Metin Yüksel

Iranian Studies in Turkey

Among other Middle Eastern countries, Iran and Turkey stand out as the two neighboring countries with many linguistic and cultural similarities. The question that comes to the fore is: to what extent do these two countries know each other? This article attempts to provide a picture of the state of Iranian Studies in Turkey with specific attention to three monographs originally written as PhD dissertations in various Turkish universities over the last three decades. Produced from within three different social science and humanities divisions, i.e. Political Science, Persian Literature and History, these are three of the very few scholarly monographs produced on Iran in Turkey. Based on a close reading of these studies, it seems possible to observe that they are mostly ill-balanced by methodological, ethnocentric as well as Turkish nationalist biases.

Compared to their Middle Eastern neighbors, Iran and Turkey are distinguished by their many similarities. Neighbors for centuries, they have been the heirs of two rival empires, the Sunni Ottomans and the Shi’i Safavids. Neither of them has been officially colonized by Western powers. Moreover, both Iran and Turkey have many shared cultural characteristics. A notable example is the existence of a large number of similar Turkish and Persian idioms. These parallels lead one to pose the following question: how much do Iran and Turkey know about each other? More specifically, what scholarship do they produce about each other? I attempt to approach these questions with particular attention to the state of scholarly interest and knowledge production in Turkey.

This article, which has been written to shed light on the state of scholarly endeavor in the field of Iranian Studies in Turkey, is divided into two parts. First, it

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provides a brief overview of the state of Iranian Studies in Turkey through various indicators such as Turkish translations of academic and literary works from Persian and English, the instruction of Persian language as well as figures and subjects of theses and dissertations written on Iran. Following this brief historical and academic contextualization, the second part of the essay critically situates three PhD dissertations submitted by Mehmet Kanar, Serpil Üşür and Celal Metin at Istanbul, Ankara and Hacettepe universities. Submitted in 1979, 1989 and 2006, these dissertations were published in 1999, 1991 and 2011, respectively. They were submitted at the departments of Political Science (Ankara University), Persian Language and Literature (Istanbul University) and the Institute of Atatürk’s Principles and the History of the Revolution (Hacettepe University). Written from within three different academic disciplines and stretching over three decades, from the 1980s through the 2000s, these three books are used as the focus of this essay to provide a picture of contemporary Turkish scholarship about Iran in Turkey. While these three studies show the small number of such books published in Turkey, in no way are they meant to represent the whole scholarly production in this field in Turkey.

**Contextualizing Iranian Studies in Turkey**

The historical turning point for the current state of popular as well as academic perception and knowledge of Iran in Turkey seems to lie in the radical shift away from Islamic towards Western civilization following the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In this context, the replacement of Arabic-Persian letters with the Latin alphabet in 1928 was perhaps the most radical step taken towards the novel ideal of reaching the “level of contemporary civilization” (cağdaş uygarlık düzeyi), a defining characteristic of the official ideology in Republican Turkey. In the context of this radical social, cultural and political change, it was Turkish scholars such as Necati Lugal (1881–1964), Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı (1900–82), Ahmed Ateş (1911–66), and Tahsin Yazıcı (1922–2002) that played an essential role with their translations of Persian classical poetry into modern Turkish from the 1940s on. With the gradual disappearance of this generation brought up in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey, however, there emerged a gap in the scholarship produced on Iran. Needless to say, translations of literary, academic and non-academic works from Persian and European languages continued to appear in Turkey. For example, in a bookstore in Ankara or Istanbul one can see works by Sadeq Hedayat, Forough Farrokhzad, Samad Behrangi, Sohrab Sepehri, Ahmed Shamlu, Sadeq Chubak, Hushang Golshiri and Iraj Pezeshkzad. It should be noted that a number of these translations from modern Persian literature are by such Iranian-Azeri artists, researchers and/or writers as Cavit Mukaddes, Hüsev Hüsevşahi and Siyaveş Azeri. Ali Shari’ati’s complete works have recently been republished by Fecr in a series called *Ali Shari’ati Library* (*Ali Şeriati Kütüphane*). The memoirs of Muhammad Reza Shah’s first and second wives, Soraya
and Farah, have also been translated into Turkish.16 As for Turkish translations of academic research, there are works by the following scholars: Ervand Abrahamian,17 Hamid Dabashi,18 Roy Mottahedeh,19 Janet Afary,20 Touraj Atabaki,21 Franklin Lewis,22 Asef Bayat23 and Abbas Vali.24

Alongside translations of literary, academic and non-academic works from Persian and English, the two main centers of producing and spreading knowledge about Iran in Turkey are state-supported institutions: Center for Teaching the Persian Language located in Ankara and functioning under the Iranian Cultural Undersecretariat (Rayzani-ye Farhangi-ye Iran/Iran Kültür Müsteşarlığı) and Turkish universities. Functioning for over 35 years, the Center for Teaching the Persian Language in Ankara has been offering Persian courses from beginner level to advanced literature courses.25 Thanks to the financial support provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran, compared to the prices of other countries’ cultural centers in Ankara, the Center for Teaching Persian in Ankara has lower prices for its language courses. In addition to organizing cultural events in Ankara,26 the Center’s activities also include taking its students to Iran in the summer in order to familiarize them with Iranian society and culture.

As to Turkish universities, one can see that out of a total of 175 universities in Turkey,27 while Istanbul and Erzurum Atatürk universities offer bachelor’s, master’s and PhD degrees in Persian Language and Literature; Ankara, Kırıkkale and Selçuk universities offer bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Ankara and Kırıkkale universities also offer a joint PhD program. Courses under the general category of Middle Eastern Politics/History are offered in the departments of International Relations and Political Science. Founded in 1992, the Institute of Middle East Studies at Marmara University in Istanbul offers master’s and PhD degrees, the graduate program of Middle East Studies at the Middle East Technical University has offered only master’s degrees since it started in 2003.28 The curriculum of the departments of History seems to be mostly concentrated on Turkish, Ottoman and Western history.29 An important institutional component of academic knowledge is the agreements signed between Turkish and Iranian universities. In 2004, a Protocol of Academic Agreement was signed between Ankara University and Allāmeh Tabatabāi University, which is the first Iranian university to found a Department of Turkish Language and Literature.30

In Turkish universities, theses and dissertations focusing on Iran and covering a wide variety of academic disciplines such as social sciences, engineering, tourism, architecture and others were submitted. A search with the keyword “Iran” brings up a total of 446 recorded master’s theses and PhD dissertations on the online national database of theses and dissertations of Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı (Higher Educational Council), all submitted between 1985 and 2013.31 A number of these theses and dissertations were submitted by Iranian students studying in Turkey.32 Likewise, articles mostly by professors at the departments of Persian Language and Literature appear in various university journals.33 However, these studies seem usually to remain within the relatively limited boundaries of universities and the circles of specialized literary research. It is hence significant that
these works get published beyond their relatively narrow academic circles. A quite significant and yet non-academic by-product of the spread of sound scholarship beyond universities in Turkey is its potential contribution to the correction and/or eradication of biases and misperceptions about Iran prevailing in Turkey. The prejudices towards Iran seem partly to have their roots in Iran’s identification with the Shi’i identity, which has been the target of some nationalist-conservative circles in Turkey. A striking figure in this sense is the Islamist-nationalist writer and poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, who is called Üstat (Ostaad) in these circles.34

Quite often, these misconceptions about Iran are renewed and reproduced by alarmist, ‘strategist’ and security-oriented publications.35 The question that arises, then, is as follows: according to scholarly standards, what is Turkish academic output about Iran like? Can it contribute to the correction and eradication of common biases in Turkey about Iran?

Three Cases from Contemporary Turkish Scholarship on Iran

A helpful way to respond to the above question seems to be a close and careful analysis of the scholarship produced in Turkey. To do this, I shed light on three published works, which were originally submitted as PhD dissertations in Turkey. As I noted earlier, these books do not represent the entire academic production on Iran in Turkey. Nonetheless, alongside various indicators presented above, these three studies help us get a closer look at the quality of recent Turkish scholarship on Iran. Furthermore, the fact that these three studies are from three different social science and humanities disciplines and published from the early 1990s through the early 2010s, helps one get a relatively comprehensive grasp of Turkish academic production on Iran.

The first work that I would like to examine is by Mehmet Kanar. Submitted to Istanbul University’s Department of Eastern Languages and Literature, Division of Persian Language and Literature in 1979 as a PhD dissertation, this book was published in its “revised and expanded form”36 in 1999 with the following title: Çağdaş İran Edebiyatı’nın Doğuşu ve Gelişimi (The Birth and Development of Contemporary Iranian Literature). Having taught in the same department for many years, Kanar has recently been teaching in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Yeditepe University in Istanbul. Mostly known for his translations of Sadeq Hedayat’s works, published by Yapı Kredi,37 Kanar has done a great service to Persian language and literature and the Turkish reading public with his compilations of modern Persian short stories,38 dictionaries39 and recent translations from classical Persian literature.40

The book begins with a short review of the nineteenth-century political history of Iran, the Constitutional Revolution alongside a brief informative section on the Persian language. The author notes that “literary development is examined in parallel with social development.”41 The book is composed of two chapters entitled Nesir (Prose) and Şiir (Poetry). In each chapter the author provides an overview
of modern Persian prose and poetry with particular attention to specific literary figures.

The book has three essential problems. First and most important, it does not have an analytical point. The book is like a dictionary of Persian prose writers and poets from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. In this sense, the work is a descriptive and informative overview rather than an analytical study based on a clear-cut research question. Furthermore, the book does not have a concluding chapter in which the emergence and development of modern Persian literature is viewed from a particular viewpoint. Hence, upon turning the last page of the book, the reader is left with many names of writers and poets, titles of books and dates, but lacking an analytical perspective on the topic.

Secondly, starting with the title, throughout the book the author uses concepts such as İran edebiyatı (Iranian literature),42 klasik İran edebiyatı (classical Iranian literature),43 modern İran edebiyatı (modern Iranian literature),44 İran dili ve edebiyatı (Iranian language and literature),45 İran nesi (Iranian prose)46 and İran şiiri (Iranian poetry).47 Sometimes the author mistranslates “Persian language” into Turkish as “Iranian language.”48 For instance, Bozorg Alavi’s German work on the history of Persian literature (Geschichte und Entwicklung der modernen Persischen Literatur) is again translated as Iranian literature (Modern İran edebiyatı tarihi ve gelişmesi).49 Needless to say, in these uses what is actually meant is Persian language and literature. The homogenization of Iranian social and cultural landscape based on Persianness is problematic as it disregards multiple languages and dialects existing in Iran. The author does not seem to be aware of this problem, especially when he talks about non-Persian writers and poets. For instance, he talks about Akhundzade as the person who is seen as one of those who laid the foundations of the Iranian theater with his Turkish plays.50 Indeed, sometimes one can also see that the author marginalizes non-Muslim Iranians. A striking example is Armenians. The author points out that the printing press was founded under the leadership of the Armenian religious leader “Haçator Gisarasi” in Julfa, Isfahan at the Vang Armenian Church.51 He notes that the Armenian religious text titled Sağnos was the first book to be printed in Iran, in 1638.52 Yet on the next page Kanar states that:

It is not known who first founded the printing press in Iran. However, as far as it is known, the first printing press was founded by Abbas Mirza in 1817 or 1820 in Tabriz. The first work that was published by this printing press is Mirza Isa Qai-maqam-e Farahani’s work Risaleh-ye Jebadiya (1819) about the second Russo-Iranian War.53

The third problem in this work is as follows: the author’s limitation of literature in modern Iran to written prose and poetry seems problematic not only because there has been a lively oral tradition in Iran but also, as literacy rates in Iran were rather low until the twentieth century, people have had less access to written literature. Hence,
being a mostly illiterate society, oral traditions had a significant place in Iran. The author only refers to folk literature when he talks about Samad Behrangi’s collection of Azeri Turkish folk tales. However, Kanar does not go into a discussion of the role and place of folk literature transmitted mainly orally.

Some observations on the format of the book are also necessary. The book relies heavily on Persian secondary sources. There are several Turkish references and very few German and English sources. Although this book was published in 1999 in “a revised and expanded form” of the author’s unpublished 1979 dissertation, the sources seem to have been predominantly published before 1980, which makes it relatively dated by the time of its publication. There are frequent references to the Turkish translation of the Encyclopedia of Islam. The book has a short list of abbreviations found right after the Bibliography. The sloppy editing of the book is also reflected in “Muhammed” being abbreviated as “Muh.” Moreover, the book does not provide a guide for Turkish readers on the Turkish transliteration rules for Persian words. Some references in the Bibliography are not given in the correct format. For instance, Bozorg Alavi is listed as “Bozorg, Alavi.” The language of the book is generally clear. However, as it is merely a listing of short biographies of specific figures and the depictions of their works, it could be boring, especially for general readers. Lastly, it should be pointed out that the Index provided at the end of the book is useful.

The second book that I would like to analyze is Serpil Üşür’s Din, Siyaset ve Kadın: İran Devrimi (Religion, Politics and Woman: The Iranian Revolution), published in 1991. This work is Üşür’s 1989 PhD dissertation submitted to Ankara University’s Faculty of Political Sciences, where she has been a professor since. Üşür’s interest in Iran seems to have been limited to her PhD dissertation and a book she translated into Turkish. Her subsequent research has mostly been about women’s and gender studies in Turkey. Üşür’s work has a legitimate point of departure: contrary to the predictions and/or assumptions of the modernizationist school, religion has not faded away; on the contrary, it proved to be a socially and politically mobilizing force. Therefore, she participates in the critical scholarship on such modernizationist assumptions. Despite its accurate research question, however, this work hardly deserves to be called an original contribution to the field, as is normally expected from a PhD dissertation. The fundamental methodological deficiency of this work is as follows: almost all of the sources used in the work are secondary English-language scholarship. The observations made throughout the book are basically reflections of English-language scholarship predominantly produced in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the author reserves approximately four pages for the influence and significance of Ali Shari‘ati under the subtitle of Populist Devrimci Şiilik: Ali Şeriatı Düşüncesinin Önemi (Populist Revolutionary Shi‘ism: The Importance of Ali Shari‘ati’s Thought). There are a total of 16 footnotes in this section and all are from various scholars’ interpretations of Ali Shari‘ati’s ideas, such as Ervand Abrahamian, Hamid Dabashi and others. On page 172, the author refers to Shari‘ati’s Turkish translation Fâtimeh is Fâtimeh; however, right after that she references an article by Marcia K. Hermansen with the title “Fâtimeh as
Role Model in the Works of Ali Shari'ati. Mostly a review of the secondary English-language scholarship produced on women, Islamism and the Iranian Revolution, this work does not let the readers hear the author’s own analytical standpoint based on primary sources. This study, therefore, seems to be a collection of borrowed data and analysis from secondary sources rather than an original contribution based on a well-defined set of primary sources.

The other problem is that although such a groundbreaking criticism as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* was published in 1978, the author does not make use of this inspiring criticism. Hence, she falls into the trap of essentializing identities such as Western and Iranian. For instance, she states that: “Alongside his effort to appear Western, Reza Shah himself did not become a real Westerner.” For Muhammad Reza Shah, she notes the following: “the disbelief that the Shah has about women’s abilities and that they were created equal with men is something that falsifies the labels of Westernism attributed to him.” On account of her construction of a hierarchical and essentializing difference between the Occident and the non-Occident, Üşür reproduces the Orientalist discourse that Said criticizes. Üşür’s orientalist approach seems to be substantiated with Eurocentricism when she approaches Iranian women’s social and political activism/mobilization in reference to their difference from Western women. For the period 1919–32, for example, she notes that: “another notable point of the women’s rights struggle of the period, unlike its Western counterparts, is that women’s demand for the right to vote has never been expressed in a pronounced and insistent way.” A similar comparison in reference to the Western experience is also seen when she notes that women in Iran entered political life during the Constitutional Revolution (1905–11). Then, she states that:

Woman’s first going out to streets was determined under the influence of the nationalist ideology and the religious direction. Women’s demands did not directly focus on their own problems. Unlike in the West, there was not an activism originating more directly from women’s problems such as the right to vote and the right to education.

There are two specific problems with this quote. First, these statements contradict what she says in the Conclusion:

Following an independent line of development from the beginning until the middle of the twentieth century, the struggle for women’s rights in Iran has been an important dynamic factor in political and social change of the country. Losing its independence from the 1950s onward, the women’s rights movement has turned to a side domain of activities of ideological streams and political organizations.

The second problem with the above passage is that although this work was written long after the beginning of the Second Wave of feminism, which defines the personal as the political, the author seems to function from within a rather conventional definition of politics, which limits politics to public political activism. Such a limitation
fails to hear such defiant women’s voices as Forugh Farrokhzad. Üşür is not only uninformed about primary texts but also is not sufficiently informed about ethnographic analysis on Middle Eastern women’s empowerment through existing cultural forms. In this sense, one should point to Lila Abu-Lughod’s groundbreaking work on women and oral poetry in Egypt, *Veiled Sentiments*, published in 1986. This work could have been inspiring for Üşür mainly because she would not limit Iranian women’s political existence with Islamist, socialist and liberal ideological viewpoints.

The book is hard to follow as it does not have a clearly stated map of its contents in the Introduction. The flow is therefore unexpected for the reader. There are also some incorrect uses of certain concepts. For instance, instead of *velāyat-i faqih*, *velāyat-i fiqḥ* (velayet-i fikhb) is used. One can also see that there are crucial historical mistakes: although she gives the dates of the reign of Safavids and Qajars as “1503–1722” and “1785–1925,” on the same page the author points to the “replacement of the Safavids with the Qajars.” Similar careless reference to historical facts is also seen when the author refers to “Nadir Şah” as the shah who gave tobacco concessions that led to the Tobacco Protests in 1891–92. Sloppy editing results in numerous typos found throughout the book. The book does not have an index. Like the other two works examined here, Üşür’s work does not provide the reader with a guide to transliteration of Persian words into modern Turkish. The influence of English-language sources is also obvious since frequently she uses English transliterations of Persian words.

Celal Metin’s work titled *Emperyalist Çağda Modernleşme: Türk Modernleşme ve İran (1800–1941)* (Modernization in the Imperialist Age: Turkish Modernization and Iran (1800–1914)), published by Phoenix in Ankara in 2011, is the last work that I will examine here. As it is the most recent of the three, it seems appropriate to review it in more detail than the other two. This book is based on the author’s PhD dissertation submitted to Hacettepe University’s Institute of Atatürk’s Principles and the History of the Revolution in 2006 under the title of *Türk Modernleşmesi ve İran (1890–1936)* (Turkish Modernization and Iran (1890–1936)). This book examines the experience of modernization in both countries from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the 1930s. The analysis mostly covers the approaches of political and intellectual elites concerning modern Western ideas, ideologies and institutions. In addition to the *Önsöz* (Preface), *Giriş* (Introduction) and *Sonuç* (Conclusion), there are four chapters in the book. The first chapter is devoted to an overview of conceptual and theoretical debates on modernization. Following a chronological order, the next three chapters shed light on the history of modernization in both countries from the beginning of the nineteenth century down to the Atatürk and Reza Shah eras. Other than a total of 17 documents from the Prime Ministry Ottoman and Republican Archives, all listed on page 327, this study has used neither Iranian (Qajar or Pahlavi) nor Ottoman-Turkish (Ottoman or Republican) archives. The study is mostly based on published materials: “published archival documents, encyclopedias, dictionaries, books, articles and periodicals.” In the 30-page-long Bibliography, one can see sources in Turkish, English, French and Persian. From its Acknowledgments, it
seems that the author has used the Library of the Center for Teaching Persian in Ankara (Markaz-e Amuzash-e Zabān-e Farsi dar Ankara) for Persian sources. One cannot help wondering why the author does not have any online references among his sources. Unlike the works of Üşür and Kanar, the work under consideration was prepared in the 2000s, when one could find an immense number of sources on the internet. The book has a long index, which is helpful.

Although its intriguing title, *Modernization in the Imperialist Age*, catches one’s attention, at a closer look one realizes that this work is highly deficient in regard to its methods and analysis. It is possible to summarize these shortcomings with four points.

First of all, the motivation underlying the author’s research on Iran is notable. In the Preface, the author makes his incentive clear:

> Both as a political power and [with] its geographical location, undoubtedly Iran occupies an important place in Turkish history. Oftentimes with an enemy-like reflection, it has the projection of a rival. It was like that yesterday, [and] it is like that today as well. In order to get to know our rival and since every knowledge and conceptualization produced on Iran has great importance; with its modest size, this study is also meant to contribute to that and encourage advanced readings and scientific examinations.

Framed from within such a nationalist discourse of antagonism, such an incentive invites questions about the soundness of a study that claims to be scholarly. Indeed, one can see that, ill-balanced with its ethnocentric motivation, this perspective is maintained in the approach and analysis throughout the book. In other words, Iranian modernization is examined through the lens of the experience of modernization in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey. Sometimes this ethnocentric viewpoint reaches its limits when some historically unfounded claims are made. For instance, it is stated that: “The Turkish national struggle is the first and most serious attempt in the context of the production and implementation of a liberation ideology in non-Western societies.” The history of the earliest Black Republic in world history, Haiti, falsifies this claim. As is well known, Haiti gained its independence from France in 1804 as a result of the struggle for freedom by slave revolts which mixed African religious beliefs and French revolutionary ideas.

A large number of studies point out that from the late Ottoman Empire to early Republican Turkey, modernization was a relatively more decisive, deep-rooted and comprehensive experience compared to modernization in Iran. Therefore, it seems understandable that Iranian political and intellectual elites would closely follow this experience as well. For instance, Thierry Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf’s 1993 edited volume, which the author also refers to in his work, sheds light on the role and significance of Istanbul for the activities of Iranian political and intellectual elites around the turn of the twentieth century. Hence, concerning the most
important conclusion of his research, the following remarks represent a rather meager contribution for a PhD dissertation and a monograph:

The most important conclusion that can be derived from this work is that until at least the 1950s, Turkish and Iranian modernization attempts have been parallel to a great extent and that Turkish modernization has influenced the form and content of modernization steps in Iran.\(^{82}\)

The second problem of the book concerns its methods and sources. What makes a historical study original is the originality of the sources alongside its analysis. Yet this work is based mainly on published materials. The most important deficiency among published sources is Reza Shah’s accounts of his travels to Khuzistān and Māzandarān, published in 1924 and 1926, respectively.\(^{83}\) These first-hand accounts reveal Reza Shah’s ideas on a wide range of social and political issues, from his critique of the Qajars’ corruption to the need to have a strong centralized state which all tribes must obey. In this sense, Reza Shah’s struggle with Sheikh Khaz'āl in Khuzistan and the telegrams exchanged between the two seem particularly interesting. In addition to such a crucial shortcoming of primary sources, one can also see that some important scholarship on late Ottoman history is missing. In this sense, one can refer to Ussama Makdisi’s concept of “Ottoman orientalism”, Thomas Kühn’s “colonial Ottomanism” and Selim Deringil’s analysis of late Ottoman history through post-colonial criticism.\(^{84}\)

The author states the following about his limited use of archival documents:

In this study a limited number of archival materials has been used. Based on my research, although there are many documents in both Ottoman and Iranian archives, these documents are mostly about military events, questions of borders and movements of tribes on borders, personal applications of mostly merchants and those following jobs, and diplomatic correspondence between the two countries. That is why we have not come across the documents that fit the aim of the topic [of this research]. Although my efforts to get access to Iranian archives have remained futile, the impression we got is that the Iranian archive has more limited documents compared to the Ottoman archive.\(^{85}\)

In archives, should there be a folder by the title of “documents about the issue of modernization” in order for it to be “appropriate for the aim of the research”? For instance, are the questions of tribes or of borders not at the heart of centralization efforts of modern states? In this sense, the creation of a homogeneous national identity that would replace tribal belonging, the settlement of nomadic tribes or the solidification of borders are among the projects of modern states.\(^{86}\)

A striking problem in the book is that, rather too ambitiously, it attempts to cover a long historical period. Moreover, it does not meaningfully narrow down the scope of modernization project in both countries. Furthermore, one cannot find a conceptual
and/or theoretical engagement with the concept of imperialist (used in the title) and its meaning in the context of modernization in both countries. Likewise, there is not an explanation and/or justification about why “1800–1941” is chosen as a common historical periodization for both countries. The lack of well-delimited primary sources, the ambitious take on a long historical period and the failure to interrogate modernization in the context of a specific topic, question and/or figure makes reading this book like sailing in a sea or walking in a desert without a compass or a map.

The third problem with this book concerns its approach to the issue of modernization. Throughout the book there is an uncritical, superficial, elitist, state-centric and West-centric approach to the concept and process of modernization. Sometimes inconsistencies can be found in its approach to modernization. For instance, while the author claims that “Western modernity saw the non-Western world as a ‘colony’ in an economic sense, ‘backward’ in a cultural sense and ‘passive’ in terms of history,” soon after that he notes that modernization is taken as a positive phenomenon despite its some negative influences and consequences. Indeed, the typical teleological approach of the modernizationist school viewing modernization as a transition from the “old” and “traditional” to the “complex, rational, dynamic and the newest” is adopted.

Although in the Bibliography one can see the works of such thinkers as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, that the author can make the following remarks seems best to be accounted for by his selective reading from the sources without having fully grasped them:

Having lost their independence from the last quarter of the nineteenth century on, in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia modernization/westernization attempts have been discontinuous and they did not have meaningful indicators concerning social consequences; [therefore] they do not mean much regarding the modernization practice of Islamic [Muslim] societies.

At this point, Hamid Dabashi’s reference to the concept of ‘colonial modernity’ to analyze nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian history is quite useful as it draws attention to the fact that for some countries colonialism and modernity have been overlapping phenomena.

As could be seen in the use of the following expressions, the statist and elitist approach has overshadowed the analysis throughout the book: “the difficulties faced in both countries concerning ensuring national unity and integrity,” “the problems that nomadic elements create,” “the provinces that cause problems,” “the passive nature of society in both modernization processes,” “the passive nature of the social structure,” “passive segments of people (edio hark kesimleri)” and “the primitive motivations of society.” Although the author seems to adopt the perspective of state elites on peripheral social forces, he also uses the following terms which sound somewhat contradictory: “social reaction,” “people’s reaction,” “social
rebellion with a broad participation,” “people’s serious discontents,” “people’s reaction,” and “the increasing reaction of crowds.”

The fourth and final observation should be made about the format of the book. There are many grammatical and orthographic errors, some of which could also be seen in the originals of the passages quoted above. Instead of a clear narrative, the reader finds a narrative loaded with unnecessary uses of too many words, which makes for exhausting reading. There are incorrect uses of certain concepts, an example of which is “religious ulama” (dini ulema). The biggest problem concerning the format of the book, however, is as follows: de facto there are two texts in the book—the main text and the footnotes. The footnotes are troublesome not only because they are too long but also because their function goes well beyond providing supplementary information about the main text. At times the footnotes function like an independent text engaging in a debate with the main text which they are supposed to clarify.

Conclusion

In his interesting essay on the construction of Turkish national identity between 1923 and 1938, Tanıl Bora notes that in the process of building Turkish national identity, there was an identification of Western civilization with Turkishness. Once naturally identified with Western civilization, notes Bora, Turkish national identity has been pushed into a framework that is closed to the outside world: “The assumption that there has been a ‘natural/essential’ (fitraten) integration with the universal civilization, cut ‘national interest’ in the world; it produced a self-confident indifference.”

Bora’s observation seems helpful for understanding the historical roots of the current state of the scholarly production on Iran in Turkey. Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, there has been a radical shift in Turkey towards Western civilization. There has been a growing decline in Turkish academic interest, curiosity and knowledge concerning the Middle East in general and Iran in particular. Based on a critical examination of the three monographs, this study attempts to demonstrate a picture of existing academic production on Iran in Turkey. It seems that these studies suffer from fundamental methodological, conceptual and analytical shortcomings. The common problem running through these three studies is that to varying degrees they are under the influence of ethnocentrism. In other words, instead of studying Iran on its own terms, they approach Iranian history, culture and politics through the lens of Turkey. As these researchers are not immersed in primary sources—whether through textual or ethnographic methods—they remain extremely poor in terms of coming up with an original analysis.

Notes

1. See Tokmak, Telaffuzlu Türkçe-Farsça.
2. For an informative article on the importance of the Ottoman archives for the study of Qajar Iran, see Ateş, “The Ottoman Archives as a Source for the Study of Qajar Iran.” For a very useful source on the Persian literature in Anatolia, see Anusha, Dânîshnâmeh-ye Adâb-e Farsi dar Ânâtuli va...
It should be pointed out that there has also been a gap in the area of the study of Islam in social

For a selected list and analysis of predominantly popular and journalistic books published in

Some selected translations by Cavit Mukaddes are as follows: Furuş, Sadece Ses Kalsıdır; Şamlu,

Thanks to my teacher Hadi Mahdi at the Center for Teaching Persian in Ankara for pointing to

For a review of the state of Iranian Studies throughout the world, see the following article and the

It should be noted that in this paper “Iranian Studies” is used in the rather limited sense of aca-

demic research conducted on Iran. It should be pointed out that there has not been an academic
division called “Iranian Studies” in Turkey.

Uşur, Din, Siyaset ve Kadın: Iran Devrimi; Kanar, Çağdaş Iran Edebiyatı’nın Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi;

Metin, Empyralist Çağda Modernleşme.

There are very few academic books published, however. For a monograph on modern Iranian

history, see Karadeniz, Iran Tarihi (1700–1925). For an edited volume predominantly written

from within the disciplines of Political Science and International Relations, see Şahin and

Yılmaz, Ortadoğu Siyasetinde Iran. Based on English and Turkish primary and secondary

göçün İslam lignin a great deal of work has been done in Turkey. As is pointed out in its introduction, this Bibliography includes 1,322

items (both books and articles), all published between 1729 and 1970. Likewise, it is noted

that among these works a large number of these books are about Persian language and literature:

For his life and works, see Meftah and Vali,

http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ates-ahmed (accessed September 8, 2013).

For his life and works, see Meftah and Vali, Nagâbî bîb Râvand-e Nûfuz. 499–501.

http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/glpinarli (accessed September 8, 2013).

http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/atessayed (accessed September 8, 2013).

http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/yazici (accessed September 8, 2013).

http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ates-ahmed (accessed September 8, 2013).

http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ates-ahmed (accessed September 8, 2013).

Firdevsi, Şehname; Ferideddin-i Attar, İlahîname; Ferideddin-i Attar, Manûk Al-Tayr; Gölpınarlı,

Mesnevi ve Şerhi; Hafiz-i Şirazi, Hafiz Divânı.

It should be pointed out that there has also been a gap in the area of study of Islam in social

sciences in Turkey. For an important criticism on this gap, see the following two works: Atay, Din

Hayattan Çıkar, 53–63, 93–116; Ocak, Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam, 97–140.

For a selected list and analysis of predominantly popular and journalistic books published in

Turkey about Iran from 1900 until 2000, see Afacan, “Komşuyu Anlamak/Anlatmak.” For

“the 2500th anniversary of the Iranian kingship,” the General Directorate of National

Library (Millî Kütüphane Genel Müdürlüğü) in Turkey published a book consisting of a bibli-

ography of Persian works, Turkish translations of Persian works as well as works about Iran

published in Turkey. As is pointed out in its introduction, this Bibliography includes 1,322

items (both books and articles), all published between 1729 and 1970. Likewise, it is noted

that among these works a large number of these books are about Persian language and literature:

Millî Kütüphane Genel Müdürlüğü, Türkiye’de Basılmış.

Some selected translations by Cavit Mukaddes are as follows: Furuş, Sadece Ses Kalsıdır; Şamlu,

Eş Açk Eş Açk Mavi Yüzün Görünmüyor; Sepehri, Başlangıç Ses. The following are some edi-

tions and translations by Hüـsev Hüşrevşahi; Şamlu, Bana Aydinluktan Söz Et; Ferruhzad, Yar-

alarım Aşktandır; Hüşrevşahi, İran Edebiyatı Öykü Antolojisî. Some of Siyâveş Azerî’s translations

are as follows: Sepehri, Söyle Ayak Sesi; Gölyíri, Şehzade İbîtabâ: Saedi, Korku ve Tîreme.

http://www.fct.com.tr/sayfa1.asp?id=1274&usfy=1 (accessed September 11, 2013).

Prenses Süreyra, Hayâtımı; Pehlevi, Anlar.

Abrahamian, Humeynism; Abrahamian, Modern Iran Tarihi.

Dabashi, Iran: Ketlenmiş Halk.

Mottahedeh, Pegambarin Hîrkaş.

Afary and Anderson, Foucault ve Iran Devrimi.

Atabaki, Devel ve Madiniyet.
22. Lewis, Mevlâna: Geçmiş ve Şimdİ, Doğu ve Batı.
23. Bayat, Ortadoğuda Maduniyet; Bayat, Sokak Siyaseti.
24. Vali, Kapitalizm Öncesi Iran; Vali, Kürdistan Cumhuriyeti.
25. http://irankulturevi.com/ (accessed September 17, 2013).
26. For instance, between 30 November and 6 December 2012, there was an Iranian Film Week at the movie theatre called Kızılrmak in Ankara. Some of these screenings were followed by question and answer sessions with their directors invited to the program.
27. http://yok.gov.tr/web/guest/universitelerimiz (accessed September 12, 2013).
28. http://mes.metu.edu.tr/programs/graduate, http://oae.marmara.edu.tr/en/ (accessed September 14, 2013).
29. http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~history/index_files/Curriculum.htm, http://hist.boun.edu.tr/graduate_courses.php, http://www.history.hacettepe.edu.tr/Lisansustu.pdf (accessed September 12, 2013).
30. Temizel, “İran’da Türkçe Öğretimi.”
31. https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/SearchTez (accessed September 14, 2013).
32. Although the data on the number of Iranian graduate students is scattered and not easily accessible, the total number of Iranian undergraduate students is as follows:

| Years     | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------|------|--------|-------|
| 1995–96   | 389  | 176    | 565   |
| 1996–97   | 379  | 201    | 580   |
| 1997–98   | 342  | 188    | 530   |
| 1998–99   | 340  | 182    | 522   |
| 1999–2000 | 325  | 174    | 499   |
| 2000–2001 | 327  | 175    | 502   |
| 2001–02   | 343  | 186    | 529   |
| 2002–03   | 357  | 197    | 554   |
| 2003–04   | 394  | 221    | 615   |
| 2004–05   | 443  | 239    | 682   |
| 2005–06   | 508  | 288    | 796   |
| 2006–07   | 534  | 325    | 859   |
| 2007–08   | 568  | 338    | 906   |
| 2008–09   | 606  | 369    | 975   |
| 2009–10   | 681  | 406    | 1087  |
| 2010–11   | 782  | 523    | 1305  |
| 2011–12   | 891  | 597    | 1488  |
| 2012–13   | 1007 | 683    | 1690  |

Source: Data derived from: http://www.osym.gov.tr/belge/1-128/sureli-yayinlar.html (accessed September 12, 2013).

33. For instance, see the online available articles in Ankara University’s Department of Eastern Languages and Literatures journal called Nüşha at http://www.doguezdebiyati.com/nusha.htm (accessed September 14, 2013).
34. Kiskakurek’s following work points to Shi‘ism as one of the “deviant branches of the Right Path”: Kiskakurek, *Doğru Yolan Sapık Kolları*, 70–73.

35. Among others, see Keneş, *Iran: Tehdit mi, Fırsat mı?*, Keneş, *Hasan Sabbah’tan Günümüze Iran ve Terör*, Keneş, *Iran Siyasettin îç Yüce*.

36. This piece of information is provided in Kanar’s CV at the following link: http://www.yeditepe.edu.tr/bolumler/turk-dili-edebiyati/akademik-kadro (accessed October 12, 2013).

37. Hidayet, *Diri Gümüşlen*; Hidayet, *Vejetaryenliğin Yararları*; Hidayet, *Hacı Ağha*; Hidayet, *Üç Damla Kan*; Hidayet, *Ahlak Köpek*; Hidayet, *Ahlak Hacanlı*; Hidayet, *Hidayetname*.

38. Kanar, *Periler Şahının Kızları*, Kanar, *Modern Iran ve Afgan Öyküleri Antolojisi*.

39. Kanar, *Farsça-Türkçe Büyük Sözlük*; Kanar, *Osmanlı Türkçesi Sözlüğü*; Kanar, *Arapça-Türkçe Sözlük*.

40. Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, *Mesnevi: Cilt 1–2–3*; Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, *Mesnevi: Cilt 4–5–6*; Hafiz-i Şirazi, *Hafiz Divanı: Cilt 1*.

41. Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatı’nın Doğuşu ve Gelişimi*, 9.

42. Ibid., 67, 77, 91, 122.

43. Ibid., 159.

44. Ibid., 161.

45. Ibid., 131.

46. Ibid., 125.

47. Ibid., 194.

48. Ibid., 175.

49. Ibid., 258.

50. Ibid., 183.

51. For more information on the introduction of the printing press by Armenians in Isfahan and their history, see Bardakjian, *Modern Ermeni Edebiyat*, 30; Gregorian, “Minorities of Isfahan.”

52. Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatı’nın Doğuşu ve Gelişimi*, 46.

53. Ibid., 47. The original is as follows: “İran’ın matbaayi ilke kimi kuduru bilinmiyor. Ancak bu bilindigi kadaryla ilk matbaa Abbas Mirza tarafından 1817 veya 1820’de Tebriz’de kurulmuştur. Bu matbaada baslan ilker ise Mirza Isa Kaimmakam-ı Ferahlâni’nin ikinci Rus-Iran Savası hâk-kündaki eser *Risâle-i Cihâdiye*’dir (1819).”

54. By 1966, “67.2 percent of men and 87.8 of women above fifteen were illiterate” in Iran: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/literacy-corps-1 (date accessed May 20, 2014).

55. For an example of a collection of Kurdish oral traditions in Iran in the 1960s, see the following: Qazi, *Manzumah-ye Kurdi-ye Mihr va Vafâ*. For a comprehensive article on folk poetry in Iranian languages, see Philip G. Kreyenbroek’s article at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/folk-poetry— (accessed May 4, 2014).

56. Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatı’nın Doğuşu ve Gelişimi*, 263.

57. Ibid., 258.

58. Üsür, *İran Devrimi*.

59. http://www.politics.ankara.edu.tr/serpilsancar/index.php/english.html (accessed October 13, 2013).

60. Üsür, *Din, Siyaset ve Kadın: İran Devrimi*, 13.

61. Ibid., 166.

62. Ibid., 141 (notes 123 to 138).

63. Ibid., 172, 235 (notes 81 and 82).

64. Ibid., 188. The original is as follows: “Batılı görünece çabası yanında Raza Şah’ın kendisi gerçek bir Batılı olmadı.”

65. Ibid., 204. The original is as follows: “Şah’in kadınların yeteneklerine ve erkelerle eşit yaratılış Koduklara duduğu inançsızlık ona yakıştırlan Batsılı etiketlerini yanişlayan bir durum- dur.”
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66. Ibid., 182. The original is as follows: “Dönemin kadın hakları mücadelesinin dikkatleri çeken bir başka noktasi, Batılı benzerlerinden farklı olarak, kadınlarının oğlu hakkı talebinin hiçbir zaman belirgin ve srarlı bir biçimde dile getirilmemesidir.”

67. Ibid., 176. The original is as follows: “Kadının İran’da ik el kez sokağa çıkma milliyetçi ideolojisinin ve dinsel yönlendirmenin etkisiyle belirlenmişti. Kadınlarının talepleri doğrudan kendi sorunlarını etrafında odaklanmıştı. Batı’da olduğu gibi oğul hakkı, eğitim hakkı gibi daha doğrudan kadın sorunlarınından kaynaklanan bir eylemlilik söz konusu değildi.”

68. Ibid., 244. The original is as follows: “Ibid., 249. The original is follows:

69. Ibid., 40, 42, 116, 117, 118.

70. Ibid., 46.

71. Ibid., 48.

72. For example, see: ibid., 113, 124, 129, 152, 176, 211.

73. For example, see: ibid., 176, 177, 178, 189, 192.

74. Metin, Empereyalist Çağda Modernleşme, 328–56.

75. Ibid., 10.

76. Ibid., 357–92.

77. Ibid., 9. The original is as follows: “Şüphesiz İran hem siyasal gücü hem de bir coğrafya olarak Türk tarihinde önemli bir yer işgal eder. Coğrunlukla dışmanca bir yişma ile rakip bir işlevi sahip her bilginin ve kavramsallarımı̇nın büyük önemi olduğu düşünülürse bu çalısmanın kendi müttevazi boytu ile buna katkı yapacağı ve ileri okuma ve bilimsel incelemeleri teşvik edecek de umit edilmekezdir.”

78. Ibid., 249. The original is as follows: “Türk milli mücadelesi, Batı dış toplumlarda görülen kurtuluş ideolojisi üretme ve bunu hayata geçirme bağımlı, ilk ve en ciddi girişimidir.”

79. Stuart Hall’s analysis found in his following study, helps one appropriately locate Haiti among non-Western societies: Hall,”The West and the Rest.”

80. Rawles et al., Andrew Marr’s History of the World.

81. Zarcone and Zarinebaf, Les Irianiens d’Istanbul.

82. Metin, Empereyalist Çağda Modernleşme, 324. The original is as follows: “Bu çalısmadan çıkarılabilicek en önemli sonuç, en azından 1950’li yıllara kadar, Türk ve İran modernleşme çabalarının büyük çapta paralellik gösterdiği ve Türk modernleşmesinin İran’daki modernleşme adımlarının çekli ve içeriğine ters ettiği çarkınıdır.”

83. Pahlavi, Safarhâ-ye Reza Shâb-e Pahlavi bîh Khuzistân ve Mâzandarân.

84. Makdisi, ”Ottoman Orientalism’; Kühn, ”Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism’; Derin, ”They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery.”

85. Metin, Empereyalist Çağda Modernleşme, 19. The original is as follows: “Bu çalısmada sınırlı sayıda arşiv malzemesi kullanılmıştır. Yaptığımız taramaları bağlı olarak bunun nedeni gerek Osmanlı gerçek İran arşivlerinde, her iki ülke hakkında çok sayıda belge olmakla birlikte, bu belgelerin daha çok askeri nitelikli olaylara, sınır sorunlarına ve sınırda aşırı hareketlere, çoğu tuçcar veya iş takipçisi olanlara ait kişisel bayvurulara ve iki ülke arasındaki diplomatik yazışmala ait olmasından dolayı, konunun uygulamalı belgelere rastlanmamıştır. İran arşivlerine ulaşma çaba-ların sonuççuz kalmakla birlikte edindişimiz ızlenim, İran arşivinin Osmanlı arşivine göre daha sınırlı belgeye sahip olduğunu.”

86. About tribes and borders, among others, see the following: Cronin, Tribal Politics in Iran; Ateş, Ottoman–Iranian Borderlands.

87. Metin, Empereyalist Çağda Modernleşme, 48–9.

88. Ibid., 62.

89. Ibid., 51.

90. Ibid., 53.
91. Ibid., 167.
92. For a critique of the modernization school, see the Introduction of Pappé, *The Modern Middle East*.
93. Ibid., 59. The original is as follows: “19. yüzyılın son çeyreğinden itibaren bağımsızlıklarını yitiren Mısır, Fas ve Tunus’ta modernleşme/باحلیشا girişimleri devamlı olmayan ve toplumsal sonuçları itibariyle de anlamli gostergeleri içermediğinden İslam toplumlarının modernleşme pratığı açısından fazla bir şey ifade etmemektedir.”
94. Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted*.
95. Metin, *Emperyalist ÇağıdaModernleşme*, 306.
96. Ibid., 73.
97. Ibid., 297.
98. Ibid., 185, 186, 223, 226, 230.
99. Ibid., 252.
100. Ibid., 253.
101. Ibid., 259.
102. Ibid., 267.
103. Ibid., 285.
104. Ibid., 297.
105. Ibid., 299.
106. Ibid., 302.
107. Ibid., 306.
108. Ibid., 310.
109. Bora, *Türk Sağına'nın Üç Hali*, 27. The original is as follows: “Evrensel medeniyetle ‘fitraten’ bütünleştiği varsayımı, dünyaya dönük ‘millî alâka’yı budamış, özgüvenli bir lâkaytlık üretmiştir.”

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