

“Vienna is a Treasure to Us”: Vienna and the Austro-Hungarian Empire as Role Models for the Late Ottoman Empire

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ABSTRACTS

This paper examines unpublished letters on Vienna by the controversial Turkish nationalist Rıza Nur (1879–1942). After he and other opposition figures were imprisoned for several months and accused of establishing a secret committee to conspire against the CUP government, Rıza Nur travelled to Vienna in 1911 in order to recover from his stay in prison. His “Letters from Vienna” (*Viyana Mektûbları*), which he wrote during his stay, were presumably planned as a series of articles which, however, has never been published. The contribution focuses on Rıza Nur’s reflections about Austria-Hungary and Vienna as models for the Ottoman Empire and its institutions. Besides the geographical proximity of Austria-Hungary as well as a long-shared history it is above all the fact that Austria represents itself politically and socially as a mosaic, thus showing some parallels to the Ottoman state that make it an exemplary model to emulate.

In diesem Beitrag werden unveröffentlichte Briefe des umstrittenen türkischen Nationalisten Rıza Nur (1879–1942) über Wien untersucht. Nachdem er und andere Oppositionelle für mehrere Monate inhaftiert und beschuldigt wurden, ein geheimes Komitee gegründet zu haben, um sich gegen die CUP-Regierung zu verschwören, reiste Rıza Nur 1911 nach Wien, um sich von seinem Gefängnisaufenthalt zu erholen. Seine „Briefe aus Wien“ (*Viyana Mektûbları*), die er während seines Aufenthalts schrieb, waren vermutlich als Artikelserie geplant, die jedoch nie veröffentlicht wurde. Im Mittelpunkt des Artikels stehen Rıza Nurs Überlegungen zu Österreich-Ungarn und Wien als Vorbilder für das Osmanische Reich und seine Institutionen. Neben der

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geographischen Nähe Österreich-Ungarns sowie einer langen gemeinsamen Geschichte ist es vor allem die Tatsache, dass sich Österreich politisch und gesellschaftlich als Mosaik darstellt und damit einige Parallelen zum osmanischen Staat aufweist, die es zu einem vorbildlichen Modell machen.

1. Vienna – Destination or Destiny

Vienna was rarely a first destination for Ottoman travellers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at least for those who left travel descriptions.¹ Certainly, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, France, with its capital Paris, was the preferred destination, followed later by other European countries such as Great Britain or Germany.² Vienna appears mostly as a stopover for travellers on their route, unless they had a mission there.

This brings us to, Rıza Nur, the main protagonist of this paper, who visited Vienna in 1911.³ As to Evliya Çelebi,⁴ he admired the city's physicians, whose expertise he desperately needed. At that time, Rıza Nur was neither physically nor mentally in good shape. Being a politician with a medical training, he was a prolific writer with an impressive range of subjects from medicine to *divan* poetry, from history to opera. Among his unpublished writings are the "Letters from Vienna" (*Viyana Mektübları*), which are presented here. These texts were only rediscovered in the early 1960s; and although Barbara Flemming drew attention to them in 1965, they have remained largely unnoticed until today.⁵

Rıza Nur had copies of his works made in Alexandria in 1934/35 and offered them, with manuscript copies of his memoirs, to libraries in Germany (Staatsbibliothek, Berlin), Great Britain (British Museum, London), France (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), and the Netherlands (University Library, Leiden),⁶ on the condition "that the manuscripts were not to be made available to readers until 1960".⁷ His stay in Vienna in 1911 also

1 See B. Asiltürk, *Osmanlı Seyyahlarının Gözüyle Avrupa* [Europe through the Eyes of Ottoman Travellers], Istanbul 2000, pp. 140–148; on the reports of the Ottoman envoys sent to Vienna, see İ. Şirin, *Osmanlı İmgeleminde Avrupa* [Europe in Ottoman Imagination], Ankara 2006.

2 B. Asiltürk, *The image of Europe and Europeans in Ottoman-Turkish travel writing*, in: B. Agai/O. Akyıldız/C. Hillebrand (eds.), *Venturing beyond Borders – Reflections on Genre, Function and Boundaries in Middle Eastern Travel Writing*, Würzburg 2013, pp. 29–52, here pp. 35–36.

3 Some parts of this contribution, especially on the person of Rıza Nur and on his "Letters from Vienna", have been taken in abbreviated form from another contribution by the author. Y. Köse, *Strolling around Vienna Unarmed. Rıza Nur and His 'Letters from Vienna' (1911)*, in: H. Çelik/Y. Köse/G. Procházka-Eisl (eds.), *"Buyurdum ki...." – The Whole World of Ottomana and Beyond. Studies in Honour of Claudia Römer, Leiden (forthcoming)*.

4 *An Ottoman Traveller. Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, transl. and comment. by R. Dankoff/S. Kim, London 2010, pp. 242–247.

5 Flemming mistakenly dates the letters to 1908, by referring to 1326 as a Hijri date. See B. Flemming, *Turkish Manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek*, in: B. Flemming, *Essays on Turkish Literature and History*, Leiden [1965] 2018, pp. 35–46, p. 44; B. Flemming, *Türkische Handschriften* (=VOHD, vol. XIII, 1), Wiesbaden 1968, p. 171.

6 Flemming, *Turkish Manuscripts*, pp. 45–46.

7 The sociologist Cavit Orhan Tütengil was the first to discover (by chance) the manuscripts in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts at the British Museum, in 1963. Two years later, for the first time, Barbara

went unnoticed, even though Rıza Nur refers to it in his memoirs, yet without giving any precise dates.⁸

The "Letters from Vienna" may be considered as part of the Ottoman travel literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And yet, they are remarkable in view of their scope, and the considerably detailed and well-informed descriptions of the city, its institutions and population, as well as its cultural peculiarities. The letters also reflect the author's personal interests, such as politics, medicine or science.

This paper will focus primarily on Rıza Nur's reflections on the role of Austria and Vienna as models for the Ottomans. The article will explore the question of why Rıza Nur, against the general trend of his time and fellow Ottomans (at least in Istanbul), believed Vienna to be more significant than Paris, London, or Berlin and will elaborate on the features that made Austria/Vienna a more suitable European role model.

Principally, like other contemporaries, he sees the "Germansphere" as a relevant frame of reference. Within this context, Austria-Hungary and Vienna in particular seem to him to be more suitable models than, for example, the German Empire with its capital Berlin. He is not entirely alone in this assessment, for other Ottoman intellectuals – mainly based in Egypt – also thought that the Ottoman Empire should transform and reform itself, taking Austria-Hungary as an example. However, Rıza Nur's remarks show that he was by no means concerned with an "Ottoman dualism" (such as "Arab-Turkish dualism") or "composite imperial formations", that late Ottoman intellectuals would discuss regarding Austria-Hungary as role model.⁹ The letters indicate that his orientation towards Austria-Hungary and Vienna respectively only served to further his vision for the Ottoman Empire. And this vision was exclusively Turkish.

2. Content and Features of the Vienna Letters

Rıza Nur's eight letters from Vienna consist of 83 numbered pages and are written in a legible *rik'a* script with black ink.¹⁰ The content and form indicate that the texts were designed for a series of articles in a newspaper or magazine, some including footnotes and the insertion of terms written in Roman script.¹¹ All the letters end with the name

Flemming reported on the volumes from the pen of Rıza Nur, which had been acquired by the Staatsbibliothek Berlin 1934/1935, and described them in the volume on Turkish Manuscripts of the Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland (VOHD, vol. XXII, 1), published in 1968. See C. O. Tütengil, Doktor Rıza Nur üzerine üç yazı – yankılar – belgeler [Three Writings on Doctor Rıza Nur, Echoes, Documents], Ankara 1965, p. 14, 41 and 45; Flemming, Turkish Manuscripts, p. 35 and Flemming, Türkische Handschriften, pp. 170–177. On Tütengil, see Flemming, Turkish Manuscripts, pp. 42–43.

8 In the research literature, this short trip has remained largely unmentioned. Zakir Avşar does refer to this trip, but only by quoting the relevant passages from Rıza Nur's memoirs. See Z. Avşar, Her zaman, Her şeye, Herkese Muhalef. Bir Türkçü'nün Portresi Dr. Rıza Nur [Always against Everybody and Everything. Portrait of a Turkist Dr. Rıza Nur], İstanbul [1992] 2011, p. 89.

9 A. Mestyan, A Muslim Dualism? Inter-Imperial History and Austria-Hungary in Ottoman Thought, 1867–1921, in: Contemporary European History 30 (2021), pp. 478–496, and A. Yenen, Evisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence between Empire and Nationalism, in: Die Welt des Islams 61 (2021), pp. 72–112.

10 For a detailed description, see Flemming, Türkische Handschriften, p. 170.

11 Such as "sui generi" [sic], "Tribune", "Louvre", "Ringstrasse", "Solidarité", "Handels Krankhus" [sic], "Melange", "Nuss", "grap-

of the author “Doktor Rızâ Nûr”, as well as the location, Vienna. At the end of his ninth letter, he states “*Bu makâleler 9 dâne idi. Bir dânesi gayb olmuşdur*”¹² (“these articles were nine of which one has been lost”), making clear that he deliberately chose the epistolary form without addressing a specific person.¹³ Thus, in conception, they resemble other travel letters published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴

Compared to other Ottoman travelogues (whether in the form of serial publications or monographs) from that period, Rıza Nur’s letters contain one of the longest coherent descriptions of the city of Vienna.¹⁵ To my knowledge,¹⁶ the journalist Mahmud Sadık, who visited Vienna in January 1917, on behalf of the journal *Servet-i Fünûn* (and “*Le Soir*”?), is the only author who, like Rıza Nur, titled the series of articles “*Viyana mektûbları*”.¹⁷

“*Viyana mektûbları*” and their subheadings

Letter	Subheading	pages	Translation
1	<i>Viyana bize bir hazîne</i>	1–9	Vienna is a treasure to us
2	<i>Her şeyimizde bir hususiyet-i milliyye olsun</i>	10–19	A national character should be inherent in everything we do/have
3	?	lost	?
4	<i>Viyana’da Râ’îhsrât</i>	20–29	The parliament (<i>Reichsrat</i>) of Vienna
5	<i>Bizde müzeler</i>	30–36	Our museums
6	<i>İstanbul’un i’-mârı</i>	37–46	Istanbul’s building development
7	<i>Viyana’da mü’essesât-ı tıbbiye</i>	47–56	Hospitals in Vienna

pen” [sic] (Krapfen) “Milieu”, “Methode rationelle”, “logique”. See, for instance, letter, 1, 6, or 8. For the written terms, see “*Viyana mektûbları*,” Ms. or. quart 2005/2, pp. 11, 22, 31, 40, 48, 60, 61, 82, 83.

12 “*Viyana mektûbları*,” Ms. or. quart 2005/2, 83 pages. At the end of the second letter, he adds “the third letter is lost”. Rızâ Nûr, “*Viyana mektûbları – Her şeyimizde bir hususiyet-i milliyye olsun*,” Ms. or. quart 2005/2, letter 8, p. 19.

13 Z. Kinsley, *Travelogues, Diaries, Letters*, in: N. Das/T. Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, Cambridge 2019, pp. 408–522.

14 To name just a few examples: Ahmed Rasim, “*Bulgâristân Mektûbları*,” published in *İstîşare* (1908); Ahmed Emin’s [Yalman] “*Bükreş Mektûbları*,” published in *Tanin* (1915); Halid Ziya’ [Uşaklıgil] “*Almanya Mektûbları*,” published in *Tanin* (1915). See also L. von Mende, “*Heutiger Nachbar – gestriger Untertan*”. *Impressionen osmanischer und türkischer Südoesteuropa-Reisender* (1890–1940), Baden-Baden 2021, pp. 63–64, and 401–428.

15 For other travelogues devoted to Vienna, of varying length and intensity, see Asiltürk, *Osmanlı Seyyahlarının Gözüyle* and Köse, *Strolling around Vienna Unarmed*.

16 A certain (Eczacı) Edhem İsmail published in the journal *Mütâla’a* three short articles under the title “*Viyana’dan Mektub-ı Mahsus*” in 1896 (27 August, 10 and 17 September). I thank Ulrich Brandenburg for pointing this out.

17 Mahmud Sadık’s 10 letters from Vienna have each 2 to 5 pages. In total, this is the third time Mahmūd Şadık visited Vienna, after 1884 and 1912. On Mahmud Sadık, who was a close friend of Ahmed İhsan, see A. A. Ersoy, *Ottoman and the Kodak Galaxy: Archiving everyday life and historical space in Ottoman illustrated journals*, in: *History of Photography* 40 (2016) 3, pp. 330–357.

7	<i>Viyana'da mü'essesât-ı tıbbiye</i>	47–56	Hospitals in Vienna
8	<i>Viyana ve Viyanalılar</i>	57–71	Vienna and the Viennese
9	<i>Ansiklopedi (muhitü'l-ma'ârif)</i>	72–83	Encyclopaedia

Source: Ms. or. quart 2005, pp. 46–130.

However, as the titles indicate, half of the letters also deal with issues that relate to the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul particularly. In contrast, all of Mahmud Sadık's letters from Vienna deal exclusively with specific aspects of the city of Vienna, which is also evident from the respective titles.¹⁸ A closer look, though, reveals that even Rıza Nur's contributions, which are supposedly dedicated to the situation in Istanbul (for instance letter 2, 5 or 6), only do so in comparison and in reference to Vienna.

Considering that many of Rıza Nur's works have remained unnoticed by researchers, these letters represent a small building block in the author's oeuvre. Nevertheless, they are important because they help to close some of the chronological gaps in his published memoirs. Further, the letters are revealing in terms of Rıza Nur's attitude and positioning on the question of the future of the Ottoman Empire.

Since these letters had never been published and at the time were only mentioned in Rıza Nur's will,¹⁹ together with his other published and unpublished works, they remained unnoticed for almost 30 years. The contentious nature of the author and at times his fundamental oppositional stance probably played a role in this.²⁰

3. Who Was Rıza Nur Afraid Of?²¹

Rıza Nur was born in Sinop, in 1879, into a conservative Muslim family. He graduated from the military medical school and worked as a doctor and teacher at the Faculty of Medicine in Istanbul until 1908, when he decided to pursue a political career. Until then he had been widely publishing on medical topics, both for an academic readership and the wider public.²² After the restoration of the constitution in 1908, he was elected to

18 Köse, Strolling around Vienna Unarmed.

19 The letters were listed with other (un-)published works he had intended for the library in Sinop. In the draft of his will that is part of the Berlin volume, the letters are not listed. "Sinobda Rızâ Nûr kütübhânesi", Ms. or. quart 2005/9, 72/646.

20 A. Mango, Atatürk, London 1999, p. 553.

21 This title refers to Hülya Adak's article on Rıza Nur, Who is afraid of Dr. Rıza Nur's Autobiography?, in: O. Akyıldız/H. Kara/ B. Sagaster (eds.), Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives, Würzburg 2016, pp. 125–141.

22 Rıza Nur, Hayat ve Hatıratım, vol. 1, pp. 43–47. For the works he wrote during his exile (1913–1919), Rıza Nur provides information on the places where they were written. See Doktor Rızâ Nûr, Gurbet dağarcığı [The Vocabulary of the Exile], Kâhire 1919, pp. 4–8.

the parliament at the age of 29 and became its youngest member. Being supportive of the *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (The Committee of Union and Progress, CUP), he soon joined the opposition liberal party (*Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası* – Ottoman Liberal Party, September 1908–April 1909). Accused of playing a role in the 31 March Incident – the conservative counter coup of 1909 –, he fled to Egypt but returned shortly afterwards. He had started to publish harsh criticism against the CUP in the local press and was put under severe pressure by its leading members. Because of several explicit warnings that he would be killed, Rıza Nur arranged a bodyguard and eventually always carried a gun (*revolver*) with him.²³ The pressure grew as he continued to severely criticise the CUP government, and on 19 July 1910 – notwithstanding his status as a parliamentary deputy – he and other opposition figures were imprisoned for several months, accused of establishing a secret committee (*cem'iyet-i hafiyye*) to conspire against the CUP government.²⁴ News of his arrest spread throughout Europe and was reported in the newspapers just a few days later.²⁵

On 20 September 1910, Rıza Nur was released with 25 other arrested defendants for lack of evidence. Yet, on the same day, he was rearrested on the basis of allegedly new evidence. On 4 October, all members of the secret committee still imprisoned were released by the martial court due to the Ramadan feast – except Rıza Nur.²⁶ Later, he was released from prison.²⁷ In December, the opposition in the Ottoman parliament tried to set up a parliamentary investigation committee for an inquiry into the arrest of deputies and allegations of torture. The CUP members had previously decided at a meeting to reject the parliamentary inquiry initiated by the opposition, which indicates that the government was unable or unwilling to act independently of the CUP leaders. Rıza Nur held the leading members of the CUP – Talât, but especially Dr. Mehmed Nâzım and Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, the “masterminds of the Young Turk Revolution”²⁸ – responsible for his imprisonment.²⁹

23 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 1, pp. 286.

24 F. Ahmad, *Riâdâ Nûr*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (online), and F. Georgeon, Religion, politics and society in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution: The ‘Ramadan Freedom’ in Istanbul, in: N. Lévy-Aksu/F. Georgeon (eds.), *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire. The Aftermath of 1908*, London 2017, pp. 177–195, here p. 186. The memoirs of the only female defendant also provide interesting information about the secret committee and the trial: A. Filiz Evcimen Salıcı (ed.), *1910 Cemiyet-i Hafiye Davasının Tek Kadın Sanığı Şahende Hanım’ın Süzüşli Hatıraları* [The Melancholic Memoirs of Şahende Hanım, the Only Female Defendant in the 1910 Cemiyet-i Hafiye Trial], Istanbul 2016.

25 See, for instance, *Un comité secret en Turquie*, in: *Le Figaro*, 21 July 1910, p. 2; *La Jeune-Turquie sévit contre ses adversaires*, in: *Le Petit Parisien*, 21 July 1910, p. 3; *Der türkische Geheimbund*, in: *Die Zeit*, 21 July 1910, front page. See also *1910 Cemiyet-i Hafiye*, p. 168, and on Ottoman reporting, pp. 175–89.

26 *Freilassung der Mitglieder des reaktionären türkischen Geheimbundes*, in: *Neue Freie Presse*, Nr. 165/166, 5 October 1910, p. 5.

27 Rıza Nur bey, in: *La Turquie*, 24 October 1910, front page. In Rıza Nur’s book on the issue, the date given is “12 Teşrin-i evvel [1326]” (25 October 1910). See Doktor Rızâ Nûr, *Cem’iyyet-i hafiyye, Dersâ’det 1330/1919*, p. 251.

28 H.-L. Kieser, *Talaat Pasha. Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide*, Princeton 2018, p. 55.

29 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 2, pp. 339–340.

Although he was badly affected by his stay in prison, he apparently still attended parliamentary sessions at end of December.³⁰ Yet, he must have felt the need to recover:

After the prison stay, I felt dazed [...] This stay in prison cost me heavily in every respect. My health suffered damage. In particular, I had become forgetful and dazed. I went to Vienna for a change of place [tebdil-i havâ] [in order to recover].³¹

Rıza Nur, who was a member of parliament after his return from Vienna, was a founding member of another opposition party, the *Hürriyet ve İ'tilâf* (Freedom and Accord Party, 1911).³² After the *coup d'état* of the CUP leaders Talât, Cemal, and Enver, in January 1913, the party was forbidden and Rıza Nur was rearrested and finally exiled.³³ He lived in Switzerland, France (where he married),³⁴ and Egypt, before returning to Istanbul after the armistice in October 1918, and was again elected as a member of the Ottoman parliament for Sinop. In 1920, he joined the Nationalist Movement under Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), serving the movement as Minister of Education (1920–1921) and Minister of Health (1921–1923), and as a representative of the Ankara government in the negotiations with Soviet Russia and Soviet Ukraine (1921).

And most notably, after he was elected as member of the new parliament in Ankara, he was sent with İsmet İnönü as a representative to the Lausanne Conference (1922–1923). Soon he came into conflict with Mustafa Kemal and again left Turkey "to go into self-imposed exile in France".³⁵ Between 1926 and 1933, he lived in Paris, where he also wrote his memoirs, and then moved to Alexandria, writing on topics such as literature and history. Because of the enmity towards Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, Rıza Nur decreed in his will that if both were still alive after his death, he would be buried in Alexandria instead of Sinop.³⁶

Andrew Mango characterises him as "a man of violent passions, and a racist nationalist, he is remembered as one of Atatürk's main detractors".³⁷ However, without doubt both men – Rıza Nur und Atatürk – agreed on the paramount role the "Turks" played in human history and especially in Anatolia. And not surprisingly, Rıza Nur's multi-volume *Türk Tarihi* ("History of the Turks"), published as early as 1924–1926, contain some of the arguments of the pseudo-scientific theory propagated in the early 1930s as the "Turkish History Thesis".³⁸ Already between 1914 and 1923, Rıza Nur wrote a history

30 According to this report, Rıza Nur was attending the chamber debate end of december. See Türkische Kammer-debatte über angebliche Mißhandlung verhafteter Abgeordneter (Konstantinopel, 31. Dezember), in: Neue Freie Presse, 1 January 1911, p. 8.

31 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 2, 340.

32 Die Partei der liberalen Entente, in: Das Vaterland, 23 November 1911, p. 4.

33 On his exile and works during the years 1913 and 1918, see Rızâ Nûr, *Gurbet dağarcığı*.

34 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 1, p. 282 and vol. 2, pp. 418–425.

35 Adak, *Who is afraid of*, p. 128.

36 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* [My Life and Memories], Istanbul 1967, 4 vols, vol. 1, p. 41.

37 Mango, *Atatürk*, p. 553. Today, Rıza Nur is revered by Islamist and anti-Kemalist circles.

38 B. Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de 'Resmi Tarih' Tezinin Oluşumu (1929–1937)* [Power and History: The Development of the "Official History" Thesis in Turkey], Istanbul 2003; M. K. Çalen, *Türk Tarihinin Çağlara Ayrılması ve Dev-*

of the Armenians (*Ermeni Tarihi*), in which he depicts them as enemies of the Turks, whose history must be known in order to better defend one's own national rights. His position on the Armenian genocide resembles the later nationalist narrative that the Ottoman state was fully justified in deporting the Armenians because they had supported the enemy.³⁹ After the death of Atatürk, Rıza Nur returned to Turkey in 1939, where he published journals such as *Türk Bilig Revüsül Revue de Turcologie* and the weekly *Tanrıdağ*. He died in 1942.

4. Rıza Nur's Travel to Vienna

When exactly Rıza Nur left for Vienna and how long he stayed there remains unclear. The year 1326 (1910/1911) is the only direct reference in his Vienna letters. In his memoirs he also does not give any date for his journey and stay.⁴⁰ As already noted, he had attended the chamber meeting on 30 December 1910, which indicates that he could have only begun his journey to Vienna in January 1911. In a report on an Ottoman chamber meeting, presumably early in January 1911, it is mentioned that Rıza Nur, due to his stay in prison, “devenu sourd au cours des son emprisonnement, est maintenant en traitement à Vienne”.⁴¹ This is confirmed in the introduction to his book *Cem'iyyet-i hafıyye* [english], which is dated “*Viyana, Kânun-i şânî* [1]326”.⁴² If we assume that he finished his introduction on the first day of *Kânun-i şânî* 1326, this would correspond to 14 January 1911. In his fifth letter, Rıza Nur mentions that he received the news of the *Bâb-ı 'Âlî* (Sublime Porte) fire while visiting some Viennese museums.⁴³ This fire took place on 6 February 1911.⁴⁴ He probably informed himself about the extent of the damage through Ottoman newspapers (“*gelen gazetelerden öğrendim*”), although the fire was also reported in the Viennese press.⁴⁵ Going on this evidence, we can narrow down his stay in Vienna to the period between early January and at least February 1911. During his stay in Vienna, he was accompanied by a translator from Istanbul who had a knowledge of German.⁴⁶

lette Devamlılık Esası [The Division of Turkish History into Ages and the Principle of Continuity in the State], in: V. Uluslararası Tarih Eğitimi Sempozyumu, 10–12 Mayıs 2018, İstanbul [2018], pp. 72–82.

39 The “*Ermeni Tarihi*” is preserved as manuscript at the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and has not been edited. The author is currently preparing a contribution for a special issue on Rıza Nur for the journal *Die Welt des Islams*. On the manuscript, see Flemming, *Türkische Handschriften*, pp. 97–98.

40 Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 2, pp. 340–341.

41 L'enquête parlementaire, in: Mécheroutiette, 15 February 1911, p. 17.

42 Rızâ Nûr, *Cem'iyyet-i hafıyye*, p. 14.

43 Rızâ Nûr, *Bizde müzeler*, Ms. or. quart 2005/2, letter 5, p. 30.

44 U. Tanyeli, *Mimari (Bâbiâli), Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* [The Encyclopedia of Istanbul from Yesterday to Today], vol. 1, İstanbul 1993, p. 523.

45 See, for instance, Brand des Pfortengebäudes in Konstantinopel, in: Wiener Zeitung, 6 February 1911, p. 2 or Brand der Hohen Pforte in Konstantinopel, in: Neues Wiener Tagblatt, 6 February 1911, p. 3.

46 Rıza Nur took German lessons before 1908, but was unable to deepen his knowledge, which he regretted, since in his opinion there was excellent German-language literature in all fields of science. Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 1, pp. 161–162. Rızâ Nûr, *Viyana ve Viyanalılar*, Ms. or. quart 2005/2, letter 8, p. 67.

It seems that it was no secret that Rıza Nur travelled to Vienna. Although he was reported on quite frequently during this period, including in Austrian newspapers, his visit apparently attracted no media attention. The reason was that he was travelling privately, rather than in an official capacity as a member of parliament.

5. Austria and Vienna as Role Models – “*Vienna is a Treasure to Us*”

The title of his first letter – “Vienna is a treasure for us” – already makes it clear that Vienna is not only a beautiful city,⁴⁷ but is first and foremost an exemplary place where “we”, that is the Turks (*Türkler*), can learn a lot. Vienna, according to Rıza Nur, is for them much more important and relevant than Paris or Berlin (“*Viyana bize [...] daha iyidir, daha lâzımdır*”).

The discourse on the question of how far the Ottoman’s should go in order to catch up with the West/Europe can be traced back at least to the Tanzimat period. The relation between “Europe” and the Ottoman Empire (the “East”) since then is characterized by ambiguity and at times a dichotomy between full-fledged modernization/westernization versus the need of protecting or the fear of losing local/“national” identity.⁴⁸

The author is entirely in line with his predecessors, who in the last third of the nineteenth century – here, Ahmed Midhat and Ahmed İhsan are particularly noteworthy – had already pointed out in their travelogues the necessity for orientation towards Europe/the West. Of course, depending on their political orientation, the travellers provided a more or less differentiated and critical perspective on “European” civilization. The recommendations for adaptation were correspondingly far-reaching or narrow.⁴⁹ The specific perspective of Rıza Nur in this regard will be further discussed in the following.

In his first letter, Rıza Nur remarks that when the name Vienna was mentioned, he imagined a large city with industry in Europe. Of course, the first and second sieges of Vienna under Sultan Süleyman in 1529 and then in 1683 under the leadership of Kara Mustafa Paşa were among the most important events in the city’s history.

But, in an underlying tone of surprise, he adds: “the city does not leave it at that. As I travelled and visited the city, I understood that for the Turks the city was a place of pilgrimage and a real treasure.” With the term “pilgrimage”, Rıza Nur presumably referred to the important role that Vienna played in Ottoman history and to the large number of historical sites and numerous “Turkish” artefacts found in the city. He adds:

47 “Viyana pek güzel bir şehirdir”. Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. 2, p. 341.

48 H. Millas, *The EU and the East-West Paradox. The Case of Greece and Turkey*, in: J. Barkhoff/J. Leerksen (eds.), *National Stereotyping, Identity Politics, European Crises*, Leiden 2021, pp. 142–159.

49 Asiltürk, *The image of Europe*, pp. 40–46, and for Southeast Europe, see von Mende, “Heutiger Nachbar – gestriger Untertan.”

*Yes, Vienna is better for us than Paris, Berlin, even more necessary. What we find in Vienna, we can't find there/elsewhere. The advantages that Vienna offers us cannot be found in the other capitals.*⁵⁰

Since the proclamation of the second constitutional period (“*meşrutiyet*”) in 1908, he confesses, they have started a new life whose model became Europe. However, they, that is the Turks, had not thought about which country would suit them exactly. Since Austria presents itself politically and socially as a mosaic and thus showed parallels to the Ottoman state, it would be the best model to emulate.⁵¹

Rıza Nur then asks plaintively which politician would have looked at what Austria was or which one would have looked at Vienna, the Austrian state and society. From his point of view, this would be the most important thing for those in power to know. However, this knowledge could not be obtained from a distance. Not knowing was to the detriment of the people/homeland.

Here he emphasises the benefits of travel and stresses the need to study the situation on the ground. One must stay for at least a year in order to:

*You have to meet with all classes of the Viennese people, their families, make friends, learn their state of mind. You have to go in and out of their schools, conferences, theatres, public places. One must connect [get in touch] with the pupils, the clergy and politicians. Get to know their holidays, traditions, concerns and desires. But for this, it is essential to learn their language first.*⁵²

According to him, politicians who want to govern the country (that is the Ottoman Empire) – a country that has serious problems both internally and externally – should be those who have completed such stays abroad. However, unfortunately, there are no such men. Europe, on the other hand, train their politicians like this. He continues:

*Vienna, which has a school for every activity, no matter how simple, has the diplomats who are to be deployed in the East [i.e. Orient] trained at the Oriental Academy [Imperial and Royal Academy for Oriental Languages], teaches them Turkish and then sends them to travel to the Orient. And afterwards they are accepted for service. In the [imperial] library called the “Court Library” there is a person called Doctor Krelitz [Friedrich Kraelitz-Greifenhorst]⁵³ who masters Turkish and trains men for the Orient in the aforementioned Oriental Academy. And now compare Austrian diplomats and their services with ours! [...] I wish our government would raise such men.*⁵⁴

50 Letter 1, p. 2.

51 For Austria-Hungary as a role model for Egypt, see Mestyan, A Muslim Dualism? and Yenen, Evisoning Turco-Arab Co-Existence.

52 Letter 1, p. 4.

53 Starting in 1915–16, Friedrich v. Kraelitz-Greifenhorst (1876–1932) taught at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Vienna and became the first full professor of Turkish in 1923–24, a position he held until 1932. See <https://orientalistik.univie.ac.at/en/disciplines/turkish-studies/history/> (accessed 5 September 2022).

54 Letter 1, p. 5.

Interestingly, Rıza Nur does not point out that the institutionalised engagement with the "Orient"/"the Turks" in Austria goes back to the sixteenth century. The Habsburg production of knowledge about the Orient, however, did not serve – as in parts of Western Europe – to "secure colonial power but rather national self-assurance through inclusion and exclusion".⁵⁵

Even though Austria-Hungary was not a "classical colonial power",⁵⁶ it had occupied and annexed Ottoman territories (Bosnia and Herzegovina), unlike the colonial "late-comer", the German Empire. However, this does not prevent Rıza Nur from considering Austria-Hungary as a better frame of reference. In his fourth letter, he confesses that the Bosnians, who had once fought side by side with the Turks, now belonged to Austria and that its government would take good care of them. He speculates, after a conversation with a Bosnian: "Probably the Bosnians hate us". In any case, he advises them to stay in Austria.⁵⁷

To underline the importance of Vienna/Austria for the homeland (*vatan*), he describes the valuable Turkish treasures that museums such as the Hof Museum, the Arsenal, and libraries such as the Hofbibliothek and Stadtbibliothek would house. These holdings should be described in detail and published. The manuscript collection in particular is unique and contains titles that "are not even available in our country". Here he addresses the chairman of the "*Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni*" (founded in 1909), Abdurrahman Efendi, and urgently advises him to send specialists with knowledge of German to Vienna to examine the objects and books. Without that, Ottoman history would remain incomplete. The "*Evfak-i İslamiye Müzesi*" (today's *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi*), which was being built in that time, would also have to send an official to learn how museums are designed and to have the paintings copied, watercolours of portraits of Ottoman dignitaries and models of the objects made. Rıza Nur is well aware of "that the Islam Museum will exhibit only few objects from our ancient armies. However, only those objects are able to (adequately) show and tell about the Turkish heroic deeds, the Turkish greatness".⁵⁸

Economically, Austria is also more attractive than other countries. Moreover, most of the goods consumed come from Austria. One of the main reasons for this is its proximity. According to Rıza Nur clothing and furniture are incredibly cheap in Vienna. Austrian trade in the homeland could not be restricted easily, since it is too strong. However, it should be the Turks who benefit from it. To illustrate the advantages, Rıza Nur mentions the well-known department store S. Stein (Eşayn), which, he assures his readers, would earn a lot of money.⁵⁹

55 J. Feichtinger, Komplexer k.u.k. Orientalismus: Akteure, Institutionen, Diskurse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Österreich, in: R. Born/S. Lemmen (eds.), *Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa. Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bielefeld 2014, pp. 31–64, p. 64.

56 Feichtinger, *Komplexer k.u.k. Orientalismus*, p. 31.

57 Letter 4, pp. 28–29.

58 Letter 5, p. 33.

59 On S. Stein, see Y. Köse, *Westlicher Konsum am Bosphorus. Warenhäuser, Nestlé & Co. im späten Osmanischen Reich*, München 2010, and Y. Köse, "Stein billig und fein – Mayer schlecht und teuer". *Österreichische Warenhäuser in Istanbul (1855–1942)*, in: *Österreich in Istanbul. K. (u.) K. Präsenz im Osmanischen Reich*, Wien 2010, pp. 201–229.

While Stein would sell his goods in Istanbul at inflated prices, one could get the same goods much cheaper in Vienna. Those who buy large stocks of goods could save even more. By lamenting “If only a Turk would do that too” (“Bir Türk de bu işi yapsa!”) he seems to point to the public discourses about the need of Muslims engagement in trade which were increasingly found in Ottoman media after 1908.⁶⁰

In view of this wealth of benefits, he invites and urges its readership to come to Vienna: “In a word, Vienna is a treasure for us. Let’s come here. Let’s get to know Vienna and Austria. Let us adopt their skills and crafts. Let us profit in every way. In my opinion, instead of sending our children far away, we should train them there, that’s it.”⁶¹ In addition to proximity, he considers the Viennese schools to be favourable. Even if, as in the Tanzimat period, Ottomans went to Austria (Vienna) for educational purposes during the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1873–1909) and also after 1909, France and above all Germany were the preferred countries of destination. During World War I at the latest, Germany took the lead, and Hungary rather than Austria became a preferred destination.⁶²

Rıza Nur continues in his second letter by elaborating on the specific characteristics of nations and their cultures. Each nation would use its own special profession to increase the demand for its products. This is followed by a stereotyping of some other European nations such as France, Germany, and England, hierarchising them.⁶³ Interestingly, he does not classify Austria here. Unlike the increasingly social Darwinist discourses (“survival of the fittest race”⁶⁴) of the Young Turks, Rıza Nur here seems to advocate a more or less friendly competition between nations.

France is famous and unrivalled for its luxury goods. Germans are praised and highlighted for their knowledge and skills in the field of medicine. Moreover, Germans are striving and serious. And in any world language, these characteristics would be used synonymously for “Germanness” (*Almanlık*). And finally, Rıza Nur characterizes the English people, who would be many times superior to the Germans in terms of stability, seriousness, trustworthiness, perseverance, and sobriety. Quality goods would therefore always be “Made in England”. If one says “Englishman” one would imagine someone who was serious, cold-blooded and a man of word (“ciddi, soğukkanlı ve sözünün eri bir kimse göz önüne geliyor”).⁶⁵

60 Letter 1, p. 9. See Z. Toprak, *Türkiye’de Millî İktisat 1908–1918*, Ankara 1992, and Köse, *Konsum am Bosphorus*.

61 Letter 1, p. 9.

62 On Egyptian Students in late nineteenth-century Vienna, see E. Specht, *Egyptian Students at the Theresianum in Vienna 1882–1914*, in: J. Holubek/H. Navrátilová/W. B. Oerter (eds.), *Egypt and Austria IV/Ägypten und Österreich IV: Crossroads/Begegnungen*, Prague 2008, pp. 297–302. For a general overview, see A. Erdoğan, *Osmanlı’da Yurt Dışı Eğitim ve Modernleşme* [Foreign Education and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire], İstanbul 2016, pp. 357–366, and 398, 406, 419.

63 See, for instance, Barkhoff/Leerssen, *National Stereotyping, or R. Florack* (ed.), *Nation als Stereotyp. Fremdwahrnehmung und Identität in deutscher und französischer Literatur*, Tübingen 2000.

64 E. Wigen, *The Education of Ottoman Man and the Practice of Orderliness*, in: M. Pernau et al. (eds.), *Civilizing Emotions. Concepts in Nineteenth-Century Asia and Europe*, Oxford 2015, pp. 107–126, p. 120.

65 Letter 2, p. 11.

Each nation, Rıza Nur says, has its own material and spiritual brand (*alem-i farika*), and the underlying character would confirm each nation's appropriate place on the world map. He asks whether they, i.e. the Turks, would be in such a position.

Then, he lists the achievements of the Turks since they had become a "regular nation" (*"millet-i muntazama"*). From cattle breeding on the mountain pastures (*kışla*), the standing armies (i.e. the Janissaries), his consideration leads him to the physicians who, although they wrote their works in Arabic, were all Turks, as documented by Bursalı Mehmed Tahir.⁶⁶

The handicraft exhibited in the museums, the mosques in Istanbul, their faience's would undoubtedly show that the Turks had a national art that was their own (*"bize has bir sanat"*). In short, both in the sciences and in the arts, a civilization of their own would have been established.

However, for various reasons, this civilization has decayed in such a way that hardly any remnants of these achievements can be seen today. But the decline was not long-lasting; the civilization was replaced by a new one. This new civilization came to life 40 to 50 years ago (i.e. around 1860/1870), the Turks entered the European civilization/culture (*"biz Avrupa medeniyetine girmeye başlamışız"*).

The influence of European civilization was felt globally. In a way, it was a necessity to open up to it. But, here Rıza Nur qualifies: "We have only aped many things. We have only adopted its shadow and played shadow games."⁶⁷ By talking of "aping" European culture, Rıza Nur refers to the early critics of "cosmetic Westernization" of Ottoman elites that at best was "skin-deep",⁶⁸ a repeated theme of Ottoman literati such as Ahmed Midhat or Recaizade Ekrem who would describe these characters in their novels as ridiculous fops.⁶⁹ His recipe for not falling into the trap of superficial imitation is to remember one's own civilizational achievements again and to use them offensively and with self-confidence.

The mistake was to betray their own customs and traditions and to try to copy European culture one-to-one instead. This had equally negative consequences. Since the *Meşrutiyet* period (that is after 1908), the same mistakes would have been made: "we completely forgot our forefathers (*ecdadımızı*), our history (*an'anât-ı tarihîyyemizi*), and adopted parliamentarism even though a constitutional monarchy existed."⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Rıza Nur emphasises: "Not adopting European civilization is definitely not an option." Of course, this adoption must be seen with moderation and in consideration of the local framework conditions, and appropriate adjustments must be made. Without

66 Letter 2, p. 12.

67 Letter 2, pp. 14–15.

68 A. Kadioğlu, The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity, in: Middle Eastern Studies 32 (1996) 3, pp. 177–193, p. 181.

69 Ş. Mardin, Super-westernization in urban life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in: P. Benedict/E. Tümtürtekin/F. Mansur (eds.), Turkey: Geographical and Social Perspectives, Leiden 1974, pp. 403–445, and Kadioğlu, The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism.

70 Letter 2, p. 15.

betraying one's own traditions and values. Because "we must be proud of Turks and Turkishness" ("Biz Türk ve Türklük ile iftihar etmeliyiz"). For him it is clear that a nation could not progress – not survive despite everything – if its population do not devote themselves to their traditions.⁷¹

Here, Rıza Nur cites Japan as a positive example of successful adaptation: "They take it from the Europeans, but they never forget to japonize (*japonlaştırma*) them, and never forget to put them in a national (*millî*) frame. That is why they are so successful."⁷²

One can see in European cities like Paris and Vienna that Turkish clothes (*turban, şalvar*) are popular as fashion accessories and that cultural practices like Turkish coffee have found their way into consumer practices. Therefore, Rıza Nur demands, "let's not reject our easternness, but revive it" (*şarklılığımızı terk değil, bilakis ihya etmeliyiz*). "Let us actively adopt Western civilization but not become Europeans in any matter. Let us always remain *şarklı*, let us become Turks" (*Türk olalım*). Becoming them would not bring any benefit, their goods would not find a market there, because they would have the better ones. And they would always be the better Europeans.⁷³

His plea reads accordingly:

*Let us pay special attention that our progress [terakki] happens within the boundaries of the "easterness" [şarklılık] and "turkishness" [türklük]. Otherwise, it is harmful. This is also what our European [frenkler] friends advise us to do. Let us revive our ancient arts. Let us make sure that progress adopted from Europe is (always) combined with şarklılık.*⁷⁴

6. Rıza Nur's Lessons from Vienna: "Türk olalım"

For Rıza Nur, Vienna / Austria appears as an ideal role model for the "Turks" to adapt to European civilization, a role model that other Ottomans have not yet considered.⁷⁵ Besides Austria-Hungary's geographical proximity as well as a long shared history, it is above all the fact that Austria represents itself politically and socially as a mosaic, thus showing some parallels to the Ottoman state that make it an example to emulate. However, according to Rıza Nur, adaptation requires people who get to know the country and its inhabitants through a long stay. For this, learning the (German) language is essential. Rıza Nur is clearly impressed by the diplomatic training of Austrians. He

⁷¹ Letter 2, p. 16.

⁷² Letter 2, p. 16. On Japan and the Ottoman Empire, see S. Esenbel, *Japon modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı: Japonya'nın Türk dünyası ve İslam politikaları* [Japan's Modernization and the Ottoman Empire: Japan's Policies towards the Turkish World and Islam], İstanbul 2012 and R. Worringer, *Ottomans Imagining Japan. East, Middle East, and Non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, New York 2014.

⁷³ Letter 2, p. 18.

⁷⁴ Letter 2, p. 19.

⁷⁵ Which is only partly true when we consider the "Ottoman Egyptian-Austro-Hungarian elite's circulatory entanglements" and the discourses among Arab-Ottoman intellectuals. See Mestyan, *A Muslim Dualism?*, and Yenen, *Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence*.

demands of his own politicians that they also have extended stays abroad (and children, too). Only politicians who did this would be able to solve the serious problems the country has. Interestingly, Rıza Nur demands that, to a certain extent, one must immerse oneself in the everyday culture of the local society in order to do this. Rıza Nur has a sympathetic view of the Viennese: they are busy, do not waste their time with idleness.⁷⁶ Even if they would spend "day and night" in coffee houses, this is not interpreted as laziness, as Rıza Nur insinuates this to the (male) visitors of Istanbul coffee houses.⁷⁷ To him Austria offers many useful examples not only at the political and social level. As seen before, he considers the Austrian economy likewise as exemplary. The proximity Rıza Nur was pointing at was due to Austria's dominant position in the field of ready-made clothing and the production of the local headgear "Fez", both distributed via Austrian department stores and their branches within the Ottoman realm. Admittedly, this dominance was not always met with mutual approval and at times harshly criticized in the Ottoman press, especially in the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1909 by Austria led to massive protests and boycotts of Austrian companies and products lasting several weeks.⁷⁸

Besides the political, social, and economic sphere, it is the cultural field that deserves special attention according to Rıza Nur. Here he aims to show the esteem in which "Turkish" artefacts and texts are held in Vienna. The enthusiasm for Turkish civilization that he believes he sees among Austrians is lacking among Turks. And this he identifies as the real malady. It is only by becoming aware of one's own achievements that one can hold one's own against the Europeans.

In this context, Rıza Nur does not address possible motives of Austrian appreciation of Ottoman/Turkish artefacts. The "Turk" was considered a hereditary enemy within the Austrian remembrance culture (*Erinnerungskultur*). Not only the "victory" (that is the successful defence against the siege of 1683) over the Turks could be presented by exhibiting of so-called "Türkenbeute" – artefacts captured during the siege –, moreover the enemy image of the "Turks" would repeatedly be instrumentalized politically and often served the Austrians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to create unity.⁷⁹ However, here Rıza Nur seems to be drawing attention to the fact that if Austrians learn Turkish and take care of the cultural heritage of the "Turks" (no matter what the motive behind it) and exhibit it in their museum, then Turks should use this as an incentive

76 For a detailed description of the Viennese, see letter 8, pp. 57–71.

77 In order to stress his argument, he refers to a passage by [François-René] M. de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem et de Jérusalem à Paris*, Paris [1811] 1859, pp. 193–194, which he paraphrases in a distorted manner. Certainly, these distortions were more a paratextual comment on the situation in Istanbul. See Letter 8, pp. 58–60. On laziness in late Ottoman society, see M. Hafez, *Inventing Laziness. The Culture of Productivity in Late Ottoman Society*, Cambridge 2021.

78 Köse, *Konsum am Bosphorus*, pp. 166–175, pp. 421–435. On boycotts, see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu. Bir Toplumsal Hareketinin Analizi* [The Ottoman Boycott of 1908. Analysis of a Social Movement], Istanbul 2004.

79 J. Heiss/J. Feichtinger (eds.), *Der Erinnernte Feind. Kritische Studien zur "Türkenbelagerung"*, Wien 2013, pp. 7–26, and Feichtinger, *Komplexer k.u.k. Orientalismus*.

to do the same. In order to compete with the Europeans and catch up with them, one should not try to become like them, but cultivate and propagate one's own culture.

For Rıza Nur the culture that is exhibited in Austria is clearly "Turkish", he uses the term "Ottoman" only four times in his letters and only when referring to the "Turkish" collections in museums and libraries. Even if the medical manuscripts, which are in Vienna, were written in Arabic, their authors are pure Turks ("Türk oğlu Türktür").⁸⁰ His position on the issue of language also shows that he is in favour of simplifying Turkish, which should be cleansed of Arabic and Persian words where possible. In any case, this should be done for words that are no longer understandable. In the field of sciences, the inclusion of European terms should be preferred instead.⁸¹

Rıza Nur alternates between specific examples and impressions gained during his stay in Vienna and commonplaces about a Europe and Europeans conceived as homogeneous. For him Vienna/Austria appears to be a much better role model for the "Turks", but in the end, it remains part of Europe. It seems that Rıza Nur, like Ziya Gökalp, oscillates between a cosmopolitan French nationalism and an organic, anti-Western German nationalism.⁸²

7. Conclusion

Considering the need of "radical modernisation according to 'European civilization' with an assertive essentialism based on *völkisch* (cultural-racial-ethnic Turkish) [and religious] references", ⁸³ Rıza Nur's position seem to be in line with Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), the leading ideologist of the CUP who played a major role in formulating ideological fundamentals of Turkish nationalism.⁸⁴ Where Ziya Gökalp and Rıza Nur agree is the differentiation between "national culture" and European civilization, the importance of protecting "Turkishness" but also the view that both, national culture (*millî hars*) and European/Western civilization (*garb medeniyeti*), has to be assembled.⁸⁵ This is what was coined "the paradox of Turkish nationalism", that is "the difficult task to achieving a balance between the Western civilization and the Turkish culture", a recurring task that the "Turks" from the early days of Westernization/Europeanization in the nineteenth century until the Republican period were asked to fulfil.⁸⁶

80 Letter 2, p. 12.

81 Letter 2, p. 12, and Letter 9, pp. 73–83.

82 Kadioğlu, The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism, p. 184.

83 H.-L. Kieser, Europe's Seminal Proto-Fascist? Historically Approaching Ziya Gökalp, Mentor of Turkish Nationalism, in: *Die Welt des Islams* 61 (2021), pp. 411–447, p. 412.

84 Yet, in his letters, Rıza Nur does not deal with the question of Islam, the third pillar of Gökalp's ideology. Kieser, Europe's Seminal Proto-Fascist?, pp. 412 and 431.

85 Ibid., pp. 414–415, and Millas, The EU and the East-West Paradox, p. 150. See also O. Koçak, 1920'lerden 1970'lere Kültür Politikaları [Culture Policies from the 1920s to the 1970s], in: T. Bora/M. Gültekinil (eds.), *Kemalizm (= Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, vol. 2)*, İstanbul 2001, pp. 370–382, here pp. 374–380.

86 Kadioğlu, The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism.

Consequently, Rıza Nur's remarks can be read as part of this plea addressed to the readers. He hardly differs from contemporary Ottoman intellectuals on this point. What is original is how he chooses Vienna and the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the starting point for his reflections, emphasising the need for a wider engagement with the state, society, and culture on the ground.

Vienna must have appeared to Rıza Nur as a lively and impressive city in terms of urban planning, its stunning public buildings, grand boulevards, and coffee houses. The communications and transport infrastructure ensured massive mobility of people – in 1910, Vienna reached two million inhabitants – and goods. The parliament, the numerous institutions such as museums, schools, hospitals, the economy, and the population made a strong impression on the author. The Habsburg Empire apparently ruled "successfully" over an ethnically and religiously diverse population. This model must have seemed enticing to Rıza Nur. The Austrian-Hungarian Empire seemed to function effectively and provide solutions for various kinds of problems, such as nationalist movements in different crownlands.

In particular, the appreciation Austrians supposedly had for the long history of relations with the Ottomans, which was evident in the "Turkish" objects on display, encouraged Rıza Nur that, in addition to modernization (that is, adaptation of European civilization), it was above all important to cultivate one's own culture. Of course, this already reveals Rıza Nur's exclusive and narrow "radical nationalist" understanding of Ottoman culture. For him, the salvation of the Ottoman Empire lied in its Turkification.

Ironically, "the idea of an anachronistic empire doomed to die well before the [WW I] war, thanks supposedly to the weakness of its internal institutions or their ability to face the challenge of modernity"⁸⁷ which was put forward to the Habsburg Empire probably applied more so to the Ottoman Empire. Certainly, the years before World War I were twilight years for both empires, but the clouds brewing over Rıza Nur's homeland were clearly darker and more threatening. In the end and on the side of the German Empire, "being modern, being European"⁸⁸ did not pay off neither for the Habsburg Empire nor the Ottoman Empire.

87 P. M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History*, Cambridge, MA 2016, p. 382.

88 Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, p. 355.