

A Digital humanities analysis of the generations who ruled Turkey from 1920-50: Network Clusters, Data Mining and Spatial Mapping

CURIOS? COME AND ASK THE QUESTIONS ON THE POSTER TO ME!

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The Abstract

This poster presentation aims to visualize the output of a research project that seeks to analyze biographic data about the members of a distinct group of late-Ottoman / early-Republican elites, the Young Turks, who served in the parliament, in order to better understand patterns of relationship and activity among the various networks of these political elites whose roles were significant in the making of modern Turkey. It seeks to discover the significance of certain biographic details (e.g. place and date of birth, educational background etc.) in the political careers of this historically significant generation of elites.

The poster is based on the primary author's collaborative research project that aims to create a digital database and employ digital humanities tools to interpret the biographic data in question, which would then constitute a bank for a prosopographical research. The project brings together three humanities scholars and a computer scientist who is consulted for the uses of data mining and digital visualization techniques throughout the project.

The group under scrutiny in this project consists of the members of the Turkish Great National Assembly's (GNA) five legislative periods (from 1920 to 1939) whose extensive biographical information is published as a collected volume in 2010 (Yıldırım and Zeynel, 2010). The MPs in this period, most of whom also belong to the group referred to as the Young Turks, are of great significance in the process of nation-state building in modern Turkey. Most of them were initially members of the constitutionalist opposition against Abdülmecid II, the last absolute Ottoman sultan. They successfully forced him to re-introduce the Ottoman constitution in 1908 and subsequent era of constitutionalism that proved to be very fragile and lasted only until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the Great War. They played pivotal roles in the Second Constitutional era, the Great War, the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922 and the eventual creation of the Republic of Turkey. Finally, many ended up being the members of the GNA. Therefore, which particular network among the larger group referred to as the Young Turks repeatedly remained as decision makers and why throughout this process of transformation is an important question in the scholarship. This research brings in a new angle to this debate.

This study focuses on the very first years of the new republic and the predominant roles of this elite network in the parliament of the new regime. Although there are many biographical works on some well-known individuals of this prominent network, and some work on the collective biographical information of these elites (Frey, 1961 and Rastan, 1997), there is no large-scale prosopographical research about all of the parliamentary elites of this period employing this novel approach informed by the use of digital humanities. As clearly demonstrated by previous scholarship (Adnan, 2001; Dündar, 2008; Tanrı, 2015; Züchner 2016, 2014 and 2015), better understanding the patterns of relationships among the members of the network would help analyze its evolution to a smaller and closely-knit single-party network and also their nation-state building policies that contemporarily shaped modern Turkey until 1950.

The idea behind the prosopographical approach is to first identify common biographic elements / characteristics / features among the members of the elite networks in question, categorize them and then to build hypotheses about the meaning of commonalities and patterns. The research builds its analysis on the data of some 2200 individuals over five legislative periods of the GNA. Each individual's data is classified under 17 categories. These categories include things like place of birth, marital status, educational institutions, total days of service, location of representation, professions and membership to various organizations of political significance etc.

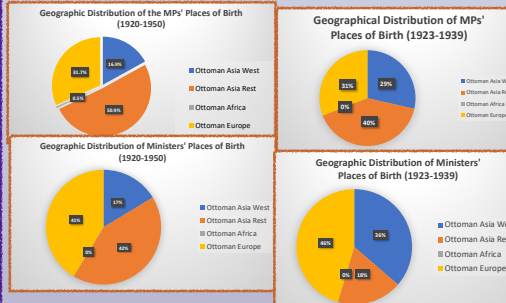
Following the conversion of these categories into a digital dataset, the relationship between various data are studied with the consultation of the expert on data mining techniques in order to make assessments about existence of clusters, nature of correlation/ relation between features in different categories, the strength of certain relationships (based on confidence and support metric measurements) and the correlation between certain features and the length of the political careers. This is achieved through the results of association rule mining that aims to measure confidence metric and support metric for each prosopographical feature in the data set. The results are then considered as to if they comply with generalizations in the existing literature / state of the art with regards to the study of this political elite network. The goal of the poster presentation is to present the patterns found in the prosopographical research both visually (spatial and temporal networks) and statistically for peer feedback and sharing of the results.

The poster presentation aims to make a point about the potential of digital humanities tools in the field of Ottoman / Turkish history and in the study of political networks in world history. The structure of the supervisor's poster complements the aim and also explicitly discusses and presents its conclusions.

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What do network clusters tell us?

Did place of birth matter? **Yes!**
Was a certain region dominant? **Kind of but not always.**



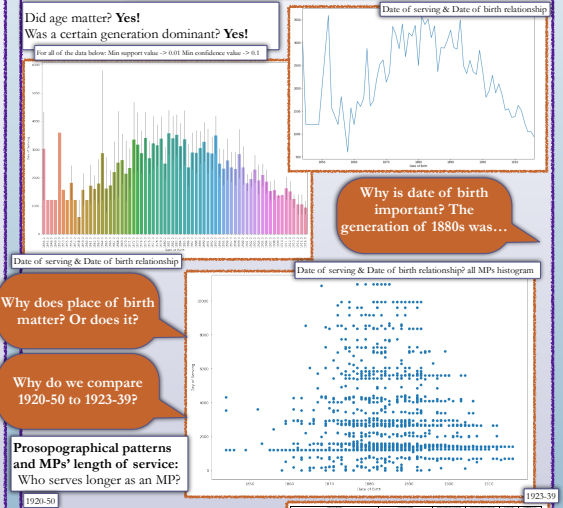
On Method: How Do Prosopographical Patterns Matter?

The basic idea behind this research is to interpret the prosopographical data and see if there are any patterns in the way the 'founding fathers' of modern Turkey were formed between 1920 and 1950. Among the many generalisations in the literature about the Young Turks and their role as the dominant decision makers of modern Turkey until 1950 one is particularly influential in the literature. This research allows us to test a few hypotheses that could be generalised out of that generalisation, which is primarily about a certain geography (birth place) and a certain generation being significant in relation to the term of service in positions of power.

Generalisation: Those who hailed from the 'Western Empire' (Ottoman Europe + Ottoman Asia-West) were more dominant as the decision makers of modern Turkey until 1950.

- Steps of the research:**
1. Collect and digitalise data
 2. Survey the literature / state of the art and collect hypotheses
 3. Use data mining, network clusters and spatial mapping. (Digital Humanities!)
 4. Compare new findings with the hypotheses from the literature / state of the art
 5. Conclusions / new hypotheses formulation
- Research questions derived from the generalisation:**
1. Did being born in the 'Western Empire' matter?
 2. Did being born in the 'Western Empire' and after 1881 matter?
 3. Who was a typical minister in the Turkish Parliament?
 4. What characteristics allowed for higher likelihood of repeating or longer service as an MP?
 5. Was there any difference between the prosopographical patterns of 1923-39 and 1920-50? Why does that matter?

What does data mining tell us?



Comparing prosopographical patterns 1923-39 and 1920-50: Does the Kemalist period make a difference?

Prosopographical patterns of the ministers: Who is a typical minister?

Year	Category	Value
1920-50

1923-39

What does spatial mapping tell us?

