

IDEOLOGICAL-AESTHETIC CONSTRUCTION: THE SARAYBURNU ATATÜRK MONUMENT (1)

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1. This paper is based on the first author's master's thesis (Okumuş, 2021). The second author is the thesis supervisor. Both authors have further developed the study in a different context. The original visual archive is presented here for the first time.

2. Maurice Agulhon refers to the element embodying the struggles of power and representation in post-revolutionary France as "statumania." By rehabilitating the term and removing its negative connotations, the author conveys that in the context of nineteenth-century urban planning, sculptures placed at the focal points of large squares, promenades, and boulevards in the modern city serve a significant role in occupying the urban space (Agulhon, 1981; Cohen, 1989, 5).

INTRODUCTION

The political, economic, cultural and ideological realities of societies are reflected in the built environment (Gottdiener, 1993, 130). Space is not merely a physical entity; it is also an abstract and social phenomenon. As a social and political product, space plays a role in the reproduction of social relations (Lefebvre, 1991, 286). Henri Lefebvre developed a theory that conceptualised the dialectical relationship between society and space as a spatial triad within the framework of the theory of space production. The spatial triad framework consists of spatial practices (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational space (lived space) (Lefebvre, 1991, 7). The convergence of ideology and knowledge in social-spatial practice gives rise to representational space (Lefebvre, 1991, 45). Representational space is constructed through the use of images and symbols that refer to a state, a principle, or a power. It makes sense of itself by establishing a connection with a concrete representation (Schmid, 2008, 37). In this context, space is both created by ideology and serves as a means of producing ideology (Cresswell, 1996, 17). The spatial production of ideology can be understood as a space of social remembering and forgetting. The formation of collective memory is shaped by the dialectics of forgetting and remembering, and is subject to continual reshaping (Nora, 2006, 19). In particular, during periods of political transition and upheaval, the ideological fault lines become more pronounced. The spatial practices of political authorities play a pivotal role in reconstructing social relations by either erasing the vestiges of the past or representing the new in designated spaces. At the core of this reconstruction lie urbanism, art, and the construction of monuments that shape political historiography (Agulhon, 1978; Cohen, 1989, 5) (2). In this framework, monumental practice plays an important role in the approach to modernity in nineteenth-century Western nations. Nation-states view monuments as a means of fostering collective memory, commemorating, celebrating, and remembering the historical past of nations (Buck-Morss,

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3. Jacques Lacan's concept of "*le point de capiton*" is a narrative of structuralist theory. For a detailed analysis of the relationship between Atatürk monuments and the *point de capiton* (Uzun, 2019).

2004, 56–7). Monuments serve an ideological function, symbolically representing the political authority of the state. The spaces in which national identity is represented with a strong visual symbolism, creating imaginary urban scenes, reflect a combination of cultural and social fiction (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). The monument serves to embody social memory, thereby creating a space of consensus within the public sphere (Lefebvre, 1991, 220). These spaces serve to embody the narrative of power, influence social order and daily life, and produce the individual as a subject (Kavuri Bauer, 2011, 2-3). In this production, all members of society are unified by a shared representation and identify with the symbol in question. Monuments are a means of establishing and reinforcing meaning in the context of political authority. Monuments serve to spatialise ideological discourse. Monuments can be considered privileged signifiers that fix meaning in a chain, which Jacques Lacan defines as *le point de capiton* (anchoring point) within the framework of his structuralist theory. They can thus be expressed as nodal points determined within the symbolic network (Žižek, 1990). In an ideological context, Slavoj Žižek defines the concept as the point that holds together a community of individuals in a national unity (3):

"If we maintain that the *point de capiton* is a nodal point, a kind of knot of meanings, this does not imply that it is simply the richest word, the word in which is condensed all the richness of meaning of the field it quilts: the *point de capiton* is rather the word which, as a word, on the level of the signifier itself, unifies a given field, constitutes its identity: it is, so to speak, the word to which things themselves refer to recognize themselves in their unity.'" (Žižek, 2008, 105).

In addition to the utilisation of symbols such as flags and anthems, which serve to represent fundamental aspects such as language and religion, the image of the leader is also employed in the erection of monuments (Tekiner, 2010, 34). As evidenced by the case of the Turkish Modernization Project, nation-state projects are characterised by a distinctive approach to the construction of national identity (Kasaba, 1997; Köker, 2000; Sargin, 2004; Akpınar, 2010). In the process of nation-state formation and the construction of national identity, the Kemalist discourse establishes a collective memory through the introduction of new and reformist images, while simultaneously distancing itself from the past. This design is constructed through the use of spatial strategies. The image of Atatürk, the founder and leader of the country, is visualised with the concepts of independence, revolution and freedom of the Republic (Yasa Yaman, 2011, 75). The Atatürk monuments, which are embodied in the public space as carriers of ideology, are powerful symbols of the regime in the urban space (Cohen, 1989, 492).

The primary focus of this study is the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, which represents the initial link in the chain of meaning. It is notable that the monument, which is approaching a hundred years old since its construction, has not been discussed in a spatial-ideological context. The article aims to fill this gap in the literature. In this study, the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument is analyzed with a focus on spatial-ideological and iconographic interpretation. The theoretical background of the study discusses the relationship between secular ideological discourse and public space-Atatürk monuments. The monument is the first symbol that the Republican regime placed in the heart of the Ottoman capital. This study argues that the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument played a pioneering role in the articulation of Istanbul into the national imaginary. Furthermore,

the Republic crystallises its break with the Ottoman Empire and tradition through the monument. The monument is of significant value as the inaugural urban intervention of the regime in Istanbul, which was defined as the Other by Ankara. In this context, the representation of the regime was spatialised, and the monument has a powerful story to tell about the nation-state building process.

PUBLIC MONUMENTS AND IDEOLOGY

The public sphere is the heart of the city, a place where feelings of democracy and citizenship are strengthened (Habermas, 1997; Sennett, 2002). It is the social sphere in which citizens produce discourse and actions in a rational and free manner without any discrimination. Arendt (1998) defines publicness as follows: "Everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity". Public art is art that can be experienced directly in public spaces, accessible to everyone. In the 1920s and 30s, the historical public spaces of many states had monuments as public art that visualised their ideologies (Yasa Yaman, 2011, 72). It is possible to read nation-state building processes through public art and propaganda (Michalski, 1998). Modern nation-states made their ideologies visible in these spaces while controlling the public sphere (Buck-Morss, 2004, 56). The public sphere became identified with the state through ideological monument constructions (Batuman, 2002, 45). Ideological narratives surround the public space through architectural and artistic spaces. These narratives multiply through shared experiences in the public sphere, creating an identity and collective memory through monuments (Rossi, 1982, 126; Halbwachs, 1992). This approach can be seen in examples of plastic art such as the French Revolution of 1789, Russian Internationalism, Vladimir Lenin monuments in the Soviet Union, German and Italian National Socialism, and social art projects in Roosevelt's New Deal programme in the United States (Krauss, 2002; Yasa Yaman, 2011, 75; Gür, 2013, 341). The constructions of "Founding Father" figures in the public sphere show the ideological rituals of the regime (Gür, 2013, 343). In the 1917 October Revolution, monuments to heroes of the defence of socialism reinforced the socialist revolutionary narrative in Soviet cities. This ideological-aesthetic construction has entered the world of phenomena of everyday life with its traces in public spaces. Despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, there is still at least one statue of Lenin in every city square in Russia. Yasa Yaman (2011, 76) argues that this "monumental propaganda" plan was innovative in terms of adapting the nationalist art form to socialist aims.

Public monuments interact with the social, cultural, political and spatial context. They appear in public space as objects of visual culture, and thus shape the movement of society. They are followers, observers and spectators of a city in constant change. They are social narrators of political aspirations, reform, revolution or social events. In contrast to written language, the spatial image establishes a direct relationship with society (Bozdoğan, 2002, 23). The eighteenth-century French thinker Diderot asserted that material representations are more robust than the word: "The sort of exhortation which appeals to the heart by means of the senses, aside from permanence, is more within reach of the common man. The people make better use of their sight than of their understanding. Images preach without ceasing, and do so without wounding our vanity" (as cited in Cohen, 1989, 492).

4. In this study, the term Kemalist ideology is used to describe the reformist movement of the independent, civilised and secular Turkish Modernisation Project led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The Republic of Turkey was founded on Atatürk's principles and revolutions.

The use of symbols associated with significant historical events and locations within the country serves to foster a sense of collective identity and membership among the population. This contributes to the formation of an imagined community (Cohen, 1989, 491; Anderson, 1991). The image that the public sees on a daily basis serves to remind citizens of their rights and duties, facilitates the adoption of the new regime, and strengthens the idea of loyalty to the nation and the founding leader. In accordance with the views of Cohen (1989) and Anderson (1991), monuments serve to ensure the commitment of each member of society to the new regime. This collection of emblems or signs imbues the community with a national character. It fosters local patriotism and provides a familiar means of asserting the history and greatness of the nation. It establishes a cultural reform through the symbolic meaning it creates, while political discourses convey conscious ideological messages (Agulhon, 1981; Cohen, 1989, 492). In this context, the Atatürk monument, as the iconic image of the founding father of the nation, served to celebrate and propagate the Kemalist ideology for the city's residents (Cohen, 1989, 492; Sargin, 2004, 660; Uzun, 2019) (4).

ICONIC REPRESENTATION: ATATÜRK MONUMENTS

One of the most significant secularising forces in a religious society was the establishment of the Republic of Turkey under Atatürk (Akpınar, 2010). The Turkish Modernisation Project, as a revolutionary ideological movement, represents a radical change characterised by the following images: contemporary, secular, modern, civilised, free and independent (Kasaba, 1997; Keyder, 1998, 31; Zürcher, 2004, 272). In the context of its civilising mission, the revolution is represented by the slogans of modernism in opposition to traditionalism, and progressivism in opposition to reactionism (Bozdoğan, 1998, 121). The Republican government is aware that modernisation cannot be achieved without a significant social and cultural transformation (Sayyid, 1997, 98). This ideology envisions a modern and civilised society and is predicated on the establishment of a nation-state (Gülalp, 2002, 28; Tuğal, 2009, 36; Zürcher, 2014, 136). The regime aims to maintain the continuity of the modernisation movement while simultaneously creating a rupture with the past. Lefebvre (1991, 52) identifies two tendencies in the production of social relations in space: the dissolution of old relations and the generation of new relations. In this context, the revolutionary ideology transformed Ottoman daily life, which was predominantly composed of the Islamic community, into a secular platform (Azak, 2010, 4). The model for the civilisation goal of the modernisation project was not the Islamic Middle East, but rather secular Western Europe (Akpınar, 2010, 117). The regime conveys itself through a new historical consciousness, which is characterised by a distinct political and cultural identity (Erkmen, 2010, 44). In the process of nation-building, the discourse is constructed through the lenses of civilisation and the modern narrative, rather than through the prism of religious doctrine. The concept of a secular nation is a key aspect of this ideology (Erkmen, 2010, 44; Zürcher, 2004, 272). In this context, architecture and art serve as effective instruments for the advancement of Kemalist ideology and the emblazoning of spaces with Republican iconography (Erkmen, 2010; Yasa Yaman, 2011). The regime implemented social and urban reforms that shaped the development of modernist urban space and everyday life (Houston, 2014, 59). Tekiner (2010, 62-63) posits that, in a society with a low literacy rate, art serves as a conduit for the ideology of revolution.

The Atatürk monuments played a pivotal role in the early years of the Republic, exerting a significant influence on the trajectory of urbanism and planning during the first fifteen years of the regime (Batur, 1984, 1382). The Kemalist ideology regarded the Atatürk monuments as an emblem of the state. In the collective consciousness of the national community, statues, busts and portraits of Atatürk came to represent the image of the state itself (Navaro Yashin, 2002, 198). The monuments serve as a means of visualising and immortalising the new Turkish state (Ahuska, 2011, 11). The image of Atatürk, the founder and leader of the country, serves as a unifying symbol for all members of society, enabling them to envisage themselves as part of the Turkish nation. The influence of the National Liberation Struggle is evident in the early Republican period monuments, which emphasise the people gathered around their Founding Father (Tekiner, 2010, 13). Monuments serve to disseminate political ideology to the general public, thereby contributing to the formation of a distinct political culture. The erection of monuments throughout the country is regarded as an indication of the acceptance of a particular ideology and the advancement of the regime (Cohen, 1989, 512). The erection of monuments in urban, suburban and rural settlements serves to demonstrate the support of these communities for the Republic. Monumental spaces serve as locations where memories are fixed, time is suspended, and the act of forgetting is prevented through the embodiment of immortality (Assmann, 2011, 41). The construction of these spaces is enabled by social and cultural experiences. They serve to conceal the past and the old while simultaneously making themselves visible (Nora, 1989; Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992). Christine Boyer (1994, 133) defines monuments and memorials as real mnemonic devices, which are erected “to stir one’s memory.” (Yılmaz, 2010, 271). Similarly, Jan Assmann (1995, 132) claims sites of memory are places where groups of people engage in public activity through which they express “a collective shared knowledge of the past, on which a group’s sense of unity and individuality is based”. In this context, monuments create a national image by representing collective memory in public spaces, presenting the identity narrative of the society (Assmann, 2011; Ricoeur, 1999; 2004).

The Kemalist programme exerts a considerable influence on the trajectory of the revolution. This programme presents a distinctive image and model for the new cultural and spatial spaces of the country (Batur, 1984, 1382). The victory in the War of Independence and the idealised concept of a civilised Turkey form the foundation of the new urban model (Elibal, 1973, 25; Yasa Yaman, 2011, 72). The construction of a new national identity is made possible through the utilisation of cultural and social codes, transformed spaces and public routines that serve as concrete indicators of everyday life. The Atatürk monuments serve to define a secular public space, effectively visualising national identity (Yasa Yaman, 2002, 157; Sargin, 2004, 660). The entry of the image, forbidden by Islamic tradition, into the public sphere strengthens the narrative of the break with the past and sheds light on the spirit of the period. The Atatürk monuments produce a representative space where the Republican identity is promoted and aim to forget and remember the religious, cultural, social and political codes of society (Sargin, 2004, 660). The spatial preference in the construction of monuments affects the formation of collective memory. The historical event, national meaning and urban significance of the site iconise the image. The iconography of the Republic is embodied in celebrations, commemorations, state rituals and official holidays, especially

5. *La Turquie Kemaliste*, which reflected the spirit of the revolution as the ideological apparatus of the state, published an article entitled Ankara-İstanbul in its 47th issue in 1943. The article states that those who go to Istanbul will see the remnants of the past that the regime was trying to erase from memory, and stresses that those who want to see the Turkey of today and the future should take the first train to Ankara (Anonymous, 1943, 38-9). Also in 1934, Falih Rifki, the head of Ankara's planning department, praised the new Ankara, which symbolised the rebirth of the nation in contrast to the ostentatious history of Istanbul (Rıfki, 1934). In the journal *La Turquie Kemaliste*, one can refer to the articles *Ankara'ya Gelmeli* (1934) and *Cazibe ve Devrim* (1936), in which Ankara is presented praisingly to the reader.

6. Some researchers use the term "neglect" in reference to Istanbul due to Atatürk's failure to visit the city until 1927 and the lack of public investment in the city until the early 1930s (Meats, 1980, 41; Keyder, 1998, 11; Akpınar, 2014, 69).

7. In 1933, four foreign urban planners, Henri Prost, Jacques Henri Lambert, Donat Alfred Agache and Hermann Ehlgötz, were invited to Istanbul for a competition (Anonymous, 1935, 61). While Martin Wagner arrived in the city to prepare his city reports, Henri Prost produced the first master plans of Istanbul in 1937. He presented the role of urban spaces in the nation-state building of the Republic with reference to the 'City Beautiful' planning in Istanbul (Arif, 1933, 154; Wagner, 1936, 301; Akpınar, 2014, 60). The master plan of Prost, the chief urban planner of Paris, incorporated elements of the Haussmann-style boulevards and a distinctive visual character, reflecting the European model of urbanisation. The concepts of a beautiful city type and beautification, which emerged in the early 1930s, were informed by the urban models of Western European cities (Akpınar, 2014, 79). Prost advanced the concept of *espaces libres* with the objective of enhancing the aesthetic appeal and hygiene of urban environments (Akpınar, 2010, 72). The French urban planner proposed that public spaces play a pivotal role in the urban improvement process. Henri Prost worked on the renewal of the city between 1936 and 1950. His first major project was Gezi Park (İnönü Promenade), which was developed following the demolition of the military barracks and named after the then President İsmet İnönü. By the late 1940s, part of the Prost Plan was fully implementable. The 1950s, marked by liberal and populist policies and global transformations following World War II, also saw the beginning of Turkey's transition to a multi-party system. The Democrat Party, which achieved victories in national and local elections, removed Prost from his position. After his dismissal, the plan was revised by Turkish experts between 1951 and 1956. In 1957, with the arrival of Italian architect and urban planner Luigi Piccinato and German urban planner Hans Högg, Prost's plan came to an end. However, the fundamental principles of the approach, including transportation networks and urban operations, continued to influence urban planning, notably serving as a reference for Mayor Dalan in the 1980s, and persisted until the end of the 20th century (Akpınar, 2014, 78).

representative city of the Kemalist discourse, Istanbul is "the Other" (Rıfki, 1934; Ahuska, 2010, 18; Gür, 2011, 10). Istanbul, the centre of imperial power and religious authority for centuries, is portrayed as the city of the past and Ankara as the city of the future (Bozdoğan, 2001, 67; Gül, 2018, 110). The old, corrupt place of dynastic tradition is presented as regressive, the new as progressive and desirable. In the urban dialectic identified with old-new, tradition-modern contrasts, the social context of remembering and forgetting reproduces the space. Accordingly, there is a need for an Other to be taken as a reference for the act of forgetting (Gür, 2011, 10) (5).

Istanbul, which did not experience the spatial effects of the revolution that developed in the context of the reforms made between 1923 and 1929, became integrated into national planning and organisation from the 1930s onwards (Akpınar, 2014, 70). The commissioning of French topographer Jacques Pervititch to prepare cadastral plans in the 1920s and the production of urban studies by architects and urban planners in the early 1930s represent pivotal moments in the urban development of the Republic (Akpınar, 2010, 111; Houston, 2014, 59). Akpınar (2014, 69) interprets this as a "change of emphasis" compared to the Ottoman period, when, contrary to the claims of many scholars that Istanbul was neglected, a privileged understanding was demonstrated (6). During this period, Atatürk frequently expressed his keen interest in the city: "İstanbul, located on two continents, is the jewel in the crown for Turkey. This is a city in the heart of all citizens of the country" (Daver et al, 1943). The imperial capital of Istanbul is permeated with Ottoman and Islamic symbols. These representations are the spatial expressions of the great mosques as monuments of Islamic sovereignty and the splendid palaces and mansions that testify to the imperial authority of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the Republic encountered difficulties in articulating its secular and national identity into the city. In order to establish an alternative identity, the Kemalist revolution sought to create centres that would reflect its secular character, as opposed to the social and political representations of the empire (Çınar, 2005, 111) (7). The 1937 Prost Plan represented a pivotal moment in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the formation of the modern nation-state. The *espaces libres* facilitated the secular daily lives of the state, uniting men and women in the city centre. The creation of new public spaces for the secular lifestyle, including squares, parks and walkways, facilitated the secularisation of society. These spaces were instrumental in the secularisation process, the reform of dress codes, the alphabet reform and cultural reform. They served to highlight the common living space between men and women. The transformation of Greco-Roman urban spaces into the courtyards of Ottoman complexes following the conquest of Istanbul was a significant aspect of urban development. This transformation was reconsidered within the framework of Prost's 1937 Plan. The cultural policy of Prost, which aimed to preserve the heritage of the Greco-Roman era, coincided with the political orientation of the regime towards the history of the period preceding the Ottoman conquest. The city's efforts to reconnect with the Roman-Byzantine period represented an attempt to identify the tradition of public space with a specific historical era (Akpınar, 2010, 117-8). French anthropologist Marc Augé (2004, 1) has argued that "one must forget the recent past in order to find the ancient past again". It can be argued that the historical past serves as a reference point for the creation of a secular city. The construction of monuments can be seen as marking the beginning of the spatial planning and urbanism movement. The urban planning approach of the revolution is informed

8. Following the inauguration of the Atatürk Monument at Sarayburnu, a debate arose in the contemporary press regarding whether it was the first Atatürk statue erected in the country. Some newspapers reported that the opening ceremony, initially planned for October 6, 1928, was brought forward to October 3 in order to grant the honour of having the first Atatürk statue to the city (Milliyet, 1926, 1). However, it is important to note that a bust of Atatürk, designed by Krippel in memory of his visit, had already been placed in the garden of the Izmir Agricultural School on June 22, 1926, nearly four months before the opening of the Sarayburnu statue (Tekiner, 2010, 15). Therefore, it would be more accurate to state that the first Atatürk statue was built at Sarayburnu (Dere, 2020, 136). After the opening, Muhiddin Pasha sent a telegram describing the excitement and joy of the thousands of people present at the ceremony. In response, on October 6, 1926, Pasha thanked the people of Istanbul for their gratitude in erecting the statue for the first time (Cumhuriyet, 1926, 2).

by the presence of the Atatürk monuments. The erection of monuments signifies the advent of figurative sculpture into the public domain, which was proscribed by Islamic tradition. Furthermore, it represents a departure from the Ottoman tradition (Elibal, 1973; Gülersoy, 1986, 23; Bozdoğan, 1997, 138; Gür, 2001; Sargın, 2004; Tekiner, 2010).

The introduction of secular forms of experience in contemporary public spaces has the effect of modernising both the city and society (Holston, 1989, 52). The Kemalist imagination of the nation, with its secular, national identity, has the objective of producing new and modern material forms in urban spaces (cited in Houston, 2014, 59). Modifying the urban environment has the potential to influence individual behaviour and adapt everyday life to new conditions (Kasaba, 1997, 24). The revolutionary regime effectively negated the traditional society and the urban conditions it produced, thereby pioneering new architectural and planning concepts (Holston, 1989, 53-4; Tekiner, 2010, 13). These spaces facilitate the formation of a culture of ceremony and commemoration (Houston, 2014, 59-61; Akpınar, 2010, 109-10). The country's first Atatürk monument is the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, built in 1926 (8) Istanbul contributes its ideological and aesthetic representation to the landscape during the early period of the regime. The construction of two monuments in 1926 and 1928 represented a significant advance in the visualisation of regime transitions and urbanism. The second ideological representation of the city, the Taksim Republic Monument, was erected in Taksim Square, which was etched in the collective memory as the symbol of the military occupation by the allied forces after World War I. The monument symbolises the representation of the regime and the liberation of the city (Baykal, 2000, 33). The Republican government that gave rise to Taksim Square sought to create an ideal space where the principles of Republican urbanism could be displayed. The Republic Monument is positioned at the new centre of the city. However, in contrast to this perspective, the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, which represents the secular public space, is constructed at the centre of Ottoman sociopolitical life. The monument's location at the heart of the Ottoman Palace serves to emphasise the significance of the regime.

IMAGINARY AND IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVES: THE SARAYBURNU ATATÜRK MONUMENT

The Republican elite seeks to reinforce the civilised image of the nascent nation through the erection of monuments, thereby ensuring that society recalls the triumph of the National Struggle and Independence, embraces the revolutionary and reformist movements, and identifies with the regime. Many cities wish to express their gratitude to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and their loyalty to the Republic through sculpture. The competition between the cities gives a great impetus to the construction of statues. However, Istanbul has the status of the fastest city in the construction of Atatürk monuments (Tekiner, 2010, 71). The location chosen for the erection of the first monument, which marks the beginning of the attempt to create the collective memory required by the Kemalist discourse, is quite remarkable and meaningful. The ideological representation of the nation-state, its modern and civilised appearance, is first presented to the public and visualised in Sarayburnu Park (**Figure 1**). Sarayburnu constitutes part of Gülhane Park, which forms the outer garden of Topkapı Palace and represents the heart of the Ottoman capital. The monument situated within the gardens of the Ottoman Palace serves to symbolise the historical

divergence from the imperial past. Furthermore, the establishment of the Republic, the secular and modern city, and the accompanying society, is proclaimed to all from the former capital (Gür, 2001; Yalın, 2001). The Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument serves to reinforce the Kemalist ideology for Istanbulites on a daily basis. It represents the inaugural instance of regime intervention in the city. The monument serves to connect community members to the ideological discourse thereby offering them a secular identity. It radically transforms the space in question, conveying the imaginary of the new nation in economic, cultural, political and social contexts. In his analysis, Lefebvre (1991) elucidates the interconnection between representational space and mythic narrative, positing that: "Nothing disappears completely. In space, what came earlier continues to underpin what follows. Pre-existing space underpins not only durable spatial arrangements, but also representational spaces and their attendant imagery and mythic narratives."



Figure 1. Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument under construction, September, 1926 (Suna and İnan Kırâç Foundation, Istanbul Research Institute Archive).

The monument shaped Sarayburnu Park, which was opened to the public at the turn of the century (Erkmen, 2010, 45-46). As the new public park of the imperial capital, Sarayburnu Park exemplified the spatial manifestations of Kemalist ideology. As a Republican project, the ambition to extend the railway network across the country and to bring it to every point in Anatolia constituted a pivotal aspect of modern life and urbanisation (Batur, 1984; Bozdoğan, 2002). The monument's location in close proximity to the railway serves to reinforce this ideal, effectively altering the context of the park and its surrounding area (Kuban, 1973, 17). Modern squares, boulevards and parks were organised around the Atatürk monument. In this context, the Kemalist ideology sought to dissolve old representational spaces and spatial practices in order to produce new spaces and social relations. The construction of secular daily life produced new cultural and political spatial practices (Erkmen, 2010, 45-46; Okumuş, 2021, 180). The Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument serves to articulate the community into a nationalist-secularist discourse. The monument enables society to symbolically identify with the founding father of the Republic. Society defines itself through the ideology of the regime (Uzun, 2019). William Cohen (1989, 491) says, "Erecting statues was a pedagogic device used by the dominant political ideologies to win over the inhabitants".

The pedestal of the monument emphasises the historical ruptures that constitute the nation's collective memory. The depiction of symbolic historical events on the pedestal effectively conveys the message of the regime to society, while simultaneously portraying the national struggle. The inscription on the sea front pedestal reads '*1336 Tarih-i İstihlas*' (1920 Independence). The south facade bears the phrase '*1926 Tarih-i Rekzi*' (1926 Date of Opening of the Statue). The inscriptions on the sides of the pedestal serve to emphasise the 1922 Final Victory (*1338 Muzafferiyet-i Kat'iyeye*) and the Battle of the Commander-in-Chief, as well as the 1923 Proclamation of the Republic (*1339 Cumhuriyet İlânı*) (Milliyet, 1926, 4; Journal of Istanbul Municipality, 1926, 68). It is noteworthy that the year 1920 is regarded as the year of liberation, with particular emphasis placed on the significance of the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Dere, 2020, 135) (9). The pedestal stands on a two-tiered quadrangular platform. Inscriptions in the form of bronze medallions are placed on three sides of the marble pedestal. The combined height of the statue and the pedestal is 6 metres. A wall, 70 cm in height, encircles the pedestal (Elibal, 1973, 196) (**Figure 2**). The monument symbolises the Republic with its ideological representation and aesthetic value.

The construction, which took place before Atatürk's first visit to Istanbul in 1927, enriches the image of the monument. The monument symbolically signifies the conclusion of the war through its portrayal of the leader of the National Struggle in a definitive and civilised manner. This is more explicitly articulated through the civilian representation and contemporary attire depicted in the portrayal of the Ghazi (Atatürk as a war hero). The figure of Atatürk is depicted with his left hand on his waist and his right hand clenched into a fist, conveying a sense of determination. His head is held erect, his eyebrows are furrowed, and his eyes are slightly squinted. The body is depicted with a combination of tension and mobility (Tekiner, 2010, 72). The self-assured bearing of the modernist leader, with his gaze fixed firmly on the future, and the youthful, robust iconography of the portrayal in stark contrast to the debilitated Ottoman legacy, serves to reinforce the representation (**Figure 3**). The statue of Atatürk on the pedestal, constructed in accordance with the First National Architecture

9. During these years, May 19 did not hold a ceremonial significance. Therefore, Emin Bey's statements appear more accurate (Dere, 2020, 126). Given that May 19 was not celebrated nationwide except in Samsun, and that Mustafa Kemal's Nutuk was written in 1927, it can be understood that the statement "on May 19, 1919, I arrived in Samsun" had not yet been written down and transformed into a significant national event at that time (Dere, 2020, 127). While there is much information in the literature about the construction and location of the monument at Sarayburnu, it is particularly noted that Sarayburnu was chosen because it was the point from which Atatürk set out for Samsun (Yeşilkaya, 2002, 149).



Figure 2. Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument under construction, September, 1926 (Suna and İnan Kırâç Foundation, İstanbul Research Institute Archive).

10. The Atatürk Monument at Sarayburnu depicts Atatürk in civilian clothing, a representation that is relatively rare in Atatürk's statues. Out of the thirty-nine monuments erected between 1923 and 1950, only seven feature Atatürk in civilian attire. While historical narratives often state that Atatürk discarded his military uniform after the victory in the War of Independence and never wore it again, this shift is not prominently reflected in the monuments, creating a paradox between discourse and action. As part of the valuable reforms of the modernisation project, the clothing revolution is symbolised by this first monument. During the interwar period, it was common practice to depict leader figures in military uniforms, and similar artistic approaches can also be found in Turkey (Tekiner, 2010, 75).

Style, is oriented with his back to the European side and his face to the Anatolian side (Elibal, 1973, 251; Berk and Gezer, 1973, 59; Gür, 2001, 160; Osma, 2003, 33; Erkmen, 2010, 45; Tekiner, 2010, 72; Gür, 2013, 357). The monument functions as a symbol of a hero who, despite temporarily relinquishing his sovereignty, proclaimed to the world that a nation had been born from this loss (Gür, 2001, 160). Tiryakioğlu (1971, 5) posits that Atatürk was unwavering in his resolve to confront the adversary by relocating to Anatolia with the objective of safeguarding the nation. In the portrayal, the esteemed leader is divested of his official and military titles and transformed into a national figure (10). The forward movement of Atatürk's right foot in the direction of Anatolia can be interpreted as an indication that he draws his strength from Anatolia (Elibal, 1973, 196). The depiction of Atatürk in a suit with the identity of a statesman and bureaucrat shows that the principles of modernity and the clothing and dress revolution of the period are symbolised (Elibal, 1973, 196; Tekiner, 2010, 74-5). However, the press and Turkish artists of the period offered criticism regarding the depiction and style of the monument (Milliyet, 1926, 4; Journal of İstanbul Municipality, 1926, 68). Osma (2003, 33) notes that the monument's dynamic posture, facial expression, and facial features convey a sense of determination. Tekiner (2010, 75), on the other hand, critiques the monument in terms of scale and proportion. He argues that it fails to reflect Atatürk's characteristic traits, pointing out that the proportions between the head and body are inconsistent, as well as the disproportion between



Figure 3. Banner of Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument (Suna and İnan Kırâç Foundation, Istanbul Research Institute Archive).

the statue and its pedestal. He also adds that the tight-fitting clothing on Atatürk accentuates this imbalance. These criticisms stem from the unclear representation of historical events and figures in the minds of people during that period. **(11)**

Sarayburnu Park is the place where the Tanzimat Edict was publicly proclaimed during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecit. It is a site imbued with the social and cultural memory of the Byzantine and Ottoman eras. During the Ottoman period, it served as the outer garden of Topkapı Palace. In 1912, it was transformed into a public park during the tenure of Istanbul Mayor Cemil Topuzlu. During the Byzantine period, Gülhane Square served as a military depot, while the Mangana Palace and Hagios Georgios Monastery and Church were situated nearby. This area was regarded as a sacred space within the city (Yaltrık et al., 1997; Demirkaya, 1999, 83). In the Ottoman Empire, the image of Sarayburnu appears in the silhouettes behind the portraits of the sultans. The park is the location where target stones were erected for the sultans' shooting practice across various

11. For detailed information regarding critiques of the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument's style, depiction, and choice of sculptor, see Elibal, 1973, 251; Berk and Gezer, 1973, 37, 59; Gür, 2001, 160; Osmâ, 2003, 33; Tekiner, 2010, 72-75; Gür, 2013, 358.

historical periods. It is known as the fifth courtyard of Topkapı Palace. During the reign of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, the park was utilised for recreational and entertainment purposes (Demirkaya, 1999, 83-6).

The area is characterised by the construction of numerous mansions, with the Tiled Pavilion being a notable example. The Column of the Goths, a structure from the Roman period, is situated in close proximity to the slope that descends towards the Bosphorus (Demirkaya, 1999, 81). After the decline of Topkapı Palace in the 18th century, the condition of the park deteriorated. In the mid-19th century, during the reigns of Sultans Abdülmecit and Abdülaziz, the garden fell into a state of disrepair. However, after the promulgation of the edict, Gülhane's importance increased again. The state printing house, warehouses, gunpowder factory and fountains were built in the park, which was redesigned after the effects of westernisation. After the fire of 1868, the garden was destroyed in 1871 with the construction of the Eastern Railway connecting Istanbul to Europe (Eldem, 1973). The historical park also played an important role in the Republican period. The development that changed the representation and meaning of the park was the construction of the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, which was opened on 3 October 1926 and became the first Atatürk statue (Sözen, 1973, 11; Osma, 2003; Tekiner, 2010, 72).

The local municipality, aware of the importance of art in the ideal of the Republic's modernisation project, decided to build a statue of Atatürk in Sarayburnu. A commission was set up within the municipality to carry out the construction process and work began (Gezer, 1984, 58-59). Emin Bey, the mayor of the period, regarded sculpture as an exemplar of civilisation. The selection of the location was informed by a consideration of the city's historical memory and its ideological context. The statue's orientation towards Topkapı Palace can be interpreted as a representation of the dissolution of the sultanate (SALT Research, Emin Erkulseyitoğlu Archive, 1960). The commissioned designer of the statue, Heinrich Krippel, travelled to Vienna for its construction. On 25th of August 1925, the foundation of the statue was laid with a ceremony (Cumhuriyet, 1925, 1; Journal of Istanbul Municipality, 1925, 426) (**Figure 4**). The first Atatürk monument was erected during a period of accelerated reform and the drafting of *the Nutuk*. The monument's location, the manner of its depiction and the message it conveys collectively present the ideals of the Republic.

The statue was placed in one of the most strategic locations in Istanbul, offering a view overlooking Sarayburnu, the Bosphorus, the Marmara Sea and the Golden Horn (Tekiner, 2010, 70; Erkmen, 2010, 45). The first figurative sculpture created by the Austrian sculptor Krippel functions as an ideological representation of the regime (Gezer, 1984, 86). The monument challenges the Islamic tradition of prohibiting figurative depiction and exemplifies the regime's aspiration to break from the past (Tekiner, 2010, 70). In 1928, Atatürk publicly proclaimed the Alphabet Reform, a seminal reform of the Republic, on the night of 9-10 August. He initiated the reform by introducing the Latin alphabet in the inaugural lesson (Cumhuriyet, 1928, 1). Gülhane Park served as the setting for Atatürk's inaugural open-air address following the Alphabet Reform on 1 September 1928. Consequently, the site acquired considerable symbolic significance, closely associated with the westernisation movement. Atatürk was bestowed the title of Head Teacher at the ceremony on 24 November 1928. Upon the transfer of Atatürk's mortal remains to Ankara on 19 November 1938, his final obligation in Istanbul was fulfilled in the

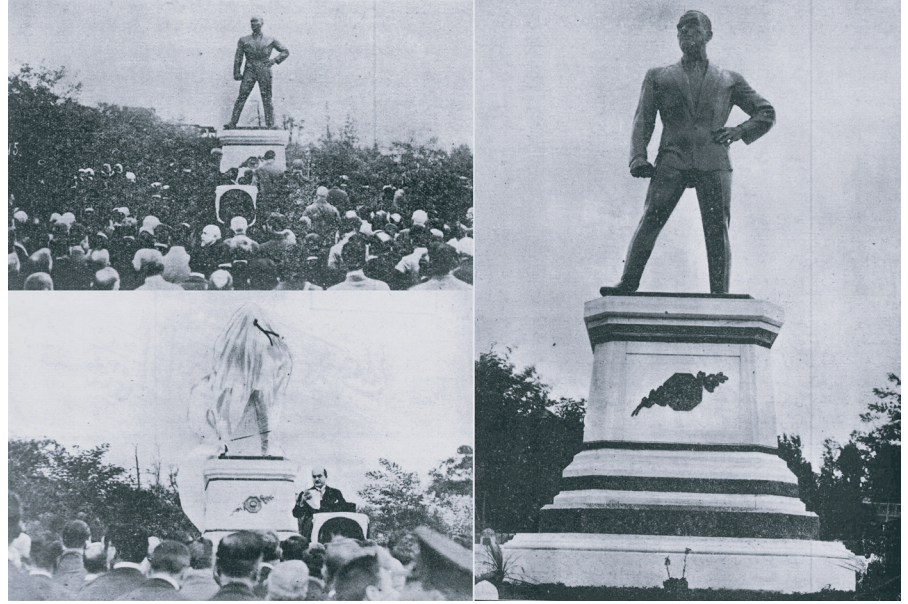


Figure 4. Opening ceremony of Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, 1926 (Journal of Istanbul Municipality, 1926).

12. The Kemalist approach defines parks as recreational spaces where modernisation and secularisation are visible in everyday life. These public spaces are symbolic places where modern citizens come together without discrimination of gender, status and ethnic origin and embrace modern life (Uludağ, 1998, 67). The public sphere in the Ottoman Empire was entirely different from the Western understanding. It was controlled by the palace and characterised by the suppression of society. There was no critical and free civil sphere; it was hierarchical, obedient and religiously bound. Sultanahmet Park (Ayasoyfa Millet Bahçesi) opened in Istanbul in 1854, Taksim Park (Millet Bahçesi) completed in 1869 and Tepebaşı Park (Millet Bahçesi) in 1880 were designed according to western design principles (Yaltrık, 1994, 223; Gülersoy, 1993, 36; Çelik, 1998). Taksim Park is located in Pera, where non-Muslims and Levantines lived. The park was designed in the Beaux-Arts style. It is a leisure space featuring music, theatre events, sculptures and a fountain (Çelik, 1998). Gülhane Park was redesigned by European architects in the mid-19th century. The park served as the courtyard (outer garden) of Topkapı Palace in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it is not a park that the public can freely use. The park is a place of limited public function and is controlled by the palace. This place represents elite authority in terms of status and religious-symbolic context. The park was opened to the public in 1912. Following the construction of the Atatürk monument in 1926, it became a secular collective public space.

Sarayburnu section of Gülhane Park (Yaltrık et al., 1997; Demirkaya, 1999, 90). Thus, the first nucleus of the cultural revolution and the rupture with tradition are situated in Sarayburnu Park (Tekiner, 2010, 70) (Figure 5) (12).

The construction of the sixth monument of the Republic and the second monument of Istanbul was carried out in Taksim. The decision to build the monument dates back to 1925. The opening day of the monument marked a historical intersection with a reformist message. The Taksim Republic Monument was opened on 9 August 1928 at 18.00. In excess of thirty thousand citizens assembled in Taksim Square to witness the unveiling of the monument (Gezer, 1984, 89). As a new monument was added to the series of inaugurations that subsequently evolved into rituals and celebrations, the people gathered in Taksim offered a warm welcome to the representation of the Republic and Atatürk. As Tekiner (2010, 98) notes, the enthusiasm generated by the event prompted Atatürk to announce the Alphabet Reform that same evening. This illustrates the significance



Figure 5. 23 April Children's Day in Sarayburnu Park in 1929 (Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation, Istanbul Research Institute Archive)



Figure 6. Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument (Matson (G. Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection).

the regime attached to the choice of location in its revolutionary reforms. The press of the period offer a variety of explanations for the monument, including that it represents a symbol of independence, civilisation, humanity, the end of the caliphate, liberation from captivity, and the necessity of the revolution (Milliyet, 1926, 1). The monument disseminates its historical narrative through its public accessibility, thereby influencing societal discourse. These powerful images exemplify the 'ethos' of the modern nation-state, constructed upon the ruins of the empire (Bozdoğan and Kasaba, 1997, 5; Yalın, 2001, 182-3). The monument serves to advance the regime's ideological objectives, facilitating a connection with the broader society. In this context, the monument functions as a conduit for political values to be conveyed to the public, who may exhibit ambivalence regarding their political allegiance (Cohen, 1989, 495) (**Figure 6**).

Change in the Political Climate: 1950s

The change in the political climate that occurred with the electoral success of the conservative bloc in 1950 brought about the urban dialectic identified with old-new, tradition-modern contrasts. This approach, which represents the Ottoman heritage and Islamic representations, aims to erase the symbolic modern expression of the Republic from the skyline and thereby erase it from memory, while the Kemalist revolutions partially come to an end (Sargın, 2004, 661). Furthermore, the spatial transformation of Turkish cities can also be observed in Sarayburnu Park. The Sarayburnu section, which was connected to the park by a bridge over the Sirkeci railway line, was separated from the park by the construction of a coastal road in 1958 (**Figure 7**). In 1960, the proposal was made to relocate the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument to Aksaray Square. This approach fails to acknowledge the symbolic presence of the Republic in opposition to ignorance and the sultanate. The existential relationship that monuments establish with the place is what gives meaning and spirit to the space. In the context of urbanism, the proposal to relocate the monument originally constructed for the park to the square is an erroneous approach. Furthermore, the issue was regarded as a grave insult to the founding leader Atatürk. Emin Bey

13. Monuments are tools of remembrance that reflect the identity of societies. They enrich the historical image, aim for eternity and have symbolic value. The term monument can be used to describe a city or a historical monument (cemetery, fountain, palace, statue). (Kuban, 1973, 5; Sözen, 1973, 7; Erkmen, 2010, 31).

emphasised that the monument was neglected during the period and called for its protection (SALT Research, Emin Erkulseytoğlu Archive, 1960). However, Sarayburnu Park was subjected to a prolonged period of neglect, during which it functioned as a construction site. This was due to the fact that the interventions were carried out within the scope of the Marmaray works, which commenced in the early 2000s. During this period, the statue was encased in metal screens and left idle for approximately twenty years. The bronze medallion-shaped inscriptions on the pedestal facades were eroded and lost (**Figure 8**). The park became a transit area situated adjacent to Kennedy Street. The monument was restored in mid-2020 due to various damages. By attempting to erase the memory of the monument, the political authority is attempting to create a new memory and control it. The first Atatürk monument in Turkey was registered as a monumental work of historical and artistic value, and Sarayburnu Park was reorganised as a recreational area (Okumuş, 2021, 202) (**Figure 9**).

CONCLUSION

In periods of significant ideological change, such as radical reforms and revolutions, imagery are employed as a means of facilitating collective action. To anchor their ideological meaning and representation in space, imagery require the construction of monuments. The Kemalist discourse employs spatial imagery to construct a secular and modern society. The figure of Atatürk, the founder and leader of the nation, is associated with the concepts of independence and freedom of the Republic. In Turkey, the term “monument” is most often used in reference to statues of Atatürk (13). It is notable that there is no urban centre in the country that does not have an Atatürk monument. Atatürk statues are urban symbols that deeply connect with different emotions of society with their symbolic power. It is a common occurrence for an image of an Atatürk monument to feature in the photographic collections of families across Turkey. The monument serves to articulate the secular and nationalist discourse into every member of society, while simultaneously providing a means of understanding society’s own identity through the lens of Kemalist



Figure 7. Sarayburnu Park Postcard (SALT Research, Kemali Söylemezoğlu Archive).



Figure 8. Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, 2015 (Baron Von Plastik Archive).



Figure 9. Sarayburnu Park and Atatürk Monument, 2024 (Author Archive).

ideology. Istanbul, surrounded by representations of the Ottoman Empire and Islam, acquired a leading role in the competition for loyalty to the regime. The first monument that visualises the fixation of ideological meanings integrated into the urban landscape is located at Sarayburnu. The sociocultural and political centre of the Ottoman Empire is marked by Republican iconography, creating the first link in the chain of meaning in the revolutionary and symbolic monumental movement. Thus, the first step in integrating Istanbul into the national imagination is taken, leading to the construction of a secular public space. This process plays a guiding role in the monumental and spatial practices of the city, which, after the 1930s, became an integral part of the national urban planning agenda. In contrast, the conservative bloc that came to power in the early 1950s invoked pre-Republican memories, symbolising the Ottoman

legacy. The societal and urban ideal envisioned by the Kemalist narrative lost significant momentum. The political power, in an effort to establish a new memory, sought to erase the monumental space. Urban spaces in Turkey, as Gramsci (2014, 179) would describe, became an “all-out war of position”. The nearly century-long delay in the protection of the country’s first Atatürk monument is deeply thought-provoking, especially within the context of the meaning of representation and the issue of preserving Turkey’s modern heritage.

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İDEOLOJİK-ESTETİK İNŞA: SARAYBURNU ATATÜRK ANITI

Türk Modernite Projesi, devrimci ideolojik bir hareket olarak çağdaş, modern, uygar ve bağımsız imgelerle özdeşleşen köklü bir değişimin işaretidir. Cumhuriyetçi hükümet, ideolojisini iletirmek ve kentleri Cumhuriyet ikonografisiyle işaretlemek için mimari ve sanata başvurur. Bu çerçevede, Cumhuriyet yöneticileri, ideolojik anlam ve temsili mekâna sabitlemek ve düğümlemek için anıtlara ihtiyaç duyar. Devrimci söylem, seküler ve modern toplum üretmek için Atatürk imgesini kullanır. Bu imge, toplumdaki her üyenin kendini Türk ulusunun bir ferdi olarak hayal etmelerini mümkün kılar, kendisini sembolle özdeşleştirir. Anıtsal mekanlar, hafızanın sabitlendiği, zamanın durduğu ve unutmaya engelleyen ölümsüzlüğün cisimleştiği yerlerdir. Osmanlı ve İslam temsilleriyle kuşatılan imparatorluk başkenti İstanbul, rejime olan bağlılık rekabetinde öncü bir role sahiptir. Osmanlı'nın sosyokültürel ve siyasi merkezi Sarayburnu, Cumhuriyet ikonografisiyle işaretlenerek devrimsel ve sembolik anıtlar hareketinin anlam zincirindeki ilk halkasıdır. Sarayburnu Atatürk Anıtı, Cumhuriyetçi rejimin Osmanlı başkentinin kalbine işaretlediği ilk semboldür. Bu sembolik anıt, seküler kamusal alanı örgütler, 30'lu yıllardan sonra ulusal şehircilik planlamasına dahil olan kentin anıt ve mekânsal pratiğine yön verir.

Bu çalışma, yapımından bu yana yüz yıla yaklaşan Sarayburnu Atatürk Anıtı'nı mekânsal ve ideolojik bağlamda inceleyerek literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmaktadır. Bu makale, literatürdeki bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, Sarayburnu Atatürk Anıtı, mekânsal-ideolojik ve ikonografik yorumlama odağında analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmadaki teorik arka plan, seküler ideolojik söylem ve kamusal alan-Atatürk anıtları ilişkisini tartışmaktadır. Çalışma, Sarayburnu Atatürk Anıtı'nın İstanbul'un ulusal tahayyüle eklemlenmesinde öncü bir rol oynadığını savunur. Anıt, rejimin İstanbul'a ilk kentsel müdahalesi olması itibarıyla değerli ve ulus-devlet inşaa sürecini okumak için güçlü bir hikâyeye sahiptir.

IDEOLOGICAL-AESTHETIC CONSTRUCTION: THE SARAYBURNU ATATÜRK MONUMENT

As a revolutionary ideological movement, the Turkish modernisation project is a sign of radical change, identified with contemporary, modern, civilised and independent images. The Republican government uses architecture and art to promote its ideology and mark cities with Republican iconography. In this framework, the rulers of the Republic need monuments to anchor and secure their ideological meaning and representation in space. The Revolutionary discourse uses the image of Atatürk to produce a secular and modern society. This image makes it possible for every member of society to imagine themselves as part of the Turkish nation and to identify with the symbol. Monumental spaces are places where memory is fixed, where time stands still and where immortality, which prevents the act of forgetting, is embodied. The imperial capital Istanbul, surrounded by representations of the Ottoman Empire and Islam, has a leading role in the competition for loyalty to the regime. Sarayburnu, the socio-cultural and political centre of the Ottoman Empire, is the first link in the chain of meaning of the revolutionary and symbolic monumental movement marked by republican iconography. The Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument is the first symbol that the republican regime placed at the heart of the Ottoman capital. This symbolic monument organises secular public space and shapes the city's monumental and

spatial practices, which were incorporated into national urban planning after the 1930s.

This study addresses a gap in the literature by examining the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument, which is approaching one hundred years since its construction, within a spatial and ideological context. The article aims to fill this gap in the literature. In this study, the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument is analyzed with a focus on spatial-ideological and iconographic interpretation. The theoretical background of the study discusses the relationship between secular ideological discourse and public space-Atatürk monuments. The study argues that the Sarayburnu Atatürk Monument played a pioneering role in the articulation of Istanbul into the national imaginary. The monument is valuable as the first urban intervention of the regime in Istanbul and has a powerful story to tell about the nation-state building process.

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