War in Europe and during the Russian revolution. This led to the emergence of modern movements, including Cubism which developed out of the unusual dynamics created by the First World War.²

All cubists of that time were influenced by the upheaval of the world around them and cubist art was generated in a dislocated and disoriented way which involved breaking off with traditional ideals and creating new technical and theoretical specialisations. Pictorial concepts of space and time were irrevocably modified by cubism. Cubism was not tied to the conventional ideologies of reality and social, political and moral ideals, unlike other movements at the time in Russia, Germany and Italy. Cubists were not members or representatives of any political revolutionary groups and their paintings, with some exceptions in some works painted by Leger and Delaunay, do not create any vision of the

¹ N. Wadley, *Cubism: Movements of Modern Art*, ed. by Trewin Copplestone (Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1970), pp. 11-12.

² Ibid. pp. 11-12.

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heroic modern man in a brave world.³ Picasso, Braque and Gris explored the relativity of traditional forms of popular, commercial and applied arts. Leger was, to some degree, aware of recent technological advances, for instance, photography and cinema. These painters were also knowledgeable about other scientific fields including mathematical philosophy and science and the works of writers, architects and musicians, but there were no deliberate attempts to incorporate these interests into their art.⁴ Generally speaking, cubism is an art that is concerned solely with the interaction between structure and movement, solids and the space around them, the unambiguous signs made on the surface of the picture and modifying the reality which they stand for. So it is an art of dynamic liberation from all static categories.⁵

Turkish cubism emerged in the 20th century towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, when Turkish painting was exposed to the reforms in European painting and Turkish artists started to prefer the value and concept of European plasticism instead of the traditional concepts of Turkish painting because they were influenced by the innovative and mind-science based concepts of European painting. Turkish painting's inclination towards European art was further accelerated with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, as the ideals of the new regime, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, were structured on the concept of modernisation in Europe, especially in France. France was seen as the best model for the Turkish Republic, politically due to its being a democratic and secular country and culturally as the place of revolution in art hosting the avant garde movement which brought new forms and techniques to the creation of original art that sought to push beyond the cultural and traditional principles based on experimental and innovative ideas considered to be hallmarks of Modernism. France was also a prominent model of Modern nationalist thought derived from the ideas generated by the French Revolution. These characteristics led to the formation of a dialogue with France concerning the art of the new regime through the translation and appropriation of many elements of French art by Turkish painters in a bid to construct a national identity for the new Republic. In light of this aim, artists who had been sent to France by the state returned to Turkey and contributed to the

³ Wadley, *Cubism*, pp. 11-13.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 12-15.

⁵ J. Berger, *The Success and Failure of Picasso* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 47-60.

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development and modernity of Turkish painting. They used French cubism to develop a Modern art which was inherently Turkish. After 1923, by which date a cultural and artistic consciousness had been developed in Turkish society, they founded diverse Modern groups, the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' and 'Group D', in order to start off a new perspective in traditionally based Turkish painting. Their efforts were reflected through their art works that reflect European art movements and concepts, namely impressionism, cubism and constructivism, in the first quarter of the 20th century. Most importantly, the formation of Group D, the initiators of the avant garde movement in Turkey, is significant in the context of the translation of the Modern French model into Turkish art using cubist language in contrast to the traditional principles and forms.

The main focus of this dissertation is the exploration of the process of the dialogue, through the concept of translation and appropriation, between Modern French and Turkish art in reference to the artistic relationship between French cubist artists and Turkish painters who went to France to work in Parisian cubist artists André Lhote and Fernand Léger's workshop in the first half of the 20th century. The work of four mainstream Turkish painters, namely Hale Asaf, Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino, will then be evaluated taking into account their art concept in terms of style and subject matter in comparison with selected pioneers of French cubism. Their works will be discussed in the context of the cubist stylisation which was translated and appropriated from the French model. This study will look at how the Modern Turkish painters Berk, Dino and Tollu carried out the translation of the model, how Asaf appropriated it and how they perceived and reflected the idea of cubism to build their own art concept.

This dissertation examines the way in which a cubist language developed after 1923, the date of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, by the artistic activities of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' between 1928 and 1932, and most importantly 'Group D' between 1933 and 1938 in Turkey. The study also explores the continuity between the late Ottoman interest in the French culture and the political and artistic links that developed in 1923. The basis of discussion for this study is the works of four prominent Turkish artists, all of whom studied in Paris. The analysis of their work will show that the influence of French painting on the Turkish artists was not a passive one but

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involved a dialogue between the two cultures which will be explored through the concepts of translation and appropriation.

The four mainstream Turkish artists on which the discussion will be based are Hale Asaf, founder-member of the Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors and Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino, founder-members of Group D, whose works will be analysed in a broad context in terms of their form and content in the context of translating French cubism into Turkish within the context of modern Turkish painting. First, the self-portrait by Asaf, which represents the appropriation of the French fashion at that time, will be compared with the work of the French cubist artist Andre Lhote in terms of content and form through the concept of appropriation. Then the works by Berk, Tollu and Dino which represent the national, traditional and local themes will be compared with the works and art concepts of their masters Andre Lhote and Fernand Leger, in terms of content and form through the concept of translation.

This study uses primary and secondary sources written in both Turkish and English by Turkish and foreign scholars. The second chapter starts out by giving a broad overview of the relationship and interaction between the Ottoman empire and the West in relation to the artistic exchange and political relationship with France in order to understand the reasons why France, out of all the other modern European countries, was identified as the model for Turkish art especially from the beginning of the 20th century until the middle of the century. It will discuss the particular importance of Paris, as a centre of modernisation during the time for Ottoman and Turkish Republican artists. Objective data which can yield some light on this matter can be provided by analysing the dialogue in the previous century between Turkey and France concerning art. Archival documents will be used to examine the policy of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s with regard to sending painters abroad on state-funds in order to identify the reasons why this was done and the countries to which the artists were sent in the context of Atatürk's art policy and modernisation project. In addition, the art of the Callı Generation in 1914, their contribution to Turkish painting and their shortcomings, which were the basis of the criticism levelled at them by their pupils in the following generations, will be compared to the activities and artistic ideas of later artistic formations.

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The third chapter starts off by discussing the emergence of cubism in Turkey and the difference between influence and dialogue through the concept of translation. The work of the aforementioned Turkish artists is then discussed on the basis of the theory and thoughts of Michael Baxandall, 'against the influence', and of Walter Benjamin. The chapter then goes on to explain the reason why the concept of translation was chosen to illuminate the works of Group D artists: Berk, Tollu and Dino. This is followed by a description of the general aims, characteristics, art concepts and activities of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' and 'Group D' artists along with their particular contribution to the creation of Modernity in painting in Turkey during Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's period, especially between 1928 and 1938. This aspect will be discussed using primary and secondary sources and the original writings of Berk, Tollu and Dino. Works written by Berk and Tollu in Turkish and other significant secondary sources written in both Turkish and English by Turkish and foreign art historians and scholars are also used as a basis for discussion of the success and deficiencies of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' and the exhibitions of the 'Group D' members, such as the *Revolution and the Art* exhibition in 1933, as well as the role of art and its status in the new regime, along with the perception of the art of 'Group D' in society at the time.

The fourth chapter gives biographical information of the artists to provide the artistic background to their art concepts. The painters are then assessed in a broad context in terms of their stylistic features and contribution to modernity in Turkish painting through an analysis of their works using the concept of translation (Berk, Tollu and Dino) and appropriation (Asaf). This assessment will highlight the fact that the Turkish artists entered into an active dialogue with French cubists rather than the traditional assertion that the French cubists were a passive influence on them. This assessment based on objective data is significant and original in the context of the evolution of Modern Turkish art. The artists' bibliographical information and information on their individual art concepts is based on primary and secondary sources written in Turkish and English. Selected paintings painted in cubist style will then be analysed in the context of translation and appropriation to reflect the reasons why these painters' works cannot be positioned as products of the traditional passive influence of their French masters within the context of national art and identity. This section will make up the significant part of the dissertation.

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CHAPTER II- PROCESS OF THE DIALOGUE BEFORE 1923

2. 1. Paris as a Centre of Modernisation for Turkish Artists during the 19th and 20th Century

It is undeniable that the Ottoman Empire and then Turkey, the continuation of the Ottoman Empire founded in 1923, were very much inclined towards Western art from the end of the Ottoman Empire until the end of 20th century. This inclination of Turkish art towards Western art took the form of a dialogue and engagement with developed European countries, such as Italy and Germany and France which was taken as a model for Turkey, a developing country seeking to keep pace with the Western countries' technological, political, social and artistic advances. Turkish painting in the Western style and its academic teaching in the Turkish art discipline goes back 200 years.

In the last period of the Ottoman Empire there was a move towards westernisation in order to keep pace with Europe which was more developed than the Ottoman Empire, not only in terms of the military and the economy but also in terms of technological and cultural advancement. The Ottoman Empire sought to reach the level of contemporary civilization in Europe. Therefore, a great number of students of Fine Arts were sent to European countries particularly to Paris, France. This inclination continued during the time of the Turkish Republic, from 1923 onwards, when the Ottoman Empire was ended. Then, many artists were sent to Europe to be exposed to modernism and be pioneers of contemporarity in Turkish art by changing the usual concept and principles of traditional art, particularly in painting. Many artists were selected and funded by government, and others preferred to go abroad on their own steam. These artists chose to go to countries where they had the opportunity to be work for and be trained by famous masters according to their expectations. After for a while, they returned to Turkey and became actively involved in artistic activities and art education in Turkey. They worked mostly in the fine arts school named as Sanayi-i Nefise and primary schools and high schools in different regions. They were known not only as carriers of artistic knowledge and exchange of ideas between France and Turkey but also as teachers of basic art pedagogy in Turkey.⁶ Many chose to go to Paris

⁶ O. Dilmaç, '1914-1940 Yılları Arasında Avrupa'da Eğitim Alan Sanatçılarımızın Ülkemizdeki Sanat Eğitime Katkıları [In Europe between the 1914 and 1940 Years Trained Artists' Contributions to Art Education in our Country]', *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Cilt 13, Sayı: 23, Haziran 2010, pp. 63-78.

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at that time. It is significant to identify the reasons why young Turkish artists made this particular choice: was it because of the popularity of Paris, which was known as the centre of modern art, hosting the Modern masters, or the existence of the state academy in Paris?

It is known that the 'Ecole des Beaux Arts' (State Fine Arts Academy) in Paris was quite popular among Ottoman and Turkish artists. Between 1835 and 1892, in the late period of the Ottoman Empire before the Turkish Republic was founded, the military painters, who were graduates of the Ottoman Military Schools, Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun, Mekteb-i Harbiye-i Şahane, Mekteb-i Tıbbiye and Mekteb-i Bahriye were chosen by the Empire and sent to the Paris State Academy. They received an art education in the 'Ecole des Beaux Arts' which, until 1868, was the only address in art education known to Ottoman artists.⁷ Then, from 1892, the fine art students of 'Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi', the first Fine Art Academy in Turkey founded in 1882 during the reign of Abdülhamit II and opened by Osman Hamdi Bey who was a famous artist trained in Paris, began to be sent to Paris.⁸ Among these fine art students were Galip Bey, Mehmet Ruhi Arel and İbrahim Çallı who were sent to Paris in 1909 and Hikmet Onat who was sent to Paris in 1910 and who studied at the Academy of 'Ecole des Beaux Arts' and 'Julian'. These artists had to return to Turkey due to beginning of the First World War.⁹ After the War, many artists, including the ones mentioned above, continued to go to Paris. Given the number of artists who chose to go to Paris, it is evident that Paris was an artistic place, popular with the imperial and Turkish Republic artists in the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of the famous Turkish artists were involved in the Parisian artistic environment during the 20th century.

Nurullah Berk, one of the pioneers among Modern Turkish artists who worked in the Cubist style, states that the main reason which impelled worldwide young artists to Paris was the availability of famous masters who gathered in Montparnasse and taught at their private workshops in Paris. These artists included painters Andre Lhote, Fernand Leger,

⁷ T. Erol; G. Renda, *Başlangıcından Bugüne Çağdaş Türk Resim Sanatı Tarihi [Contemporary Turkish Art of Painting History from the Beginning to the Present Day]* (İstanbul: Tıglat Sanat Galerisi, 1980), p. 78.

⁸ H. Edhem, *Elvah-ı Nakşiye Koleksiyonu [Elvah-ı Nakşiye Collection]* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1970), p. 84.

⁹ D. Artun, *Paristen Modernlik Tercümeleeri Academie Julian' da İmparatorluk ve Cumhuriyet Öğrencileri [Interpretation of Modernity from Paris: the Imperial and the Republican Students in Academie Julian]* (n. p. : İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 97-158.

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Marcel Gromaire and Othon Friezs and sculptors Marcel Gimond and Bourdelle.¹⁰ He also mentions that Andre Lhote's private academy in Odessa Street was the most crowded workshop. Fernand Leger had a workshop together with engraver Marcoussis and Gromaire trained young painters twice a week at his workshop in Grande Chaumiere Street. These three masters played a significant role in the young artists' training because they worked in the Cubist style and consolidated the technique of Cubist painting giving it a structural basis. The power of patterns, formal research, the architectural structure of picture, undetailed smooth forms and plastic constructionism were the main and most significant features of their art. Therefore, young artists who chose these masters, moved away from the Impressionist aesthetic and began to work in a stylised form of Cubism.¹¹ These explanations provide sufficient reason why young Modern Turkish artists preferred Paris, France and why they chose masters who worked in the French Cubists' Modern style.

These young artists preferred to carry out their artistic training in this city due to the presence of popular academies and the opportunities it afforded of meeting and working with world-renowned Modern masters in order to create a national Modern art as pioneer artists. They were the first representatives of the new Turkish Republic based on democracy and secularity committed to the principles of national sovereignty and national independence, which conflicted with the Ottoman Empire. The reasons mentioned above made France, especially Paris, the best choice for young Modern Turkish artists during the 20th century.

2. 2. Why did Turkish artists identify Modernism with France?

2. 2. 1. A Historical Analysis of the Dialogue

The origin of the interaction between Europe and the Ottoman Empire was based on a long process started in the 17th century. This interaction was in diverse areas, including politics, the economy and culture and even in mutual diplomatic exchange. The term 'interaction' is apt as both Turkish culture, the continuation of the Ottoman culture, and France, a central

¹⁰ N. Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in the Turkish Painting]' in *Başlangıcından Bugüne Çağdaş Türk Resim Sanatı Tarihi C.2 [Contemporary Turkish Art of Painting History from the Beginning to the Present Day Vol. 2]* (İstanbul: Tıglat Yayınları, 1981), p. 96.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 96-97.

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European culture, were very well-known on the stage of world history and art history for their rooted and strong artistic, cultural and historical background. This deeply-rooted background enabled an active dialogue between one and the other during the period. This interpenetrating process is natural and quite conceivable when their powerful positions in the historical art context is taken into consideration. For this reason, it is essential to look at the starting point of the exchange between Ottoman and French cultures in history in order to figure out why such the representative of the oriental eastern culture the Ottoman Empire, and then its successor Turkey in the 20th century identified Modernism with France. Why did the two cultures get into such a dialogue during this periods and how and when did it start?

According to Mustafa Cezar, the political, economic and cultural dialogues between the Ottoman Empire and France had already started in the 17th century. This led to the exchange of diplomats between the two civilizations. Many French delegates came to Istanbul together with European artists to paint the typical geographical and social characteristics of the Ottoman Empire.¹² Sezer Tansuğ claims that this practice was continued during the 18th and early 19th centuries and many artists were also introduced to the Ottoman imperial palace through delegates.¹³ It is known that in 1699 the French ambassador Marquis Charles de Ferriol d' Argental, appointed for Istanbul by Louis XIV of France, brought a French artist, Jean-Baptiste Van Mour, to Istanbul. Van Mour is the first artist who witnessed the full enthusiasm of Ottoman's 'tulip era'.¹⁴ The aim of the French ambassador was to create a collection of Mour's paintings which represents decorative Ottoman dresses and fascinating lifestyles. By doing so, he could document the Ottoman people's daily lives and the main elements of the Ottoman culture. Following the return of the French ambassador in 1711, Mour stayed on in Istanbul and received many similar commissions from following French ambassadors. He therefore painted many diverse aspects of the Ottoman culture upon the request of French delegates.¹⁵

¹² M. Cezar, *Sanatta Batıya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi [Opening to the West in Art and Osman Hamdi]* (İstanbul: Erol Kerim Aksoy Vakfı, 1971), p. 8.

¹³ S. Tansuğ, *Çağdaş Türk Sanatı [Contemporary Turkish Art]* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 1996), p. 36.

¹⁴ O. Öndeş; E. Makzume, *Lâle Devri Ressamı- Jean Baptiste Van Mour [Painter of the Tulip Era- Jean Baptiste Van Mour]* (İstanbul: Aksoy Yayıncılık, 2000), p. 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 62.

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The dialogue between French and Turkish cultures is also evident in the literature and ideas of the time derived from the popular French world of ideas and strong cultural richness presented by well-known scholars of the time. According to Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad, a Turkish history professor, writer and politician of the time, the dialogue started in the reign of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman who had the longest reign of the Ottoman sultans, around 46 years. His reign is known as being the most brilliant period of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶ Fuad states that, Turkish-French relations accelerated especially during the reign of Selim III and then continued to evolve in the 'Tanzimat period' which is known as the new period of Modernisation in the late Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1876 due to its reformist nature which brought many diverse reforms in every area of the Empire.¹⁷ This dialogue in politics and literature is evident in the translations of the famous Turkish scholars, Reşid Paşa, Namık Kemal and Ziya Paşa, who first came up with the concept of westernisation and translated a number of famous French writers including Voltaire and Rousseau.¹⁸ Under the influence of these Turkish translations of French literature and scholars' ideas, Turkish culture and politics started to look to France as a mode and an active dialogue between the two cultures began. Thus, Ottoman (Turkish) culture and literature benefitted from French culture and ideas through translations of French scholars which integrated western ideas into Turkish society. These political and artistic interactions made up the dialogue between late Ottoman (Turkish) and French cultures in the historical art context. In parallel, this is also the case in art in the 19th and 20th centuries, which will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2. 3. Establishment of a Dialogue with Europe and Westernization in Art

It is known that the Ottoman Empire's cultural leaning to the west was mainly due to the westward extension of the interests of the scientific and literary intellectuals who launched Westernisation and the cultural conflicts and shifts of political balance that this provoked in

¹⁶ M. F. Köprülü, 'Fikrî Hayatımızda Fransız Tesirâtı [The French Effect in Our Intellectual Life]', *İkdam*, No. 8749, 23 Temmuz 1921, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

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the 19th century.¹⁹ Moreover, according to primary sources on Ottoman Art, it is frequently assumed that the artistic shifts in the early 18th century of Ottoman Art stemmed from external causes, which was clearly seen as a form of 'Westernisation' by historians. Predictably, during the time when the Ottoman Empire was inclined towards Western developments in every area, including art, the motifs and other elements were taken from French and Italian art to start a form of what has been called 'Ottoman baroque' which consists of a mixture of Ottoman and European elements. This has been seen as a kind of borrowing in the 'Tulip age', which is the period between 1718 and 1730 in Ottoman architecture.²⁰ There were the traces of westernisation in other fields, too, including painting, music and literature. Ayda Arel states that the European effect on Turkish art was first evident in the minor arts over the 18th century, most evidently in the realm of architectural decoration. The art forms adapted from Baroque and Rococo were the first seen in mid-century following the reign of the Ahmet III and his famous vizier Damad İbrahim Paşa.²¹ Classical elements in Ottoman architecture, such as 'Muqarnas', were turned into volutes and decorative shapes known as 'Rumis' mutated into arabesques.²²

During the period, patrons were interested in Western forms and elements which were not imitations of European forms but which attempted to enrich Ottoman art and explore and initiate new developments through translation. Following that period, main architectural buildings, including the grand complex of the Nuruosmaniye Mosque and the Topkapı Palace, were built on the principle forms of western art in İstanbul.²³ These were not the products of passive influences, but the products of a very active dialogue with Western art starting in the beginning of the 18th century in Ottoman Empire when many foreign artists and architects, including Armenian and Greek architects, worked in the Ottoman capital. These artists may have been responsible for executing the decorative details originating in Western art and architecture.²⁴ With regard to painting, miniature

¹⁹ C. Vaughn Findley, 'Political culture and the great households' in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed by Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 69.

²⁰ T. Artan, 'Arts and Architecture' in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed by Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 473.

²¹ A. Arel, *18. Yüzyıl İstanbul Mimarisinde Batılılaşma Süreci [The Process of Westernisation in Eighteenth Century İstanbul Architecture]* (İstanbul: n. p. , 1975), p. 10.

²² Artan, 'Arts and Architecture', p. 473.

²³ Ibid. pp. 473-474.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 474.

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Ottoman art was very well-known until the 18th century. The features and style of the Ottoman miniature were different from those of the Arabic, Indian and Persian miniatures, however, they were similar to the other Islamic miniature form, which was highly stylised book decoration. The popularity of the traditional Ottoman miniature started to decline due to the attempts of non-Muslim artists, who began to experiment with the technique of oil-on-canvas in the 18th century.²⁵

The geopolitical position of the Ottoman Empire, the geographic proximity to Europe and the political and economic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe allowed the Ottoman Turks and artists to establish a strong dialogue with Europe, especially with France, after the 18th century. The period was marked by the Westernisation of the state structure and education system brought about by the Reform of the 1839, known as 'Tanzimat' and the foundation of a monarchy in 1908 called 'Meşrutiyet'. This cultural dialogue manifested itself in all areas, but especially in art.²⁶ Due to this interaction, many well-known Turkish artists were sent to European countries, such as France, Belgium and Italy. Evidence of this can be found in archival documents which name the countries the students were sent to and state the salary of the students and the other regulations, written and signed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and senior officials of the 'Board of Education' (Maarif Vekaleti) of the Ministry of Education during the 20th century (see Appendices 1 and 2).²⁷ Also many European visitors and artists were received by the Ottoman Turks, which reinforced the interaction and dialogue between Europe and Turkey. Following the period of the dialogue, oil-on canvas painting which, unlike miniatures, originated in Western European countries, was seen to be the best choice among artists who were sent to European countries and who became known as the pioneers of the new genre. In the first half of the 19th century, artists who were known as 'Turkish Primitives' painted un-peopled scenes of parks and gardens in a representational and detailed style.²⁸ They were not in any obvious contact with their European peers, however, artists of the next generation, between

²⁵ B. Inel, 'Discovering the Missing Heroines: The Role of Women Painters in Early Modernist Art in Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2002, p. 205.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 205.

²⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti: Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [Republic of Turkey: Prime Ministry Republic Archive], Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekalet Muamelet Müdüriyeti, Ankara, 22. 07. 1928, No. 6896, and Türkiye Cumhuriyeti: Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [Republic of Turkey: Prime Ministry Republic Archive], Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekalet Muamelet Müdürlüğü, Ankara, 05. 12. 1928, No. 7375.

²⁸ For more detail on this period, see N. Berk, *İstanbul Resim ve Heykel Müzesi [Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum]*, Art Book Series 1 (İstanbul, n. p. , 1972).

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1830s and 1840s, were often trained in the European academies. For this reason, during the last decades of the 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th century, Turkish painting, as a continuation of Ottoman culture, was closely connected with Modernist European styles, for instance, Impressionism, Expressionism, Romanticism and Realism.²⁹

In this context, the effects of the west on the Turkish arts and the dialogue between the two civilizations were more evident in the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. This innovation affected all areas of the state,³⁰ ending the Ottoman Empire which was based on Islamic rules and monarchy and beginning the new formation of the Turkish Republic founded on the principles of democracy and secularism, which launched the process of modernisation and democratisation in every area of social, cultural, political and economic life by getting into a dialogue with Europe and translating elements of Western art, as well as appropriating the Modern European life style, particularly Western fashion. These developments opened the way for the Westernisation of art. The model of democracy, modernisation and industry in France in particular provided the basis of a dialogue with Turkey. Artists, as pioneers of the post republican period (1923), created a synthesis by combining Western techniques and concepts with the techniques, concepts and context of traditional and modern Turkey.

On this basis, it is possible to look at early Turkish Republican paintings to gain a feel of the social context and start to comprehend the aims of the Republic, and the reforms executed in relation to the nationalism based on Kemalist principles after the establishment of the Republic. These paintings are significant when it comes to understanding the artistic environment and the context of the early Republican paintings. Cemren Altan points out that the attempts of the political elite to create a secular nation state and to move towards a modern, positivist, progress-oriented society are of importance particularly following the foundation of the Republic.³¹ That is to say, there was a move toward western figurative painting, which is the opposite of Islamic art which prohibits figurative representation. The political elite backed this move as part of their modernisation project which was defended during the new Republic.

²⁹ Inel, 'Discovering the Missing Heroines', p. 206.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 205-206.

³¹ C. Altan, 'Populism and Peasant Iconography: Turkish Painting in the 1930s', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2005, p. 547.

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Altan claims that this project basically comprised the ideals of 'the modern nation' based on the Kemalist principles of nationalism, populism, secularism, republicanism, reformism and étatism.³² Nationalism was one of the most significant principles, linked to the transformation of the political system and to the realm of culture. By transforming the political system the most important aim of the Republican would be achievable, that is the aim to reach the level of contemporary civilization ('muassır medeniyetler seviyesine erişmek') that is European civilization.³³ In this case, civilization (medeniyet) is an international term, which comprises the scientific knowledge and technology that can be adopted from European civilization, but culture can be produced by the 'nation' through its people and cannot be adopted from Europe, but can be adapted to European codes.³⁴ This explains the reason why Turkish art, especially painting, inclined towards European art and why Turkish artists were sent to certain European countries particularly during the 20th century. However, in this context, the question to be asked is how can the ideal of reaching the level of contemporary civilization, that is European civilization, be possible together with reaching the ideals of nationalism and national art?

In this context, it is necessary to mention some deeply-rooted reforms within cultural and social institutions aimed at large-scale transformation that marked the first decades of the Turkish Republic. Art is highly symbolic within this structure as a determinate of the shift in civilization. The artistic productions of the time were identified as belonging to a new social order and perceived as part of the process of westernization. The revolution began with signs and shifts in the visual aesthetics of view, which could be seen as the beginning of the transformation towards the European model organised by the political elite who aimed to spread its ideals to all who lived within the boundary of the Republic.³⁵ The political elite backed a variety of reforms in different areas to reach the aims of the Kemalist state, including the abolition of the caliphate on the 3 March 1924, alteration in the dress code on the 3 November 1925, prohibition of religious costumes in public on the 26 November and 13 December 1934. They abolished any form of dress known as 'oriental style' comprising

³² Altan, 'Populism and Peasant Iconography', p. 547.

³³ According to Tuncer Baykara, the term 'civilization' (medeniyet) emerges in the Turkish language in 1938, in connection with European 'civilization'. T. Baykara, 'Introduction' in *Osmanlılarda medeniyet kavramı ve ondokuzuncu yüzyıla dair araştırmalar [The Concept of the Civilization in the Ottomans and Research on 19th Century]* (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1992), n. p.

³⁴ Altan, 'Populism and Peasant Iconography', p. 547.

³⁵ L. Bernard, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 2nd edn.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 35.

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the fez, the red cap worn by Muslim men, which identifies Muslims from persons of other religions and Europeans.³⁶

Additionally, the alphabet was switched from Arabic to Roman characters on 1 November of 1928, which resulted in illiteracy and difficulties in spreading new ideas.³⁷ Therefore, imitative images became a significant way of diffusion. In this context, nationalism, one of the interdependent Kemalist principles, gained importance in determining the nation as a people with a common aim, language and culture, excepting any religious connotations. This makes nationalism close to populism at the political level, which implies solidarity and togetherness among the people who lived within the Turkish territory, excluding any segregation of origin, language, religion and class. In essence, the sovereignty belonged to the nation.³⁸ These principles drew particular attention to cultural unity and westernisation through education. They aimed to construct a new Turkish identity effective in all areas of the state by achieving synthesis between local cultural values and European values.

Furthermore, the aim of the Kemalist nation and the Republican artists of the time was to create both national and contemporary art. This means that the themes and contexts of paintings were to be taken from the local 'national' subjects of daily life and village life, as the majority of the Turkish population consisted of peasants at that time. However, the techniques and concept applied to the national painting were to be European. Thus, the artists mostly applied the varying forms of Cubism and Expressionism, in contrast to the usual characteristics of Impressionism which can be seen in the paintings of the artists known as the 'Callı Generation' (Çallı Kuşağı) who were active in 1914 and beyond (during and after the First World War). The art of the 'Çallı Kuşağı' is significant in terms of the artistic conditions of the time, their aims, the subject matter of their paintings and techniques in comparison with the Republican artists and their associations, for example, the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptures' (Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltıraşlar Birliği) founded in 1928 and 'Group D' (D Grubu) founded in 1933. These will be discussed on a broad scale in the next chapter as they concern the main topic of the dissertation in the context of creation of the *National and Modern Turkish style* after the Callı Generation.

³⁶ Bernard, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, p. 35.

³⁷ Altan, 'Populism and Peasant Iconography', p. 547.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 548.

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2. 3. 1. The Art of the Callı Generation in 1914

The art of the Callı Generation is quite important as it portrays the first step of the modern movements through the concept of impressionism by the generation of artists who were sent to Paris, as their predecessors in the late Ottoman Empire had been, and who worked with Parisian pioneers of the impressionist style. This marked their period as ‘the age of Impressionism’ in the art of the late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic from 1914 onwards. Ibrahim Callı (1889-1977) is a renowned member of the generation. He was sent to Paris by Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi (the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts) which was the first art school in the Ottoman Empire, founded in 1882.³⁹ Its curriculum covered a wide range of artistic subjects, including painting, sculpture, architecture and engraving, taught by foreign teachers. The school also contributed to the formation of Contemporary Turkish painting through diverse exhibitions held in summer and by training the artists of the future. The academy was managed by Osman Hamdi Bey, who was an artist, intellectual, bureaucrat and the founder of both the Imperial Museum of Antiquities in 1881 and the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in İstanbul in 1882.⁴⁰

He had been instrumental in highlighting *the national Turkish essence* of Ottoman culture as distinct from Arab and Persian culture, and in establishing art and architectural education, as well as heritage preservation, as fundamental institutions of a modern nation-state.⁴¹ His paintings, while academic and orientalist in technique, especially in his realistic details of Islamic crafts, carpets, objects and calligraphy, reflect in content a modern ideal that western-educated Ottoman elites longed for; namely, a society that is distinctly oriental/Islamic, and yet modern, rational and refined at the same time.⁴² As for the artists of the generation, along with Ibrahim Çallı one could mention Hikmet Onat (1886- 1977), Nazmi Ziya (1881- 1937), Namık İsmail (1890-1935), Feyhaman Duran (1886-1970) and Avni Lifij (1889-1927) who went to Paris of their own accord and returned to Turkey in 1914 because of the outbreak of the First World War. Their generation was named the ‘Callı Generation (Çallı Kuşağı)’, ‘1914 Generation (1914 Kuşağı)’ and, because of their concept of

³⁹ S. Bozdoğan, ‘Art and Architecture in Modern Turkey: The Republican period’ in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 4: Turkey in the Modern World*, ed by Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 422.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 422.

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 421-422.

⁴² Ibid. pp. 421-422.

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'Impressionism' taken from Paris, the 'Turkish Impressionists (Türk İzlenimcileri (Empresyonistleri))'.⁴³

The artists of the Callı Generation aimed to establish an anti-academic, Modern, style in Turkish painting as pioneers of the early Turkish art of painting. They wished to leave the academic tradition of the previous generation, as can be seen in the still-life paintings of Süleyman Seyyid, Şeker Ahmet Paşa and Osman Hamdi Bey's orientalist paintings. Unlike these predecessors, the works of the Callı Generation focused on the pervasiveness of the landscapes which has been particularly important in the formation of a modern national consciousness through an emphasis on the particularities of place and country and the portraits of ordinary people, that reflect the emergence of the modern individual subjectivities.⁴⁴ In this context, the question to be asked is to what extent were their landscapes, portraits and figures the product of their encounters with Impressionism in Paris and to what extent should they be seen in continuity with earlier Ottoman painting traditions? Also why did they prefer to work in the Impressionist style, especially adhering to the tradition of the landscape? These questions are still the main points of debate among art historians. These painters were actually known as the founders of the genre 'Boğaziçi Landscapes (Boğaziçi Manzaraları)' which include paintings of the scenic regions of Istanbul, including the region of Çamlıca in 'From Camlıca (Çamlıca'dan)' (fig. 1) by Nazmi Ziya Güran, 'From the ridges of Kuzguncuk (Kuzguncuk Sırtlarından)' (fig. 2) painted by Hikmet Onat and Haliç and the Boğaziçi coasts in 'View From Halic (Haliç'ten)' (fig. 3) painted by Hüseyin Avni Lifij. This demonstrates their similarity with the previous generation of late Ottoman artists in the selection of the genre and the continuation of the tradition of landscape themes.

However, their perception, vision and plans of the execution in their paintings differentiate them from their predecessors Şeker Ahmet, Hüseyin Zekai, Osman Hamdi and Süleyman Seyyit. Nurullah Berk, a Modern Turkish painter and writer, states that when comparing the works of the Callı Generation with the previous generation, the difference in their concept and execution are immediately evident.⁴⁵ With the exception of Osman Hamdi,

⁴³ S. Başkan, 'Türk Resim Sanatında İlk Sanatçı Birliği [First Artist Association in the Turkish Art of Painting]' in *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti [Ottoman Artists Association]*, sayı 23, Eylül (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 1994), p. 33.

⁴⁴ Bozdoğan, 'Art and Architecture in Modern Turkey', p. 423.

⁴⁵ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in Turkish Painting]', p. 11.

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the artists who were active in the 19th century did not paint major compositions including figures, portraits and specific subjects but restricted their subjects to still-lives and landscapes.⁴⁶ He goes on to say that although the works of the previous generation were performed quite carefully, skillfully, patiently and meticulously, they did not include individual creativity and personal review. In fact, their works included an objectivity which depended on natural appearance. The artists preceding the Callı Generation refrained from interpretive attempts and just copied nature. Even Osman Hamdi, who used photographs, did not get away from copying nature.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the artists of the Callı Generation focused on the variation of the genre by painting not only landscapes and still-lives but also single figures, simulated portraits and scenes of diverse themes in an Impressionist style, derived from the Parisian Impressionists when the Callı Generation worked in Paris.⁴⁸ They were known as pioneers because they brought the artistic technique of the West with its new approach and anti-academic style.

They also worked in Fernand Cormon, Jean-Paul Laurens and Albert Laurens's workshops and brought Impressionism to Turkish painting as a new style of the Modern movement in Turkey. Their preference of painting landscapes in the Impressionist style was not a coincidence according to Seyfi Başkan, as the tradition of painting landscapes was the only common point with their predecessors of the late Ottoman period.⁴⁹ Thus, despite the fact that they represented an advanced art concept when compared with the previous generation, they stayed under the influence of the traditional genre of the landscape of their predecessors and did not succeed in being the pioneers of the new genre which provided a Modern perspective without adhering to the academic and old painting traditions based on the imitation of the nature.

Başkan further claims that another reason for their adherence to the traditional landscape is that the landscape painting was also the most common genre painted by the French Impressionists.⁵⁰ In this context, it is prudent to ask to what extent do their works

⁴⁶ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in Turkish Painting]', pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 11-14.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 14.

⁴⁹ Başkan, 'Türk Resim Sanatında İlk Sanatçı Birliği [First Artist Association in the Turkish Art of Painting]', p. 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 33.

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reflect their encounters in Paris? The answer to this question is vital when it comes to placing the next artist group's art in the context of the 'passive influence' or 'translation' of the visual language of French Impressionism. In fact, the works of the Callı Generation, in particular the mood of the landscapes, the nudes and the scenes of daily life, were quite new but common subjects of the French Impressionists.⁵¹ Also these variations within the genre and their concept derived from the principles of the new movement, Impressionism, underscored the modernity of the period and identified their works as being quite new in comparison with the late Ottoman painting tradition which was promoted by these particular artists. They were also influenced by the Turkish novelists of the period, Peyami Safa, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Mehmet Şevket Esendal, who were very well-known in their time, in terms of their emphasis on the 'occidental life (alafranga)' and their paintings of the portrait, figures and nude subjects, unlike their predecessors⁵² and against the canons of Islamic inflected art rooted in the Ottoman art of painting until the foundation of the secular and democratic Turkish Republic. The subject matter of the artists match with the French Impressionism style and reflect their encounters in Paris.

Furthermore, the womanly figure and fashion decoration of the time, during the first years of the Republic, were the most commonly painted themes especially by Ibrahim Çallı, Namık İsmail and Feyhaman Duran⁵³ These themes also mirror the common themes of French Impressionism. Ibrahim Çallı and Namık İsmail painted the compositions of figures and portraits on large sized canvasses and they took the the concept of academic pattern as a genre of painting. By doing so, they were improving their expressive portrait style. Also Feyhaman Duran is very well-known for painting portraits in Turkish art.⁵⁴ In this context, Namık İsmail's 'Woman Lying on Couch' (Sedirde Uzanan Kadın) (fig. 4), Ibrahim Çallı's 'Young Lady' (Genç Kız) (fig. 5) and Feyhaman Duran's 'The Lady with Dog' (Köpekli Kız) (fig. 6) provide evidence of the importation of the fashion from France through the artists' encounters in Paris, and the French Impressionists' common themes and subject matter.

⁵¹ Bozdoğan, 'Art and Architecture in Modern Turkey', p. 423.

⁵² N. Berk, *Çağdaş Türk Resim Sanatı cilt II [Contemporary Turkish Art of Painting vol. II]* (İstanbul: Tıglat Yayınevi, 1989), pp. 14–15.

⁵³ Başkan, 'Türk Resim Sanatında İlk Sanatçı Birliği [First Artist Association in the Turkish Art of Painting]', p. 34.

⁵⁴ K. Özsezgin, 'Sanatıyla Düünden Bugüne Çallı [Callı with His Art from Past to Present]' in *Türkiye de Sanat (Plastik Sanatlar Dergisi) [Art in Turkey (Journal of Plastic Arts)]*, No. 4, May- August, İstanbul, 1992, pp. 22–23.

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In the paintings, the context and the fashion of women's dress are noticeably Western and straying away from the late Ottoman and early Republic fashion. The style of dress is quite fashionable, drawing attention to Parisian entertainment and the modern woman's lifestyle and showing colourful, fashionably dressed women without any oriental accoutrements like scarves, which contrasts with traditional and Islamic inflected art. The scenes depicted are also western, for example in the Feyhaman Duran's 'The Lady with Dog', the unusual togetherness of the lady and the dog in the house reflects the western life style, an oft encountered theme in French Impressionism, contrasting with traditional and Islamic canons. By depicting such scenes the artists imported and introduced the western life style and fashion to Turkey in the French Impressionist style, which marks them as initiators of Modernity and the creators of the first traces of Modernist paintings in Turkey.

In addition to this, the Callı Generation is quite renowned for war paintings depicting scenes from the Balkan Wars, the Gallipoli Defence during the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence. Works in this different genre include Hikmet Onat's 'A Soldier Reading the Letter in Bulwark' (Siperde Mektup Okuyan Asker) (fig. 7), which bears a strong testimony to the political and historical turmoil of the period.⁵⁵ These Impressionist artists of the 1914 generation also painted some of the best portraits of Atatürk, such as Nazmi Ziya Güran's 'Kemal Atatürk' (fig. 8) and other heroes of the War of Independence, such as İsmet İnönü and Fevzi Çakmak. These are further illustrating the continuity between the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the new Turkish Republic founded in 1923.⁵⁶

This variety of subject matter of the Callı Generation shows that they did not have a strict and common guideline and they painted both national and western themes within the concept of Impressionism. They brought a new genre, the painting of nude women, which is completely western in terms of technique and subject matter, as well as the portraits of Republican heroes, traditional landscapes of Istanbul and national themes of the Turkish people during the Wars to Turkish art. Although they undertook the mission of being the first representatives of Contemporary Turkish art by introducing the first reflections of the Modern art of painting through Impressionism, they cannot be deemed the actual pioneers

⁵⁵ Bozdoğan, 'Art and Architecture in Modern Turkey', p. 423.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 423.

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of National Modern art as they were unable to comprehend the discourse of Modernity and undertook a mixed and immature variety of subject matter that referred to both East and West, which marks their Modernity as immature and unsettled. This became a point of criticism by their pupils and following generations. For these reasons, they cannot be named the pioneers of the dialogue between French and Turkish art aimed at constructing a national identity in art. They adhered to imitating nature without any creative and interpretive analysis despite starting some initiatives in the concept of Impressionism with the introduction of new genres. They did however translate the visual language of French Impressionism into Turkish by painting the traditional and national subjects within the concept of French Impressionism. Nevertheless, the nude, the western scenes of women and Modern fashion within the concept of Impressionism demonstrate an appropriation of the French life style and art into Turkish life.

In this context, when looking at the 'self-portrait' of Hüseyin Avni Lifij painted in 1908-9 (fig. 9) and Şeker Ahmet Paşa (1841-1907) in 1870s (fig. 10), the differences are quite obvious. Characteristics of the modern posture in the figure in Lifij's painting are the pipe in his mouth, the wineglass in the hand, his trilby hat and the way he is looking through narrowed eyes. In comparison, Şeker Ahmet Paşa's posture is quite heavy and official, with the 'fez' drawing attention to the traditional fashion of the Ottoman which was seen as an Islamic accessory and was therefore banned by Atatürk's 'Hat Revolution' in 1925. His dress is quite simple with its dark jacket which points to the traditional official Ottoman dress, unlike French dress and culture. On this basis, the attributes of Lifij's portrait can be seen as an example of 'appropriation' of fashion and style adopted from French lifestyle and art, and his self-confident posture and fashionable, colourful modern suit signals the identity and modernity of the artist, and the high level of the art of painting, which is derived from the French art and lifestyle and is in contrast to the art of the previous generation of the late Ottoman Empire.

All in all, the art of the Callı Generation can be seen as the first emergence of Modern painting through the concept of appropriation and translation from French paintings, which is also the first step of unsettled and immature attempts at the process of dialogue with French art that leans towards the Cubist concept for a real sense of national modernisation in art. The artists of the Callı Generation organised the annual exhibition called 'Galatasaray

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Exhibitions' in order to promote the phenomenon of Modern art in Turkey. By doing so, one can say that they contributed to some extent to the improvement of contemporary Turkish art of painting.

CHAPTER III- THE EMERGENCE OF CUBISM IN TURKEY

3. 1. Influence, Dialogue and Translation

The notion of artistic 'influence', one painter 'influencing' another, has been the focus of debate for many decades among art historians of the Modern periods. Also the distinction between 'influence' and 'translation' is not clear cut. The distinction is of significance to many modern central European countries which saw the rise of Modern movements during the 20th century such as France where it is useful to differentiate between perception of influence and translation from one artist to another in the art of painting. This is particularly the case for countries which were located outside European culture, such as the Turkish Republic in the 20th century. In this case, what does it mean to say that French Cubism 'influenced' Turkish cubism? Michael Baxandall and Walter Benjamin write about the context of the artistic translation and the issue of influence. In this context, the dialog between France and Turkey through the artists' relationships, and translations from French cubists in the 20th century will be discussed on the basis of the Baxandall and Benjamin's thoughts regarding the issue.

According to Baxandall, 'influence' is an interpenetrating process (relation of intention to process) which cannot be identified in a painting.⁵⁷ Baxandall explains the situation through the theory of simple cause and effect. If one painter influences another as, for example, French Andre Lhote and Fernand Leger's influenced the Modern Turkish artists from the beginning to the middle of the 20th century, this can be symbolised as 'x and y', where x will be repositioned by the action of y due to its selection from x, and y will refer to the x whenever it is cited. At the end, each will have a new relationship in a line and surrounded by others. Some of these elements on the line can more or less be realised because these are available to y, and thus y can access all others after reference to the x. In this context, the artists can be likened to billiard balls on the table; for each artist to perform he/she has to be influenced by another.⁵⁸ By doing so, they slightly rewrite their art history. The French masters and the Turkish artists of the time can be viewed as the x and y in this analogy. Moreover, looking at Turkey and Turkish artists from that time reveals an obvious

⁵⁷ M. Baxandall, 'Excursus against influence' in *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Heaven; London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 61-62.

⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 59-60.

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difference when compared with French cubist masters in terms of the paintings' subject matter and the legacy of discourse. Wendy M. K. Shaw has this to say on the matter:

In Turkey, apparent transparency of adoption has served as a metonym for unmitigated success in modernisation, despite fascinating inherent contradictions and divergences. Painting in Western modality as practiced in the Ottoman Empire is not the same as Western painting because it does not contain the legacy of its discourse. Consequently, it often relies instead on metanarratives of modernisation and national identity. This creates a unique history which reflects the transformation of traditions reborn through the adoption of foreign cultural practices and their adaptation to local circumstances. Delineating such a history often has a redemptive cast, reframing critical disdain as a product of biased historiography. Attempting to move away from the modernist affirmation of South Asian Art as a successful imitation of the West.⁵⁹

In this context it is necessary to explain that Turkish artists did not aim to imitate the French masters or to be influenced passively by their new style 'cubism', which was seen as a fresh art concept of the new political regime in Turkey. The aim was to create a national modern art and to introduce the visual language of the modern cultures to the provincial public, which enabled the establishment of the Turkish Modernism to be differentiated from the French Modernism due to its adaptation to the local circumstances and traditional themes and values. Moreover, the artists did not depend on their predecessors and their art concept, simply imitating nature without any attempt to be creative and make personal reviews on nature and objects in order to reflect the reality, which made them pioneers of Modern Turkish painting and pioneers of the dialogue between the two cultures' visual languages through translation. They consciously preferred their masters, who provided them with sufficient resources to translate the concept and grammar of the Modern French visual Cubist language into Turkish, which is the main objective of this dissertation. When looking at Zeki Faik Izer's 'On the way of Revolution' (1933) (fig. 11) and Eugène Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People', (1830) (fig. 12) through Baxandall's theory one could claim that Izer read and saw the Delacroix and imitated him and, conversely, that he tackled Delacroix's painting as an actual resource in distinctive ways. He used his concept and composition in an advanced form and he benefitted from and updated him in his own way, adapting his

⁵⁹ W. M. K. Shaw, 'Introduction: The Translation of Art' in *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London: I. B. Tauris&Co Ltd, 2011), pp. 1-2.

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representation and concept to present a national case by representing Atatürk and the people who are supporting Atatürk's revolutions as reformers, which is inherently national. He intentionally chose Delacroix's work, which represents a similar case but is based on a completely different content and idea, and reworked it into a new national context, which makes this a very active and not a passive influence. Thus, the assertion that Delacroix influenced Izer would be wrong.⁶⁰

Like Izer, his peers also continued the ongoing artistic relationship with French art, as their predecessors did, but this is not to say that they went to Paris and imitated and were passively influenced by the French Cubists. They experienced French Cubism through the Cubist style of Andre Lhote and Fernand Leger, not through Braque or other well-known Cubists in France. This supports the assertion that Turkish Cubists intentionally selected their masters to address French cubism's visual language, as being the closest and most interrelated with what they wished to express, by translating the concept and grammar of the visual cubist language, not subject matter and themes that are evidenced by the artists' paintings in cubist style. In reference to the Walter Benjamin's writing, this translation serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of visual languages to one another and they are not strangers to one another, apart from all historical relationships.⁶¹ In fact, translation is an interpretation and a form of cultural exchange: embedded and entangled in structures of power and discourses of identity, constantly negotiating between past and present, local and global and similarity and difference.

In this case, it is essential to explain the reason why the concept of translation is preferred to illuminate the case of Turkish artists in this context. Turkish artists who worked with French Cubists at their workshops at that time acted on the line of their masters' art, because they had to follow their path to have a sense of Modernity. Thus, they inevitably used the same form used by their masters but within a new cultural environment and using new subject matter, which was inherently traditional, local and Turkish in every sense. In fact, they used the Modern visual language of French Cubism in reference to its representatives to explore the traditional and national values to construct and share an idea of national identity routed in folklore and peasant tradition and national themes. Their

⁶⁰ Baxandall, 'Excursus against influence', pp. 58-62.

⁶¹ W. Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1:1913-1926*, ed by M. Bullock, M. W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 255-262.

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works did not reflect any copy or imitation in content but represented the reinterpretation of the formal language of French Cubism in form. They selected the formal characteristics of these particular French artists intentionally, although they had opportunity to select other masters who were available to them at that time. Despite the fact that they had the formal elements of French masters on their works, they positioned their own style shaped with individual interpretation on a new line by taking elements from their masters' cubist style and language. They translated from French Cubism by reworking the cubist stylisation into Turkish. Therefore, their art responded to the need of Modernism in Turkish art. Hence, it can be said that they used French Cubism to develop a Modern art, which is inherently national. However, it cannot be said that French cubism influenced Turkish Cubism, due to the existence of an active translation as a result of the dialogue rather than a passive influence. Due to the reasons and the case of Turkish artists discussed above, the concept of translation is preferred when it comes to an analysis of their works.

The Turkish painters served to revolutionise reformism within a national ideology in art by synthesizing traditional motifs and themes with Western Modern techniques and innovative Cubist concepts. They were responsible for introducing art to the public in the modern sense because they were funded by state. Upon the declaration of a new regime by Atatürk, a new concept and modern discourse were required in the art of painting. For this reason, the ongoing tradition of setting a dialogue with Western art was continued and young painters of the new Republic were sent to Paris in France, because France was also a secular and democratic nation based on nationalism and was also the centre of Modern Art which presented an actual source and model for Modern Republican artists. However, they did not work under a passive influence after returning Turkey; instead, they became the pioneers of an active dialogue between two languages through the concept of translation. For this reason, it is necessary to look at some Republican artists and their associations founded in the late the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, together with the art of the new regime, the artistic activities and aims of the artists's works, based on the French Cubist stylisation for the creation of Modern National art and identity in the context of the Modernisation project.

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3. 1. 1. The Art of 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors'

The Group is highly significant to the analysis of the development of Modern art after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. It is important, to some extent, that they did not prefer to paint in the style of Impressionism, which was executed by the Callı Generation artists who testified to the challenges of the Wars during the time and focused on landscapes, imported genres of the nude and portraits and war themes within the concept of the French Modern Impressionism as a transitional phase from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. Although the artists of the Callı Generation contributed to the diffusion of Modern art and Impressionism and used light and shade successfully in landscapes, still-lives and portraits,⁶² they could not demonstrate any creativity in points of pattern structure and linear organisation of the painting except in the reflections of Impressionist colourfulness, imitations of nature, snapshots and blurred views and undecisive art concepts.⁶³

However, the artists of the Independent Painters and Sculptors' group were relatively decisive in their art by bringing a new character and concept which was based on the formal structure, pattern and linear organisation of the painting derived from the style of Cubism and Constructivism translated and adapted from French art. For these reasons, this Group which included prominent painters such as Refik Epikman (1901-74), Mahmut Cuda (1904-87), Turgut Zaim (1906-74), Cevat Dereli (1900-1974), Edip Hakkı Köseoğlu (1904-1990), Şeref Aktik (1899-1972), Nurullah Berk (1906-1982), Hale Asaf (1903-1938), Ali Avni Çelebi (1904-1993), Zeki Kocamemi (1901-1959), Muhittin Sebati (1901-1935) and sculptor Ratip Aşir Acudoğlu (1898-1957) organised themselves into the Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors established in 1928 and challenged the Impressionism of the Callı Generation, which, they claimed, was itself an academic tradition rather than a critical new current.⁶⁴ They represented a wide range of artistic trends which do not have a common denominator. They followed the trace of European Avant-Garde currents like Cubism, and

⁶² T. Toros, *O Güzel İnsanlar (Anı Dizisi) [The Beautiful People (Remembrance Array)]*, (İstanbul: Aksoy Yayıncılık, 2000), p. 86.

⁶³ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in the Turkish Painting]', p. 71.

⁶⁴ Bozdoğan, 'Art and architecture in modern Turkey', p. 428.

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performed it in landscape, figure and still-life painting as well as sought inspiration in the Anatolian folk sources of Turkish culture.⁶⁵

Their inclination towards the European current is understandable considering that Turkey has a completely different culture and religion from Europe. The inclination was, as mentioned in the previous chapter, due to the desire to keep pace with the development of the age economically, artistically and politically. This inclination in the art of painting was nurtured by the pioneer artists and their association through their experiences and observation in the artistic centres of Europe such as Paris during that time. They did not copy the French painting and were not passively influenced by their French masters; instead, they translated Cubist stylisation from their French masters to explore the traditional subject matter. Also they appropriated the French fashion, culture and lifestyle, synthesizing with national culture, art and lifestyle to construct a national identity in art. This was the context in which the Modern artistic associations were formed in Turkish art history; the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' in the late 1920s, and 'Group D', its continuation, during the 1930s.

In this context, it is necessary to ask why the artists in the group acted against their predecessors' art and how they had access to the idea of formal stylizations, pattern and structure in the concept of Cubism and Constructivism at that time. To answer these questions requires an investigation into their experiences, education and points of relationship with such modern currents originating in Europe. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, many young artists were sent to European countries to be trained by well-known modern European masters in art schools. According to Ahmet Kamil Gören, the majority of artists in the Association had scholarships provided by the Turkish Republic. To gain a scholarship an artist had to pass an exam in 1924 and then proceed to Paris in 1925. Zeki Kocamemi, Ratip Aşir and Ali Avni went to Germany in 1922 on their own accord.⁶⁶ They were educated for four years in Parisian and German art schools and worked with Ernest Laurent, Lucien Simon, Paul- Albert Laurens before returning to Turkey in 1928 and establishing the Group officially on 15 July 1929. The Group had already been unofficially

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 428.

⁶⁶ A. K. Gören, 'Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltıraşlar Birliği [Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors]' in *50. Yılında Akbank Resim Koleksiyonu [Akbank Painting Collection in Its Fiftieth Anniversary]* (İstanbul: Akbank, 1998), p. 76.

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established in 1928. Gören recounts that they organised their first exhibition known as 'First Exhibition of The Young Artists' (1. Genç Sanatçılar Sergisi) at the Ankara Ethnography Museum on 15 April 1929.⁶⁷ This shows the significance of the two particular countries, France and Germany, as models for the Turkish art of painting after the foundation of the new Republic which necessitated fresh ideas derived from European Modern movements, for instance Cubism, Fauvism and Expressionism.

Sezer Tansuğ states that these new modern currents were brought by the members of the Group through their new formal concepts spread by the writings of Nurullah Berk, Refik Epikman, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Arif Kaplan Elif Naci, Cemal Tollu and Eşref Üren.⁶⁸ The innovative ideas of the Modern currents matched with the artistic aims of the artists and the new regime of the Republic. They were not defenders of a particular Modern current; on the contrary, they were open to many diverse trends. However, their major and common aim was to give importance to the pattern and linear structure of the painting rather than its Impressionist colourfulness.⁶⁹

Moreover, they aimed to establish a collaborative artistic community in order to preserve artists' rights and have the opportunity to open the exhibitions to diffuse the idea of Modern art to society. During the first half of the 20th century, a wide range of events including the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Independence War, the declaration of the Turkish Republic and the cultural and social conflicts which they were exposed to abroad affected the members of the Group and they gathered together to outline their aims for the art of the new regime.⁷⁰ When they returned to Turkey between 1927-30, however, their art depicts diversity in an individual sense in terms of subject matter, including the nude, portraits, still-lives, landscapes and themes of daily life, with Modern art concepts, especially Cubism and Constructivism, which enabled them to be pioneers of a new period art that represented the ideals of the Modernisation of the Turkish Republic. This shows that the aims of the new regime were to start a revolution with innovative ideals and attempt to

⁶⁷ Gören, 'Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltıraşlar Birliği [Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors]' p. 76.

⁶⁸ Tansuğ, *Çağdaş Türk Sanatı [Contemporary Turkish Art]*, p. 121.

⁶⁹ Gören, 'Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltıraşlar Birliği [Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors]', pp. 76-81.

⁷⁰ L. Kalaycı, '75 Yıllık Plastik Sanatlar Serüvenine Bir Bakış [A Glance at the Plastic Arts Adventure of 75 Years]', in *Türkiye de Plastik Sanatlar Dergisi [Plastic Arts Magazine in Turkey]*, Sayı 32, Eylül-Ekim, İstanbul, 1998, p. 35.

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spread them across all areas of the state, as happened in art. This positions art in a public role, namely, art should serve to spread the new principles of the democratic and secular regime, which was spearheaded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his political supporters, to the public. These aims shaped the content and concept of painting at that time.

For this reason, the artists focused not only on national and informative themes but also on Modern themes in reference to the perception of the Cubist style being defined as the prominent symbol and concept of the new regime. This draws attention to the pronounced separation between Impressionism and Cubism. Despite the fact that Impressionism was perceived as the first step of Modernity by Turkish artists, who were active in the late Ottoman era, such as the Callı Generation, it was unable to go forward when the Republic was founded, which marks it as a preparation process and a transition for the actual Modern concept of the new democratic regime, not as an exact and decisive concept such as Cubism.

In fact, this analytical review reveals that the Modern styles went in parallel with the political regimes, that is to say, Impressionism was perceived as an undecisive concept in the works of the artists of the period, similar to the new state's policy, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the Turkish Republic was founded; a time full of confusion and indecision. This was also the case in the artists' world, which necessitated a convenient Modern style, Impressionism, which was reflected through their works. Cubism was perceived as an actual concept which is in accordance with the settled and matured Republic regime represented through the varied genres and subject matter of the young artists of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' in 1928 and then 'Group D' in 1933 and onwards.

The members of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' were working within the principles of western art and movements as well as working individually on regional and traditional themes. Also they organised many significant exhibitions and trips in diverse regions and generated a unique style, producing regional landscapes during their trips. After ten years many of the members resigned from the Association due to their desire for modernisation and to work individually. Many of them went on to work freelance, but Nurullah Berk, together with Cemal Tollu, Abidin Dino, Zeki Faik Izer, Elif Naci and

sculptor Zühtü Muridođlu founded the 'Group D' in 1933 and united under the name of the Group.

3. 1. 2. The Art of 'Group D'

The art of 'Group D' is the main point of discussion in this dissertation, specifically the concept and the subject matter of three particular artists' works i.e. Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino who activated the group after the dissolution of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' in order to explore their translation of the French Cubism to construct a National Modern art and to explore traditional subject matter in the art of the Turkish Republic and establish a dialogue with French Modern art. Before arguing these points it would be useful to look at and evaluate the general characteristics of the Group's art, along with their aims and success in the creation of Modernity in the art of painting especially between 1933 and 1938, during the time of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The information used in the discussion has been obtained through primary sources and their original writings. In the following chapter the biographical information and art concepts of the artists Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino, together with their aims, individual concepts of art and particular roles in the art of the period will be analysed on the basis of their works through the concept of translation.

The official establishment of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' in 1929 was quite significant in terms of the emergence of Modernity in the art of the new regime in the Western sense, which positioned the Group as the first artists to make a step in the direction of Modern art through Cubist and Constructivist attempts even if they were indecisive and uncertain steps in some aspects. Also, their first exhibition in Ankara in 1929 and then in İstanbul and in many other cities served to set the artists up as pioneers of Modernity.⁷¹ In the advanced stage they were compared with the Impressionist artists of the Callı Generation in 1914. They introduced the main features of Western Modern art to Turkish society by translating and appropriating the concept of Cubism from the French model. They contributed to the intellectual and technical development of Turkish painting by integrating the concept of Western painting into Turkish. The majority of artists in the

⁷¹ N. Berk, *Türkiye'de Resim [Painting in Turkey]* (İstanbul: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi Yayını, 1943), p. 37.

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Group mostly focused on the lines, patterns and structural integrity in their works along with the colourfulness of the Callı Generation.⁷² One of the pioneers of the Group, Nurullah Berk, left the Group while the Group was still active.

Painter, art critic and Group spokesman Nurullah Berk (1904-82) and painters Sabri Berkel (1907-93), Zeki Faik Izer(1905-88), Elif Naci (1898-1987) and Abidin Dino (1913-93) and sculptor Zühtü Müridoğlu (1906-92)⁷³ founded 'Group D' in 1933, which is the second and advanced step of the Cubist concept.⁷⁴ The Group was the fourth association of Turkish painters and sculptors. Its members tried to gain acceptance of Modern styles, Cubism and Abstract art by focusing on these concepts in their paintings. By doing so, they aimed to bring common Modern currents to Turkey and interpret composition in Cubism and Constructivism, which caused a debate among the scholars and critics of the time that contributed to the formation of a vivid artistic environment in Turkish art history.

The number of exhibitions and articles on art were raised over the 1930s by the activities of the Group. The French artist Léopold Lévy (1882–1966), who came to work in Istanbul from 1937 to 1949 as head of the department of painting at the Academy, revitalised Turkish art.⁷⁵ Art was used as a vehicle to reflect Republican ideals, therefore, it was encouraged and supported by the government during the 1930s. In this context, the exhibition *Revolution and the Arts* was organised to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Republic in 1933, which comprised portraits of Atatürk, commemorations of the War of Independence and the modernisation of Turkey.⁷⁶ These national as well as local themes were painted in Modern style to create a national identity and Modern national art by the artist-members of 'Group D'. Thanks to the Group's art, Turkish painting reached the level of actual Modern art in the Western sense by including the Western characters and contemporary art concepts of the time. In 1947, the renowned Turkish author and journalist of the time, Fikret Adil, published a brochure called 'Group D and Painting in Turkey (D Grubu ve Türkiye'de Resim)' and wrote the following with regard to the foundation of

⁷² T. E. Şahin, *Sanat Tarihi II [Art History II]* (İstanbul: Serhat Yayınları, 1995), p. 148.

⁷³ These founding members of Group D published the journal *Ar* and continued as a group until 1946.

⁷⁴ S. Başkan, *19.Yüzyıldan Günümüze Türk Ressamları [Turkish Painters from 19th Century to Present Day]* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991), p. 2.

⁷⁵ N. Micklewright, 'Turkey', *Grove Art Online: Oxford Art Online* (Oxford University Press, [n. d]), <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T086610> [accessed 11 July 2014].

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

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'Group D': 'In the fifth floor of the Zeki Faik İzer's house at Cihangir Yavuz Apartment, five painters and one sculptor gathered and founded an art community which they called 'Group D'.⁷⁷ The Group's name 'D' was derived from the fourth letter of the Turkish alphabet since the Group was the fourth artistic formation following in the steps of 'The Ottoman Society of Painters' (Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti) (1908),⁷⁸ 'Sanayi-i Nefise Union' (Sanayi-i Nefise Birliđi) (1926) and the "Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors (Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltraşlar Birliđi) (1928). The artists in the Group aimed to infuse Modern Art in Turkish Painting.⁷⁹

On this basis, then, the questions which arise are why did they found this Group after the 'Association of Independents'? What were the requirements and main reasons for such a formation? Was it a kind of avant-garde Turkish art originating in France? In the context of the formation of 'Group D' as a Modernist avant-garde organisation, Sibel Bozdoğan argues that the Group emerged in 1933 when historically the idea of a Modernist avant-garde in Europe emerged in the 1910s and 1920s. She explains as follows:

It is debatable to what extent Group D constitutes an avant-garde. The idea of a Modernist avant-garde, as it historically emerged in Europe in the 1910s and 1920s as a radical and subversive challenge to established artistic norms was by no definition, outside official ideology. It was an exaltation of individual creativity, not of the collective; an exploration of the abstract and universal, not of the figurative and local. Group D, on the other hand, was a product of the Kemalist period, when art was expected to have a larger social function, and national idealism above and beyond individualistic experiments. Like most artists and architects of the 1930s, Group D members also aligned themselves with the Republican People's Party (RPP) programme and contributed paintings to the inkılap exhibitions organised by the state.⁸⁰

With regard to the Group artists' perspectives regarding the issue, it is necessary to look at some primary sources available in the national newspaper, book and art magazines

⁷⁷ N. Berk; H. Gezer, *50 Yılın Türk Resim ve Heykeli [50 Years of Turkish Painting and Sculpture]*, 1.Baskı (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 1973), p. 52.

⁷⁸ The name 'Ottoman Society of Painters' was changed as 'Turkish Painters Association (Türk Ressamlar Cemiyeti)' in 1921, and then altered again as 'Fine Arts Association (Güzel Sanatlar Birliđi)' in 1926; for more detail, see Başkan, 'Türk Resim Sanatında İlk Sanatçı Birliđi [First Artist Association in Turkish Art of Painting]', p. 32.

⁷⁹ H. Elmas, *Çağdaş Türk Resminde Minyatür Etkiler [Miniature Effects in Contemporary Turkish Painting]* (Konya: n. p. , 2000), p. 58.

⁸⁰ Bozdoğan, 'Art and architecture in modern Turkey', p. 437.

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of the time as well as Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino's writings and articles. In fact, their attempts were actually seen as a formation of an avant-garde movement, unlike in Europe in some aspects, as Bozdoğan mentions. This can be seen in their writings in newspapers and magazines of the time. In this context, one of the significant painters' writings, Abidin Dino, in the 'Ses (Voice)' magazine in 1939, cited in Sezer Tansuğ's book, outlines their aims and the deficiencies in Turkish painting at that time. Dino says that the efforts of the young artists which came before them did not go beyond the painting of the common street around Taksim in Istanbul and therefore the development of Turkish painting had been delayed by around fifty years when compared to European Art.⁸¹ Thus, their initial aims were to bring and integrate common Modern Western art currents to Turkey in order to reach the level of European Art. To do this required an investigation of the Cubist and Constructivist composition, which derived from European Modern currents, and were based on a solid pattern and a constructive structure.⁸²

Another artist and spokesman of the Group, Nurullah Berk, in his writings in 1938 in the art magazine called 'Ar', first published in 1937, of which he was director and founder, provides further information regarding their aims and the existence of the Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum as a great work of the Turkish Republic for national art in comparison with the past.⁸³ He states that the Museum is the first great building which was built by the Republic to preserve the national cultural values, including paintings and sculptures from the 19th to the 20th centuries. These works housed in the museum reflect the process of reality; affliction, distress and national struggle, from the past until that day⁸⁴ He further states that the Group members have quite a significant role to play in the rise of the Turkish plastic arts which will be given to the Museum as first examples of the genre in Turkish painting by the Group artists.⁸⁵

⁸¹ S. Tansuğ, *Resim Sanatının Tarihi [History of Art of Painting]*, 3. Basım (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1995), p. 181.

⁸² Ibid. pp. 181-182.

⁸³ N. Berk, 'Cumhuriyetin Büyük Bir Eseri: Resim ve Heykel Müzesi I [A Great Work of the Republic, Painting and Sculpture Museum I]', *Ar*, 4, April, 1938, pp. 10-122, provided by Z. C. Bayer, 'Cumhuriyet Dönemi (1923-1950) Türk Ressamlarının Türk Resim Sanatının Gelişimine Yazıları İle Katkıları [Contributions of the Turkish Painters of Republican Period (1923-1950) to Development of the Turkish Art of Painting by Their Writings]', PhD diss., Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2009, pp. 617-619.

⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 617-619.

⁸⁵ Ibid. pp. 617-619.

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Cemal Tollu, spokesman and artist of the Group, gives his perspective in an article entitled '*We need to promote our presence in the world of art*' (Sanat aleminde Varlığımızı tanıtmalıyız) published in the Vatan Newspaper, a national publication, in 1944. He outlines the artistic status of the time, the deficiencies and contribution of the Republic to art and what is needed to introduce Modern art in Turkey.⁸⁶ This article throws light on the Group's aims, contributions and the reasons for establishing a dialogue with Western art through the concept of translation built upon the European model. In this context, he claims that the Group artists did not see any reason to imitate the past and other Western arts, they aimed to raise the level of national art by focusing on the traditional and national values taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the Republic for the emergence of national art and identity in art.⁸⁷ To succeed in doing this the Group members should be aware of their abilities and should introduce their art to the public through exhibitions. He exhorted the Group members not to suspect their own power and artistic associations or their new ideas.⁸⁸

In saying this, he draws attention to the distrust of the Turkish people, stemming from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, of the new artistic reforms of the Group and the people's lack of awareness of art and Modern ideas. In fact, he points to the successes of the past and the reason why Turkish painting looked upon the developed Modern European painting as a model despite the fact that Turkish Art had been quite rich and successful in terms of artistic and cultural value. The reality of an active artistic dialogue with France was to be considered through translation by the Group's young Turkish artists of French art and the Cubists of the time. The main reason for this dialogue could be said to be the desire and struggle to re-attain the artistic wealth and achievement of the past. This would be possible through adherence to the cultural, national and traditional values and subject matter integrated in the Modern concept and visual language of French Cubist stylisation and translating and appropriating in order to explore the traditional subject matter and construct the national identity in art which is inherently Turkish, without any passive influence and

⁸⁶ C. Tollu, '*Sanat aleminde Varlığımızı tanıtmalıyız [We need to promote our Presence in the world of art]*', *Vatan Gazetesi [Vatan Newspaper]*, 22 April, 1944, n. p. , provided by Z. C. Bayer, '*Cumhuriyet Dönemi (1923-1950) Türk Ressamlarının Türk Resim Sanatının Gelişimine Yazıları İle Katkıları [Contributions of the Turkish Painters of Republican Period (1923-1950) to Development of the Turkish Art of Painting by Their Writings]*', PhD diss. , Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2009, pp. 665-666.

⁸⁷ Ibid. pp. 665-666.

⁸⁸ Ibid. pp. 665-666.

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imitation. This contextual analysis shows that the D Group undertook the mission of being avant-garde in Turkey, by comprising a number of artists who could focus on figurative and local themes in painting, supported by the Republic, unlike Europe.

Tollu further affirms that there were not enough people who comprehended the meaning of the Group artists' works and critics to evaluate the value of their works at that time. He also mentioned the lack of art markets in the artistic environment of the period.⁸⁹ To solve these issues, he suggests that Turkish art and artists should start a dialogue with famous art centres in Europe through the provision of individual and state-funded opportunities. He also states that Turkish people and another artists and scholars of the time should trust and support the Group's art and activities.⁹⁰ In fact, these suggestions gave a clear signal of the need to establish a dialogue with Europe, meaning Paris in France, due to this being the artistic centre of the period hosting very well-known pioneers of Modern art. The origin and process of this establishment of dialogue with France has already been analysed in previous sections. The argument regarding this dialogue through the concept of translation, which is not a passive influence but something very active, based on the model of French Cubism in order to create Turkish Cubism based on a National Modern art and identity performed by the most significant members of Group D, namely Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Abidin Dino, will be analysed through the artists' works painted between 1928- 38.

⁸⁹ Tollu, 'Sanat aleminde Varlığımızı tanıtmalıyız [We need to promote our Presence in the world of art]', pp. 665-666.

⁹⁰ Ibid. pp. 665-666.

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CHAPTER IV- TURKISH CUBISM

4. 1. The Introduction of Modern Turkish Cubists

4. 1. 1. The Case of Hale Asaf

Hale Asaf (1905, Istanbul- 1938, Paris) is the only female member of the Independent Painters and Sculptors Union founded by her peers in 1928 in Turkey. She went to Paris in 1920 to become a student of Namık İsmail and returned in 1924⁹¹ to study at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris. She became a student of Andre Lhote when she went to Paris again in 1927. The impact of Raoul Dufy, Henry Matisse and her other masters' art are obvious in her works.⁹²

Moreover, she was Mihri Müşfik's niece and like Mihri she spent her life in various countries. Her life was quite similar to her aunt's. After secondary school, she visited her aunt in Rome and continued studying with Namık İsmail in Paris. She then succeeded in entering the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts in the following year. She returned to Turkey in 1928 after several years of poor health and then studied alternatively in İstanbul, Munich (with Lovis Corinth) and Paris (with Andre Lhote).⁹³ She was appointed as an art teacher at the Bursa Teaching College. The pressure on her as a woman in a provincial city was so great that she and Mahmut Cuda (1904-1987), a close friend from Paris, agreed to trade positions, enabling her to teach at the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts in 1929. In the same year, she became one of the founding members of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors'.⁹⁴

Hale Asaf is known as a significant proponent of Cubism in Turkish painting. She went to Paris in 1930 to take part in the Montparnasse Summer Exhibit, where she met the anti-Fascist Italian author Antonio Aniante. Accepting his invitation to live with him in Paris, she started to work for the Galerie Librarie Jeune Europe, of which he was the director. Impoverished, she died of cancer in 1938.⁹⁵ The works of Hale Asaf, as pioneer and initiator

⁹¹ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in Turkish Painting]', pp. 82-84.

⁹² Ibid. pp. 82-83.

⁹³ W. M. K. Shaw, 'Ten Long Years of War' in *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London: I. B. Tauris&Co Ltd, 2011), p. 139.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 139.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 140.

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of the Independent Group, are analysed below in terms of subject matter and style in relation to the Cubist style and French fashion through the concept of appropriation from the French model.

4. 1. 1. 1. Analysis of the Hale Asaf's works in the context of Appropriation

Appropriation should be taken into consideration in the development process of Modern Turkish art of painting particularly during the time when the new Republican regime and art succeeded its previous generation's regime and art after 1923 under the leadership of Atatürk who played a significant role in leading the artistic activities and their content to reach the level of European art as well as introducing the European lifestyle and new artistic trends to Turkish society through appropriating the fashion as well as translating the visual and technical characteristics of European models. These aims were executed by many well-known Republican artists in diverse concepts, not only by translating from French models through representations of traditional and local themes, but also by taking advantage of the visual language of French Cubism, which is inherently Turkish, as seen in 'Group D' Tollu, Berk and Dino's paintings and by appropriating the Modern European fashion from the French model, which is the case for Hale Asaf, a member of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' in the self-portrait painted after she returned from Paris in the 1930s. Therefore, Asaf's works, portraits and self-portrait, will be analysed in terms of appropriating the fashion through her connection with Andre Lhote.

Appropriation in the visual arts has been quite significant in the history of art and can be traced back to Cubism and continued in practice through the activities of later modern movements. There have been different definitions of the concept according to the situation. The definitions which will be used to analyse the case of Modern artists is 'the use of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation applied to them'⁹⁶ and 'the taking over, into a work of art, of a real object or even an existing work of art'.⁹⁷ In visual arts, especially in painting, appropriation is more accurately defined as properly adopting and borrowing the sample aspects or the entire form of artist-made work.

⁹⁶ I. Chilvers, et al. (ed.), *Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 27-28.

⁹⁷ S. Wilson and J. Lack, *The Tate Guide to Modern Art Terms* (London: Tate Publishing Ltd, 2008), pp. 20-21.

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Moreover, according to Robert S. Nelson, 'etymologically the word "appropriation" could hardly be more innocent and simpler, which is derived from the Latin *ad*, meaning "to," with the notion of "rendering to," and *proprius*, "own or personal," yielding in combination, *appropriate*, "to make one's own."⁹⁸ Likewise, the word also means to take something for one's own use in the present day, which is not passive, objective or disinterested, but active, subjective, and motivated.⁹⁹ Its application to art and art history is quite recent and relates to the artwork's adoption of preexisting elements. It is completely different from the traditional terms of art history, such as "influence" which is passive, as Baxandall argued that influence occludes actor and agency,¹⁰⁰ conversely, "appropriation" locates both in the person of the maker or receiver.¹⁰¹

Moreover, appropriation can sometimes involve the artist's personal vision and it may or may not involve cultural relocation or updating of some form and this reinterpreted act can involve the movement into a new generic mode or context.¹⁰² However, it is often an inescapable fact that a political or ethical commitment can shape the artist's decision to re-interpret another culture's fashion through the content or the entire form of work of art.¹⁰³ Furthermore, appropriation actually affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain.¹⁰⁴

On this basis, in the context of Modern Turkish painting in the 1930s, the most appropriate definition of "appropriation" to define the case of Turkish artist, Hale Asaf, is the recontextualisation of whatever is borrowed to create the new work, without any attempt to modify the pre-existing work's original value in most cases. Asaf's works can be seen and analysed in this context of appropriation, which connotes the aim to introduce the European lifestyle, fashion and developed artistic style to Turkish society in order to construct the national identity.

⁹⁸ R. S. Nelson, 'Appropriation' in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed by R. S. Nelson and R. Shiff (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 161-162.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 162.

¹⁰⁰ Baxandall, 'Excursus against influence' pp. 58-62.

¹⁰¹ Nelson, 'Appropriation' pp. 162-163.

¹⁰² J. Sanders, 'Introduction' in *Adaptation and Appropriation: the New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-14.

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp. 1-14.

¹⁰⁴ J. Sanders, 'What is Appropriation?' in *Adaptation and Appropriation: the New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 26-32.

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In this context, Asaf's works can be seen as having the first traces of cultural appropriation, in the introduction of forms of dress and personal adornment from French culture in her 'Self-portrait' (Otoportre) painted in 1938 (fig. 13), which will be analysed through the concept of appropriation in this context. When looking at the portrait and self-portrait, which are well-known among her works, in terms of form, the main characteristics of French Cubism in relation to the art of Andre Lhote, as well as the impact of Raoul Dufy and Henry Matisse in terms of the use of colours can be easily seen. The artistic features which were derived from her experience in European art centres, especially while working with Lhote in Paris, are evident in her art which demonstrates a lyricism that appears with broad brush strokes and the use of contrast colours and the effect of light and shade. This is also evident in her ability to successfully give form without going into the details of figures and objects and using minimum colour, which matches with her master's art concept as mentioned above.

These stylistic similarities with Lhote also bring in some similarities with Modern elements with regard to fashion which do not match with the fashion of the time in Turkey but inherently reflect Parisian fashion as seen in the self-portrait of Asaf as a self-representation of the artist's own appropriation. Evidence of Asaf's appropriation from Parisian fashion through Lhote's work is seen in a portrait by Lhote 'Portrait de Anne' (fig. 14), painted in 1925 when he was often seen primarily in the context of French art and was highly influential on an international level.¹⁰⁵ In the painting, Lhote clearly represents the general characteristics of his Cubist form reflecting the popular Modern fashion of women at the time, illustrated through the sharp lines that delineate the detail of the woman figure and dress, the stylistic long yellow coat which is in harmony with the yellow hat and the plaited dark blue kirtle which stresses her high status in society. Likewise, the contrasting use of light and dark colours in the foreground and background and the effect of light and shade without specific detail creating a general perception of the form is also seen in Asaf's self-portrait.

In the painting, Lhote actually reflects the general characteristics of French fashion through the fashionable representation of the woman to emphasise the high status of the

¹⁰⁵ D. Robbins, 'Lhote, Andre', *Grove Art Online: Oxford Art Online* (Oxford University Press, [n. d]), <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T050818> [accessed 11 July 2014].

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woman and her clothing style represented in Cubist style. This entire form and representation of a Parisian woman by Lhote can be seen in the self-portrait of Asaf, who appropriates the Parisian fashion through her master, Lhote's, work by reinterpreting the same fashion and style on the self-portrait which represents herself as a Turkish woman. This is not a passive influence which occludes actor and agency and it is not imitation of the original, but is an active reinterpretative act, located both in the person of the maker and receiver, involving movement into a new generic mode or context. Also it is an act which reflects the artist's personal vision, own decision as well as her aim to create a Modern national art and identity by appropriating Parisian fashion through the form and content of the work painted by Lhote who had originally represented it from his own culture.

4. 1. 2. The Case of Nurullah Berk

Nurullah Berk (1906, Istanbul- 1982, Istanbul) studied and graduated from the Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul in 1924 and then went to Paris to work at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts with Ernest Laurent.¹⁰⁶ He founded the 'Independent Painters and Sculptors Union' after returning to Turkey from Paris in 1928 when the Turkish Republic was declared by Atatürk.¹⁰⁷ He then left the Group due to the lack of any new philosophical ideas in the group. In 1932 he returned to Paris in order to study in the workshop of the well-known European Cubist artists André Lhote and Fernand Léger, whose art concepts and features can be followed through the works of Berk during these years.

These particular characteristics and style of Cubism are obvious in Berk's paintings, such as in 'Still-life with Playing Cards (İskambil Kağıtlı Natürmort)' (fig. 15) painted in 1933.¹⁰⁸ On returning to Turkey in 1933, he succeeded in becoming a founder member and spokesman of the 'D Group'. He had benefitted from the art concept of French artists in relation to Cubism and aimed to introduce it to Turkish painting in order to encourage Modern European artistic ideas in Turkey.¹⁰⁹ Following that, he became a teacher at the Fine

¹⁰⁶ Oxford Art Online, 'Berk, Nurullah', *Grove Art Online* (Oxford University Press, [n. d]), <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T008136> [accessed 11 July 2014].

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ K. Özsezgin, *Türk Plastik Sanatçıları: Ansiklopedik Sözlük [Turkish Plastic Artists: Encyclopedic Dictionary]* (Istanbul: YKY Yayınları, 1999), p. 109.

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Arts Academy and Director of the Museum of Painting and Sculpture in Istanbul. He also spearheaded the organisation of regional, national and international exhibitions of Turkish paintings together with the Turkish art scholar Suut Kemal Yetkin, as well as established the Turkish branch of the International Art Critics Association to write about both Western and Turkish art.¹¹⁰

4. 1. 2. 1. Analysis of the Nurullah Berk's works in the context of Cubist Translation

When analyzing Berk's art concept and style in the context of the history of art, it is obvious that his paintings generally draw attention to the main characteristics and technical visual language of French Cubism, such as cubic fragmentation with thick black contours, rather than particular representations of the Modern French culture and French Cubists' popular themes and subject matter. These characteristics can be seen in Berk's painting 'The Water Pipe Smoking Man' painted around 1933-34 (fig. 16), which shows the simplified and distorted forms of the human body represented through the formal language of Cubism in reference to the significance of perception of form, thick black contours and pattern as emphasised by Berk's French masters', Lhote and Léger's, styles.

Nevertheless, the subject matter is completely different from the French models, because 'The Water Pipe Smoking' has an oriental theme, which is typical of the Ottoman and Turkish culture but is not seen in Western European culture and which does not comprise any element and scene of Modern life. In the painting, Berk explores the traditional subject matter through taking advantage of the Cubist form using fractured planes and geometrical arrangements with the oval formal perception of the figure and objects, like Leger, defined by black thick lines and predominantly dark colours without any emotional expression of the figure in the composition. Therefore, it can be said that he did not exactly work in parallel to his French masters, who were renowned artists of European Cubism, in terms of subject matter and the idea of Modernity.

However, he perceived and translated the visual language of French Cubism, using the grammar of the Cubist language, into Turkish using a national and traditional base and

¹¹⁰ Oxford Art Online, 'Berk, Nurullah'.

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the French cubists' style in terms of form, pattern and formal structure. By doing so, he gave the concept of Cubism a diverse expression and action, which are inherently traditional and originating in Turkish culture, and a balanced harmony using hot and cold colours and applying the traditional motifs to the Cubist concept in order to create a different synthesis of East-West. Likewise, in Berk's other work 'Coffee' (fig. 17) painted in 1933, we can see similar attempts at the Cubist style and another example of translation performed by the artist from his French masters in terms of technique and style which show the main principles of Lhote and Leger's style, but the subject matter is again traditional and oriental looking. 'Odalisque' in French, which originated from Turkish 'Odalık' and which is derived from the Ottoman Turkish culture is also a common theme among artists during the 19th century. A similar theme was painted by Leger in a painting called 'Reclining Woman' (fig. 18) painted in 1922 and and by Lhote in a painting called 'Odalisque' (fig. 19) painted at an unknown date. The closeness of both masters' works to Berk is evident in the similarity of the themes and style and technique in his work.

Leger and Lhote's interests in Classicism during the 1920s can be seen in these works. The flat pattern, solid, machinelike imagery and colourful composition of Leger,¹¹¹ and the Cubist stylisation, decorative and dynamic surface and colourful, formal representation of Lhote¹¹² can be followed in Berk's composition in terms of the translation of technique and style. The formal and technical perception of Cubism is also obvious in the shape of the reclining woman's body in the resting pose and the decorative and colourful patterns of the figure's dress, which looks like a sleeping suit, with the jewels in the arm represented in an undetailed and general form and an oval head and body. Although the style demonstrates the characteristics of French Cubism translated by Berk in a unique form, the subject matter is completely traditional and cultural in every sense.

In a painting called 'Potter' (Çömlekçi) (fig. 20) by Berk, probably painted in the same years, Berk again presents a traditional theme using Cubist fragmentation. He uses the same visual language of Cubism, cubist fragmentation, executed on the objects of the composition with a colourful organisation of figure and objects around the figure divided into contours, translating the language in terms of style and technique, presenting excessive fragmentation

¹¹¹ J. Freeman, 'Leger, Fernand', *Grove Art Online: Oxford Art Online* (Oxford University Press, [n. d]), <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T050075> [accessed 11 July 2014].

¹¹² Robbins, 'Lhote, Andre'.

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of the figure, objects and space, as in his previous work 'The Water Pipe Smoking Man'. The subject matter is again traditional, a common profession in Anatolian culture, represented and explored through the concept of translation from the visual language of Cubism benefiting from the style of the French Cubists.

4. 1. 3. The Case of Cemal Tollu

Cemal Tollu (1899, Istanbul- 1968, Istanbul) lived in the Hijaz (now Saudi Arabia), where he received painting lessons from an Ottoman officer while he was an apprentice in a workshop. He started to study at the Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul in 1919, but in the following year he joined the forces fighting for Turkish Independence and continued to serve until 1923 as a cavalry lieutenant.¹¹³ He was then appointed as an art teacher at the Teacher Training College in Elazig and Erzincan in 1927.¹¹⁴ He then went to France and Germany and studied with painters Andre Lhote (1928), Hans Hofmann (1931), Fernand Leger and Marcel Gromaire and sculptors Charles Despiau and Marcel Gimond in 1932.¹¹⁵ On returning to Turkey, he participated in the first exhibition of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' (Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltıraşlar Birliği) and was a founder-member of the 'Group D' in 1933 and one of the members who were devoted to Cubism and Constructivism.¹¹⁶ He was appointed as an assistant director of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara and was then selected by Leopold Levy (1882-1966), head of the department of painting, to teach at the Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul, where he stayed until 1965.¹¹⁷ He was a pupil of Ibrahim Callı and of the French Cubists Lhote and Leger.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Oxford Art Online, 'Tollu, Cemal', *Grove Art Online* (Oxford University Press, [n. d]), <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T085427> [accessed 11 July 2014].

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ö. Altan, 'Cemal Tollu' *Akademi, Mimarlık ve Sanat [Academy, Architecture and Art]*, No. 2 July, 1964, p. 19.

¹¹⁶ Oxford Art Online, 'Tollu, Cemal'.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ A. K. Gören, 'D Grubu ve Türk Resminde Yeni Bir Dönem [Group D and A New Era in Turkish Painting]' in *50. Yılında Akbank Resim Koleksiyonu [Akbank Painting Collection in the Fiftieth Years]* (İstanbul: Akbank, 1998), p. 84.

4. 1. 3. 1. Analysis of the Cemal Tollu's works in the context of Cubist Translation

In his art, Cemal Tollu mainly focused on Hittite and Contemporary Western art by painting in many diverse genres, including figures, landscapes and portraits in the distinctive architectonic and volumetric forms of the Cubist style and the heavy and blunt forms of Hittite Art.¹¹⁹ He succeeded in integrating the Western Modern style with local and traditional cultural values, which can be seen in the works produced in this period. To what extent his works reflected the concept, style and visual language of his French masters Lhote and Leger will be analysed below in terms of how this active dialogue was reflected in the artist's works through the concept of translation. The works produced during the 1930s reflect his struggle with form to create his individual monumental and volumetric expression, and formal approach which was derived from his study with Andrea Lhote at the Academie Montparnasse in Paris, like his peers at that time.

His contribution to the Modernisation of Turkey can be followed through his unique style; a geometric-based formal attitude, integrated with traditional regional Anatolian themes. At first, this individual Cubist stylization is evident in his self-portrait and figure studies done in 1932-33. In this context, when analysing his 'Self- portrait' (fig. 21) painted in 1933 and the portrait called 'Sacide Lady (Sacide Hanım)' (fig. 22) painted in 1933, we can see that he analysed the the human body and individual figure based on an understanding of deformation. He used mostly grey shades and shades of brown and bound the figure with prominent contours. In his self-portrait, he mainly uses dark colours giving the perception of a general form without any detailed and colourful representation. The same approach and perception are recognisable in the portrait of 'Sacide Lady'.

In Tollu's painting 'Goats in Ankara (Ankara'da Keçiler)' (fig. 23) painted in 1933, the unique style and subject matter are obvious, reflecting Tollu's own concept which consists of his own cultural and national values and his grammatical formal visual translation of the Cubist concept learned from Cubist French models. That is to say, although the content involves a regional theme, the Ankara Goats, which are famous and very well-known in the capital city of Turkey and known as a symbol of the city the form and style are definitely Cubist which inherently presents the formal characteristics of the French cubists, especially

¹¹⁹ Gören, 'D Grubu ve Türk Resminde Yeni Bir Dönem [Group D and A New Era in Turkish Painting]', pp. 84-85.

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Lhote. Cubist fragmentation and sharp lines with the formal perceived figures in an undetailed representation show the technical and stylistic features of French Cubism, which enable the artist to explore the traditional subject matter and cultural values through Modern cubist stylisation. In the painting, the horizontal movements of the goats are offset by the vertical movements of the human figures. Tollu painted a daily subject, shepherds and goats, with plain colours emphasising the requirement that the regional national and traditional cultural values should be painted and explored within the Modern language of Cubism rather than untraditional and unusual Western themes and subject matter. These unmatched characteristics of Tollu's art provide the main principles and requirements to be followed for the establishment of Modern national art and identity.

Tollu's other work 'Peasants Reading Alphabet (Alfabe Okuyan Köylüler)' (fig. 24) painted in 1933 for the Revolution Exhibition which was organised for the tenth anniversary of the declaration of the Turkish Republic, 29 October 1933, on the initiative of the Minister of National Education Reşit Galip, is exhibited in Ankara as an artistic document aimed to reflect the developments of the Republic in the ten years under the leadership of Atatürk.¹²⁰ The exhibition's emphasis was on the themes that comprise the Turkish Independence War and the Revolution of the Republic, but the technique was used by the artists and the method of the paintings were completely derived from the artistic knowledge of Modern Europe, for instance, Cubism and Constructivism.¹²¹ Also this exhibition was continued until 1936 and mainly represented the themes of the Turkish Revolution in order to popularise the art and raise social awareness of the imagery of national identity.¹²² Like his peers in 'Group D', Cemal Tollu also served this aim of the Republic and became an important artist who produced works for the exhibition.

As for Tollu's work mentioned above for this exhibition, he refers to the revolutionary idea of having education for women and its development after the 'Revolution of Letters', that is the adoption of Latin letters to create a National alphabet in 1928 by Atatürk. In the painting, the main figure is a woman reading and learning the new letters while working in

¹²⁰ N. Öndin, *Cumhuriyet'in Kültür Politikası ve Sanat 1923-1950* [Cultural Policy of the Republic and Art 1923-1950] (İstanbul: İnsancıl Yayınları, 2003), pp. 223-225.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 223-225.

¹²² *Ibid.* pp. 223-225.

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the field of a provincial area. She is represented with two girls, who are probably her daughters, who are looking at the same point to read the letters, one on each side. They are represented wearing the peasant clothes of village life, but act as a symbol of a national peasant woman with enlightened understanding.

In this composition, Tollu represented the position of the woman which had been changed and developed in the 1928 revolution by Atatürk in the spirit of public education and which triggered an increase in the proportion of literacy in Turkey when compared with the past. Therefore, he draws attention to the benefits of the Republican revolution and the requirements of education and having equality between men and women in order to reach the level of contemporary civilisations, alluding to Modern West civilisations in every sense. In this case, art undertakes a mission to adopt innovations in society and was used as an instrument to spread the notion of a new secular and democratic regime. Artists like Tollu also undertook an important mission that positioned them as producers who carried and introduced the ideas of Modernity and revolution to all societies through regional and traditional visual themes of the Modern stylised paintings. Tollu represents and introduces not only the idea of Modernity in his paintings in the Cubist style through the translation of form and visual grammar of the French Cubism and formal representations defined by contours and dark colours and deformation like Paul Cezanne, Pablo Picasso and Lhote, but also the discourse and revolutions of the new regime on behalf of the nation to construct a Modern national identity and art in the Turkish Republic.

4. 1. 4. The Case of Abidin Dino

Abidin Dino (1913, Istanbul- 1993, Paris), one of the founder-members of 'Group D', started drawing and painting at a young age influenced by his family.¹²³ He lived in Geneva, Switzerland and France for several years with his parents, returning to Istanbul in 1925. Dino began his secondary education at the American high school Robert College of Istanbul, but left to dedicate himself to painting, drawing and writing.¹²⁴ In 1933, together with the other members of 'Group D' he began to work to instill a new perspective in Turkish painting,

¹²³ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in the Turkish Painting]', p. 103.

¹²⁴ C. E. Arseven, *Türk Sanatı Tarihi III [Turkish Art History III]* (İstanbul: n. p., 1996), p. 298.

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learnt during his years in Paris. This perspective focused on the importance of line and pattern drawn with shadowless thick contours, derived from Picasso's art.¹²⁵ After 1947 he went back to Paris to work and his artistic work since then is unknown.¹²⁶ Although his works technically reflect the general form and concept of French Cubism with reference to Picasso's concept in some aspects, the content of the works, their subject matter, remains regional and local, like Tollu's and Berk's, which creates a unique synthesis. Like them he focused on themes which represent the working class and local peasant typecasting in a peculiar manner.

4. 1. 4. 1. Analysis of the Abidin Dino's works in the context of Cubist Translation

Abidin Dino's art draws attention to the past and future as well as the living environment. Also, art, in Dino's perspective, encompasses the whole of experience, knowledge, object and formation covering the interests and areas of sensitivity of the artist from the past to the future. Thus, he built his art on the intellectual and visual basics.¹²⁷ Furthermore, his art, according to Berk, is reminiscent of the old Turkish miniature in terms of skillfully drawn lines,¹²⁸ and of the Modern style in the drawing of the pattern with shadowless thick contours in a way which is similar to Picasso and Cocteau's patterns,¹²⁹ which reflects the effects of East and West on his art. Given his artistic features and his concept of art in the Modern sense, it would help to look at and analyse some of the works he painted in the 1930s.

In the beginning Dino worked on the model of workers and villagers in a unique concept with the clear lines and patterns of Cubism, translating from the French model. These characteristics are evident in a painting called 'Miner (Madenci)' painted in 1933 (fig. 25), which externalises Dino's unique style, applying grey and dark hues together with thick

¹²⁵ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in the Turkish Painting]', pp. 103-104.

¹²⁶ Ibid. pp. 103-104.

¹²⁷ K. Özsezgin, *Türk Plastik Sanatçıları Ansiklopedisi Sözlüğü* [Encyclopedia Dictionary of Turkish Plastic Artists] (İstanbul: n. p. , 1994), p. 126.

¹²⁸ Berk, *Türkiye'de Resim [Painting in Turkey]*, p. 47.

¹²⁹ Berk, 'Türk Resminde Modern Eğilimlere İlk Adımlar [The First Steps to Modern Trends in the Turkish Painting]', p. 103; J. Erzen, 'Abidin Dino', *Boyut Plastik Sanatlar Dergisi [Boyut Plastic Arts Magazine]*, s. 23, İstanbul, 1984, p. 34.

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contoured brush strokes to delineate the contours of the face of the figure which is deformed to explore the general form without any particular detailed and idealised representation, as done by Picasso and Lhote. The significance of the execution of the formal perception and distortion opens the way to the oval representation and perception of the figure's face in Cubist language. In this context, one can say that he translated the style of Picasso in terms of form rather than content. In fact, Dino's translation from French Cubism in formal aspects demonstrates his interest in exploring the local subject matter, the representation of a miner, to create a unique synthesis by reflecting the reality of the life of the working class in Cubist language.

Using this language externalised the artist's creativity in terms of the representation of a social reality by taking advantage of the formal language of Cubism to depict the reality of the difficulties of the daily lives of the miners: the threat of poverty, obligation and the danger of death every single day, stemming from having to work under difficult conditions to survive in Turkey at that time which was experiencing the negative effects of Modern life. Therefore, Dino's translation of French Cubism in the painting 'Miner' highlights the impositions and realities of Modern life in Turkey through the fatigue reflected in the figure's face with dark and light shades, represented through the use of the universal visual artistic language of Modern Cubism on a local theme. On the basis of this analysis, therefore, this visual translation in form reflects the artist's aim to explore the local subject matter in order to construct a Modern national art and national identity.

In 'Composition (Kompozisyon)' (fig. 26) painted in the Cubist style in the 1930s Dino represents a peasant woman painted intensively in shades of blue and formed in the general geometric form of Cubism, which draws attention to the formal characteristics of Leger's style. Despite the fact that Dino was mostly interested in Picasso's style, this work demonstrates his interest in Leger's style too, through his formal fragmentation and oval representation of the peasant woman figure on a black background with clear lines and black contours delineating the form of the face and body of the figure, taking advantage of the contrasting use of light and dark and the use of black and blue shades. This similarity with Leger's work implies that Dino could have worked with Leger and analysed his style and composition in terms of formal structure rather than content when living in Paris just as Berk and Tollu had done. This similarity in form can be seen as Dino's formal translation of French

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Cubist Leger which is evident when comparing his work with Leger's 'Woman with a Book' (fig. 27) painted in 1923. It is known that Leger's style between 1918 and 1926 consists of flat objects with strong contours executed using mechanical themes, including the mechanical representations of figures which look like they are made of tubes and cylinders.¹³⁰

It seems evident, therefore, given Leger's formal structure, strong contours and oval cylindrical and mechanical representation of figures that in his work Dino is translating the form of the visual Cubist language of Leger's style. However, his subject matter and content remains completely different from Leger's. Although Leger represents an image of the Modern dressed Parisian woman figure, holding a book and flowers, painted as a representation of the European fashion and the wealth of Modern life as well as the high position of the woman in European society, Dino represents a picture of the local Anatolian peasant woman figure represented wearing the old-fashioned dress and scarf surrounding her head and tied on her neck, painted as a representation of the Anatolian peasant fashion and poor village life as well as the low status of the woman at that time in Turkish society when compared to Europe. Thus, on the basis of this analysis, it can be said that Dino translated the visual language of French Cubism into Turkish in terms of the form through the Cubist concept of Leger rather than the content, which led to the creation of a unique synthesis in Dino's art aimed at constructing a Modern national art for the purposes of 'Group D' and the Turkish Republic.

¹³⁰ Freeman, 'Leger, Fernand'.

CHAPTER V- CONCLUSION

In summary, during the 19th century, the western modality of art had affected the traditionally based Ottoman visual culture, which was inspired by the materials, methods and practices of the Western artistic tradition. These changes were at first to be seen on the walls and ceilings of westernised architecture and then in paintings. This change continued into the 20th century in the Turkish visual culture, which was a continuation of the culture of the Ottoman Empire constructed upon Ottoman heritage. In particular, this inclination of the Turkish art towards Western art and its Modern concept was seen in the paintings as well as in the architecture of the new Republic. In the context of painting, as analysed through the works of the Turkish artists in Chapter 4, the purpose of the artists in constructing a Modern National art and identity in the art of the Republic can be followed through the adoption of the form of Western art rather than its content, that is to say, the content is inherently local and traditional and does not include any Western themes but the form is completely Western and adopts the modern styles, Cubism and Constructivism, which signals the construction of a new national identity connected with the West.

The perception of modernity in Turkey through the artistic activities of the Republican artists is not an imitation of the West and does not follow a singular path based on the adoption of practices introduced through varied forms of direct, indirect and self-imposed imperialism. Instead these artists create new ways which amalgamate Western and modern practices with local and traditional practices. By doing so, a new form of Turkish modernity was created alongside the many types of modernity in the world. This form of modernity can be considered as a different form which is a kind of displacement that took place when the revolutionary reformism of the Turkish Republic modified the modes of production of society. Although the assumption that modernisation is purely mimetic and that this mimesis can be successful becomes profoundly ideological, this obvious adoption of modernity serves the aim of modernisation for unmitigated success despite the existence of inherent divergences and contradictions in Turkey. Therefore, the perception of modernity in Turkish painting comprises the inherent content of Turkish culture and the form of Modern Western art within the modernisation project of the Republic. The art of the new regime relies on the themes and metanarratives of modernisation and national identity as undertaken by the Republican artists who were sent or went of their own accord to

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European artistic centres including Paris and Munich and who experienced Western painting through their Modern masters during the 1920s and 1930s. These attempts generated a unique concept of Modernity that reflected the transformation of the tradition which occurred through the adoption of Modern European cultural practices and their adaption to local cases and values.

In general, Modern art movements came into being at the beginning of the 20th century with the accelerated development of technology and industry which modified the techniques and styles of art, as well as the subject matter which came to include mechanical and machinelike content painted in a mind-based interpretation that reflects artists' individual creativity in form. In Turkish paintings, this is the case for Cubist and Constructivist concepts in the art of painting, in contrast to the landscape tradition of the Impressionists which was restricted to the imitation of nature without any individual interpretation. Artists following Cubist and Constructivist concepts began to achieve a new dimension of experience and opinion, changing the concept of time and distance. The new political ideals were reflected through the visual language of painting; that is artists painted under the influence of the political regime and its ideals, such as the Kemalist regime in Turkey. They represented the atmosphere of the time and undertook the mission to introduce new developments, reforms and revolutions to the nation state. They also undertook to demonstrate the people's desires, local values, political revolutions and national and international events such as the Turkish Independence War and the First World War as seen in the analysis of some of their works in previous chapters.

Furthermore, Modern Turkish artists, particularly Tollu, Berk, Asaf and Dino, who are known as the pioneers of the Modern Turkish art of painting after 1923, brought the technique and style of Modern art as well as the style of Modern life by representing Modern fashion and appropriating from and translating the French Modern Cubist style, particularly with reference to Lhote's art. They achieved this thanks to their experience in France as observers of culture on behalf of Turkish society. In this context, they perceived the Cubist style as an art concept of the new regime by its innovative nature and Modern discourse which matched with the ideals of the Kemalist regime to construct a new national identity after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in every sense. Turkish Cubism, which is inherently oriental, local and traditional and constructed on Ottoman cultural values, in

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reference to the works of Tolly, Dino and Berk, was seen as an art style which instills the ideas and revolutions of the Kemalist regime into society. In this context, art played a key role in making people aware of the social, political and cultural developments at the time.

In France, in general, Cubism was not tied to any conventional ideology and political regime and contained every relevant form of traditional, commercial and technical element as an art of dynamic liberation. However, in Turkey, Cubism was tied to the Republicans political ideals and Atatürk's revolutions in the 1920s and 1930s, and served the aim of keeping pace with Europe in political and artistic aspects. The style was brought to Turkey from France as a result of the dialogue between the two cultures' visual language by the members of 'Group D', an avant garde group, who painted traditional, local and national themes in the form of French Cubism. Their works do not have any similarities with their French Cubist masters Lhote and Leger in content, but contain the same compositional structures and patterns which reflect the visual language of French Cubism in form in reference to the form of Lhote and Leger's works. Thus, their art, which is inherently Turkish, is the product of an active dialogue not of a passive influence, which is why the concept of translation has been chosen in this study to analyse their works as a reflection of the dialogue between French and Turkish art.

In the 1930s their art was used as a vehicle to represent and introduce the ideals of the new regime supported by Atatürk and the Republicans. This did not lead to any misleading or biased ideals. Their art was used to promote and publicise a particular national point of view which was useful in building a new identity in the Modern sense in order to achieve the ideal of reaching the level of contemporary civilisations, which by implication referred to the European civilisation. In this context, as discussed in Chapter 4, the works of Hale Asaf are also quite significant in terms of her cultural and artistic appropriation from the French model through her self-portrait in reference to the portrait by Lhote. She appropriated not only the form of the French master's work, but also its content which represented the Modern Parisian fashion appropriated through her self-representation. This is a case of the use of art as an instrument to introduce the Modern fashion of France to Turkish society by benefitting from the Modern concept of French Cubist language. It should not be forgotten that Asaf is a founder-member of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' which first introduced the idea of Cubism and Constructivism to the Turkish

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art of painting before 'Group D'. Asaf produced the works during the Atatürk period and her works also served his revolutionary ideals in the context of his modernisation project. Moreover, her self-portrait demonstrates the reinterpretation of Lhote in terms of form and content, unlike Tollu, Dino and Berk of 'Group D'. Therefore, in this case, she reinterprets both the visual language of French Cubism in form and the elements of French fashion in content. Thus the preferred method to explore and analyse her work in this study was through the concept of appropriation. Her work can be categorised as the product of cultural appropriation that served Atatürk's 'Clothing Revolution' in 1934 which prompted women to wear Modern clothes as fashionable in Europe at that time.

To sum up, taking into consideration all the points mentioned above, it can be said that art played a public role through the activities of the artist members of the Republic and their desire to disseminate Modern discourse and the principles of Modernisation. The activities of the 'Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors' and 'Group D' members were quite important in the context of the Modernisation project and in constructing a Modern national art and identity to reach the level previously held by Turkish art. To achieve this aim, the artists demonstrated how their efforts functioned to prompt revolutions and regime change; acting as a different decisive formation of avant garde supported by the Republicans. Their art followed the official ideology and explored traditional, local and national themes and values; they did not give rein to their individual creativity and explore the abstract and universal positioned outside the political ideology. They positioned their art as products of the national ideology and the main instruments of Modernity in Turkish society and art in the context of the Modernisation project, which marks the artists as pioneer representatives of Modernity and the first formation of an avant-garde group in Turkish art. To conclude, their works contain similar characteristics and serve the same aim, which is not an imitation of French Cubists in the context of traditional passive influence, but as products of an active dialogue between two visual languages through translation and appropriation, in the case of Tollu, Berk and Dino by taking the form of the Modern French Cubist language, and in the case of Asaf by taking the form and content to integrate Modern French fashion into the Turkish visual culture and art in order to create a national identity.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1: Nazmi Ziya Güran, *Çamlıca'dan* [From Camlıca], 1914 (?)



Fig. 2: Hikmet Onat, *Kuzguncuk Sırtlarından* [From the ridges of Kuzguncuk], 1917 (?)

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Fig. 3: Hüseyin Avni Lifij, *Haliç'den [View From Halic]*, 1908-9 (?)

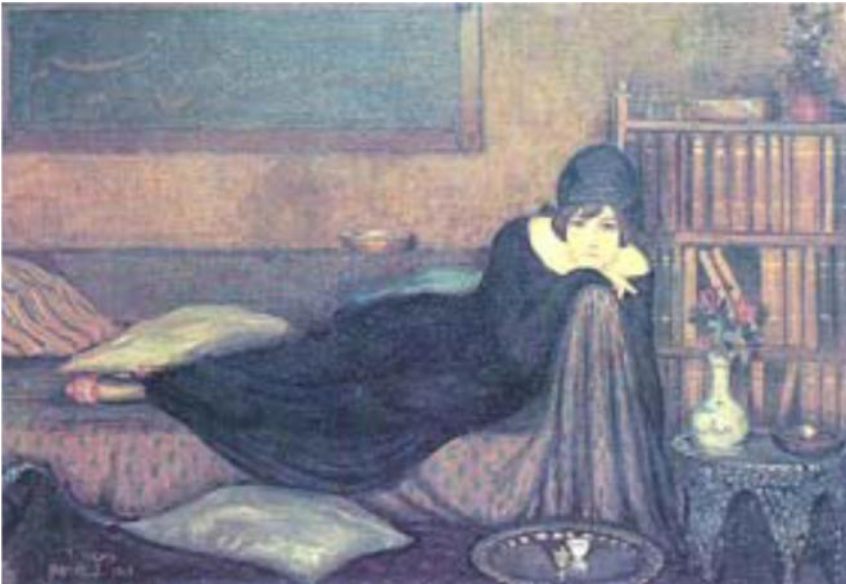


Fig. 4: Namık İsmail, *Sedirde Uzanan Kadın [Woman lying on couch]*, 1917

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Fig. 5: İbrahim Çallı, *Genç Kız* [Young Lady], 1910s (?)



Fig. 6: Feyhaman Duran, *Köpekli Kız* [The Lady with Dog], 1910s (?)

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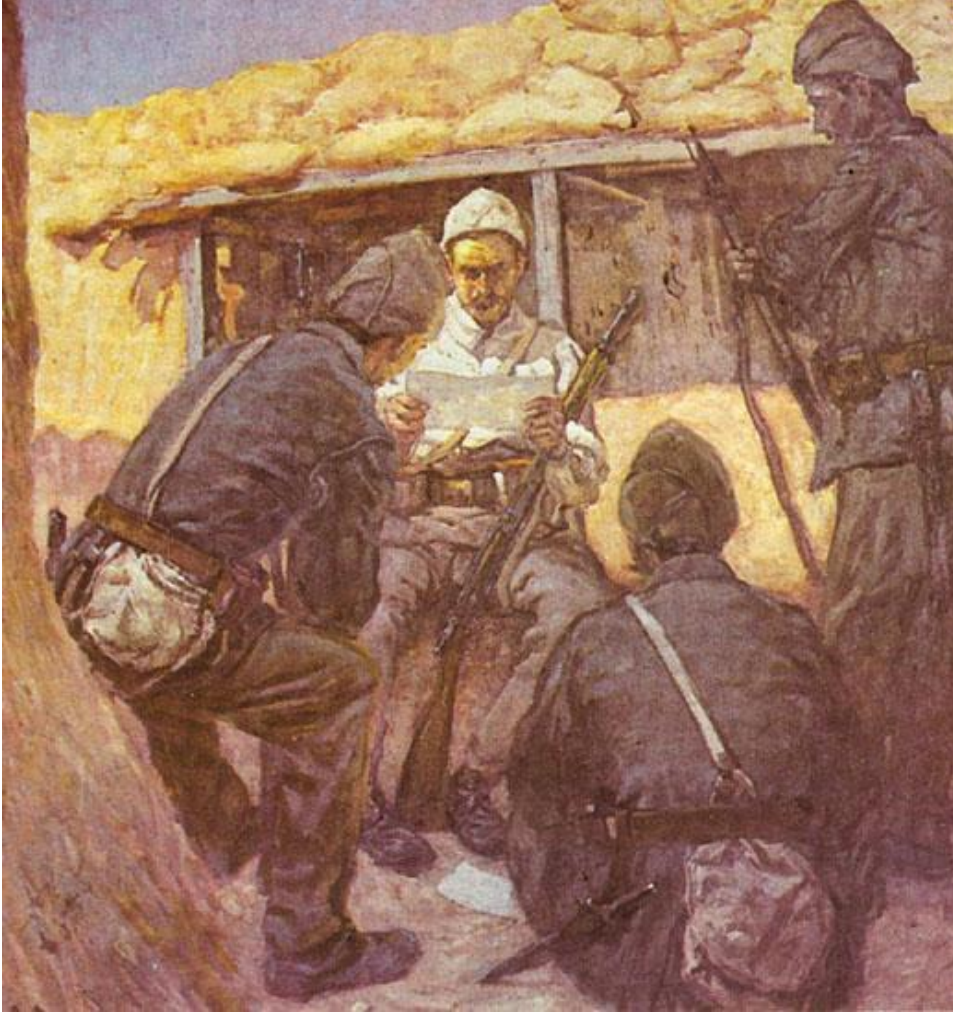


Fig. 7: Hikmet Onat, *Siperde Mektup Okuyan Asker* [A Soldier Reading the Letter in Bulwark], 1917

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Fig. 8: Nazmi Ziya Güran, *Kemal Atatürk*, 1915

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Fig. 9: Hüseyin Avni Lifij, *Ressamın Kendi Portresi* [Self-portrait], 1908-9



Fig. 10: Şeker Ahmet Paşa, *Otoportre* [Self-portrait], 1870s (?)



İnkılap Yolunda / Zeki Faik İzer

Fig. 11: Zeki Faik İzer, *İnkılap Yolunda* [On the way of Revolution], 1933



Fig. 12: Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830

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Fig. 13: Hale Asaf, *Otoportre [Self-portrait]*, 1938

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Fig. 14: André Lhote, *Portrait de Anne*, 1925



Fig. 15: Nurullah Berk, *İskambil Kağıtlı Natürmort [Still-life with Playing Cards]*, 1933 (?)

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Fig. 16: Nurullah Berk, *Nargile İçen Adam* [The Water Pipe Smoking Man], 1933

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Fig. 17: Nurullah Berk, *Kahve [Coffee]*, 1933



Fig. 18: Fernand Léger, *Reclining Woman*, 1922

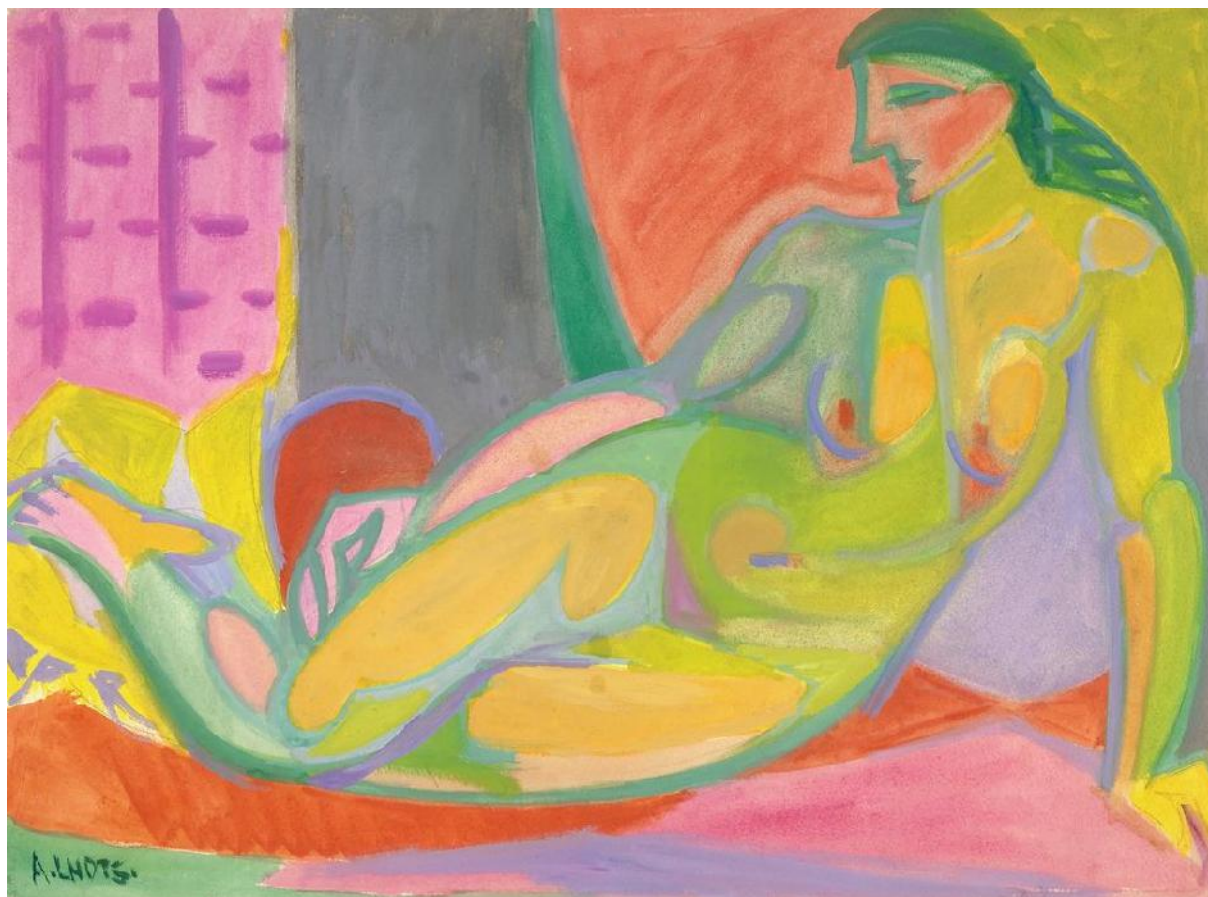


Fig. 19: André Lhote, *Odalisque*, n. d.

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Fig. 20: Nurullah Berk, *Çömlekçi* [Potter], 1933-4 (?)

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Fig. 21: Cemal Tollu, *Sanatçının kendi portresi* [Self-portrait], 1933



Fig. 22: Cemal Tollu, *Sacide Hanim [Sacide Lady]*, 1933

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Fig. 23: Cemal Tollu, *Ankara'da Keçiler* [Goats in Ankara], 1933 (?)



Fig. 24: Cemal Tollu, *Alfabe Okuyan Köylüler* [Peasants Reading Alphabet], 1933

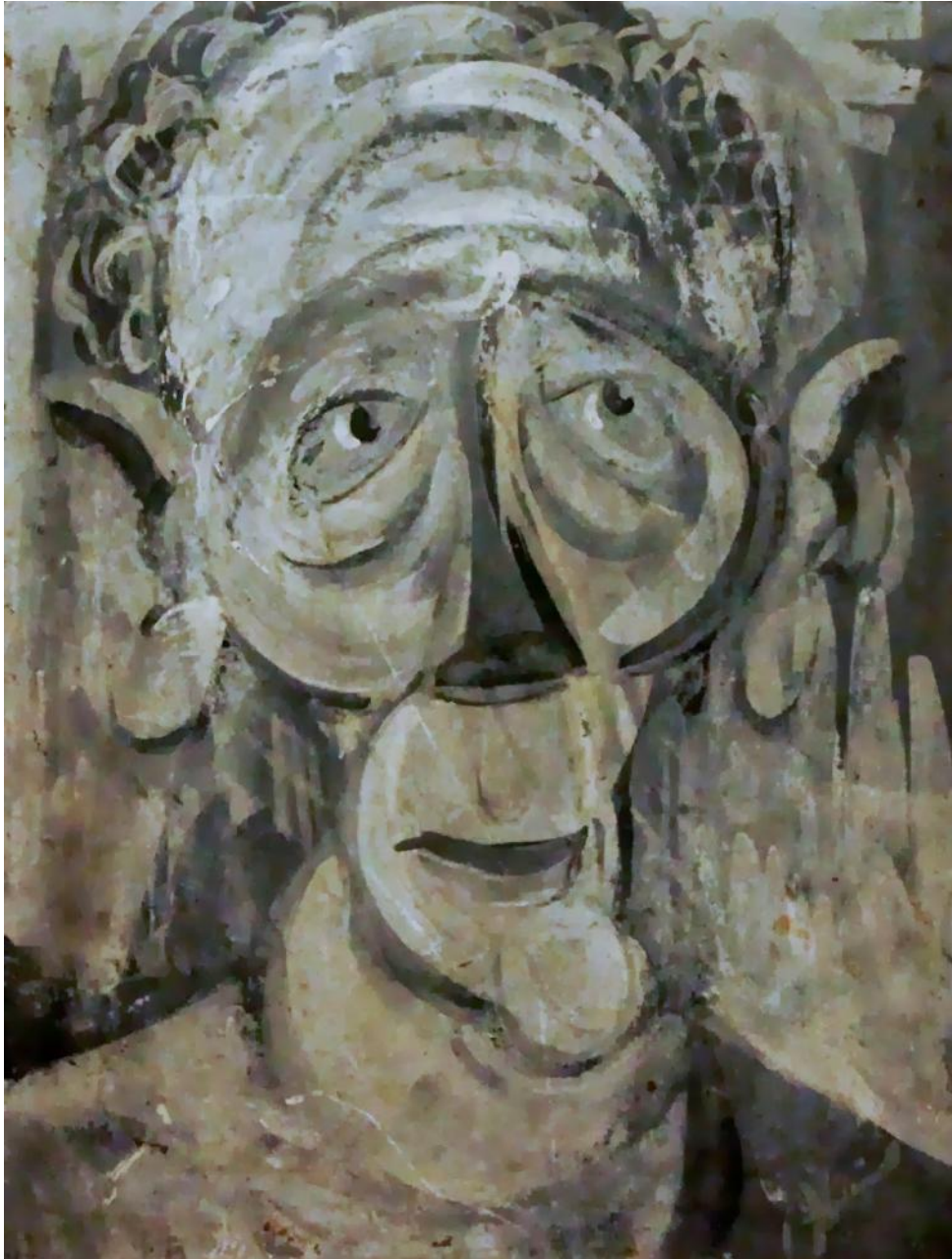


Fig. 25: Abidin Dino, *Madenci [Miner]*, 1933

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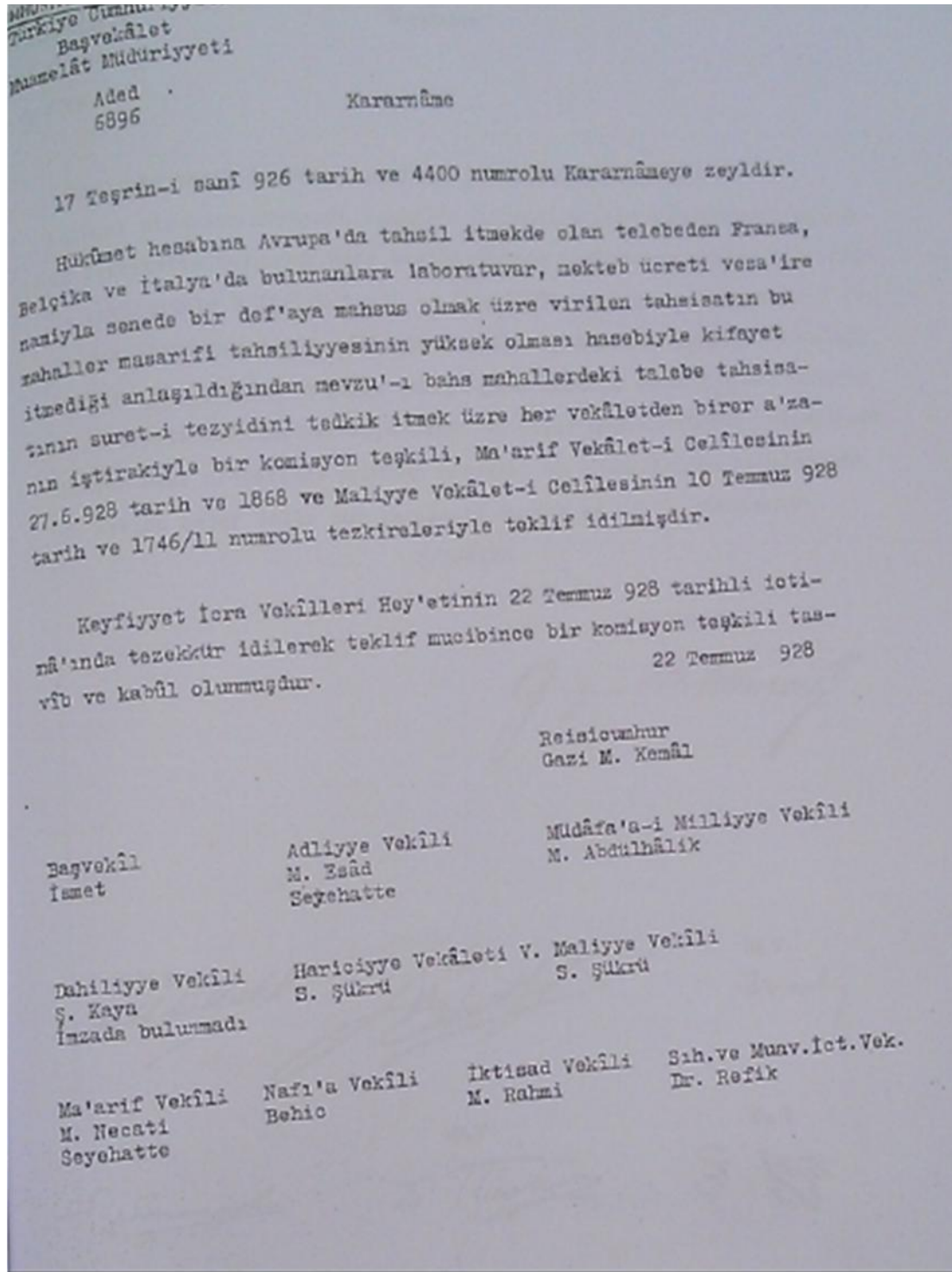


Fig. 26: Abidin Dino, *Kompozisyon* [Composition], 1930s (?)

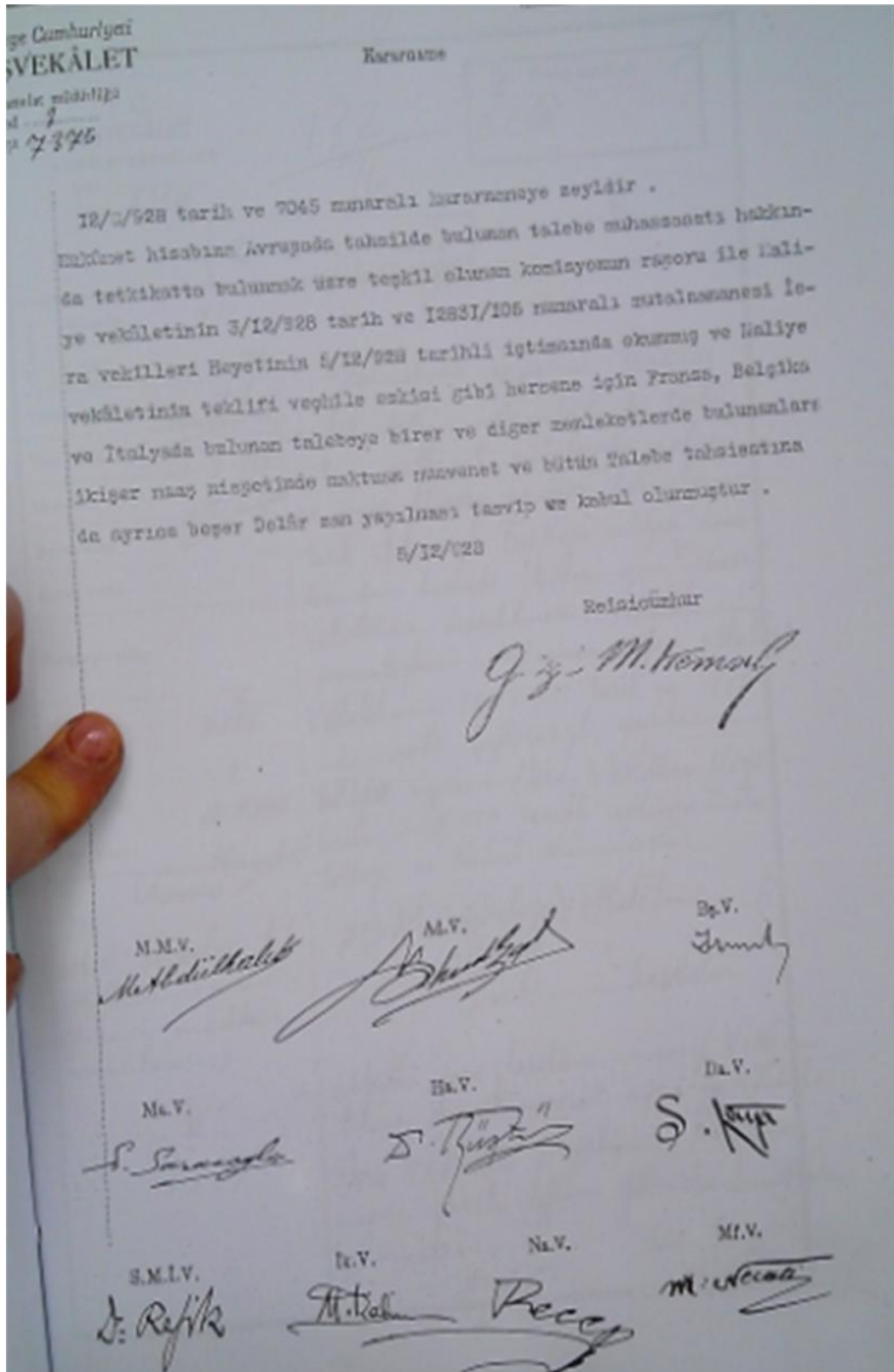


Fig. 27: Fernand Léger, *Woman With A Book*, 1923

APPENDICES



Appendix 1: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti: Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [Republic of Turkey: Prime Ministry Republic Archive], Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekalet Muamelat Müdüriyeti, Ankara, 22. 07. 1928, No. 6896.



Appendix 2: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti: Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [Republic of Turkey: Prime Ministry Republic Archive], Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekalet Muamelat Müdürlüğü, Ankara, 05. 12. 1928, No. 7375.

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