León—experimented with design in Northern Mexico. In Monterrey, a St. Louis firm designed the Estación del Ferrocarril del Golfo (1891), a Richardsonian Romanesque assemblage, to accommodate railway passengers. Among Alfred Giles’s numerous works in Northern Mexico is the Palacio Municipal (1904–9) in Ciudad Chihuahua, designed with John White; this “norteño hybrid” building caps a neoclassical façade with a heavy mansard roof. The master plan for Monterrey’s steel foundry (1903) was drawn by a U.S. company, and its component elements were imported from Pittsburgh. Émigrés also influenced local building strategies—one excellent example is the clock tower in Lerdo, Durango, which was designed by a Palestinian in 1889.

Materials such as _tezontle_, a red volcanic rock, traveled north from Mexico City; _cantera_, a limestone quarried in San Luis Potosí and other states, clad buildings in Hermosillo; and bricks that arrived by ship from England were used in Torreón. Meanwhile, “cypress-boarded houses from Louisiana” were imported to Tampico, and a church that was built entirely from prefabricated components of flat galvanized iron shipped from France is still standing in Santa Rosalía, Baja California Sur. This rich circulation contrasts with the local production of adobe brick, thatched roofs, and other building materials ubiquitous throughout small towns in the region.

Formal and spatial ideas traveling from afar have also influenced urban plans, architectural forms, and architectural details in Northern Mexico. Burian contrasts the urban morphology of Spanish colonial towns following the Laws of the Indies with gridded railroad townst such as Torreón, Coahuila, and Los Mochis, Sonora. In Tampico, Tamulipas, Doheny Oil financed the construction of an entire Anglo-American suburb, where prefabricated wooden houses for U.S. workers arrived by port and were assembled by local builders. The courtyard plans evident in Mexico’s homes, schools, hospitals, and civic buildings can be compared to the appropriation of U.S. architectural vocabularies seen in the Anglo-American central hall and the asymmetrical Victorian floor plan found in small towns throughout Nuevo León.

Mexican architects refined regional technologies and materials and pushed the profession forward with experimental designs. In Monterrey, an early example of Félix Candela’s modernist work, Iglesia la Purísima, showcases parabolic concrete ribs connected by thin-shell concrete vaulting. Also in Monterrey, the Steel House by Mario Pani, Burian argues, should be viewed as a parallel development with the well-known Case Study House Program in Southern California. He similarly likens the Aceros Planos Office Building in Monterrey to John Deere World Headquarters in Moline, Illinois. Burian also directs our attention to the scale of erasure in Mexican city building through redevelopment. The most striking example of demolition and development is the Macroplaza (1981–85) in Monterrey, where 427 buildings in forty city blocks of colonial and nineteenth-century fabric were destroyed to create a largely empty plaza of 100 acres.

By contextualizing works in a basic political, cultural, and economic history, this book does more than merely catalogue great works. As evidenced by the seventeen-page appendix, which “revalues” little-known practitioners in the region by presenting in print for the first time their basic biographical information and architectural contributions, the book is an essential contribution to preservation efforts in both Mexico and the United States. Due to his focus on documenting and presenting works for the first time, Burian—by design—stops short of producing a critical project on the architecture and urbanism of the region. In a very brief conclusion, he begins to define thematic and analytic threads, especially regarding the effects of the automobile on the preservation of historic fabrics and the development of new urbanisms, and mainly he suggests directions for future research. Judging from Burian’s previous book on the modern architecture of Mexico, one wonders if a more critical engagement with the voluminous material collected here may be forthcoming. For now, the expansive range of primary information contained in the current book makes it an exceptional reference for anyone interested in the architecture and urbanism of Northern Mexico.

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Zeynep Kezer
Building Modern Turkey: State, Space, and Ideology in the Early Republic
Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015, 344 pp., $29.95 (paper), ISBN 9780822963905

Meltem Ö. Gürel, ed.
Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey: Architecture across Cultures in the 1950s and 1960s
New York: Routledge, 2016, 192 pp., $163 (cloth), ISBN 978113806092; $49.95 (paper), ISBN 9781138104341

Two fascinating new books on early Republican and midcentury modernism in Turkey may help international audiences make sense of the recent turmoil featured prominently in the news about Turkey. Zeynep Kezer’s long-awaited book Building Modern Turkey synthesizes some of the critical scholarship on how the Kemalist program shaped the nation-state in the years immediately following the establishment of the Republic in 1923. Kezer particularly emphasizes the destructive forces in this process, in addition to the constructive ones, by putting special emphasis on the transformation of the multiethnic and multicultural Ottoman Empire into the unitary and homogenized nation-state of Turkey.

The first part of the book, which focuses on the construction of the new capital, Ankara, recapitulates previous scholarship without acknowledging recent important contributions; nevertheless, this section sets the stage for the second part, “Erasures in the Land,” which effectively demonstrates the authoritarian dismantling of unwanted formations. In this part of the book, readers find out that much of what they have learned in the first part about the new nation-state’s creative construction was made possible by the destruction and replacement of previous landowners, institutions, and populations. In a chapter titled “Dismantling the Landscapes of Islam,” for instance, Kezer shows that the closing down of the _vakıflar_ (the pious foundations that were central institutions in the Ottoman Empire’s religious, commercial, and social activities) not only put an end to their functioning but also channeled their property and liquid assets to the new state’s
treasury. Most of the land on which Ankara’s governmental buildings arose, and with them state-sponsored modernism, was seized through this process. This was partially how the Turkish state could offer enticing tax and land incentives to foreign countries to tempt them to transfer their embassies to Ankara, after the state realized that “Turkey’s new stature in international politics was inextricably linked to the recognition of its capital” (60). Additionally, the sudden “crackdown on the enclaves of vernacular Islam” (87) soon after the War of Independence normalized the Sunni version of Islam as the only acceptable religious conviction. The institutional and physical facilities of Sufi orders, dervish lodges, and ethnic and tribal associations, including their educational spaces, mausoleums, and praying spaces, were targeted during this process.

Non-Sunnı Muslims were not the only ones whose architectural sites of memory were erased from the surface of the nation. In a chapter titled “Of Forgotten People and Forgotten Places,” Kezer exposes the expulsion and marginalization of the Ottoman Empire’s non-Muslims, including the Turco-Greek, Armenian, and Jewish populations. The process through which the proportion of non-Muslims dropped from one in every five people in 1914 to one in forty in 1927 included massacres, mass deportations, exchange of populations, emigration due to the wealth tax imposed on non-Muslims, campaigns that mandated the speaking of Turkish, appropriation of Ankara’s vineyards for governmental purposes, and the conversion of churches into mosques or other programs in towns such as Ayvalık, Diyarbakır, Kayseri, and Sivas. In the third and final part of the book, Kezer redirects her attention to the “constructive” forces of the state apparatus, which were engineered to imagine a community called the Turkish nation. While discussing rail networks punctuated by standardized railway stations, elementary schools, girls’ institutes, and people’s houses, the book contributes to scholarship especially by adding examples from the Kurdish provinces, where these programs are portrayed to help deny the existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group.

Overall, it was the conquest of the public sphere, and its materialization in public spaces, that enabled the Turkification of Turkey. In Kezer’s words: “Kemalists regarded the public sphere and its institutions not as platforms for true political negotiation and exchange of ideas but as sites that had to be dominated. They tried relentlessly to monopolize the public sphere and eliminate alternative ideologies, potential political opposition, and competing sources of loyalty. This resulted in the suppression of religious activities, purges of political rivals, and the demise of ethnic and religious minorities” (235). In the introduction, Kezer promises to reveal the “anxieties and ambivalences” during this process, but throughout the subsequent chapters, Kemalist statecraft comes off as a very decided and determined force that employed its one-liner policy without hesitation. A closer look at the individuals involved, especially the planners and architects who were employed for their expertise but were not necessarily the arms of the state, could have added the nuance to which the author aspires. This absence of concentration on architectural details also thins out the thread that was to knit the different chapters together. Notwithstanding the book’s overall argument, Kezer’s chapters work independently as articles on topics as varied as city planning, diplomacy, minority politics, vernacular Islam, pious foundations, clothing, education, gender formation, the public sphere, infrastructure, toponymy, and cartography, each of which could be or has been treated in separate book-length studies. Given that architecture and urbanism are meant to stitch these diverse topics into a book, Kezer’s analytical tools could have benefited from a more careful examination of the programmatic, typological, formal, volumetric, spatial, tectonic, or structural aspects of the buildings under consideration. Instead, we learn more about the curriculum resulting from educational policies than we do about the school buildings themselves; the diplomatic relevance of selected embassy buildings receives more attention than their architectural innovation. While these constitute matchless lessons for architectural historians, professionals, and students who seek to understand their discipline’s historically conformist role in governmentality and biopower, this audience would also have benefited from a more extensive discussion of the direct relations between specific design choices and the political order.

Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey

Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey, edited by Meltem O. Gürel, brings together new scholarship on case studies about the 1950s and 1960s. The theme of Turkification in Kezer’s book is taken up here by Ipek Akpınar, who analyzes the democratically elected Democrat Party’s urban interventions in Istanbul. It was during this period that violent state-manipulated masses attacked and demolished non-Muslims’ property on 6 and 7 September 1955, causing the gradual emigration of non-Muslims after one of the darkest days in Turkey’s history. Waves of Turkification continued later as the cancellation of the treaty between Turkey and Greece in 1964 mandated that approximately forty thousand Greek passport holders and their relatives leave the country on twenty-four hours’ notice. Akpınar asks whether the massive urban destruction in Istanbul to clear space for wide avenues and new buildings constituted the direct architectural extension of this Turkification policy. She ultimately concludes otherwise after analyzing one case where the “demonizations were not themselves directed against the ethnic minorities, and they had just as much effect upon Muslim and non-Muslim groups” (78).

The other chapters analyze Turkey’s early encounters with consumer culture, especially those resulting from the “soft power” policies of the United States. Sibel Bozdogan’s essay functions as an introduction, contextualizing each piece within the broader survey and emphasizing the reverberations in Turkey of capitalist modernity’s promises of the “good life” and the “American way of life” (13). The roles played by the United States in Turkey throughout the 1950s and 1960s ranged from direct sponsor to muse for new architecture, and the impacts varied, with the United States gaining long-term influence but also becoming a target for subversion. Emre Gönlügür presents new archival research and analysis of the model American suburban home that was constructed for the 1957 İzmir International Fair to display the latest in American living standards and consumer goods. Through the translation of new domestic ideals into everyday consumer goods, Gönlügür argues, the private sphere was integrated into the economic system, and “architecture mediated between the home and the market” (103).
Meltem Gürel points out that U.S. financial and technical support in the motorization of transportation networks made Turkey’s seashores accessible by car, thus generating the summerhouse as a residential type for architectural innovation, as opposed to the burgeoning apartments and squatter settlements in rapidly urbanizing cities. Annabel Jane Wharton exposes the role of the Istanbul Hilton, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Sedad Eldem, in American political economic policy during the Cold War; she reframes material from her book on the Hilton Hotels and emphasizes how the “modern gaze controlled the program” of the Istanbul hotel through panoptic and panoramic vision (147).

That countries subject to the threat of communism were the primary beneficiaries of U.S. economic support and soft power during the Cold War era is well known. Burak Erdoğan not only exposes the role of the Marshall Plan and the University of Pennsylvania’s faculty and curriculum during the initial stages of the Middle East Technical University’s establishment in Ankara but also asserts that there were many continuities in the campus design carried out during the subsequent phase in the 1960s, after work was halted on the original plans because of complaints about American cultural imperialism and the university started anew, eventually to become a platform for left-wing ideas. This chapter portrays a second face of the United States, in contrast to its role as a global harbinger of consumerism. G. Holmes Perkins’s original campus design for METU emphasized civil liberties, academic independence, and civic centers as forums of free speech and discussion, reflecting Perkins’s own position in American fault lines at the time when new monumentality emerged as a call for architecture’s renewed civic importance. Finally, İpek Türel discusses the relation between architecture and advertisement by focusing on the Istanbul Reklam (Advertisement) Building. Rather than offering a generic explanation about Americanism or consumerism, she analyzes the building in the context of multiple considerations and influences, including Japanese Metabolism, Turkish film and advertising media, and debates on architectural contextualism and heritage preservation during this period in Turkey.

The intentions of the AK Party’s rule in present-day Turkey are often contrasted to the early Republic’s Kemalism in the 1930s and 1940s, and seen as a reincarnation of the Democrat Party’s populism in the 1950s. The urban interventions and architectural program carried out by the AKP government and its municipalities confirm this assessment at first sight. These include the top-down, rapid erasure of Turkey’s early Republican architectural icons—such as Taksim Square and Gezi Park, the most evident examples that sparked protests in 2013 and exposed the government’s use of extreme violence—and their replacement with monumental, neo-Ottoman symbols. Nevertheless, Building Modern Turkey and some of the chapters in Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey complicate this picture by revealing how the AK Party follows the early Republic’s statecraft closely in means if not ends. When one reads some of Kezer’s statements about the early Republican period, such as “The pretext of ‘insulting Turkishness’ was used to break up gatherings, justify arrests, withhold justice, even condone violence, and ultimately to intimidate non-Muslims to remain outside the public sphere” (122), one can imagine the same words being written to describe current events and present-day violations of free speech and academic freedom (just add “opposition groups” to “non-Muslims”). Bozdoğan prefaces her essay by noting her “nostalgia . . . for the latent but ultimately unrealized possibilities” of the 1950s (9), and she concludes, “Today, it is hard to miss the considerable irony in that while the ruling AKP government expresses reverence for the DP [Democrat Party] decade and for its populist politics on every occasion, it is the aggressive neo-liberal construction boom sponsored by the same AKP that continues to obliterate the architectural and urban traces of that decade” (23).

Given that book reviews are meant to be both acknowledgments of existing publications and projections into future scholarship, I would like to end with one more suggestion. I am convinced that both books under consideration in this review would have benefited from a more pronounced attempt to lift Turkish studies out of its isolation and put it into conversation with broader debates on the “global” history and theory of architecture. Kezer’s book would have been enriched by a dialogue with the scholarship on the historical and theoretical dimensions of other authoritarian nation-building processes around the world. To mirror this, Wharton’s analysis in Gürel’s edited volume would have benefited from the placement of Hilton within the history of Turkey’s or West Asia’s modernism, as well as from an understanding of the complex and nuanced history of Istanbul’s panoramas in the discourse of Orientalism (beyond being a mere modern gaze machine). This would have required further investment in related scholarship, which could have balanced the celebratory tone of Wharton’s description of the American-sponsored and -authored Hilton as the “training ground in Modernity for Turkish architects and Turkish workers” (156). In other words, Wharton’s argument disavows the importance of local actors in the long-term creation of architectural modernism that included but was not exclusive to the Istanbul Hilton, a position that is mirrored in her disinterest in acknowledging Turkish scholars’ contributions to the global history and historiography of modern architecture.

Such openings happen only momentarily in these two books—for instance, when Gönlügür suggests that an examination of the American–Soviet dialogue at the 1957 İzmir International Fair could reveal a different and more nuanced history of relations between the two countries during the Cold War. That is, how they interacted during an annual event away from the stereotypical Cold War centers “could tell us whether and to what extent Soviet authorities were intrigued by the American model before the highly publicized Kitchen Debate conveyed to the entire world the official Soviet stance towards that model to be the one of unconditional repudiation” (106). Building Modern Turkey and Mid-Century Modernism in Turkey both make momentous contributions to the architectural history of Turkey, the former by showing the violent erasure and oppression of ethnic and religious minorities and the latter by shifting scholarly attention to the 1950s and 1960s. More explicit dialogue between this immediate field and its hitherto outside might benefit scholars and audiences in all fields by enhancing their understanding of the relevance of Turkey’s architectural history.

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