

TEOMAN DURALI *

Religion, woman, nature

We human beings have two distinct sides, the natural and the cultural. While we find the former ready-made in front of us, the latter is a so-called crossbreed of outgoing naturalness and our inborn capacities. To brandish these inborn capacities as solely genetic is nothing else but, like most contemporary endeavors, a simpleminded, superficial attempt. To a certain extent they do spring from a genetic basis, but this is not the whole story. Each ingredient of our experience which forms the treasury of traditions and brings about the other realm, known as culture, arises from an irrational, hence philosophically and scientifically inexplicable, source.

As we label everything that seems rationally, and thus scientifically unexplainable, as mysterious, accordingly our inborn capacities, which we are unable to explain genetically are also mysterious. The nongenetic part, that is, the innermost core of our lives is generally specified as spiritual.

At the crossroads where our spirituality, and also in part our genetic resources meet nature, culture arises. Spirituality, moreover, is intertwined with religiosity, and life experience is the outcome of this process. Hence the principal components of our lives are our experiences which are hammered out of our dealings with both the natural environment and our socio-cultural surroundings.

Who is that craftsman who hammers these experiences out of the natural environment? We humans as socio-cultural beings. The socio-cultural values are sustained by our closer and wider surroundings. Furthermore, this is done by informal (i.e. customs, habits, traditions) and formal (i.e. schooling) education.

The human being receives the essential elements of education from the family. Therefore the family can be seen as the main fabric of the socio-cultural network. Moreover, the principal responsibility for bringing up the future generation is played by the woman, the mother. Thus the healthy development, the well-being of a society mainly depends on the woman's equilibrium status. This means a balance must be maintained with regard to the sensitive state between repression and permissiveness.

Although Islamic civilization arises from the Muslim religion, the former is not always consistent with the latter in every aspect. Woman has not usually found in the Muslim world the relevant rank God bestows upon her in the Koran. His prominent attribute "al-Rahim" ("the most Merciful") is reflected among human beings only by the woman in the form of "rahm" ("womb"): "...and (revere) the wombs (that bore you); for Allah ever watches over you..." [Koran: Al-Nisa, 4/1].

"The wife, through whom we enter parentage, must have our reverence. Sex, which governs so much our physical life, and has so much influence on our emotional and higher nature, deserves, not our fear, or our contempt, on our amused indulgence, but our reverence in the highest sense of the term...." (commentary: Abdullah Yusuf Ali [The Holy Koran, Amana, Brentwood/ Maryland, 1989]). And how impressive is this verse from Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi (1207-1273): "Woman is a ray of God, not a mere mistress, The Creator's self as it were, not a mere creature!"

Unfortunately, the status of woman is the weakest and most vulnerable side of Islamic civilization. As has been stated above, this adverse situation does not stem from the religion itself, but has something to do with the texture of most of the societies within which Islam spread. In the Malay world (that is, Malaysia and Indonesia), for example, the position of women is completely different from that in the West Asian Muslim countries. Here she enjoys a status

that can be declared as example for all Muslim nations. Therefore, Malaysia must ensure that her women's middle-of-the-road position — that is, one between oppression and indulgence — is safeguarded.

The other valuable asset Malaysians possess in the lush greenery, that beatific colour of nature, hence of Islam. Together with religion — the basis of culture — nature, as mentioned earlier, is the essential ingredient of our life experiences. Both are a manifestation of God perceived in different aspects; therefore, they are our sustainers and cherishers. Where one fails to appear, the other limps. Nature deprived of religious uplift is senseless, while religion remains shallow and cannot be heart permeating, if it is dispossessed of its invaluable asset, pristine nature. Both induce in us a deep reverence for God and his creation, a profound sentiment of piety.

It is not in vain that we qualify nature as mother: we are not only borne by her as physical beings, but also as spiritual entities. Thus to unremittently destroy her in order to

build new highways, tourist installations and absurd golf courses does not fall short of imposture and, even, heresy.

When we ponder the causes of the ever increasing number of youngsters disposed towards violence, crime, abnormal behaviour and drug abuse, why is it that we constantly fail to think about our morbid neglect of our children, an attitude that reaches the shores of treason. Broken families, the destruction of nature, consumerism — which is manifested by mechanical gadgets, such as the car, motorcycle, computer, television and video assume an overriding role in our lives —, vanity, arrogance: all, at the end of the day, devour the sap of society. To prevent this disaster we need to cling to religion and save nature — the jungle, for that matter — and, last but not least, enhance respect for woman — humanity's heart.

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worry and say: "Oh, I cannot go. They will go and let water into the canals

President Süleyman Demirel referring to Tuesday's ceremony at GAP.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

During my holiday stay in Istanbul, I regularly read the Turkish Daily News, which impresses me for it being a liberal and open-minded newspaper. Reading the commentary of Dr. Teoman Duralı (The "Obsession with Progress," March 29, 1995), I found this commentary not only to be not liberal and not open-minded, but I also found it to be simply wrong in certain respects. First of all, Dr. Duralı says the whole world has been "obsessed" with progress for the last hundred years. Speaking of an "obsession, he clearly implies that he thinks of the phenomenon he is speaking about as if it were a pathological condition, as if there were demonic forces that have driven the world crazy and "out of its mind." Being a philosopher, Dr. Duralı surely knows, or at least he should know, that he is making a categorical mistake when he tries to apply a concept like "obsession, which originates in a clinical-psychiatric (or religious) area to social or sociological phenomena. Not only does he make in his initial statement a mistake that he would — most probably — dislike if his students made it in their arguments, additionally what he said is obviously wrong: Of course, it's simply not true that "progress" has reached "the whole world" since a hundred years. Isn't it true, that a hundred years ago, e.g., most people in the rural areas of Russia lived under near-slavery conditions? Isn't it true that 100 years ago a diagnosis of tuberculosis was equal to a death sentence in most, if not all, areas of the world? Isn't it true that in large areas of countries like Turkey, the Arabian states, but also in some remote areas of, say, Ireland or France there are not adequate (or optimal) educational facilities for the poorest people? The list can easily be continued. Anyway, Dr. Duralı doesn't say the truth when stating "progress" would have reached the world "since a hundred years."

The next obvious mistake is only a few sentences away! Dr. Duralı first states that we do "not know" where "progress" is going to take us, but if that's true, how can he know that progress is going to take us to something not valuable? If in the succession from A to B, B is undefined ("unknown"), how can our philosopher know that it's "not a progression towards something ... more valuable"? To my knowledge this is simply a logical mistake, something a professor of philosophy should be able to avoid.

Now, when Dr. Duralı says that the world is "obsessed" with "progress," what is he talking about? What is this "progress" that he speaks about as if it were something monolithic or indivisible? Is it progress in the medical area, is it technical or scientific progress (and if so in which area?), is it social progress giving equal opportunities to everyone, is it political

progress (in the sense of growing democracy), is it economic progress in the sense of an ever growing GNP or in the sense that more people do have what they need for their daily lives? Also this remains unclear, and I assume it remains unclear because Dr. Duralı intends to build up a polemical and, in my opinion, demagogical argument in favor of backward-oriented politics.

This comes clear from his putting together right-wing oriented criticism of modern living that is not only characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism, but also of Christian fundamentalism as it can be seen in the U.S.A. or Poland, and also of newly rising nationalism that we presently face in Germany and other European countries. Almost all the ingredients are there: criticism of a "hedonist" lifestyle (golf, discotheques and disco music), criticism of tourism, "economics" and "sexism." If Dr. Duralı would have taken a closer look at what right-wing extremists in Germany or France (e.g., the German journal *Junge Freiheit*) usually publish, he would have been able to see more clearly who those people are whom he obviously wants to join.

The most important mistake Dr. Duralı makes is an idealistic error when he supposes that philosophy, as I would prefer to say, ideology has a status of logical priority over material conditions. Speaking as the psychoanalyst that I am, I would strongly insist on the fact that philosophical and religious belief systems are firmly rooted in the material living conditions of people as they are mediated through the families in which people are raised. Philosophical hypotheses, theories and systems are the reflections of the subjective experience of the material living conditions, and they surely do not have precedence over the material living conditions.

So what Dr. Duralı is favoring is the implementation of a "false consciousness" that keeps people from knowing what the world is all about. An Islamic world view — just as any other religious world view — does not help people to see who exploits them and takes from them the fruits of their daily labor. On the contrary, an Islamic "world view," just like any other prescribed world view, be it Christian, communist or whatever, brings with it the danger that people are forced to give their lives in "crusades" or "holy wars," never being able to recognize that they're only suffering for the interests and for the benefit of other people.

In my view there is no alternative to emancipation and enlightenment, if one hopes to find "peace at home and peace in the world." I wish philosopher Dr. Duralı of Istanbul University would also agree with this aim of Kemal Atatürk.

Best regards,
Norbert J. Hartkamp, M.D.

TEOMAN DURALI

Progressivism

In a previous article of mine ("The Obsession with Progress," TDN, 29 March 1995), I tried to reflect upon the excesses of the ideal of progress, brought about by the Modern Secular West European civilization. Progress is, in fact, a natural part of human beings' physical as well as mental mobility. It is commonly used to signify a factual or intellectual movement toward a physically, materially or spiritually favorable end that is really or virtually situated at a distance from one's own initial position.

Accordingly, each individual belonging to any society at any given time in history progresses physically all her/his life long, but also morally and mentally, although usually to a relatively lesser extent. So does every society. Therefore it is absurd to qualify any particular society as downright primitive, as the West European missionary-anthropologists have done.

Only living beings other than humans remain phylogenetically close to their prime stage unless they succumb to a radical genetic alteration (mutation). So, progress and development belong to the domain of the human.

The Modern Secular West European civilization, which appeared on the stage of history toward the end of the 16th century, depreciates any culture that does not conform with its own, (in the form of "backward," "primitive," "barbaric," "uncultured" and, of course, "unprogressive."

This attitude of the above-mentioned civilization is known as Eurocentrism. Besides, the core of this civilization has been, since the mid-18th century, the English culture. Furthermore, Progressivism is the unremitting pursuit of the values dear to this culture.

What are these? Particularly that "I am the measure of every thing that there is" egocentrism (that the first person singular pronoun in English, the lingua franca of the aforementioned civilization, is written with a capital letter, i.e., I <a peerless case in the realm of languages> reveals already the fact we are talking about). "All that serves my psychophysiological-psychic well-being is acceptable to me." The highest values are "my interest." "The more I can materialize them the better for me: I am progressing!" "I get together with people who share my interests and conditions." When those interest and conditions are fulfilled, we might drift apart again. A sort of "marriage of convenience" seals our social bonds (hence the "contractual society"). In order to decide what complies with my interests and conditions "I must make use of my empirical-rational aptitudes."

When Reason does not reach the upmost, sublime confines of humaneness (i.e., piety and spirituality), it lingers on the level of rationality. Thus, rationality is the state of Reason that turns and turns around a vicious circle.

One of the most notorious products of the "homo economicus" is the eight tons of hair shorn

off those destined for the gas chambers in order to get stockings and other sorts of garb woven for the military — what a horrendous triumph of economics! This amassed amount of hair was discovered by Russian troops when they captured Auschwitz on Jan. 27, 1945. Now, this is, of course, not the only example of the epoch-making terrible results brought forth by Materialist Mechanistic Secular Progressive West European civilization: "Had the American not ruthlessly exterminated the Indians?" asks Heinrich Himmler (ref: John Toland: "The Last Hundred Days," p: 178; Mayflower Books, London, 1968). It will not be difficult to grasp the magnitude, the severity of the foregoing suggestive question by glancing at a short list of some of the many other terrifying crimes the aforesaid civilization has perpetrated throughout its lifetime:

■ **Genocide:** In 1519, there were 28 million Amerindians; by 1605, only 1 million survived;

■ **Slavery:** between 1526 and 1870 10 million Africans were shipped to the Americas as slaves;

■ **Colonialism:** At its height, Britain exacted \$300 million annual tribute from India;

■ **Neocolonialism:** In 1988, net transfer of \$35 billion was made from South to North;

■ **Cold War:** Over 20 million were killed in the Third World (ref: New Straits Times, p:30, Kuala Lumpur, Friday, June 25, 1993).

From Rwanda and Burundi to the Fiji islands, from Tierra del Fuego to Tasmania, from Turkestan to the Timor island, wherever you come across misery, massacre, holocaust, social and economic upheaval, religious and racial unrest, be sure that you are tracing the Progressive Modern European man's footsteps. One of his most out-

standing features is his disdain, his arrogance: "the white man's burden" (Rudyard Kipling). The consequence of such a narcissistic claim cannot be anything else except the following aggressive assertion: "It is the curse of greatness that it must step over dead bodies to create new life (Heinrich Himmler, ibidem).

Ultimately would the minimum of Justice not require that instead of a handful of Germans, the whole bunch of the "founding fathers" of the Modern West European civilization should have been called to account at the Nuremberg trials for their awful atrocities committed against non-European peoples and nature? Was, after all, National Socialism as well as Communism not the natural outcome of this "blessed Progressive civilization"?

No one on Earth should ever tell me that Johann Sebastian Bach, Friedrich von Schiller, Immanuel Kant, Albert Schweitzer or Albert Einstein were part of this civilization as well. No, not at all! They were still receiving the enlightening beams of Religion. What concerns Fundamentalism; this is the outright degeneration of Religious ideals under the impact of Modern Progressivism's mentality.

P.S. Interestingly enough the so-called open minded Dr. Norbert J. Hartkamp scolds the Turkish Daily News (in his letter to the Editor, April 14, 1995) for having allowed me to express my views (regarding my article "Obsession with Progress") in its pages.

Herewith I want to remind him of the momentous phrase of one of his trend setters, S.G. Tallentyre and attributed to Francois-Marie Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it!"

PROFESSOR DR. TEOMAN DURALI*

The obsession with progress

For the last one hundred years the whole world has been obsessed with progress. There is no other subject which has created so much concern as progress and in the process it has lost its previous role as a means to attain a better quality of life.

We are now carried away by a torrent of progress, not knowing where it will take us, and it is not a progression towards something more sensible, intrinsically more valuable. It is merely progress for the sake of progress with no room for sentimentality or sensitivity. The clear expression of this mood is visible in all walks of modern life.

An ever increasing uniformity can be perceived everywhere: A standardization of the tastes and habits of dressing, eating, drinking, working, education and architecture. The overall impression that you encounter in New York you will also encounter in Brasilia and Buenos Aires, in Dakar and Nairobi, in Ankara and Athens, in Beijing and Tokyo, in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Despite drugs being forbidden in all countries, other hazardous stupefiers, such as golf, cricket, rugby, discotheques and disco music, an almost unlimited range of tourism and gutter press are incessantly enhanced. The possession of unlicensed arms is also forbidden in many countries, but the use of private vehicles, computers and the like is allowed and even encouraged.

In an ever more congested and environmentally spoiled world would it not make more sense to make use of our legs or at least bicycles, and for longer distances public transport? Nowadays it is common to find that in a family of say five, each person has his or her own car! Furthermore, what actual necessity is there for having a computer in the house? A house is not normally a center of astrophysical research, not a tax office or department of finances, not a registry of births or a public prosecutor's office; still it is common to come across 10-year-old children spending the whole day playing with their home computer. Another common sight is ladies and gentlemen sitting in limousines talking into a mobile telephone. These are some worldwide harmful trends. Then there are some even more destructive ones which have dealt a fatal blow to human dignity: "economism" and "sexism."

Since the day humans first appeared on the earth they have been engaged in production, consumption and reproduction. These are such commonplace facts that until the beginning of this century it never dawned on decent people to evoke them.

This most protuberant feature, this frantic pursuit of progress observable from one end of the globe to the other is a thoughtless, blindfold attempt to strive for things newly contrived, no matter how absurd. This can manifest itself as adherence to a crazy, criminal doctrine and the overriding personality who represents an ideological-political current, or to trivial fashions like mass tourism, vacation and touring follies, modes and manners of dressing, eating, drinking, dwelling, furnishing and so on and so forth. Stock ideas and attitudes sprout like mushrooms: libertarian child upbringing, human rights, women's lib, animal lib, single parenthood, computer literacy and a lot more.

The oldest and most widespread run-of-the-mill myths are, however, industrialization and prosperity. At the beginning these made sense resulting in a never-ending trend to "ward-off nature." Why?

Because since the days of the onset of the Renaissance and Humanism, Nature has been regarded as a realm that must be transformed into a man-serving domain.

This has been achieved through massive industrialization, where the unremitting systematic abuse of Nature has gone hand in hand with the organized exploitation of the majority of humanity by a minority.

This craze began in Northwest Europe and eventually cast its spell over the whole of humanity. Now industrial development together with the increase in prosperity have become to some extent a global obsession from which no one is immune. What can be done to modify and moderate this ominous trend? As already indicated, we cannot remove ourselves from this global process.

Such an attempt would mean suicide. Malaysia, for that matter, has achieved from the late 1950s onwards an ever increasing rate of growth in industrialization and welfare. This, it seems, being obtained in drastic defiance of Nature. Now there is visible remorse; although unfortunately somewhat belated. Henceforth, utter care and vigilance are necessary.

Nature-respecting industrial development is an important condition that leads people towards an equitable and healthy State. Nevertheless, industry in itself is an effect, an occurrence. Its driving dynamo hidden away from sight: philosophy-science. Any nation furnished with industry, even if highly technological, is still utterly vulnerable, unless it primarily possesses a philosophy-science system. Science is engendered by philosophy; and then again, science is technology; this in turn is the agent

link in a long chain. To appropriate only industry without philosophy-science can be likened to a human being endowed with a body, but short of a brain.

Many nations are completely dependent on more dominant ones to do their thinking. In order to gain independence and be free they need to use their brains, that is, develop their own philosophy-science. The most sublime human products are those brought about by the combined efforts of intellect and imagination. The greatest human productivity is reflected by works of art and scientific research coupled with philosophical inquiries yielding hypotheses, nomologies, theories and ultimately systems.

Consequently, it is about time Malaysia, like certain other Muslim nations, which is presently endowed with a highly developed industry based on imported technology, attempts to jump from a mere imitation stage over to a creative phase. This will only become possible by combining creative ingeniousness with extensive and at the same serious knowledge.

This will require the acquisition of a number of cognitive dimensions. To name but a few: a genuine knowledge of the Muslim religion from which sprang Islamic civilization which has, in turn, brought forward a particular world view; and an expert knowledge and the modern philosophy that stands behind it.

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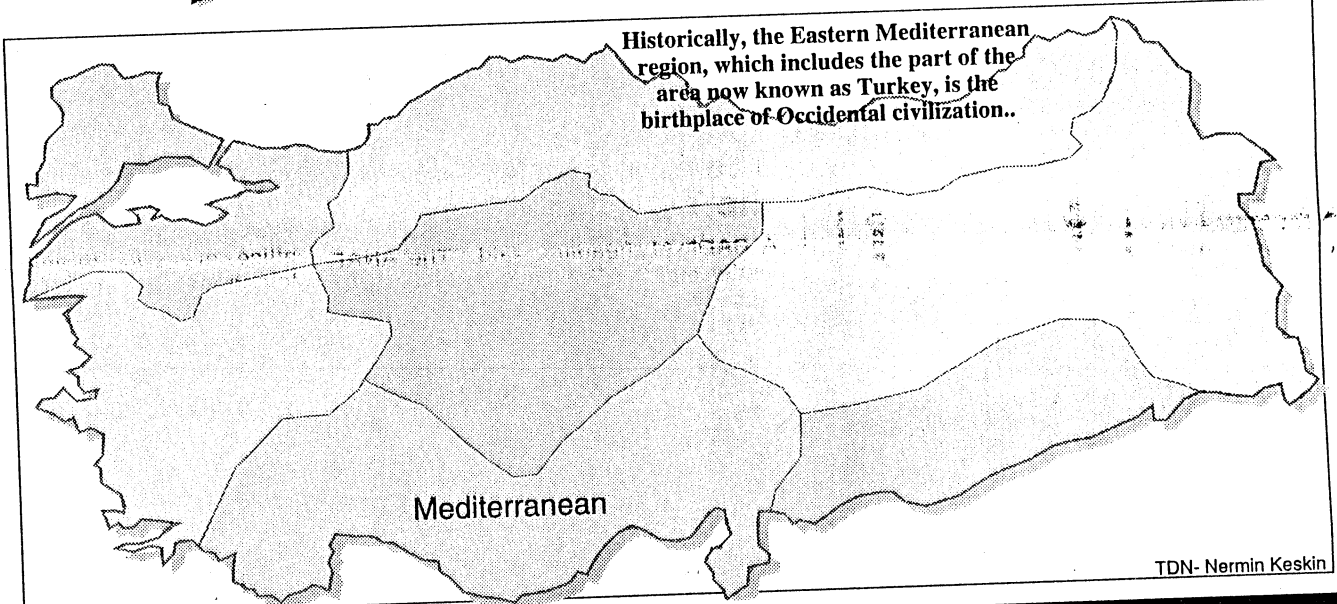
The fountainhead of Occidental Civilizations and

Teoman Durah
TDN Guest Writer

We are told by the father of human population genetics Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza that man left his native soil of Southern and Eastern Central Africa approximately 70,000 years ago. He encountered for the first time vast spaces of water when he reached the southeastern shores of the Mediterranean sea. He settled along the banks of the Nile and shores of Egypt and Palestine. Then, he moved farther east over Mesopotamia towards Central and Southern Asia as well as all the way through Anatolia in the direction of Eastern, Middle and ultimately Western Europe. An ever increasing number of people settled along the main river-banks of the Euphrates, Tigris and the Nile as well as coastal regions. But when land became scarce due to rapid overpopulation, whole chunks of virgin territories on mainland extending behind coastal stretches and islands lying across the shoreline began to be populated. These chunks of populated areas in the Eastern Mediterranean together with similar sites in the Indus valley, East and Southeast Asia looked like lighthouses in the night or oases in the vast uninhabited or sparsely inhabited landmasses of the world which (according to present estimations) housed 10 million people in 15,000 B.C.

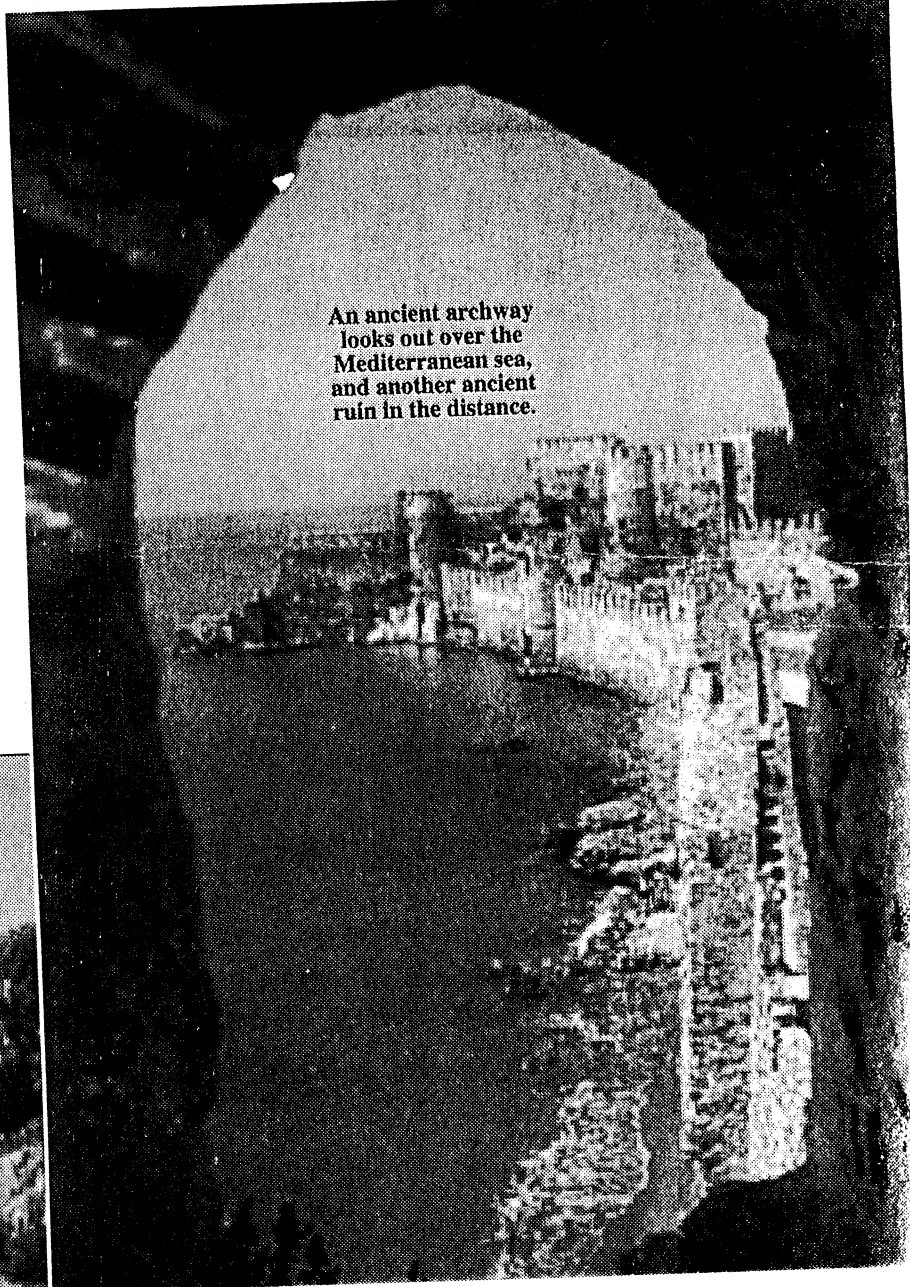
Three peerless events, the invention of (cuneiform) writing by the Sumerians in the 4th millennium in Southeast Mesopotamia; the chain of revelations of the Monotheistic religion from the 2nd millennium onwards in the Eastern Mediterranean region; finally, the institution of the philosophy-science system in the 5th century B.C. within the framework of the Antique Aegean civilization are the building blocks of the Occidental set of civilizations

The switching from hunter-gathering over to agriculture started only about 10,000 years ago when the ice sheets which had covered enormous areas of the Earth's land surface were in retreat. As temperature and therewith sea level rose, the ratio between land and sea as well as the prospect of coastal regions drastically changed. Taking advantage of the improvement in cli-

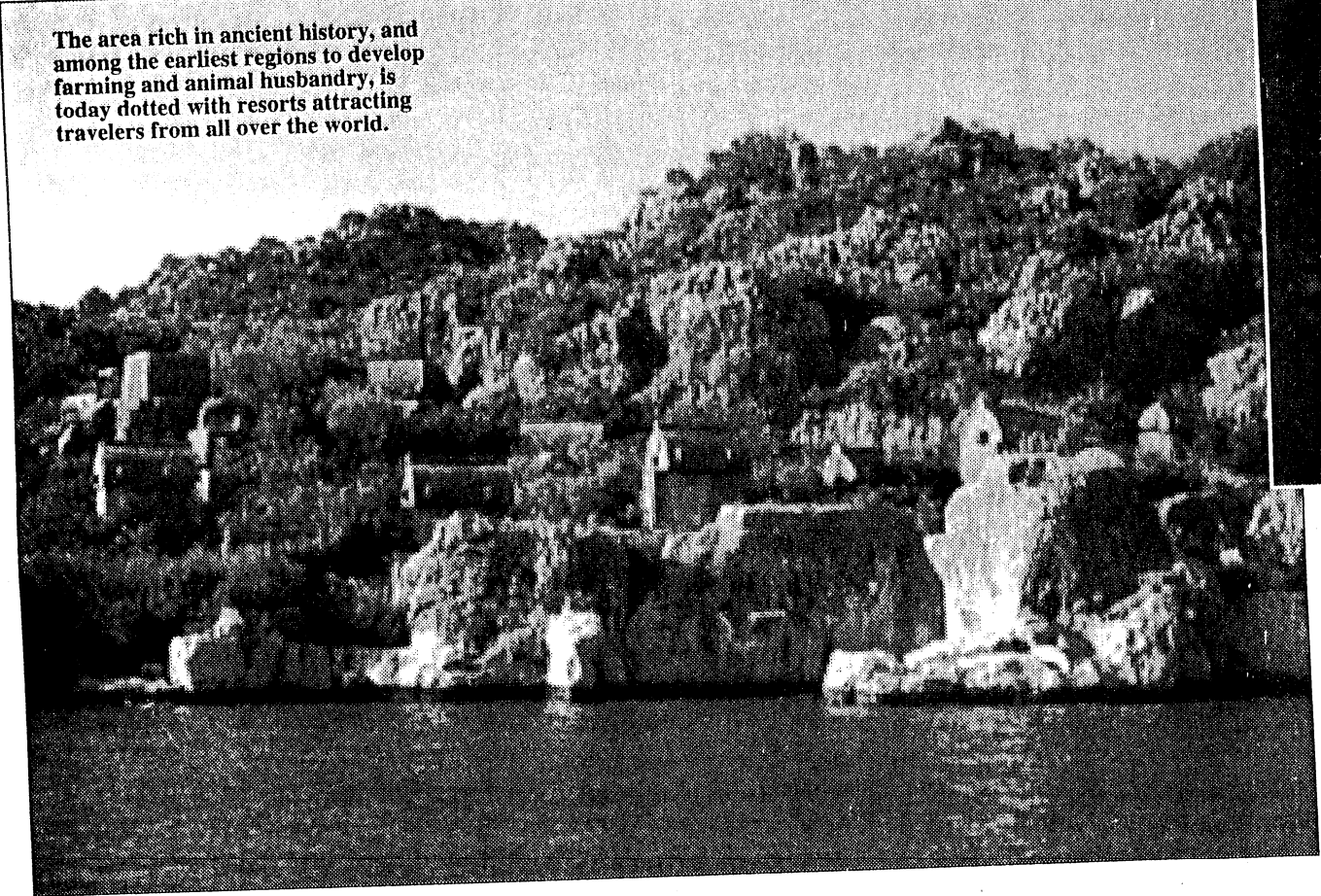


mate, hunter-gatherers were able to move into latitudes that for several thousand years had been too inhospitable and communities everywhere had to develop new ways of benefiting from resources of the postglacial world. The most important of those new adaptations, one which was to transform the face of the Earth and human life, was the adoption of farming. To cultivate the soil and getting settled at one certain spot must, as far as one can imagine today, have been parallel-running processes. They took place, apparently independently, in widely distant parts of the world, yet at approximately the same time: in the Eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia by around 8,000 B.C., in China by 6,000 B.C., by the 7th millennium in Mesoamerica. In each of these areas a range of different plants was cultivated: wheat, barley and pulses in the Eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia; rice and millet in East and Southeast Asia; beans and potato in the Americas, to name only some of the most important species involved.

Communities having to do with husbandry, agriculture, trade, crafts and military techniques evolved from the above-mentioned precarious settlements. Moreover, these rather crowded communities manifested a comprehensive religious life (the extravagant shrines bearing witness to it) and political organization. They eventually became cities in about 5,000 B.C., and thus the fertile grounds from where culture came to reach its peak in the form of statehood and



An ancient archway looks out over the Mediterranean sea, and another ancient ruin in the distance.

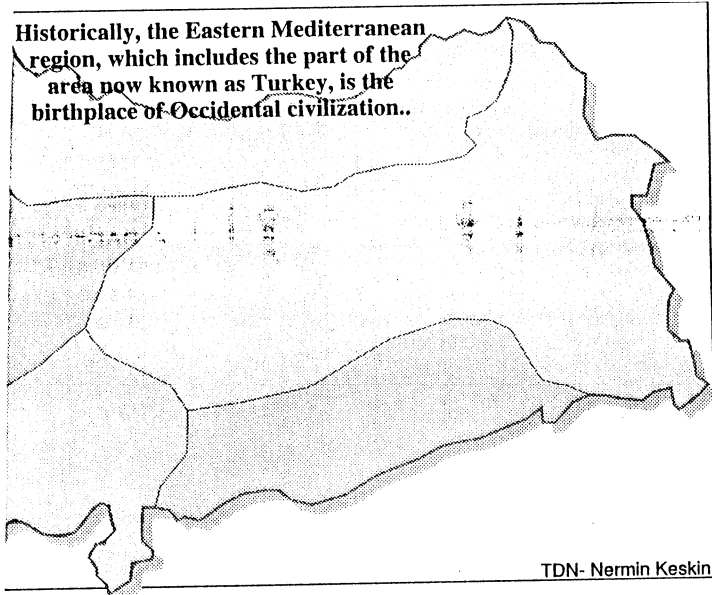


The area rich in ancient history, and among the earliest regions to develop farming and animal husbandry, is today dotted with resorts attracting travelers from all over the world.

hence civilization. That being the case, the Eastern Mediterranean region and its immediate neighbour Mesopotamia have historically been considered as the cradle of the set of Occidental civilizations. This set in a chronological sequence comprises the Ancient Mesopotamian-Egyptian-Mediterranean, the Ancient Hebraic, the Antique Aegean (or Greek), the Medieval Christian, the Islamic, and finally the Modern secular West European-American civilizations. Three peerless events, namely, the invention of (cuneiform) writing by the Sumerians in the 4th millennium in Southeast Mesopotamia; the chain of revelations of the Monotheistic religion from the 2nd millennium onwards in the Eastern Mediterranean region that furthermore comprises the Arabian peninsula as well; finally, the institution of the philosophy-

tal Civilizations and the Turks

Historically, the Eastern Mediterranean region, which includes the part of the area now known as Turkey, is the birthplace of Occidental civilization..



TDN- Nermin Keskin

science system in the 5th century B.C. within the framework of the Antique Aegean civilization which, in fact, is geographically as well as historically a derivation of the Eastern Mediterranean sphere, are the building blocks of the Occidental set of civilizations.

The Mediterranean is by definition a landlocked sea, lying approximately between the latitudes of 32 North and 44 North and longitudes of 5 West and 35 East connected in the west to the Atlantic Ocean by the narrow Strait of Gibraltar. Beyond this, we must distinguish between the kinds of land that surround and confine it. It is, above all, a sea ringed round by mountains. The Mediterranean was originally a huge ocean which stretched across half the globe. But it shrank to its present size through the rise of surrounding areas in the Oligocene era. It now has a total area of 2,969,000 km², including its so-called offshoots, the Aegean, Marmara, the Black Sea, Azov and some other seas. Its maximum length (that is, stretching from Gibraltar to the Azov sea) amounts to 3,800 km, and breadth (between Algiers and Marseille) is 740 km. The Mediterranean reaches at some points a depth of over 5,000 meters. Geographically it is divided into two principal sections: the eastern sector extends from the Levantine coasts and islands to the Ionian Sea; and the western part lies between the Ionian Sea in the east and the Strait of Gibraltar in the west.

Geographically (including topography, climatology, flora and fauna) as well as historically the range of influence of the Eastern Mediterranean has by far been wider than the Western part. The Eastern zone includes in its sphere of influence Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Palestine, the Land of Israel, Arabia, Egypt, Anatolia, the Aegean region and coasts of the Black and Azov Seas. While, as already indicated, the eastern portion of the Mediterranean basin, together with its farther extension Mesopotamia, can be regarded as the cradle of the set of Occidental civilizations, the western half stands for the birthplace and living space of the State of Rome, the foundation-stone of the mainly Modern West European civilization, also a member of the aforesaid set.

Occidental civilizations varied in time. They showed greater ability of alteration for the better or worse than any other throughout history. In the case of the three dominant representative of the Oriental set, the Ancient Chinese, Indian and Persian civilizations, even if they had undergone important political changes, their institutions remained fundamentally intact. They tended to develop without violent changes or breaks, so that civilization and religion remained virtually coterminus. The 'Mediterranean-Mesopotamian

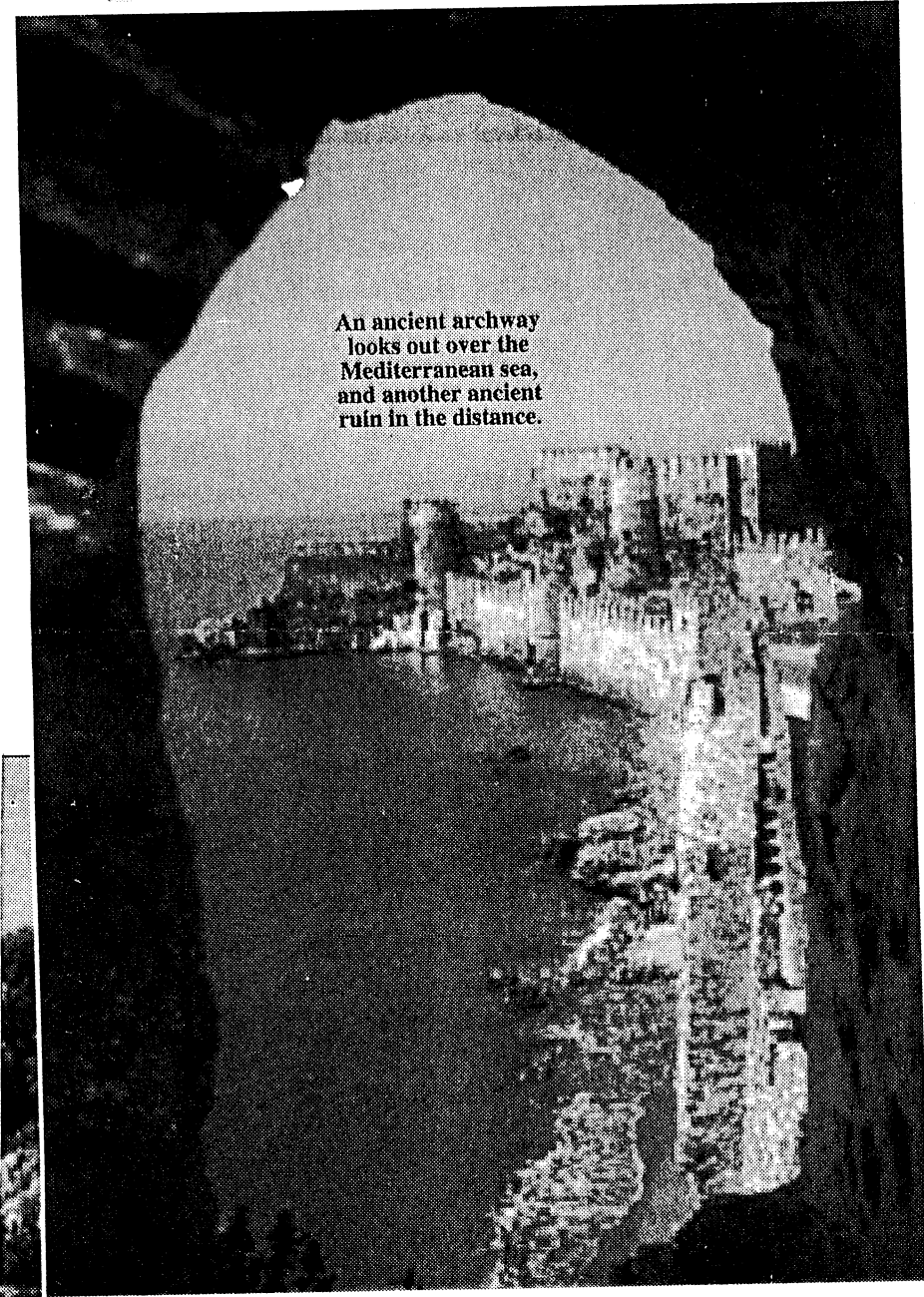
fountainhead-civilization,' on the other hand, begins in a native paganism and ends by manifesting the Monotheistic revelatory religion. Whereas in the Oriental set changes occurred in the shape of modifications, they came about in the Occidental set of civilizations as transformations. This incessant stream of alterations transformed continually the Occidental set's and most particularly the ensuing Modern secular West European civilizations' s possibilities of influencing the future.

"Of all the forces making for its crystallizations, the most fundamental was the setting itself, the Mediterranean basin. It was both a collecting area and a source; currents flowed easily into it from the lands of the old civilizations and from this central reservoir they also flowed back to where they came from and northwards into the barbarian lands. Though it is large and contains a variety of peoples, this

basin has well-defined general characteristics. Most of its coasts are narrow plains behind which quickly rise fairly steep and enclosing mountain ranges, broken by a few important river valleys. Those who lived on the coasts tended to look along them and outward across the sea, rather than behind them to their hinterland. This, combined with a climate they all shared, made the spreading of ideas and techniques within the Mediterranean natural for enterprising peoples.

The Romans, with reason, named the Mediterranean *Mare Magnum*, the Great Sea. It was the outstanding geographical fact of their world, the center of classical maps". Moreover, it was for the Arabs *al-bahr abyad al mutawassit*, The White Middle Sea, and later for the Turks, simply, *Akdeniz*, the clear White Sea.

An ancient archway looks out over the Mediterranean sea, and another ancient ruin in the distance.



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The fountainhead of Occidental Civilizations and the Turks

By Teoman Durali

TDN Guest Writer

- PART II -

So who were they, these relatively late-coming Turks, eventually arriving at the clear blue waters of the White Sea? In his work "An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples," Peter B. Golden asks: "integrating the linguistic and archaeological data, what can be said regarding the ancient habitat of Turkic peoples?" Researchers into ancient Turkish history, like Golden himself and Menge, located the primordial territory of the Turks (of the Mongoloid somatic type) in the Altai zone, with Indo-European peoples to their west, Samodian and Paleo-Siberian (Yeniseic) groupings to their northwest, Mongols to their east and south and Tungusic peoples to their north and east. The Altai, in all likelihood, was an important zone of contact. But if the identification of the Turks with the Mongolian population that entered the Altai region at various times is correct (as the archaeological materials of the historically attested population of the Türk Qaganate suggest), then we should probably place the early Turkic-speaking people at least in the Hsiung-nu era, or thereabouts, in the Trans-Baikal. Proto-Turkic unity came to an end during the 1st millennium B.C., and the ancestors of the Turkic peoples advanced to East Asia and thence to Western and Eastern Turkistan.

So, we can trace back the past of the Turks up to the first millennium B.C.; the period of their primeval ancestors, the Huns — or, as the Chinese called them, Hiong-nu. Nevertheless, their history as a state-constituting entity did not begin until around the 3rd century B.C. when the mythical leader of the Huns, Teoman (T'eu-man in Chinese) gathered the scattered tribes under the roof of a federation.

A state with the appellation "Türk" first appeared in the 6th century A.D., which is also the period in which we find the oldest existing Turkish-written texts (to be precise, in 581).

Transoxiana, the Southern Caucasus, Northern Mesopotamia, and last but not least Anatolia, and the legitimization of Seljuk rule by the Caliph enabled the Turks to settle across a wide area, from the ancestral lands of north-eastern and Central Asia to Anatolia and later, with the oncoming of the third power in — and indeed the pinnacle of — Turkish history, the Ottoman state, to the Balkans. Eventually, in the early 20th century, the Ottoman state was superseded by the Turkish Republic, the second state in history after the Celestial Turkish Republic to bear the name "Turkish"; all the others carried a dynastic name.

By joining the fold of Muslim societies, settling once and for all in western Asia and south-eastern Europe and on the eastern fringes of the Mediterranean basin, and establishing states within a brand-new context, Turkish history changed its track from the Oriental to the Occidental set of civilizations. Turkish culture, the product of tremendously rich past acquisitions, still displays many vestiges of archaic elements dating back to pre-Islamic times.

After all, as the eminent French scholar and specialist on ancient Turkish history Jean-Paul Roux claims, "the Turks represent two thousand years of history extending from the Pacific to the Mediterranean, from Peking to Vienna, Algiers and Troy; they merged their fortune with that of all the peoples of the world."

It would not be an overstatement to assert that a so-called unshattered "backbone" stands firmly behind Turkish history; or, to use a Hegelian term, a spirit exists deep inside it.

A keen and careful observer will certainly not fail to discern within this spirit age-old and worldwide-valid components, skills and wisdom, mainly to constitute and run a state as well as wield authority of law and order over the ruled people.

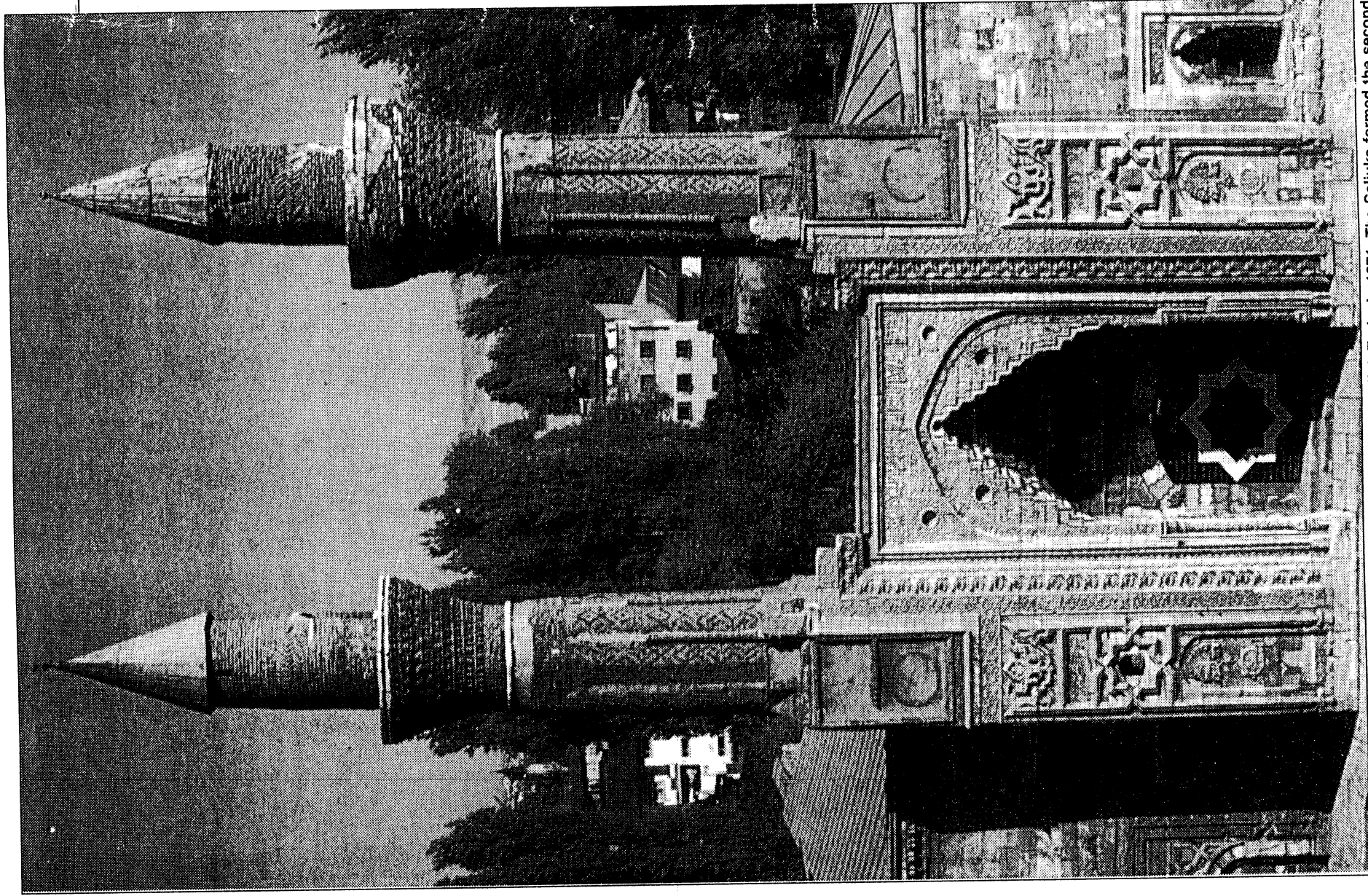
Besides this, particularly in architecture, calligraphy, music and poetry, Turkish history is a showcase of the finest works of artistry.

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The East and West Celestial Turkish States were succeeded by the Uighur Turks who adopted a myriad of beliefs: to begin with their own traditional one, the faith in a certain divinity, Tengri (in latter-day Ottoman Turkish, "Tanrı"), Manicheism, Buddhism, Taoism and the Nestorian version of Christianity. In the course of time other Turkish states and communities were converted to Orthodox and Catholic Christianity as well as, to a minor extent, Judaism.

This utter heterogeneity ceased to be the case when almost all Turkish tribes and communities began to embrace Islam in the 9th century. The first officially Muslim Turkish state was the Qarakhanite kingdom (founded in 870). The second major Muslim Turkish state was that of the Seljuks in the 11th century.

The movement of the Seljuks into the heartland of Islam, the Islamization of a large block of Turks and thereby the adoption of a unitary writing system (with Arabic letters) comprehensible throughout an immense area extending from East Turkistan to the Balkans, the swift conquests, the Turkification of



The Gök Medrese in Sivas, central Anatolia, was built by the Seljuk Turks in 1271. The Seljuks formed the second major Muslim Turkish state, after the Qarakhanite kingdom which was founded in 870.

