

Weimar Culture in Turkey: The European Refugee Crisis, and The Hopes and Struggles of German Exiles, 1919 – 1945

This study uncovers the stories of an under-researched refugee group who fled fascism in Europe – German exiles in Turkey – and puts their history within the context of the European refugee crisis from the end of the First World War to the aftermath of the Second World War. By exploring the multiple destinations the German émigrés arrived and analyzing their sense of displacement, I call into question the simple, cut and dried comparative perspectives to the exilic experience in general and illuminate how the German émigrés dealt with their trauma of exile by constructing new identities that drew upon their memories of Europe and their experiences in their new home. The loose threads of the émigrés’ lives during the Weimar Republic and in exile are drawn together to give a comprehensive picture of their emotional and social networks. Ironically, the refugees, who had just lost their German citizenship by reason of their racial background in Nazi Germany, proved of great use to the young Turkish Republic in its nation-building project, precisely because of their “German” heritage and expertise. Another major contribution of this study is to reveal the real effects of transnationalism on the building of the nation-state by exploring how the cross-territorial forces in the form of ideas and a real dialogue between multiple actors conditioned the nation-building processes as a dynamic space of decision-making. By creating, designing, and directing the classical university training in arts and music for decades, the émigrés introduced a new generation of artists, musicians, and teachers who would function as creators and arbiters of the new public taste in Turkey. While transnationalism informs my conceptual

framework, my prosopographical approach, combined with an exploration of social and cultural contexts, allows me to understand the social network of the émigrés, not only through global diplomacy, but also in the life experiences and encounters of these little-known German humanists.