

Alev Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 199 pp., \$60.00 hbk., \$20.00 pbk.).

Çınar's examination of modernity and Islam in Turkey challenges conventional assumptions about political Islam and demonstrates how the secularist and Islamist movements follow the same trajectories for different projects. It questions classical modernist scholarship on Islamism and articulates a need to look beyond its anti-secular formation. To yield insights for the debate about how Islamists offer an alternative modernity, the author employs Foucault's conceptualisation; that is, modernity is made possible by the defamation of the present.

The author starts with the premise that modernity is an intervention in the public sphere, namely that which is related to bodies, places, and times so as to display and induce movement (p. 9). In a dichotomy, modernising interventions present the existing condition as a malady and the future ideal as a common goal with which to transform the society (p. 168). Within this conceptual framework, the successive chapters illustrate how the construction of the gendered national subject (bodies), the making of national public space (places), and the writing of national history (times) emerge as the sites of those interventions. When explaining these applications, the author also questions the Habermasian conception of the public sphere as a site of debate and dialogue, and she develops the notion of "public gaze" by which she refers to 'the organising force in the constitution of the perimeters of the public sphere'. (pp. 30-31) In the Turkish context, the dominant public gaze is male, upper-middle class, urban, patriotic, and secular. (p. 46)

Çınar displays dazzling creativity in gathering compelling evidence to justify that the secularising state and its Islamist rivals of the early 1990s were equally modernist in generating nationalist modernity projects that employed similar techniques to implement their policies. In this perspective, she illustrates how the body has emerged as a site of intervention in which the "male/state" legitimates its transformative interventions by rescuing the "female/nation" (pp. 54-55). During the early years of the Turkish Republic, for instance, the new national subject was represented by the female body that is portrayed as in need of liberation and protection. Just as the secular elite in 1920s and 30s used the unveiling of women to legitimise their intervention, the Islamist elite in 1990s instituted their Islamism by reveiling the female body as a sign of liberation of women and of the nation from the oppression of the secular Westernising state.

When exploring the making of modernity through the arrangements of "spaces", Çınar examines how Ankara was created as a new, secular, modern, and national capital city out of a little town. On

the other hand, she also investigates how some public places in Istanbul became the medium through which Islamism attempted to institutionalise an alternative nationalist ideology. In the 1990s, the Islamist national space is displayed as essentially Eastern, Ottoman, authentically local, and Islamic (p. 102).

The creation of national history also demonstrates how the secularists and Islamists followed the same path in opposite directions, Çınar argues. She basically focuses on how the official national Turkish history, which was written by a committee under the leadership of Atatürk, defamed the Ottoman and Islamic past, established Atatürk as the founder of the republic, and set “the founding moment” as 29 October 1923, the foundation of the Turkish Republic (p. 140). This is later compared to the unofficial commemoration of the conquest of Istanbul on 29 May 1453 by Islamist groups, who construct an alternative national ideology that is both Ottoman and Islamic.

In Çınar’s framing, once the Islamist subversive acts are incorporated into a political project seeking power, they become parts of a contending Islamist ideology that is equally totalising and nationalist. This would, therefore, constitute an alternative modernisation project seeking to transform the nation toward an alternative future. Especially notable is Çınar’s observation that Islamism in Turkey has just a different project for the republic rather than aiming to overthrow the Turkish state on the basis of Islamic universalist claims.

The book succeeds in awakening scholarly and lay readers, and it enables us to see more clearly how Islamism generated an alternative modernity. To be sure, the author’s research design, which works well enough for her purposes, does not allow much probing into the variations of Islamism. This is because the study mainly focuses just on the “National View” group, which does not represent all Islamist formations in Turkey. Considering the transformation of Islamism in Turkey in the late 1990s, it would also be beneficial to update the examinations in the book and to investigate how the state elite has affected the Islamist modernity project through the means of suppression. Nevertheless, Çınar still adds depth to what has often been treated superficially, and she sheds new light on grand questions about the interaction between modernity and Islam.

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