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Benevolent conquerors, besieged homelands, threated state: the reproduction of political myths in cold war Turkey

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CHAPTER II: Changing Balances of Political Power in the 1950s

2.1. Introduction:

The central tenet of the early Republican cultural ideals was the Turkish History Thesis, which eliminated the links with the Ottoman and Islamic pasts to raise the new nation-state to the league of ‘contemporary civilizations.’³⁸² This unique formula of westernization relied on a synthesis of a modernized version of pre-modern folk culture and Western civilization. The elites, then, embarked on a project of redesigning the multi-cultural heritage of Anatolia as homogeneous and idealized folk culture and importing models from the West mainly by ignoring the cultural capital.³⁸³ The reaction to the project under the influence of various political and social transformations between the 1950s-1980 was the gradual rise of nationalist and Islamic elements in politics, as well as the formulation of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis. This happened in the context of the rhetorical shift in the balance of political power in favor of the ‘common man’ vis a vis the westernizing military/bureaucratic elite. In addition to the transition to multiparty politics and the rise of the representatives of the industrial, commercial and landowning bourgeoisie, as a result, the rural to urban migration which made the rural population much more physically visible in cities, and the US and Turkey rapprochement in the Cold War political atmosphere which provided not only the surge of Americanization against the founding military/bureaucratic elite but also the necessary nationalist backdrop of the formulation of nationalist discourses during the period contributed to the changes in the balance power. All these, of course, reflected on widely consumed action/adventure films that reproduced nationalist political myths by manifesting the transformation of the ideal Turkish national from a purely Turkish and Western one into a Turkish and Muslim one.

Thus, this chapter focuses on the 1950s, which constitutes the start of the rhetorical shift in power balances and the beginning of the golden age of Turkish cinema in terms of increasing domestic production and consumption. The main question I am dealing with in this chapter is: How did the rhetorical shift against a backdrop of the Cold War influence the depictions of nationalist political myths in action/adventure films of the 1950s? Thus, for a full-fledged explanation of the context and its nationalist discourses, I also look at Turkey’s foreign policy

³⁸² Etienne Copeaux, *Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine: Tarih Ders Kitaplarında (1931-1993)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 29-78.

³⁸³ Gönül Paçacı, “Dar-ül-elhan ve Türk Musikisi’nin Gelişimi I,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, No: 121, Vol. 21 (January 1994): 48-55; “Dar-ül-elhan ve Türk Musikisi’nin Gelişimi II,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, No: 122, Vol. 21 (February 1994): 17-23; Koray Değirmenci, “On the Pursuit of a Nation: The Construction of Folk and Folk Music in the Founding Decades of the Turkish Republic,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (June 2006): 47-65.

stance. Finally, I argue that foreign policy dynamics reflected on the political myths hence the depictions of nationalism reproduced through films.

The chapter has been divided into two main sections. In the first, I explain political and social transformations that influenced nationalist discourses of the 1950s. This section has four sub-sections, which explain the ideological rise of the ‘common man.’ The first analyzes the political changes and elections, the second talks about migration, and the third deals with Turkey’s foreign policy choices. The fourth sub-section enriches the period’s ideological backdrop by referring to the rising popular interest in history and increasing intellectual production related to that. The second main section examines how the contexts mentioned in the first part might have influenced the depictions of nationalism in action/adventure films of the period. This section is again divided into three: the first presents the historical development of cinema in relation to the transformation mentioned above, the second analyzes the films that take the Ottoman past as its center, and the third discusses the films displaying the War of Independence. All in all, this chapter aims to pave the way in revealing the transformation in Turkish nationalist discourses through time as reflected on the reproduction of political myths in action/adventure films with historical settings.

2.2. The Context:

2.2.1. The Encounter of the ‘Despotic Elites’ with ‘Common Man’ through political transformations:

The transition to the multiparty regime in 1950 brought a rhetorical shift in the power distribution, mostly in favor of the landowning commercial and industrial elites represented by the DP challenging the military/bureaucratic elite of the CHP. In this new equilibrium, the DP made the propaganda of the power and potential of the ‘common man’ as the representative of the true ‘national will’ vis a vis ‘despotic elites.’ These changes complied with the expansion of Turkish cinema thanks to the rising domestic production and consumption. In fact, the whole atmosphere constituted a step toward transforming ordinary people’s imaginings of a political leader from the Europe-oriented military/bureaucratic elite into self-made, traditional, anti-intellectual, anti-elitist, and anti-bureaucratic man of the periphery. Unsurprisingly, this imagining formed the most significant characteristics of heroes in nationalist action/adventure movies that served to reproduce political myths.

The DP's establishment goes back to the split in the CHP due to a disagreement over a law draft about the land reform, which proposed redistributing land to peasants in 1945.³⁸⁴ Some landowners, including Adnan Menderes, a landowner and deputy from the province of Aydın, opposed the draft by arguing that this law harmed national sovereignty and the maintenance of democratic institutions. Later, a group of four CHP deputies formed by Celal Bayar, Refik Koraltan, Adnan Menderes, and Fuat Köprülü submitted the *Dörtlü Takrir* (Memorandum of the Four) in which they asked for the party's reform.³⁸⁵ In a very short time, Bayar and Menderes were dismissed from the CHP. For these two former members of the CHP, the Memorandum and what happened afterward put the CHP and its leader İsmet İnönü (1884-1973) in a conflicting position against 'democracy' and the 'nation's will.' In fact, this conflict shaped the DP's populist propaganda centered on the argument that the CHP acted against the nation like "enlightened despots," therefore, the only representative of the national will was the DP.³⁸⁶ From then on, any political parties in the DP line would make the propaganda that they were the real representatives of the Turkish nation as opposed to the despotic elites of the other side. This cleavage of elites and the 'real and legitimate citizens' would become one of the dominant themes of Turkey's political culture in justifying political power and how citizens identified with the leaders.

Indeed, the propaganda of the DP had some popular basis. As stated by both Zürcher and Eroğul, the state-centered modernization policies and radical reforms, including the suppression of expressing religious beliefs during the single-party era, had already created popular discontent.³⁸⁷ The government had also increased its role in the country's economy with the National Protection Law, which gave it full authority to control stocks and fix prices. Furthermore, to extract resources for the treasury, it imposed the wealth tax and soil products tax.³⁸⁸ The primary victims of the wealth tax were the wealthy, particularly non-Muslims, who

³⁸⁴ For a comprehensive presentation of the debates of the law draft see: Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de İki Partili Siyasi Sistemin Kuruluş Yılları (1945-1950): İkinci Parti*, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 182-228, 253-296.

³⁸⁵ Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti Tarihi ve İdeolojisi* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2013), 12-14.

³⁸⁶ Speech by Adnan Menderes, 9 September 1949 cited in Tanıl Bora, "Adnan Menderes" in *Türkiye'nin 1950li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015): 334. For speeches of Menderes see: Samet Ağaoğlu, *Arkadaşım Menderes* (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967), Mükerrer Sarol, *Bilinmeyen Menderes*, Vol. 1-2 (İstanbul: Kervan Yayınları, 1983), Talat Asal, *Güneş Batmadı-Müvekkilim Adnan Menderes ve Yassıada* (İstanbul: Selis Yayınevi, 2003).

³⁸⁷ Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti Tarihi ve İdeolojisi*, 76-81, Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 209-210.

³⁸⁸ İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin (eds.), *Savaşın İçinden Geleceğine Yönelen İkinci Dünya Savaşı Türkiye'si*, Vol. 3, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2013), 291-293; Güngör Özcan, "Demokrat Parti Döneminde Maliye Politikası," *CBÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (2014): 262.

were charged higher rates than Muslims.³⁸⁹ Apart from that, the soil products tax alienated landowners. Small landowners were the most suffered ones since they had to give 12 per cent of the grain they produced to the state.³⁹⁰ Those who failed to pay either of these taxes had to struggle with the oppression by state officers and gendarmerie, namely the militaristic and bureaucratic means of the state.³⁹¹ These developments were reviving people's bitter memories about *aşar*, the tithe taken from all agricultural produce by the Ottoman state.³⁹² Keyder and Birtek argue that, due to these policies, the CHP lost touch with large segments of the society, and the compromise between peasants and state was harmed³⁹³ as some portions of the population felt marginalized by the central authority. Besides, industrialists and commercial classes had memories of the etatist policies of the CHP and the bitter impacts of heavy taxation in their minds. In this context, the DP emerged as a new chain of equivalences, gathering different interests in one pot under the name of democracy and national will.³⁹⁴

The DP also attracted crowds by its so-called 'mission' of fighting for democracy on behalf of the 'common man' against 'despotic elites.' This was manifested in their election slogan of 'at last, the nation has the word,' meaning that the DP provided the first opportunity for the people to speak after they had been silenced under the leadership of the CHP. Until taking despotic measures to silence the opposing voices, the DP had the support of intelligentsia, press, and capital owners who visualized a democratic Turkey. Its populist discourse instilled hope in everybody, especially 'ordinary people,' by conveying that even the uneducated, lower class and rural citizens could have a word in politics like the 'modernized' or 'westernized' and 'privileged' military/bureaucratic elite.³⁹⁵ The economic well-being of the country also helped this optimistic ideological climate. The period of 1948-1954 was a time of rapid economic expansion, and the early fifties witnessed good harvests in addition to the Marshall aid that brought tractors and trucks to the countryside, which was a real revolution.³⁹⁶ Thanks to the austerity policy of the CHP during the war years, export revenues and purchasing

³⁸⁹ Ayhan Aktar, "'Tax me to the End of my life!' Anatomy of an anti-minority tax legislation (1942-3)" in *State Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945*, eds. Benjamin C. Fortna, Stefanos Katsikas, Dimitris Kamouzis and Paraskevas Konortas (London: Routledge, 2013), 188-220.

³⁹⁰ Şevket Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015), 207.

³⁹¹ Hasan Bülent Kahraman, *Türk Siyasetinin Yapısal Analizi-II 1920-1960* (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2010), 170.

³⁹² Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 208-209.

³⁹³ Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Birtek, "'Türkiye'de Devlet Tarım İlişkileri 1923-1950'" in *Toplumsal Tarih Çalışmaları*, ed. Çağlar Keyder (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 1983), 195.

³⁹⁴ Tanel Demirel, *Türkiye'nin Uzun On Yılı-Demokrat Parti İktidarı ve 27 Mayıs Darbesi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 52.

³⁹⁵ Tanıl Bora, *Medeniyet Kaybı: Milliyetçilik ve Faşizm Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 91.

³⁹⁶ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 226-228.

power of large commercial farmers had increased. With increasing imports in the first half of the 1950s, new products such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, record players, and automobiles were brought to Turkish markets, leading to the emergence of new consumption patterns in large urban centers in particular.³⁹⁷ These developments brought “an explosive rise in the average villager’s expectations of material improvement,” especially of those who recently migrated to cities even if income inequalities kept most segments of society from enjoying these imported goods.³⁹⁸

The embodiment of hope for the ‘common man’ and, in fact, anybody against the military/bureaucratic elite was Adnan Menderes (1899-1961), the chairman of the DP and a Prime Minister of the multiparty period. What made him appealing to the masses was, first, his background. Unlike many military/bureaucratic elites who were military school graduates, Menderes had studied at İzmir American College and then Ankara Law Faculty. His educational background had exposed him to western culture, American culture in particular, and liberal values. He chose law as his professional career, and his family owned one of the most productive farms in Aydın, Western Anatolia.³⁹⁹ His feudal and traditional connections that coexisting with his western style of education probably made him gain money independently from bureaucratic structures, unlike the founding elite, who dominated the single-party regime.

İnönü, on the other hand, was a military man, a hero of the War of Independence, the leader for life of the CHP until 1946, and the National Chief deeply respected as Atatürk’s closest friend. Even Menderes accepted İnönü’s charisma as he stated in one of his propaganda speeches: İnönü was a “great hero, a legendary rival” and “this country owes him a lot,” but himself was “a farmer whom the people came to know only recently.”⁴⁰⁰ This populist discourse and his background made Menderes the symbol of a discourse in favor of democratization by strengthening ‘common man.’⁴⁰¹ He was “a heroic figure” with an ordinary farmer background, “who defended the political and economic rights and interests of the ‘common man.’”⁴⁰² Besides, Aydemir states, people saw him as a visionary, a builder, and a developer who was not

³⁹⁷ Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 116-117.

³⁹⁸ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 230; Tunçay calls this period as “the hopeful years of democracy,” emphasizing the wave of optimism the new political system instilled on people, Mete Tunçay, “Siyasal Tarih, 1950-1960” in *Türkiye Tarihi*, Vol. 4, ed. Sina Akşin (İstanbul: Cem Yayınları, 1990), 178.

³⁹⁹ Bora, “Adnan Menderes” in *Türkiye’nin 1950li Yılları*, 331-351.

⁴⁰⁰ Metin Heper, “İsmet İnönü: A Rationalist Democrat” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, (eds.) Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari, (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2002), 25-44, p. 26, footnote 8

⁴⁰¹ Sabri Sayari, “Adnan Menderes: Between Democratic and Authoritarian Populism” in *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, 70.

⁴⁰² Bora, “Adnan Menderes,” 331.

scared of big numbers.⁴⁰³ In this context, in his voters' eyes, Menderes symbolized change, whereas İnönü was the symbol of elitism, bulky and corrupted bureaucratic structure, and *status quo*. This mindset can also be followed in the DP-controlled newspapers of the time. These were frequently full of news about İnönü's health, hearing problem, and medical test results confirming the outdated-old and sick bureaucracy. So, İnönü was presented as a *sakit* leader, an old and fallen one, who was no longer influential.⁴⁰⁴ This news, obviously, contributed to polishing Menderes' young and energetic image.

Furthermore, with trips and mass demonstrations around the country, Menderes and other DP members came closer to the nation, unlike the traditional elite, who was perceived as far from the periphery. According to Eroğul, the novelty of the DP method was clear: "a people who had had no say in its own destiny for centuries was suddenly thrust into the political arenas and began to scream its demands at the face of those in power."⁴⁰⁵ Menderes, then, promised to create a millionaire in every district, save the country from the gloomy prudence of the CHP and build 'Little America' with liberal policies based on entrepreneurship.⁴⁰⁶ These promises were not only optimistic but also motivating because they imposed the idea that 'ordinary men' could reach the top from nothing. That is, they did not need to be a member of the military/bureaucratic elite to be politically and economically powerful. Besides, according to Menderes' propaganda, the military/bureaucratic elite of the CHP was *devletlu* – the state elite-which controlled the country's economic life against the common man's interests.⁴⁰⁷ These resembled the Ottoman state's *kapıkulu*, *gedik* owners, and local notables in their obedience. Since the CHP had granted them some privileges, they fulfilled what the government wanted them to do without any problem. Therefore, in the eyes of the DP supporters, the idealized citizen was not a state officer but an entrepreneur who used his rationality to get richer and politically powerful.

⁴⁰³ "inşacı ve imarcıdır" according to Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Menderes'in dramı?* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1969), 217.

⁴⁰⁴ Süleyman İnan, "'Sakit İnönü' Muhalefette İsmet İnönü" in *Türkiye'nin 1950li Yılları*, 249-266.

⁴⁰⁵ Eroğul, "The Establishment of Multiparty Rule: 1945-71" in *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, eds. Irvin Cemil Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press), 105.

⁴⁰⁶ 15 May 1952, Balıkesir Speech in Bora, "Adnan Menderes," 341.

⁴⁰⁷ 1 October 1947 speech: "Vaktiyle Osmanlı Devleti denildiği zaman saray ve onun etrafında toplanmış kapıkulu, gedik sahipleri ve vilayetlerdeki eşrafin anlaşılması gibi, Halk Partisi sisteminde de seneler geçtikçe iktidarın etrafında koskoca bir zümrenin adeta devletleştiğine şahit olduk. Böye bir devlet anlayışının ilk neticesimemuriyet kadrolarını alabildiğine genişletmek ve bu suretle mümkün olduğunca geniş ve okumuş vatandaş kütlesini iktidarın emri ve un maişetiye bağlı hale getirmek oldu. Buna muvazi olarak da iktidadi hayatın memurlştırılması gayretleri sarf olunurdu. Bu suretle daha çok sayıda vatandaşarı işleriyle güçleriyle iktidara bağlamak imkanı elde edilmiş olacaktı." 13 February 1950 speech: Münevver ve okumuş zümreyi mümkün olduğu kadar Devle kapısına bağlamak, şuurlu hesaplı olmasa bile insiyaki olarak belirmiş bir temayüldür...Devletçilikte ölçünün kaybedilmiş ve aşırı hudutlara gidilmiş olmasında da bu teayül ve insiyakin tesirlerini aramak yerinde olur," cited in Bora, "Adnan Menderes," 341.

Pro-Islamic policies also captured the rural voters' hearts. The re-appropriation of the Arabic version of the azan, the increase in the number of mosques, the opening of religious schools, and the allowance of the sale of religious literature made the DP much more popular. When the economy started to deteriorate by the late 1950s, the DP increased Islamic symbols' use in its propaganda. It sought alliances with several religious communities, such as the Nurcu movement, to not lose its votes.⁴⁰⁸ Besides, from time to time, it utilized nationalist political myths to give the sense that the Greeks had threatened Turkey, and therefore, the DP should stay in power to protect the Turkish nation. A significant reflection of that on the streets was the 6-7 September 1955 incidents when after some nationalist speeches of Menderes, a street demonstration turned into vulgar plunder against non-Muslims of Istanbul.⁴⁰⁹ According to Zürcher, the incidents were not only attacks on non-Muslims but also a general attack on visible wealth by the inhabitants of the *gecekondus* and rural areas.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, the incidents could also be interpreted as the attack of 'unprivileged' lower classes on the 'privileged' classes. Although politically incorrect, it would still be enlightening to a certain degree to say that the incident could also reflect a conflict between potential DP supporters – 'the common man' - and the so-called 'elites.' This approach confirms the nationalist, anti-intellectual, anti-elitist, anti-bureaucratic, and populist discourse of Menderes.

Meanwhile, the 1950s also witnessed rural to urban migration leading to a ten per cent increase in the population of cities⁴¹¹, with İstanbul's population tripling between 1950 and 1970.⁴¹² This brought increasing encounters of the urbanites with those from the periphery,

⁴⁰⁸ Here it should be kept in mind that the DP's instrumentalist use of Islam does not mean that the DP gave up the Kemalist modernization project. It took measures to curtail the power of Islamist circles in *Büyük Doğu* and *Sebiülreşat*, which had intensified their propaganda against Kemalism. When Ahmet Emin Yalman, a journalist who had been criticizing the DP's increasing emphasis on Islam with the idea that it encouraged anti-secular groups in the country, was attacked and wounded in Malatya in 1952, the government arrested and imprisoned the Islamist groups organized the crime. Furthermore, in 1953, a law was enacted prohibiting the use of Islam as a tool for seeking personal and political interest which strictly prohibited propaganda attacking the secular character of the state. For a comprehensive analysis see: Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 89-96.

⁴⁰⁹ Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005).

⁴¹⁰ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 233.

⁴¹¹ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, *İstatistik Göstergeler-Statistical Indicators 1923-2009*, Publication No. 3493 (Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, 2010), 8-10, 27-28.

⁴¹² Michael N. Danielson and Ruşen Keleş, *The Politics of Rapid Urbanization: Government and Growth in Modern Turkey* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 28-29. Here, it should also be emphasized that at the same time the rural population did not decline because thanks to the improved health and hygiene, child mortality went down very fast. For the factors leading to rural to urban migration, see: Ecehan Balta, "1945 Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu: Reform Mu Karşı Reform Mu?," *Praksis*, No. 5 (Winter 2002), 283; Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 226-227; Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 115. For more discussions and comments on the Land Distribution Law, see: İnan, "Toprak Reformunun En Çok Tartışılan Maddesi: 17. Madde," *Journal of Historical Studies* 3 (2005): 45-57; Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "Bir Tepeden Reform Denemesi: 'Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanununun' Hikayesi," *Birikim*, No. 107 (March, 1998):

reinforcing the DP's propaganda of putting the 'common man' at the center.⁴¹³ Nevertheless, in the 1950s, with its propaganda, the DP told the rural population that their traditional ways were not inferior. This message must have enhanced the self-confidence of the peripheral populations who felt far from the state and marginalized. In fact, Behice Boran, in her 1945 study about thirteen villages, indicated that villagers felt inferior as they came closer to cities.⁴¹⁴ Given this, in the eyes of that segment of the population, Menderes must have been a symbol of hope, enhancing their self-confidence. Furthermore, his youth, dynamism, culturally traditional, entrepreneurial, self-made, non-elite 'common man' image against the *devletlu* -the state elite- must have played a role in people's imaginings of the ideal political leader by reproducing the national heroic leader myth. Therefore, the depiction of heroes in nationalist action/adventure movies was influenced by that understanding of rhetorical glorification of the 'common man.' At this point, in addition to some later leaders in the DP line, Menderes might be a critical inspiring source for the heroes portrayed in the nationalist action/adventure movies of the following decades.

2.2.2. Americanized 'Common Man' against Westernized elites:

The other significant change that the supportive environment in shifting power balances from military/bureaucratic elites to 'common man' was the rising American political and cultural influence. In the 1950s, the ideological divide between the communist and non-communist blocs was consolidated, and Turkey aligned itself with the US by reorienting its foreign policy.⁴¹⁵ As a significant outcome of the Turkey-US alliance, the Turkish government

31-47; Çağlar Keyder and Şevket Pamuk, "1945 Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu Üzerine Tezler," *Yapıt*, 8 (December/January 1984/1985): 52-63; Özer Serper, "1950-1960 Devresinde Türkiye'de Şehirleşme Hareketleri," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 24, no. 1-2 (October-March 1964): 162-163; Bahattin Akşit, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye Köylerindeki Dönüşümler" in *75 Yılda Köylerden Şehirlere*, ed. Oya Baydar (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 173-186

⁴¹³ Moreover, for the military/bureaucratic elite, the newcomers were basically misfits to the Republic's westernization ideals due to their rural and religious sides. This is explained by the following sources: Levent Cantek, *Cumhuriyetin Büluğ Çağı: Gündelik Yaşama Dair Tartışmalar (1945-1950)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 247-251. Their crude behavior was to be ridiculed in novels, newspaper articles and so forth since the 1930s through the 1950s. Cantek and Öncü maintain that the stereotypical representation of such rural-originated rich landlord types were given the name of *hacıağa* to imply their religious and feudal features. This name indicates that the urbanized and 'modern' elite found *hacıağas* as misfits to the westernizing targets of the cultural modernization policies. Ayşe Öncü, "Istanbulites and Others: The Cultural Cosmology of 'Middleness' in the Era of Neo-Liberalism" in *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local*, ed. Çağlar Keyder (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 95-120.

⁴¹⁴ Behice Boran, *Toplumsal Yapı Araştırmaları: İki Köy Çeşidinin Mukayeseli Tetkiki* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1945).

⁴¹⁵ For more about the shifting power balances, see: John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 198-243; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 25-36.

sent a brigade of soldiers to join the UN forces in the Korean War. The government's motivation in sending soldiers was to prove that Turkey was part of the anti-communist, free world and an indispensable international actor that could protect the entire Middle East from the Red Army.⁴¹⁶ This could also be interpreted as an attempt to eliminate Turkey's inferiority complex against old, antique, and graceful Europe by justifying its role in global politics. In this respect, Turkey's NATO membership in 1952 was perceived as a great success showing that the Western nations had entirely accepted Turkey on equal terms.⁴¹⁷ At this point, the evoking of political myths in politics caused the militarization of everyday life not only through the army but also through popular cultural products. Of course, the increasing domestic and national film production, thanks to the reduction in municipal entertainment taxes in 1948, got its share. In the wartime period, many films with quite militarist titles were shot such as *Hürriyet Şarkısı* (*Song of Liberty*, 1951), *Kore Gazileri* (*Veterans of the Korean War*, 1951), *Kore'de Türk Kahramanları* (*Turkish Heroes in Korea*, 1951), *Kore'de Türk Süngüsü* (*Turkish Bayonet in Korea*, 1951), *Kore'den Geliyorum* (*I am coming from Korea*, 1951), *Vatan için* (*For the Fatherland*, 1951), *Mehmetçik Kore'de* (*Mehmetçik in Korea*, 1952), *Yurda Dönüş* (*Back to the Fatherland*, 1952), *Dokunulmaz Bu Aslana* (*Cannot touch this Lion*, 1952), and *Zafer Güneşi* (*Sun of Victory*, 1953). Although beyond the limits of that dissertation, these films are significant in comprehending the increasing militarism during the period.

In this context, for the DP line, the US was a good example of a nation that had achieved technological modernity and material progress while embracing its traditional and religious values. As Bora states, it was the new role model in which cultural conservatism and the liberal economy went hand in hand.⁴¹⁸ This model emphasized the idea that there was no need to adopt European culture to modernize. Therefore, it was, basically, a challenge to the Europeanized military/bureaucratic elite who had been holding the monopoly of the modernization project until the rise of the DP. In this context, Europeanization was associated with top-down elitist reforms, and the spread of American culture was connected with the traditions and values of ordinary men. In parallel to that idea, *Bütün Dünya* praises Vehbi Koç, who worked hard like Americans and opened his shop by praying every morning, showing that he had not forgotten

⁴¹⁶ See: *Milliyet*, 15.11.1950 and 06.03.1951.

⁴¹⁷ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 237-238. This was in line with Turkey's efforts of modernization as raised by Ambassador İsmail Soysal in 1977: "Turkey's participation...in NATO in 1952 are concrete steps in the...direction (of establishing Turkey in the Western civilization and democratic order) from İsmail Soysal, "The influence of the concept of western civilization on Turkish foreign policy," *Foreign Policy* 6. 4/4 (1977), 3-6 cited in Eylem Yılmaz and Pınar Bilgin, "Constructing Turkey's 'Western' Identity during the Cold War," *International Journal*, (Winter 2005-2006): 57.

⁴¹⁸ Bora, "Türkiye'de Siyasal İdeolojilerde ABD/Amerika İmgesi" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Vol. 3: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, eds. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 154.

his essence.⁴¹⁹ The same magazine also mentions the success stories of American businessmen like Rockefeller, George Kent, or Elmas Jim and shares their secrets with articles such as “Ten Conditions for Becoming Rich.”⁴²⁰ It is said that none of these successful businessmen came from wealthy families, but whatever the circumstances were, they became wealthy as a consequence of their own hard work.⁴²¹ Here, the message is that people could become rich, gain respect and higher status even if they were not members of a privileged elite. So, people could be successful no matter what their backgrounds were. In the minds of populist DP supporters, this privileged group was associated with the military/bureaucratic/Europeanized elite who did not take ordinary people’s interests into account.

In this light, it could be argued that in the 1950s, the ideal citizen was not someone from the military or bureaucracy but a hardworking entrepreneur or self-made businessman. This businessman was also expected to be respectful towards religious and national values. Namely, he should display both Turkish spirituality (*maneviyat*) and Western rationality. This idealized national, in fact, nurtures the self-esteem of the ‘ordinary man’ and his way of doing things. This understanding definitely fits into the shift in political power’s focus from ‘elites’ associated with advanced secular Europe to the ‘common man.’ Indeed, this emphasis was not a coincidence at a time when Menderes, as a trader, became the hero of the masses as opposed to İnönü, a man of the military.

2.2.3. Constructing ‘history for people:’

The 1950s also witnessed a rising interest in history in the Western world. This, interestingly, fits well into the period when the military/bureaucratic elites of Turkey started to lose their political power. This interest could first be understood in relation to what happened in the Western world during those years. Hobsbawm says that once the gloomy atmosphere of the Second World War was over, many countries, particularly the developing ones, realized that the times were better than the dark days of the past.⁴²² Then, as Lowenthal argues, they started to revisit the past to rebuild their identities while responding to war-related anxieties like dislocation, chaos, absence, loss, and death.⁴²³ During this period in Turkey, a new national

⁴¹⁹ Sabahattin Sönmez, “Küçük Koç her sabah dükkanının asma kilidini besmeyle açıyor,” *Bütün Dünya*, Vol. 9, No. 51, (April 1952), 359.

⁴²⁰ “Zengin Olmanın On Şartı,” *Bütün Dünya*, Vol. 1. No.2 (March 1948), 199.

⁴²¹ Dale Carnegie, “Hayır için 750.000 dolar dağıtan adam,” *Bütün Dünya*, Vol. 5, No.24 (January 1950), 24; George Kent, “Lüks otelleri yaratan adam,” *Bütün Dünya*, Vol. 13, N.o 73 (February 1954), 165; “2000 kat elbisesi olan adam: Elmas Jim,” *Bütün Dünya*, Vol. 5, No. 25 (February 1950), 146.

⁴²² Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), 258.

⁴²³ David Lowenthal, “Nostalgia: dreams and nightmares,” *The Past is A Foreign Country-Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 31-64.

culture based on academic and non-academic sources about history became popular. This is, of course, related to several social and political transformations mentioned earlier. One may add the death of the ‘Father of the Turks’- Atatürk in 1938, which had the potential to bring about an identity crisis once people failed to find another leader or hero to feel attached to. Also, given the solidification of communism as an international threat, citizens might have sought refuge in a ‘usable’ past to identify themselves. All these, of course, facilitated the birth of alternative historiographies, including the Turkish Islamic Synthesis, in the following decades.

In the 1950s, a corpus of daily newspapers, magazines, children’s periodicals, encyclopedias, novels, cartoons, and serialized stories (*tefrika*) about history emerged.⁴²⁴ As a result of this dynamism, history became a marketable commodity. This was reflected in cinema by increasing the number of films with historical settings that constituted a new and fruitful arena for the reproduction of political myths. All these also meant the emergence of new channels of narrating and publicizing history. Moreover, what came out of the new channels was richer than the productions of official channels. To put it simply, during the 1950s-80, in addition to those made about the War of Independence, many movies were made about the imperial legacy, with which the official historiography could sympathize. Unlike the official narrative, instead of depicting failures, defeats, and how the Ottoman Sultans harmed racial purity with the devshirme system and intermarriages, these movies glorified certain periods of Ottoman history, military victories, Ottoman İstanbul and other Muslim Turkic states, such as the Seljuks.

In fact, the 1950s’ ideological atmosphere was favorable to the popularization of alternative historiographies with Ottoman and Islamic emphasis differing from the official historiography.⁴²⁵ Akurgal, one of the authors of *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası (Illustrated History Magazine)* in the 1950s, states that intellectuals of the period had the goal of writing/manifesting history ‘as it was’ to represent ‘realities.’ Accordingly, the creators of new sources argued that what they were creating was ‘history for people’ as opposed to that of official channels, which failed to make history understandable by wider audiences.⁴²⁶ This

⁴²⁴ For a detailed analysis, see: Ahmet Özcan, *Türkiye’de Popüler Tarihçilik 1908-1960* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2011).

⁴²⁵ One reflection of that interest could be the audience letters available in journals and periodicals. In *Tarih Hazinesi (The Treasure of History)*, for example, readers asked questions about historical issues to ‘experts.’ Another reflection of the interest also mentioned by *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası (Illustrated History Magazine)* was sales numbers. According to the magazine, its first issue sold 10,000, second 20,000, third and fourth 40.000. Although neither the audience letters nor sales numbers were trustworthy, one should keep in mind that raw paper prices in the 50s were quite expensive. Compensating these costs necessities considerable demand. For detailed information, see: Özcan, *Türkiye’de Popüler Tarihçilik 1908-1960*.

⁴²⁶ Ekrem Akurgal, *Bir Arkeoloğun Anıları* (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2002), 246 cited in Özcan, *Türkiye’de Popüler Tarihçilik 1908-1960*, 189.

claim indicates a kind of misfit or a disagreement between the narratives of official and unofficial channels. In this context, the creators could be striving to make theirs much more believable and exciting to reach out to more people with their products. This could explain why they mostly used both adventurous and didactic tones simultaneously, presented some dangerous situations, escapes, and bravery while supporting them with footnotes and references in printed materials or the insertion of documentary footages or a voiceover in the films.

Consequently, starting with the 1950s, alternative national imaginings based on the imperial past, which had been concealed in the early Republican era, began to glow in the dark. Karpat explains the reasons for the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire by referring to several stages of the Turkish Revolution. He states that, by the 1940s, the radical phase had ended, the regime had formed its own support groups, and confidence in the modernization project had emerged.⁴²⁷ Since the regime had been solidified, alternative ideas were no longer perceived as potentially dangerous to the regime. Nejdet Sançar, a prolific nationalist writer from the 1950s, makes a complementary argument that the hostility towards the Ottomans was a natural outcome of early Republican politics, but now after twenty-five years, the Ottoman Empire was no longer a threat. However, Sançar raises a very significant point that sheds light on the populist policies of the DP about religion as well: “sinking the Ottoman period, which was the most brilliant period of the Turkish past, would only help communists.”⁴²⁸ For the anti-communist nationalist line in the 1950s, the Ottoman legacy was a safe haven to protect Turkey from communism. Furthermore, the celebrations of the fifth centenary of İstanbul’s conquest in 1953 also increased awareness about the Ottoman Empire. With lectures, seminars, exhibitions, a soccer match dedicated to the conquest, horse races, and restoration of Rumeli Fortress,⁴²⁹ these celebrations conveyed the idea of respect and curiosity of the imperial past.

Although the general interest in the imperial legacy became the most vital source of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis dominating the 1970s and 80s, a broader perspective reveals that, in the 1950s, the alternative and unofficial narratives still served to the Kemalist modernization project. In fact, the alternative explanations did not erase the Kemalist thesis, but complemented it. This happened with the retrospective Turkification of the Ottomans and several other Muslim

⁴²⁷ Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi: Sosyal, Kültürel. Ekonomik Temeller* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2010), 331-332.

⁴²⁸ Nejdet Sançar, “Osmanlı ve Padişah Düşmanlığı,” *Orkun*, 53, (October 5, 1951), 6-7.

⁴²⁹ Müjgan Cınbur, “İstanbul’un 500üncü Fetih Yıldönümü Dolayısıyla Tertiplenen Sergilere, Yapılan Kültür, San’at ve Neşriyat Hareketlerine Dair,” *Vakıflar Dergisi*, Vol.4, No. 265, (1958): 265-281; Kazım Yetiş, “İstanbul’un Fethi Kutlamaları Yeni Bir Dönemi Başlatıyor” in *Türk Edebiyatında İstanbul’un Fethi ve Fatih*, ed. Kazım Yetiş (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005), 3-76. Newspapers gave detailed information about these. See, for example, “Fetih yılı programı,” *Milliyet*, 21 May 1953; Ferdi Oner, “Fethin 500üncü yıldönümü tören ve şenlikleri başladı,” *Cumhuriyet*, 30 May 1953.

states and reinterpretation of them as legitimate and honorable precedents of the modern Turkish nation-state. Osman Turan, Zeki Velidi Togan, and İbrahim Kafesoğlu were among the most important academics who solidified Islam's place in Turkish culture and history. Thus, historiography gradually shifted to contemporary Turks and the Ottomans as saviors of Islamic civilization from the Mongols and the Crusades, even in Medieval times. This was, more clearly, a 'domestication' or 'rehabilitation' of the past through the lenses of the Kemalist modernization project. Therefore, as Lowenthal maintains, "...one thing that history does...is to fumigate experience, making it safe and sterile...Experience undergoes eternal gentrification; the past, all the parts of it that are dirty and exciting and dangerous and uncomfortable and real, turn gradually into the east village."⁴³⁰ This means the past, which had been mainly ignored in the early years of the Republic, went through a process of 'gentrification' to justify the 1950s.

In the 1950s, the conquest of İstanbul was not merely a victory of the Ottoman and Islamic elements, but one of secularism, Western enlightenment values, and the Turkish nation. Hasan Ali Yücel, the former minister of education and a columnist in *Cumhuriyet*, declared that in conquering İstanbul, Mehmet II culturally and geographically "turned his face towards the West."⁴³¹ He, in fact, "gave an end to the Middle Ages" and its "fundamentalism," leading to "sectarian conflict." Then he "opened a new era" in history, even started the Renaissance, awakened the West, erased religious bigotry, and revived the free thought of Ancient Greece. He even made İstanbul the center of science by establishing the first university, and his arts and sciences.⁴³² From this perspective, Mehmet II was the most secular sultan of all.⁴³³ He was also a revolutionary, an innovator, or a visionary, as it could be understood from how he dragged his fleet over İstanbul to circumvent Byzantine. This shows that he was not satisfied with traditional methods.⁴³⁴

Indeed, Mehmet II had all the features of the ideal political ruler. Here, Atatürk is used as 'the reference,' and a bond between the 'two great men' is formed. Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, the mayor of İstanbul, said in his speech during the celebrations: "His (Mehmet II's) ideas will live forever with the Turkish nation on the strong base built by Atatürk." These words continued with: "Look at Korea. Look at the Atlantic Pact...We, as the Conqueror's children, show that

⁴³⁰ "Notes and comment," *New Yorker*, (24 September 1984): 39 cited in Lowenthal, *The Past is A Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xxv.

⁴³¹ Hasan Ali Yücel, "Fethin Önemi," *Cumhuriyet*, 29 May 1953.

⁴³² Sami Nafiz Tansu, "Sanatkar Fatih," *Cumhuriyet*, 31 May 1953.

⁴³³ "İstanbul bugün Fetih yılını kutluyor," *Cumhuriyet*, 29 May 1953.

⁴³⁴ Ataç, "Yeni," *Ulus*, 31 May 1953.

we are worthy of him through serving the cause of world peace with our soldiers' blood in Korea today. Now we bow down with honor before all our holy martyrs who, beginning with the Conqueror, died for their country and who now give their lives for world peace under the United Nations in Korea today."⁴³⁵ Here, Gökay started with Atatürk and then legitimized not only the Ottoman past but also the Korean War. He connected all these by reproducing the political myth that Turks are benevolent fighters; they fight not with greedy motivations but for world peace. Others contributed to this argument, saying: "Today's soldiers are descended from him, and these heroic children were an indication that heroism was truly what this nation inherited from its ancestors."⁴³⁶ Therefore, there is no difference "between Ulubatlı Hasan, who first raised our flag over the walls of Istanbul, and the commander who went to fight in Korea wrapped in the Turkish flag?"⁴³⁷ It is precisely this idea that gave birth to the fighter image in nationalist action/adventure movies. These heroes are all depicted as loyal to powerful rulers, similar to Ulubatlı Hasan's depiction here. This idea, of course, reinforces the 'common man' discourse because Ulubatlı-like characters are all common man performing their heroic skills in fighting for the ruler. It also draws boundaries between loyal and disloyal citizens, featuring the loyal ones and disregarding the others. This is a guide for citizens to learn 'what is loyal' and 'what is not' and therefore 'who is to blame.'

Thus, the emergence of alternative historiographies and their popularization via a new supply of popular sources could be interpreted as a challenge to the 1930s' monopolistic imagining of the Turkish nation, hence the military/bureaucratic elite's power. Furthermore, this new supply with elements from Turkish-Islamic Synthesis inspired the reproduction of political myths in action/adventure films with historical settings in the 1950s-1970s, as revealed in the following parts.

2.3. Cinema and the Reproduction of Political Myths:

2.3.1. The Republican ideals, realities, and cinema:

According to *Ulus*, in May 1945, three young men in Ankara committed a series of robberies. When they were caught, they told the police that they needed to find money because they had decided to go to Texas, buy land, and become cowboys like Hollywood stars.⁴³⁸ These

⁴³⁵ "Fatih ve Topkapı'daki törende yüzbinlerce İstanbullu bulundu," *Vatan*, 30 May 1953; see: Gavin D. Brockett, "Chapter 6: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Mehmed the Conqueror: Negotiating A National Historical Narrative," *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 173-202.

⁴³⁶ Ferdi Öner, "Fethin 500 üncü yıldönümü tören ve şenlikleri başladı," *Cumhuriyet*, 30 May 1953.

⁴³⁷ Mumtas Faik Fenik, "Seferihisar'da Genç Ulubatlı Hasanlar," *Zafer*, 30 May 1953.

⁴³⁸ "Ankara Kovboyları," *Ulus*, 8 May 1945, 3.

three young men probably had watched Hollywood films and wanted the same life depicted in those films. As this example shows, some ‘common men’ were familiar with America due to Hollywood movies. Turkey’s participation in the Korean War as a US ally intensified this familiarity by adding the ideological aspect, and the result of this was the reproduction of political myths through the lenses of anti-communism. This reinforced cultural and religious conservatism and contributed to the rhetorical power shift from ‘elites’ to ‘common man.’

In fact, before the 1950s, domestic production was limited in Turkish cinema. Due to economic insufficiency, neither the state nor the private capital holders were to produce systematically. Eighty per cent of the film companies were short-lived, low-budgeted, shot only one feature film on average per year. As a result, the supply of films was predominantly provided by American and Egyptian films. However, there was a difference between consumer demands for each. Öztuna states, “American films were only popular in big cities, whereas Egyptian films were shown for weeks even in small towns.”⁴³⁹ The US Department of Commerce also referred to the popularity as cited by Gürata: “In the İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara regions, United States films are definitely preferred, while European films and particularly British films meet with favor...In the rest of the country, United States films, although well-received, do not meet as much favor as Egyptian films.”⁴⁴⁰ It seems that the audience of the time preferred Egyptian films over Hollywood films when given a choice. Tekelioğlu notes that, in the 1940s, approximately 150 Egyptian films were shown in Turkey. For Cantek, the number is probably around 100 or higher. This vast consumption of Egyptian films was obviously a challenge to the early Republican military/bureaucratic elite’s westernization ideals. Unsurprisingly, many of the elites did not like Egyptian films, perceiving them as backward and so not in line with the modernization project.⁴⁴¹ Özön finds them technically inadequate⁴⁴² and says they usually looked like filmed revues with belly dances. He also did not like melodramatic elements such as raped young girls, tears, sick love, suicide, murder, death.⁴⁴³ These elements were all considered so emotional and irrational, unlike the Western cultural model, based on rationality, science, and industry.

⁴³⁹ Yılmaz Öztuna, “Türk Musikisi’nin Yayılışı ve Tesirleri” in *Türk Musikisi Ansiklopedisi* vol. II /2 (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi), 341, cited in Ahmet Gürata, “Tears of Love: Egyptian Cinema in Turkey 1938-1950,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 30 (Spring 2004): 56.

⁴⁴⁰ World Trade in Commodities-Motion Pictures and Equipment, vol. VI, part 4, no. 21, (1948), cited in Gürata, “Tears of Love: Egyptian Cinema in Turkey 1938-1950,” 74.

⁴⁴¹ Cantek, *Cumhuriyetin Bülüş Çağı: Gündelik Yaşama Dair Tartışmalar (1945-1950)*, 159-164.

⁴⁴² Nijat Özön, *Türk Sineması Kronolojisi 1895-1966* (Ankara Bilgi Yayımevi, 1968), 21.

⁴⁴³ Özön, “Mısır Sinemasının Türk Sinemasına Etkisi,” *Türk Dili*, No. 129, (1962): 760, cited in Gürata, “Tears of Love: Egyptian Cinema in Turkey 1938-1950,” 67-68.

The popularity of these films indicates a mismatch between the elites' expectations and the demands of the periphery. This also alarmed the CHP, so the General Secretariat warned the Ministry of Internal Affairs about this 'threat to the Turkish language in the areas bordering Syria', which included a significant Arab-Turkish population in 1942. After this complaint, in 1943, the Ministry wrote to the censorship committee in Istanbul suggesting a ban on Egyptian films in Kurdish or Arab populated areas in eastern Turkey. This limited the display of these films in those regions, and the ban lasted until 1957. Besides, since the government was very keen on the issue, in movies shown in the other areas of Turkey, the dialogues and the lyrics of Arabic songs were also Turkified.⁴⁴⁴

Nevertheless, it was this consumer profile into which the Turkish cinema developed. After the 70 per cent reduction of the municipal tax on domestic films in 1948,⁴⁴⁵ the cost of filmmaking decreased, so domestic production increased significantly. In the meantime, ticket prices decreased, rural areas were gradually electrified, and transportation facilities improved, providing easier access to cinema halls.⁴⁴⁶ All these, in the end, led to the awakening of the Turkish cinema industry. Here, the critical point is that, unlike with the other branches of art, the state had no financial support for cinema, and the Turkish economy was still on the edge of expansion. Therefore, Turkish cinema primarily relied on consumer demand. This made it a realm where the mismatch between Republican ideals and consumer demands could be followed, since cinema was mainly shaped by what sold most.

Thus, the 1950s brought the beginning of a period with phenomenal production and cinema consumption, which became accessible not only in urban areas but also in the periphery thanks to prolific production. Besides, going to the cinema was a cheaper way of entertainment than going to music halls during this period. As a result, people could go to the cinema in crowded groups with their families and friends inexpensively. The whole activity, in fact, was more than just watching a movie, but a social event in which people saw and met each other. Therefore, cinema was a significant element of everyday life.

⁴⁴⁴ Özkan Tikveş, *Mukayeseli Hukukta ve Türk Hukukunda Sinema Filmlerinin Sansürü* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1968), 97-98.

⁴⁴⁵ Özön, *Karagözden Sinemaya: Türk Sineması ve Sorunları: Tarih, Sanat, Estetik, Endüstri, Ekonomi*, Vol. 1 (Ankara: Kitle Yayınları, 1995), 335.

⁴⁴⁶ It must be noted that as late as 1953 the total number of villages that had been linked up to the electric grid was 10 which was equal to 0.025 per cent of Turkey's 40,000 villages. While total production of electricity had grown tenfold between 1923 and 1943, it was still a phenomenon of city life. Of the total energy capacity of 107,000 kilowatts available in 1945, 83,000 kilowatts went to İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir. And even so, the trolleybuses in Ankara had to stop when the lights went on. Hakkı Devrim, Nezihe Araz, Nurullah Gezgin (eds.), *Türkiye Ansiklopedisi 1923-1973*, Vol. 2 (İstanbul: Kaynak Kitaplar, 1974), 583. Ten years later the number was 216 (Vol. 3, 962) cited in Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 208.

In this regard, the masses were the critical driving force making Turkish cinema a sector of its own kind. It was, basically, a product of the consumption-based economy⁴⁴⁷ and rested on the fundamental supply and demand relationship. In this system, to distribute films in İstanbul, producers contacted the owners of first-run cinema halls that major film importing companies partly controlled. For the other cinema halls, producers collaborated with distributors who gathered information from cinemas in six regions: İstanbul, Adana, Ankara, Samsun, İzmir, Zonguldak. Due to this communication, they learned about audiences' demands and determined which films they would make for the following season. Once the producers decided, they were given bonds by cinema hall owners or regional operators for producing films.⁴⁴⁸ The producers gave some portion of these bonds to the actors and film crew for guaranteeing their labor. On the other hand, the distributors made sure that the most demanded films would be produced. Then rented films or four-walled cinema houses for a couple of weeks or months. In the end, 35 to 45 per cent of the net profit from ticket revenues was collected by the owners of cinema houses; the rest went to the producers.⁴⁴⁹ In this system, consumer demand was the single most crucial thing for the sector's survival. Therefore, most directors worked in line with the commercial mentality, produced within the supply and demand relationship, and even adjusted content according to audience reactions. This situation restricted new cinematic experiments while leading to the enormous production of similar films, one after the other based on commercial formulas mainly shaped around popular Hollywood and Egyptian films of previous years. This made cinema a lucrative business as well, and as a result, the 12 production companies in the 1950s increased to more than 370 in the 1960s and early 1970s to respond to the increasing demand.⁴⁵⁰ This brought new people into the cinema business, including some 'nouveau riche,' from agriculturally rich areas like Kayseri and Adana, who wanted to make quick money. These people did not have sufficient cultural capital, but they could find themselves a place in the cinema sector. *Perde ve Sahne*, in 1954, stated that "Recently production has become a fashion in our country. Everybody from teachers dismissed from school to smiths and carpenters, who have had a little money in their hands have attempted to make film and ruined Turkish filmmaking...Of course, these people who are not trained and do not know what it means to be a producer would be unable to appreciate the

⁴⁴⁷ Tanju Akerson, "Türk Sinemasında Eleştiri," *Yeni Sinema*, No. 3, (Oct.-Nov. 1966): 35.

⁴⁴⁸ Ertan Tunç, *Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı (1896-2005)* (İstanbul: Doruk Yayınları, 2012), 92-93.

⁴⁴⁹ For details about regional distributors and four-walling, see: Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History*, 105-109.

⁴⁵⁰ Giovanni Scognamillo, "Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Tarihine Giriş," *Yeni İnsan Yeni Sinema*, No. 9, (Spring 2001): 94-105. <http://yenifilm.net/2000/12/turk-sinemasinin-ekonomik-tarihine-giris/>

value of artists, directors, and cameramen under their service.”⁴⁵¹ This commercial nature of Turkish cinema, based mainly upon the ability to earn money by appealing to the masses, made it a convenient tool to understand the viewers’ wishes and desires. This situation fits nicely into the political atmosphere that has winds blowing in favor of the ‘common man,’ who can be considered as the representative of the periphery finding themselves a place in the center.

Despite tremendous consumer demand, the cultural elite was somewhat distant from Turkish cinema. The elite preferences were mainly shaped around American or European productions, and they generally found Yeşilçam films unrealistic, exaggerated, and fake, and therefore undesirable and unacceptable. They thought these films did not represent the Turkish nation, and their viewers were ‘passive,’ ‘irresponsible,’ and ‘mindless’ masses.⁴⁵² Nijat Özön, a critique in the period, in *Akis*, called Yeşilçam a “swamp that should be dried,” because it was spreading bad taste to the society.⁴⁵³ This, again, reveals the distinctive characteristic of Turkish cinema: On the one hand, crowds were flocking into cinema halls, sometimes even breaking the doors to be able to see certain films. On the other, there was a group of intellectuals who severely criticized these people and the films. This is an indication of the cleavage between the consumers of Turkish cinema and the elite. This context, of course, influenced the reproduction of political myths in action/adventure films with historical settings.

2.3.2. Imagining the Ottoman Past in the 1950s’ Cinematic Baggage:

In parallel to the rising popular interest in Ottoman history as reflected in the newly published sources, several movies about the Ottoman Empire were shot in the 1950s. Here, one point to note is that shooting movies about Ottoman history does not mean the DP government’s complete internalization of Ottoman history. In fact, the official discourse of the 1950s still did not diverge that much from the Turkish History Thesis of the early Republican era. There was still a distance from the Ottoman past despite increasing academic and non-academic sources.

⁴⁵¹ “İstismarcı Prodüktörler,” *Perde ve Sahne* 1 (1954): 15 cited in Dilek Kaya Mutlu, *Yeşilçam in Letters: A ‘Cinema Event’ in 1960s Turkey from the Perspective of An Audience Discourse*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Bilkent University, (2002), 126.

⁴⁵² *Yeni Sinema* presents many criticisms in this line throughout the 1960s. For example: Özön “Türk sinemasına elestirmeli bir bakış,” *Yeni Sinema*, No.3 (1966): 12; Ali Gevgilili, “Çağdaş sinema karşısında Türk sineması,” *Yeni Sinema*, No.3 (1966): 17. In addition, see the following for negative criticisms about Yeşilçam: Ünsal Oskay, “Sinemanın Yüzüncü Yılında Türk Sinemasında Entelektüellik Tartışması” in *Türk Sineması Üzerine Düşünceler*, ed. Ali Dinçer (Ankara: Doruk Yayıncılık, 1996), 98; Nijat Özön, *Karagözden Sinemaya: Türk Sineması ve Sorunları*, Vol.1, (Ankara: Kitle Yayınları, 1995); Ayşe Şasa, *Yeşilçam Günlüğü* (İstanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2002), 40-41; Dilek Tunalı, *Batıdan Doğuya, Hollywood’dan Yeşilçam’a Melodram* (Ankara: Arjantin Felsefe Grubu Yayınları, 2006), 219.

⁴⁵³ Özön, “Kurulması Gereken Bataklik,” *Akis*, No.203 (1958): 30–31.

The point here is that the government was still not in complete peace with the Ottoman past. However, instead, it would start to utilize it to exalt the Turkish national identity.

In fact, during the 1950s, movies about the Ottoman Empire constituted a significant group that reproduced nationalist political myths. In total, 23 movies were shot about subject areas such as Ottoman personalities and several Ottoman conquests.⁴⁵⁴ Considering the fifth centenary celebrations that dominated the country's cultural agenda in the early 1950s, although not high, the number is significant. Besides, not all 23 movies are accessible. From those that are, the sample I chose constitutes four movies centered on war and conquest, therefore action and adventure. These are *İstanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of İstanbul)*, dir. Aydın Arakon, 1951), *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa (Hayrettin Barbarossa)*, dir. Baha Gelenbevi, 1951), *Vatan ve Namık Kemal (Fatherland and Namık Kemal)*, dir. Cahide Sonku, Talat Artemel, Sami Ayanoğlu, 1951) and *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor (Sultan Selim the Resolute is Crying)*, Sami Ayanoğlu, 1957). The most significant common point of these movies is the producers' selection of particular periods and persons to polish the Turkish national identity. The leading characters are all real people from the past. These include two sultans, Mehmet II and Selim I, and the Ottoman navy's admiral, Hayrettin Barbarossa. Here, the focus is obviously the Ottoman conquests. Another persona is Namık Kemal, a poet who greatly influenced Young Turks and nationalist movements. His story is told in relation to a Russian siege in the 19th century. In this film, Ottoman patriotism and anti-Russian nationalism are fueled, confirming Turkey's Cold War anti-Soviet stance. Nevertheless, although the characters and events are Ottoman, the films contribute to the construction of the heroism of Turks. The dominant narrative in the films is also based upon replacing the word 'Ottoman' with 'Turkish.' This is a way to Turkify the past and reproduce nationalist political myths to bolster the Turkish national identity. In this situation, first, a direct continuity between the Ottomans and the 1950s' Turkish nation-state is established. In the end, movies created a visual repertoire of 'golden' times, people, and places that are worth remembering by Turkish nationals, while marginalizing what must not be remembered.

2.3.2.1. The leader, the nation, the mission:

The most notable cinematic production from the corpus of this chapter was *İstanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of İstanbul)*, which, according to its opening credits, was supported by the

⁴⁵⁴ Some of these films that use the Ottoman wars solely as a backdrop are: *Üçüncü Selimin Gözdesi (Selim III's Favorite)*, dir. Vedat Ar, 1950); *Cem Sultan* (dir. Münir Hayri Egeli, 1951); *Gül naz Sultan* (dir. Muharrem Gürses, 1954), and *Safiye Sultan* (dirs. Enzo Martino and Fikri Rutkay, 1955).

military, several bureaucrats, and academics. This is not surprising if the movie is considered within the framework of the celebrations of the fifth centenary of the Conquest. The movie displays the didactic tone that dominated popular historical materials of the period. The narrative is supported by voiceovers that describe various stages of the siege. In this way, the viewers are directed to acquire ‘the proper’ understanding of the subject matter. This means the audience is not only shown a selected narrative but also taught about how to perceive and interpret it. One of the central characters is Sultan Mehmet II, with his features making him the ideal political leader: physical power, wisdom, toughness, passion, dynamism, heroism, a strategic mind, and state-building capabilities. In some scenes, he is called *devletli* and *şevketli* (the Most Excellent and Majestic) by the viziers and other bureaucrats. These words mean that he has legitimate power in the state. As a heroic sultan, he does not hesitate to take an active part in one-to-one fights in accordance with his warrior nature. As for his attitude towards his subjects, he is not only just and prudent, but also tolerant. Just before the Conquest, he says: “We do not chop people’s heads off because they are worshipping God in another way” (44:42)⁴⁵⁵ about how he behaves the non-Muslims. In fact, believing that Mehmet would bring justice, the people of Byzantium even support the siege and open the city gates for the Ottoman army. At this point, the film also portrays a Byzantine priest informed by the Turkish side who then helps the three loyal men of Mehmet II. All these make Mehmet an ideal Turkish hero, capable of acting as a world leader. This message also completes the official nationalist discourse based on the idea that Turks are civilized and respectful members of the European world. Besides, since İstanbul is within the borders of contemporary Turkey, the fact that this movie is about a conquest does not give it an expansionist or an irredentist discourse. Rather, it depicts İstanbul as a place that is predestined to be owned by Turks.

Mehmet II’s grandson, Selim I, known as Selim the Resolute, was the second sultan that filmmakers were interested in. *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor* (*Sultan Selim the Resolute is Crying*) first portrays Selim as a tough prince and a military strategist. This portrayal is based upon a critique of his father, Bayezid II, for not continuing the victorious conquests of his grandfather, Mehmet II. Selim says his grandfather’s sword has not been taken out of its sheath since his death, and this is unacceptable because “God created conquerors not to live steadily in a territory but to conquer new lands” (01:32:29).⁴⁵⁶ Here, the ruler’s continuous dynamism is emphasized as one of the qualities making him the ‘ideal’. In this context, Bayezid is no longer ‘ideal’ and must be replaced by the legitimate one. It must also be noted that the leader’s health

⁴⁵⁵ “Allah’a başka türlü ibadet ediyor diye biz kimseyi kesmeyiz.”

⁴⁵⁶ “Tanrı cihangirleri bir toprakta yaşamak için değil; ülkeler fethetmek için yaratmıştır.”

equals the empire's health since the leader is considered the state's embodiment. In this context, Bayezid's deteriorating health and older age are associated not only with the halted military expansion, but also with the weakening of state authority. The escalating unrest among the Janissaries and bandits in the periphery and corruption of state circles are all considered as the symptoms of the emperor's so the empire's sickening body. All in all, according to the narrative, Bayezid's impotence causes the disruption of the unity of the empire and the survival of the state. Here, using a Machiavellian perspective could help understand the ideal ruler's sole duty: protecting the state's integrity, indivisibility, and continuity. In the film, Selim is depicted as the ideal one who deserves to be sultan. When Bayezid abdicates, Selim is involved in fratricide to eliminate his rivals for the throne. Although we do not see an overt representation of this in the film, Selim cries after killing his brothers, which could be a modern interpretation of the practice of fratricide in the Ottoman Empire. Selim's concern means that neither he nor the Ottomans is violent, but he has to do this for the state's survival. In fact, while leaving his throne, Bayezid tells Selim that human beings are ephemeral, and only the state can last. Therefore, Süleyman, Selim's son, must learn how to govern the state. This would suggest that, although the focus of the movie seems to be Selim, the message was that the state must survive no matter what happens. The sacred nature of the state above everything is what the audience should absorb.

Once he becomes sultan, Selim does not dispose of everything related to the past; instead, he builds on them. For example, he respectfully receives Bayezid's advice on being just and merciful and not leaving God's path. This transgenerational communication fosters the legitimacy of the state and the ruling dynasty throughout history. *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor (Sultan Selim the Resolute is Crying)* also includes Selim's son: Süleyman, who would become the Magnificent. This representative of the younger generation is yet inexperienced and must learn how to unravel his potential. In the scenes depicting the Battle of Çaldıran, Selim says that nobody can teach Süleyman how to fight because he, as a Turk, was born a soldier and already knows to fight (01:34:44).⁴⁵⁷ This is an apparent reproduction of the myth of warrior nation with an essentialist understanding of nationhood, presenting Turks as genetically capable of fighting. Through the end of the film, Süleyman gives a hint of his passionate, heroic potential, saying that there was nothing he would not do until only one flag was waved in the world (01:59:40).⁴⁵⁸ When Selim is overwhelmed by his illness after the battle, he becomes

⁴⁵⁷ "Oğlum, madem Türk'sün, sana savaşmayı hiç kimse öğretemez, sen onu bilip de doğdun. Hocamız damarlarımızdaki kan, örneğimiz atalarımızdır."

⁴⁵⁸ "Dünyada tek bayrak dalgalanması için yapmayacağımız şey yok."

concerned because he could not fight, and then dreams of his children riding their horses at full gallop in Magyar lands. This could be a harbinger of Süleyman's raids to Europe through the Balkans in the following years. These imperialist references are made very vaguely and are not actually placed at the center. The reason for this weak emphasis could be the fact that they do not fit into the official nationalist discourse. Religious references are not given much emphasis either compared to the focus on territorial integrity. In *İstanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of İstanbul)*, Mehmet II states, "Our power is based upon the goal of making this glorious city a mujahid and opening it to religion" (1:09:20).⁴⁵⁹ We also see fewer prayer scenes, minor references to the Quran accompanied by janissary band music about the victorious nature of Turkish armies and God's help to the Turkish army during the siege. These scenes are still less intense than those of future decades, as revealed in the following chapters.

Since İstanbul is located within the borders of the contemporary Turkish nation-state, the producers probably did not see any problem in mentioning the conquest in a much more detailed way. In fact, İstanbul is considered as a land that is destined to be possessed by the Turks. According to Mehmet II in *İstanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of İstanbul)*, Byzantium resembles the head of a boil rising in the middle of the country, and therefore must be conquered to provide indivisibility of the 'country.' Since "we do not want a foreign flag waving in our land (*ülke*), we do not want to bow down before anybody while our army is crossing the Straits (08:18).⁴⁶⁰ "We want to leave a unified piece of land to our children. When we succeed in this, our children, as the masters of these lands, will not encounter a hypocrite enemy in a land of their own" (57:37).⁴⁶¹ These words strongly legitimize war while repelling any potential territorial claim regarding the independence of the Straits during the Cold War period. In addition to providing and protecting territorial integrity, the other cause of the conquest is "to bring a fresh soul and infallible justice to a fusty empire where morality and justice were disrupted" (45:17),⁴⁶² Mehmet II says to the messenger of the emperor Constantine XI in *İstanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of İstanbul)*. Therefore, the Ottomans/Turks are saviors of oppressed people, and Mehmet II is the ideal leader also for the people of Byzantium who have been suppressed by their own administration. This feature distinguishes Ottoman/Turkish army from the others in the world since it is the army of 'benevolent conquerors' with altruistic

⁴⁵⁹ "Kudretimiz bu muazzam beldeyi mücahit ve din için açık bir şehir haline getirmektir."

⁴⁶⁰ "Biz isteriz ki ülkemizde yabancı bayrağı dalgalanmasın. Biz isteriz ki Boğazlar'dan ordu geçirdiğimizde hiç kimseye baş vermeyelim."

⁴⁶¹ "Evlatlara yekpare vatan verelim, istedik ki evlatlarımız bu ülkenin efendileri bizleriz dedikleri zaman bu topraklarda münafık bir düşmanla karşılaşmasınlar."

⁴⁶² "Muradımız...ahlak ve adaletin tebessua uğradığı köhne Bizans'a taze bir ruh, sağlam ve şaşmaz bir adalet getirmektir."

missions instead of greedy imperialist motivations. This is the message provided by Byzantine women and children who welcome the Ottoman/Turkish army and the Sultan with smiling faces and flowers upon their arrival to the city right after the victory. In fact, they are not the only people longing for Ottoman/Turkish rule. In *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa (Hayrettin Barbarossa)*, the people living in ‘Fondi’ Castle are crushed severely by the taxes imposed on them by the Italian Count Vespasio. They get together and open the gates of the castle to the Ottoman navy led by the Ottoman admiral Barbarossa. One of them even kills Vespasio with a sword blow to help the conquering army. The grand vizier tells the Naples ambassador that Turkish pirates never plunder but are involved in *ghaza* to rescue those suffering under cruel suzerains. All these events justify the idea that the Ottomans/Turks are not after personal or economic interests.

The war, therefore, is a just war, and the Ottomans/Turks are the ‘benevolent conquerors.’ This is even a significant reason for attraction for the women of others. Vespasio’s wife Julia also wants to get saved by the Turks, saying that “I know that you come to succor the unfortunate and oppressed ones. Your name means fear for the oppressor, hope for the oppressed in the entire Mediterranean. Please, save me, too” (11:50)⁴⁶³. Venetian Donna in *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor (Selim the Resolute is Crying)* gives up her decision to go away and wants to be a part of Selim’s harem after realizing how just and tolerant he is towards his subjects. Neither Yavuz nor Barbarossa respond positively to these women’s attraction because, for the heroes, patriotic duties always have priority over love. When Julia of *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa (Hayrettin Barbarossa)* wants to join the harem after he rescued her, Barbarossa says, “You are the most beautiful woman of the Mediterranean, but I cannot take you with me, you can make me feel dizzy and lose control. However, my shoulders should be firm and strong. I want to take the entire Mediterranean as my bride; I want to adorn it with the Turkish flag as its veil” (53:20-53:40).⁴⁶⁴

2.3.2.2. *The warriors:*

It should be noted that *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa (Hayrettin Barbarossa)* focuses on Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa’s personality and his raids. In its narrative formulation, Sultan Süleyman, who is at the height of his political power, is depicted only in connection to

⁴⁶³ “Beni kurtarmanızı istiyorum. Siz kimsesizlerin, zulüm görenlerin imdadına koşarsınız bilirim. Bütün Akdeniz’de adınız zalimlere korku, mazlumlara ümittir. Beni de kurtarınız.”

⁴⁶⁴ “Akdeniz’in en güzel kadını sensin. Fakat seni alıp götürmem. Başımı döndürebilirsin. Halbuki omuzlarımda dimdik durmalı. Ben kendime gelin diye Akdeniz’i boydan boya almak isterim, ona duvak diye Türk sancağını takmak isterim.”

Barbarossa giving orders and appointing him as the admiral. Unlike the Sultan depictions in other movies, here, Süleyman is not on a battlefield but in his court in İstanbul getting involved in state affairs. Instead of the young Süleyman of *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor* (*Yavuz Sultan Selim is Crying*) in the battlefield, there is a mature, experienced, dignified, wise and encouraging Süleyman, corresponding to Girardet's Cincinnatus type of leader, at the Capital directing wars and administering his state. He is in the background, and the protagonist is Barbarossa. This style of depiction, with the Sultan behind the curtains and his loyal soldier in the forefront, is employed in nationalist action/adventure films. In this context, Barbarossa represents the ideal, true warrior, who fights for his country and confirms the leader's orders without questioning them. He could also be interpreted as an average or common man, because he does not come from bureaucracy or the highly educated intellectual class. When 'this common man' is at the Court to visit Süleyman, the viziers explain the codes of conduct and the protocol he must follow, such as salutation and bowing. Barbarossa listens to them reluctantly because he finds all these meaningless. In the presence of Süleyman, he bows, but the Sultan does not want him to do this and says: "So, they did not allow you to see me directly" (1:24:57).⁴⁶⁵ A similar scene is in *İstanbul'un Fethi* (*The Conquest of İstanbul*), in which Mehmet II gives orders directly to his three loyal warriors; Hasan, Hızır, and Mustafa, who are assigned to spy on Byzantium. When they ask whom to inform, Mehmet II says: "Me, directly" (11:35).⁴⁶⁶ The message in these scenes is quite significant in determining the narratives of nationalist action/adventure films that depict loyal heroes directly commanded by the Sultan. First, the Sultan is revered by an emphasis on how he is distant from his bureaucratic circles. He is the only authority and so above his bureaucrats. Therefore, there is no one, no authority to check and balance him. He could do whatever he wanted, even see his loyal men without taking the protocol into account. In the eyes of ordinary people, viziers or ministers have no power. It is the Sultan who knows and controls everything. Second, there is a sincere and personal relationship between the Sultan and his warrior. The warrior is directly responsible to the ruler. Therefore, he is expected to be much more loyal and sacrificing. When Mehmet II orders, Hasan passes unscathed through arrows and swords in the heat of the battle and plants the Turkish flag on the walls of Byzantium, and is subsequently killed. This sacrificial duty strengthens the relationship between the loyal man and the ruler.

Furthermore, loyalty is the key to success for the common man. If he follows the commands without questioning, he could gain glory. In this context, seeking personal interest,

⁴⁶⁵ "Demek beni görmene izin vermediler."

⁴⁶⁶ "Bana!"

money, or titles is undesirable; because the ideal proper warrior should be dedicating himself only to the Sultan, fatherland, nation, or empire. For instance, the Janissary Hasan in *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor (Yavuz the Resolute is Crying)* underlines that he never fights for promotion. Barbarossa does not even enjoy all the fun and entertainment organized in his honor at the court. The only thing that occupies his mind is fighting and, therefore, fulfilling his duties. These representations create a role model for a loyal man and draw a boundary with the disloyal ones. Here, the disloyal man is the one who is dizzy with entertainment, titles, money, and some other material rewards; but the loyal one always thinks about his patriotic duties. This is also a reflection of the anti-bureaucratic perspective through which the connection between the ruler and the ruled becomes much more robust, and the ruler's authority is absolutized.

The symbol of 'disloyal' man is Çandarlı Halil Pasha, the grand vizier of Mehmet II in *İstanbul'un Fethi (The Conquest of İstanbul)*. Having been bribed by Byzantium, he does not support Mehmet II's plans. The Sultan is not happy with his advice either; sometimes, he even says that Çandarlı continues his duty just because he is the legacy of the previous Sultan, Murat II. At one point during the siege, Çandarlı misdirects the Janissaries, causing them to fall. When Mehmet II realizes this, he says: "Is it greediness for money and property which made you like this? You are mistaken. You have forgotten that we were raised in war, and we know how to fight; we are the sons of Orhan, Yıldırım and Murat. Betrayals do not make us lose the war...Victory belongs to the Turks" (1:18:35)⁴⁶⁷. With these words, Mehmet II alienates Çandarlı, who is executed immediately after the conquest. This could reflect the anti-bureaucratic viewpoint again. Bureaucrats might have been perceived as constantly challenging the leaders' goals. This idea favors the monopolistic authority of the Sultan and severely punishes the disloyal ones. Moreover, continuity with previous Sultans is emphasized, and the war is 'Turkified' simultaneously.

The boundaries between loyalty and disloyalty also foster the myth that Turks are born as soldiers. In *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa (Hayrettin Barbarossa)*, Selim, the architect Sinan's foreman, suffers from thalassophobia and has never taken a gun into his hands. Nevertheless, he evolves into a true warrior when fighting against Count Vespasio's men to save his betrothed, Hatice. Eventually, war becomes an indispensable part of his being, and he does not hesitate to leave Hatice to join Barbarossa's forces getting prepared to fight in another siege. In fact, none of these heroes in war/conquest films choose love over war, similar to the heroes of nationalist action/adventure films. This kind of portrayal emphasizes the significance of fighting for the

⁴⁶⁷ "Seni bu hale getiren para ve mal hırsı mı? Ama yanıldı. Unuttun ki biz sefer içinde büyüdük. Harp etmesini biliriz. Unuttun ki Orhanların, Yıldırımın, Muratların oğluyuz."

heroic fulfilment of the Sultan's command. It may also have a narrative advantage in that the hero should have no commitment so he can engage in new adventures.

Other natural-born fighters volunteer to fight in the war. In *Vatan ve Namık Kemal* (*Fatherland and Namık Kemal*), an older man who has lost his arm in another war, women, and youths all want to join the forces against the Russians. Among them, a young woman named Zekiye helps Sergeant Abdullah to bomb the enemies' headquarters. She, as the loyal one, in the end, receives an honor medal for her contribution. Here, the myth of the warrior nation, showing that all Turks are capable of fighting, is again strengthened. The message is that Turks could defeat the enemy even when they are in a disadvantaged situation, regardless of age or gender. Therefore, even a young Turkish woman or a child could overpower the enemy. Furthermore, Turks use their mind and intelligence, even if they are in a disadvantaged position. For example, they could be trapped in prison, or they may have few or no weapons. Despite what may happen, the Turks eliminate the enemy. The three loyal warriors of Mehmet II in *İstanbul'un Fethi* (*The Conquest of İstanbul*) hold off the Byzantine guards easily by deceiving them with some hand puppets. These kinds of examples serve to belittle the enemy and to increase the self-confidence of the Turkish nation conveying the message that 'we could defeat the enemy even if there is an imbalance in power.'

2.3.2.3. Internal and external others:

Internal enemies such as Çandarlı are always depicted as more wicked than external others. In contrast, in *İstanbul'un Fethi* (*The Conquest of İstanbul*), the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI is portrayed as a heroic man, although he is an 'external other.' During the siege, he dresses like an ordinary Byzantine soldier, without any sign distinguishing him from the rest. He wants to fight equally to "save his nation." Just before the war, he gives an encouraging speech and asks the Venetian and Genoese people to help Byzantium: "Under the auspices of Jesus, this city has become your second homeland. I kindly ask you to fight together with us in a brotherly manner. As for me, I am determined to die for my nation, and if it is predestined, together with my nation. Do not lose your bravery and courage; put your trust in your commanders; victory is ours" (1:11:02-1:11:50).⁴⁶⁸ This speech is not dramatically different from one that any other Turkish leaders could deliver. The use of the word 'nation' interestingly

⁴⁶⁸ "Siz Venedikli, Cenevizli askerler! Bu şehir sizin ikinci vatanınız oldu. Bizimle beraber muhasara etmenizi rica ederim. Bizimle beraber kardeşçe muharebe etmenizi sizden tekrar rica ediyorum. Bana gelince; milletim için ve mukadderse milletimle beraber ölmeye kati suretle karar vermiş durumdayım. Cesaretinizi kaybetmeyin, kumandanlarınıza itimat edin. Zafer bizindir."

reveals the producers' insistence on defining every community as 'nation.' This could be a deliberate choice for establishing parallelism and equality between Turks and Byzantium. The emperor does not say a single negative word about the Turks; instead, he appreciates their bravery and their high possibility of winning the war in several scenes. This heroic character is not only brave on his own, but he also contributes to the bravery of Turks. Another such external other is Shah İsmail, the leader of the Safavids in *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor* (*Yavuz, the Resolute is Crying*). In the Battle of Çaldıran, he refuses to shoot a Turkish prisoner of war in the back because it is not chivalrous. The bravery of the 'external' enemies or their compliance with the 'laws of war' increases the legitimacy of the war for the Turkish side.

Among the other external enemies, there are also Russians. In *Vatan ve Namık Kemal* (*Fatherland and Namık Kemal*), which is based upon a theater play, *Vatan yahut Silistre* (*Fatherland or Silistra*) from 1872, the audience is not shown the Russian nation but the commanders. The characters inform the audience about the cause of the war that Russians are trying to invade the 'fatherland.' However, we do not see any representative of the Russian nation in person. Although the protagonist continuously talks about the sacred nature of the fatherland, it is not clear where the Russians attack and for which land piece the 'Turkish' army is fighting for. The fact that it was a castle named Silistra is not stated anywhere in the film. This could be because the producers did not want to attach hostility towards the Russians onto a particular land piece to generalize it. Besides, Silistra was probably unfamiliar to the 1950s audience, therefore, it would be hard for the audience to feel attached. Hence, the producers were able to keep the anti-communist stance alive in the Cold War by not naming the land piece the Ottomans are fighting for. Another interesting case is the enemies that invade the Fondi Castle and later attack the island of Lesbos in *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa* (*Hayrettin Barbarossa*). After Hatice is kidnapped in Lesbos by the same enemies, in one scene, a man introduces himself to her saying: "an Italian aristocrat" (38:55)⁴⁶⁹. This is the only reference to the identity of enemies. The audience knows that they are Christians, because Sultan Süleyman declares that this is a *ghaza* against infidels, but there is no mention of their national or ethnic identities other than what this 'aristocrat' says. The other 'external' enemy is King Abdullah of Tlemcen in North Africa. In *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa* (*Hayrettin Barbarossa*), his plans to cooperate with Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, is mentioned by several characters. He is fundamentally portrayed as cruel, greedy, and excessively interested in material things and

⁴⁶⁹ "bir İtalyan asilzadesi"

women. His corsairs kidnap Hatice, and although she says, “Save me. I am a Turk, I am Muslim” (1:00:01),⁴⁷⁰ they take her to King Abdullah’s harem.

There is no difference between the depictions of non-Muslim and Muslim enemies. Most significantly, references to nations or communities are not entirely clear. What matters, instead, is single characters instead of the entire community or the nation. For example, in *Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa* (*Hayrettin Barbarossa*), we do not see Italians; but an Italian commander and a count, even without hearing their national or ethnic identities. King Abdullah’s Tlemcen in the same film is relatively unfamiliar to the Turkish audience. *Vatan ve Namık Kemal* (*Fatherland and Namık Kemal*) refers only to some imaginary Russians without embodying them. There is Shah İsmail in *Yavuz Sultan Selim Ağlıyor* (*Yavuz the Resolute is Crying*), but no mention of the Safavids. The only visible community is the people of Byzantium in *İstanbul’un Fethi* (*The Conquest of İstanbul*). This kind of depiction could be attempting to distinguish modern nations from past political entities. Except for the Turkish case, the producers do not want the audience to connect today’s modern nations with the old enemies.

2.3.3. *Imagining the War of Independence in the 1950s’ Cinematic Baggage:*

One group of movies that reveals the increasing interest in history while contributing to the reproduction of political myths is those about the War of Independence. The emotional circumstances of the Korean War were also influential in creating a militarist atmosphere that could easily absorb the messages presented in movies. As a result, between 1948, when the municipal entertainment tax was reduced significantly, and 1960 when the first military intervention took place, around 40 movies about the War of Independence were filmed.⁴⁷¹ This section analyzes seven available films which include: *Allahısmarladık* (*Goodbye*, dir. Sami Ayanoğlu, 1951), *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş”* (*The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş,”* dir. Faruk Kenç, 1951), *Bulgar Sadık* (*Sadık the Bulgarian*, dir. Osman Seden, 1954), *İstiklal Harbi Ruhların Mucizesi* (*War of Independence, The Miracle of Souls*, dir. Hayri Esen, 1954), *Meçhul Kahramanlar* (*Unknown Heroes*, dir. Agah Ün, 1958), *Düşman Yolları Kesti*

⁴⁷⁰ “Ben Türk’üm, Müslüman’ım. Kurtarın beni.”

⁴⁷¹ Some of the unavailable films are: *İstiklal Madalyası* (*War of Independence Medal*, dir. Ferdi Tayfur, 1948); *Fato Ya İstiklal Ya Ölüm* (*Fato Independence or Death*, dir. Turgut Demirağ, 1949); *Ateşten Gömlek* (*Shirt of Flame*, dir. Vedat Örfi Bengü, 1950); *Ege Kahramanları*, (*Aegean Heroes*, dir. Nuri Akıncı, 1951); *Hürriyet Uğrunda* (*For Independence*, dir. Muharrem Gürses, 1954); *Kahraman Denizciler* (*Brave Sailors*, dir. Refik Kemal Ardurun, 1953); *Bu Vatan Bizindir* (*This Fatherland is Ours*, dir. Nejat Saydam, 1958) and *Bu Vatanın Çocukları* (*This Fatherland’s Children*, dir. Atıf Yılmaz, 1959).

(*The Enemy Blocked the Road*, dir. Osman Seden, 1959), and *İzmir Ateşler İçinde* (*İzmir is in Fire*, dir. Onur Ergün, 1959).

Among the available films from the 1950s, few had been supported by the Turkish military in terms of financial sources, military equipment, and human resources. For example, the opening scene of *Allahısmarladık* (*Goodbye*) presents thanks to the General Staff, navy, and land forces, along with a ship engineer. These films were rare examples because there was no systematic state or big capital holders' support in Yeşilçam. Nevertheless, this kind of support enabled filmmakers to use authentic ships, munitions, real soldiers, and actual military uniforms. These made war scenes look much more realistic, crowded, and technological, as manifested in impressive long shots. The other way to increase the sense of reality was to use documentary footage about the occupation of İstanbul and Anatolia. These scenes also included prominent real-life figures such as Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, General Fevzi Çakmak,⁴⁷² Halide Edip Adıvar,⁴⁷³ and Mehmet VI, the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly, the same documentary scenes were used by all films with a voice-over that explained the subject matter of these scenes. This could be an indication that the filmmakers were not comfortable with the subject matter. They may even have been afraid of misunderstanding or misinterpretation, which is unsurprising given the 1951 Law against Defaming Atatürk. Therefore, filmmakers protected themselves by using the same scenes, which seemed legitimate because they had already been used in another film. With this strategy, they did not divert from official historical understanding and eliminated any potential risks. Besides, they guided the audience about how to interpret certain scenes. This mentoring could be a beneficial strategy in overcoming false interpretations and contributing to a canonical nationalist narrative.

2.3.3.1. The warriors:

In all the films analyzed in this part, the storyline starts with the end of World War I and İstanbul's occupation by the Allies composed of British, French, and Italian forces. There is always a group of nationalists called *Kuva-yi Milliyeci* (National Forces), *Milliyeci* (Nationalists), or *Mustafa Kemalci* (Followers/Supporters of Mustafa Kemal) usually led by a handsome, likable, and masculine lieutenant as the central figure. This figure is a representation of the younger generation of professional soldiers who were nationally conscious. In fact, lieutenants were attractive characters for filmmakers because they were in direct contact with

⁴⁷² Fevzi Çakmak (1876-1950) was the Chief of General Staff in 1918-1919 and later the Minister of War in 1920.

⁴⁷³ Halide Edip (1884-1964) was a nationalist intellectual who wrote one of the first novels about İstanbul under Allied occupation.

their men, in contrast with the captains, the next highest rank who conferred with their lieutenants. Moreover, they could have been modeled after the young Mustafa Kemal. Lieutenant Süha in *İstiklal Harbi Ruhların Mucizesi (War of Independence, The Miracle of Souls)* even plans to copy what Mustafa Kemal did: ripping off all his epaulets and throwing them on the table after his condemnation to death by the Sultan. This is a repetition of what official historiography proclaims about Mustafa Kemal's free and independent personality that did not give importance to rank or titles.

The lieutenants in the films are never alone, but accompanied by sergeants and privates. In their scenes, the audience witnesses a brotherhood between all soldiers. None of the films provide information about where any of these soldiers are from or their ethnic identities. All characters speak Turkish with a proper İstanbul accent, which is the norm throughout Turkey. As for their religious affiliations, the audience assumes that they are Muslims. For a critical viewer, there are small references to soldiers' religion or at least if they are practicing Muslims or not. Two exceptions could be the soldiers' saying 'Allah Allah' in the heat of the battle, and Agent Kemal, who swears on the Quran and promises to serve his nation and his flag with loyalty in *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)*. As for the civilians, we see some imams and some veiled women but never placed at the center of the movies. There is also a reference to some people of Maraş going to the mosque for Friday prayers in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir "Şanlı Maraş"* (*The City that Saved Itself "Glorious Maraş"*). These men say Friday prayer is not permissible until the Turkish flag is raised in Maraş (42:06).⁴⁷⁴ They give priority to the independence of their cities over practicing their religion.

Besides, the films mainly focus on soldiers and desperate people. They do not mention how soldiers collaborated with intellectuals except one scene in *Allahısmarladık (Goodbye)*, in which a jailed nationalist speaks about how the Turkish nation will punish supporters of the Sultans one day. With his bowtie and jacket, he resembles a Western-educated intellectual. However, there are only teachers or doctors who help the military during the war in the films. This could be a deliberate choice for filmmakers who wanted to reach larger audiences. In fact, prototypes of teachers and doctors are generally easier to portray, and it is not unusual for ordinary people to be familiar with them in everyday life. However, the situation was more complicated for the portrayal of intellectuals because their depiction could lead to controversies that commercially minded filmmakers would want to avoid.

⁴⁷⁴ "Başucumuzda düşman bayrağı dalgalanırken bize Cuma namazı caiz değil."

2.3.3.2. *The warrior-nation:*

The Nationalists strive to deliver weapons and other supplies to armed groups to fight the occupation forces in Anatolia. Since the Nationalists are the legitimate owners of the fatherland, their fight is just. Therefore, they are fighting not because they want to kill and destroy other nations, but because their homeland is under attack, and they were almost enslaved. However, for Turks, the essential thing in life is freedom. Therefore, as Lieutenant İzzet says in *Allahısmarladık (Goodbye)*, they prefer to die with their honor to living as enslaved like the people of Africa (1:17:57-1:18:53).⁴⁷⁵ This argument also strengthens the myth that Turks were never barbarians. Besides, the voice-over in *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)* states that, like the other civilized nations in the world, they believe in the ideal of humanity, living in peace and tranquility, and being part of a strong front against any power that could threaten world peace. This might be interpreted as a reference to Turkey's NATO ideal that the Turkish nation was a part of the anti-communist free world – ‘*hür dünya*’ brought together under NATO. In this context, “the past has gone, and Turkey is a friend of its neighbors who believe in the same ideal of humanity and is determined to live as friends forever” (1:42:35-1:43:09). These lines from *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)* are in line with Turkey's Cold War foreign policy.

In realizing their mission, the main supporting power behind the nationalists consists of civilians of different ages and genders, befitting the myth of military-nation. Among these, teenage boys show up quite frequently. These are depicted as potential soldiers or potential ideal men who learn how to fight from the elderly. In *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*, sergeant Sadık teaches Mehmet, lieutenant Osman's teenage brother, how to shoot. In fact, despite his age, Mehmet is a quick learner, and after a brief practice, he hits the target. This is, of course, not surprising because Turkish men are born and raised as soldiers. Then, Osman asks Mehmet to enemy camps and learn about the number of guards for the arsenal. Mehmet's answer was befitting to his soldierly character: “don't worry, my commander” (36:55).⁴⁷⁶ Here, the audience understands that Mehmet is no longer the main character's brother but a soldier obeying the commander's demands. Although he gets caught and beaten by enemy soldiers, Mehmet achieves the assignment. In revenge, in a night raid, he attacks the particular soldier who had beaten him by saying, “you, the bandit of wilderness” (47:44),⁴⁷⁷ but this “little

⁴⁷⁵ “Burada bayrağımızın gölgesinde ecdadımızın icap ettiği zaman yaptığı gibi şerefimizle dalgaların arasına karışmak mı; yoksa Afrikalı bir zenci gibi zindanlarda esir olarak yaşamak mı?”

⁴⁷⁶ “Merak etme kumandanım.”

⁴⁷⁷ “yabanın haydudu”

soldier,” as Osman calls him, gets shot in the back. Additionally, in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş”* (*The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş”*), two boys attack drunken enemy soldiers that harass a veiled woman on the street. Then Ali Ökkeş, the leading character, appears and kills those men. He gives his gun to the boys as a gift. Here the message is that although we are a military nation, we still need adults to defeat the enemy. As the other group of men, we see older ones who had fought in previous wars and anxious to fight in this one, too, such as the imam had fought in the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş”* (*The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş”*). Here through a reference to another war, a connection is established between different generations as co-nationals, and the people are attached to the homeland. However, the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish War of Independence is not entirely clear. This was probably because the people did not call themselves the Ottomans. Even in *Bulgar Sadık* (*Sadık the Bulgarian*), which depicts 1910 just before the Balkan Wars, close to the period before the First World War, the word ‘Ottomans’ is not used to name people. Instead, there are always ‘Turks,’ ‘the Turkish nation,’ or ‘heroic Turks’ adopted to define the people living in Anatolia.

Regardless of who these civilians are, the members of the warrior-nation are heroic, nationally conscious, and know how to use guns. Their almost automatic adaptation into wartime conditions reproduces the myth of Turks being a warrior nation since birth. This is not only an essentialist approach to the formation of nationhood but also imagines a nation in a von Herderian way -that is, a biological entity composed of separate cells or organs, all of which work harmoniously in fulfilling their specific functions for the same interest. This perspective suppresses any kind of differences, such as ethnic and class-based ones that could disturb societal harmony and so envisages a homogeneous and solidaristic people devoid of any conflicts. This community in the films fights for the fatherland, which is their sacred home. From this perspective, the enemies are attacking not an ordinary land but the sacred fatherland of the nation. The war, therefore, is a just war. To depict the cause of this just war, the filmmakers construct Anatolia as a beautiful land of forests and rivers where innocent people live happily and peacefully free of conflict. In *Allahısmarladık* (*Goodbye*), the occupation commander’s daughter Betty and the nationalist Lieutenant İzzet the Black Sea coast visit a Black Sea town and participate in a rural wedding ceremony. We see helpful and respectful local people there, musicians playing local songs, and young people playing folk dances. As in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş”* (*The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş”*), these depictions help the audience to imagine Anatolia as a national, untouched, and peaceful

fatherland. They guide the audience in what to imagine and how to do that by manifesting a national repertoire of songs and dances.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the cooperation within this particular community in protecting the fatherland leads to the idea that the war had been won together. Therefore, every member of the Turkish nation can be considered a hero. This idea enhances the self-confidence of the people. In this context, the general portrayal of characters in the films is worth mentioning. At first sight, they seem to be mainly featuring Lieutenants. However, it is hard to argue that the narratives were only about the main characters. There are secondary characters such as sergeants or heroic young women whose stories occupy considerable narrative portions. In fact, there are no radical differences between the time devoted to Lieutenants and secondary characters. Even most of the titles do not refer to individual heroes; instead, they refer to plural anonymous heroes as in *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)* or a city and its heroic inhabitants without like *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş” (The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş”)* or *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)*. When all these are considered within the DP’s populist discourse in the 1950s, we see the connection to the zeitgeist ‘common man’s self-confidence’ and ‘self-assertion.’

2.3.3.3. Women:

There are four groups of women helping the Nationalists. This first includes older women, such as the mother in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş” (The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş”)*. She kills her husband, Salih, with a gun because he was a spy carrying the Nationalists’ secret plans to the Sultan. After shooting her husband, she says: “God damn this traitor! If he did not die, Maraş would be lost” (01:25:55)⁴⁷⁸. In *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*, we see older and traditional-looking women with guns waiting for the Nationalists’ commands. The second group of women was younger mothers with their babies. In one scene of *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*, we see a young woman protecting a field gun from the rain instead of her baby, who was suffering from malaria. When her baby dies, she and other women are upset, but continue their mission of carrying guns to the battlefield. We see the third group of women leading all those young mothers: young Turkish women who are active on the battlefield. One of them is Zeynep in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir “Şanlı Maraş” (The City that Saved Itself “Glorious Maraş”)*. When the leading character Ali Ökkeş asks her to go back to her house because she is a woman, Zeynep says: “I will go

⁴⁷⁸ “Gebersin vatan haini. O ölmeseydi Maraş elden gidecekti.”

wherever you go. I am a woman. Ok. But am I not a Turkish woman? ... Look, I can use guns. In war, woman and man unite, there is no difference between them” (01:27:05).⁴⁷⁹ She subsequently falls a martyr and is buried like other martyrs wrapped in the Turkish flag. Similarly, Zehra in *İstiklal Harbi Ruhlar Mucizesi (War of Independence, The Miracle of Souls)* also says to Lieutenant Süha: “We all have the same goal...And...we should work altogether, women and men, the young and, elderly” (22:45-23:03).⁴⁸⁰ Here women perceive themselves as equal to men in realizing this goal. Another salient figure is Ayşe of *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*. Although her father was a well-to-do merchant supporting the Sultan and the occupation forces, Ayşe becomes conscious of her country’s politics after falling in love with Lieutenant Osman. At one point, she even slaps her betrothed, a pro-Sultan Lieutenant. When she breaks up with him, she enters a transformation process as reflected through her clothes. Instead of dresses and high heels, she puts on military uniforms and fights in the hills as the founder of Women’s Troops. At some point, she works as a tailor to sew Turkish flags like many other women who fulfill several duties on the battlefield. Like other members of the Turkish nation, young women are also nationally conscious, or about to gain national consciousness. Ayşe of *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*, for example, states that she learned heroism and the love for the fatherland from Lieutenant Osman (1:08:53).⁴⁸¹ She even calls him “my commander” in one scene (1:15:42-1:16:26)⁴⁸² as a sign of her respect for the military and her adaptation ability into wartime conditions. Here, love comes with national consciousness, and lovers do not reunite until the end of the war. Therefore, personal relations also become political. Interestingly, we do not see teenage girls in films. This could be simply because the storytellers did not know where to place them in the story. They were too young and could not be put in a love relationship; besides, there were already teenage boys as the potential heroes for the future, and there may have been no need for small girls.

The last group of women is the Other women represented through the daughters of occupation commanders. Betty in *Allahaismarladık (Goodbye)* and Suzy in *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)* fall in love with the principal characters-the Lieutenants. These relationships underline the protagonists’ masculinity through their desirability to Western women. One point to note is that although these women are from the enemy side, they are never evil. Instead, they are honorable, thoughtful, and sensitive characters who support the protagonists with their love.

⁴⁷⁹ “Sen nereye, ben oraya. Kadınsam kadınıam. Türk kızı değil miyim bunun ne ehemmiyeti var? Elim silah tutuyor ya se ona bak. Savaş olunca kadın erkek bir tek varlık demektir, ayrı gayrı olmaz.”

⁴⁸⁰ “Biz aynı gaye için çalışıyoruz...kadın, erkek, genç, ihtiyar çalışmalıyız.”

⁴⁸¹ “Senden kahramanlığı, vatan sevgisini öğrendim.”

⁴⁸² “komutanım”

For the main characters, however, the love for the nation is above all other relationships. Kemal, a Turkish agent, in *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)*, for example, says that he would not hold back from killing Suzy if his country wanted him to do so. On the other hand, the protagonists' approach to these women is not based on aggressiveness; they want a relatively steady and regular relationship. Therefore, the women of the Other are not 'conquered,' but the two become 'partners.' Although this partnership is still unequal considering the typical storyline that ends with those women's decisions to leave their own countries to live with the Lieutenants in Turkey, one could state that it is relatively equal compared to the evil women of the Other in historical action/adventure movies of the following decades. Besides, one of the women, Betty, is also depicted as nationally conscious. In the last scene of *Allahıs marladık (Goodbye)*, looking at the allied forces' ships, one of which is carrying her father, departing from the coast of İstanbul, she waves, saying: "Goodbye my honorable flag, my beautiful homeland" (2:00:49).⁴⁸³ These words elevate her in the audience's eyes by making her a suitable accompaniment for the Turkish hero. At this point, it should be noted that with their modern outlook, hobbies such as playing piano, and tenderness, Betty or Suzy are less controversial role models for young Turkish women who may have been bonding with cinematic characters.

2.3.3.4. *External others:*

There are several groups of Others. The most obvious one is, of course, external others. The audience is shown high-ranking enemy soldiers or occupation commanders making plans and giving commands. They are not represented as an evil that the audience could hate, but respectable soldiers who are fulfilling their duties. The filmmaker appreciates the Turkish nation through them. At some point, the commander in *Allahıs marladık (Goodbye)* appreciates the honor of the Turks by referring to other wars: "I have fought against Turks at close quarters for days and months in Gallipoli. I know it better than anybody: how honorable, brave, and heroic Turks are. I came here as an enemy, but now I'm leaving with friendly feelings" (01:56:17-01:56:52).⁴⁸⁴ With these sentences, the audience is reminded of the Battle of Gallipoli. This reference reinforces what the audience must know about the Turks' heroic struggles, therefore contributing to the narration of the milestones of the official nationalist

⁴⁸³ "Güle güle şerefli bayrağım, güzel vatanım."

⁴⁸⁴ "Ben Çanakkale'de Türklerle karşı karşıya, göğüs göğüse günlerce ve aylarca harbettim. Türklerin ne kadar şerefli, mert ve kahraman bir millet olduğunu herkesten daha iyi bilirim...Memleketinize düşman olarak gelip içi dostça hislerle dolu ayrılan bir asker olarak..."

historiography. Besides, these lines emphasize the Turks' being a noble nation, making it compatible with fighting within the same league of the Western powers. The commanders also have a conscience. Therefore, in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir "Şanlı Maraş"* (*The City that Saved Itself "Glorious Maraş"*), the occupation commander wants to find a solution to the spilling of blood. Here, although they are enemies, the evil sides of these characters are not overly emphasized, probably because the general atmosphere avoided offending the Western European powers who were Turkey's allies in the 1950s.

However, if the enemy was not from Western Europe but Bulgaria, the Other's representation dramatically changes. It could be related to the power balance that the Turkish foreign policy followed during the 1950s. Bulgaria was mainly a part of the communist bloc, therefore, constituted a threat to the Western anti-communist piece of land that Turkey was attached to. An excellent example of the devilish representation of the Bulgarians is in by *Bulgar Sadık (Sadık the Bulgarian)*, which is about Bulgarian comitajis (*komitacı*) terrorizing muhajirs in 1910. In it, the Bulgarian commander orders his soldiers to burn down muhajirs' houses and kill them all. Here we see evil Bulgarians entertaining themselves, consuming ample amounts of food and wine, trying to harass a Turkish muhajir woman by forcing her to dance. However, there is an exception in one scene in which Rüştü Pasha informs three Bulgarians about court decisions, and these Bulgarians become immensely grateful to the Ottoman court because of its justice and mercy. This scene serves to underline Turks' justice as opposed to the Bulgarians, who are ungrateful to the Ottoman state that has been taking care of them for centuries.

More 'Others' are the Armenians, who are also expected to be 'grateful' to the Turkish nation. This is stated by a dialogue between a wealthy Armenian landowner, Agop, a supporter of the Sultan, and his two relatives in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir "Şanlı Maraş"* (*The City that Saved Itself "Glorious Maraş"*): "We have actually been ungrateful towards Turks...Let us think, Agop Efendi. What kind of a misdeed did we see from Turks?" Agop: "That is right." First Armenian: "Agop Efendi, you are the most educated, most intelligent man among us. I guess you are influenced because your wife is a foreigner. As I know, Turks have not bowed down to any other nation, and they never will. We are content with them, so why are we betraying our fellow countrymen by serving those foreigners?" Agop: "You are right. My emotions have got the better of me. However, I, too, have eaten this nation's bread for years. I cannot deny this." Second Armenian: "Yes, we are happy that you have understood your mistake, Agop Efendi. All Armenians except you and us are fighting against the enemy together with the Turks." Witnessing the dialogue, Agop's son finds it meaningless. When the relatives

declare that the son is manipulating his father, the son grabs a gun and shoots them. Then Agop takes the weapon from the hands of his son, saying: “you the dog, you fooled me and asked me to help the enemy, and now you attempted to kill my relatives. A monster like you must not live. The fact that you are living is a shame for our family.” Then Agop kills his son (01:16:18-01:18:15).⁴⁸⁵ This particular scene is quite impressive in showing the legitimacy of the war. This means it is such a sacred struggle that fathers are killing their sons for the future of the fatherland. The scene also contributes to the Turkish nation’s justice and mercifulness by underlining the so-called ‘loyalty’ of the Armenians.

There are not many low-ranking ‘Other’ soldiers, such as privates, as if the war is simply between high-ranking men and the Turkish nation. In fact, when there is a hot conflict between two armies, documentary footage is shown. Therefore, in these scenes, the audience generally sees ships, bombs, smoke, tanks, and some troops with long shots instead of close shots of the faces of ordinary soldiers killed on fronts. One-to-one encounters between Turkish soldiers and other soldiers are not common. These representations increase the epic side but might decrease the possibility of feeling attached to those soldiers who fought on fronts. They are basically non-violent scenes, which might also cause the audience not to hold excessive hate towards the enemy. Besides, there is no single overt reference to the exact nationalities of the occupying forces in İstanbul. In *Allahaismarladık (Goodbye)*, Major Rıfat mentions them indirectly: “Let them come. From Scotland, Senegal, India, Africa, they are pouring from all over the world...the world’s huge armies...” (09:27).⁴⁸⁶ In these lines, the character only gives the names of colonies joining the occupying forces. In other words, who occupied where is not thoroughly evident in the films. The reason could be the impracticality of showing different

⁴⁸⁵ Armenian 1: “Aslını ararsanız bir Türklere karşı çok nankörlük ediyoruz.”

Agop : Doğru”

Armenian 1: “Düşünün bir kere Agop efendi biz şimdiye adar Türklere ne kötülük gördük?”

Agop: “Çok doğru”

Armenian 1: “Agop efendi sen içimizde en okumuş en akıllı adamsın ama galibe karın ecnebi olduğu için tesir altında alıyorsun. Benim bildiğim Türklere hiçbir millete boyun eğmemişlerdir ve eğmezler de. Biz onlardan memnunuz ne diye elin gavuruna hizmet edip de hemşehrilerimize hıyanet edelim.”

Agop: “Hakkınız var. Ben hislerime mağlup oldum. Halbuki ben de senelerce bu milletin ekmeğini yedim. Bunu inkar edemem.”

Armenian 1: “Tabii ya, hatanı anladığına memnun olduk Agop Efendi. Senden ve bizden başka bütün Ermeniler Türklere beraber şehri kurtarmak için düşmana karşı harp ediyor.”

Agop’s son: “Bir avuç Türk koskoca devletle başa çıkabilir mi hiç? Defolun da babamı rahat bırakın.”

Armenians: “Seni vatan haini seni babanı da kendini de kötü yola sevk ediyorsun da farkında bile değilsin ha. Biz Türklere düşmana karşı omuz omuza harp etmeye gidiyoruz.”

Armenian 2: “Eğer karşıma çıkacak olursan beynini ilk kurşuna benden yersin.”

Agop’s son: “O kadar acele etmeyin nasıl olsa düşmana karşı harp edemeyeceksiniz”

Agop: “Alçak köpek! Beni kandırıp düşmana yardım ettirdiğin yetiştirmemiş gibi şimdi de akrabalarımı öldürmeye kalktın. Senin gibi bir canavarın yaşaması ailemiz için lekedir.”

⁴⁸⁶ Gelsinler bakalım. İskoçya’dan, Senegal’den Hindistan’dan, Afrika’dan, dünyanın dörtbir yanından akıyorlar ...dünyanın en muazzam orduları.”

soldiers, making the narrative harder to understand. Another reason could be that the filmmakers probably did not want to offend Western European countries in the Cold War atmosphere, in which Turkey needed to find itself an ally against the Soviet threat. Besides, the emphasis only on the greatness of the enemy's armies recognizes the enemies' worth and strengthens the idea of the Turks' bravery and success despite the imbalance.

2.3.3.5. *Internal others:*

In general, the occupying forces are helped by the Sultan's troops and some other groups which do not support the War of Independence. Those helping the enemy are the true evil towards whom the audience must feel hate. More explicitly, they are 'internal enemies' as exemplified by some Lieutenants, high-ranking soldiers, prosperous merchants, bureaucrats, non-Muslims, and a few imams. Since they are against the War of Independence and collaborate with the occupying forces, they are considered traitors or enemies of the fatherland by the heroes and their surrounding groups. For example, in *Düşman Yolları Kesti* (*The Enemy Blocked the Road*), a spy carries messages to occupying forces from Ankara. In *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir "Şanlı Maraş"* (*The City that Saved Itself "Glorious Maraş"*), one imam is anxious to fight with the enemy, although the other supports the Sultan. These examples are significant to reveal the heterogeneity of the Turks. The most striking representation is of ambitious and wicked Lieutenants and some high-ranking soldiers who only think of their individual interests and therefore cooperate with the Sultan to rise in rank. The nationalist Lieutenant İzzet describes *Allahısmarladık's* (*Goodbye*) Major Celal as ready "to sell the fatherland" for an additional star on his epaulet (11:36).⁴⁸⁷ The voiceover in *İstiklal Harbi Ruhların Mucizesi* (*The War of Independence, The Miracle of Souls*) asks why those pashas and *efendis* with shining uniforms glittering medals are waiting for while Turkish soldiers in Anatolia are fighting against soldiers from all over the world. These yes-men of the Sultan belittle the ones who fought in Anatolia (05:31-06:30).⁴⁸⁸ Zeynep's father in *Kendini Kurtaran Şehir "Şanlı Maraş"* (*The City that Saved Itself "Glorious Maraş"*), says that it is not possible for a handful of "vagabonds" (*baldırıçıplak*) to defeat this enormous state. The spy who carries information to İstanbul and the occupying forces named Salih declares that these nationalists

⁴⁸⁷ "Apoletine ilave edilebilecek tek bir yıldız için bir vatan satabilir."

⁴⁸⁸ "Etrafında bir suru dalkavuk vazifesi merasimlere iştirakten başka bir şey olmayan parlak üniformalı paşalar vatan kaygısından uzak ihsan-ı şahaneye mazhar olabilmek için vatani satmaya bile gönülleri razı...Çanakkale'de Mehmetçik yedi iklimin askerleriyle savaşıyor. Şu eli tutan askerlerin burada ne isi var, göğüslerinde pırıl pırıl madalyalar olan efendiler neyi bekliyorlar niçin onlar da cephede değiller. Onlar cepheye gitseler efendilerini kim karşılayacak, kim padişahım çok yasa diyecek."

are just a group of “plunderers” (*çapulcu*) (1:18:20-1:19:47). “Bandits” is another name used for the Nationalists.

In *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*, after the group he leads attacks a rich farmhouse to find money and the necessary guns, the nationalist Lieutenant Osman says: “I have come here to take back all the money you have stolen from the nation for years by cooperating with some corrupted ones. We are not bandits. We are here to give what has been stolen from the nation back to the nation” (25:58-26:47).⁴⁸⁹ Here the emphasis on banditry might be related to the fact that nationalists were composed of irregular armies at first. Therefore, the way they were perceived could be different from how the Sultan’s troops were perceived. The irregular ones could be legitimizing their cause by saying that they were not bandits, and their real aim is not to kill people but to awaken them about the national cause. At one point, Lieutenant Osman gives the receipt for the money he seized from the wealthy owner of the farmhouse. Here they express themselves as the legitimate representatives of the national will instead of those who exploited people.

2.3.3.6. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk:

In their quest for freedom, the guide for Nationalists is Mustafa Kemal. In *İzmir Ateşler İçinde (İzmir is in Fire)*, he is described as “the world’s greatest savior and commander, the most honorable face of humanity and civilization” (1:41:02). This is a step towards the mythization of Atatürk, happening at a time when the Law against Defaming Atatürk was passed, and Menderes wanted to show himself as the real supporter of Atatürk to curtail İnönü’s charisma. Conforming with this environment, in *Meçhul Kahramanlar (Unknown Heroes)*, when the teenage boy Mehmet is dying, he sees Atatürk in between lights above the mountains like the dawn. These mythized Atatürk as ‘Savior’ and ‘the only political leader,’ monopolizing how he and the ideal leader could be interpreted. In this context, the emphasis is on the ordinary man, and that anybody could become a hero; you do not need superpowers. There is already a man with superpowers, and that is Atatürk. In this case, what you should do as an ordinary man is to follow Atatürk, the mythical leader as a member of the warrior nation that is obedient and heroic.

⁴⁸⁹ “Buraya senelerdir namussuzlarla uyarak milletten çaldığım paraları almak için geldim. Biz eşkıya değiliz Milletten çalınanı millete vermeye geldik.”

2.4. Concluding Remarks:

The 1950s was the beginning of a period in which the dominant political discourse characterized politics based on a struggle between the Western-oriented military/bureaucratic elite and ‘common man.’ According to the ruling DP, the western-oriented elites were isolated from the desires and interests of the ‘common man’, who was believed to be the real representative of the nation. This understanding was born parallel to various political and social transformations, such as the DP propaganda, rural to urban migration, Cold War foreign policy choices, and American influence. It also transformed social values in favor of a self-made, traditionalist, and anti-communist role model of the idealized Turk instead of a military-bureaucratic one imagined in connection with the early Republican elite. In the cultural area, a blend of the American and peripheral values, besides the increasing interest in history, came to the fore in everyday life. This marked negotiations within the official discourse and the formation of alternative imaginings of the Turkish nationhood as it could be followed through action/adventure films with historical settings shot during the period.

In fact, the 1950s also witnessed the beginning of a tremendous increase in production and consumption in Turkish cinema. Rather than simple artifacts, these complex cultural products created a world where the Turkish nation was wholly unchanged and homogeneous, yet militarist. Many action/adventure movies take their subjects from the past in this rich pool of movies. With their focus on the heroism of Turks, these movies reproduced nationalist political myths, as the analysis reveals. According to this sample, Turks are a heroic nation attached to Anatolia and İstanbul. This insertion of the nation into its current national borders could be related to the efforts of establishing good relations with the allies and, at the same time, prove that the Republic is different from the Ottoman Empire, hence always in favor of peace and never supporting imperialism. In this context, the golden age of this sample of movies starts with the War of Independence, as it could be seen even from the greater number of movies about the War of Independence in comparison to those about the Ottoman Empire.

On the other hand, there is also a selective appropriation of the Ottoman past. Specifically, the Ottomans are taken to represent the Turkish nation’s heroism, preparing the ground for today’s Republic. Therefore, the conquest of İstanbul is depicted as a heroic event in which the Turks fulfilled their national mission of bringing peace and civilization everywhere. Of course, filmmakers were cautious in not offending the allies in line with the government’s foreign policy. In this context, the enemies are never represented clearly. The soldiers' faces are blurred, there are no close shots, and hot conflicts between Turkish and enemy soldiers are not shown. Besides, although Russians are mentioned as the enemy, the

audience does not see any Russians. To avoid mentioning the Greeks, Byzantium is referred to at some point. This could be related to the filmmakers' attempts to distinguish enemies of the past from today's nation-states. The only exception is the more precise representations of the Bulgarians in *Bulgar Sadık* (*Sadık the Bulgarian*). Therefore, if the enemy is from the communist bloc, its representation changes, except for the case of Russia, the leader of the bloc. This, again, is the result of an attempt to place Turkey in the group of 'civilized' nations in line with the anti-communist propaganda messages of the Western bloc, which are mainly based on emphasizing the barbaric nature of communists in contrast to civilized westerners.

These action/adventure movies that reproduced political myths succeeded in three instances. First, they created visual baggage consisting of nationalist symbols, images, and narratives that could be used by the filmmakers of the following decade. Then, they militarized the everyday life of the 1950s by disseminating nationalist ideas through non-militaristic means. Third, they constructed an ideal leader and his warrior prototype in a period without Atatürk - 'the Father of Turks.' The perfect leader in the Ottoman context is Mehmet the Conqueror, who is a young, dynamic, healthy, and heroic Sultan with significant military capabilities. He is an Alexander type of leader in Girardet's categorization. Although he is a conqueror, he conquers İstanbul, which is a place that is meant to belong to Turks due to the oppressive regime terrorizing even its own citizens. Therefore, Mehmet is, in fact, a protector of today's Turkish homeland. In this context, the mythization of Atatürk in the films was much more intense. He is represented as the Savior in parallel to the savior myth of Girardet. He is powerful, distinct, unreachable, and unchallengeable. The warriors of the ideal leader, however, are not represented anonymously. Of course, the entire nation, including women and children, is constituted by ideal warriors. However, other than Barbarossa, no film established its entire discourse on a hero representing the ideal warrior. Instead, the ideal warrior is the whole nation without any exception.

Nevertheless, the end product of all these representations is a step toward depicting the ideal warrior as a challenge to the Europe-oriented military/bureaucratic elite. As analyzed in the following chapters, this man is expected to be active, dynamic, and masculine, in addition to being culturally conservative, anti-elitist, anti-bureaucratic, self-made, and most importantly, loyal. This depiction reinforces the power and influence of the 'common man' vis a vis the traditional military/bureaucratic elites.