

**The Perception of Byzantine History During the
First World War Through the Lens of A Late
Ottoman Intellectual: An Analysis of Celal Nuri's
Rum ve Bizans Through Morality**

By

Osman Kocabal

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Vienna, Austria

2024

Statement of Copyright

Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full part or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in Central European University Library. Details may be obtained from the librarians. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author.

Abstract

This thesis examines Celal Nuri [İleri]'s book *Rum ve Bizans* from the perspective of the author's understanding of morality and examines the perception of Byzantine history in late Ottoman historiography. It aims to understand how historiography intersected with discussions of moral decline and how Byzantine history was instrumentalized at this point by examining the book in the context of the First World War. Celal Nuri, one of the most read and productive names of the Second Constitutional and Early Republic periods, was both an influential name with his ideas and someone who was influenced by every perspective in this complex political environment. The aim of the study is to contribute to better examining both the relationship of Turkish historiography with Byzantium and the roots of the negative perception of Byzantine heritage and history in today's Turkish society through the examination of *Rum ve Bizans* of Celal Nuri. The study aligns with the claims that the depiction of an immoral image of Byzantium served to strengthen nationalism. By doing this, this study also looks at the interactions between history, politics, and morality for shaping historical narratives.

Acknowledgment

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, M. Brett Wilson and Günhan Börekçi, whose expertise, guidance, and encouragement made this thesis possible. I express my gratitude to the Central European University History Department for giving me the opportunity to study here expanding my horizons in my journey to be a historian.

Beyond this, my journey in Vienna and CEU would never been possible without the faith and support of my family. I cannot thank enough my friends Ece Derindere and Zorana Cvijanović who were always showing their support during these two years and made my life in Vienna memorable.

Maybe most importantly, I would like to thank Gülru Tanman and Emir Alışık, who gave me the initial ideas for developing this thesis two years ago in İstanbul supported me in coming to Vienna.

I thank Gerald Gußleitner for translating newspaper text from French to English.

Also, to all my friends in CEU Medieval Studies and History, thank you for all the good time and drinks. I will miss you!

Table of Contents

<i>Statement of Copyright</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1.1 The Scope and the Context of the Study, Literature Review.....	3
1.2 The Sources and Methodology	8
1.3 Structure of the Thesis	12
<i>Chapter One: Development of Byzantine History in Ottoman Historical Writing in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century and Historiographical Transformation</i>	13
1. Historiography from the mid-Nineteenth Century.....	13
2. Historiography Developed on Byzantine History	18
2.1 On the Use of Byzantium from the Early Nineteenth Century onwards	19
2.1 Mid-Century Developments.....	21
2.2 Byzantine History Written by Turkish-Speaking Intelligentsia	23
3. On Morality.....	29
<i>Chapter 2: Celal Nuri [İleri] and the Analysis of the Rum ve Bizans</i>	33
1. On Celal Nuri [İleri]	33
2. The Analysis of <i>Rum ve Bizans</i>	37
<i>Conclusion</i>	57
<i>Bibliography</i>	60
Primary Sources	60
Secondary Literature.....	61

Introduction

Turks were under many different influences: Arab influence, Seljuk and Turkmen influence, Persian influence, Frankish influence, and Roman influence. However, none of these were as sticky and severe as the Roman influence. Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that Rome and its successor, the Byzantine civilization, were more deep-rooted than others. That is why, although we did not know, feel, understand, hear, and even hate some Byzantine features, we could not resist the charm of Istanbul. The Ottomans conquered many cities, but none excited the Turks as much as the conquest of Istanbul. Istanbul was more important than anything else. It was considered the biggest target to be conquered. Indeed, Eastern Rome had the greatest impact on the Turks.¹

In the studies on the reception of Byzantium, the Ottoman perception of Byzantine history has a growing body of literature. Especially in the last two decades of the Ottoman Empire, writing Byzantine history was constructed through the lens of “decline,” serving also as the function of constructing an “other.” The most distinct connection between “Byzantinization,” “decline,” and the “other” is constructed through the cosmopolitanism of Ottoman society, with a focus on Constantinople, the capital of the Empire. Criticism of Istanbul during the first quarter of the twentieth century stems from both the rise of new nation-states in regions formerly under Ottoman rule since the mid-nineteenth century and the internal shaping of Muslim-Turkish identity. In the context of the decline paradigm discussed in the 1910s, one of the reasons to explain it was moral values. Immorality became a subject for the intelligentsia to explain the empire’s decline. The intelligentsia aimed to create an ideal citizen by transferring their understanding of morality. Publications were an important tool to transfer their values, and historiography was one of them. In this context, I claim that

¹ “Türkler bir çok nüfûzlar altında bulundular. Arap nüfûzu, Selçuk ve Türkmen nüfûzu, Acem nüfûzu, Frenk nüfûzu, Rum nüfûzu. Fakat bunların hiç biri Rum nüfûzu kadar yapışkan ve şiddetli değildi. Şurası da inkâr edilemez ki Roma ve Yunanî halef olan Bizans’ın medeniyeti diğerlerinden daha esaslı idi. Onun için bilmeyerek, hissetmeyek, anlamayarak, duymayarak ve hatta teneffür ederek bazı Bizans husûsiyatını aldık. Sevmediğimiz; fuhûşiyatıyla, rezaletleriyle nefretimiz mucib olan bir alfütenin ferifte-i evza olduğu gibi, kendisinden son derece ikrah etmekle beraber, İstanbul’un işvelerine dayanamadık. Osmanlılar bir çok büldan ve kat’enate istilâ ettiler. Fakat bunların hiç biri Türkleri İstanbulun fetihi kadar kari’u el-ayn [aydın, sevinçli] etmedi. İstanbul her şeyden mühimdi. Orası kabl’ el-fetih pek büyük telki olunuyordu. Flhakîka Türkler’e en büyük te’siri icra edende Şark-ı Roma olmuştur.” Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, (Konstantiniyye: Efkâr-ı Cedid Kütüphanesi, 1917), 52.

the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia used Byzantium as a historiographical tool to convey their moral values by portraying Byzantium as immoral. This also helps me to understand the broader context of how the intelligentsia perceived the decline of the empire in the second decade of the twentieth century. In the Republican period, the immoral perception of Byzantium evolved into a reference to an enemy. Recent scholarship also discusses the place of reception of Byzantium in contemporary Turkey. One of the consensuses reached in studies on the representation of Byzantium in cinema, literature, politics, and other fields is its relationship with the construction of the “other” in historiography.

Considering this trajectory, this thesis aims to analyze Celal Nuri [İleri]’s book *Rum ve Bizans* (Roman and Byzantine), published in 1917. Focusing on the Second Constitutional Era (1908–1918) in the context of “decline,” it examines how Byzantine history is perceived² in Turkish historiography and how negative connotations of Byzantium are constructed. One of the purposes of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of Turkish historiography’s relationship with Byzantium and the roots of the negative perception of Byzantine heritage and history in contemporary Turkish society. Secondly, this thesis aims to give a glimpse of how morality has been engaged with historiography by Celal Nuri to transfer his ideas on morals to his audience, which serves to create an ideal citizen. So, in this thesis, I hypothesize that Celal Nuri in *Rum ve Bizans* utilized Byzantine history to express his views of morality in the context of the post-Balkan Wars period and emerging the Turkish national identity.

² I borrow Koray Durak’s definition for perception in order to explain what do I mean by perception of Byzantine history. “The term ‘perception’ to shift the focus away from the intentional memory-building policies of state institutions or collective bodies, such as the official celebrations of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 or the creation of a discourse on Byzantium in school textbooks. This also includes shifting attention away from the relatively permanent representations created by individuals, such as how artists and writers present Byzantium.” Koray Durak, “Popular Perception of Byzantium in contemporary Turkish culture,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 47, no.1 (2022), 123.

The Second Constitutional Era was one of the most active periods in the Ottoman printing culture. Also, Celal Nuri is one of the prominent figures who influenced the political and intellectual life of the period. His writings outlined the era's political, religious, and societal characteristics and proposed solutions according to his perspective. Witnessing the Second Constitutional Era, World War I, the Turkish War of Independence, and the revolutionary movements, Celal Nuri actively participated in politics by becoming a member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), contributing to the preparation and adoption of revolutionary reforms. Various studies have quoted the aforementioned text about the negative reception of Byzantium by presenting it together with a group of other books. However, those studies neglected a close reading of history books on Byzantine history in the context of identity formation. So, this study aims to better understand the usage of Byzantine and Byzantine history in the context of narratological analysis and contribute to this growing body of literature with the given issues above on the perception of Byzantine history.

1.1 The Scope and the Context of the Study, Literature Review

In this thesis, I broadly cover the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first two decades of the twentieth century. There are multi-layered, interlocking different contexts. Firstly, I look at the transformation of historiography in the Ottoman Empire from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. While doing this, I benefit from several works. Erdem Sönmez discusses how governments developed a new discourse on state legitimization to ease the tension, primarily taking the form of an imperial ideology that Hugh Seton-Watson called “official nationalism.”³ He also inserts this ideology, which could be seen as an application of “national” motifs by multinational empires or, in Benedict Anderson's words, “stretching the short, tight skin of the nation over the

³ Hugh Seton-Watson, “Nationalism, Nations, and the Western Policies,” *The Washington Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1979): 91-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636607909450254>.

gigantic body of the empire.”⁴ Over the era between 1750 and 1850, known as the “European bridge period,” according to Stefan Berger, each imperial state developed a transnational ideology that was infused with “national” “imagery and identity.”⁵ In addition, Cemal Kafadar and Hakan Karateke’s article titled “Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Historical Writing”⁶ helps me perceive the transformation of historical writing within a broader framework, showing the transition from Ottomanism to Turkish nationalism and its impact on historical writing. Moreover, Hakan Karateke’s book chapter, “The Challenge of Periodization New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography,” considers the nineteenth-century reception as multiple visions of Ottoman identity. Reacting to contemporary political and intellectual circumstances, the histories written by nineteenth-century authors consider the Ottomans part of a newly redefined world and world history.⁷ Following the above, Sönmez’s article “Clio between Revolution and Collapse: The Making of the Historical Discipline in the Late Ottoman Empire”⁸ discusses the institutionalization of historical discipline in the socio-political atmosphere following 1908. Sönmez argues that the process of disciplining history in the Ottoman Empire occurred amidst the tumultuous political environment of the 1910s, marked by competition between Ottomanist and Turkist historical perspectives. Shaped within the framework of Ottoman and Turkish nationalist projects, these historical visions attributed different meanings to “nation” and “national history,” interpreted the past divergently, and engaged in a sharp struggle to establish their

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁵ Erdem Sönmez, “Historical Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Expansion, Islamization, and Nationalization (1839–1908),” *Turkish Historical Journal* 13, no. 1-2 (2022): 46.

⁶ Cemal Kafadar and Hakan Karateke, “Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Historical Writing,” in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, 1800-1945*, vol. 4, ed. by Daniel Woolf, 563-584. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

⁷ Hakan Karateke, “The Challenge of Periodization: New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography,” in *Writing the History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future*, ed. by Erdem Çıpa and Emine Avcı, 129–154. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013.

⁸ Erdem Sönmez, “Clio between Revolution and Collapse: The Making of the Historical Discipline in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Modern Intellectual History* (2022): 1–22.

interpretation as the dominant reading of history. While the Ottomanist historical perspective enjoyed a hegemonic position in the early years of the 1908 Revolution, it began to lose its influence, especially after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, which rendered Ottomanism a defunct concept and led to a Turkish nationalist shift in Young Turk politics. Building upon this, I argue that Celal Nuri's book reflects the transformation of an understanding of historiography that has been going on since the nineteenth century and appears as a general accumulation of ideas on Byzantine history and a reflection of the ideologies formed after the 1908 revolution. Therefore, my analysis of the book will be on this post-1908 context.

As one of my chapters will discuss the transformation within Byzantine historiography in the Ottoman Empire, I believe that it should be important to note that studies on the perception of Byzantium during the Ottoman period focus primarily on the art, architectural history, and tangible heritage of Byzantium. I hope to address a gap in the literature on the perception of Byzantine history in the late Ottoman period by making a close reading of a specific text, and connecting it to a broader context and discussions. In the late 1980s, Michael Ursinus examined how late Ottoman historians approached Byzantine history and culture. His article series, consisting of "Byzantine History in Late Ottoman Turkish Historiography" (1986)⁹, "Der Schlechteste Staat: Ahmed Mithat Efendi (1844-1913) on Byzantine Institutions" (1987)¹⁰, and "From Süleyman Pasha to Mehmet Fuat Köprülü: Roman and Byzantine history in late Ottoman historiography" (1988)¹¹, delves into this topic.¹² Although Ursinus initially intended for these articles to be part of a larger project, they currently stand as the primary reference for comprehending late Ottoman historiography

⁹ Michael Ursinus, "Byzantine History in late Ottoman Turkish Historiography," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 10, no. 1 (1986), 211-222

¹⁰ Micheal Ursinus, "Der schlechteste staat: Ahmed Midhat Efendi (1844-1913) on Byzantine Institutions" *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 11/1, (1987), 237-244

¹¹ Micheal Ursinus, "From Süleyman Pasha to Mehmet Fuat Köprülü: Roman and Byzantine History in Late Ottoman Historiography", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 12, no.1 (1988), 305-314.

¹² Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage", (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2013); 19.

concerning Byzantine history. Ursinus argues that in the nineteenth century, especially in the later periods and early twentieth century, the number of history books on Byzantine history increased, but he points out that they directly adopted an approach from French positivism. The reason for this point is that they do make direct translations from Western histories of Byzantine history.

Few studies on Byzantine historiography focus on the late Ottoman period. However, to cover the perception of Byzantine history, I will rely on the published Ph.D. dissertation by Şule Kılıç Yıldız *Byzantium Between “East” and “West”: Perceptions and Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage*.¹³ The dissertation examines the growing Byzantine interest in both the West and the East starting from the seventeenth century. It looks at the perception of Byzantine heritage and architectural historiography, focusing on Ottoman Turkey in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The study investigates how the cultural and architectural heritage of Byzantium is represented and described in historical texts in the context of the complex relations between Orientalism, nationalism, and historiography. Even though she closely reads many texts, she does not provide detailed inter-textual analysis. However, she raises many issues, such as the impact of the post-Balkan Wars period as an open debate. She demonstrates that Ottoman views of Byzantium were not all that dissimilar from those of Western Europe. There are a lot of similarities in their approaches to Byzantium and the patterns they follow. According to her, both times, a selective appropriation of Byzantium’s legacy resulted from unclear conceptions of the region. Much of this ambiguity stems from the form and location of the Byzantine Empire itself, though the exact causes have changed over time. Her other studies on Byzantine

¹³ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium Between ‘East’ and ‘West’: Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage”, (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2013); As published monograph: Şule Kılıç Yıldız, *Byzantium Between “East” and “West”: Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage*, (İstanbul, Libra Kitap, 2021).

history in the late Ottoman era will support this chapter.¹⁴ The exhibition catalog *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800–1955*, published in 2021, discusses heritage discourse on the Byzantine Empire in the Ottoman Empire and its European counterparts. Drawing from Edward Said’s *Orientalism*,¹⁵ I adopt the perspective of how the West represents the Orient to construct other with exoticism and backwardness that serve for colonial justification. I believe this approach is helpful to understand how Ottoman intelligentsia perceived Byzantine history. I argue that Celal Nuri’s Byzantine depiction can be seen from *Orientalism*. As his narrative is part of a nation-building process, depicting Byzantine serves to highlight the Turkish nation but also supports a contradiction at the heart of the Orientalist approach.

Finally, the most recent work on the field, *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*¹⁶ by Diana Mishkova, helps me to frame how Byzantium finds a place in national-historical canons. By examining how Byzantine studies were institutionalized and in which directions they evolved, the book reveals the various uses made by national historiographies in the region on the role of Byzantium. However, it also reveals research on how these uses are shaped. Mishkova argues that the peculiar inevitability of the Byzantine phenomenon leads intellectuals and politicians to interpret it as they wish. Byzantium has varied considerably in terms of meaning to different people. Driven by this, my study also aims to understand Celal Nuri’s Byzantine perspective by putting it into a bigger context.

I follow a different path than the above studies by reading how Byzantine history is written from the perspective of moral values. Therefore, I will give a glimpse of a few studies

¹⁴ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Entellektüellerin Gözüyle Bizans İstanbul’u,” *Doğu Batı Dergisi* no. 68 (2014), 1–16; Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Ottoman Scholars and the Byzantine Architectural Legacy of Istanbul,” in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955* ed. by Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis, (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute, 2022), 39–65.

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁶ Diana Mishkova, *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

on morality in the late Ottoman period, and I will claim that the individual moral perspective of intelligentsia builds their own perspective on Byzantine history. I argue that we should read Byzantine history from the moral perspective of the authors because morality is an important issue in the written literature of this period. There are books, essays, and novels written on morality during the First World War. The fact that lessons on morality had an important place in education during this period pushed me to examine historiography through morality. Morality has an important place here and is also related to the birth of the concept of “citizen,” as it will be discussed in the first chapter. However, there is still not enough study on reading historiography under the concept of morality, as it is also addressed by Çiğdem Oğuz; I borrow her perspective and how she contextualizes the importance of morality in the late Ottoman period, as it is also mentioned that morality was a rising issue in the discussions of the decline of the Empire.¹⁷

For the perception of Byzantine history in the late Ottoman period, I have three findings about the consensus of the majority of the intelligentsia. I believe that they see the Ottoman Empire as a continuation of the Byzantine Empire. Secondly, they argue that Byzantinization, metaphorically, is a reason for the empire’s decline. Third, Byzantine is constructed as an enemy. I claim that the third is not as concrete as it can be seen in the popular perception of Byzantine during the Republican period. I believe that what was written about Byzantine history during the late Ottoman period created a basis for developing this idea in the twentieth century, which will be addressed in the conclusion.

1.2 The Sources and Methodology

The work analyzed in this thesis is *Rum ve Bizans*, published by *Efkat-ı Cedid* Library in 1917. It covers various topics related to Byzantine history. According to Celal Nuri’s

¹⁷ Çiğdem Oğuz, *Moral Crisis in the Ottoman Empire: Society, Politics and Gender during WWI* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021).

statements, the book serves as an introduction to Roman and Byzantine history based on studies examining the factors leading to the conquest of Istanbul. In the preface, it is mentioned that the purpose of writing this book is to provide specific lessons and “evoke the thoughts” of the audience. I claim that the book is a popular publication since it might have probably more than seven thousand copies. On the other hand, Celal Nuri, as a popular and influential figure, also makes the book valuable to analyze.

There is no existing study on this book. In the current literature, only specific quotations from the book have been used, but they do not contain any analysis. However, generally, the histories of the late Ottoman period on the Byzantine Empire are not analyzed as a single product but instead considered as a group for analysis based on specific quotations.

When analyzing the book, I focus not on the accuracy of the information provided by Celal Nuri on Byzantine history but on how he utilized this information. While Byzantine history is the focus throughout the book, there are references to Ancient Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Ottoman histories. For my analysis, I borrow Hayden White’s approach from *Metahistory* on historical narration. According to White, historical narration is not merely a tool for conveying an objective truth. Instead, the historical narration itself is a kind of “verbal image” shaped by the historian’s imagination, which White terms as emplotment. To be more precise, emplotment means that historical narration serves as a tool to understand the events and relationships of the past, but at the same time, it can intervene between the readers and them, complicating the perception of these events. This perspective emphasizes that historical narration is not only about conveying facts but also about interpreting and making sense of them. The language, narrative techniques, and visual images used by historians

influence how we understand and interpret past events. Therefore, historical narration is not just a means of transmitting information; it is also a process of interpretation and creation.¹⁸

White proposes four types of emplotment in the book: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire.¹⁹ Among these types, Celal Nuri's narrative can be considered as history emplotted as Tragedy. For instance, if a historian shapes their narrative as a story of historical subjects overcoming challenges to achieve success, they have chosen the Romance narrative structure. If these subjects fail despite their efforts and resign themselves to their fate due to the insurmountable structure of natural, societal, etc., laws, the narrative structure chosen by the historian is Tragedy.²⁰

Similarly, by understanding history through a metaphoric framework, by explaining the similarities between Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire, and by telling a Byzantine history, the book has found a place for itself in the discussions of moral decline in the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, choosing the dominant Tragedy narrative structure, Celal Nuri implies a radical politics that predicts the necessity of changing the existing social order according to these laws; as for the metaphors proposed by Hayden White, Celal Nuri's work aligns with the Synecdoche genre. In this metaphor, a part is used to represent the whole or vice versa.

I will be doing an intertextual analysis to understand how Celal Nuri constructs Byzantine history throughout the book. I will be benefiting from a recent M.A. thesis by Mine Konuk.²¹ She analyses his book called *İlel-i Ahlâkiye* [Principals of Morality]. Since I will be looking at the text from Celal Nuri's moral perspective, it is essential to benefit from

¹⁸ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 12–13.

¹⁹ The analysis of four emplotment begins from page 135.

²⁰ Hayden White, "Chapter 5, Tocqueville: Historical Realism as Tragedy," *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 191–229; Selim Tezcan, "Hayden White ve Tarih Anlatısı Sorunu," *Turkish Educational Journal* 7, no.2, (2018), 644.

²¹ Mine Konuk, "Celal Nuri'nin Ahlak Anlayışı" (Elazığ: Fırat Üniversitesi, 2024).

the mentioned thesis. I will utilize secondary literature on Celal Nuri and his other works to analyze Celal Nuri's historiographical approach more accurately. A vast amount of literature is available on Celal Nuri. The most comprehensive of these works is the monograph *Celal Nuri: Young Turk Modernizer and Muslim Nationalist*, written by York Norman in 2021, which will be one of my key sources. This monograph provides a comprehensive list of literature written about Celal Nuri, and it holds great importance for situating his life, works, and ideas within the context of the post-Balkan Wars period.²² In addition, numerous theses and articles are available on various topics, such as Celal Nuri's understanding of history, "Westernization," and "Modernization." I heavily rely on this extensive literature while analyzing Celal Nuri's political and intellectual personality and his work on *Rum ve Bizans*. Additionally, I have access to transliterations of Celal Nuri's works such as *Tarihi Tedenniyat-ı Osmaniye* (The History of Decline of the Ottomans)²³ and *Osmanlı Mülkünün Tarihi Coğrafyası* (The Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire)²⁴, as well as some articles he wrote on historiography. I will use these sources inter-textually while analyzing his work *Rum ve Bizans* to trace the discourse and understand the formation of his ideas.

Overall, my analysis will pay close attention to the details of chosen events or individuals to contextualize them within the broader historical context. Doing this helps me to analyze Celal Nuri's narrativity and identify how and why he chooses those events to engage the reader while considering his story-telling techniques. Therefore, I can reveal the lessons he recounts to his audience and see how this book can be contextualized within a broader context of the late Ottoman period.

²² York Norman, *Celal Nuri: Young Turk Modernizer and Muslim Nationalist*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

²³ The book has transliterated under a different title. I have both Ottoman Turkish and transliterated versions. Respectively; Celal Nuri, *Tarih-i Teddeniyat-ı Osmaniye*, (İstanbul: Cağaloğlunda Matbaa-i İctimai, 1330 [1915]); Celal Nuri [İleri], *Uygurluklar Çatışmasında Türkiye* (İstanbul: Togan Yayıncılık, 2008).

²⁴ Celal Nuri [İleri], *Osmanlı Mülkünün Tarihi Coğrafyası*, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2021).

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis will contain two chapters. In the first chapter, I examine the development of historiography in the Ottoman Empire and, within this, the development of Byzantine historiography. Following these, I state that I can integrate Byzantine historiography into the moral debates that arose during the post-Balkan Wars period and that Celal Nuri's book should be evaluated within this framework. In the second part, I look at Celal Nuri's life and intellectual world and examine what he said about both historiography and morality. While doing this, I examine *Rum ve Bizans* and reveal the ideas that Celal Nuri wants to convey to his readers by showing parallels in the context and moral understanding of the book's construction.

Chapter One: Development of Byzantine History in Ottoman Historical Writing in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century and Historiographical Transformation

1. Historiography from the mid-Nineteenth Century

The long nineteenth century (1789-1914), for the Ottoman Empire and broader Eurasia, was a time of significant cultural, political, social, and economic transformations. The first attempts at centralization with Selim III (1789–1807), later initiated by Mahmud II (1808-1839), and the declaration of *Tanzimat*²⁵ edict by Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861) accelerated the modernization process. It was the time of institutional transformations from Sultan to civil bureaucrats at the Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı Ali*). The reforms continued during the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909). On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire, especially in Rumelia, saw many uprisings, political crises, and wars throughout the nineteenth century. The crises affected not only the Ottoman Empire but also Europe. At a time when nation-states began to replace empires, the Ottoman Empire could not meet the demands of its own people.²⁶ An atmosphere of instability prevailed in the empire, with weak governance, internal crisis, and imperial rivalries.

The modernization reforms were primarily reactionary steps implemented in reaction to the military and scientific advancements, as well as internal rebellions within the Empire. Their main goal was to protect the empire from collapse and maintain its unity. To achieve this goal, Ottoman leaders turned to Westernization, seeking to adopt European military and administrative systems. These modernization initiatives coincided with the empire's efforts to

²⁵ *Tanzimat* or as known as *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayun* (Gülhane Charter) which is the plural of the word *tanzîm*, which means “to organize, put in order, to reform” in the dictionary, is used in the literature to mean “reform and re-organize the civil administration”, and also characterizes the period in which these regulations were made. see: Ali Akyıldız, “Tanzimat,” accessed October 24, 2023. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tanzimat>.

²⁶ Emre Erol, “Makedonya Sorunu’nun Batı Anadolu’ya Sicrayisi ve 1914 Rum Tehciri,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 252 (December 2014), 58.

spread its values to outlying regions, leading to shifts in the dynamics between the central government and its peripheries.²⁷ In the context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ottoman government sought to establish a more inclusive social basis for the state and establish new ties with its subjects. These ties became concrete and official with the declaration of Tanzimat and later with the Reform Edict in 1856. These edicts guaranteed the safety of individuals and their belongings and enforced uniform equality among the empire's populace, irrespective of their social status or religious affiliation. As a result, they sought to cultivate a shared Ottoman identity and promote the evolution of a unique imperial state ideology. Ottomanism²⁸ emerged as a concept and strategy to unify the empire's diverse communities under a unified identity. Referred to as "official nationalism," it framed the state as a tangible political structure where all residents, regardless of their differences, were considered equal constituents of the Ottoman nation.²⁹

During the nineteenth century, Ottoman historians re-discovered how to write the empire's ancient past, establish political legitimacy, and create a linear, imperialistic national history. Certain weaknesses and the growing influence of the Western institutions in the empire impelled Ottoman historians to describe the "decline" of the empire.³⁰ They knew the Ottoman Empire was weaker economically and militarily than their European counterparts,

²⁷ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage", 98.

²⁸ To define Ottomanism, I borrow the definition from Oğuzhan Kır's MA thesis, "*Ottoman Nation (Osmanlılık)*: The identity created by the Ottoman State above the ethnic and religious identities in the Ottoman territories in the 19th century is a superordinate identity formed in response to the emergence of nationalism. *Ottomanism (Osmanlılık)*: It is a political thought movement developed by statesmen to create an Ottoman Nation. It is an integral and inclusive movement. *Ottoman (Osmanlı)*: It is the identity given by the state to all its citizens with equal rights. In short, everyone living in the territory of the Ottoman Empire is an Ottoman, an Ottoman citizen. Oğuzhan Kır, "Meşrutiyet Döneminde Osmanlılık Tartışmaları," (MA thesis: Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2019), 5.

²⁹ Erdem Sönmez, "Historical Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Expansion, Islamization, and Nationalization (1839–1908)," 48.

³⁰ Christoph Neumann, "Bad Times, Better Self: Definitions of Identity and Strategies for Development in Late Ottoman Historiography, 1850-1900", in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanır, Suraiya Faroqhi, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 57.

so historical writing was crucial in legitimizing its existence.³¹ Mainly from the mid-nineteenth century, it is visible that there was an attempt to investigate the public uses and practices of history in the Ottoman Empire. A change began in the Ottomans' perception of history and the importance they gave to it. It is stated that during this period, historiographical expansion processes such as the publication of historical works, the addition of history courses in schools, and the establishment of an archive institution emerged. With these processes, the role and importance of history in Ottoman society increased.³² Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the rise of the positivist approach, new narratives were being constructed by establishing cause-effect relationships in explaining events. The Ottoman intelligentsia, which tried to implement "scientific" historiography with a periodization that divided the entire known world history into three main periods, called this the *usûl-i cedid* (new method).³³ Founded in 1851 and dissolved in 1862, *Encümen-i Daniş* [Council of Knowledge] was primarily concerned with writing history textbooks for *Darülfunun*³⁴, and for this purpose, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1823–1895) was commissioned to write a book that included the reforms between 1774 and 1826 and named *Tarih-i Cevdet* (History of Cevdet).³⁵ This historical writing had clear expectations. Accurate coverage of narrative sources, and especially the use of archival sources, was vital. However, critical evaluation of official state documents was out of the question. The author's style, analytical skills, and work organization were decisive determinants of quality, but no one was interested in originality. Ümit Akagündüz mentions that although there were developments in Ottoman

³¹ Erdem Sönmez, "Historical Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Expansion, Islamization, and Nationalization (1839–1908)," 48; Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage," 104.

³² Erdem Sönmez, "Clio between Revolution and Collapse: The Making of the Historical Discipline in the Late Ottoman Empire," 5.

³³ Hakan Karateke, "The Challenge of Periodization: New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography," 146.

³⁴ Higher education institution established in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century.

³⁵ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage" 101.

historiography in the period from the Tanzimat to the Second Constitutional Monarchy, sufficient institutionalization was not achieved.³⁶ The second institution, *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni* [Ottoman History Society], was founded in 1909, which took an important step for the institutionalization of history. It aimed to promote Ottoman nationalism through historical publications.³⁷

The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 ushered in the Second Constitutional Period, which persisted until the Ottoman Empire's dissolution. *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (The Committee for Union and Progress), the new governing party, declared Mehmed Reşad (1909-1918) the Sultan. While this era brought about significant social and political changes, including introducing parliamentary rule, it couldn't prevent territorial losses. The period coincided with the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and WWI, leading to substantial territorial concessions.

Another aspect of the Young Turk Revolution, after the re-declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, was that a long series of effects and reactions took place in the political and intellectual fields. Young Turks claimed that they represented political will by engaging with politics to solve social problems. This situation was a new reflection of the political-public sphere. Because with the transition from "community" to "society," from "mechanical solidarity" to "organic solidarity," the concept of "citizenship" was born, and rights and limits were determined through legalization.³⁸ During this period, there was an increase in the number of political individuals. From now on, an institutionalized understanding of administration that serves the public and internalizing citizenship is the primary goal of the bureaucracy of the period. Of course, history writing was also affected by

³⁶ Ümit Akagündüz, "II. Meşrutiyet Yılları Düşünce Dünyamızda Tarih ve Tarih Yazımı Üstüne Bir Değerlendirme," *Journal of Modern Turkish History* 11, no.21 (Spring, 2015), 5.

³⁷ Cemal Kafadar and Hakan Karateke, "Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Historical Writing", 571.

³⁸ Füsun Üstel, *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Günümüze Vatandaşlık Eğitimi*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 27.

these events, and a group that tried to interpret the past with a nationalist understanding of history emerged.³⁹

Building upon this, the history books published in this period should be evaluated within this framework. In such an environment and in the process of literary transformation of history, Roman and Byzantine history gradually began to take place in books from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and intellectuals began to write about this period. Since significant chapters or separate volumes have been published as parts of the world or general histories of ancient Roman and Byzantine history, several European works on ancient history have appeared in Turkish translations. However, in general historical accounts, Byzantine history received little initial attention compared to Ancient Rome, usually as summaries of political events.⁴⁰

Therefore, I focus on the historiography regarding the Byzantine past that developed in the Ottoman Empire. In this multi-layered process, no single, uniform perspective on Byzantine history has emerged. Rather, a diversity of views characterized Ottoman narratives on Byzantium. There was not significant study among the Turkish-speaking Ottoman intellectuals until the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the Greek community of empire, it emerged slightly earlier, also mostly around art and architectural history. Therefore, the Byzantine legacy and its perception in the Ottoman Empire were reshaped in the second half of the nineteenth century, which will be explained in more detail below. Ottoman writers strongly emphasized that the cultural origin of European civilization was the Byzantine Empire, which carried the legacy of the ancient Greeks and spread it throughout the European continent. Thus, although empires often claimed their lands under the pretext of claiming heritage, the Ottoman Empire, claimed as the successor of the Byzantines, had the

³⁹ Ümit Akagündüz, "II. Meşrutiyet Yılları Düşünce Dünyamızda Tarih ve Tarih Yazımı Üstüne Bir Değerlendirme," 6–7.

⁴⁰ Diana Mishkova, "Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish History," in *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*, 172.

right to exist as a modern state.⁴¹ Johann Arnason makes a valid point in opening up the importance of understanding the historians who write “our story” and examining the relationship of Byzantium with this narrative: If it makes sense to speak of the “path-dependency of nation-formation,” in a cultural as well as a political sense, the post-Byzantine constellation is an exceptionally complex and interesting one: no other historical empire has had a similar variety of national claimants to or depositories of its legacy.⁴²

2. Historiography Developed on Byzantine History

The attribution to the term ‘Byzantine’ in nation-formation varied within the discourses. As Byzantine was not alien to Ottomans, they knew they ruled the former territories of the Eastern Roman Empire. Especially objecting to Charles V, who claimed to be the Emperor of Rome, the Ottoman sultans claimed to be the heirs of the Roman-Byzantine emperors by asserting the imperial title, *Kayser-i Rum*, within their domains. They sought to base their political horizons on the ideological foundations established and sustained by the empires preceding them, particularly on the concept of the “World Empire.”⁴³ However, dealing with the history of the Byzantine Empire (*Rum-i Şarkî*), except Hezarfen Hüseyin’s universal history *Tenkihü’t Tevarih-i Müllük*,⁴⁴ Stefanos Yerasimos inserts, Ottomans were writing the history of Byzantine, based on legends of the foundation of Constantinople and Hagia Sophia.⁴⁵ Hezarfen Hüseyin’s history is known as, for the first

⁴¹ Mertkan Karaca, “Writing the Byzantine Past, Reconfiguring the Ottoman Present: Byzantine Art in the Late Ottoman Art Historiography,” in *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery: 1800–1955*, ed. Brigitte Pitarakis, (İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021), 165.

⁴² The quotation is quoted from Diana Mishkova “Introduction,” in *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 2. For Johann Anason’s article please see: Johann P. Arnason, “Approaching Byzantium: Identity, Predicament and Afterlife,” *Thesis Eleven* 62, no.1 (2000).

⁴³ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Türk Metinlerinde Konstantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1993), 7–8.

⁴⁴ To read a detailed analysis of perception of Byzantium of Hezarfen’s exceptional work, see: Cumhur Bekar, *A New Perception of Rome, Byzantium and Constantinople in Hezarfen Hüseyin’s Universal History*, (MA thesis: Boğaziçi University, 2011).

⁴⁵ For a detail analysis about pre-nineteenth century tradition of Ottoman history writing on Byzantine, see; Yerasimos, *Türk Metinlerinde Kosntantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*.

time, an early-modern Ottoman historian who wrote a very detailed version of the foundation of Constantinople alongside Roman and Byzantine histories, which is exceptional in traditional Ottoman historical writing.⁴⁶

2.1 On the Use of Byzantium from the Early Nineteenth Century onwards

The meanings attributed to Byzantium changed throughout the nineteenth century, and many different groups in the Ottoman Empire produced works on Byzantium. With the restoration of the Hagia Sophia commissioned by Sultan Abdülmecid (1823–1861), the discourse that the Ottoman Empire was the successor of Rome was brought back to the forefront, and an increase in studies on Byzantium was observed in the Ottoman Empire. The restoration of Hagia Sophia from 1847 to 1849 by the Fossati brothers, ordered by Sultan Abdülmecid, could be considered a starting point for an embodiment of the Byzantine heritage that served as a tool to enhance the glory and power of the empire.⁴⁷ Beatrice Daskas points out that redecorating Hagia Sophia in Byzantine style, as well as constructing the Sultanate Mosque under Ottoman Islamic rules with decorative motifs and colors. Similarly, the Fossati brothers' construction of the imperial lodge, "in the Byzantine style, harmonious with the existing structures," can be interpreted from an ideological standpoint as a move by Abdülmecid to fulfill a similar imperial need as Mehmed II.⁴⁸ Particularly referencing the legend of the construction of the Hagia Sophia during the opening ceremony of the old cathedral on 20 July 1849 Friday, these references substantiate this imperative. Indeed, the

⁴⁶ For Hezarfen, George Kedrenos' history has been central to demonstrating, contrary to the narratives in legendary texts, that the city was founded by a devout individual and that idols, symbols of sinfulness, were destroyed, with the most important sacred site being constructed with the assistance of holy individuals. Hezarfen, who wrote focusing on Kedrenos' narrative, has chosen to abstain from using the text in places where it does not align with his own account, turning instead to other sources. For more, see: Cumhuriyet, "Hezarfen Hüseyin'in Evrensel Tarihinde Yeni Bir Bizans ve Konstantinople Algısı," in *XVII. Türk Tarih Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı*, (2018), 35.

⁴⁷ As a detailed analysis of restoration of Hagia Sophia in the context of Byzantine heritage and imperial identity during Abdülmecid's reign, see: Beatrice Daskas, "Aya Sofia Kibir Gıamy Scheriffy: The Fosatti Brothers, the Ottoman Capital and the "Superb Imperial Mosque of Hagia Sophia," in *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800-1955*, ed. by Brigitte Pitarakis, (İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021), 20–39.

⁴⁸ Beatrice Daskas, "Aya Sofia Kibir Gıamy Scheriffy: The Fosatti Brothers, the Ottoman Capital and the Superb Imperial Mosque of Hagia Sophia," 39.

use of Byzantine was reflected in the press of the time, and it was seen in terms of “progress” and “reform.”⁴⁹

During the same years, the establishment of a museum that possessed an extensive Byzantine collection also increased the utilization of Byzantium in Ottoman imperial discourse throughout the nineteenth century. In 1867, the Ottomans participated in the Paris World Fair with an exhibition consisting of five drawings showcasing the reconstructions of the Serpent Column, the interior of Hebdomon, the Column of Constantine, the monument of Theodosius II, and the northern section of the land walls. In 1873, preparations were made for the Byzantine Constantinople project for the Vienna World Fair.⁵⁰ The prominence of archaeology and the Byzantine past during this period, as Wendy Shaw puts it, is an important tool in constructing a narrative about the nation’s past and cultural heritage. It aims to “reclaim and reclaim a fragmented and dispersed cultural heritage” while simultaneously serving both nationalist and modernist agendas. In the long term, these developments in the museum and Byzantine archaeology aimed to create a sense of pride and continuity in the rapidly modernizing society of the late Ottoman period and early Turkish Republic.⁵¹

⁴⁹ “The part specially reserved for the Sultan is covered with a dome enriched with tasteful ornaments and surmounted by a sun whose rays sparkled on the tribune. This completely new construction harmonizes so well with the rest of the mosque that, far from being disparate, it seems to belong to the period which saw the Byzantine Basilica built; and in fact, there is no platform in other mosques that produces a richer and more original effect than this small monument whose idea and execution do honor to the taste and talent Fossati... In ending this list of the work carried out at the Sainte-Sophie mosque, an list that we could not help but make at such length, thinking of the magnitude and importance of the repairs that we are reporting, of the loss that they even take from the point of view of progress and reform, we must thank, in the name of the arts which are interested in everything that is accomplished in the world by them and for them, Mr. and Mr. Fossati who attached the memory of their talent and zeal for the restoration of Hagia Sophia. The very flattering choice with which the government has honored them, recommends them to the attention of the artistic world which, despite the little leisure that the commotions of Europe on fire leave to the arts, will take care of the important work that Mr. and Mr. Fossati have accomplished at the mosque in the space of two years, and will estimate their value.” “Feuilleton,” *Journal de Constantinople. Écho de l’Orient*, (20 Juil 1849), 1–2. I give a special thanks to Gerald Gußleitner for translating the journal from French to English for this study.

⁵⁰ Edhem Eldem, “Byzantium in İstanbul: The Byzantine Collections of the İstanbul Archeological Museums,” in *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800-1955*, ed. Brigitte Pitarakis (İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021), 261–263.

⁵¹ Wendy Shaw, “Conclusion,” in *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 221–222.

2.1 Mid-Century Developments

The cataloging of archaeological findings from the Byzantine period, which developed after the restoration of Hagia Sophia, an essential initiative of Sultan Abdülmecid, became a part of the Ottoman cultural representation policy of the Byzantine heritage. The preservation of this heritage became the focal point of the imperial image of the Ottoman state. These state-sponsored movements continued until the beginning of the twentieth century. Later, individual articles (such as newspapers and magazines) began to appear more frequently. One of the first examples of this is *Heyet-i Sabika-ı Konstantiniyye* [Appearance of Ancient Constantinople]⁵², which was serialized in *Tercüman-ı Ahval* [The Translator of Circumstances] newspaper in 1860.⁵³ The work, written in Greek by Patriarch Konstantinos I in 1820, attracted great attention and was translated into French in 1846 and Turkish in 1861. The book provided a comprehensive history of Constantinople and information about the city's Byzantine monuments. It also described the transformation of the city during the Ottoman period. Another important work is *Konstantinopolis* [Constantinople], by Skarlatos Byzantios⁵⁴, a multilingual intellectual, published in three volumes between 1851 and 1869. The work was based on a blend of Byzantine, Western European, and Ottoman sources, and it tried to explain the city's history from the foundation of Byzantium to the modern period,

⁵² The book originally published in 1820 in Venice with the name of *Konstantinias Palaia kai Neotera* [Old and New Constantinopolis]

⁵³ “792 issues were published by Âgâh Efendi in Istanbul between the years 1277-1282 (1860-1866). It is considered the beginning of the Turkish press as it was published for the first time by a Muslim Turkish citizen without any help from the state.” The direct quotation is translated by me from; Hamza Çakır, “Tercüman-ı Ahval,” *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tercuman-i-ahval> (accessed 21.11.2023).

⁵⁴ “Information on Skarlatos Byzantios’ life is fragmentary at best. Even though in the literature he is thought to have been born in Jassy, Moldova in 1797 and died in Athens in 1878, in his book he explicitly states that he was born in Istanbul. Skarlatos’ residence in these centers of Greek learning had a profound impact on his intellectual formation as did his firsthand experience of momentous historical processes and events from the heyday of the Modern Greek Enlightenment to the 1821 War of Independence. Pesmazoglou rightly notes that Skarlatos lived through a pivotal period of transformation for Europe, starting with the French Revolution in 1789, continuing with the 1848 revolutions, and including the great transformation of the Ottoman Empire throughout the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.” Directly quoted from; Firuzan Melike Sümertaş, “Constantinople: A Topographical, Archaeological & Historical Description... Vol. 1: Constantinople intra and circa Muros,” *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies* 1 (2019): 213.

together with Byzantios' observations. A section of the book is devoted solely to showing the similarities between Ottoman sultans and Roman-Byzantine emperors. One of the reasons why the book was popular is its emphasis on the importance of Turkish history in better understanding the Greek past. So much so that the Athens ambassador of the time, Halil Bey, wrote a letter to Sultan Abdülmecid and praised Skarlatos, and Byzantios was rewarded in 1857.⁵⁵

The Ottoman attitude also manifested itself in Phillip Anton Dethier's (1803–1881)⁵⁶ book *Le Bosphore et Constantinople* [The Bosphorus and Constantinople], in which he described the topography and monuments of Constantinople. So much so that Dethier is the name that gave life to the Byzantine representation of the Ottoman Empire in the international arena, he prepared the aforementioned work for the 1873 Vienna World Fair, and in this book, he examined the monuments symbolizing the Byzantine past of the city. Preparing a book representing the Ottoman Empire and its history together with the legacy of the Byzantine Empire was an effort to build a discourse about being the heir of Byzantium in Byzantine lands. The book was primarily about the continuity between the two empires and, as was frequently discussed in other publications of the period. It has set a practical example for intellectuals writing in Turkish by emphasizing the concern for image formation.⁵⁷

The perception of the Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals regarding the Byzantine history used as a tool of the Empire was generally negative. This negative perception started to form, especially from the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. This formation was dependent on

⁵⁵ Mertkan Karaca, "Writing the Byzantine Past, Reconfiguring the Ottoman Present: Byzantine Art in the Late Ottoman Art Historiography," 167.

⁵⁶ Anthon Dethier was the first director of Istanbul Archeology Museum. He was mostly ignored by his contemporaries as a scholar, but Edhem Eldem has a great article that shows his importance and presence among the intellectual community in Constantinople by his activities in the museum. See: Edhem Eldem, "Philipp Anton Dethier: der Anti-Held der osmanischen Archäologie. Philipp Anton Dethier: Osmanlı Arkeolojisinin Anti-Kahramanı," in *Daheim in Konstantinopel Deutsche Spuren Am Bosphorus AB 1850/ Memleketimiz Dersaadet 1850'den İtibaren Boğaziçi'ndeki Alman İzleri*, ed. Erald Pauw (Nürnberg: Pagma-Verl, 2014), 59–91.

⁵⁷ Mertkan Karaca, "Writing the Byzantine Past, Reconfiguring the Ottoman Present: Byzantine Art in the Late Ottoman Art Historiography," 169.

some factors. The first of these, as will be explained in more detail below, was moral reasons. In the context that I discuss in this thesis and as I will show in my analysis of the book *Rum and Byzantium*, Byzantine history is a metaphor used to criticize contemporary Ottoman society. In particular, framing the history of the Byzantine Empire around a moral decline became a tool to explain the problems they saw in the Ottoman Empire. Secondly, it included the need to redefine the Byzantine past within the framework of Turkish nationalism, which began to take shape and emerge from the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century.

2.2 Byzantine History Written by Turkish-Speaking Intelligentsia

By the mid-nineteenth century, in the case of Byzantine history specifically, the concept of universal history, developed during the Enlightenment in the context of the Ottoman Turkish intelligentsia, spread through several specialized educational institutions designed specifically on French models and by the introduction of modernized curricula in history courses. During this period, among the chapters or separate volumes of world or general histories from ancient to modern times, important sections on Roman and Byzantine history were published, and many European works on ancient history were translated into Ottoman-Turkish. However, in these general historical accounts, Byzantine history received little attention, usually in the form of brief summaries of political events, compared to the history of Ancient Rome.

Around 1900, Ottoman Turkish scholars started adding to the expanding body of work on Byzantine history. The importance of looking at these names will help me frame Celal Nuri's perception of Byzantium to analyze *Rum ve Bizans*. The perspectives attributed to Byzantium, especially among Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals, I consider them in three approaches: Seeing a historical continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Roman, i.e. Byzantine Empire; Making sense of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire while writing Byzantine history, especially in the post-Second Constitutional period; and the fact

that Byzantium corresponds to an “enemy,” for which the groundwork was prepared in this period, but we see concrete examples in the Republic period. We will also see this continuity approach in Celal Nuri’s book.

Perhaps one of the first to compare Byzantium and Ottomans was Ahmed Midhat Efendi (1844-1912), a well-known author, journalist, and novelist in the late era. In his three-volume work *Mufasssal Tarih-i Kurun-i Cedide* [Complete History of the Modern Ages] (1886-1887), Ahmed Midhat ascribed a Turkish origin to the Ottoman dynasty. While focusing on Ottoman history up to the sixteenth century, he dedicated a distinct chapter to the Byzantine Empire, emphasizing a comparative analysis of various socio-political aspects between the two empires.⁵⁸ Michael Ursinus, in his article, reveals Ahmed Midhat’s sources on Byzantine history in the section on *Rûm-i Şarkî* [Eastern Roman Empire], which deals with the period between 330–1453 and considers topics like political, institutional, and social histories. Ahmed Midhat is heavily based on Western sources.⁵⁹ His main source was Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a general history of Canetto, and the *Histoire du Bas-Empire* by Louis-Philippe Comte de Segur.⁶⁰

As Şule Kılıç Yıldız also points out, Ibrahim Hakki Pasha’s *Tarih-i Umumi* [General History] (1889) considered Byzantine history in a six-page examination under the titles of “Roma’nın İnkırazı” [Decline of the Roman Empire], “Fesad-ı Ahlak” [Corrupted morals], and “Konstantiniyye Rezaletleri” [Scandals of Constantinople]. The idea of the Byzantine Empire symbolizing moral decay is also widely used in high school textbooks.⁶¹ Such descriptions can be found in Ahmed Midhat’s other book, *Üss-i İnkılâp* [The Basis of

⁵⁸ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium Between ‘East’ and ‘West’: Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage” 106.

⁵⁹ Micheal Ursinus, “Byzantine History in the Ottoman Turkish History,” in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 10 (1986), 206.

⁶⁰ Micheal Ursinus, “Byzantine History in the Late Ottoman Historiography,” 216.

⁶¹ For a more comprehensive analysis on Ahmed Midhat, see: Michael, Ursinus. “Byzantine History in Late Ottoman Turkish Historiography,” 211–22. doi:10.1179/030701386790203506.

Transformation]. As an official history of the Tanzimat Era commissioned by Abdülhamid II, the book contains an Ottomanist idea with non-Islamic and non-Turkic elements. However, for the Byzantine period, Ahmed Mithad describes it as “corrupt” and portrays Ottomans as a savior of the Orthodox Church from the moral decay of Byzantines.⁶² Compared to the rest of the book, only the part on Byzantine history has references to the Turkic identity of the Ottoman Empire. For when Ahmed Midhat mentions “existing immorality” in Byzantine lands, only “Turks’ virtues” could deal with this immorality.”⁶³ Such definitions were to justify the Ottoman political presence and conquests. The Byzantines’ view of the Ottomans as salvation was to highlight the achievements of the dynasty and create a basis for legitimacy.

With a similar approach, Mizancı Mehmed Murad (1854–1917), an important Young Turk figure, examined the Ottoman decline in his book *Tarih-i Ebul Faruk*. Thus, from the Ottoman state’s founding, the “twinness of Byzantine and Iranian influence” has been a significant feature. Mehmed Murad used a metaphor from architecture to illustrate this occurrence. According to him, the Ottoman Empire was built on “Byzantine ruins,” and the “political building” had more foreign elements than Ottoman ones. Thereupon, the Iranian style was organized.⁶⁴ To describe Istanbul’s situation during his time, he defined it as “Ottoman Byzantium.”⁶⁵ Mizancı Murad further builds on this view and says that the Eastern Roman Empire, which was decaying due to the geopolitical location of the Ottoman Empire, was infected with the widespread and harmful “Greek disease,” which destroyed the empire.

⁶² Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium Between ‘East’ and ‘West’: Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage,” 109.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁶⁵ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Entellektüellerin Gözüyle Bizans İstanbul’u,” in *Doğu-Batı Dergisi* 17, no. 68 (2014), 1.

The cause of the illness of the “Sick Man in the Bosphorus” was now clear, and it “had nothing to do with Turkishness.”⁶⁶

Another name is Ahmed Refik [Altınay] (1881–1937), one of the late Ottoman historians and pioneers of popular historiography who embraced romantic and positivist historical writing; he resembled his European counterparts. He stood out as one of the first famous historians, seamlessly blending history with literature and gaining a wide readership with historical novels.

Ahmet Refik showed a keen interest in Byzantine history, focusing on the political and cultural connections between the Ottomans and Byzantines. Ahmed Refik, in his book called *Bizans İmparatoriçeleri* [Byzantine Empresses], points out the importance of Byzantine history for the Ottoman Empire, and perhaps he reveals his political stance in the preface of his book published in 1915. In the preface, for Ahmed Refik, the negative reception of Byzantium is most likely due to the fact that its history has not been studied sufficiently. Therefore, the way to understand the Ottoman Empire is to understand Byzantine history. He shows characteristics of the Romance narrative structure that Hayden White suggests. White mentions that romance narrative is an idealized, heroic portrayal of subjects who strive to fulfill a purpose. Romance narrative style introduces an aspiration and ultimate accomplishment to the historical account.

So, Ahmet Refik’s perspective on reading Byzantine and Ottoman histories can be considered as a part of the Romance narrative. He suggests that the key to historical enlightenment is to understand the past complexly and comprehensively, which eventually will lead to perceiving the empire’s struggles and eventual decline. He says that we should read Byzantine and Ottoman history together to understand better the reasons for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which found itself in the First World War immediately after the

⁶⁶ Diana Mishkova, “Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish History,” 175.

Balkan Wars. While doing this, he used a very romantic language that elevates the historical inquiry as a quest for understanding the truth. Ahmed Refik ended his words with a suggestion:

*Let us understand with certainty that unless ignorance is extinguished in this country, unless all Ottomans think like a European, unless scientific power becomes a protective power, our political existence will melt away in the face of the science, art, and technology of the twentieth century. Loyalty to the homeland can be possible by cultivating the homeland, appreciating the value of the homeland, and protecting its past. This sublime feeling will be possible for us only by reading and learning about Byzantine, Ottoman, and Islamic history. However, let's think about the importance that all humanity attaches to Byzantium and the Prophet's good news of conquest about Byzantium.*⁶⁷

There is an interesting point here: Ahmed Refik may be criticizing his contemporaries, too. While his contemporaries mostly rejected accepting Byzantine, Persian, and Arab influences and identities in their works, Ahmed Refik's call to embrace them and his quotation of the Prophet Muhammad's words on Constantinople are noteworthy. Although his works on Byzantine history heavily relied on abridged translations of European (especially French)⁶⁸ works rather than original writing, his significant contribution lay in his effort to incorporate the Byzantine heritage into the concept of "Ottoman identity."⁶⁹ As Mishkova shows,⁷⁰ Ahmet Refik takes this idea one step further and says that if the Ottomans do not claim the Byzantine heritage, the goals of the Greeks and Slavs will be not only the Balkans but also the capture of Istanbul. This was seen as a means of both stopping the

⁶⁷ Ahmed Refik, *Bizans İmparatoriçeleri, Bizans Tarihine Medhal, İmparatoriçelerin Tarz-ı Hayatı, Teodora, Atenais, İren, Dindar Teodora, Teofano, Zovi, Anna Comnenus*, (İstanbul: Muhtar Halid Kitabhanesi, 1331 [1915], 15.

⁶⁸ Ahmed Refik's re-evaluation of Byzantium was greatly shaped by the influence of Charles Diehl, who extensively reviewed Byzantine studies in France in his work *Études Byzantines* (1905). It's worth noting that while Ahmed Refik didn't explicitly mention the source books, he used in his works *Büyük Tarih-i Umumi* [The Great World History] or *Bizans İmparatoriçeleri* [Byzantine Empresses], in his later years, he consistently wrote about "European historians and their works." He specifically highlighted the contributions of Charles Diehl and the innovations he brought to the study of Byzantium. cited from Yıldız, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage," 115.

⁶⁹Şule Kılıç Yıldız, "Byzantium Between 'East' and 'West': Perceptions and the Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage," 112.

⁷⁰ Diana Mishkova, "Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish History," 178.

irredentist policies of the empire's Balkan neighbors and leaving an imperial legacy for the Ottomans.

Another name wrote on Byzantine history was Mehmed Ziya (1871–1930), who received education at the Galatasaray Sultan-i Mektebi, excelling in French, and graduated from the School of Fine Arts in 1890. After teaching in Anatolia, he returned to Istanbul, where his fascination with the city's history ignited. During this period, Ziya explored antiquities, adopting European research methods with comprehensive citations and bibliographies. Though not a professional archaeologist, he was well-versed in archaeology, having graduated from the School of Fine Arts, where antiquities were part of the curriculum.

Ziya's ground-breaking work on Byzantine Constantinople's topography employed a unique narrative style and methodology.⁷¹ He referenced recent archaeological findings and personally inspected structures, city walls, churches-turned-mosques, and aqueduct ruins. Despite risking his life in pursuits like exploring the basilica cistern, he emphasized the significance of fieldwork in his architectural history approach. Mehmed Ziya's narrative bridged the Byzantine and Ottoman heritage of Istanbul, rejecting a historical divide. He visually connected the two eras, illustrating this link in photo captions of Ottoman mosques, acknowledging their past as churches. His depictions encompassed popular monumental buildings and lesser-known medieval Byzantine structures, presenting a holistic view of the city's architectural evolution.⁷²

Apparently, there are two distinct perspectives for approaching Byzantine history. Except for Mehmed Ziya, the examples given by Ahmed Midhat, Mizancı Murad, and Ahmed Refik write on art history but social, political, and economic histories. They argued that the “immorality of Byzantium” caused the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The

⁷¹ Mehmed Ziya, *İstanbul ve Boğaziçi: Bizans ve Osmanlı Medeniyetlerinin Âsar-ı Bakıyesi II Volumes*, (İstanbul: Dârü't-tıbâ'ati'l-amire, 1336 [1928]).

⁷² Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Ottoman Scholars and the Byzantine Architectural Legacy of Istanbul,” 52–53.

secondary literature puts that in the art and architectural history on Byzantium in the late Ottoman era, and there is a more positive approach to that. For Mehmed Ziya, Mertkan Karaca explains this as art and architectural history grew without articulating contemporary political issues. I do not agree with this argument, but I suggest that those fields were still mostly under the influence of Ottomanism. In Ahmet Refik's case, he argued that, unlike his contemporaries who explained the Ottoman misfortunes in terms of "Byzantine influences," the "brightest years of Ottoman history were associated with Byzantium." He said that the disasters that occurred in the Ottoman Empire - the loss of territory and the dissolution of the empire - were caused by a lack of patriotism. Therefore, he stated that we should embrace the history of the geography where the Ottoman Empire was located, and that this includes the Byzantine Empire.⁷³

It was not a coincidence that Byzantine heritage was appropriated or that Byzantium was associated with immorality in history books. Debates on morality were a rising issue starting from the 1910s. Çiğdem Oğuz states that when this transformation took place, the moral crisis was an important topic of discussion for the Ottoman intelligentsia.⁷⁴ Discussions on morality are important for them, especially in making sense of the social, economic, cultural, and political crisis that the Ottoman society went through during this period.⁷⁵

3. On Morality

Morality is a related concept to values that has a crucial role in shaping the moral judgments of societies. As clearly pointed out in Ramazan Alabaş's study, morality regulates

⁷³ Diana Mishkova, "Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish History," 177–178.

⁷⁴ Çiğdem Oğuz, "Introduction," in *Moral Crisis in the Ottoman Empire: Society, Politics and Gender during WWI*, (New York: I.B Tauris, 2021), 4. It should be pointed that, As Çiğdem Oğuz also points, I don't consider that writing on morality is unique to only this period. There is a vast literature on morality, for earlier periods. So morality discourses had a significant place in political and social life long before the nineteenth century. However, discussing morals in WWI context is unique itself. About this discussion please see pages: Çiğdem Oğuz, "Introduction."

⁷⁵ Çiğdem Oğuz, "Introduction," 5–6.

people's interactions as a system of rules.⁷⁶ This was the case during the Second Constitutional Period from 1908 to 1918. Alabaş shows that the aim was to revoke the educational mentality from the Tanzimat period, and special attention was given to citizenship education as the goal was to raise 'good citizens.' He also points out that the prominent role of morals, especially in school textbooks, included Turkish nationalism alongside Ottomanism, starting from the First World War, pointing to this transition to Turkish nationalism.⁷⁷ The source of the moral crisis was thought to be the deterioration of moral values. The general aim of the discussions on morality during the Second Constitutional period was to reshape values according to the conditions of the period and to bring them to society. In societies where there was a lack of morality, needs such as justice, conscience, rights, and freedoms could not be met.⁷⁸

Writings on the moral crisis frequently referred to the dissolution of social and moral values and the pursuit of individual interests in the name of the common good in the First World War context. Among the Turkish-Muslim intellectuals writing at that time, including the intellectuals mentioned above, there was no denying the existence of a moral crisis, but the solutions they proposed differed. Still, there were issues on which consensus was reached. One of these is the crisis of re-imagining the "homeland." This imagination is considered to be a moral crisis. Ziya Gökalp's work was published in "Türk Yurdu" and "İslam" journals in 1913–1914 as separate essays and later in 1918 under the title "Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak" (Turkification, Islamization, Modernization), as a book is considered a pioneering work in the development of Turkish nationalism through Anatolia while re-

⁷⁶ Ramazan Alabaş, "Moral Values in School Textbooks during the Second Constitution and Early Republican Periods: The Case of the Lectures on Morality," *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences* 11, no.3 (2019), 73.

⁷⁷ Ramazan Alabaş, "Moral Values in School Textbooks during the Second Constitution and Early Republican Periods: The Case of the Lectures on Morality," 74–75.

⁷⁸ Dr. Ali Gurbetoğlu, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Çocuk Dergilerinde Ahlak Eğitimi ve Ahlaki Değerler (1908–1918)," *Yüzcüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* (2007), 83.

imagining the homeland.⁷⁹ Morality was a topic discussed in literature, newspapers, journals, and schools. Intellectuals tried to convey their moral ideas through these tools. It is an important tool in conveying these in history, during this period when the transition from the dissolution of the empire to the republic was experienced.

Here, recalling Hayden White, he states that historical narration serves as a tool to understand past events and relationships and directs the reader's perception. The authors who discussed Byzantine history above pass their own Byzantine imagination through this filter and convey the re-imagining of the homeland under moral crisis by using it as a historical tool.

This crisis also demanded social change from reformists who wanted to create a “national family.”⁸⁰ I think Byzantium is a useful tool here for the demand to create the “national family.” With reference to Eric Hobsbawm's concept of “invention of tradition,”⁸¹ in the state of crisis after the Balkan Wars, the government has to produce new traditions to keep the “nation” together. I believe that the Conquest of Istanbul, celebrated for the first time on 30 May 1330 [13 June 1914], is an example of this. As Ali Şükrü Çoruk shows in his study⁸², in the newspapers published on 30 May, in the article titled “Fetih ve İstanbul” [Conquest and İstanbul] written by Efdaleddin Bey (1868-1957), a member of the History Committee, in the *Tanin*⁸³ (1908–1947) newspaper, he sees Sultan Mehmed II as a symbol of Turkishness. In his article, he puts the Sultan at the center of Ottoman history. The point he particularly emphasizes is that Mehmed II left the throne to his father, Murad II, before his

⁷⁹ Mustafa Oral, “Çağdaşları Tarafından Ziya Gökalp'in Eleştirisi,” *Çağdaş Türkiye Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5, no. 12 (2006), 23.

⁸⁰ Çiğdem Oğuz, “Introduction,” 8.

⁸¹ I am adopting the concept as it has been used like in the article; Ali Şükrü Çoruk, “Bir Gelenek İcadı Olarak II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul'un Fethi Törenleri,” *FSM Scholarly Studies: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 7 (2016), 80; For the concept please see: Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. of Canto Classics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

⁸² Ali Şükrü Çoruk, “Bir Gelenek İcadı Olarak II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul'un Fethi Törenleri,” 89.

⁸³ It should be noted that *Tanin* was purchased by CUP in 1914.

reign and waited patiently for his own time.⁸⁴ Efdaleddin Bey emphasizes that society should take Mehmed II's behavior as an example. Because the destruction brought by the Balkan Wars can only be overcome this way. While Efdaleddin Bey talks about Mehmed II, he also legitimizes the conquest of the city. Here, interestingly, he makes a reference to Social Darwinism and says that the capture of Istanbul by the Ottomans and the collapse of Byzantium were legitimate. Before the conquest, the city was experiencing “exorbitant and moral turpitude.” In this way, the city had already prepared its own end, and it is not possible for the society of such a city to show “the ability to survive and rise.” At this point, Efdaleddin Bey most likely aimed to give a message to the people of Istanbul during his time by instrumentalizing Byzantium through his moral views.⁸⁵

In other words, Byzantium, which was an “example of immorality” for Ottoman intellectuals, could be an important tool in historiography to convey their moral values. Celal Nuri's *Rum ve Bizans* shows us how he constructed this image by his moral values - in the context of the First World War - also revealing how the Byzantine period in which he shaped his perception of history. In this context, in the second part of the thesis, by examining Celal Nuri's book *Greek and Byzantine* through his understanding of morality, I reveal how he interpreted the period of the collapse of the empire from his moral framework and what he suggested, and how he used Byzantium at this point.

⁸⁴ Ali Şükrü Çoruk, “Bir Gelenek İcadı Olarak II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul'un Fethi Törenleri,” 89.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 89–90

Chapter 2: Celal Nuri [İleri] and the Analysis of the *Rum ve Bizans*

In the preceding chapter, I examined the intellectual and political landscape within which *Rum ve Bizans* emerged by providing the context for understanding its reception. In this chapter, I turn directly to the book to unravel its themes and narrative techniques and point out its messages. I apply Hayden White's suggestions of history emplotted as Tragedy in my analysis. I argue that *Rum ve Bizans* is a verbal image shaped by Celal Nuri's aims and imagination. So, this chapter aims to comprehensively analyze *Rum ve Bizans* and find how the book reflects and interacts with the broader historical milieu. By analyzing the book, I aim to shed light on the author's intentions and the book's significance within its contemporary context and beyond.

1. On Celal Nuri [İleri]

Celal Nuri [İleri] (1881–1938) is a transitional intellectual who came to the fore from the Second Constitutional Monarchy period to the early Republic years, in the most critical years when the transformation from the empire to the nation-state took place. Celal Nuri, who published over thirty books and nearly two thousand articles, put forward ideas, theses, and suggestions during the construction of Turkish/Muslim identity. Celal Nuri is thought of as a confused intellectual because the ideas he expressed in his writings vary. He was probably one of the most outspoken CUP advocates. Along with many Unionists, Celal Nuri was influenced by European intellectuals significantly. The four main intellectuals in which Celal Nuri was influenced were Gustav Le Bon, Hyppolyte Taine, Max Nordau, and Ludwig Büchner.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ York Norman, "Celal Nuri's Life and Work," in *Celal Nuri: Young Turk Modernizer and Muslim Nationalist*, (New York: I.B Taurius, 2021), 8.

He was born into the Helvacızade family of Crete in Gallipoli. His father, Mustafa Nuri, and his uncle Sırrı Giridi Pasha (1844–1895), who was a prominent Hamidian statesman, taught Sunni Islam to Celal Nuri. He was mostly tutored at home and was sent to *Galata Saray Mekteb-i Sultânî* in 1894. He later continued to *mekteb-i hukuk* (law school).⁸⁷ He did not work as a lawyer for a long time. Perhaps the Young Turk Era changed his life forever in 1908.⁸⁸

He was inspired to embark on a new career as a journalist and active member of CUP. He founded his newspaper *Âti* 1918, later became *İleri* as he adopted it as his last name during the republican period; *he* wrote essays in different newspapers and journals. Celal Nuri started his journalism career writing in *Le Courrier D'orient* in 1909 under Ebüziyya Tevfik. Celal Nuri later wrote in *Le Jeune Turc* in the same year; however, he ended his relationship with this newspaper due to his nationalistic inclinations. A detailed analysis of his early journalist career has been done by York Norman. According to Norman, Celal Nuri's initial reason for writing in *Le Jeune Turc* was Ebüziyya Tevfik's criticisms of CUP's relations with Zionists. CUP suspended *Le Jeune Turc* newspaper because Celal Nuri published an article about Italy's desire to invade Libya. In 1912, shortly after the Italians declared war, Celal Nuri left the newspaper. In addition, during this period, CUP began to suspect the Zionists of establishing a "separatist" state in Palestine, and the newspaper did not continue.⁸⁹

Celal Nuri was evaluated under the Westernist movement of thought. However, his understanding of Westernism differs from that of the intellectuals of the period; unlike Abdullah Cevdet, whose ideas on total Westernization, Celal Nuri's ideas towards the West were shaped by major events of his time (Ottoman-Italian War of 1911 Balkan Wars of

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁸ For the list of Celal Nuri's publications please see; Necmi Uyanık, "Siyasi düşünce tarihimizde batıcı bir aydın olarak Celal Nuri (İleri)," (Selçuk Üniversitesi, 2003).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

1912–13 and First World War 1914–17). This means that the Ottoman decline and the challenges of modern warfare led him to reassess his stance on the West. He adopted more likely selectively incorporating a portion of Western technology into Ottoman society while protecting the values.⁹⁰

Celal Nuri had discussions with Abdullah Cevdet about Westernism when he was writing for Abdullah Cevdet's newspaper *İctihad* [1904–1932] after he left *Le Jeune Turc*. Abdullah Cevdet criticized Celal Nuri's "hostile" ideas against the West. According to Abdullah Cevdet, towards Europe, "sincerity" should be defended. Abdullah Cevdet means that the Westernization process will be damaged if there is hostility towards Europe. The debate between Celal Nuri and Abdullah Cevdet intensified⁹¹, and eventually, Celal Nuri resigned from the *İctihad* in 1914.⁹²

York Norman suggests that after leaving Abdullah Cevdet's newspaper, Celal Nuri partially changed his mind about *İttihad-ı İslam*. After the First World War, Celal Nuri abandoned the claim of "using Islam as a political and social tool to achieve progress."⁹³ However, Ş. Tufan Buzpınar puts a different approach in his article⁹⁴ that after Celal Nuri left Abdullah Cevdet's newspaper, he should be seen as a Pan-Islamist, not a Westernist. From 1911 until the proclamation of the Republic, wartime often referred to Pan-Islamist rhetoric,

⁹⁰ Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, "Celal Nuri's Concept of Westernization and Religion," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007), 248–9.

⁹¹ Celal Nuri wrote his treatise titled *Türklere, Müslümanlara Hakaret, Düşmanlara Riayet ve Muhabbet* [Insult to Turks and Muslims, Respect and Love for Enemies], addressing Abdullah Cevdet's article titled "Şime-i Muhabbet" in which he criticized him. The treatise begins with "Doctor Abdullah Cevdet Bey died" and continues with "Abdullah Cevdet Bey passed away on 16 Kanunısanı 1329 and was buried in the article 'Şime-i Muhabbet' in the *İctihad* copy number 89." What Celal Nuri means here, he explains, is Abdullah Cevdet's rejection of Turkism and Islam. After stating that he saw in Cevdet "the spirit of Sent Ignas de Loyala, the founder of the Jesuit society," he made heavy criticisms by saying "I would rather see the signature of a Greek Eteria leader under this article, unfortunately I find the name of a former freedom fighter." Ş. Tufan Bozpınar, "'Öteki' Üzerinden Hesaplaşma: Celal Nuri ve Abdullah Cevdet'in Avrupa Tartışmaları Hakkında Bir Değerlendirme," *Divan İlmi Araştırmalar* 19, no. 2 (2005), 165.

⁹² Ş. Tufan Bozpınar, "'Öteki' Üzerinden Hesaplaşma: Celal Nuri ve Abdullah Cevdet'in Avrupa Tartışmaları Hakkında Bir Değerlendirme," *Divan İlmi Araştırmalar* 19, no. 2 (2005), 155–56; 165.

⁹³ York Norman, "Celal Nuri's Life and Work," 16.

⁹⁴ Please see the article: Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, "Celal Nuri's Concept of Westernization and Religion," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007), 247–258.

influenced by the enthusiasm of the period. Cemil Aydın, in his study, also shows Celal Nuri's pan-Islamist approach in a global context. In the post-Balkan Wars period, Celal Nuri published a book called *İttihad-ı İslam* in 1913.⁹⁵ As Aydın summarizes, in the book, Celal Nuri criticized the Eurocentric order from a moral perspective. He expressed his concerns about the increasing distrust in the international arena and the increasing influence of Russia, British, and France. He also wrote about the conflicts between Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism. Finally, he emphasized the awakening of the East with the strengthening of Japan and the establishment of the republican regime in China. Thus, he drew a scenario of conflict between the "Awakening East" and the "Imperialist West." As a result, he tried to draw an understanding of the Ottoman Empire that suggested the unification of all Muslim peoples. However, there is a consensus that towards the end of the war and with the proclamation of the Republic, Celal Nuri's writings and ideas were shaped more around the construction of Turkish/Muslim identity.

Celal Nuri's perspective on Byzantium is parallel to the ideas of his period. He largely reads Byzantine history through history books written in Europe. For Celal Nuri, Byzantium is a tool that can be used to explain the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. As explained in the previous chapter, within the framework of Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals, the Byzantine Empire was seen as an empire as it had historical continuity with the Ottomans. This is based on being the successor of the Roman Empire. In addition, there are those who reject the Byzantine heritage of the empire by metaphorically explaining the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as resembling Byzantium or becoming Byzantine. Third, the overlap of the construction of Byzantium as an enemy with the current political situation, especially after

⁹⁵ Cemil Aydın, "The Battle of Geopolitical Illusions (1908-1924), in *The Idea of Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017) 110–111.

1912. *Rum ve Bizans* projects a perspective of the Byzantine history perception of the late Ottoman period, including the aforementioned approaches.

2. The Analysis of *Rum ve Bizans*

The book *Rum ve Bizans* was published by *Matba'a-ı Orhâniye* in the *Efkâr-ı Cedid* Library in 1917. The exact publishing date of the book is May 1917, as it was written at the end of another book by Celal Nuri *Harbden Sonra Türkleri Yükseltelim* [Elevate the Turks after the War], published in the same year.⁹⁶ The book is divided into five sections: “Rum Milleti” (14 pages), an untitled second section (13 pages), a third section (9 pages), a fourth section (14 pages), and the final section titled “Tasvir-i Şiken Devrinde Doğu Sultanatının Hâli,” (Situation of the East Sultanate in the Iconoclasm Period) which is the most extended section (24 pages). There is a mention of *7'nci bin* (7th edition), which indicates that the book has probably been published seven thousand copies. Therefore, there is a possibility that the book was also popular when it was published.⁹⁷

The preface of the book reveals the process of the preparation of the book. Celal Nuri says that in “a convenient time,” he did research about the situation of Constantinople before the conquest and the reasons for the conquest of the city. By quoting, translating, comparing, and bringing together, he ended up having 400-500 pages of text. Therefore, he presents this book as an introduction to Byzantine history to the audience. He points out that what he

⁹⁶ At the end of the book, there is information about the upcoming publications, for *Rum ve Bizans* it says: “Efkâr-ı Cedid Kütüphanesi'nin üçüncü cüzünü teşekkül eden bu risale Mayıs bidayetinde neşr idilecektir.” In English: “This treatise, which is the third part of the Efkâr-ı Cedid Library, will be published at the beginning of May.” Celal Nuri, *Harbden Sonra Türkleri Yükseltelim*, (Efkâr-ı Cedid Kütüphanesi, 1917), end page.

⁹⁷ I speculate this information by Erol Köroğlu's famous work *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1914-1918)*. Köroğlu puts examples on, during First World War many books as a propaganda tool funded by state has been published over ten thousand. On the other hand many journals and newspapers were published more than five thousand as well. Therefore, I think it is not impossible to think that *Rum ve Bizans* has been published over seven thousand. Please see: Erol Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1914-1918): Propaganda'dan Milli Kimlik İnşasına*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

presented here is “edifying,” so there are lessons from the book that should be taken, and *it’s awakening*.⁹⁸

Rum ve Bizans, while examining the history and effects of the Byzantine Empire, particularly addresses the Ottoman Empire’s relations with this past. While discussing the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, Celal Nuri examines the impact of the cultural, political, and economic legacy of Byzantium on the Ottoman Empire as well. If we look at this book with Celal Nuri’s historiographical understanding, *Rum ve Bizans* is a “Milli Tarih” (national history). He expressed his ideas about historiography in his essay titled *Milli Tarih, Tenkidi Tarih*⁹⁹ [National History, Critical History]. From his point of view, he adopts this from Europe. For him, when history books written in Europe are examined, it is generally seen that they are divided into two main categories:

1. National History
2. Critical History

For him, both can be true and necessary. However, he also explains that one of these types may be exaggerated or may not correspond to reality. He writes that being for one and against the other can mean partisanship. Suppose critical historical studies are not carried out in a society. In that case, it becomes difficult to train political leaders and understand the values of the nation, and it also becomes difficult to diagnose national problems. Therefore, not understanding the past can be a form of “blessing denial” for the current situation. For this reason, Celâl Nuri prefers to look at events and developments from a broad perspective and argues that every idea should be approached fairly.¹⁰⁰ The most important point that

⁹⁸ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, Efkâr-ı Cedid Kütüphanesi, 1917, 2.

⁹⁹ Ahmet Vurgun, “Milli Tarih, Tenkidi Tarih – Celal Nuri,” *Turkish History Education Journal* 3, no.2 (2014), 217–227, <https://doi.org/10.17497/tuhed.185610>. The study is the transliteration of Celal Nuri’s essay.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmet Vurgun, “Milli Tarih, Tenkidi Tarih – Celal Nuri,” 221.

helps to understand the *Rum ve Bizans* is Celal Nuri, who describes national history as a moral lesson to be learned. “It is a retreat of virtues, a strengthener, an elixir of the soul.”¹⁰¹

Not surprisingly, in *Rum ve Bizans*, morals are the most featured concepts in the book. Because of how he tells the Byzantine history, the immorality of the Byzantine Empire is the most common theme in the book. In addition, Celal Nuri says that treatises (risâleler) on morality are now unnecessary. According to him, all lessons, even geography, history, grammar, and entertainment, are moral lessons.¹⁰² As Celal Nuri wrote in the book, the immorality in the Byzantine Empire led the empire to collapse. Therefore, the conquest of Constantinople was possible. As framed in the previous chapter, morality is essential to describe the decline among the intellectuals, especially during the First World War. So, *Rum ve Bizans* is a book on the decline of the Byzantine Empire that mirrors the Ottoman decline of his time.

As I have said before, *Rum ve Bizans* should be evaluated in the Tragedy category of the four categories suggested by Hayden White. The reason for this is not that Celal Nuri sees Byzantine history itself as a tragedy, but he implies that the events he chose have tragic elements, motifs, and themes that help him to build his narrative. For example, his research of the reasons for the conquest of Istanbul and his choice of the immoral image of Byzantium can be explained in this way. As I will discuss in more detail below, Celal Nuri’s attribution of a tragedy to his book could also be due to the effects of the war conditions he was in and the fact that Istanbul at the time had no positive imaginations.

In the aftermath of the 1912 Balkan Wars, Celal Nuri interpreted the deteriorating situation as “tedenniyat” (decline) as well. He particularly explains the decline in his work

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁰² Mine Konuk, “Celal Nuri’nin Ahlak Anlayışı,” (MA thesis, Elâzığ: Fırat Üniversitesi 2024), 68.

Tarih-i Teddeniyat-ı Osmaniye [History of Decline of the Ottoman Empire].¹⁰³ He identifies the onset of this decline as moral decay, which he traced back to the period after the Ottoman Empire's so-called "peak."¹⁰⁴ He stated that it began with the corruption of the army, specifically the Janissary institution. Particularly after the end of the Ottoman Empire's peak, Celal Nuri described signs of "fatigue," "lethargy," "tension," and "aging" in the Ottoman state. He argues that the various "intrigues" in state administration, frequent changes of sultans, and the killing of viziers are all part of the process and consequence of this moral decay. Furthermore, he extensively elaborates on his views on morals in his book *İlel-i Ahlâkiyemiz*¹⁰⁵ [Our Moral Principles], published in 1916, and the issues he discussed there also parallel his approach to Byzantine history, the topics he chooses, and the moral issues he emphasizes.

According to Celal Nuri, to find the origin of "anything," one may need to look in different "places."¹⁰⁶ For instance, while we may seek the cause of something in time and space, we may find it in a political event that has nothing to do with it. However, when it comes to morals, the matter should be investigated in the past. This approach creates a reasonable basis for *Rum ve Bizans* to analyze it from Celal Nuri's perspective of morals. Therefore, it is meaningful to say Celal Nuri wanted his readers to learn lessons by reading his book, which we can consider *Rum ve Bizans* as a national history book that teaches specific moral lessons. So, *Rum ve Bizans* is a blend of Celal Nuri's history and moral understanding by using Byzantine history, which also affects his perception of Byzantine history.

¹⁰³ Celal Nuri, *Tarih-i Tedenniyat-ı Osmaniye*. (İstanbul: Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, 1915). However, a transliterated version of the book has been used in this thesis. See: Celal Nuri İleri, *Uygarlık Çatışmasında Türkiye*, ed. and trans. Mahir Aydın, (İstanbul: Togan Yayıncılık, 2008)

¹⁰⁴ Celal Nuri İleri, *Uygarlık Çatışmasında Türkiye*, ed. and trans. Mahir Aydın, (İstanbul: Togan Yayıncılık, 2008), 25–28.

¹⁰⁵ Celal Nuri, *İlel-i Ahlâkiyemiz*. (İstanbul: Yeni Osmanlı Matbaası, 1916).

¹⁰⁶ Mine Konuk, "Celal Nuri'nin Ahlak Anlayışı," 68.

Byzantium holds a symbolic significance here, as we must think that Celal Nuri essentially presents it as a metaphorical reflection of the problems of his own time. By connecting Byzantine history to Ottoman history, he narrates a continuity, explaining how everything about the state and society should not be and what should be done for the future. In the book, his moral concerns are examined by looking at society, religion, military, economy, state organization, ethnicity, women, and marriage. When we look at his moral perspective on those topics in his other essays or books, there is a parallelism between *Rum ve Bizans* and his other works, which will be explained below. We must also keep in mind that he does not talk about those topics in separate titles but throughout the text. When he talks about certain events in Byzantine history, he intertwines all these as a single narrative to reach a conclusion or to explain the causes of the decline or immorality of the Byzantine Empire.

How he describes the immorality of the Byzantine Empire is usually shaped around Constantinople. According to another work of his, just as Paris influences global morals, Istanbul influences the morals of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁷ Since Celal Nuri sees the Ottoman Empire as a continuation of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, primarily due to its geographical location,¹⁰⁸ it is obvious that he reads Byzantine society through Constantinople. Moreover, the book isn't only about the history of Byzantium. For Celal Nuri, I argue that Byzantine is a concept under his free interpretation. He especially does this when mentioning the "Greekness" of the empire. In some parts, the Byzantine Empire appears as a Greek Empire but can also be called a Latin Empire. This changes throughout the book, as does what Celal Nuri wants to say during that time.

¹⁰⁷ Celal Nuri İleri, *Uygarlık Çatışmasında Türkiye*, 173.

¹⁰⁸ For Celal Nuri, Ottoman Empire as a race is Turkish history, as a time is Islamic history and as a geography it is Roman history. See: Celal Nuri [İleri], *Osmanlı Mülkünün Tarihi Coğrafyası*, ed. and trans. İlker Yiğit, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2021), 36.

In Byzantine history, Celal Nuri was heavily influenced by Western sources. Referring especially to the works of Gibbon and Montesquieu, Celal Nuri reflects their perspective to some extent.¹⁰⁹ Since the eighteenth century, meanings such as “corrupt,” “strange,” or “complicated” have been attributed to Byzantium. Additionally, the perception of the Byzantine Empire as the “collapse of the Roman Empire” became a dominant theme in historical and political writings in this century. Both historical and literary writings were produced during the Enlightenment period, and they played an important role in establishing Byzantine history as an empire that was despotic and in decline because it had “Eastern characteristics.”¹¹⁰ The Byzantine perception and historical themes of the eighteenth century are seen very clearly, especially in the works of Edward Gibbon (1776-1789). For Gibbon, Byzantium symbolized “oriental despotism.” Among political thinkers of the Enlightenment period, similar views were expressed in the works of other writers such as Montesquieu and Voltaire. For example, Montesquieu (1689-1755), who first contributed to giving a pejorative meaning to the word Byzantium, clearly reflected this idea. In eighteenth-century political literature, the “autocratic” and “despotic” features of Byzantium were emphasized. Byzantium considered a “repository of antiquities” reflecting the ancient Greek and Roman periods, was now seen as an ambiguous “other.”¹¹¹

The perspective Celal Nuri offers about Byzantium in the book parallels the views of Gibbon and Montesquieu. However, Celal Nuri interpreted Byzantine history within a different context with a certain aim. Therefore, I attribute Celal Nuri’s frequent negative portrayal of Byzantium and his discussion of immorality under the influence of Gibbon and

¹⁰⁹ In the book he benefits from many different Western intellectuals; Edward Gibbon, Montesquieu, Charles Diehl, Dirk Christiaan Hesseling, Gustave Schlumberger, George Finlay, Gustav Le Bon, Jakob Phillip Fallmerayer and Alfred Rambaud are the names mentioned.

¹¹⁰ Şule Kılıç Yıldız, “Byzantium Between ‘East,’ and ‘West,’” 29.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 30–31.

Montesquieu. For him, Byzantium, perceived as “despotic” and “oriental,”¹¹² influenced the Ottomans due to its geographical location, eventually leading to its downfall and salvation only possible through the “purification” of these elements.

In the previous chapter, I said that historians use Byzantium to convey a moral message. Here, I tried to take a look at the origins of the immoral image of Byzantium by looking at the names that influenced Celal Nuri. There are two reasons why he, and probably many Ottoman intellectuals who wrote about Byzantine history, portrayed Byzantium in an immoral image. They present a similar image by being influenced by the sources they read. Second, authors help their readers make sense of the text they read. It is forming a perception of Byzantium based on immorality, not only in historiography but also in the period's popular culture. Especially in the nineteenth century, in a global context, Felice Lifshitz and Elena Boeck argue that Victorien Sardou's play *Théodora* (1884)¹¹³ “creates a truly Byzantine reality for its audience” and “conveys the material world of the empire with excessive ornamentation, colorfulness, and barbaric aesthetics,” physically constructing it as a “complete collapse.”¹¹⁴ The impact of this theater play on the immoral image of Byzantium was very strong indeed. In later years, publishings continued to be influenced by the themes of Sardou. The interest garnered by the effects of the image created by him naturally resonated in the Ottoman Empire. In 1915, the play was translated by Reşad Rıdvan (1873–1919) under the title *Fusty Byzantine Atrocities or Empress Theodora* [Köhne Bizans Vahşetleri Yahut İmparatoriçe Teodora]¹¹⁵ at the *Darılbedayi-i Osmanlı* [Ottoman House of Arts]. Unfortunately, there is no information that the translation of this play was published or

¹¹² Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 28–29; 32.

¹¹³ Elena Boeck also argues that a reason Sardou's play was also very popular because he was benefited from Byzantine Annals and especially from Procopius *Secret History*.

¹¹⁴ Felice Lifshitz, “The Bear Keeper's Daughter and the Armenian Dwarf: Cinematic Byzantinism in Postwar Europe,” in *What Byzantinism is this in İstanbul: Byzantium in Popular Culture*, ed. Emir Alışık (Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2021), 76.

¹¹⁵ The source has open access on IBB Atatürk Kitaplığı as an understudied source. Catalog location information: ME_Evr_011925/1331 k.1 [Köhne Bizans Vahşetleri Yahut İmparatoriçe Teodora, 152 pages]

performed. Nevertheless, I might speculate that the immoral image of Byzantium in popular culture, which gained power with the influence of the play written by Sardou in 1884, was also reflected in Ottoman popular culture.¹¹⁶ The point I am trying to explain here is that another aspect of Celal Nuri's explanation of his moral understanding to the reader through the immoral aspect of Byzantium in *Rum ve Bizans* is to make the text more understandable in the reader's mind by associating it with the plot they are already familiar with from fictional literature.

Although immorality is emphasized on many topics in the book, the three most prominent topics are Constantinople, Greeks, and religion. Building upon the above part, I will examine how Celal Nuri interprets these three topics in his book in the context of Byzantine history. I won't be revealing each lesson that his reader should receive after examination of each concept, but there will be a section at the end of the conclusion of this chapter about what this book is meant for and the lessons.

While examining these three topics, I claim that those are metaphorical narratives. The comparative narrative established between Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire is not that the Ottoman Empire became similar to Byzantium after the conquest of Istanbul but that the themes Celal Nuri identified in Byzantium are narrated in a way that mirrors the situation of the Ottoman Empire after the post-Balkan Wars. Secondly, about the Greeks, the focus is on the Byzantine agenda rather than the Ottomans. While telling the history of Byzantium, it is claimed that the decadence was experienced due to the loss of the Roman identity and the Hellenization of the empire. I claim that Celal Nuri still writes on this metaphorically about

¹¹⁶ Elena Boeck argues that Sardou's *Théodora* actively participated both in academic and popular discourses and claims that Sardou's play had a contribution to epistemological categorization of the Byzantine empire. This is why I benefit from this argument to support my discussion. On Sardou's play *Theodora* please see: Filippo Carlà-Uhink, "Theodora A.P. (After Procopius)/ Theodora A.S. (After Sardou): Metamorphoses of an Empress," in *Orientalism and the Reception of Powerful Women From the Ancient World*, ed. Anha Wieber and Filippo Carlà-Uhink (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020); Elena N. Boeck, "Archaeology of Decadence: Uncovering Byzantium in Victorien Sardou's *Theodora*," in *Byzantium/Modernism, The Byzantine as Method in Modernity*, ed. Roland Betancourt and Maria Taroutina (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

his contemporary. When Celal Nuri talks about Hellenization, he actually criticizes the multi-ethnic structure of the empire of his time through the Greeks and aims for the Turks to find their own “identity.” Lastly, he explains the decadence and the corruption of religion in the Byzantine Empire by metaphorizing his own understanding of Islam.

2.1 Effects of Byzantium on the Ottoman Empire

Examining Istanbul has an important place not only in *Rum ve Bizans* but also in the articles and books he wrote around those years. According to Celal Nuri, his approach to Istanbul has something to do with the destiny of the Ottoman Empire. Because Istanbul was the capital of the empire, he made his determinations about the moral collapse of the Ottoman Empire through Istanbul. For him, Istanbul is an “artificial capital.”¹¹⁷

Celal Nuri says that to understand Istanbul and the empire’s collapse, it is necessary to understand the kind of people that make up İstanbul. For Celal Nuri, the non-Muslim people of Istanbul do not have morals because there are many “fraudsters” and “impostors” in this group. According to him, Jews have no sense of patriotism and do not even have a language of their own. Levantines bear the characteristics of corruption, immorality, and deceit. Especially the increase in immorality among Christians in Ottoman Syria is because instead of the Ottoman administration, Christian missionaries did business there. From Celal Nuri’s perspective, the Greeks and Armenians are groups that are deficient and prevent the city from being in harmony. Because, especially the Greeks, in the eyes of Celal Nuri, is a community with *different goals*.¹¹⁸

Throughout *Rum ve Bizans*, these ideas were explained through the idea of “being under Byzantine influence.” He intertwined the Byzantine influence and Constantinople as the city had the biggest effect on Ottoman Turks for losing morals, which caused collapse,

¹¹⁷ Cemil Bağlama, “Bir Geçiş Dönemi Aydını Olarak Celâl Nuri İleri ve Görüşleri” (PhD diss., İstanbul University, 2000), 137.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 138–140. Cemil Bağlama here talks about Celal Nuri’s books and articles written around 1916–1919. Therefore I believe it is important to consider those articles in order to understand the *Rum ve Bizans*.

which he calls *Byzantinization* (this idea will be described below in detail). Most of the time, Byzantine influence is equal to that of a cosmopolitan society. Before he explains the influence, at the beginning of the book, he quotes from George Finlay's work about the situation of İstanbul during Byzantine times. However, the passage looks more like he interprets his own time over Byzantine İstanbul:

*Constantinople was the apple of the emperor's eye for a long time. This city, ruled by its own, had deviated from national specializations for a long time. Despite being exempt from taxes, they struggled with poverty and hardship due to difficulties in accessing basic food supplies, yet they were little affected by the prevailing unrest in the province.*¹¹⁹

In the fourth chapter of the book, he makes a comparison between Byzantine and Ottoman. In this comparison, he explains that the Ottoman Empire was under the influence of the Byzantine Empire. Celal Nuri says that he sees the Ottoman Empire as a "copy" of Byzantium in many ways that he considers immoral by being Byzantine-like.¹²⁰ In this respect, Byzantium represents pleasure and joy for him; it is despotic, and he says that the Ottomans *could not resist its charm*. He interprets that Arabs, Persians, and Byzantines influenced Ottomans. He explains this effect as follows:

*Turks were under many influences: Arab influence, Seljuk and Turkmen influence, Persian influence, Frankish influence, and Rum influence. However, none of them were as sticky and strong as the Rum influence. In addition, the Byzantine civilization, which was a Roman and Greek legacy, was of more fundamental importance than the others. So, without knowing it, feeling it, understanding it, hearing it, or even being aware of it, we took on some Byzantine features. Despite the characteristics of Byzantium that we disliked, such as its moral decadence and disgrace, we could not resist the charm of İstanbul.*¹²¹

Celal Nuri continues to explain this influence of the Byzantine Empire in the book. According to him, both Byzantine and Ottoman societies are cosmopolitan societies. He does not see cosmopolitanism as a positive concept. According to him, in cosmopolitan societies, nations mix, and we cannot understand who belongs to which nation. This brings about a

¹¹⁹ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 3.

¹²⁰ "Farkına varmayarak, belki bilmeyerek Osmanlılar Bizansı kopya etdiler." Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 41.

¹²¹ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 52.

social degradation in Celal Nuri's mind and leads to the rise of immorality. On the other hand, Celal Nuri interprets this issue as "becoming Byzantine" and being under "Byzantine influence" in *Rum ve Bizans*.

Celal Nuri also interpreted Istanbul's social and political life through the throne fights within Byzantium. For him, Heraclius and Constans II periods were when immorality was again high in Istanbul. "Roughness and slothfulness had now enveloped the grandeur of Constantinople. Prejudice and sectarian disputes thrived amidst Istanbul's debasement, indolence, and lethargy. Prophecies gained considerable popularity. The people were living in a state of religious delusion."¹²² The part expressed about "Istanbul being low and lazy" reflects a certain point of view in the text. For example, the expressions "lowness" and "laziness" in the text reflect the city's economic stagnation, weaknesses in government, or social unrest. However, when we consider Istanbul at the time when Celal Nuri wrote the book, Istanbul was a city struggling with migration, war, and economic problems. Erol Köroğlu has framed the wartime situation of Istanbul well.¹²³ He shows an atmosphere of fear and turmoil in Istanbul, especially by showing how the wave of migration to the city after the Balkan Wars and the increasing epidemics were intertwined and presented by the press and publishing of the period.

During the First World War, hunger, economic crisis, and epidemics continued in the city. With the increased discussions on morality in such an environment, novels, poems, and all kinds of printed products written about Istanbul were about moral collapse.¹²⁴ In another work, Erol Köroğlu also makes inferences about the period by examining Mehmed Akif's novels. The period, framed by intellectuals between 1917 and 1918, is depicted as exhausting

¹²² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹²³ Erol Köroğlu, "İstanbul During Balkan Wars (1912-1913)," *Turkish Historical Review* 5, (2014), 141–164.

¹²⁴ Cafer Ulu, "I. Dünya Savaşı ve İşgal Sürecinde İstanbul'da Yaşanan Sosyal ve Ahlaki Çözünme," *Tarih Dergisi* 58, (2013/2), 87–129.

and challenging due to the circumstances of the First World War.¹²⁵ It is probably inevitable in such an environment that Celal Nuri sees Istanbul as a bad and immoral city. Therefore, it is useful for Celal Nuri to frame his ideas through the Byzantine history of İstanbul and the situation in the city.

2.2 On Greeks and Byzantine History

In Celal Nuri's mindset, he sees the Greeks as a nation that he can compare with the Turks. Celal Nuri believed that the Greeks had parallels with the Ottoman Empire as they had a long imperial history. The imperial history is the Byzantine Empire. Rum ve Bizans' first part is about the Greeks and is titled *Rum Milleti*. According to Celal Nuri, the Greeks emerged as a disciplined community, reviving their national culture and establishing a separate state under Ottoman rule.¹²⁶ However, he says that Turks and Greeks have interacted for centuries, which has changed the Greeks. The Greeks mixed with Slavs, Armenians, Turks, and Albanians over time, and he emphasizes that it is unnecessary to talk about a nation called the Greek nation today.¹²⁷ Celal Nuri quotes this idea from the famous German historian Jakob Phillip Fallmerayer.¹²⁸ In 1835, in a class at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, Fallmerayer questioned the ancestral origins of modern Greeks. He argued that contemporary Greeks were not related to the ancients but were replaced by Slavs and Albanian invaders during the Byzantine Era. He was making historical arguments rather than

¹²⁵ Erol Koroğlu, "Beşinci Bölüm: Savaş Sırasında Edebi Üretim: Şiir," in *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı 1914–1918: Propagandanın Milli Kimlik İnşasına*, 315.

¹²⁶ York Norman, "The Nationalities Problem," in *Celal Nuri: Young Turk Modernizer and Muslim Nationalist*, 49–51.

¹²⁷ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 9.

¹²⁸ Fallmerayer was born in South Tyrol in 1790. A major turning point in his life was the publication of his renowned *Geschichte des Kaiserthums von Trapezunt* (1827) that brought him into contact with byzantine history. He is mostly known for his controversial discontinuity theory concerning racial origins of Greeks. See: Peter Schreiner, "Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer and Kalr Krumbacher," in *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955*, ed. Brigitte Pitarakis and Olivier Delouis (Istanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2022), 364–375.

genetic ones. Cultural and “racial” elements were mixed then, and Fallmerayer used one to support claims about the other.¹²⁹

In the book, Celal Nuri says that Turks should learn from the spiritual and entrepreneurial behavior of the Greeks and reshape themselves morally.¹³⁰ According to him, although the Greeks are a nation that he can compare with the Turks, they are the “natural enemies” of the Turks. Hatred and opposing thoughts against the Greeks largely emerged with the Balkan Wars. York Norman summarized in his study that the French newspaper *Le Figaro* published news exactly six days before the start of the Balkan Wars, and Celal Nuri commented on this.¹³¹ According to the news, the French journalist visits the patriarchate in the Fener district of Istanbul, the “Heart of Old Byzantium,” and has the opportunity to speak directly with the Patriarch Joachim III there. According to what the Patriarch said, he, like the French nation, represents a purpose and an idea. The Greeks, who had been waiting patiently for four hundred years, would sooner or later overcome all obstacles. Celal Nuri states that he felt a great betrayal after these words of the Patriarch. From 1912-13 until the Republic, his anger towards the Greek community does not diminish. Because, according to him, there is no hope of including the Greeks within the Ottoman Turkish Muslim nation.¹³² His sentiments, which lasted until the early republic period, could reflect the concerns of the intellectuals of the period about the collapse of the empire and the rising Turkish Muslim national identity.

During the Balkan Wars and then the First World War, propaganda movements began to mobilize the emotions of the people behind the front and demonize their enemies. In the Ottoman Empire, state and civilian initiatives played important roles in the intense

¹²⁹ Effie F. Athanassopoulos, “‘Medieval Archeology in Greece’ An Overview,” in *Archeology and History in Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval Greece: Studies on Method and Meaning in Honor of Timothy E. Gregory*, ed. by William R. Caraher, Linda Jones Hall and R. Scott More, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 19.

¹³⁰ York Norman, “The Nationalities Problem,” 51.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 52.

propaganda formation in the Turkish press. At the beginning of the war and in the following years, propaganda played a role in radicalizing nationalism.¹³³ Propaganda not only mobilized the emotions of wartime society but also managed to turn the native Christian population of the empire into “internal” enemies. As Doğan Çetinkaya reveals in his study¹³⁴, along with the marginalization of the local non-Muslim population, they were considered archenemies aiming to weaken the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the native Greek, Bulgarian, and Armenian populations became the focus of rising Turkish/Muslim nationalism. Although the propaganda movement initially targeted Christians living outside the Empire, over time, during the loss of the Balkans and the Anatolian-centered Turkish/Muslim identity construction of the Committee of Union and Progress during the First World War, the non-Muslim population within the Empire also became a target. This type of radical propaganda movement manifested itself in the press, literature, and other writing fields, and nationalist historiography was also affected by it.

As mentioned above, I explained why Celal Nuri chose Byzantium as an example of immorality. However, in the historical literature of the period, the Byzantine Empire was discussed as part of Greek history.¹³⁵ Herkül Milas stated in his work that the idea that the Greeks would revive the Byzantine Empire was dominant in the Ottoman Empire. However, Byzantium did not have a central position in Greek national historiography. Based on this, together with the above context, I believe that this is how Celal Nuri’s negative image of the Greeks was formed, which is repeated throughout the book.

¹³³ Please see: Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, “Atricity Propaganda and the Nationalization of the Masses in the Ottoman Empire During Balkan Wars (1912–1913),” in *International Journal of Middle East* 46, (2014), 759–778.

¹³⁴ Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, “Illustrated Atrocity: The Stigmatisation of Non-Muslims through Images in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars,” in *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 4 (December 2014), 464–465.

¹³⁵ It is important to note that towards the end of the Byzantine history, Byzantine did claim a Greek identity for themselves. An important study on the topic is the monograph by Han Lamers, *Greece Reinvented: Transformations of Byzantine Hellenism in Renaissance Italy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Building upon this, in *Rum ve Bizans*, the image of evil and immoral Greeks constantly comes to the fore through Byzantine History. For Celal Nuri, the Greeks are perhaps the most important reason for the collapse of Byzantium. Frequently throughout the book, along with religious disunity and the influence of Istanbul, the Hellenization of Byzantium is one of the biggest causes of immorality and destruction. Celal Nuri often states that Greeks and Byzantines have nothing to do with each other. Discourses such as the “Greeks taking over Byzantium” or “Byzantium becoming Greek” are frequently repeated throughout the text. However, although Celal Nuri sees the Greeks and “Graecization”¹³⁶ as immoral, he says there are points that should be taken as an example from the Greeks. He says that Turks have never explored Greece and its former glorious and magnificent period. Turks did not remember the development of the Greek nationality and character. The Greek spirit was slowly revived. A promising Greece emerged in the mid-nineteenth century.¹³⁷ From Celal Nuri’s perspective, if we can learn moral lessons from the past, as mentioned above, since Greeks and Turks are comparable nations, it is important to understand how Byzantium, a Greek state (in this case), collapsed. To this day, the Greeks established a state again. It is an important moral lesson for him. Celal Nuri tried to convey lessons that will help understand the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and build a new Turkish-Muslim identity through this book.

Celal Nuri says that the Eastern Roman Empire became a Greek Empire during the Justinian period of Byzantium. Adopting the folklore of the Greeks, Byzantium “turned them into prisoners of the Greek government and organized their lives in the form of the Greek government.” According to Celal Nuri, the Hellenization of Byzantium is a factor that

¹³⁶ I used Graecization because throughout the text, he distinguished “Hellen” refers to Ancient Greeks, Yunan/Yunani for Greeks of his own time but in Greece and Rum for the Greeks in Ottoman Empire. However sometimes this does not apply and he uses one of those for all the Greeks. In the case of immorality, he uses “Yunanlaşmak.”

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

increases the examples of “disorder,” “immorality,” “disgrace,” “murder,” and “betrayal.”¹³⁸ So much so that, according to Celal Nuri, the Byzantines did not call themselves Greeks. Because, in Latin, the word Greek is equivalent to the word “despicable.”¹³⁹ Celal Nuri does not provide any information about where he read this information. According to him, “a citizen in Constantinople, and the people of the Byzantine Empire in general, were Roman in their civil and religious affairs. They would not see themselves as Greeks in any social, cultural, or national context.”¹⁴⁰

Celal Nuri distinguishes the concepts of Greek, *Rum*, and Hellenic throughout the book. He also uses the term *Rum* as an umbrella term that includes Greeks, Byzantine, Orthodox Church, and Rome. However, while explaining how many million people lived in the Kingdom of Greece in the book's first part, he also states how many million Greeks lived in the Ottoman Empire. Here, he refers to all Greeks as *Rums*.¹⁴¹ Then, while he states that the *Rums* have strong national feelings, in the next sentence, he refers to the same group and states that the Greeks have a strong economy, but here he refers to the Greek Kingdom but includes all the Greeks from Ottoman Empire and in the Greek Kingdom.¹⁴²

2.3 Religion, State, and Society

In the book's second section, Celal Nuri explains Byzantine history by mentioning that its foundations are weak. He compares Byzantium to the Ottoman Empire and says that the state was internally weak despite the great conquests in the sixth century. For Celal Nuri, Byzantine history is not easy to understand because Byzantium is *by nature* full of “superstitions,” “lies,” “intrigues,” “conflicts,” and “exaggerations.”¹⁴³ While explaining Byzantine history, Celal Nuri explains these issues in more detail, especially through religion.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17.

The sectarian strife that began in the sixth century also demonstrated immorality. In his book *İlel-i Ahlakiyemiz*, he talks about the morality of the religion in a similar direction. He saw that if there is no unity among Muslims, there is no morality or future for the Muslims.¹⁴⁴ He develops this idea in the book around the idea of the Turkish nation, and the most important means of uniting the nation within the framework of societal norms, introducing individuals to each other, and thus fostering good morals is religion. The promises of religion will keep the people in order. In *Rum ve Bizans*, this idea comes up repeatedly. Due to the lack of religious unity, immorality is never absent in Byzantium, which also affects other state institutions.

As Celal Nuri sees religion as a crucial topic to explain social morals and decline, these are also intertwined. In *Rum ve Bizans*, the lack of religious unity developed as a big problem:

*When Christianity became the dominant religion, heterodox views became widespread. Convictions increased. While Arius questioned the word God, the Macedonians believed in the divine existence of the holy spirit. Nestorius did not believe in Jesus' existence and divine wrath. Eutyches did not accept that Jesus had two natures with his algebra and divinity and that those in the unity of God were the two desires of the spirit of God. Councils were held against them. As emperors changed, decisions changed. History has never seen such turmoil. The conflicts of the Muslim Mu'tazila were insignificant compared to these struggles. They were divided into fixed scholars and sects, cursing each other, some condemning the other, and being subjected to all kinds of punishments. The Greeks gained fame by being subjected to the harshest treatment. Bigotry has increased. Greeting a heterodox person or even sitting with him was considered 'janabet.'*¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶

According to him, the extinction of religious life left morality uncontrolled. For Celal Nuri, it is observed when looking at historical processes how important the position and influence of religious people in society are.¹⁴⁷ He based his thoughts on Islam through

¹⁴⁴ Mine Konuk, "Celal Nuri'nin Ahlak Anlayışı," 32–33.

¹⁴⁵ "Cenâbet" in here has been used in the context of a state of canonical uncleanness, arising from physical fluxes.

¹⁴⁶ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 22–23.

¹⁴⁷ Mine Konuk, "Celal Nuri'nin Ahlak Anlayışı," 32.

materialism, but he generally adapts materialism to all religions. Advocating vulgar materialism, he adopted Büchner's ideas and blended them with his understanding of Islam. For Celal Nuri, due to the gap between science and religion in society, religion is conveyed through superstitions instead of being taught from real sources. Excessive emphasis is given to transplantation, which has reduced the influence of religion and religious people in the eyes of the public, and this has increased immorality in society.¹⁴⁸ In *Rum ve Bizans*, this idea has developed as an exploitation of religion and conflict. Celal Nuri writes that even at the end of the empire, during the siege of Constantinople, the Byzantines were waiting for the Florentine Consul instead of defending the city.¹⁴⁹ There was great passion in the sectarian debates. The *Rums* corrupted Christianity and exploited it. There was confusion among the priests, and the new and old Patriarch had different supporters.¹⁵⁰

However, he makes a point that one of the reasons Byzantine rule lasted until the middle of the fifteenth century was the problems in the Islamic world. He explains that the death of the caliphate created separatism among the Arabs that “delayed” the conquest of Constantinople.¹⁵¹ So again, this observation of him overlaps with his ideas about the lack of unity in religion and how it affects history.

For Celal Nuri, corruption in religion also affects the state administration and society. All those sectarian conflicts in the Byzantine Empire caused also political and social

¹⁴⁸ York Norman, “Vulgar Materialism and Islam,” in *Celal Nuri: Young Turk Modernizer and Muslim Nationalist*, 67–68; Mine Konuk, “Celal Nuri'nin Ahlak Anlayışı,” 32.

¹⁴⁹ “Council of Ferrara-Florence, ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic church (1438–45) in which the Latin and Greek churches tried to reach agreement on their doctrinal differences and end the schism between them. The council ended in an agreed decree of reunion, but the reunion was short-lived. The Council of Ferrara-Florence was not a new council but was the continuation of the Council of Basel, which Pope Eugenius IV transferred from Basel and which opened in Ferrara on Jan. 8, 1438. The Greek delegation, numbering about 700, included the patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II, 20 metropolitans, and the Byzantine emperor John VIII Palaeologus.” Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Council of Ferrara-Florence.” Encyclopedia Britannica, January 1, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Ferrara-Florence>.

¹⁵⁰ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 27.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

problems. He mentions the famous Nica Revolt¹⁵² in the sixth century and sees Justinian's reign as a moral decay. Reflecting on the political struggle between the Blues and the Greens on society, "all relationships, friendships, kinships, duties, respects disappeared in society. Families began to harm each other. The Blues encouraged bad habits such as indecency, theft, and bribery. All tyrants were powerful, and generally, the victims were weak. Government oppression increased. The emperor took great pleasure in living in all kinds of luxury."¹⁵³ "Laws and order were never fixed. They were constantly changing. Laws were altered and rearranged for every matter. The ruler acted at his discretion. And he did not insist on legal changes for money."¹⁵⁴

The reason why he talks about such corruption and why religion plays a driving force here is very simple for Celal Nuri. According to him, Byzantium was not an empire based on ethnic identity but an empire based on religion. He says, "The strongest feature of Byzantium was its use of puns and symbolism, its religious representation." As explained above, the message Celal Nuri wants to give so far is religious unity. Since there is no consensus among believers, the level of morality in society is low.

3. Concluding Remarks

As I discussed above, *Rum ve Bizans* is the product of a period of transformation in which the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic was experienced. During the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent effort to create a new nation-state in an empire composed of different elements, the views of late Ottoman intellectuals on the Byzantine legacy were largely shaped within this context. By writing the book Greek and Byzantine in such an environment, Celal Nuri reflects the perception of Byzantine history of

¹⁵² "The uprising in Constantinople in January 532 has long been a subject of scholarly interest, with J.B. Bury's influential article from 1897 marking a significant contribution. It was not an isolated event of popular discontent but rather part of a series of violent confrontations in the capital." For further information see: Geoffrey Greatrex, "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 60-86.

¹⁵³ Celal Nuri, *Rum ve Bizans*, 19.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

the period and sets an example of how history was used in the late Ottoman period. Celal Nuri, who associated moral collapse with the collapse of the empire, especially in the last decade of the empire, did this by using Byzantine history in his historical narrative. Because, according to him, it was no longer important to write treatises on morality during his time. The aim was to increase people's sentiments of homeland and nationalist feelings and to explain to people how to be appropriate "morally." According to him, one way to do this was through history. That is why he wrote this book.

In the book, Celal Nuri tried to explain his understanding of morality through many topics, but the most prominent were the Greeks, Constantinople, and religion. Celal Nuri thought that the lack of religious unity during his time led people to collapse socially and morally, and therefore, by focusing on issues such as sectarian conflicts in Byzantine history and conflicts in the church, he tried to explain to his readers that people could improve morally if there were a religiously united society. Apart from this, Celal Nuri tried to say that non-Turkish and non-Muslim elements within the society would cause a moral collapse and, as a result, the collapse of the state. For Celal Nuri and many Turkish intellectuals of the period, Istanbul is not ideal. The problems surrounding the city and the empire pushed the intellectuals of the period to understand this, and the idea of a city in which Istanbul was morally corrupt was formed. For Celal Nuri, the cosmopolitanism of Istanbul was perceived as a moral collapse. In the book, he tried to explain one of the reasons for the collapse of Byzantium: the capital, the heart of the empire, contained many different and foreign elements.

For Celal Nuri, within the cosmopolitan society, the Greeks are the "natural enemies" of the Turks. Therefore, one of the biggest reasons for the moral collapse of Byzantium was the Graecization of Byzantium. Celal Nuri took the issue of Byzantium's Hellenization and cosmopolitanism one step further and explained the Byzantinization of the Ottoman Empire

metaphorically as moral collapse and adopted the idea that the Ottoman Empire's adoption of Byzantium led to moral collapse, which in turn collapsed the state. The reason why Greeks are more central among other ethnic groups throughout the book is that the Byzantine Empire is referred to as the Greek Empire in Byzantine studies of the period. Apart from this, the fact that most people in Byzantium spoke Greek supports this understanding. In addition, there was anti-Greek propaganda in the press during the period. This can be seen as the reason why Celal Nuri highlighted the Greeks.

When considered alone, *Rum ve Bizans* offers a reading of Byzantine history largely from the perspective of Celal Nuri. In the bigger context, evaluating *Rum ve Bizans*, together with other Byzantine history books written in this period, are the ideas that paved the way for and nourished the perception of Byzantium as an enemy, especially during the Republican period. The conclusion of this thesis will be to put together ideas that have been pointed out in this thesis and touch on how Byzantine perception evolved in the Republican period.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to contribute to the studies on the perception of Byzantine history in the late Ottoman period historiography by examining Celal Nuri's *Rum ve Bizans* work and see the roots of the negative perceptions of Byzantium that exist today. While examining the book, I first examined how the studies on Byzantine history were shaped, which helped me to understand the atmosphere in which the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia wrote their works and looked at how the intellectuals perceived Byzantine history. Although the Ottoman-Turkish

intellectuals displayed a similar perspective on Byzantium with their contemporaries European historians, I believe their instrumentalizing the Byzantine heritage in historiography was different.

While the nation-building process had an important place in the perception of the Byzantine heritage, Byzantine history was a useful tool when the intellectuals tried to convey their own moral values in the discussions of the rising moral crisis after 1910. This is exactly the point I am trying to prove in this thesis. Celal Nuri's book, *Rum ve Bizans*, instrumentalized Byzantine history and tried to explain his own moral understanding to his reader as metaphorical, and while doing so, he described the events in a tragic language, depicting Byzantium as a corrupt and morally collapsed empire, which enabled his reader to engage with the text more strongly. He was mirroring his contemporary problems by using Byzantine history to understand the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Another suggestion of this thesis is that the Byzantine history books written in the late Ottoman period paved the way for the use of Byzantium in popular culture and in historiography, especially in the national discourse during the Republican period. As Edhem Eldem also discussed, it was very easy for Byzantium to be seen not only as an old enemy but also as a condemnation project that the nation's enemies wanted to use again. Nevertheless, in the early years of the Kemalist regime, Byzantine history had become a part of this, and Hagia Sophia played an iconic role.¹⁵⁵ The restoration of the structure and its conversion into a museum attracted public attention and led to speculation. Restoration and conversion were, of course, a political decision, and the voices that rose against it were suppressed by the regime of the time. Hagia Sophia's transformation and the polishing of Byzantine heritage were important in boosting secular nationalism and aiming to distance the new country from its Ottoman-Islamic past. Especially in the 1930s, ideas such as "Turks are the ancestors of

¹⁵⁵ Edhem Eldem, "The Ottoman (Re)Discovery of Byzantium," 32.

civilization” or “all civilizations come from Turks” began to be centered in history books in schools.¹⁵⁶

The idea of Anatolia as the eternal homeland of the Turks emphasized in these books was carefully processed in the history writing of the Republican period, and the Byzantines were reflected as a source of unrest that occupied the lands that were the destiny of the Turks and were eventually expelled from this geography. This effect continued throughout the 1940s.¹⁵⁷ However, with Turkey’s transition to a multi-party system from the 1950s onwards, voices against the Byzantine heritage and Hagia Sophia began to rise again. These voices began to grow stronger, especially with the celebration of the centennial of the conquest of Istanbul in 1953 and the conservative policies of the Democrat Party. In particular, the fact that the Tenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies was held in Istanbul in 1955, just days after the September 6-7 pogrom targeting the city’s Greek population, may be one of the most striking examples of Byzantium’s eternal enemy imagery.¹⁵⁸

Again, in the textbooks of this period, the sections on the conquest of Istanbul were given more detail. Because of the conquest, the Turkish Sultan, or Mehmet II, was described as “multilingual,” “forward-looking,” and “extremely cultured.” Similarly, it is emphasized that the Turkification of Anatolia was completed with the conquest of Istanbul. Similar attitudes were also reflected in novels. As Yağmur Karakaya puts it in her work, Byzantium is portrayed as “degenerate,” “immoral,” and “a swamp turned into ruins.” However, Hagia

¹⁵⁶ Sinan Ekim, “Ulusun Çocuklarına Bizanslıları Öğretmek: Türkçe Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Bizans İmparatorluğu’nun Temsilleri (1930-1960) / Teaching the Nation’s Children about the Byzantines: Representations of the Byzantine Empire in Turkish History Textbooks (1930-1960),” in *“İstanbul’da Bu Ne Bizantinizm!”: Popüler Kültürde Bizans / “What Byzantinism is This in Istanbul!”: Byzantium in Popular Culture*, ed Emir Alışık (İstanbul: Pera Müzesi, 2021), 124.

¹⁵⁷ Sinan Ekim, “Ulusun Çocuklarına Bizanslıları Öğretmek: Türkçe Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Bizans İmparatorluğu’nun Temsilleri (1930-1960) / Teaching the Nation’s Children about the Byzantines: Representations of the Byzantine Empire in Turkish History Textbooks (1930-1960),” 133–135.

¹⁵⁸ Edhem Eldem, “The Ottoman (Re)Discovery of Byzantium,” 33.

Sophia is portrayed as “a woman who must be conquered.”¹⁵⁹ Especially in the works written by mid-century Turkish novelists and in the following years, the attitude towards Hagia Sophia or its imagination parallels the policies of the Democrat Party in the 1950s and the rising voices about the Ottoman past. When viewed today, it is seen that the works produced about the Byzantine past are connected to contemporary political interest in relation to Hagia Sophia. In Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Hagia Sophia Manifesto, he emphasizes that the Byzantines destroyed Hagia Sophia and did not look after it. While attributing qualities such as dark, obsolete, and dilapidated to the Byzantine heritage, he brings the Ottomans and their heirs, the Turks, to a pure and bright position that brought civilization to Hagia Sophia and restored it.¹⁶⁰

When we look at today, as Edhem Eldem points out, Byzantium has become an unspoken taboo that has been exoticized and eroticized more concretely, pretending to mock Turkish stereotypes and serving nationalism. Even today, Hagia Sophia still holds an important place in the distinction between “us” and “them.”¹⁶¹ Therefore, examining works such as *Rum ve Bizans* gives us more insight into the historiography of the late Ottoman period and allows us to understand how Byzantium was perceived and used and the evolution of this use in the long term.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ahmed Refik. *Bizans İmparatoriçeleri, Bizans Tarihine Medhal, İmparatoriçelerin Tarz-ı Hayatı, Teodora, Atenais, İren, Dindar Teodora, Teofano, Zovi, Anna Comnenus*, İstanbul: Muhtar Halid Kitabhanesi, 1331 [1915].

¹⁵⁹ Yağmur Karakaya, “Karanlık Bizans’ın Sonsuz Işığı: Ayasofya/ Hagia Sophia: The Eternal Light in the Dark Byzantium,” in “İstanbul’da Bu Ne Bizantinizm!”: *Popüler Kültürde Bizans / “What Byzantinism is This in İstanbul!”: Byzantium in Popular Culture*, ed. by Emir Alışık (İstanbul: Pera Müzesi, 2021), 147–155.

¹⁶⁰ Yağmur Karakaya, “Karanlık Bizans’ın Sonsuz Işığı: Ayasofya/ Hagia Sophia: The Eternal Light in the Dark Byzantium,” 165–167.

¹⁶¹ Edhem Eldem, “The Ottoman (Re)Discovery of Byzantium,” 33.

Celal Nuri. *Rum ve Bizans*, Konstantiniyye: Efkâr-ı Cedid Kütüphanesi, 1917.
— . *Harbden Sonra Türkleri Yükseltelim*, Konstantiniyye: Efkâr-ı Cedid Kütüphanesi, 1917.
“Feuilleton.” *Journal de Constantinople. Écho de l’Orient*, July 20, 1849.

Translated Primary Sources

İleri, Celal Nuri. *Uygurlık Çatışmasında Türkiye*, Translated by Mahir Aydın, İstanbul: Togan Yayıncılık, 2008.
İleri, Celal Nuri. *Osmanlı Mülkünün Tarihi Coğrafyası*. Translated by Yiğit İlker. İstanbul: Yeditepe Akademi, 2021.

Secondary Literature

Akagündüz, Ümit. “II. Meşrutiyet Yılları Düşünce Dünyamızda Tarih ve Tarih Yazımı Üstüne Bir Değerlendirme.” *Journal of Modern Turkish History* 11, no. 21 (2015): 3–32.
Akyıldız, Ali. “İslam Ansiklopedisi.” In *Tanzimat*. Accessed October 24, 2023.
<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tanzimat>.
Alabaş, Ramazan. “Moral Values in School Textbooks during the Second Constitution and Early Republican Periods: The Case of the Lectures on Morality.” *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences* 11, no. 3 (2019).
Arnason, Johann P. “Approaching Byzantium: Identity, Predicament and Afterlife.” *Thesis Eleven* 62, no. 1 (August 1, 2000): 39–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513600062000004>.
Athanassopoulos, Effie F. “Medieval Archaeology in Greece: A Historical Overview.” In *Archaeology and History in Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval Greece*, 15–35. Routledge, 2008.
Aydın, Cemil. *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017.
Bağlama, Cemil. “Bir Geçiş Dönemi Aydını Olarak Celâl Nuri İleri ve Görüşleri.” İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2000.
Bekar, Cumhur. “A New Perception of Rome, Byzantium and Constantinople in Hezarfen Hüseyin’s Universal History.” Boğaziçi University, 2014.
———. “Hezarfen Hüseyin’in Evrensel Tarihinde Yeni Bir Bizans ve Konstantinopolis Algısı.” *XVII. Türk Tarih Kongresi Kongre Bildiri Kitabı*, January 1, 2018, 17–38.
Boeck, Elena N. “Archaeology of Decadence: Uncovering Byzantium in Victorien Sardou’s Theodora.” edited by Roland Betancourt and Maria Taroutina. Brill, 2015.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004300019_006.
Buzpinar, Ş. Tufan. “Celal Nuri’s Concepts of Westernization and Religion.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007): 247–58.
Buzpinar, Ş. Tufan. “‘Öteki’ üzerinden hesaplaşma: Celâl Nuri ve Abdullah Cevdet’in Avrupa tartışmaları hakkında bir değerlendirme.” *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, no. 19 (December 1, 2005): 151–76.
Carlà-Uhink, Filippo. “Theodora A.P. (After Procopius) / Theodora A.S. (After Sardou): Metamorphoses of an Empress.” In *Orientalism and the Reception of Powerful Women from the Ancient World*, edited by Anha Wieber and Carla-Uhink Filippo, 167–83. Bloomsbury, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350077416.ch-011>.
“Council of Ferrara-Florence | Council of Ferrara-Florence | Papal Union, Ecumenism & Reformation | Britannica,” April 23, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Ferrara-Florence>.

- Çakır, Hamza. “Tercümân-ı Ahvâl.” In *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. Accessed November 21, 2023. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tercuman-i-ahval>.
- Çetinkaya, Y. Doğan. “Atrocity Propaganda and the Nationalization of the Masses in the Ottoman Empire During the Balkan Wars (1912-13).” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 4 (2014): 759–78.
- Çetinkaya, Yunus. “Illustrated Atrocity: The Stigmatisation of Non-Muslims through Images in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars.” *Journal of Modern European History* 12 (November 1, 2014): 460–78. https://doi.org/10.17104/1611-8944_2014_4_460.
- Çoruk, Ali Şükrü. “Bir Gelenek İcadı Olarak II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul’un Fethi Törenleri,” June 2016. <http://acikerisim.fsm.edu.tr/xmlui/handle/11352/2345>.
- Daskas, Beatrice. “Aya Sofia Kibir Giamy Scheriffy: The Fosatti Brothers, the Ottoman Capital and the Superb Imperial Mosque of Hagia Sophia.” In *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800-1955*, edited by Brigitte Pitarakis, 20–39. İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021.
- Ekim, Sinan. “Ulusun Çocuklarına Bizanslıları Öğretmek: Türkçe Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Bizans İmparatorluğu’nun Temsilleri (1930-1960) / Teaching the Nation’s Children about the Byzantines: Representations of the Byzantine Empire in Turkish History Textbooks (1930-1960).” In *İstanbul’da Bu Ne Bizantinizm!”: Popüler Kültürde Bizans / “What Byzantinism Is This in İstanbul!”: Byzantium in Popular Culture*, edited by Emir Alışık, 122–43. İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021.
- Eldem, Edhem. “Byzantium in İstanbul: The Byzantine Collections of the İstanbul Archeological Museums.” In *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800-1955*, edited by Brigitte Pitarakis, 259–73. İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021.
- . “Philipp Anton Dethier: Der Anti-Held Der Osmanischen Archäologie/ Philipp Anton Dethier: Osmanlı Arkeolojisinin Anti-Kahramanı.” In *Daheim in Konstantinopel Deutsche Spuren Am Bosphorus AB 1850/ Memleketimiz Dersaadet 1850’den İtibaren Boğaziçi’ndeki Alman İzleri*, edited by Erald Pauw, 59–91. Nürnberg: Pagma-Verl, 2014.
- . “The Ottoman (Re)Discovery of Byzantium.” *Olivier Delouis and Brigitte Pitarakis, Eds., Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955 (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute, 2022), Pp. 19–36, January 1, 2022.*
- Erol, Emre. “Makedonya Sorunu’nun Batı Anadolu’ya Sıçrayışı ve 1914 Rum Tehciri.” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 252 (2014), 58–65.
- Greatrex, Geoffrey. “The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 60–86. <https://doi.org/10.2307/632550>.
- Karaca, Mertkan. “Writing the Byzantine Past, Reconfiguring the Ottoman Present: Byzantine Art in the Late Ottoman Art Historiography.” In *From Istanbul to Byzantium: Paths to Rediscovery, 1800–1955*, edited by Brigitte Pitarakis, 164–77. İstanbul: Pera Müzesi, 2021.
- Karakaya, Yağmur. “Karanlık Bizans’ın Sonsuz Işığı: Ayasofya/ Hagia Sophia: The Eternal Light in the Dark Byzantium.” In *İstanbul’da Bu Ne Bizantinizm!”: Popüler Kültürde Bizans / “What Byzantinism Is This in İstanbul!”: Byzantium in Popular Culture*, edited by Emir Alışık, 144–69. İstanbul: Pera Museum, 2021.
- Karateke, Hakan. “The Challenge of Periodization: New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography.” In *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future*, edited by H. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı, 129–54. Indiana University Press, 2013. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gz87c>.
- Kılıç Yıldız, Şule. “Byzantium between ‘East’ and ‘West’: Perceptions and Architectural Historiography of the Byzantine Heritage.” PhD dissertation, Middle East Technical University, 2013.
- Kır, Oğuzhan. “Meşrutiyet Döneminde Osmanlılık Tartışmaları.” Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2019.
- Konuk, Mine. “Celal Nuri’nin Ahlak Anlayışı.” Fırat Üniversitesi, 2024.

- Köroğlu, Erol. “İstanbul During Balkan Wars (1912-1913).” *Turkish Historical Review* 5 (2014): 141–64.
- . *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1914-1918) Propagandadan Milli Kimlik İnşasına*. İletişim Yayınları, 2010.
- Lamers, Han. *Greece Reinvented: Transformations of Byzantine Hellenism in Renaissance Italy*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Milas, Herkül. *Yunan Ulusunun Doğuşu - Herkül Millas*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021.
- Mishkova, Diana. *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108759557>.
- Neumann, Christopher. “Bad Times, Better Self: Definitions of Identity and Strategies for Development in Late Ottoman Historiography, 1850-1900.” In *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, edited by Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, 57–78. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Norman, York. *Celal Nuri: Young Turk Modernizer and Muslim Nationalist*. 1st edition. I.B. Tauris, 2021.
- Oguz, Çigdem. *Moral Crisis in the Ottoman Empire: Society, Politics, and Gender during WWI*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2021.
- Oral, Mustafa. “Çağdaşları Tarafından Ziya Gökalp’in Eleştirisi.” *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5, no. 12 (June 1, 2006): 21–34.
- Schreiner, Peter. “Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer and Kalr Krumbacher.” In *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800–1955*, edited by Brigitte Pitarakis and Olivier Delouis, 364–75. İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2022.
- Shaw, Wendy. *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*. University of California Press, 2003.
- Sönmez, Erdem. “Clio between Revolution and Collapse: The Making of the Historical Discipline in the Late Ottoman Empire.” *Modern Intellectual History*, September 2, 2022, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244322000439>.
- . “Historical Writing in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Expansion, Islamization, and Nationalization (1839–1908).” *Turkish Historical Review* 13, no. 1–2 (October 7, 2022): 42–66. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18775462-bja10031>.
- Tezcan, Selim. “Hayden White ve Tarih Anlatısı Sorunu.” *Turkish History Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (October 20, 2018): 632–61. <https://doi.org/10.17497/tuhed.465558>.
- Ursinus, Michael. “Byzantine History in Late Ottoman Turkish Historiography.” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 10 (January 1986): 211–22. <https://doi.org/10.1179/030701386790203506>.
- Uyanık, Necmi. “Siyasi Düşünce Tarihimizde Batıcı Bir Aydın Olarak Celal Nuri (İleri).” Selçuk Üniversitesi, 2003.
- Üstel, Füsün. *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Günümüze Vatandaşlık Eğitimi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009.
- Vurgun, Ahmet. “Milli Tarih, Tenkidî Tarih – Celal Nuri.” *Turkish History Education Journal* 3, no. 2 (October 20, 2014): 217–27. <https://doi.org/10.17497/tuhed.185610>.
- White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. JHU Press, 1975.
- Yerasimos, Stefanos. *Konstantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*. İletişim Yayınları, 1993.

