

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Civilizations are manifestations of a nation's worldview. This is invariably a product of a consciously shared heritage of social and cultural values and traditions of a people. Civilizations are also shaped by the vision of its leaders who sometimes leave behind them a legacy of the type of civilization they envision for their community which then becomes a dominant feature in a nation's psyche and in its institutional structures.

One such strong and indomitable leader who envisioned a 'modern' civilization for the Turkish people was Kemal Ataturk. He sought to re-model Turkish civilization in the western mould. It is hoped that through this brief study, the extent of the appeal of this man, his ideology, his vision and his approach in building such a civilization will be better understood.

For the purpose of studying this building of a new civilization, it would be appropriate to understand some aspects of the term, especially where it is pertinent and has meaning to the origin of Turkish civilization. It is not the intention, however, to go into a detailed exploration of the term.

## 1.2 An Overview of Civilizations

### 1.2.1 Etymology and Definition

The word, 'civilization' may have come from the Latin term 'civitas', meaning citizenship, or members of a community or 'city'.<sup>1</sup> Cities are considered one important criterion of civilization as it is probably in cities that all the socio-cultural variants of a civilization are best manifested. It is not surprising then that civilizations have, among many other criteria, tended to be associated with towns and urbanization which are perceived to represent 'civilized living'. Cities project a society of 'law and order, and justice and authority'.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Khaldun,<sup>3</sup> the fourteenth century Muslim historiographer used the Arabic word, 'umran' to encapsulate this concept of civilization in his study of the rise and fall of North African dynasties. The root word of 'umran' means 'to build, to cultivate', denoting 'settlement'. The term has been translated by Franz Rosenthal to mean 'urban settlement' or 'urbanization'.<sup>4</sup> To Ibn Khaldun, a civilization or 'a dynasty requires large cities and towns to make its existence possible; in turn they

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<sup>1</sup> Charlton T. Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.133.

<sup>2</sup> Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas, 'Islam: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality' in Altaf Gauhar (ed) *The Challenge of Islam* (Islamic Council of Europe, 1978 ) p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Khaldun (A. D. 1332 – 1406). Magribi jurist, sociologist and historian. Author of *The Muqaddimah*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*. Translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958) p. lxxvi.

permit the development of luxury.’<sup>5</sup> ‘Luxury’ in this case, implies the achievement of a certain elevated level of social and economic living.

Following from this observation, Ibn Khaldun also noted that nomadism was detrimental to higher civilization.<sup>6</sup> This point underscores the fact that early Turkish civilization had indeed evolved from a purely nomadic race to a ‘sedentary and urban people’ to whom Khaldun’s description, ‘inhabitants of large population centers’<sup>7</sup> would rightly fit. In his ‘challenge and response’<sup>8</sup> theory of civilizations, Arnold Toynbee also affirmed that it was the early Turks’ ability to adapt from a nomadic existence to sedentary settlements that enabled them to establish their empires.<sup>9</sup> It is also interesting to note that, after the Turkish War of Independence, when he toured the country and saw it in ruins, Kemal Atatürk lamented, ‘we have no place we may call a city’.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, in the West, the word, ‘civilization’ was unknown until as late as the eighteenth century. It surfaced quietly in France from the words, ‘civilized’ and ‘to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. lxxx.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. lxxvii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. lxxvii.

<sup>8</sup> This is one of Arnold Toynbee’s theories on civilizations. It examined the genesis of civilizations: why some societies become static at an early stage of their existence and failed to emerge as civilizations while others do. He attributed it to 2 factors: the presence of a creative minority in a given society and an environment that was neither too favourable nor too unfavourable. The birth of civilizations results from an interplay of ‘challenge and response’ under these 2 conditions: the environment ‘challenging’ society, and the creative minority ‘responding’ to the challenge. The process of ‘challenge and response’ continues in succession until a society reaches a level of civilization. He studied 23 ‘full-blown’, 4 ‘arrested’, and 5 ‘abortive’ civilizations. The Ottoman civilization was one of the 4 ‘arrested’ ones.

<sup>9</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*. Abridgement of Vol. I – VI by D.C. Sommervell. (London: Oxford University Press, 1946) p. 174.

<sup>10</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, ‘The Principles of Kemalism’ in Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun (eds) *Atatürk. Founder of a Modern State* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981) p. 15.

civilize'<sup>11</sup> and up to 1732, 'civilization' was still a legal term that described an act that converted 'a criminal trial into civil proceedings'.<sup>12</sup> The word in its modern meaning of 'becoming civilized' and generally understood as being the 'opposite of barbarism' first came out in print only in 1756.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2.2 Civilization and Culture

In many sociological and anthropological writings, the words, 'civilization' and 'culture' are often used synonymously. To conclude this overview, it would be useful to differentiate between the two meanings as it would become apparent later in this study that the making of a new civilization was through acquiring and adopting new cultural values and practices.

The American Heritage Dictionary has defined 'civilization' as 'a condition of human society marked by an advanced stage of development in the arts and sciences and by a corresponding social, political and cultural complexity'. It has further defined it as 'those nations or peoples regarded as having arrived at this stage' and also as 'the type of culture and society developed by a particular group, nation or region or by any of these in some particular epoch'. It is also 'the act or

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<sup>11</sup> Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*. Translated by Richard Mayne (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

process of civilizing or of reaching a civilized state'.<sup>14</sup> The above descriptions aptly express the content and the idea of the process of 'building a civilization'.

Culture, on the other hand, is the 'totality of socially transmitted and shared behavior patterns, art, beliefs, values, language and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population'.<sup>15</sup> Culture is therefore the complex mix of assumptions, behavior, traditions, stories, myths, heroes, etc, that defines a person or a particular group of people as a member of a particular society. For example, the cultural practices of a Malay person, i.e. his way of life, his value system, etc, distinguish him as a member of the Malay race.

Culture in its many variations is therefore a manifestation of a civilization.<sup>16</sup> It is a sub-set of civilization which is much wider in scope. Civilizations can and often comprise many cultures and transcends geographical space, time and people.<sup>17</sup> An example is the Islamic civilization. It is spread across many countries and continents and it comprises people from different races, cultures and nations. Ziya Gokalp, the Turkish nationalist and sociologist, described culture as the set of values and habits prevailing within a community while civilization is the rational, international system of knowledge, science and technology.<sup>18</sup> Huntington summarizes the above very succinctly when he refers to a civilization as the highest

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<sup>14</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976) p. 246.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.321.

<sup>16</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1926-1928) p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996) p. 43-48.

<sup>18</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey. A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1995) p. 136.

cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have'.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3 Objective of Study

The aim of this dissertation is to study Kemal Ataturk's vision and approach in the building of a modern Turkish civilization. Chapter I began with a brief introduction to some relevant aspects on the subject of civilization. It highlighted in particular, the aspect of 'urban settlement' as a prerequisite for the development of 'high civilization' as opposed to that of a nomadic community which was the origin of the Turkish people.

Chapter II will outline a short history of Turkish civilization. It will highlight the origins of the Turks; focusing on the Ottoman Empire: its origin, rise and decline, insights into its socio-political structure, early reforms and the emerging signs of westernization. Chapter III focuses on Kemal Ataturk, giving an insight into how his family, education and military career might have shaped his vision, and how he imposed the cultural values and practices of another civilization on a society already deeply entrenched in its own traditions and values in order to achieve a modern, secular and westernized nation state. Chapter IV examines the two main approaches by which he re-modeled a modern Turkish civilization, that is, through education and the military. Chapter V elaborates on the six principles of Kemalism, the basis of his modernizing regime and will touch

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<sup>19</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization*, p. 57.

on the general reaction to his methods. Chapter VI provides some insights on the personal side of Ataturk and assesses the legacy he left behind and two institutions that will preserve it. Chapter VII concludes this study with some personal views and assessment of Ataturk's reforms.

#### **1.4 Methodology of Study**

This study is based on secondary research. The sources are mainly from books, journals, past research, magazines and other reference material from the Main Library and the Za'aba Memorial Library, both in the University of Malaya; and the Main Library of the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur. Information from the Malaysian newspapers and the internet have also been accessed. I have also had the availability of general information, publications and the loan of books from the Embassy of Turkey in Kuala Lumpur. More interestingly, I had the opportunity to have a senior Attache' of the Embassy discuss and share his views on Ataturk's role in the formation of the Turkish Republic and to speak to a Turkish national now resident in Malaysia who shared with me their experiences of growing up in Turkey during the fifties and sixties.

I have also tried to 'lighten' chapter III which may be 'heavy' with historical events and dates by adding a little 'diversion' through references to some well known films based on these events so that readers may be better able to relate

meaningfully to these historical events and dates or perhaps even look out for these films after reading this study in order to enhance their appreciation of these events!

Finally, a study of Turkey will encounter difficulties with Turkish terms and names or rather, the variety thereof. Due to practical constraints and to avoid being distracted into explaining countless Turkish words, e.g. beys, agas, celebi, etc, I have avoided using Turkish terms as far as possible, and have instead, used their English equivalents. In referring to Atatürk, I have used 'Kemal' in the earlier part of the study and 'Kemal Atatürk' or just 'Atatürk' in the later chapters.

## **1.5 Literature Review**

The materials covered for the purpose of this study may be generally grouped into three categories: The histories of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, the biographies of Kemal Atatürk and commentaries and essays on specific topics pertaining to modern Turkey and its reforms. These topics range from key issues such as secularism, Kemalism, the military, modernization and religion in Turkey.

Bernard Lewis (1961), Stanford J. and Ezel Shaw (1976) provide brilliant insights into the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire as well as excellent research material on the emergence of modern Turkey, covering in great scholarly detail the making of the Kemalist revolution and the formation of the republic. Recent studies by Feroz Ahmad (1993), Erik J. Zürcher (1995) and Justin McCarthy (1997) are



are useful readings which provide overviews and easy understanding of Turkish history and politics.

Among the earliest biographies of Ataturk are that of Armstrong (1932) which gives a very personal account of Ataturk's life while Lord Kinross (1965) studies Ataturk against the background of the events in the making of modern Turkey. Extracts of speeches and personal statements quoted, together with accounts of memorable incidents provide authenticity and hold readers' attention. Macfie (1994)'s commission for a 'profiles in power' series is largely historical and does not give particularly new insights. Mango (1999)'s opus is the latest addition to the biographies on Ataturk and one is able to derive new insights and information from his voluminous and extensive research and observations. There are also a few glossy 'coffee table'-type biographies but they do not add significantly to existing knowledge of the man.

Other books and commentaries are largely targeted at the issues related to the Kemalist regime and its reforms and they have provided invaluable insights and new perspectives to this writer who have benefited tremendously from them. The writers are too many to completely cite but of significance are Jacob M. Landau, Dankwart A. Rustow, Kemal H. Karpat, Robert E. Ward, George S. Harris, Serif Mardin, Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Ozbudun, among many others, who are able to write analytically on a variety of issues. Niyazi Berkes (1964)'s discourse on the development of secularism in Turkey is an invaluable source of information on the

subject as well as on Ottoman-Turkish social structure. Binnaz Toprak (1981) also gives an incisive account of Islam in Turkish political development, supported by useful statistics.

Turkey's long and rich history and its unique developments since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire makes it a fascinating and continuously topical subject. In the light of its own social and political situation and world developments, especially that in the Muslim world, it would no doubt continue to inspire new angles and perspectives of research.

## 1.6 Conclusion

Many writers, among them renown historians and sociologists such as Arnold Toynbee, Oswald Spengler, Will and Ariel Durant, Fernand Braudel and Pitirim Sorokin have written extensively and incisively on the subject of civilizations in the last century; including Ibn Khaldun many centuries earlier. In the last decade however, interest in the subject have been rekindled, perhaps by Samuel P. Huntington's 1993 article, 'The Clash of Civilizations?'<sup>20</sup> and his subsequent book, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order' in 1996.

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<sup>20</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilization?'. Vol. 72, No. 3. New York. *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.

Huntington's views in his treatise, however, focused interest from a different perspective. He had propounded that the next major 'clash' in the world would not be based on political or ideological grounds but most likely between civilizations of different cultural affiliations.<sup>21</sup> His claims prompted renewed attention on the importance and the need for inter- civilizational dialogue in the world. This need for dialogue and understanding will be evident in the course of this study as in the process of building a new civilization it was deemed necessary to alienate the traditions and values of one civilization in preference for that of another. In the light of recent world events, specifically the attacks on the United States of America and the subsequent bombing of Afghanistan, his claims in his article and book have yet again resurfaced in discussions and debates.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 28.