A Utopia Hunter in the History of Turkish Utopia Studies: Sadık Usta

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Utopian literature is a reflection of one of the natural tendencies of human consciousness, which is the feeling of "resistance against the existing." According to philosophical anthropology, animals have their environment, humans have their world, and even the universe. The ability to adapt to one's surroundings and to reshape that environment is one of the characteristics that distinguishes humans from animals. As beings who do not accept their current situation and say "no," humans inherently seek a world that is logically correct, ethically good, aesthetically beautiful, and legally just. For this reason, utopia is not a way of thinking or living that is specific to a certain group of people, a particular era, or a specific cultural environment. Wherever there are humans, there are designs for a life and social order that is better in ethical terms, more beautiful in aesthetic terms, more correct in logical terms, and fairer in legal terms. These intrinsic qualities are essential characteristics of utopian design. In addition to these, elements that constitute utopia can be found in myths of a lost golden age, beliefs in an expected savior, isolated island lives, humanistic city quests, examples of communal ownership societies, equal living arrangements in fraternal organizations, libertarian anti-clerical peasant uprisings, poetic escapism in literature, axis mundi culture, images of paradise, imagined dreams, and hopes for a new world. Thus, utopian tendencies and examples of utopia can be observed in mythology, religion, philosophy, art, and literature since ancient times.

The earliest examples of utopia with known authors in literary history can be found among the ancient Greeks. Ancient Greek literature was transmitted to the Renaissance and from there to the contemporary literary world through Latin literature. There is a continuity in European utopian literature, as in all other cultural fields. For instance, Aristotle's book on logic, the *Organon*, was followed almost two thousand years later by Bacon's *Novum Organum*, and Plato's utopia, *Atlantis*, was succeeded by Bacon's *Nova Atlantis*.

The most significant development in world utopian literature occurred in 1516 with the publication of Thomas More's *Utopia* in Latin in the Netherlands. Thus, More introduced a new concept to the realm of thought and literature. This concept is not only the title of a work but also a genre of literature, a philosophical movement, and a way of life that has entered the history of thought.

The term is formed from the combination of the Greek words "ou," meaning "not," and "eu," meaning "good," with the common vowel "u," and the word "topos," meaning "place." If More had used the Latin word "Nusquama," which means "nowhere," "no land," "dream land," or "no place," instead of the Greek word meaning "not a good place," could the term utopia have had the same

impact? The answer to this question would undoubtedly be "no." Before the publication of the book, More referenced the title as Nusquama in a letter to Erasmus of Rotterdam:

> For some time before the publication in I 5 I6 of the *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia Libellus vere Aureus*, Thomas More and his friend Erasmus had been referring to it simply as the "Nusquama," from a good Latin adverb meaning "nowhere." (Manuel-Manuel, 1997, p.1)

Winiarczyk notes that the name *utopia* was assigned later, based on More's correspondence with Erasmus. According to him, while the word utopia is a neologism, the concept itself existed in ancient literature. Bernhard Kytzler compiled various terms used by authors such as Diodorus, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius for the concept of utopia in ancient Greek and Latin (Winiarczyk, 2011, p. 2).

With his work, More not only pioneered utopian literature but also created the prototype for the main structure of utopian works. A key feature of the utopia genre is that it is based on a city established on an isolated city or island. Through the society living within the city, the author seeks the possibilities of living forms such as freedom and equality. Since these possibilities are limited by the conditions of a classed society, utopias naturally contain critiques of class society. The design for a free and equal organization of society is essential for a work to be considered a utopia. Therefore, utopian societies also require questioning a utopian form of governance. The governance must educate and shape the populace, ensuring the continuity of utopian life, which necessitates providing education in a particular way of thinking. In this regard, some classical utopias also include proposals for religious organization and the imposition of religious or mythical forms of thought upon society. Thus, in some classical utopias, one may encounter theocratic and clerical regimes instead of secular and lay cultures. For this reason, the existence of a clerical class makes the formation of a classless society impossible. In works that enter utopian literature, issues of returning to the past or reaching the future are also inevitable. Many classical utopias, like More's, narrate the stories of a harmonious and happy life once lived on a lost continent, an island submerged in waters. In some utopias, however, the social order does not exist "yet," "today," "now," or "here." It will only materialize in the tomorrows and future days. The situation of tomorrow's utopias containing a prediction, estimation, or hope gained momentum, especially in the nineteenth century, with the exception of Lucian's works. Thus, a dimension of anticipation was added to utopias. During the same period, as scientific and technological developments made progressivist ideology an inseparable part of progressive social thoughts, there arose a need to incorporate scientific and technical advancements into the characteristics of utopias. The history of utopian thought and literature thus underwent a second transformation in the nineteenth century. The significant influence of socialist thought on post-industrial social developments led to a leap in utopian thought. Engels' association of the utopian socialist tradition with scientific developments, class struggles, and dialectical philosophy resulted in the universalization of utopian thought and literature in parallel with socialism. In fact, Engels establishes a contrast between socialism and utopianism, arguing that utopian socialism does not

recognize the proletariat as the subject of history, nor does it benefit from scientific developments. It is disconnected from the working class and science. Real socialism is only possible by distancing itself from this fanciful approach. The transformation of utopias devoid of the essence of laborers, scientists, and humanists into their opposites is inevitable. Naturally, this development that produces its opposite has also led to the emergence of dystopias (Widdicombe, 1992).

Following the widespread acceptance of utopia in societies that underwent the industrial revolution, this effect has begun to manifest itself in pre-industrial societies as well. As a result of the influence of socialist thought, along with the translations of More's works and the emergence of subsequent utopian traditions, utopian literature has become a significant intellectual factor that stimulates and awakens creative and critical thought.

The first work on the history of utopian thought was written about a hundred years ago by Joyce Oramel Hertzler. Hertzler defines utopian thought as social idealism and delves into the history of the concept in this context. The first part of Hertzler's work is dedicated to the ethical and religious societal ideals in the narratives of the Old and New Testaments. The second part focuses on the period after More, that is, modern utopias. In this manner, Hertzler's work does not mention ancient utopias or non-Western utopian traditions. (Hertzler, 1923/2020).

Sadık Usta's Works

Sadık Usta is a thinker who has produced significant works in the field of utopian literature by confronting many issues related to it. In Turkish, Usta's contributions to the field of utopian studies seem to have reached a remarkable critical mass. Through his books "Ancient Utopias," "Turkish Utopias," and *Utopia and Folklore Studies*, along with his translations, articles, interviews, television programs, and civil initiatives, he has effectively contributed to this field as if he were a one-person institute. Today, the name Sadık Usta appears to be a "sine qua non" in Turkish utopian studies.

Sadık Usta's works in the history of utopian literature can be categorized under the following headings:

1. Books: *Ancient Utopias*, *Turkish Utopias*, *Utopia and Folklore Studies*.
2. Translations: Thomas More - *Utopia*, Tommasso Campanella - *The City of the Sun*.
3. Journals: *Science and Utopia*, *Science and Future*.
4. TV programs: *Habertürk*, Presented by Okan Bayülgen.
5. Meetings: Campus gatherings.
6. Interviews: In magazines and schools.
7. Communal initiatives: Summer gatherings.

Sadık Usta and Ancient Utopias

The greatest tradition in utopian literature is the ancient Greco-Latin literature. When it comes to utopia in ancient writings, an important criterion must be considered. In myths and

cultures such as Sanskrit, Buddhist, Chinese, Persian, Sumerian, Egyptian, Anatolian, ancient American, Scandinavian, Germanic, and Slavic, the characteristic of anonymity and collectivity is particularly emphasized instead of the author's name. In Greek and Latin literature, on the other hand, creations are personal. In this context, Homer, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo recorded the first examples of utopia. Following the Renaissance, humanistic research aimed at discovering antiquity began to uncover the utopian tendencies and utopias present in Greek and Latin literature, particularly towards the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The pioneering work in the history of ancient utopian literature is attributed to Aristotle, known for his leadership in the history of philosophy and various branches of science. In his work "Politics," Aristotle refers to utopian thinkers in the context of ideal city designs, including the urban planner Hippodamus of Miletus and Phaleas of Chalcedon.

The bibliography of modern studies on ancient utopias is quite extensive (Brown, 1955, p. 57; Rigobert-Müller, 1988, pp. 18-92). In this context, the legal regulations of the Spartan Lycurgus, Plato's Atlantis, Aristophanes' comedy "Women in Parliament" (Ekklesiazousai, Ἐκκλησιάζουσαι) (Kundakçı, 2018), Iambulus' travelogue "The Isles of the Sun" (Helios Nisoi, Ἠλιος νήσοι) (Winston, 1976; Winiarczyk, 1997; Robbio-Sebastián, 2010; Baloglou, 2011), Lucian's novel *True History* (Alēthē Diēgēmata, Ἀληθῆ διηγήματα) (Raisch, 2016), and Euhemerus' account of the utopia of the island of Panchaea in "Sacred History" (Hiera Anagraphê, Ἱερὰ ἀναγραφή) have contributed to the formation of ancient utopian literature. Rigobert Günther and Reimar Müller collectively assessed ancient Greco-Roman utopias and data based on the understanding of the Golden Age (Günther-Müller, 1988). An anthology of the most famous utopian texts written from antiquity to the present has been prepared by Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (Claeys-Sargent, 1999). The most significant study in this regard was authored by Winiarczyk. The work was published first in Polish and later in German (Dzielska, 2011, pp. 309-311; Neather, 2012, pp. 37-41). A book edited by Pierre Destrée, Jan Opsomer, and Geert Roskam, consisting of sections examining the concept of utopia in ancient thought, also includes utopias that emerged in Greek and Latin literature, analyzed by various authors. In addition to the ancient utopias mentioned above, this book also discusses utopias found in Latin and Chinese literature. Eight years after the publication of Usta's work, a similar study was published in Turkish by Nilnur Tandaçgüneş (Tandaçgüneş, 2013).

Usta embarks on examining ancient utopias based on Oscar Wilde's view that "the history of civilization is also the history of utopias," compiling the utopian texts of this period into his work. Thus, for the first time, ancient utopian texts were brought together in a chronological, thematic, and systematic manner to create an anthology. The central thesis of the book "Ancient Utopias" is the determination that Sparta is a primary source in Greco-Latin utopian literature. The rivalry between Sparta and Athens in the ancient Greek world has fostered the idea that the ideal societal model is closer to Sparta. Therefore, ancient Greek writers and utopian works constantly refer back to the structure and laws of this city. The factors that make Sparta a utopian city and define it as a

utopian alternative to Athens are the legislative activities carried out by the leader Lycurgus in this city.

According to Usta, although the roots of utopia can be traced back to Sumer, Egypt, and Minoan civilizations, its appearance as a political program and its embodiment in state organization first occurred in Sparta. The first systematic, egalitarian, and communal constitution in human history by Lycurgus has also inspired subsequent utopian writers.

The book, which has been published in three editions, addresses the utopian and state designs of ancient writers such as Lycurgus, Hesiod, Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes, Hippodamus, Phaleas, Euhemerus, Lucian, and Iambulus. With this compilation, readers can recognize the origins of elements found in Renaissance and modern utopias and anticipations, such as island literature, journeys to the moon, intercontinental exotic travels, Robinsonades, science fiction writings, and the first examples of free and rational societal designs that were not hindered by the prejudices and prohibitions of the Middle Ages. Usta's compilation is one of the first works in Turkish as well as in European languages. While the author examines ancient utopias in an original manner, he has also produced an anthology through his own translations. Usta's work, which consists of examination, compilation, and translation focusing on ancient utopias, is a pioneering and novel study for both Turkish and other languages.

Sadık Usta and Utopian Translations

The first translations of More's works from Latin into European languages such as English, French, German, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Greek, Albanian, Czech, Slovak, Serbian, and Russian, and the dates of these translations, their impacts, and significant bibliometric research topics related to the spread and development of utopian literature are important areas of study. Some works have been conducted in this regard (Elgül, 2011; Dozo, 2005; Phélippeau, 2016; Hunt, 1991; Hosington, 1984; McCutcheon, 1992; Osinovsky, 1969; Kleberg, 1984; Fortunati, 2016; Vieira, 2016; Blaim, 2016).

Similarly, the story and characteristics of the first translations into Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Chinese, Greek, Japanese, and Turkish also reflect the literary developments of these languages and countries. In this context, three translations of *Utopia* appear to be primary and significant in Turkish. The first is the translation made in 1964 by Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Vedat Günyol, and Prof. Dr. Mina Urgan. The preface of this translation contains a section written by Urgan titled "The Concept of Utopia in Literature and Thomas More," which has been included in subsequent editions. Mina Urgan, a professor of English language and literature, presents the first comprehensive history of utopian literature in Turkish to readers. The author of these lines also encountered utopia through Urgan nearly fifty years ago. The second text is a direct translation from Latin into Turkish by Çiğdem Dürüşken. The third was completed by Sadık Usta.

Usta also translated Campanella's The City of the Sun along with his own translation of More's *Utopia* to complement the ancient utopian works. These translations were made utilizing the

German and English versions. Although the original language of the texts is Latin, Usta addresses this deficiency through explanations regarding proper names, place names, and terms provided in the book. Emrah Atasoy emphasizes the importance of this approach in his comparative article on the Turkish translations of More:

> One of its main differences from the Eyüboğlu, Günyol, and Urgan translation is its use of clarifying notes about historical figures, various places, and cities. … What is remarkable about his version is that he refers to other translations and explains his reasons for the 'necessary' changes in the relevant parts through his notes." (Atasoy, 2016, p. 561)

Sadık Usta and Turkish Utopias

Turkish utopian literature has shown a twofold development over the past 35 years. Firstly, there has been an increase in utopian translations. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Servet-i Fünun group began reading More's and Campanella's works through French. During the Republican era, as socialist thought reached a broader readership through encyclopedic and classical texts, the interest sparked by these utopias and the evolving needs of the reading public led various publishing houses to translate More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, and Bacon's *New Atlantis* in full. Plato's *Atlantis* and the communal aristocratic utopia presented in *The Republic* have also circulated among readers since the 1940s. Akşit Göktürk's doctoral thesis on the theme of islands in literature and Mina Urgan's preface to her translation of *Utopia* have further broadened the readers' horizons.

Secondly, parallel to the emerging culture and readership, there has been a significant development in the writing and publication of works of utopian genre in the liberal environment brought about by the 1961 Constitution.

Lastly, there have been major advancements in studies on utopias. These developments began with the examination of works from European literature and were followed by studies conducted on Turkish texts. After Akşit Göktürk's book, two studies that collectively address utopias in European literature in Turkish stand out:

1. Nail Bezel's two-volume work titled "Creating Earthly Paradises and the End of Earthly Paradises," which examines examples of utopian and dystopian world literature and includes selected texts (Bezel, 1984).
2. A scientific expertise thesis presented by Abamüslüm Akdemir to Atatürk University in 1988 titled "Utopias in Terms of Philosophy of Society."

While Göktürk's thesis represents the pre-YÖK (Higher Education Council) period: 1982, it is seen that to date, two hundred theses on the theme of utopia have been written in the post-YÖK period. According to the national thesis center data of YÖK, thirty-four of these two hundred theses are doctoral, two are for art proficiency, and one hundred sixty-four are master's theses. The first study addressing the theme of utopia in Turkish literature, which also ranks third in the general list, is a master's thesis titled "Utopia in Contemporary Turkish Literature" presented

by Nurettin Öztürk in 1992 at İnönü University. Öztürk wrote this thesis to demonstrate the existence of utopia in Turkish literature, based on the assertion of the award-winning utopia writing competition announced in the Milliyet Sanat Magazine, which stated that "there is no utopia in Turkish literature," by arguing that utopia is a fundamental human inclination. The author, examining Turkish utopias and various works written in genres such as novel, story, essay, and poetry from the Tanzimat era to 1980, addressed the utopian tendencies he identified within the conditions of the period in terms of their religious, literary, political, philosophical, and psychological natures, ultimately showing that there are utopias in Turkish literature. Since this study was carried out in the nature of a "thesis," the author did not engage in a critical stance regarding whether the utopias and utopian tendencies he identified in Turkish literature are "truly" or "concretely" utopian. Öztürk's contributions to utopian literature began before the aforementioned thesis and continued afterward (See References).

In 2000, Ayhan Yalçınkaya presented a doctoral thesis titled "Equality and Freedom as Utopian Themes in Turkish Literature: A Comparison; 1970-1980 and 1980-1990" to Ankara University, which utilized Öztürk's work on various topics while also critiquing it from the perspective mentioned above (Yalçınkaya, 2004, p. 179).

Usta's first contribution to Turkish utopian literature is the book "Turkish Utopias," which was presented to Goethe University in 2012 and is a published version of the thesis titled "Utopia and Revolution: Modernization Movements in Turkey (1908-1938)" under the name "Turkish Utopias: Utopia and Revolution from Tanzimat to the Republic." The book consists of five chapters and appendices. The theoretical framework is discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter addresses "Western Enlightenment and Its Impact on Turkey." The third chapter is dedicated to the topic of Turkish literature and modernization. The fourth chapter discusses utopia and revolution during the Young Turks period, and the fifth chapter encompasses the tradition of utopia during the Kemalist revolution and the Republic. The appendices include the following texts:

1. Ziya Paşa: *Dream* (Rüya)
2. Namık Kemal: *Dream* (Rüya)
3. İsmail Gaspıralı: *Muslims of Darürrahat* (Darürrahat Müslümanları)
4. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın: *Life of Imagination* (Hayat-ı Muhayyel: Düşyaşam)
5. Kılıçzade İsmail Hakkı: *A Very Aware Sleep* (Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku)
6. Ahmet Ağaoğlu: *In the Land of Free Men* (Serbest İnsanlar Ülkesinde)

In the preface, the author expresses his memories and feelings regarding the inspiration and story behind the book. In 1984, while embarking on a train journey, a friend and neighbor handed him Eric Frank Russell's book *Planet of Disobedience*, published in English in 1951. The original title is *And Then There Were None*, published in Turkish as *Ve Sonra Hiç Kalmadı*. The book narrates a fiction about a society of twelve million living on another planet, without class, hierarchy, army, bureaucracy, money, lies, living freely and equally. Usta recounts the utopian content of the book and the impact it left on him in a TV interview and in another book in a

memoir-like and detailed manner[1]. This book profoundly affects the author's entire perspective. Since that day, the author has been, in his own words, "wandering in the sea of utopia" (Usta, 2014a, p. 13). After reading Russell's book, he turns his attention to More's classic utopia, both studying and translating it into Turkish. Although More's book had previously been translated into Turkish, Usta's journey of translation opens new horizons for him as he attempts to embrace the vast utopian corpus. Not stopping there, Usta also begins to question the existence of Turkish utopias and writes the aforementioned thesis. To prepare for the thesis, he first examines the documentation at the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education. The first footnote of the book provides this information to the reader. Usta generally adopts a stance against the theses that claim there are no utopias among Turks. While he places Öztürk's work at the forefront of those who believe there are utopias among Turks, he positions Yalçınkaya's doctoral thesis with those who claim "Turks cannot write utopias." In this way, he begins to justify his positive approach between the two theses.

The debate over whether there are utopias in Turkish literature is not an original or specific discussion. This polemic is also a sub-issue of the East-West cultural comparisons. Just as many topics have been discussed in terms of claims that "philosophy is a Western thinking activity," "why did capitalism develop first in the West," "is the industrial revolution unique to the West," "does one have to be Western to board a train in China before the Opium War?," in this context, the debate over whether utopia is universal or specific to the West has been previously experienced among researchers of global utopian literature. Krishan Kumar is the most rigid advocate of the idea that utopia is Western. According to him:

> There is no utopian tradition and thought outside the Western world. In non-Western societies, various types of ideal societal examples or dreams of perfection related to humanity are often attached to religious cosmologies. However, in none of these societies do we see practices based on writing utopias, critiquing them, enriching and transforming the themes contained in utopias, and seeking new possibilities within them." (Kumar, 2005, p. 57). Utopia is not universal. It arises solely in societies that possess the Christian and classical period heritage, in other words, solely in the West. (Dutton, 2017, p. 318)

The weak side of this East-West polemic is the lack of consensus in defining the East and West. Additionally, can it truly be proven that there is a West and an East in the world? Is it correct to take the hinterland of Western Rome and Eastern Rome as opposing worlds? How "Western" are Spain or Portugal, which are the westernmost regions within what is referred to as the West? Where does the East begin and where does it end? Is it the Asian side of Istanbul, or the Elburz mountains of Iran, or the imagined Iron Gate that marks the beginning of the East? Who's East are the Balkans, and who's West are they? How "Eastern" is Islam? Is there a culture that is as intertwined with European culture as Islamic countries and culture are? For instance, is there a distinctly separate Islamic philosophy from the West? Or is Islamic philosophy merely a continuation of antiquity in Syriac, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish? Ultimately, articles on the virtual network[3] argue that even in antiquity, there were very close cultural relationships and exchanges

between Greco-Roman and Chinese cultural circles. It is possible to speak of the influences of Egypt, Persia, Buddhism, and Kabbalism on philosophers like Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus. In this case, it is not feasible to speak of two opposing and separate camps called East and West. Considering the secular culture and individualization process that emerged after the Renaissance, it is clear that this development originated in the West and spread from there to the world. However, all events and phenomena should not be overshadowed by this reality. On the other hand, against the claim that utopia is specific to the West, Dutton's serious examination surrounding the non-Western utopian tradition leads to conclusions that are in stark contrast to the views of Kumar and Yalçınkaya:

> Based on evidence related to different belief systems and worldviews that reveal inherently utopian designs, cultural manifestations, and socio-political movements, it can be said that the desire to exist better on earth is fundamentally a universal concept." (Dutton, 2017, p. 351)

In parallel with Kumar, Yalçınkaya's thesis states that there are no utopias among Turks. The author has a judgment in his master's thesis, presented in the same department in 1994, stating that "not only have the Alevis failed to develop utopias, but the absence of a messianic obsession despite carrying the understanding of the 12 Imams is striking and noteworthy" (Yalçınkaya, 1996, p. 206). The issue at the heart of this judgment revolves around the term "messianic obsession." Messianism is common in Hebrew and Christian beliefs. It is also present in both Sunni and Shia traditions. Additionally, such a "returning savior substitute prophet" figure can be seen in other cultures and beliefs. For example, in ancient Iranian belief, Behram Gur is such a figure. Moreover, what is significant in these beliefs is not the debates over who the Messiah or Mehdi will be or when they will arrive, but the promises of freedom, equality, brotherhood, and peace that are based on texts like the Manichean, Essenian, and Hılfü'l-fuzulci, or a kind of political Islamic "Medina Agreement." This is the essence of the matter.

Indeed, Ernst Bloch has drawn attention to the utopian qualities of some religious movements that are against dominant religions in his works *The Spirit of Utopia* and *The Principle of Hope*. Whether something is orthodoxy, heterodoxy, deviation, perversion, obsession, bigotry, hegemony, or oppression is determined not by the eye of the observer but by whether that thing is peaceful, egalitarian, and liberating. In another perspective, it should also be noted that instead of messianism, there is an alternative in Alevism. It is true that the principle of messianism, which is one of the conditions of Shiism, does not exist in Alevism. In other words, as Yalçınkaya stated, belief in Mehdi is not one of the fundamental beliefs of Alevism. However, approaching the subject descriptively and interpretatively rather than normatively is more appropriate for a scientific stance. The term obsession is a subjective expression in this context.

On the other hand, Alevi communities in Anatolia, following the warning of the Hacı Bektaş Dergah, viewed Mustafa Kemal as a "Mehdi" and participated in the national struggle. For them, this was also a revolutionary initiative containing the desire for equal and brotherly coexistence

against the policies of othering, oppression, extermination, and denial that sharpened particularly after the "Vaka-i Hayriye" that began with Yavuz. In this sense, they fought for a utopia. The gap between the expected and the realized is not their fault.

Usta divides modern Turkish history into two main periods. The first period is referred to as Young Turkism, and the second period as Kemalism. The influence of Feroz Ahmad's theses on the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress and studies on the transformation process from Unionism to Kemalism can be clearly traced in Usta's historical consciousness in terms of sociological discontinuity and continuity. Turkish modernization is also a process of democratic revolutions. These revolutions have influenced utopian writing, and Turkish utopias have likewise influenced the processes of modernization. Therefore, according to Usta, there is a dialectical relationship between utopia and revolution. The author evaluates historical conditions and periods in this context, presenting utopian texts within these conditions. In his view, Turkish utopias are also the utopias of the Turkish revolution. Naturally, there are no utopias among those who resist change; they have ideologies in the Mannheim sense. Usta examines Turkish utopias with a particular focus on their connections to the ideals of freedom and equality of the revolution. In an interview, he highlighted the relationship between utopia and revolution, which is one of the main theses of his book:

> There is an unbreakable bond between utopia and revolution. Every utopia simultaneously provokes revolution. Every revolution needs a utopia. There has never been a revolution without a utopia. A utopia that does not lead to revolution is also not worth mentioning. Therefore, every utopian is ultimately a revolutionary." (Usta, 2014b)

Since the author primarily aims to demonstrate the existence and values of utopias in the socio-political context, some philological information and views show inaccuracies.

For instance, references to utopia can be found in the Orhun inscriptions, where Bilge Kağan speaks of "a paradise of the past" during the times of his father and uncle, and in relation to historical days in Ötüken. However, this nostalgia does not contain a legend of ages or a longing for a golden age. If a search for utopia is to be conducted from a philological perspective in the Old Turkic period, it is necessary to examine the Uighur period poem titled "Anı teg orunlarta."

The initiative associated with Sheikh Bedreddin is, in fact, the action of the Torlaks. There is no communal view or utopian reference in Bedreddin's writings or statements. The Sheikh is straightforwardly a kadı. The revolutionary actions of Börklüce Mustafa and Torlak Kemal undoubtedly carry a communal character. In this aspect, the Torlak uprising, known as the Bedreddin rebellion, is similar to the Heliopolitan uprising of Aristonicus of Pergamon (Mossé, 1969, p. 297) and the peasant wars in Germany. It should be noted that Usta should include Aristonicus's revolution and utopia in the new edition of Ancient Utopias; this would further strengthen the argument that Anatolia is the cradle of the first utopias.

The author has also included Nizamülmülk's "Siyasetname" and generally political treatises within the scope of utopia. Many political treatises written in the Turkish and Islamic cultural basin, such as Nizamülmülk's famous "Siyasetname," identify that egalitarian thought has sometimes been active in the Islamic and Eastern tradition, particularly in Anatolia (Usta, 2017, p. 77).

The author also references Agah Sırrı Levend, who systematically introduced political treatises in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature. However, there are no records of equality or utopia in such works, and such a claim cannot be made. Works of the political treatise genre primarily combine efforts to sustain the monarchy and to divide society into classes in the eyes of the state. This approach, based on the four-element understanding of the ulama, umara, reaya, and beraya, is not egalitarian; on the contrary, it defines "justice" as treating the reaya "well" and "fairly" to maintain the state, without giving them more or less than they deserve. They are valued not because they are human, but because they support the state and army through their production. This is referred to as "the circle of justice." The best example of this is found in Kınalızade Ali Efendi's work "Ahlak-ı Alai." The state described by Sencer Divitçioğlu in the Asian mode of production, which the Tahirists referred to as the "noble state," is fundamentally a simple and naked expression of a slave, that is, a kapıkulu state. The "reaya," meaning a flock of sheep, is what sustains the state. Naturally, from a political theory perspective, the flock is managed by the shepherd. The flock is a deposit of God entrusted to the shepherd, in authentic terms, a "vedia." When looking at the lines in Nizamülmülk's work that speak of how these people should be treated when they are the palace's slaves and guardians, it will be evident that they are viewed as rebels who must be eliminated when they seek their rights. Traces of utopia can be more effectively pursued in works such as "menakıpname, velayetname, and fütüvvetname".

Another significant error is the confusion between the language revolution and the writing revolution, with the assertion that "the transition to Latin letters occurred in 1927." However, the language revolution is dated to September 26, 1932, the opening day of the First Turkish Language Congress. The law that facilitated the change referred to as the writing revolution, letter reform, or alphabet reform was approved by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on March 1, 1928, and published in the Official Gazette on November 3, 1928, coming into effect (Usta, 2014a, p. 18). Usta argues that the decline in interest in old written works due to the writing revolution, the neglect of Ottoman texts, and the abandonment of this field to "reactionaries," has opened the door for "progressive circles to cut themselves off from their roots," leading to these works being forgotten in archives. However, the circles the author refers to are not the philological academicians, that is, Turkologists, who have translated and examined old written texts as master's and doctoral theses; various official and private publishing houses have also published these. The leading official publishing houses include university publications and the Turkish History and Language Institutes. These academicians pursue this work not out of political motives but as a requirement of their profession, using philological methods. On the other hand, while Usta's statements indicate this reality, he also corrects his own views. For instance, he notes in

relevant footnotes that the "Dreams" of Ziya Paşa and Namık Kemal, which he claims were first transferred to new writing, were published in 1932 in Istanbul by Tefeyyüz Publishing House with the new letters (Usta, 2014a, pp. 68, 84, 167, 191). Additionally, these texts have also appeared in the second volume of the Modern Turkish Literature Anthology, prepared by Prof. Dr. Mehmet Kaplan and his colleagues, published with new letters (N. Kemal, 1978; Z. Paşa, 1978). According to Usta, Ziya Paşa's "Dream" is the first utopia of the Ottoman period: "Undoubtedly, among the utopian works that initiated the formation of modern Turkish novels, Ziya Paşa's 'Dream' comes first" (Usta, 2014a, p. 68). Both "Dream" texts should not be viewed in the same light as "these are utopias." According to Öztürk, Ziya Paşa's "Dream" is not utopia and can never be considered so. The first utopia of Turkish literature and dream utopia is the work of Namık Kemal (Öztürk, 1992, p. 25). The incorrect view that Ziya Paşa's "Dream" is an utopia like Namık Kemal's "Dream" is continued in subsequent studies, referencing Usta. For example, Kurpınar (2020, p. 7) writes:

> Philosopher Sadık Usta (1960-) recognizes the start of the Turkish literary utopian tradition in the 19th century with the political dreams of Ziya Paşa and Namık Kemal, which will be touched upon later in the third chapter." (Kurpınar, 2020, p. 7)

In this book, Usta emphasizes that utopias are written to meet the demands for equality, brotherhood, and freedom that arose after the emergence of class societies, and that they are not specific to a certain society but are evident in all ancient civilizations from Ancient China and India to Ancient Egypt and Sumer. With this thesis, he argues against the Orientalist discourse that utopia is specific to the West. Simultaneously, Usta states that there are various utopian references and tendencies in Islamic culture and ancient Turkish literature. In this context, he includes a poem titled "City of Riza," introduced as an Alevi utopia. According to the author, this text, which lacks detailed information, expresses typical egalitarian views seen in the Alevi tradition (Usta, 2014a, p. 64). The poem actually belongs to a folk poet named Hasan Yıldırım, who was born in Sivas Şarkışla, a member of the family known as Yüzbaşıoğulları, and who had the pen name Mihmani. The poet was first given the pen name "Yüzbaşıoğlu" by Aşık Veysel, and then "Mihmani" by Aşık Ali İzzet Özkan (Başaran, 2018, Kaya, 2001). The references in Mihmani's poem reflect the poet's personal culture before the established common teachings of Alevism.

The term "City of Riza" has been frequently mentioned in recent times among Alevi civil society circles. It is claimed that this concept appears in a mystical book of advice called "İmam Cafer Buyruğu," which is believed to have been written in the name of Imam Ja'far. This book has various manuscripts and translations. The narrative of the City of Riza appears in Esat Korkmaz's translation (Korkmaz, 2007, pp. 178-182). In Korkmaz's other books, this text is also recounted in support of communal views. However, neither the Mihmani nor Korkmaz texts can be characterized as an Alevi utopia. The Alevi utopia should be sought in classical texts such as fütüvvetname, menakıpname, and velayetname. Before engaging with this autochthonous culture, Korkmaz had been involved in political actions within the 68 generation. Possessing a profound and broad culture concerning the history of socialist thought, and hailing from a family known as the Torlaks, Korkmaz turned to such studies after the 1980s due to interest in the communal

narratives and teachings of the East and West. Interestingly, just as Nazım Hikmet wrote the "Bedrettin Epic" when accused of indifference to national history, Kemal Tahir turned to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, Korkmaz to the City of Riza, and Usta to Turkish utopias for similar reasons. Usta's starting point was influenced by some intellectuals associated with leftist and liberal thought who disparagingly claimed that "Turks cannot write utopias." This quest has led Usta to embark on a journey that deepened his understanding of Turkish and Islamic history, which resulted in his contributions to Turkish Utopias, "Thinkers Who Changed the World - V," and "Ömer Hayyam."

In Usta's work, the major utopias written during the period from the Tanzimat to the death of Atatürk are addressed in interaction with socio-political developments. These include the New Zealand projects of the Servet-i Fünun group, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın's story "Life of Imagination," Abdullah Cevdet's article "A Very Aware Sleep," Gaspıralı İsmail's "Women's Country" and "Muslims of Darürrahat," and Ahmet Ağaoğlu's novel *In the Land of Free Men*. Among these, a brief examination of Ahmet Ağaoğlu is necessary.

Although Ağaoğlu was a republican and secular figure, he was also the intellectual father of the Free Party, which opposed the single-party rule of the People's Party, and he authored the memoirs *Memories of the Free Party* along with the utopia In the *Land of Free Men*. The term "free" here is used in a liberal sense. While still in Malta, Ağaoğlu noted that two opposing political currents confronted each other in the formation of the new Turkish state, which he identified as the Hadidiler (Angry Ones), radicals, and the Serbestiler (Liberals). Ağaoğlu sided with liberalism. His utopia should not merely be viewed as a product or opposition to the Turkish and Atatürk revolutions. Ağaoğlu had observed, experienced, and analyzed the 1905 Russian Revolution, the 1906 Iranian Revolution, the II. Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire, and the Republican Revolutions. While still in Azerbaijan, he began writing books advocating for secularism and women's freedom against the oppression of landlords and the mullahs. Therefore, Ağaoğlu's utopia must be evaluated within the context of his own developmental trajectory.

Utopia and Folklore Studies: One Thousand and One Nights

Usta continued his search for utopia in tales first through articles and then by writing a book. In his book titled *Utopia and Folklore Studies: One Thousand and One Nights*, he reiterates the justifications regarding the existence of utopia among Turks that he put forward in his book Turkish Utopias. Usta articulates the purpose of writing the folklore book as follows:

> Our aim in this work is to examine *One Thousand and One Nights*, one of the most important texts of Eastern literary culture, from the perspective of utopia. While *One Thousand and One Nights* is the most significant source of utopia in the East, these tales have not yet been examined from this perspective. (Usta, 2017, p. 78).

Usta discusses the genealogy and structural aspects of the term "tale" without addressing which linguistic group the Ethiopian language belongs to, stating that the word "masal" passed

into Aramaic as "masla," then into Hebrew as "maşal," Arabic as "mesel" and "masal," Persian as "masal," Uzbek through letter transformation as "maral," and Hungarian as "mese." A journey tracing such etymology cannot be undertaken. The language referred to as Ethiopian is, in fact, the Amharic language. This language forms a subset of the Semitic languages along with Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, and now a dead language, Aramaic. In a language group, one cannot discuss the transfer of a word from one dialect to another. In these languages, which are equal branches of a common root or parent language, words differ over time and space due to phonetic changes. This situation holds true for all branches of root languages. For instance, Spanish does not take basic words from Portuguese, nor does Romanian from French. The common vocabulary undergoes changes in sound and meaning within its historical development. This is also true for Germanic, Slavic, Turkic, Ural, and Altaic languages. Therefore, terms like masal, mesel, maşal, and metel are appearances of the same word in different dialects. The word in Persian came from Arabic, in Uzbek from Persian, and in Hungarian through Ottoman Turkish. As is known, Hungarian is a Ural language, Uzbek is Turkic, and Persian belongs to the Indo-European languages of the Indo-Iranian branch. Hence, the appearances of the mentioned word in Semitic languages relate to dialectal variations. Its appearances in other language groups have occurred through loaning, borrowing, or copying. After these explanations, two conclusions should be emphasized:

1. The word "masal" did not pass from Ethiopian to Arabic and other languages. This word, which is already common in the Semitic languages, has passed into non-Semitic languages directly or indirectly through various variants via Arabic.
2. There is no relationship between Ethiopia and utopia.

Some argue that the term "Ethiopian" is an external designation meaning "slave" in Arabic, while others claim it is an internal designation derived from the name of a king named Habisi. The word has been expressed in Latin as "Abissin," which has become widespread. It is said that the Greek term "Ethiopia" (Aithiopia: Αἰθιοπία = aithein: to burn, ōps: face = burnt face) has been a composite external name (exonim) since the time of Homer and Herodotus. However, it has also been strongly defended by Ayele Bekerie that this name is indeed an internal name linked to the king Ethiopis (Bekerie, 2004). Classic sources also provide the following information:

> The Phoenicians called themselves Ethiopians (p. 12). In Greek times, the Egyptians depicted Ethiopia as an ideal state (p. 14). Archaic books were full of the stories of the wonderful Ethiopians (p. 15). A great many nations distant and different from one another are called Ethiopians (p. 16). The Ethiopians were distinguished from other races by a very dark or completely black skin (p. 16). The ancient Ethiopians were the architectural giants of the past. When the daring Cushite genius was in the full career of its glory, it was the peculiar delight of this enterprising race to erect stupendous edifices, excavate long subterranean passages in the living rock, form vast lakes and extend over the hollows of adjoining mountains magnificent arches for aqueducts and bridges (p. 19). Passing southward, we find that ancient edifices occur throughout the whole extent of Ethiopia. In the olden days, the climate there was favorable to the nurturing and development of a high

> type of civilization, producing an Ethiopian so superior to the later types that they were called by the ancients 'the handsomest men of the primeval world' (p. 21). The whole of the space between the Nile and Abyssinia, and northward to Lower Egypt once constituted Ethiopia. It was called Beled-es-Soudan (land of the blacks) (p. 21). Everything south of Egypt was called Ethiopia, the land of the dark races (p. 32). (Houston, 1926).

In his book *Utopia and Folklore Studies*, Usta first reiterates his views on the universality of utopias addressed in Turkish utopias and some articles, then narrates the philological history of One Thousand and One Nights and the journey of the tales from east to west over centuries. By emphasizing tales such as "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and "Aladdin's Magic Lamp," Usta asserts that these tales teach listeners that a better world is possible. A valuable observation by Usta should be highlighted in this context: "To tell a tale is to travel" (Usta, 2017b, p. 96). As he brings the discussion to One Thousand and One Nights, he notes that although these tales have Indian origins, they transitioned into Arabic through Persia, finding their main essence in Arab culture:

> Culturally, *One Thousand and One Nights*, while originating from India and Persia, fundamentally responds to the societal needs of Arab culture and its emerging civilization, which is being established across almost half the world. The entrepreneurial spirit of the Arab reflects the adventurous spirit of merchants and caravans, as well as the cities being constructed. But it is also an elegy for the character of the equitable, just, and honest human being who has been betrayed and is crumbling. The tales also reflect the echoes of the egalitarian uprisings that erupted in Arab lands in the 1st century CE. The relative degradation of women is also a requirement of the ideology of that day. (Usta, 2017, p. 97)

The second section of the book opens with an introduction that is known as a "döşeme" in Turkish folk storytelling terminology, referred to as formal or cliché. This döşeme was added to the text by the translator. Alim Şerif Onaran, who translated the tales into Turkish, incorporated a repeated introduction found in love stories told by mendicant storytellers, such as "Kerem and Aslı" and "Tahir and Zühre." Experts like Boratav and Kaya have noted that this döşeme was transferred from written and printed texts to these oral stories. Thus, the text has become more than just a translation; it has been Turkified. This döşeme has been used by authors such as Aziz Nesin (in the story "The Stick that Entered the King") and İhsan Oktay Anar (in "Kitabü'l-Hiyel"). This narrative, which likely derives from the historical texts of Ottoman chroniclers, is frequently utilized by authors who aspire to a neo-classical style. However, the main text of the tale does not entirely conform to this Turkification. As Usta noted, the tales are shaped around Arab or Indo-Iranian culture. Tales that do not originate from Turkish culture, such as "Crystal Palace" or "Keloğlan Tales," have been read and examined by Usta, who based his analysis on the German translation from Czech to demonstrate and showcase the existence of utopia in the East. The features that emerge in the tales with respect to utopia, such as the belief and hope that "a better world than the existing one is possible, that a life based on truth and justice can be established, that no one should establish unnatural dominance over anyone else, and that a life free from

pain and evil, where people trust one another and live without theft or threats, can be lived," are elements that nourish the sense of utopia. Beyond these, Usta also has a familiar "utopian" principle that he attributes to the king speaking to Scheherazade: "From now on, everyone will have a job according to their ability, and everyone will acquire property according to their needs" (Usta, 2017, p. 105).

Undoubtedly, tales contain elements reflecting the egalitarian, libertarian, and communal prehistory of human consciousness. However, the principle mentioned above symbolizes the conscious age of humanity that has escaped from the tales, characterized by rational and scientifically based hopes for living.

The relationship between tales and utopia can be understood similarly to the analogy established by Anday in his poem:

> Protohippus is the ancestor of the horse,
> Dinothorium is the ancestor of the elephant,
> We are the ancestors of humanity…
> 'THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE HAPPY HUMAN.'
> Protohippus atın ceddi
> Dinothorium filin ceddi
> Biz insanın ceddi…
> GELECEK MUTLU İNSANIN.

Just as the relationship between communism and communalism is, so is the relationship between tales and utopia.

Magazines and Events

Usta and his colleagues have published the magazines "Science and Utopia" and "Science and the Future" to demonstrate the existence of utopia in non-Western societies and to spread utopian culture. According to the author, the magazine *Science and the Future* has popularized the understanding that "wherever there is a struggle against inequality, there is also utopia," serving as the antithesis to the thesis that "there is no utopia in Turkish" (Usta, 2014, p. 16).

The magazine *Science and the Future* has featured special sections on Eastern utopias in two separate issues. In the first of these sections, Usta's friend Ender Helvacıoğlu discusses the existence of utopia in the ancient East. Helvacıoğlu, after questioning the claim by communication science professor and translator Ünsal Oskay that there is no utopia in Eastern societies based on the presupposition of structural invariance, concludes his article with the belief that the distinction between East and West will disappear in the context of communist utopia (Helvacıoğlu, E. 2004, p. 21). Other authors in this issue have written articles interpreting data related to paradise in the East, peasant uprisings, and Islamic philosophy to argue for the existence of utopia. While these articles, which lack conceptual analysis and are more based on encyclopedic and historical approaches, contribute to the spread of utopian culture, they fall short of deepening the thought

of utopia. Although Usta's article is not present in this issue, various references to his work can be found in different articles. Usta has an article on Greco-Roman utopias in one issue of this magazine (Usta, 2016), as well as another article foundational to fairy-tale studies in another issue (Usta, 2017a).

In terms of Usta's efforts to spread utopian culture through publishing, the magazine *Science and Utopia* also plays an important role. As Usta states, "The magazine *Science and Utopia*, which started its publication life in 1993... popularized the view that utopia will surely exist wherever humanity struggles against inequality in Turkey." (Usta, 2010, pp. 7-8). Usta provided a regular and successful summary of his book *Turkish Utopias* two years before its publication in this magazine and included a reference to Gaspıralı's utopia at the end of his article. The special issue of the magazine was published as "Turkish Utopias from the Tanzimat to the Republic" and is an indispensable source in the history of Turkish utopian literature.

The e-magazine *İleti*, published quarterly by the Communication Society of Uşak University, organized a competition for a story and essay themed around utopia to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the writing of More's *Utopia*. The competition conditions and regulations were published on the Communication Faculty announcement page on November 28, 2016.[4] As an honorary guest to present awards and participate in discussions, Sadık Usta, described in the community announcement as "the most productive intellectual in our country in the field of utopia," was invited.

A total of twenty-five participants from seven different faculties submitted twenty-eight texts to the competition. The award ceremony took place on January 4, 2017, where Usta presented the awards to the winners. The award package also included the author's books *Ancient Utopias* and *Turkish Utopias*.[5]

The first prize was awarded to Muhammed Uçar. It was announced that all the stories and essays submitted would be compiled and published in a special issue of the *İleti* magazine, with Usta writing the introduction for the special issue to be released in book form.[6]

However, the link to the *İleti* magazine provided on the announcement page of the mentioned university[7] is not accessible.

Conclusion

Through the examination of his publications, articles, interviews, TV programs, events, and initiatives, it becomes evident that Sadık Usta is one of the most significant researchers in the history of Turkish utopian literature. This study has shown that Usta's book on Ancient Utopias is among the pioneering works in world literature. In his thesis on Turkish Utopias presented to the Goethe Institute, he provided new evidence regarding the existence of utopia in Turkish and analyzed previously unexplored Turkish utopian texts. The author establishes a dialectical relationship between utopia and societal quests for equality, struggles for freedom, and progressive revolutions. His fundamental assertion can be summarized as stating that every revolution has its

utopia. He claims that the objective revolutionary praxis exists alongside a subjective-theoretical superstructure element in the form of utopia. In this respect, Usta approaches utopia and its historical-social environment with an economic-political methodology. His approach is both semantic and transformative in nature. Usta seeks to develop utopian consciousness and influence the human transformation of culture, based on the principle that ideas become a material power when they are adopted by the masses. Although his work contains some inaccuracies and omissions from the perspective of various scientific disciplines, Usta stands out as one of the most productive and competent voices in his field within Turkey.

In Turkey, popular historian Ahmet Refik Altınay is referred to as "the man who makes history loved." In this context, Sadık Usta can be seen as "the man who makes utopia loved."

Notes

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6yggT2F0Z0
2. https://www.sino-platonic.org
3. http://www.azizmsanat.org/2016/12/19/utopya-konulu-oyku-ve-deneme-yarismasi/
4. https://iletisim.usak.edu.tr/haber/125
5. http://www.azizmsanat.org/2017/01/14/utopya-konulu-edebiyat-yarismasi-sonuclandi/
6. https://iletisim.usak.edu.tr/haber/116

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