

# I3

## Shifting the Boundaries of Literacy: Introduction of Western-Style Education to the Ottoman Empire

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**Winn:** For almost everyone in this room, I venture to say, an absolutely thrilling intellectual experience was learning a first foreign language. My son is having this experience now, learning Latin as a ninth grader. And I'm sort of reliving what that was like. One thing that happens when you learn the first language other than the one you learned from your parent is that, regardless of what that language is, and regardless of what cultural baggage it comes trailing, it makes you aware, for probably the first time, of language and literacy as technology. That is to say, I would argue that for most of us the language that we grow up speaking, that we learned from our parents, is entirely embedded, until it is made foreign.



Baron de Tott was a French artillery officer who had taught for two years at one of the earliest Western-style schools established in the Ottoman empire in 1773, the naval school of mathematics (Lewis 1961: 48-9). An anecdote in his *Memoirs* (1786: II, 203-4) about his departure from the empire in 1775 captures his unique teaching experience:

The vessel that was to convey me . . . had already weighed anchor, and set her sails, when several boats came about us, and I saw myself surrounded by all my pupils, with each a book or an instrument in his hand. Before you leave us, said they, with much emotion, give us, at least, a parting lesson; it will be more deeply impressed on our memories than all the rest. One opened his book to explain the square of the hypotenuse; another with a long white beard elevated his sextant to take an altitude; a third asked me questions concerning the use of the sinical quadrant; and all accompanied me out to sea for more than two leagues: where we took leave of each other, with a tenderness the more lively, as it was with the Turks unusual (*sic.*), and to me unexpected.

The age of de Tott's pupils and the content of their coursework illustrate one interpretation of Western literacy that emerged in the Ottoman Empire<sup>1</sup> during the late 18th and 19th centuries, one emphasizing the acquisition of technical and scientific competency. In the following years, this naval school expanded, developed, and provided the model for other such schools. Western-style military engineering, medical, and training schools were established at which many European officers served as teachers and instructors and at which French was the language of instruction.

In this chapter, I argue that the Ottoman society translated, negotiated, and redefined Western literacy in the 18th and 19th centuries through three types of Western-style schools: the state schools founded by the Ottoman sultan; the minority schools of the Ottoman Greeks, Armenians, and Jews; and the foreign schools instituted by Western powers such as the French, British, and the American. Whereas the state schools emphasized the acquisition of technical and scientific competency, the minority schools stressed the significance of civic responsibility and the foreign schools moral duty to self and society in interpreting Western literacy. These interpretations of literacy emerged through an interaction of the visions of the founders with the Ottoman social structure.

<sup>1</sup>The Ottoman empire ruled parts of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Asia Minor, the Fertile Crescent, North Africa, and the Arabian peninsula during the 13th to the 20th centuries. Attempts to Westernize after militarily and financially successful Europe started in the 18th century and continued until the demise of the empire in 1922.

## HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY AND THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

Street's definition of literacy (1984: 1) as "the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" captures the elements of the debate about the term. Some scholars (Clammer 1976, Goody 1968), focusing on the functional aspect of reading and writing, have emphasized its universality and its relationship to social issues such as economic development and political democracy. Others (Gee 1990, Scribner and Cole 1988, Street 1984) have concentrated on the evaluative dimension of the social practices and conceptions surrounding literacy, thereby highlighting the multiplicity of literacies across time and space. They have demonstrated how the consequences of literacy vary from being emancipatory (Arnove 1986, Freire 1970, Mackie 1980) to hegemonic (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Stuckey 1991), and how one needs to locate literacy within the larger social structure (Graff 1987, Houston 1985, Markoff 1986, Street 1984, Vincent 1989) to give it any meaning.

What contribution can historical sociology make to the concept of literacy? It can further analyze the "social practice" of reading and writing. The *social* emphasizes the context within which reading and writing occurs. This context includes all factors that affect the parameters of reading and writing such as the construction of meaning, the relation to state or to power, or interactions with class, gender, and ethnicity. The *practice* captures the agency of the individuals or groups engaged in reading and writing; it includes those who teach, those who learn, and those in society who are indirectly affected by this process. The interaction of these two aspects, the "social" giving the structural constraints and "practice" conveying the goals of the agents, construct the concept of literacy. According to this formulation, the goals of the social agents engaged in the production or reproduction of literacy intersect with the structural constraints of society to produce a particular form of literacy.

One crucial component in this social construction of literacy is the effect of the differential power of the individuals or groups engaged in the process. Each individual or group articulate their conception of literacy within the parameters of their own social experience. Their particular social realities and visions of society lead to different interpretations of literacy. This discrepancy becomes particularly significant across societies that have differential political and economic power. The effects of the form of literacy that emerged in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has since then spread to the rest of the world is the focus of this chapter.

### THE DEFINITION OF WESTERN LITERACY

Two historical contexts demarcate the parameters of this form of literacy; its emergence in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries,<sup>2</sup> and its subsequent reinterpretation outside of Europe. The European context emphasizes the redefinition of "literacy" that occurred as a consequence of the social, political, and economic transformations in Europe at the time. The context outside stresses the definition of "Western" as those perceived qualities that differentiated the European experience of literacy. I thus refer to this historical form as "Western"<sup>3</sup> literacy and define it as comprising the inculcation of moral responsibility to self and society, the acquisition of technological proficiency, and their dissemination through mass schooling.

The European association of moral responsibility with literacy emerged through the objective of Lutheran Protestantism to make reading, in particular reading of the Bible in the vernacular, accessible to all (Gee 1990: 37). This objective connected with the Enlightenment idea of rights, specifically of civil, political, and social rights<sup>4</sup> to produce the concept of moral responsibility of individuals to self and society. The relation of literacy with technological proficiency was rooted in the attempts of the emerging European industries to train and control the worker (Levine 1986: 82) and to expand to "civilize" the rest of the world (Adas 1989: 3-4; Street 1984: 2). With industrialization, the degree to which a society had mastered its environment became a measure of its place within the spectrum of savagery to civilization. As Adas argues (1989: 53, 64), literacy then came "to be regarded as a major attribute of civilized societies," and technological proficiency gradually indicated "the level of development attained by different societies." Europe was at the top of the development scale.

The dissemination of literacy through mass schooling in 18th- and 19th-century Europe fit a multiplicity of social projects ranging from Protestantism and industrialization to nation-statehood and political control. As schools expanded into the remotest areas, religion and science penetrated deeper and deeper into all niches of society. Educational institutions gradually monopolized the various Western

media through which one could acquire literacy (Cook-Gumperz 1986: 22). This concentration of skills was also accompanied by the systematic accumulation of Western knowledge. Schooling and literacy thus became synonymous. The social capital individuals acquired by going through this process created political power, necessitating the control of the nation-state in the name of the masses it claimed to represent. Yet, the nation-state itself often represented the interests of specific social groups, such as the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie. Hence, knowledge, power, and class interests coincided as social groups controlling schooling and literacy aimed to reproduce their dominance at the expense of others (Lankshear and Lawler 1987: 19).

The nation-state configured into this contestation over the distribution of power among social groups in the 19th century as it attempted to use education "to homogenize the population, to penetrate society, and to control it" (Houston 1985: 137). The state attempted to separate literacy from religion and industry and to bring it under state jurisdiction through schooling. It created a new model of schooling based on an intricate system of annual curricula, grades, and diplomas that acted as gatekeepers. This system was adapted throughout the rest of the world.

The moral and technological dimensions of Western literacy that evolved throughout European history were reinterpreted in non-Western contexts. These dimensions acquired new meanings in their novel surroundings of Western-style schools that often had English or French as the language of instruction. I argue that Western literacy created a duality in the non-Western societies, a "double" literacy (Bleich 1988: 316). The societies acquired, in addition to the preexisting form of literacy, a new literacy within the organizational context of Western-style schools.

In the case of the Ottoman Empire, during the 18th and 19th centuries, the displacement of the literacy based on the mastery of religious texts took place. I argue that the emerging Western literacy was interpreted differently across the three types of Western-style schools founded in the empire. The newly formed Ottoman state schools emphasized the accumulation of a systematic knowledge of science and technology; the minority schools stressed the exercise of civic duties to self and society, and the foreign schools underscored the acquisition of moral responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

"civil rights, such as the liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought, and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice; political rights, such as the franchise and the right of access to public office; and social rights, ranging from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a person according to the standards in the society."

<sup>2</sup>Resnick and Resnick (1988) have a similar formulation in which they differentiate literacy development before the 20th century into the Protestant-religious, elite-technical, and civic-national models.

<sup>3</sup>The category of the "West" mainly comprises England and France at this time period; the term West acquires meaning through the perceptions of Western Europe by those outside its boundaries, that is, the non-West (Göçek 1988: Introduction).

<sup>4</sup>These rights, described in more detail, (Van Amersfoort 1978: 219-20) are

### THE OTTOMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In the Ottoman Empire, prior to the 18th century, the learning of reading and writing was not originally separated from the mastery of religious texts. This conception of literacy seems to extend across societies (see Deborah Keller-Cohen, this volume, on early American self-help books and David Hall, this volume, on clergymen as members of the Royal Society of Britain). In the context of the Ottoman society, both the Ottoman Muslims and the Ottoman minorities of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews combined religion and reading and writing in defining literacy. Among the Muslims, for example, the memorization of the Qur'an was regarded as the first step in mastering the religious sciences that comprised all bodies of knowledge elucidating the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet.<sup>6</sup> Secular knowledge referred to knowledge outside the religious sciences, including knowledge about commercial transactions, administrative practices, and the execution of crafts such as music and poetry (Eickelman 1978: 489-91; Mottahedeh 1985: 89).

Schooling, in this context, did not imply literacy; students in the mosque school (*mekteb*) first learned to memorize and recite the Qur'an without learning to read and write. Each morning the teacher wrote the verses to be memorized on a wooden slate, and the 15 to 20 children spent the rest of the day memorizing them by reciting out loud; they then systematically recounted all the previously learned verses.<sup>7</sup> The students were not grouped into classes based on their age or their degree of mastery of the material. Their age mostly varied between 5 and 12, and those who recited the material correctly moved on to the next set of verses until memorization of the whole Qur'an was completed. Should they choose to continue their education, these "memorizers" (*hafiz*) then sat with circles of men of learning and their disciples who met regularly in the principal mosques in large towns (Eickelman 1978: 493-3).

It was only at this more advanced level, in these mosque universities (*medrese*), that students started to comprehend the meaning of the Qur'an and of reading and writing outside the boundaries set by religion. Learning was based on the systematic methods of discussion, especially of Aristotle, as advocated by Avicenna (Mottahedeh 1985: 82). At this level, the oral tradition was more important than

(1988) discuss among the West African Vai, where three literacies—the local Vai, religious Arabic, and colonial English—coexist in three different scripts. Each one has a distinct form of social organization, transmission, and function.

<sup>6</sup>Religious sciences also included Islamic jurisprudence, Ptolemaic astronomy, Avicennian medicine, and the algebra of Omar Khayyam.

<sup>7</sup>Because the language of the Qur'an did not correspond to their native lan-

the written one because learning occurred through the dialogues and disputations among the advanced students. Once more, there was no fixed progression of studies, except for the gradual mastery of the exegetical literature and jurisprudence. Some then achieved reputations as men of learning and, through apprenticeship, prepared for positions in the Ottoman judiciary or in education.

This religious form of literacy was also complemented with a secular form for Ottoman administrators. The training for Ottoman administrative positions took place in the sultan's palace and his officials' households (Göçek 1988). After attending courses in mosques to master the Qur'an in Arabic (a language they did not understand), at the age of 12, the clerks started to reside in the official's household. They were trained there in reading and writing in Ottoman, in literary composition and style, and in calligraphy. Persian and Arabic teachers were also hired to come to the household and give lessons to those clerks who wanted to master these languages.<sup>8</sup>

### THE ADOPTION OF A WESTERN-STYLE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The boundaries of Ottoman literacy started to shift in the 18th and 19th centuries as the forces of commerce, wars, and Ottoman internal alliances created the need for Western literacy (Göçek 1988). Some elements united the interpretation of this Western literacy in the Ottoman context, whereas others produced differences. I argue that the visions of the founders of the Western-style state, minority, and missionary schools interacted with the Ottoman social structure to produce different definitions of Western literacy.

The Western-style educational system shared many elements. Although different Western-style schools in the Ottoman empire defined Western literacy differently, all agreed that this new literacy diverged from the former one based on the mastery of religious texts. Literacy had started to acquire a value in and of itself; it was no longer treated as a by-product of the study of the religious sciences. The memorization of the religious texts was replaced by the learning of the Latin alphabet, a script not previously employed by any of the Ottoman social groups. The language of instruction

guage, they did not know the meaning of the verses they recited. In the absence of textbooks, the verses on the slates served as visual markers guiding their learning by rote.

<sup>8</sup>The training for the military, or for other occupations which often did not require literacy, was done through apprenticeship in the army or the guild system (Akkutay 1984: 16-20).

engaged by all was always a European one, most often French—this meant for all the mastery of a new grammar as well as a new script. There also developed a social disjuncture between those Ottomans who attended these schools and their peers and families (Taylor 1983) who did not possess this new literacy. The new literacy was a cultural capital that favorably altered the social position of those who acquired it at the expense of those who did not.

The changing balance of powers in Europe at the expense of the Ottoman empire generated, among the Ottoman statesmen who were mostly Muslims, an interest in patterns of European social transformation. These men identified science and technology as the reasons for the constant European success in war, and they attempted to replicate this success in the Ottoman empire. They established Western-style state schools within which to study Western science and technology. The Ottoman internal alliances also favored the adoption of Western literacy. The Ottoman sultan, who was challenged domestically by the alliances of his officials, introduced a new form of literacy in newly organized schools to train a new corps of officials. He aimed to replace his old officials with this new loyal corps.

The Ottoman minorities of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, who served as intermediaries in Ottoman commerce with the West, adopted Western literacy for different reasons. Because their position within Ottoman society hindered their attendance in the Western-style schools of the sultan, these minorities established Western-style schools themselves. Through these schools they attempted to successfully participate in the emerging European "civilization" with which they identified themselves more and more. Western powers, mainly France, England, and the United States, also directly "civilized" the rest of the world by establishing missionary schools. Many foreign schools were established in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century as a result of this civilizing mission.

#### WESTERN-STYLE OTTOMAN STATE SCHOOLS

Late 18th- and 19th-century Ottoman historical chronicles and memoirs amply demonstrate the inadequacies the Ottoman sultan and his officials found in their social system as they compared it, particularly the military institution, to the West (Hanioglu 1985). Their lengthy discussions on why the West was much more advanced centered on the three concepts that they identified as underlying all accomplishments: science, technology, and progress.

The Ottoman sultan and officials decided to close the perceived gap between the Ottoman empire and the West through

Western-style education. Western-style state schools were speedily established from the second half of the 18th century on. First, naval and military engineering schools were founded in the years 1773 and 1793. These and other military schools like them were followed by the establishment of a medical school in 1823 to train physicians for the new Ottoman army, a school for surgeons in 1831, and another school in military sciences in 1834 (Göçek 1988: 229-30).<sup>9</sup>

The education in all of these schools was based on the French model, with the courses also taught in French. The courses at the Ottoman school of military sciences, for example, were structured after the French military academy of Saint-Cyr, and the course outline for the general staff was based on that of the *École d'Etat Major*. The mode of teaching, as the remarks of Baron de Tott at the beginning of this chapter indicate, was based on the lectures of European tutors from books mostly in French. The Muslim pupils would translate, frequently with the help of Ottoman minorities (who knew Western languages), sections from these books into Ottoman, and then discuss them in conjunction with the tutor's lecture (Erdem 1986: 46).

The age structure of the students varied greatly in the beginning (as de Tott's account of a white bearded pupil demonstrates), but gradually became more uniform. Unlike the former Islamic education, the course of training was prescribed and standardized for all students, the recruitment entailed special examinations, and the administrative positions one attained upon graduation had a regular salary paid by the state.

How did these Western-style state schools interpret Western literacy? The Ottoman sultan advocated Western literacy specifically for the acquisition of current European knowledge on science and technology. He assumed that the acquisition of this knowledge within the context of Western-style state schools would naturally produce progress as an intended consequence. His address on the inauguration of the new medical school building in 1838 captured this motive as he told the students (Lewis 1961: 85):

You will study scientific medicine in French. . . . My purpose in having you taught French is not to educate you in the French language; it is to teach you scientific medicine and little by little to take it into our language. . . . Work to acquire a knowledge of medicine from your teachers, and strive gradually to take it into Turkish and give it currency in our language.

<sup>9</sup>The number of Western-style state schools increased rapidly in late 19th century; between 1879 and 1895, for example, 160 such secondary schools were built.

Hence, Western literacy was defined in a very goal-oriented manner as the acquisition of European science and technology.

Yet, this acquisition inevitably brought with it elements of the social context within which it had been produced. European economic, political, and social issues<sup>10</sup> started to be introduced together with its science and technology. This gradual transformation in the Ottoman boundaries of Western literacy is best demonstrated by the case of the most Westernized of all the Western-style state schools, that is, the lycée of Galatasaray founded under direct French influence with the guidance of an expert from the French ministry of education.

The curriculum Galatasaray followed was entirely French, except for the inclusion of classes in Ottoman (Davison 1961: 297-8). The Ottoman students started to oppose the curriculum on the grounds that the language of instruction was slighting their language. They asked, without success, for the language of instruction to be changed into Ottoman.<sup>11</sup> The seeds of this objection were embedded in the social context of the Western literacy they were acquiring. The Galatasaray students were all reading French textbooks which, in France, had become an important medium for building loyalty to the French nation-state (Resnick 1990: 24). In the Ottoman context, as the students read these texts, they ended up forming loyalty not to the person of the sultan who established these schools for that purpose, but instead to the abstract notion of the Ottoman state. They then looked for ways to foster and reproduce this loyalty: they demanded instruction in Ottoman.

The memoirs of one of the graduates of this school, Niyazi Bey, highlights the mode through which the Ottoman students thus reinterpreted Western literacy. It was his introduction in the French literature and history courses to concepts such as progress, loyalty, humanity, and love of the country that changed his vision for the future of his society. He recounted (Lewis 1961: 195):

They used to tell us stories about the patriotism of the old Ottomans and the French. . . . Would it not be our duty to defend the fatherland and repel the attacks of the enemy? Why then is there no trace, in our courses and syllabi, of fatherland or of training of the mind? Why do they force us to conceal a whole set of feelings that by religion, reason, and logic are sacred to us?

<sup>10</sup>The first Ottoman literary translations were the works of Victor Hugo, Shakespeare, and Lamartine. The first Ottoman translation was specifically the short story "Telemaque," followed by *Les Misérables*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1864), *Monte Cristo* (1871-3), "Atala" by Chateaubriand (1872), and "Paul et Virginie" (1873) (Göçek 1988: 88).

<sup>11</sup>To this day, the language of instruction is French.

It was questions such as these that gradually generated a political opposition to the Ottoman sultan. The first seeds of opposition were sowed in 1859 when the students trained in new military schools met to discuss the structure of Ottoman society and the plausibility of political representation. Thirty years later, four medical students founded a secret opposition group to the sultan.

The Western-style schools thus developed a new group of Ottoman students who formed social allegiances among themselves, acquired new scientific and administrative skills, and learned of new political models of organizing their society. Even though the Ottoman sultan and his officials had redefined Western literacy narrowly to the acquisition of European science and technology, the media of the French language and Western-style schooling introduced additional components that mobilized the students against the sultan.

### WESTERN-STYLE MINORITY SCHOOLS

The position of the Ottoman minorities in the empire changed favorably in the 18th and 19th centuries with increasing trade with the West. They started sending their sons to the West in the early 19th century and established Western-style schools in their own communities.<sup>12</sup> Western literacy for these minorities implied a cultural regeneration, revival within the norms and values propagated by the European Enlightenment. They looked to Europe for ways to recapture their golden past—the Western-style school emerged as the ideal medium for such a goal. These Western-style minority schools thus combined French instruction as the language of "civilization" with an increased emphasis on their "national" language and literature.

The in-depth analysis of the Ottoman Armenian community illustrates this reinterpretation of Western literacy among the Ottoman minorities. The Armenian cultural revival emerged through the combination of the educational influence of the Italian missionaries, the revival of Armenian classical literature in Venice, and the modernization of the Armenian language and the rise of the Armenian literati (Sarkiss 1937: 433). The most significant historical juncture in this process was the 18th-century Michtarist movement, which rediscovered Armenian classical literature and created an Armenian vernacular.

Abbot Michitar (1676-1749), the founder of the movement, had been affected by the European Enlightenment. His dominant motive in attaining Western literacy was quite different from that of

<sup>12</sup>The Ottoman minorities did not fully attend the Western-style state schools of the sultan because ethnic segmentation restricted their social participation in Ottoman society (Göçek 1993).



the Ottoman sultan; he stated that he wanted (Sarkiss 1937: 442): "to bring the Armenian nation into contact with Europe without extinguishing the national spirit, to love his nation, and, for that very reason, to borrow from European science and Enlightenment that which might not prove antithetical and injurious to the spirit of the nation." Hence, the borrowing from the West and the definition of Western literacy was not going to be along the boundaries of science and technology, but instead along those parameters acceptable to the spirit of the Armenian "nation."

The disciples of Abbot Michitar bolstered this new literacy as they collected classical manuscripts, published the first grammar of classical Armenian, compiled an Armenian dictionary, and wrote books on arts and sciences. Vernacular Armenian grammar was structured and written about the same time. Translations from Homer to Virgil, Dante to Shakespeare followed. Hence, it was the formulation of classical and vernacular Armenian texts that enabled the interpretation of Western literacy as the social practice of reading and writing Armenian as well as French. The emphasis on national identity was a significant component of the new literacy in Ottoman communities.

A special group sustained and reproduced this Armenian cultural revival by founding and financing Western-style schools in their communities. These were the amiras, a group of urban Armenians who had attained wealth through trade and finance (Artinian 1989: 20, 23, 29). In 1790, one Mkrdich amira Mirijanian financed, for example, the first Western-style school in the Kumkapi neighborhood of Constantinople; he was soon followed by others who established similar schools in the quarters of Balat (1796), Ortaköy (1798), Kuruçeşme (1798), Samatya (1799), and Üsküdar (1800). Some, like Mkrdich amira Jezayirlian, also funded the education of bright Armenians in European universities (Barsoumian 1982: 177). By mid-19th century, the Ottoman Armenians had 44 schools and 1 higher education academy; by 1900, there were 80,000 students in the Armenian schools<sup>13</sup> of the empire (Rodrigue 1990: 45-6).

The disputes within the Armenian community eventually led to the gradual decline of communal schooling, however. In addition to the tensions between the "reformist" amiras and the conservatives in the community, the religious schisms among the Armenians delayed the establishment of a united communal vision. Leaving the orthodox Armenians behind, the Catholic Armenians started to attend French missionary schools in Constantinople, whereas the Protestant

<sup>13</sup>The Ottoman Greeks were even more active; at the same time period, the capital of the empire, Constantinople, alone had 105 Greek schools with 15,000 students.

Armenians went to the American schools. Hence, the conflicts within minority communities bolstered the attendance of Ottoman minorities in the foreign schools of the empire as well.

The fact that the Ottoman minorities aligned themselves with a distant Western civilization rather than adopting the culture and language of their surrounding society had a significant consequence. Strengthened by their own conception of Western literacy which emphasized civic duty to self and society, these communities attempted to break away from the Ottoman empire to establish "homelands" of their own.

### WESTERN-STYLE FOREIGN SCHOOLS

The number of Western-style foreign schools in the Ottoman empire escalated in the 19th century. An 1894 Ottoman inventory documents the existence in the empire of 413 foreign and 4,547 minority schools (Göçek 1993). Of the foreign schools, the French established 115, the Americans 83, the British 52, Russia and the Balkan states of Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria 50, Austria and Germany 32, and Italy 25. Most founded schools in the Arab provinces, and the rest were almost evenly distributed among the Balkans, Constantinople, and Asia Minor. By the eve of World War I, an unofficial count (Davison 1961: 291, Szyliowicz 1973: 149) estimated that 500 French schools with 59,414 students, 675 American schools with 34,317, and 178 British schools with 12,800 students were functioning in the empire.

The reason behind the founding of these schools was the Enlightenment idea of civilization and progress for all. The West took it upon itself to spread these ideas through education, which was believed by the European thinkers to be the only medium with the capacity to transform human existence. The in-depth study, through archival documents,<sup>14</sup> of one such foreign school, the American Robert College, portrays these and many other dimensions. The faith placed in the transformative power of education, a presupposition of the Enlightenment, is evident in the speech of the U.S. representative Mr. Morris at the laying of the cornerstone of Robert College in 1867. He stated that (Doc. # 5: 5):

<sup>14</sup>The documents (*Robert College Archives*) are comprised of the correspondence before the foundation of the school by Mr. Robert, a wealthy American philanthropist, in 1863, the contemporary and subsequent speeches given at and about the college, and the curricula. See the Appendix to this chapter for a list of the documents in Istanbul, Turkey.

The uneducated man is like untilled earth, which produces nothing but noxious weeds and plants; the educated man, like the earth under the effect of culture, its powers of production increased, and blooming with waving harvest and useful grains. To educate a human being, is to redeem him from a state of brute ignorance, to pour upon his benighted mind the vivifying rays of knowledge, to change his whole nature in fact, and to teach him to know himself, and how to use his mental powers. Knowledge is the chosen agent of civilization: it is power in every sense of the word, power to create, power to develop, and power for infinite progress.

The constant emphasis on the positive consequences of knowledge one attained through education totally precluded the possibility that the knowledge itself might not be value-free. This misconception may be due to the nature of Western historical transformation, which united the processes of religious transformation, technological and scientific progress, and literacy. Literacy always implied Western morality and scientific expertise.

Based on this latent Western historical experience, and the emphasis of the missionaries on religion, the inculcation of moral responsibility<sup>15</sup> became the main component of the Robert College's interpretation of Western literacy. The form of this moral responsibility and the nature of its ties with Protestantism were issues discussed in depth within the initial correspondence about the foundation of Robert College. The original initiators debated how apparent this underlying purpose of Western literacy ought to be. The educators in Constantinople who originally recommended the foundation of such a college suggested it be "disconnected from the Mission, tolerant to their (Muslims') religious prejudices, which might thus secure a native patronage, become self-sustaining, and carry evangelical influences into families of Turks and others where no direct missionary effort would ever be tolerated" (Doc. #7:1).

Yet, such a "neutral" position was not readily acceptable by Mr. Robert, the eventual founder of the college, who argued that the emphasis on religion was necessary for practical and moral purposes. He wanted the religious element in the college's conception of Western literacy to be evident; for a "strict acknowledgement of God and His

<sup>15</sup>The lack of this moral responsibility in Ottoman society was pointed out by Mr. Gates, the U.S. Representative, at the laying of the cornerstone of Robert College in 1867, who noted that (Doc. #5: 5-6): "The education of the heart is here (in the Ottoman empire) too often sacrificed to that of the head, a fact which accounts for the striking contrasts so common in this country, of cultivated intelligence existing in the same person with an absence of moral principle. Such faults of education Robert College seeks to correct, and in so doing it will confer lasting benefits upon all who are subjected to its influence, and through them, upon the community generally."

Word" was in his judgement, necessary. He was not willing to have anything to do with the college if it were not founded on strictly Christian principles, as one cannot then "expect God to bless it." Furthermore, "Christian men would not furnish the money unless they knew it would be used to build a Christian institution" (Doc. #7: 1-2).

The competition among the Catholics and Protestants over the control of foreign education in the empire was another factor that led to the emphasis on the religious component. The correspondence between Mr. Robert and Mr. Cyrus Hamlin, a former missionary who eventually founded Robert College, demonstrates this competition. Mr. Hamlin wrote to Mr. Robert that "if you succeed in founding this institution, the labors of your life will have culminated in a great and permanent result for the rescue of this (Ottoman) empire from Islamism and popery for the Lord Jesus Christ" (Doc. #7: 11). Hence, it was both Islam and the perceived influence of Catholicism in the empire that the American college aimed to supplant.<sup>16</sup>

The premises of American society on which Robert College was based also affected its reinterpretation of Western literacy. The education was directly modeled on the New England schools; the aim was to produce a graduate "who could properly take his place as a respectable member of the New England society fondly believed to be the norm for civilized Western behavior" (Doc. #9: 8). The two values instilled in all the men were "self-reliance, and individual initiative" (Doc. #1: 4). The college combined (Doc. #3: 15-6) "the highest moral training with the most complete moral discipline and with a due care for physical culture. Such was the general aim and ideal of any New England college of the time." Liberty was the most emphasized premise of American society; many speeches repeated that the education was aimed at training men to the use of liberty, "an aspect of Anglo-Saxon communities" (Doc. #3: 14-6). The college was also founded, for example, on July 4, 1867, a day that celebrates U.S. Independence.

How did this abstract reinterpretation of Western literacy on moral responsibility and liberty translate into practice in the context of Robert College? Moral responsibility and liberty transformed, through the curriculum, into a demonstration of national loyalty. The college's definition of Western literacy specifically entailed (Doc. #7: 17) a thorough and grammatical study of each students' own vernacular language and a knowledge of English<sup>17</sup> and French languages. These languages alerted the students to the separateness of each community within the Ottoman empire. The contents of the courses offered further articulation of this conception.

<sup>16</sup>The religious influence on the college was evident in its motto, *per deum omnia*, all things through God (Doc. #4: 8).

<sup>17</sup>The use of English as the language of instruction was justified on two



The earliest brochure of the college (Doc. #6A: 3) grouped the courses offered under mathematics; natural sciences; law and philosophy; geography and history; English, rhetoric and oratory; Armenian; Bulgarian; French; Greek; Latin; and, Turkish. The courses under philosophy contained political economy, parliamentary law, and moral philosophy in an empire that lacked such analyses of its structure. History included the history of the world, of Europe, the United States, and the Ottoman empire. European history contained the ancient and Greek parts, which located the cradle of civilization in Greece and its rejuvenation in Western Europe. Shakespeare and elements of criticism were contained under English literature.

Armenian and Bulgarian contained language teaching as well as literature—thus fostering the full identities and boundaries of these languages in a national context. French instruction included literature of the 16th to the 19th centuries in the third and fourth years, as well as works by Corneille, Racine, and Moliere. Hence, the historical emergence of French revolutionary ideas were certainly traced. Greek training included works of Aesop, Lucian, Xenophon, Lucurgus, Plato, Demosthenes, Homer, Euripides, Thucydides, and Sophocles; Latin training centered on the works of Caesar, Virgil, Cicero, Horace, Tacitus, and Juvenal.

The training in Turkish, the only venue to get students oriented to the social setting within which they lived, appeared as a residual category. The Turkish category included as disparate elements as writing, arithmetic, grammar, history, poetry, calligraphy, literary styles, and Dervish Pasha's natural philosophy. It did not have any internal consistency similar to those courses that reflected the multiple dimensions of Western civilization.

The consequences of the inculcation of this reinterpretation of Western literacy can be seen in the composition of the student body and their contribution to society upon graduation. In the first 40 years (1863-1903), of the 435 graduates, only 118 was an Ottoman Muslim;<sup>19</sup> the rest comprised 195 Bulgarians, 144 Armenians, 76 Greeks, 2 Jews, and 17 Americans and Europeans (Davison 1961:

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grounds (Doc. #6: 15): First, a common and "neutral" language was necessary to educate men of diverse nationalities of the empire; second, the history of English-speaking nations, "their policy, their literature, the position they occupy in the world afford, beyond question, lessons, and exercise an influence which can enlighten and inspire the patriotic youths of other nations to lift their people to a high and happy place in the commonwealth of mankind."

<sup>18</sup>He was the unique Ottoman Muslim Hulusi Hüseyin (Pektaş), grandson of the sheik of the local heterodox Islam *tekke* (gathering place) (Davison 1961: 292-3).

<sup>19</sup>After 1908, when Ottoman Muslims were encouraged by the state to attend

293). The immediate contribution to Ottoman society of the largest segment of the graduates, the Bulgarians, was the Bulgarian independence movement (Doc. #2: 8-9). The College graduates contributed to the founding of the Bulgarian state to such a degree<sup>20</sup> that it was often commented that "Robert College made Bulgaria. . . (never was) the life of a nation. . . so molded by a single educational institution (Doc. #4: 7). The Greek and Armenian alumni went into the professions, and comparatively few took up political activity or government positions. Then again, they failed to do so because, unlike the Bulgarian alumni, these groups had to strive for political activity within the Ottoman empire, where politics and government was dominated by Muslims. The values and norms inculcated through Robert College's conception of Western literacy thus produced national liberation movements in one context and reproduced the existing social structure in another.

### CONCLUSION

The differing conceptions of Western literacy in the Ottoman Empire thus interacted with the preexisting social structure and the diverse organization of Western-style schooling to produce disparate modes of social action for different segments of Ottoman society. The social practice of Western literacy was indeed diverse in both its European origin and its Ottoman application. This argument brings two new dimensions to the analysis of Third World literacy and schooling. First, it recognizes the differential interpretations of Western literacy within the receiving societies. Second, by emphasizing the dimension of inequality among these groups, it highlights the connection of literacy to the power structure of society. More research within Third World contexts would further highlight the complexity of the concept of literacy in general and Western literacy in particular.



**Gere:** I was interested, Müge (Göçek), in your definition of Western literacy as juxtaposing religion, science, and mass

---

these institutions, the proportion of Muslims quickly rose to more than 50% (Doc. #9: 15-6).

<sup>20</sup>Nine graduates became cabinet ministers, and two held the office of prime minister. Sixteen were deputies to the national assembly, and six were diplomats.

education. And, for the Westerners on the panel, I was thinking about Elizabeth Eisenstein's work on the printing press, in particular, and the kind of tensions that she notes between, on the one hand, in some sense, the closing down of some of the powers of religion and, simultaneously, expanding the powers of science by means of the printing press and, getting back to your point David (Hall), about the need to have a more inflected view of the relation of power and literacy; you've just started to move in that direction, I think, with the previous question. But, I would be interested in Debby Keller-Cohen and David Hall both talking more about the scientific side of the equation. I think the religion side has been covered a little bit. But, in what ways might this relation between science and religion, if you want to accept that as part of what we might talk about as literacy in the West, how might that relationship tension, perhaps, shade the inflections of power and literacy?

**Hall:** I will refer you to an essay by Frank Turner, the historian of 19th-century Britain, published in *Isis* 10, 15 years ago. It's an essay about the 19th century. And he points to a reorganization of the Royal Society during about the third quarter of the 19th century in which the Royal Society says that we're not going to allow clergymen to be members any longer unless they're real scientists. A distinction is drawn between religion and science. You've had all these clergymen who have done science since the founding of the Royal Society in the 17th century, and, all of a sudden, the line is drawn. So, in the 17th century, that issue doesn't come up. I mean science is not a power, being scientific is not an enabling tool. There's no distinction. But suddenly, at the end of the 19th century, it is, and this article lays out the claims to power that scientists begin to make—very specific administrative, financial, and other, claims to power, secular claims to power. So, this is a second half of the 19th-century phenomenon in the West, in this part of what we call, to use a bad term, *professionalization*, and that's when this issue arises—not in the 17th century. It's a horrible, crippling issue now, in terms of what we call expertise or the authority of expertise. And it has to do with shifting needs of text, authorship, books. To go back to Courtney Cazden's comment about autonomy, about what schools do, how they disrupt, interrupt, and imprison, this is a very modern thing, since 1880 or 1875.

**Keller-Cohen:** I think an illustration of the way in which there isn't a tension between science and religion is in these little self-help books that a common person could buy. You find devotional material along with plasters and poultices and how to get rid of warts. They're just little bits of knowledge that a person needs to know. Which isn't to say that religion isn't privileged, but the fact that you can buy a book that you can carry around that tells you just about anything you need to know, I think, supports the blurring David mentioned.

## APPENDIX

The documents listed below are located in the *Robert College Archives* in Istanbul, Turkey:

- DOCUMENT #1: "Robert College." Anonymous typewritten manuscript, catalogued as 45049: n378.496RCh.
- DOCUMENT #2: "Founder's Day at Robert College, Constantinople, March 23, 1923." Published by Zellitch Brothers, Yazidji Street, Pera. 21 pp.
- DOCUMENT #3: "The Meaning of Robert College: Founder's Day Address, Robert College, Constantinople, March 26, 1926, Notes on Robert College." Constantinople: Societe Anonyme de Pap. et d'Imp. (Fratelli Haim), 1927. 28 pp.
- DOCUMENT #4: "Founders' Day, Robert College, Address by Caleb F. Gates, President." Istanbul, Soc. An. de Papeterie et d'Imprimerie, 1931. 12 pp.
- DOCUMENT #5: "Laying of the Corner Stone of Robert College, July 4, 1869." Published by the Press of A.H. Boyajian, Galata, Constantinople. 24 pp. (Includes "Address and the Laying of the Stone by the American Minister, Hon. E. Joy Morris" pp. 5-8)
- DOCUMENT #6: "How Robert College Came to be Founded, Address Delivered by Professor Alexander van Millingen, D.D. on March 23, 1909, Founders' Day." Constantinople, Reprinted February 1929. 23 pp.

- DOCUMENT #6A: "Robert College, Constantinople. Brochure including a Tabular View of the Course of Study in Robert College." 1929. 4 pp. Appendix to Document #6.
- DOCUMENT #7: "Chapter I: Origin of Robert College at Constantinople, 1857, 1858, 1859; Chapter II: Purchase of Site and General Plans for Organization of College, 1859, 1860." Incomplete typewritten anonymous manuscript. 31 pp.
- DOCUMENT #8: "The Making of Robert College" by Charles T. Riggs. Unpublished typewritten manuscript, Constantinople, October 1930. 8pp.
- DOCUMENT #9: "A Brief History of Robert College," by K.M. Greenwood, 1963. Unpublished typewritten manuscript. 24 pp.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the National Academy of Education for their support of this project by granting me a 1990-91 Spencer Fellowship.

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# 14

## The Discourses of Inquiry: Pedagogical Challenges and Responses

Bertram Bruce

**Swales:** To me, as a person who's interested in linguistics and rhetoric, one of the things that I have been able to appreciate better through the session on history and education is some sense that I have not paid enough attention to the actual forms of the text—whether it's either Anglo-Saxon documents or Renaissance, colonial, Spanish texts, or, in fact, children's texts. I got a new sense of needing to develop something more in terms of an aesthetics of rhetoric from that sort of coming together, which I wouldn't have got if I'd just been concentrating on the educational issues or if I found myself straying into some historical conference.



A leading economist, speaking on the prospects for recovery from the economic recession, said "the labor market will be the last to respond." This comment came in the midst of a discussion of other "markets," such as those for farm products, durable goods, and financial services. In that context, the relevant issues for the economist were demand and supply, dollar figures, and quantifiable trends. He



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**Literacy:  
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edited by  
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 HAMPTON PRESS, INC  
CRESSKILL, NEW JERSEY

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Printed in the United States of America

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Literacy : interdisciplinary conversations / edited by Deborah Keller  
-Cohen

p. cm. -- (Written language)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-881303-48-9. -- ISBN 1-881303-49-7 (pbk.)

1. Literacy. 2. Interdisciplinary approach in education.

I. Keller-Cohen, Deborah. II. Series: Written language series.

LC149.L49935 1994

302.2'244--dc20

94-2969

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## Series Preface



**Marcia Farr, series editor**  
University of Illinois at Chicago

This new series examines the characteristics of *writing* in the human world. Volumes in the series present scholarly work on written language in its various contexts. Across time and space, human beings use various forms of written language—or writing systems—to fulfill a range of social, cultural, and personal functions, and this diversity can be studied from a variety of perspectives within both the social sciences and the humanities, including those of linguistics, anthropology, psychology, education, rhetoric, literary criticism, philosophy, and history. Although writing is not often used apart from oral language, or without aspects of reading, and thus many volumes in this series include other facets of language and communication, writing itself receives primary emphasis.

This volume brings together the many disciplinary perspectives from which written language can be studied. Scholars from 14 different fields offer original essays in which they use a variety of traditions and disciplinary tools to investigate the uses of writing in various human settings. These different perspectives, however, have resulted in more than a pluralistic endeavor; in this volume, and in the conference that preceded it, they have engaged in serious dialogues with one another. The resulting conversation, carefully woven together by the editor, offers deeper insights into the social embeddedness of literacy than has previously been available. The present work thus represents a notable step forward in the wide-ranging field of literacy studies.

While the study of writing is absorbing in its own right, it is an