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From Empire to Nation State: The Mutation of Educational Interaction Rituals in Turkey

Del Imperio a la Nación: La Mutación de los Rituales de Interacción Educativa en Turquía

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine how the educational rituals changed over the time from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. This study confines Turkish educational rituals to the rituals Goffman (1967) conceptualized as *interaction rituals*. Interaction rituals are micro daily events and behaviours, including gestures and facial expressions, clothes and symbols, that safeguard the definition and the holiness of the authority, and therefore act as the differentiator. This paper reveals that as education was modernized and institutionalized in Turkey, the relationship between the student and the teacher became more distant. The hierarchical gap between the student and the teacher became more visible through educational interaction rituals, and the role of the teacher changed within the Republic, from religious authority to soldier citizen.

Keywords: Educational ritual; interaction ritual; educational gestures.

Resumen: El propósito de este estudio es determinar cómo los rituales educativos cambiaron en el tiempo, desde el Imperio Otomano hasta la República de Turquía. Este estudio limita los rituales educativos turcos a los rituales que Goffman (1967) conceptualizó como ritual de interacción. Los rituales de interacción son eventos micro cotidianos y comportamientos que incluyen gestos y expresiones faciales, ropa y símbolos que aseguran la definición y la santidad de la autoridad y, por tanto, actúan como diferenciador. Este trabajo revela que a medida que la educación se moderniza e institucionaliza en Turquía, la relación entre el estudiante y el profesor se ha vuelto más distante. La estructura jerárquica entre el estudiante y el profesor se hizo más visible con rituales de interacción educativa. También los papeles del maestro han cambiado con la República de una autoridad religiosa a un ciudadano soldado.

Palabras clave: ritual educativo; ritual de interacción; gestos educativos.

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1. Context and concepts

School hallways simultaneously carry warmth of the family as well as coldness of institutional distance. This dual structure is the reflection of both the consensual and the differentiating functions of the school. School's consensual function aims social solidarity and its differentiating function determines the hierarchy of the society. These functions are fulfilled by curriculum, extracurricular activities, rituals, symbols and behavioural patterns. Among these elements, the most refractory are the educational rituals. However, modernization and globalization process, paradigm shift in pedagogy and psychology have required the changes in the educational rituals as with all the elements of the school.

Purpose of this study is to determine how the educational rituals changed in time, from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. Ritual can be defined as a 'modelled symbolic performance' in accordance with the extent of this study. This study confines Turkish educational rituals to the rituals Goffman (1967) conceptualized as *interaction ritual*. Interaction rituals are micro daily events and behaviours including gestures and facial expressions, clothes and symbols that ensure the definition and the holiness of the authority and therefore, act as the differentiator. As classroom materials like stands and desks that deepen the distance between the student and the teacher, respectful behaviours like standing up as the teacher walks in the classroom and gestures students are expected to demonstrate, rules students have to follow in and out of the school, school smocks and the silence expected from students during the class can all be gathered under the title of interaction rituals, because they are all rituals and symbols that emphasize the differentiation of different groups according to their functions and define the hierarchical structure. In order to reach the purpose of the study, a survey was undertaken of the curriculums, relevant legal acts, statutes, and regulations pertaining to the educational rituals of the time in Ottoman *Archives and Republican Archives*.

In the Ottoman Empire of the early nineteenth century, educational institutions could be gathered under three topics: Ottoman primary schools (sıbyan mektepleri) and madrasahs which provide religious education; Ottoman palace schools (enderun); and military schools which the Ottoman Empire, after its defeats in the eighteenth century, copied from the French and English models. In the nineteenth century, modern schools that were structured on Western models, embracing religious as well as secular education, were opened.

2. Distance between the student and the teacher

For centuries, bureaucrats were educated in Ottoman palace schools, scientists in madrasahs and common people in Ottoman primary schools in the Ottoman Empire. In Ottoman palace schools, palace manners and in madrasah, Islamic rituals were dominant. In Ottoman primary schools education was not collective; there was one to one education. With this method, the teacher could undoubtedly take only one student in hand and other students were studying individually until it's their turn. This, without any doubt, made the classroom a noisier one compared to today's classes. Nevertheless, with this method the teacher was physically closer to students. Teachers were respected considerably and students were standing respectfully before them, kissing their hands. Beating of teachers were regarded legitimate. Expressions of this period such as «Beating comes from heaven», «Where the hodja hits, roses grow» and «Flesh is yours, bones are mine» are the best examples that reflect society's view of the teacher. The father would take his child to the school and made him kiss the hand of the teacher to show his respect and say «Flesh is yours, bones are mine». Thus, the father would transfer all the authority related to the child's education, including the beating, to the teacher.

Towards the end of 18th century, the Ottoman Empire adopted the military characteristic of the French educational system and started making innovations, especially in the field of education, through opening military schools. Started in military schools, this modernism was also practised in Ottoman junior secondary schools [rüşdiye] that were opened to train students for military schools in 1839. Students in Ottoman junior high schools were going to sit on desks like in Western schools and take lessons as a class and not one to one (Akyüz, 2013, p. 148). With the *new style* (usûl-i cedîde) movement started in 1870, new educational practices started in the primary schools of the Ministry of Education (Berker, 1945, p. 89). Different from the curriculum of the Ottoman primary schools, these schools taught lessons such as history, geography, calculation and learning materials such as maps and globes. Beside the curriculum, desks, black boards, teacher's stands and smocks were also used in primary schools in this period. A more positive approach was adopted in reward and punishment method. People reacted against these innovations as they were adapted from foreigners but they were accepted in time (Berker, 1945, p. 86; Akyüz, 2013, p. 182; Okay, 2002, p. 42).

The Ottoman Empire experienced the first Constitutionalist period in 1876 for a very short time. The Second Constitutionalist period (1908-1918) opened with Abdülhamid II's reactivation of The Ottoman Basic Law (*Kanun-i Esasi*) on July 23, 1908 (*July 10, 1324*). With the Second Constitutionalist Period,

changes in the political and intellectual areas of the Ottoman Empire were quickly reflected on education. Changes in the curriculums, books and school rituals are the most explicit evidence. Religious and national rituals of the time were intertwined. Religion was still continuing to be the subject of rituals as an important unitary factor along with Turkism and Nationalism ideals that flourished after the Balkan wars. As Yusuf Akçura (2005) states, during this period Islamism, Ottomanism and Turkism were the most important political tendencies in Ottoman Empire. Symbols of these policies were being used at schools very frequently. These symbols were important as they were reflecting the quest between the identities of Ottoman citizens, Turkish nation and Muslim community.

In that time planting in the love of motherland and bringing up a soldier citizen became the important purposes of education (*Mekâtib-i İbtidaiyye Mahsus Talimatname*, 1915). Also the role of the teacher has transformed. Teachers started to be called as army who fight with ignorance.

In Ottoman tradition, the relationship between the teacher and the student is based on respect. Nevertheless, considering the mutual close distance studies in the classroom and the physical connection during the physical punishment as well as student's kissing the teacher's hand and teacher's kissing the student, it can be said that the personal space perception in the Ottoman Empire is considerably narrow. However, with the establishment of the modern classroom structure, bodies of the student and the teacher began to differentiate and especially with the classroom system, the close relationship between them gave way to distance. Spreading use of the teacher's stand which is an important element of a modern classroom, consolidated this differentiating even more and became an important symbol of the teacher's hierarchical position.

After the victory of the War of Independence, the Republic of Turkey was declared on 29th October, 1923 and The Ottoman Empire of six hundred years gave way to the new Republic of Turkey. Compared to the reformation movement of the Ottoman Empire, the most distinctive feature of the Republic of Turkey was that it accepted the transition to the Western civilization with an exact decision. As the Western Civilization has the most advanced level of civilization, Turkey's intention was going to be to reach to that level.

It can be seen that, after the abolishment of the sultanate, a special emphasis was being made upon the strengthening of the nation in educational goals. Symbols used in schools in 1923 also gave messages of distancing from the Ottoman Empire and approaching to Turkish-Islamic identity. Unlike in Abdülhamid II's period and the Second Constitutionalist Period, Ottoman and the Palace rituals like sultan's birthday and date of his accession to the throne

were abolished. The abolishment of the sultanate as well as religious and national rituals were being celebrated.

3. Symbols in the classrooms and at schools

Introducing Western, secular education to the 19th century Ottoman Empire can be regarded as the beginning of Kemalist revolutions and a chain of events that guided young Turkish people. As a result of modern education, modern elites that compete with the traditionist elites who were educated in madrasahs emerged. Founded after the victory of the War of Independence, State of the Republic of Turkey rapidly realized the break with tradition in many aspects through modernism movements and legislations. It did the best it can to disconnect with the Ottoman-Islamic past (Kazamias, 1966, pp. 262-263). Transition from the Ottoman citizenship to the Republic of Turkey citizenship was not at all easy. Ottoman citizens who were expected to «Be thankful for being a Muslim or for being alive» and shout «Long live my sultan!» until that day, were now expected to say «How happy am I that I am a Turk» or «Long live the Republic» (Güvenç, 1993, p. 250). Realizing such a difficult goal could only be possible with a rapid break. One of the ways to make it happen was to get rid of symbols that represented the Ottoman Empire. In the opening speech for the third gathering year of the second parliamentary session on November 1st, 1925, Mustafa Kemal said that the nation had certainly decided to accept the purposes and the level of living of today's civilized nations as they are in terms of content and form (*Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I. (1906–1938)*, 1997, p. 356). Thus, the government declared that it aimed at abolishing the Ottoman traditions and symbols that conflicted with the intended innovations (Steinhaus, 1973, p. 121).

In 1927, the law on the removal of all the sultan's signatures and praises from the official and the national buildings within the borders of the Republic of Turkey was made. According to this law, sultan's signatures and praises and emblems were going to be removed and put in museums or be covered, or else official acts would not be appropriated («T.C. Dâhilinde Bulunan Bilumum Mebanii...», 1927). This regulation was also reflected on schools. Article 129 of Primary Schools Regulations of 1929 states no plaques to be hung on classroom walls and only Turkish map to be hung on the classroom walls facing the third, fourth and fifth graders. Article 144 states photographs of Atatürk and Turkish elders or important historical places and monuments could optionally be hung on school walls (*Kültür Bakanlığı*, 1938). The expression «optional» here, is considerably remarkable. Thus, it turned out obligatory later on.

4. Teacher as the blessed soldier and a good citizen

Along with the symbols in the classroom, it was the teacher who had the most important place for the construction of national identity. Ziya Gökalp says teachers are the deputies of national culture and that the authority of a teacher comes from the reputation of national culture. He says the teacher becomes an inspiration and that teachers should be able to constitute some emotional habits in a child's spirit. A teacher himself at first should believe in that inspiration (Gökalp, 1973, p. 62). Gökalp's expressions are almost like a translation of Durkheim's opinions. Gökalp's ideas about the role of a teacher were carried into practice as the Republic of Turkey was founded. After the foundation of Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the government from time to time, commissioned teachers to enlighten students about the independence struggle and show rebels the true way through advice (Akyüz, 2013, p. 318). Teacher community was reconceptualised as the «army of teachers». Teachers, unlike the past, started to get a military role carrying features such as discipline, monotony and absolute obedience. These mentioned expectations had important effects on the shaping of the professional roles of teachers, no doubt. It has been effectual in defining the acceptable behaviours of teachers and also in forming the teaching fiction as the cultural agent, missionary and soldier of the regime (Özden, 2004, p. 54).

Teachers, as the missionary of the ideals of the Republic, had the key role to teach the students that there was an external force that made the rules and set the limits and that they should live with it and obey to it. The uneducated was about to enter the modern world. The role of the uneducated family of the Ottoman period was reduced to maternity and the education given in the early stages of childhood. Teachers of the Republic was going to detract the student from the ignorant family and the orbit of Islamic religion and make a moral campaign for secular religion. Detracting the family from the educational setting and also from the moral component of education, caused the relationships between the government and students to remain unrivalled (Fortna, 2002, p. 283). Durkheim says that the role of a teacher is vital in terms of creating a society with a modern and secular morality. Teacher plays the role of a churchman. Teacher is the spokesperson, a soldier of a transcendent and spiritual reality; the government. Students can only communicate with the government through teachers. Teachers present the rules not like a personal product, but like a condition imposed by a transcendent and a superior force. Thus, teachers can provide feelings of respect not only for themselves, but also for the rules (Durkheim, 2004, p. 141).

Classroom structures also contribute to the teacher's justified holiness in the eyes of the students. In the Ottoman period, classroom structures inspired by the French parish schools were widespread in primary schools. Today, classroom structures in public schools consist of the desk system as stated in the regulations. A classroom structure in which the teacher uses a stand and students sit on desks arranged for the teacher to be able to control each one of them, gives a clear message. Teacher is the one who knows, asks and gives the right answer. Students aren't expected to be in touch with each other. Hence, such structure also reveals the hierarchy in the classroom. The teacher who owns the information is positioned different than students in terms of hierarchy. The first things students learn in their first hours at school are «Be quiet» and «If you have a question, raise your hand». Students aren't allowed to talk while the teacher is speaking and if they want to speak, teacher's permission is required. The rules of this unequal communication is the first rule a student learns. Baltacıoğlu (1964, p. 37, p. 104). associates this way of life at school to the life of a pile rather than the life of a community.

Ways of interaction between the teacher and the students also resemble the rules of La Salle's community schools. There are well structured behavioural rules on how to behave when talking to or greeting the authority figures like principles and teachers. Invisible behavioural rules within the routine functioning of the school sanctify the teacher, as the behavioural rules and enforcements applied during school ceremonies and national festivals sanctify what the ceremony represents. Symbolic gestures used as a way of showing respect to teachers and principals can be presented as behavioural rules that sanctify the teacher as the provider of discipline and as the hierarchical differentiator between the teacher and the students.

In 1939, a note was published on the teaching of the social intercourse rules to students in Turkey. This note puts emphasis on teaching the students basic social intercourse rules between the students and the teachers such as greeting, hand shaking, talking, moving and taking the hat off which show the hierarchical relationship between them («Muaşeret Kaidelerinin...», 1939). In 1941, a note was published determining how students should greet the flag, the dead, the elder and friends down to the last detail. Principals and teachers were authorized to take every measure to make sure students were practising this greeting style in and out of the school. According to this note:

As an expression of respect for the elder, students practise greeting as follows: Hat is taken off and head is lowered. Students approach to the respondent staying at an average distance of three steps; standing in a regular position, greets the respondent with heels coupled and hands on the sides and head lowered and

body upright. When students are in the class, they stand up to greet as the elder person comes in and do not sit down until the person greets back and permits them to sit down. When an elder person inquires after them or says «Good Morning», they answer back saying «Thank you».

Greeting the flag means greeting the Turkishness and the honour and good name of the heroic Turkish Army which represent them and show them the deepest respect. In flag raising ceremony, students turn to the flag with the attention note and put their hands to the visor of their hats with a harsh movement. They follow the flag with their eyes until the flag is raised completely and then stand easy with the instruction.

When the Independence March is playing, everyone always and everywhere stands still and listens to it in an upright position («Talebinin Selam...», 1941).

The tradition of greeting the teachers with respect was also being practised before the Republic. According to 1870's regulations of Ottoman junior high schools, students had to connect their hands before them and lower their bodies during the greeting. Each student had to well-behave during the lesson and listen to the teacher carefully. When teacher asked a question to a student, only that student was allowed to answer and other students were to keep quiet. Asking questions or displaying behaviours that would distract the teacher were not allowed (Özalp, 1982).

Behind all these obedience movements we do everyday without realizing, there is a wide ritual meaning. Although these greetings are done for the symbols of a secular system in a secular environment, student's giving a symbolic meaning to this movements beside an individual (the teacher) to whom holiness is attributed, turns these movements into a ritual. The student under authority bows and greets the teacher who is positioned as the authority. The student keeps himself at a distance from the teacher, does not call him with his name and shows he refrains from the teacher by keeping himself physically away from him. These greetings resemble the greetings of La Salle's students which mentioned in «The Conduct of the Christian School» (Jean-Baptiste De La Salle, 1720). Students should also button up their jackets and stand up as well as taking a bow to show respect, whether its officially determined by the rules or not.

These gestures are in fact unintentionally made. One practises these movements «without any reason» or because he «feels that way». As a person follows these behavioural rules even without thinking, he surrenders himself to a certain structure. Accepting the authority of the teacher and the holiness attributed to him, the student puts the teacher to a different place practising

these meaningful behaviours. So, these rituals help these people maintain their positions in the hierarchical structure (Goffman, 1967, p. 49).

Being the representatives of the state authority, teachers to whom holiness is attributed should also behave according to the ideal of the Republic beside their students and in the society. During the early years of the Republic, teacher had to be more careful to earn people's respect, especially within the traditional or rural communities. Hence, article 108 and 109 of the 1929 Primary Schools Regulation were about how the clothes and behaviours of teachers should be. According to this, teacher should be careful with their clothes and avoid wearing clothes that are nonchalant, informal and over-embellished and that exceed the limits of seriousness. They should obey the rules of propriety and good manners and always be careful to treat their students equally (Kültür Bakanlığı, 1938). For female teachers who do not obey the rules determined by the 1929 regulation, the Ministry of Education served a notice in 1934 and stated that teachers who wore too much make up and dress like artists should be warned («Notlu İlk Mektepler Talimatnamesi», 1952).

5. Clothing of teachers and students

In the Ottoman Empire and especially in the Ottoman palace schools and madrasahs, there was a long-standing tradition on what the students should wear. In Ottoman palace schools, students used to follow hierarchical dressing habits according to their class levels; starting from humble clothes to kaftans. In madrasahs, professors (mudarris) and students used to wear long surcoats. In Ottoman primary schools where people had the basic religious education, dressing was not an issue. It was only important that students and teachers covered their poverty.

During the westernization period in the Ottoman Empire, not only the educational system but also the clothes students would wear were copied from France. Thus, the graduates of the new schools were differentiated from the old ulema not only in terms of their thoughts but also their clothes (Başgöz & Wilson, 1968, p. 39). Starting with the Tanzimat Reform Era, regulations about the clothing of teachers and students had become one of the important aspects that separate Ottoman primary schools from the primary schools that had become widespread during Abdülhamid II's period and the Second Constitutionalist Period (Ergin, 1977, p. 938). While madrasah students wore surcoats, public school students wore half - military smocks, frock coats and trousers with the influence of France.

In fact, we see that smocks were first suggested to primary schools in 1915, with the Regulations of Primary Schools. According to this, «students should wear as plain and monotype clothes as possible» (*Mekatib-i İbtidaiyye Mahsus Talimatname*, 1915). When we look at the photographs of primary schools students of this period, we can see they wore bright black button-front jacket, trouser and a fez, although this plain and monotype clothing was not defined in the regulation (Hesapçioğlu & Meşeci Giorgetti, 2009).

The Republic, however, put more emphasis on the regulation of clothing. The law that repealed the use of fez and made hat the national headpiece was established on November 25th, 1925 (Koloğlu, 1978, 2000). This was reflected on the schools as well and students began to wear monotype berets although their clothes were different. In 1926, a regulation was published on how students wearing berets and cloth caps would do the greetings. In this regulation, how students would do the greeting before the President, in mosques, in theatres and classrooms was stated with all details (Faik Reşit, 1927, p. 548). In 1932, a regulation about the cloth caps of the students was established and all male and female students were exacted to wear cloth caps or berets according to their schools. Male students of official primary schools were going to wear «caps» and «female» students were going to wear berets. It was the Ministry of Education who determined what type of cloth caps the students would wear in 1959 Primary Schools Regulation (*Maarif Vekaleti*, 1959, p. 49). It was also obligatory to wear these caps out of school. So, bodies of the students were taken under control in and also out of school. Berets had become the most important clothing of the students and their shapes were determined by the regulations carefully. Student walked with these caps in national festival parades. These images are almost like rituals representing the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. Reactions against the fez and the hat as the symbol of westernization became the symbols differentiating the religious section from the western-oriented masses (Meşeci Giorgetti, 2016, p. 317).

The sensitivity shown for the caps and berets of students in the early years of the Republic was not shown for their clothes, probably because of poverty. The government was more flexible on this subject. Until the regulation about the clothing of the staff and students in schools under the Ministry of Education and other ministries was published in 1981 and made it obligatory to wear black smocks and white-collars, we can see no obligations other than the use of caps and berets and local fabrics («Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı...», 1981). 1929's primary school regulation probably meant the black school smock when it suggested a dark colour coveralls for female students (Kültür Bakanlığı, 1938). When the photographs of the period are analyzed, it can be seen that students did not

wear monotype clothes for a long time, and that if they did, these consisted of black smocks and white-collars. Moreover, white-collars were not used by every student.

Black smocks and white-collars were the symbols of equality and the Republic in France (Dussel, 2001, pp. 89-93). As the use of smocks were decreasing in France after the Second World War, they were still used until 1960's. Smocks were mostly in black and blue colours, whereas white-collars were in various shapes as seen in the photographs and weren't worn by every student. Although the use of black smocks and white-collars was to a great extent flexible in terms of colour, they were used by most of the students in public primary schools for a long time. In the early 1990's and 2000's, smocks in public primary schools were mostly in blue colour in Turkey. Another regulation about the school clothing was made in 2012 by the Ministry of Education and it offered a radical change in school clothing. This regulation liberalized the school clothing in preschool, primary, secondary and high school levels, except some limitations. According to the regulation, students cannot be forced to wear monotype clothes. However, clothes can be determined under the coordination of school executives and parent-teacher association by getting the approval of more than the fifty percent of parents («Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına Bağlı...», 2012).

Smocks were designed to be the symbol of a certain power and knowledge hierarchy and have been used as an instrument to provide hygiene, determine what should be seen and covered and discipline sexuality. They took new meanings, shapes within history and at last, used as a sign of social agreement, and became a symbol for equalitarian and Republican schools. Regardless of who was wearing them or reasons people wore them for, smocks or monotype clothes were determined completely by an authority. Thus, although they provided equality on the surface, these smocks differentiated the hierarchy of the authority and the obedient from each other.

Smocks are considerably effective not only in controlling what the obedient wears but also how they move and behave. Someone who wears a smock abandons the right to move as an individual and has to censor his/her words completely or partially. Smocks require treating a person not as an individual but as the carrier of a mission. A person wearing a smock abandons the right of free-speech, is made to repeat dialogues written by someone else and becomes a part of a crowd that shouts the same words, at the same time, with the same people in certain conditions (Lurie, 1981, pp. 18 and 20).

6. Conclusion

Behaviours, interactions, dressing and seating arrangements we practise in schools consciously or unconsciously and in which there are hidden and deep ritual meanings, have a long history. These similar patterns have continued to exist in religious, military and public institutions in history. Used for same purposes by different institutions, this system, although different meanings are attributed to it, serves for differentiating individuals within the order. It works for positioning the holy and the unholy in terms of hierarchy and for legitimating this hierarchy. However, modern world has made changes on rituals that are considerably resistant to change as well. As the education gets modernized and institutionalized, the relationship between the student and the teacher has become more distant. This also elaborated the hierarchical structure between the student and the teacher and made it more visible with interaction rituals. Teacher (hodja) as a religious authority has changed roles with the Republic and become a soldier citizen. Thus, clothes of the students and teachers as well as the gestures showing respect to teachers with the new identity have moved with the conditions and become mutated.

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