

HISTORY

THE FIRST BOOK ABOUT ATATÜRK EVER PUBLISHED IN IRAN



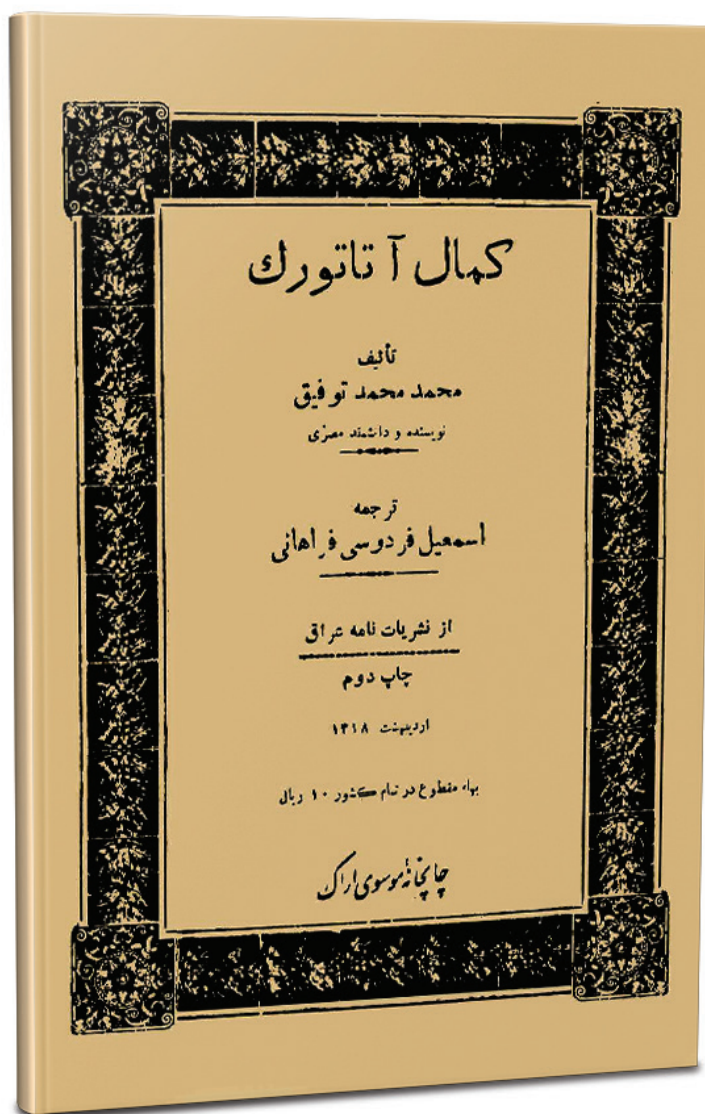
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Kemal Atatürk

Author: Mohammad Mohammad Tawfiq

Egyptian Author

Translation: Ismail Firdevsi Ferahani *Namey-i Irak* Publication Second Edition, March 1939 Erak Musevi Printing House

THIS BOOK IS AN IMPORTANT READING in Turkish-Iranian studies. It sheds light on the history of modern Turkey and Atatürk's charismatic personality from a Middle Eastern lens. The manuscript was authored by an Egyptian writer named Mohammad Mohammad Tawfiq and first appeared in *Al-Hilal* magazine based in

Cairo at a time while Atatürk was still alive. It was later translated into Persian by Ismail Firdevsi Ferahani and his translation was serialized during Atatürk's lifetime for a period of 16 months in a daily newspaper called *Namey-i Irak*. This translation was also printed as a book in December 1938, exactly one month after Atatürk's pass-

ing. The book was released in a second edition, which does not unfortunately provide any clues about the publication date of both the original manuscript and its Persian translation. Judging from the narration, however, one could presume that the Arabic edition may have appeared in the mid-1930, while the serialization of its translation by *Namey-i Irak* occurred between 1936 and 1938, until Atatürk's passing.

As was specified in the preface to the second edition, the original edition was completed within a few weeks following its serialization by *Al-Hilal*, and the second edition was published in March 1939. Overall, this 220-page book does not only present Atatürk's personal and intellectual life, but also addresses the history of Turkey after the reign of Abdulhamid.

The Persian Translator: "The Publication of This Book Is a Service to Humanity"

In his preface, the translator considers the writing, translation and publishing of a book about Atatürk's life, acknowledging his place in world history, as a service to human history.

He goes on to describe the situation of the Turkish people after the First World War and Atatürk's role in this period as follows:

"The Ottoman lands were in a very strange mess and everything was falling apart. There was no chance of salvation. However, Kemal Atatürk, with his own power, tore the veil of eternal unhappiness and misery and started a new era. He saved his own people from the danger of extinction with tireless effort and strong will, which is to be found only in historical geniuses, and he himself became the leader of this greatness."



The Egyptian Author's Description of Atatürk

In his book, Mohammad Mohammad Tawfiq seeks, not only to tell the social and political history of modern Turkey, but also to draw a portrait of one of the greatest leaders in history.

He concludes his introduction by expressing his gratitude to the Turks who have contributed to the book by providing details of the war of independence and its aftermath. The name of Mehmet Akif Ersoy –the author of the Turkish National Anthem– is also acknowledged in this regard.

In the chapter to follow, Tawfiq provides a vivid portrayal of Atatürk's physical traits:

"Protruding facial bones, long forehead, blond hair, wolf-like blue and bright eyes. It radiates greatness; greatness, genius and magic from these eyes. His nerves are like iron and his will is unbreakable. His soul is sometimes like a flame and sometimes like an ice. The way he talks is hard and scary like molten iron, and the way he looks is very catchy. He

was born for as if rule over iron and flames. His patience is for precautions, but his entrance to the square is like an apocalypse. Life and death are the same in his eyes on the battlefield... He sits seriously in his library, as if he was in ambush during the war. He draws his people towards civilization, just as he marched in front of them on the battlefield. In all of these contrasting situations, he is solid as a stone, solid as a hard steel.”

In what follows, the author attempts to explain the characteristics of Atatürk's personality based on his life story. He quotes Atatürk's own words and the people around him, while also addressing the events he witnessed in the late Ottoman era, the War of Independence and the Early Republic Era. These events testify to his leadership style.

The author uses the following depictions to narrate Atatürk's leadership qualities:

“Confident”,
 “... despair can penetrate every heart, except for the heart of Mustafa Kemal”,
 “...his decisions are final, and his will is immutable”,
 “... the whole world was fooled by Wilson's words, but Mustafa Kemal just smiled at him with full of intelligence”,
 “... there is no room for softness and compromise in his military method”.

Tawfiq then concludes his introduction by offering the following advice: “We advise all our readers to model themselves on the life of this great man.”

Relations with Enver Pasha and the Committee of Union and Progress

The first chapter of the book describes Atatürk's life. Main topics addressed in this part include the situation of Thessaloniki, Mustafa Kemal's military education, the policies of Abdülhamid, the creation of the Homeland Society, the exile of Mustafa Kemal to Damascus and his return from exile, his activities in Istanbul and Thessaloniki, the Second Constitutional Era, Mustafa Kemal's travel to Europe and the role of the Union and Progress.

The remainder of this chapter provides information about the Tripoli War and Atatürk's leadership in this war. Tawfiq goes on to criticize the imprudence of Enver Pasha and other Union and Progress officials, especially during the Balkan wars. In particular, the relations with Germany and the decision to enter the First World War are criticized by the author. This critique is supported by the late Atatürk's own words. The author describes this period as follows:

"When Turkey entered the war, Mustafa Kemal was in Sofia. He had repeatedly communicated to the statesmen in Istanbul in long writings that it was wrong to enter the war and march with Germany. But at the time, his views were deemed insane..."

In this regard, the author also refers to the correspondence between Mustafa Kemal and Enver Pasha and describes the long battle of the Dardanelles and the failures of Britain. Afterwards, he describes the state of the Ottoman fronts during the First World War, especially Atatürk leadership in these fronts as well as important developments in the country's domestic politics.

“There Was No Cure But the Revolution”

The second chapter of the book, titled “Jihad and Independence”, describes the War of Independence. After describing the situation of Turkey after World War II in a few pages, the author goes on to argue:

“There was no cure but the revolution and thus the miracle of the 20th century was about to happen. Some of them mocked and accused the revolutionaries of madness. The Government of Damat Ferit left everything to the Europeans, and the Caliph was sitting in his palace waiting for his fate to unfold. He was satisfied with occupying a throne that rules only a city where the water, air, soil and sky of the Ottoman Empire were under enemy occupation.”

Moreover, Tawfiq mentions Atatürk's initiation of the national struggle, acknowledges the commanders and the people who followed him on this path, and quotes from Atatürk's speeches. In particular, he discusses the developments in Sivas and Erzurum by explaining Atatürk's policies to mobilize the people and the army:

“Mustafa Kemal was always busy writing letters. He once objected to the political attitude of the palace by writing a letter to the palace on behalf of the Sivas Council. In this letter, he criticized the measures taken by the Caliph against the patriots and objected to Kurdish attacks against the national forces in favor of the British. In another letter, he told how Damat

Ferit Pasha sowed the seeds of hostility and discord among the Ottoman tribes. He demanded that the government of Damat Ferit be dismissed. He was not contented with these. In an open letter addressed to the public, he sharply criticized the Istanbul administration for postponing the elections and for keeping quiet about the Greek occupation. This letter was very effective in the eyes of the people and provoked the public against the ‘black bat’ (Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Pasha). The people wanted his dismissal. This marked Mustafa Kemal's second political success after the Congress, and his tone became even sharper towards the Istanbul government.”

The Iron Will of Mustafa Kemal

Tawfiq describes the situation after Atatürk's arrival in Ankara as follows:

“The Caliph's forces lacked spirit, and his troops were joining the national forces day by day. In a few weeks, they all perished, just as falsehood perishes in the face of the truth. The repentant troops were crying and joining Mustafa Kemal. Young people, old people and women were flocking to Ankara from all over the country.”

“Women and girls were sending fresh and dry food from their own regions to Ankara. They were serving soldiers, cooking, sewing clothes. Then they even helped the military transport military from several provinces

to Ankara. These supplies continued even in the freezing winter cold. Supplies were continuing from villages to Ankara. Women were working day and night, despite rain and snow. They were working without anything to protect themselves from harsh weather conditions. In the middle of roads, deserts, valleys, under snow and rain, these women stayed in the cold, all night until the morning and continued their work again in the morning. Not only did they carry weapons, but they also sent their only children to the front lines to be martyrs of the country. O daughters of martyrs, O mothers of martyrs, only Allah can reward you!”

“Mustafa Kemal was leading with an iron will in this promising but also difficult situation and watching his army grow with iron and flame. A terrible war awaited them in the future, where hunger and hardships were considerable.”

“The Wolf of Ankara”

In the continuation of the second chapter, Tawfiq explains in a very detailed and exciting manner the Battle of Sakarya and how the Greeks were poured into the sea. He then emphasizes Atatürk's leadership genius as well as the loyalty of the Turkish people and Kuvâ-yi Milliye to his cause.

The third chapter of the book, which covers the Republican period, is under titled “The New Era”.

In this chapter, the author first touches on the abolition of the Sultanate, then the Lausanne negotiations and agreement, and then details the

creation of political parties in the Republican period. After describing the opposition movements and revolts of the Republican period, Tawfiq describes Atatürk's domestic policies and finally addresses the social and cultural reforms under the title, “The Immortal Spirit of Mustafa Kemal”. The author devotes special attention to educational reforms and the reconstruction of the Anatolian civilization.

Tawfiq also addresses Turkey's military situation:

“Such an army is inconceivable anywhere but in Turkey. The disorganized state of the Ottoman Empire has left itself to a unitary and centralized administration. Turkey's current borders are in the form of an impenetrable steel fortress that protects Atatürk's nation. Mustafa Kemal, a war genius, knows his army one by one from A to Z. He knows the methods and tools of war. This means that war is a summoner of hell to anyone who can oppose the interests of the country with the order of the army!”

Tawfiq portrays Atatürk as “the Wolf of Ankara”. Worthy of note that the wolf is a symbol of genius, intelligence, courage and fearlessness in Arab culture. At the end of the book, the author refers to the development of Turkey in the Republican era, especially the increase in production and security, and the fact that Turkey has become an internationally respected country.

These analyses show how Turkey's image was globally perceived in the 1930s, especially in the Middle East. 🌍