



Claiming civilizations: The geographical imagination of blue anatolianism in modern Türkiye

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Abstract Blue Anatolianism, first conceptualized by the Turkish intellectual Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, asserts that, unlike the geographical imaginations of Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism, which were promoted as social identity projects during the Late Ottoman and Early Republican periods in today's Türkiye, the various civilizations that have inhabited Anatolia have historically intertwined and synthesized on the peninsula, ultimately creating a distinct Anatolian identity. Blue Anatolianism, a new geographical imagination that focuses on cultural continuity rather than differences such as religion, language, or race, took root in Kabaağaçlı's life during his period of exile in Bodrum (Halicarnassus) and gained recognition through the blue voyages he initiated immediately after World War II. Thanks to the semi-regular sea voyages made by a group of intellectuals along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey in the post-war period, Blue Anatolianism quickly gained both a core group and prominent supporters within the intellectual community. However, the political polarization in Türkiye during the Cold

War, based on the left–right divide in the 1960s and 1970s and the nationalist-conservative ideology promoted as an antidote to socialism after the 1980 military coup, prevented Blue Anatolianism from reaching a wider audience and confined it to an intellectual circle. Nevertheless, revisiting Blue Anatolianism today as a geographical imagination holds the promise of overcoming the increasingly growing identity conflicts and social polarization in the country.

Keywords Blue anatolianism · Blue voyages · Geographical imagination · Truth spot · Bodrum · Anatolia

Introduction

Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert et al., 2006), drawing an analogy between the examination of historical geographies of seas through diverse epistemologies and ocean currents, underscore how seas have been envisaged differently by various cultures across different times and places. They liken the sea to a living organism, pulsating with narratives that do not culminate on the shores or in harbors; rather, they are inscribed within the depths of the water, thereby opening the door to the writing of new historical geographies. In this regard, seas harbor innovative ways of engaging with space, and one of these is the pivotal role of sea voyages in shaping thoughts about the sea and in the production of knowledge about the

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World (Ogborn, 2002). Sea voyages are occasions when the ship is at times perceived as a home (Ryan, 2006), spatial perceptions are at times transformed (Stafford, 2017), and at other times, opportunities emerge for reinterpreting space in various political contexts such as imperialism, anti-imperialism, or nationalism (Legg, 2020).

One remarkable example of the construction of new historical geographies through sea voyages can be found in the ‘blue voyages’ conducted along the coasts of Türkiye’s Aegean and Mediterranean regions. Spearheaded by an intellectual using the pseudonym Halicarnassus’ Fisherman, whose real name was Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, the Blue Anatolia circle initiated these semi-regular sea travels soon after the Second World War, with a focus on the civilizations that had flourished along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of the Anatolian Peninsula. Going beyond the realm of simple sea expeditions, these voyages provided a holistic reinterpretation of space, history, culture, and civilization. As a result, they opened the door to the creation of a brand-new geographical imagination, which forms the backdrop for a new social identity for the Anatolian people living in contemporary Türkiye.

Geographical imaginations are highly inspiring in explaining how space has evolved as a tool to understand the physical and human-made world, how people perceive the places they inhabit, and how they recreate them. While the concept of imagination has found its place in geographical research for approximately a century, it began to acquire theoretical content from the 1960s onwards. As a result, geographical imaginations have paved the way for reimagining space differently from the ‘real’ world, portraying places as constructions of real and imaginative worlds interlinked, showing how space is reconstructed to include both concrete realities and subjective worlds (Harvey, 2005). Thus, space creatively hosts both physical and cultural realities on one hand and meanings that reflect emotions, feelings, preferences, and values on the other. Undoubtedly, one of the contexts reconstructed through geographical imaginations is social identities.

In present-day Türkiye, a series of identity politics and, as a result, geographical imaginations have emerged in response to tumultuous societal changes over the past two centuries. Often formulated by those in power, Kemalism, a modernist and secular

interpretation of Turkish nationalism, has been the most influential amidst these identity discourses (including Ottomanism, Islamism, Turkism, Kemalism, Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, and others) in the historical journey of modern Türkiye, which developed into an independent nation-state following the First World War. Meanwhile, the geographical imagination crafted by the Blue Anatolia circle between the 1950s and 1970s, developed independently of the ruling authority, has opened up entirely new horizons when considered within the framework of the new nation-building project of the nascent republic.

Blue Anatolianism denotes a unique intellectual collective comprising philosophers, philologists, literary figures, artists, and historians, embodying their thoughts that spotlight Anatolia, a land blending diverse cultures in the quest for a social identity in Türkiye. Unlike geographical imaginations repeatedly reformulated based on the late Ottoman and early Republican socio-political context, Blue Anatolianism holds an inclusive space within an overarching framework, actively engaging as a distinct player. In contrast to initiatives attempting to construct social identities based on divisions such as religion, ethnicity, or language, Blue Anatolianism claims that all civilizations (e.g. Hittite, Greek, Roman, Turkish, and others) cohabiting on the peninsula have influenced each other over time, creating an inseparable cultural mosaic, with the inhabitants being the ultimate representatives of this synthesis (Eroler, 2022). The emergence of Blue Anatolianism was significantly shaped by the quarter-century spent by the leader of this group, Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, in a small town in the southwest of Türkiye (Bodrum – Halicarnassus) as part of his exile. Bodrum played a critical role in as a truth spot (Gieryn, 2018) his intellectual transformation, offering cultural wealth through mythology, archaeology, historical figures, geography, and intellectual richness, exerting an undeniable influence in his construction of a new geographical imagination.

The primary argument of this study asserts that the Blue Anatolianist imagination, which sprouted in Bodrum, transcended its local context and evolved into a generalized geographical imagination encompassing all of Anatolia, with a significant role played by the blue voyages. The blue voyages have paved the way for a new form of historical geography writing, depicting the Aegean and gradually all of Anatolia as a realm where civilizations blend, cultures influence

one another, and all civilizations contribute to the construction of space. Launched for the first time in the coasts of Türkiye's Aegean and Mediterranean in 1945 and subsequently held annually since 1957, these voyages have not only garnered intellectual followers but have also enriched a repertoire of diverse intellectual products (novels, stories, essays, translations, research, etc.). In this context, our aim is to underscore how the Blue Voyages have been instrumental in transcending the actor-dependent nature of Blue Anatolianism, garnering support for the group, and ultimately achieving recognition as a broader intellectual framework.

Moreover, this study posits that Blue Anatolianism offers a compelling framework for the construction of a cosmopolitan identity (Warf, 2012) in contemporary Türkiye. It holds the potential to mitigate identity conflicts and promote a perspective grounded in peace and tolerance. By facilitating a cosmopolitan approach, Blue Anatolianism may contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse on cultural and intellectual identity, advancing a vision of inclusivity and harmony within Türkiye's multifaceted socio-cultural landscape.

The article is divided into four main sections. The first part scrutinizes the relationship between geographical imaginations and identity politics, focusing on the alternative identity discourse produced by Blue Anatolianism. The second section examines the relationship between actors and space in the emergence of Blue Anatolianist thought, evaluating the role of Bodrum as a truth spot in shaping Kabağaçlı's ideas. The third section details the blue voyages conducted by the Blue Anatolia circle along Türkiye's Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, highlighting the critical role these voyages played in shaping the geographical imagination. The final section provides essential insights into the role of imagination in fostering peace construction.

Geographical imaginations and blue anatolianism

Geographical imaginations, encapsulating a rich tapestry of representations and perceptions tailored for lived spaces, have undergone a nuanced historical development closely entwined with societal perspectives and the dynamics of human interaction with space. This multidimensional concept extends beyond

the tangible elements of the natural and human environment, delving into the realm of individual emotions, experiences, and expectations associated with these spaces. Throughout history, the evolution of geographical imaginations has mirrored shifts in socio-political landscapes, demonstrating the concept's adaptability to diverse historical contexts.

The critical role of geographical imaginations in identity politics is paramount. These imaginations significantly influence the construction of collective identities, with nationalistic representations fostering a shared national identity and a sense of belonging among communities. Simultaneously, geographical imaginations can be harnessed by marginalized groups to contest existing power structures through the redefinition of spaces, while also evolving into a vision of the world that centers on human commonality, transcending direct associations with specific locations (Warf, 2012). Geographical imaginations thus become a contested terrain where struggles for recognition and representation unfold. The construction of geographical imaginations, much like identity politics, is intricately tied to power dynamics. As Gregory (2005) emphasizes, geographical imaginations can be interpreted as political acts and spatial representations entwined with power. Powerful entities strategically construct their own spaces, disseminating them widely to establish or maintain legitimacy. An explicit example of this lies in Said's (1978) examination of the East. According to him, geographical imaginations stem from power relations, resulting in the dominant side producing representations of the other. Thus, geographical imaginations facilitate the circulation, quotation, repetition, and eventual dominance of various meanings, contributing to their attainment of a status akin to truth (Desbiens, 2017). In this regard, the East, as a spatial representation generated by the West, carries the label of the 'other' in the modern world, providing an opportunity for the construction of authority by the West (Said, 1978).

Social developments in Türkiye since the late nineteenth century have paved the way for distinct geographical imaginations to emerge rapidly. During the late Ottoman period, ideologies such as Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism developed under the general control of the ruling powers, responding to changing socio-political conditions. Ottomanism, as an supra-national approach amidst the nationalist wave,

aimed to create a superordinate identity that treated everyone equally, with the purpose of holding different nations together in the face of movements within Balkan nations and preventing the dissolution of the empire (Karakaş, 2013). However, the unmaterialized Ottomanism, coupled with the influx of Muslim populations from lost territories, resulting in the Muslim population exceeding 70% within the country (Findley, 2010), and reactions to modernization efforts, paved the way for the emergence of Islamist policies. Islamism represents the confluence of both political and religious dominance, seeking to unite society around religion (Kara, 1985). However, especially in the aftermath of the First World War, the failure of both initiatives eventually led to the decline of attempts to overcome nationalism. With groups considered as fundamental components of the empire, such as Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Arabs, and Jews gaining independence or striving for it, and with almost only Turks as the majority of the population remaining in the aftermath, Turkism emerged as a third step. Focused on ethnicity, Turkism emphasized a societal structure rooted in Turkish culture and values (Lewis, 1968). The three identity projects mentioned above serve as a striking example of changes in the comprehension of space over approximately a century, reflecting socio-political transformations that resulted in different geographical imaginations.

The transformative aftermath of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic in 1923, following the First World War, has significantly reshaped the societal fabric. The Republic, marked by a distinct departure from the Ottoman era, turned its gaze towards the West and, under the auspices of the Kemalist ideology named after its founder, initiated a radical modernization agenda (Tekeli, 2011). Drawing inspiration from Turkism, Kemalism aspired to construct a modern society and posited the antiquity of the Turkish people through the Turkish Historical Thesis¹ and the Sun Language

Theory² (Güvenç, 1993). The profound societal changes ushered in by Kemalism were not confined solely to the sociopolitical realm but extended to the realm of geographical imaginations. By formulating a more profound spatial perception, Kemalism repositioned Anatolia as the national homeland. In this context, Kemalism forged an ontological relationship between the nation and space. Simultaneously, Kemalism expanded the boundaries of spatial perception by establishing connections with Anatolia and Central Asia through the Turkish Historical Thesis and the Sun Language Theory, while concurrently seeking integration with Europe in pursuit of modernization. Consequently, Europe, once perceived as an imperialist adversary during the War of Independence, transformed into an exemplary model after the proclamation of the Republic. Furthermore, Kemalism delimited the association between space and Islam, effectively relegating Islam from being an integral part of the spatial construct. Particularly, the radical reforms implemented during the modernization era weakened ties with the Islamic world.

Blue Anatolianism is a novel geographical imagination produced by an intellectual group that was active roughly between 1950 and 1970, overlaying on this historical background. Three key figures played a pivotal role in the emergence and development of Blue Anatolian thought: Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (1890–1973), Sabahattin Eyüboğlu (1908–1973), and Azra Erhat (1915–1982). Each of these figures contributed to the development of Blue Anatolianism in distinct ways (Akyıldız, 2007). Kabaağaçlı, through literary works such as essays, stories, and novels, unveiled the historical context of the thought. Eyüboğlu, representing a political stance, endeavored to popularize the thought at the grassroots level through various types of writings and documentary films. Erhat, on the other hand, sought to deepen the thought particularly through translations and travel writings. Additionally, numerous intellectuals (like Vedat Günyol, Melih Cevdet Anday, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Can Yücel, Oktay Rıfat, Mina Urgan, Türkan Saylan, Şadi Çalık) were influenced by this

¹ The Turkish History Thesis, developed in early Republican Türkiye, claims that the Turks are among the earliest civilizations and have significantly influenced world history. The thesis asserts that Central Asian Turks migrated to different parts of the world, contributing to the development of other civilizations (Yıldız, 2009).

² The Sun Language Theory, developed in 1930s Türkiye, posits that Turkish is the origin of all languages (Çağaptay, 2008). The theory suggests that many world languages descended from Turkish, using the metaphor of the sun's rays spreading in all directions to illustrate this linguistic diffusion.

thought, contributing to it through various books, journals, and newspaper articles. The Blue Anatolian geographical imagination can be elucidated through a series of fundamental characteristics.

Firstly, in Blue Anatolianism, the notion that space (i.e., Anatolia) assumes the role of an actant, or an active player, is emphasized. Blue Anatolians underscore the cultural accumulation that has emerged through the contributions of civilizations inhabiting Anatolia, asserting that this cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation through cultural capillaries, thereby influencing other societies through the claimed cultural synthesis. The continuity of specific characteristics of each civilization in Anatolia within subsequent civilizations, persisting to the present day, imparts a shaping identity to Anatolia. From this perspective of Blue Anatolianism, the space functions as an active agent, possessing a synthesizing effect on the accumulation of civilization and molding the residing community, establishing a direct connection with other cultures through the values and cultural richness of this accumulation. As Eyüboğlu stated (Eyüboğlu, 2002: 9):

Why is this land ours? Is it because we conquered it with four hundred horsemen from Central Asia? Those who say this may not truly embrace it, nor do they consider this land as their homeland. Abroad, they recognize themselves where they live. The Hittites, Phrygians, Greeks, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, and Mongols also conquered Anatolia. What happened in the end? Anatolia is not theirs; they became the property of Anatolia.³

In contrast to the relatively passive role of space in other geographical imaginations, this characteristic, which imparts a constructive identity to Anatolia, has ensured that the contemporary society represented by Anatolia possesses a distinctive structure. According to Kabağağaçlı, over the past millennium, Anatolian culture and history have created a context that distances Turks from their Central Asian roots and integrates them as part of Anatolia (Yıldırım, 2012). Kabağağaçlı underscores the similarity between Bektaşî and Mevlevî rituals, zeybek dances, and

Bacchus ceremonies, asserting the continuity of identical cultural practices among different communities and emphasizing this cultural relationship (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1985). Consequently, Anatolia, shaped by cultural elements from civilizations such as Minoan, Mycenaean, Etruscan, Urartian, Phrygian, Lydian, Persian, Hellenic, Eastern Roman-Byzantine, and Turkish, emerges as an actor influencing people from the past to the present, making them participants in the entirety of these cultures.

Secondly, in Blue Anatolianism, the foundation of the relationship among civilizations that have inhabited Anatolia is rooted in cultural transmission. For Blue Anatolians, culture, which is a continuity generated by individuals living in the same space and unrelated to any specific lineage or race, has facilitated civilizations to establish relationships with each other and led to the emergence of a synthesis in Anatolia (Bilsel, 2007). Emphasizing that culture, rather than blood, is crucial and that culture is not inherently tied to lineage, Blue Anatolians argue that cultural elements belonging to all civilizations from the past to the present have endured within subsequent cultures (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1995). In this context, Anatolian civilizations, akin to links in a chain, continue to exist in language, architecture, and tradition in contemporary Anatolia (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1986). For them, it is possible to observe this cultural accumulation within the people. The populace, blending in a multitude of colors, sounds, and scents, has allowed for coexistence of differences for thousands of years (Eyüboğlu, 2002). In this regard, Blue Anatolians frequently explore mythological elements present in legends, epics, and stories, alongside tangible cultural heritage, seeking connections among different cultures. As Erhat emphasized: ‘How fortunate it is to declare oneself an Anatolian! On this land where civilizations overflow and blend, is it not a little happiness to be born, cradled by the lullaby of various cultures in their cradle?’ (Erhat, 2019a: 9).

Thirdly, according to the perspective of Blue Anatolianism, Anatolia is characterized as the cradle of civilization. Blue Anatolians assert that the foundations of Western culture lie in Anatolia rather than the ancient Greek and Latin worlds. Contrary to conventional beliefs, Blue Anatolians emphasize that many developments shaping contemporary Western civilization originated in Anatolia, particularly believing in the superiority of Ionia over Athens (Akyıldız, 2007).

³ All quotations in the article have been translated by the authors.

According to Blue Anatolians, Anatolia not only served as the source of scientific and artistic thought, such as the alphabet (Phoenicians), epic poetry (Homer), poetry (Archilochus of Paros, Alcaeus of Lesbos, Sappho), and philosophers (Thales from Miletus, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus from Ephesus), but also hosted structural developments such as the first currency (Sardis), the first bank (Ephesus), urban development model (Hippodamus of Miletus), and modern medicine (Hippocrates and Galen).

Fourthly, in Blue Anatolianism, Anatolia is positioned as part of Mediterranean civilization. Particularly, Kabağaalı regarded the Mediterranean as the ‘sixth continent’ and claimed that Anatolia is the place where the foundations of Mediterranean civilization were laid (Halikarnas Balıkısı, 1991). According to Kabağaalı, many cultures in the Mediterranean were constructed by people originating from Anatolia. For instance, the initial attempt by the Phocaeans to settle on the island of Corsica was followed by the establishment of Marseille, Antibes, Nice, Agatea, and Castellammare di Stabia in the south of Naples, as well as Cadiz in Spain (Halikarnas Balıkısı, 1986). In this sense, Anatolia is not positioned within the continent of Asia (Halikarnas Balıkısı, 1992). For Kabağaalı, Tangier, Algeria, Morocco, Tripoli, and Egypt in Africa; Türkiye and Syria in Asia; and Spain, France, Italy, and Greece in Europe are not strictly affiliated with their respective continents. The real continent that should be considered is the Mediterranean. To refer to the Mediterranean as just a sea, in this sense, is to believe in a naïve imagination. These countries are neither African nor Asian; they are ‘genuinely Mediterranean’ (Halikarnas Balıkısı, 1995: 73).

Finally, Blue Anatolianism underscores a unifying and integrative framework. Prioritizing coexistence over divisions such as race, language, and religion, Blue Anatolianism embraces an inclusive perspective, encompassing all societies in Anatolia while maintaining a non-exclusionary stance. Simultaneously, it advocates for a mindset characterized by respect and tolerance toward all forms of diversity. In this context, Blue Anatolianism contends that the mere emergence within the Anatolian terrain is sufficient for the appropriation and preservation of any ancient civilization signifier (Erhat, 1999). Additionally, Blue Anatolian thought engages in a dialogue

with all civilizations established in Anatolia. The interaction among civilizations originating from different races, religions, and languages has resulted in the emergence of a shared Anatolian civilization. For instance, figures such as Homer and Yunus Emre are acknowledged as two distinct representatives of the same culture, both considered contributions to humanity emanating from Anatolia.

In essence, the Blue Anatolianist imagination constructs a novel spatial understanding of Anatolia based on the interactions among cultures. Distinct from other geographical imaginations, Blue Anatolianism perceives Anatolia as a realm of cultural synthesis and interaction. While Turkism, Ottomanism, and Islamism emphasize specific ethnic, national, or religious identities, Blue Anatolianism highlights Anatolia’s role in creating a rich cultural heritage through its historical interactions with various civilizations and transmitting this heritage to the present day. Therefore, this approach offers a nuanced exploration of how space influences cultural dynamics, reconstituting Anatolia as a central node of cultural interactions.

However, the emergence and dissemination of Blue Anatolianism is as integral to this spatial context as its theses. Known more by his pseudonym (Halikarnas Balıkısı’s ‘Fisherman’) than his real name, Kabağaalı laid the foundations of Blue Anatolianism during approximately a quarter of a century spent in Bodrum. Throughout this period, Bodrum, as a truth spot, profoundly shaped his thoughts and contributed to the formulation of Blue Anatolianism.

Bodrum as a truth spot

The notion of the truth spot, derived from the scholarly endeavors of Thomas Gieryn (2002), intricately delineates an interconnection between the veracity of knowledge claims and the contextual nuances of specific locales, thus accentuating the pivotal role of places in the genesis and validation of assertions. Underlining the premise that every scientific claim originates from a specific source that shapes its essence and significance, this conceptual framework posits that spatial conditions possess the capacity to exert influence over the substantiation of these claims. Consequently, the distinctive attributes characterizing places, encompassing natural, societal,

historical, economic, cultural, and political dimensions, wield a profound impact on the initiation, evolution, and caliber of knowledge. As a corollary, the genesis, deliberation, proclamation, manifestation, preservation, interrogation, concealment, or oblivion of knowledge invariably unfolds within the intricate fabric of spatial contexts (Gieryn, 2018).

However, in Gieryn's perspective, the authenticity and credibility of knowledge necessitate its adoption and dissemination by diverse individuals or communities across different locations (Gieryn, 2002). Throughout this process of dissemination, knowledge progressively distances itself from its original context. This, consequently, results in the locale that actively contributes to the genesis and evolution of knowledge losing its contextual relevance when attempting to engage individuals in other spatial domains (Gieryn, 2006). Essentially, with the removal of the contingent circumstances surrounding the truth spot, knowledge assumes an abstract, generalized, and decontextualized stature, divorced from its initial spatial framework (Gieryn, 2002). Sheppard and Barnes (2019), for example, provide a paradigmatic instance of this phenomenon, where they scrutinize the trajectory of David Harvey's radicalization within the Baltimore context.

The emergence of the Blue Anatolian thought is directly linked to Kabağağalı's exile to Bodrum and his quarter-century residence there. Born on April 17, 1890, in Crete, Kabağağalı lived in Athens until the age of five due to his father Mehmet Şakir Pasha's duties, after which his family moved to İstanbul. Growing up in a family where many artists were nurtured, Kabağağalı received education in Modern History at Oxford and spent a year studying at the Rome Academy of Fine Arts, enhancing his proficiency in English, Italian, and Latin. Upon his return to İstanbul, he accidentally caused the death of his father Şakir Pasha in 1914, leading to seven years of imprisonment. In 1925, he was tried for allegedly inciting military rebellion due to a story he published and received a three-year exile sentence to Bodrum.

However, he remains in Bodrum far beyond the sentence he received. During his approximately quarter-century stay in Bodrum between 1925 and 1947, Kabağağalı not only engaged in intellectual pursuits but also underwent a personal transformation, evolving into Halicarnassus' Fisherman, inspired by the ancient name of Bodrum (Fig. 1 and 2; Belge, 2014).

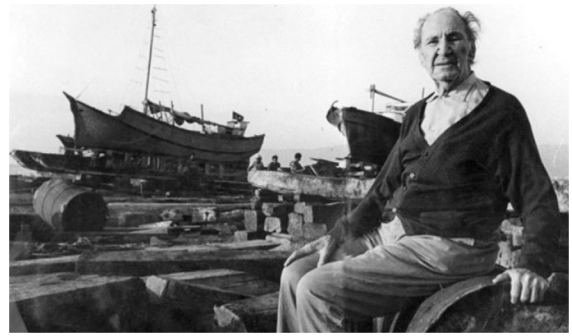


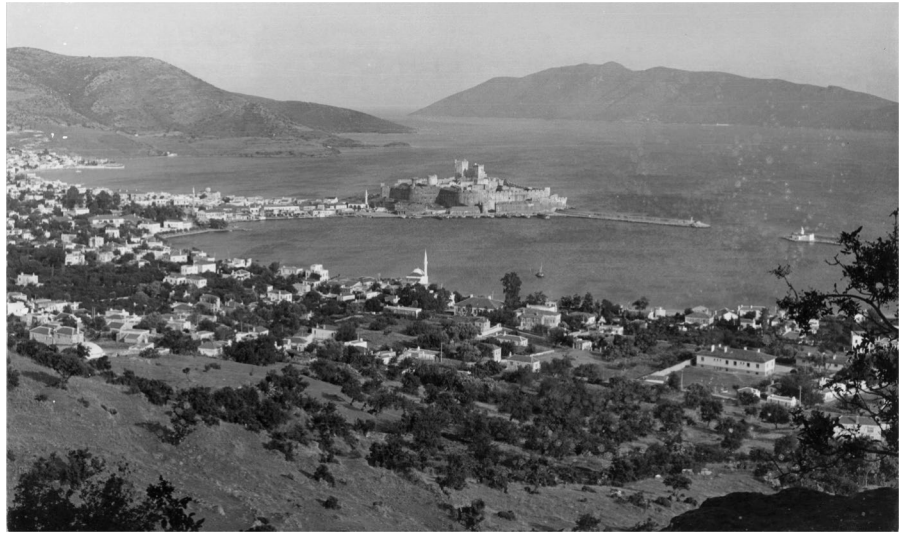
Fig. 1 Turkish intellectual Cevat Şakir Kabağağalı founded Blue Anatolianism and initiated the blue voyages (Source: www.cumhuriyet.com.tr, issue: May 30, 2021. Photo by Ara Güler)

Balancing family life with a quest to understand and familiarize himself with Bodrum, this period of accumulation culminated in a prolific literary career after he relocated to İzmir, the biggest city in Western Türkiye. Examining the dates of Kabağağalı's diverse books and writings published in various newspapers and magazines reveals that he articulated his ideas about Blue Anatolianism in İzmir (Özbek, 2018). In this regard, as Erhat puts it, Kabağağalı transitioned from the darkness of the prison in Bodrum to the freedom blue (Erhat, 1985), constructing a romantic Aegean-Mediterranean pathos and laying the foundations of Blue Anatolianism as a product of his years in Bodrum (Bora, 2017).

Upon his move to İzmir, Kabağağalı exhibited an unparalleled productivity compared to his İstanbul and Bodrum years, publishing a variety of works in the form of essays, novels, stories, and articles, delving into the Blue Anatolian thought. During this period, he wrote novels such as 'Uluç Reis' (1950) and 'Turgut Reis' (1966), stories like 'Hello Mediterranean' (1947), and essays like 'Anatolian Legends' (1954), 'Gods of Anatolia' (1955), 'Voice of Anatolia' (1971), 'Hey Great Homeland' (1972), 'Hello Anatolia' (1980), and 'The Sixth Continent Mediterranean' (1982). Thus, Kabağağalı's literary life was shaped around Bodrum, the Aegean, and Anatolia, with Blue Anatolianism crystallizing in Bodrum, as a truth spot. He himself expressed the influence of Bodrum as follows (Cumhuriyet, 1979: 8):

Since the fastest, happiest, and dearest years of my life were in Bodrum, I can claim that my

Fig. 2 A panoramic photograph of Bodrum's old town (Source: www.eskiturkiye.net, accessed on August 20, 2024)



works are products of Bodrum. The ones that are most Bodrum are my favorites. In fact, there is nothing that is not Bodrum. (...) I love every part of Bodrum. Every part of the city.

In 1925, after an exhaustive and costly three-and-a-half-month journey, Kabağağalı arrived in Bodrum, where he led a vibrant life. Confronted with a landscape he had never seen before, Kabağağalı endeavored to both understand and enhance the city. Particularly focusing on the landscape of Bodrum, he scattered seeds everywhere to beautify the city and diversify its vegetation, essentially altering its appearance. In addition to introducing many plants, such as palm trees, to the city, he immersed himself in gardening, fishing, and sponge diving, imparting his knowledge to the public and becoming intertwined with the community (Yazıcı, 1998). Kabağağalı's family roots also played a role in this integration. Conversing in Greek when he, his wife, and his sister gathered together fostered relationships with the non-Turkish population in Bodrum (Noonan, 2009). Therefore, while Kabağağalı familiarized himself with almost every aspect of Bodrum, he also became intimately connected with the place, laying the foundations of Blue Anatolianism there.

Kabağağalı, foremost, underscores the geographical significance of Bodrum. Bodrum, as a corner of the Mediterranean that encapsulates the extraordinary beauty of nature and the renowned memories of history (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1989), is not only a part of

the Anatolian Peninsula but also an integral element of the Mediterranean world. In this regard, apart from experiencing the cultural influences of both worlds, Bodrum is particularly connected to Mediterranean ports such as the Aegean islands, Crete, Alexandria, Marseille, and Barcelona (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1983a). Throughout history, leveraging its geographical location, Bodrum has not only carried the cultural diversity of the Anatolian and the Eastern Mediterranean worlds to a certain extent but has also established connections with other Mediterranean ports, becoming a member of the Mediterranean identity. Thus, serving as a significant intersection, Bodrum has played a crucial role in refining Kabağağalı's ideas that emphasize the amalgamation of cultural diversities and acknowledging the Mediterranean as a distinct continent.

While en route from Muğla to Bodrum to serve his penal exile, Kabağağalı was profoundly moved by the sight of millennia-old remnants of the Ionian period, a towering Seljuk fortress, a Byzantine church casting its shadow over the fortress, and a knight's castle atop a hill (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1983b). In Bodrum, he encountered a rich historical background encompassing civilizations like Caria, Greek, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman, along with their corresponding cultural remnants. Simultaneously, he experienced vibrant social life inclusive of diverse cultures, intertwined with close relationships with the Greek islands. Indeed, despite the demographic shift caused by migrations and exchanges, where the

Greeks, constituting nearly half of Bodrum's population in the late nineteenth century, were later replaced by Muslims from Crete and other islands, the cultural and architectural traces left by the Greeks remained significant (Taner & Tezcan, 2020). Moreover, during Kabağağalı's era, Bodrum exhibited widespread hospitality and tolerance among different nations (Noonan, 2009). In this context, his exploration of the diversity in Bodrum, transcending differences of race, language, and religion, served as inspiration for two key characteristics of Blue Anatolian thought. First, the coexistence of different cultures in the same space, their interweaving in various words, songs, and traditions. Second, the realization of Anatolia possessing a formative identity. These two aspects led Kabağağalı to conceive Anatolia as having its own cosmopolitan identity.

Kabağağalı strategically leverages Herodotus' widespread fame throughout history. Being a native of Bodrum, Herodotus becomes one of Kabağağalı's crucial arguments for emphasizing the significance of Anatolia. Referring to Herodotus as his fellow countryman, Kabağağalı notes that Herodotus was an Ionian, and that his name originates from the Carian language (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1992). According to Kabağağalı, Anatolia's history commenced with Herodotus' most significant work, 'The Histories'. Greeting Herodotus as the first polymath to traverse all of Anatolia from his hometown Bodrum, Kabağağalı identifies himself with Herodotus and aspires to rewrite Anatolian history nearly two thousand years later. Treating Herodotus as a role model, Kabağağalı adopts his interpretations of history and culture, which originated in Bodrum. He does not see it as a coincidence that history began with Herodotus from Anatolia, attributing it to the region's hosting of various cultures and significant developments. In that era, Bodrum, influenced by Ionian free thought, and Anatolia, a region where civilizations thrived successively in the ecumenical world with a high degree of cultural diversity, made Herodotus a natural source. Thus, for Kabağağalı, Herodotus' existence stands as one of the most crucial affirmations of the Anatolian-centric civilization thesis. In 'Anatolian Legends' Kabağağalı describes Anatolia as follows (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1983a: 15):

When Western intellect is mentioned, it is thought of as foreign, whereas the cradle of

Western culture is Anatolia. We are the children of those who created that culture here. However, fifty or sixty years ago, when we said we were adopting Western intellect, works of that culture, such as Milo Aphrodite, the Semendirek victory, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, the Zeus horses of Pergamon, and the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, were repeatedly excavated and taken from the Ottoman lands. In response, we were putting on fezzes and wearing Istanbulin on our backs, claiming that we had become Westernized. There was no need to tie the flowers of the West to the branches of our now-dry old tree with cotton thread; the stems and roots that bloomed those flowers were in our lands.

Another figure that served as an inspiration for Kabağağalı is the renowned Ottoman naval commander Turgut Reis⁴ (1485–1565), who was born in the village of Karabağ affiliated with Bodrum. In his novel about Turgut Reis (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 2000), Kabağağalı fictionally utilizes the coexistence of various communities, including Turks and Greeks, living together in Bodrum during that era. The novel emphasizes the absence of animosity between Turks and Greeks or Muslims and Christians living in Anatolia, highlighting the harmony among these communities. In the same narrative, a Greek fisherman named Paho is unjustly imprisoned by the Knights of St. John, who share the same religion and nationality. Turgut Reis later saves and releases him. However, Paho chooses to remain with Turgut Reis. Kabağağalı asserts that the humanistic thought that prioritizes individuals is rooted in Anatolia (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 2000). He points out that Turgut Reis embodies the continuity of this thought over the years, especially at the grassroots level, emphasizing the perpetuation of this humanistic spirit among the people. Furthermore, he illustrates the intermingling of diverse societies in the same space, claiming that they eventually become part of Anatolia by blending into each other. According to Kabağağalı, Turks have also transformed into Anatolian people over time by

⁴ Turgut Reis, also known as Dragut, was an Ottoman admiral and privateer active in the sixteenth century. Renowned for his naval prowess, he played a crucial role in expanding Ottoman influence in the Mediterranean.

integrating with the local communities (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1992).

Kabaağaçlı accords special significance not only to individuals representing Bodrum but also to its structures. In this context, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus holds particular importance. Built in the fourth century BC, it is listed among the Seven Wonders of the World. The hosting of such a significant monument in Bodrum has influenced Kabaağaçlı's ideas regarding Anatolia. According to him, this structure not only epitomizes the cultural richness of Bodrum but also stands as one of the most important monuments of high civilization in Anatolia during that era. It signifies the presence of notable artists and architects in Anatolia during that period (Erhat, 1985). Despite the fact that the Knights of St. John, who came to Bodrum from Rhodes, dismantled the Mausoleum and used its stones to build Bodrum Castle, the cultural significance represented by this remarkable structure has endured to the present day. In this sense, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus serves as an example of the emergence of almost unparalleled cultural taste in Anatolia up to that period. Simultaneously, it reinforces Kabaağaçlı's belief that civilization emanated from Anatolia.

Kabaağaçlı also encounters and places significant importance on legends and myths in Bodrum. One of these, he emphasizes, is the legend surrounding the Salmakis spring near Bodrum. According to the myth, Salmakis, the nymph of the spring, is greatly captivated by a young man she encounters, and when the young man enters the water, they merge into a single entity (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1989). For Kabaağaçlı, many legends in Bodrum and other places carry profound significance. He sees them not only as a source of inspiration for poets throughout the ages, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to contemporary poets, but also as indicators of the advanced social life in Anatolia. This aspect is one of the factors shaping his ideas regarding the importance of Anatolia. Anatolia, a source of rich mythologies and legends, is recognized as the birthplace of many well-known myths, particularly in the Western World (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, 1983a).

He eloquently depicts Bodrum as a vibrant structure in historical, cultural, and social terms. He approaches Bodrum with a temporal and spatial context that transcends his own time, nation,

religion, and society. In his works, he consistently uses Bodrum, which he sees as the collective spatial construction of all its inhabitants or the meaning represented by Bodrum. Regardless of changes in individuals or eras, he continuously emphasizes the cultural relationships between people and societies (Yazıcı, 1998). Traces of the Blue Anatolian thought are always evident in his works, illustrating the interconnectedness of the contemporary world with the past, emphasizing the significance of cohabitation in the same space and the continuity of cultural imprints. This approach provides him with the opportunity to juxtapose figures like Mevlana (Rumi) with Dante, Bektashis with Herodotus and Homer (Sevinçli, 1999).

Although Kabaağaçlı assumed the identity of the Fisherman of Halicarnassus while in Bodrum, his works published during his years in İzmir approach Blue Anatolianism beyond the local characteristics of Bodrum, placing it within a broader context. In this respect, Kabaağaçlı distances himself from the particularities of Bodrum in his writings, presenting Blue Anatolianism through a broader perspective that considers Anatolia as a peninsula and the Mediterranean as a continent, thus abstracting the spatial context. This approach reflects Kabaağaçlı's strategy of viewing Bodrum as an authentic mode of perception. He envisions Bodrum as a persuasive model that amalgamates all elements of Anatolia, from the Urartians to the Sumerians, from tiles to sculptures. Ultimately, this strategy gives rise to a generalized image of Blue Anatolianism, abstracted both from Kabaağaçlı's personal perspective and Bodrum's distinctiveness.

Bodrum, as a truth spot, is at the center of Kabaağaçlı's transformation into Halicarnassus' Fisherman. Over the course of approximately a quarter of a century, Bodrum's natural, social, historical, and cultural aspects, among others, triggers this transformation and contributes to the characterizing design of the Blue Anatolian identity. While Bodrum lays the groundwork for Blue Anatolianism as a truth spot, the widespread adoption and gaining of new followers for this philosophy occurred through Kabaağaçlı's leading role in blue voyages. These journeys played a crucial role in transforming Blue Anatolianism from an actor-dependent context to a broader geographical imagination.



Fig. 3 The Blue Voyage routes (blue line). The routes have been compiled by the authors from various sources that describe a typical blue voyage in full detail. These routes

represent five different journeys organized in different years between 1958 and 1979. The light gray circles indicate archaeological sites visited during those Blue Voyages

Blue voyages

The Blue Voyage is the name given to the journey undertaken by a handful of progressive intellectuals who have embraced the heritage of ancient cultures flourishing along the Anatolian coasts, with the aim of swiftly instilling this legacy into the people living in Anatolia (Günyol, 1994). Spanning the Aegean and Mediterranean regions of Türkiye (Fig. 3), particularly the ancient regions of Caria and Lycia, Blue Voyages are centered around the exploration of historical and cultural sites along the coast and nearby areas (Boratav, 2019).

Initiated by Kabağağalı and named by Eyüboğlu (Erhat, 1979a), the Blue Voyages originally began as individual trips taken by Kabağağalı himself along the coasts of Bodrum and the Gulf of Gökova, either

alone or with fishermen. Kabağağalı, desiring to transform these journeys into a collective and context-focused organization, invited his friends to Bodrum, proclaiming, ‘Come south, understand what beauty is!’ (Taner & Tezcan, 2020: 135). With a positive response to his call, the first Blue Voyage was conducted in 1945, following the route he had devised, involving a total of nine participants. Typically lasting for about three weeks and not exceeding twenty participants, these journeys were organized annually from 1957 onwards, continuing until the 1980s within the framework established by Kabağağalı (Albachten, 2012). During the trips, the aim was to examine both the cultural remnants in Anatolia and the question of whether contemporary Türkiye is a continuation of the ancient cultures in Anatolia (Eyüboğlu, 2008). On boats resembling floating seminar halls, historical

and cultural discussions about the visited locations took place, intertwining the sites with history, culture, and mythology (Urgan, 2013). At the outset of each journey, a flag bearing a cup and two small amphorae drawn with white paint on a light blue background for the first trip, and a flag with a greeting written in large white letters on a navy blue background for the second trip, would be hoisted (Yetgin & Yılmaz, 2018). Prominent intellectuals, scientists, and artists of the time such as Can Yücel, Melih Cevdet Anday, Necati Cumalı, Sabahattin Ali, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Mina Urgan, Yaşar Kemal, İsmet Zeki Eyüboğlu, in addition to Eyüboğlu and Erhat, participated in these voyages.

Although comprehensive data on all journeys is lacking, it is feasible to characterize a typical Blue Voyage, particularly by leveraging Erhat's work 'The Blue Voyage', based on the journeys of 1961 and 1962 (Erhat, 2019b). Preparations for the 1961 expedition were meticulously discussed months in advance, encompassing considerations regarding the vessel, departure time, and the requisite provisions for passengers. Embarking on a vessel named 'Macera' (Adventure), reminiscent of a pirate ship complete with facilities such as a kitchen and toilet, the journey commenced with the participation of seventeen individuals, setting sail from Kuşadası toward the Gulf of Gökova. Kabağağaçlı assumed a preeminent role in this odyssey, delivering a continuous discourse on maritime affairs, meteorological conditions, marine life, and the philosophy of Blue Anatolianism. Life aboard the vessel transpired through engaging conversations, moments of immersion in the sea, and the consumption of provisions or the relishing of freshly caught fish. Throughout the expedition, visits were made to Didyma, Halicarnassus, Arkonnesos, Ceramus, Cedrae (Kedrai), Triopium, Knidos, Priene, Miletus, and Ephesus (Fig. 3). These destinations were subjected to historical scrutiny while concurrently being intertwined with Anatolian identity, stimulating discussions on their contributions to civilization. Frequently invoking names such as Herodotus, Heraclitus, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus, debates unfolded regarding Anatolia's pivotal role in the evolution of civilization. However, there was also a lamentation for the contemporary apathy toward this cultural richness. Additionally, they evaluated traces left by civilizations like the Sumerians and Hittites as new links in the Anatolian chain, thereby assigning

themselves the responsibility of incorporating these elements into the cultural tapestry.

In the context of Erhat's completion of the *Iliad* translation in the same year, the 1962 journey unfolded in the Northern Aegean. Efforts were made prior to the expedition to secure a suitable vessel, and essential equipment such as a camera, provisions, and fishing gear were procured. Eventually, the journey commenced with the vessel named 'Uçarı' (Frivolous), starting from Ayvalık with the participation of 15 individuals. During the expedition, visits were made to Troy, Mount Ida, Assos, Tenedos, Imbros, and Adramyttion (Fig. 3). Notably, poet Melih Cevdet Anday recited passages from the *Iliad*, prompting a contemplation on the intertwining of different cultures resulting from societies in Anatolia sharing the same geographic space. While recalling the Sarı Kız legend during their exploration of Mount Ida, parallels were drawn between the story of Paris in the *Iliad*, leading to a discussion on the similarities between the two narratives. Despite their temporal and socio-cultural disparities, it was emphasized that both events unfolded on the same lands within a comparable context. Furthermore, the expedition highlighted Troy, believed to bear the traces of nine civilizations within its nine-layered walls, as an exemplar of the struggles waged for the same location. Drawing parallels, it was underscored that there is a continuity between the struggles of Hector or Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the conflicts related to Troy or Conkbayırı (a symbolic site of resistance during the First World War). Perhaps encapsulating the ambiance of these journeys most vividly is the following quote (Erhat, 2019b: 117): 'Are you for Troy, or are you for the Greeks?' Fifteen voices resonated in unison, "'We are for Troy!'. 'Achilles or Hector?'. 'Hector, Hector, Hector...' fingers raised, and Uçarı's deck reverberated with laughter'".

At the helm of Blue Voyages stands Kabağağaçlı, who utilized these journeys as a means to propagate Blue Anatolian thought. His narrative style, which broadens the travelers' knowledge base and offers a holistic perspective on space centered around nature, history, and culture, leaves a lasting impression (Erhat, 2019a). Upon their return from the voyages, some passengers, immersed in the sea, history, and culture, found themselves envisioning as Lycian fishermen or Greek gods from Xanthos, a phenomenon that subsequently served as a catalyst in the

establishment of new networks for Blue Voyages (Yetgin & Yılmaz, 2018).

One of the most significant impacts of Blue Voyages lies in its role in the formation of the intellectual core of the Blue Anatolian thought. Kabağağaçlı's camaraderie with Eyüboğlu, who accompanied him from the first journey, and his later acquaintance with Erhat, marked by a profound friendship, led to the adoption of the Blue Anatolian thought by these two influential figures. This convergence significantly enhanced the intellectual productivity of the circle, to the extent that Blue Anatolianism soon became synonymous with these three names. The formation of this core group, in a sense, encouraged the continuation of intellectual exploration inspired by Blue Voyages even beyond the sailing seasons.

In the recognition of Blue Anatolian thought, Eyüboğlu has played a pivotal role through various activities such as literary works, documentary films, art exhibitions, and discussion meetings. In his literary works, particularly in the essay collection 'Blue and Black (1961), he articulates a general perspective that unveils the Western thought rooted in Anatolia and asserts that Turks are inheritors of this legacy (Eyüboğlu, 1956). Similar to Kabağağaçlı and Erhat, he characterizes Homer as an Anatolian child, emphasizing that Homer is not foreign to us but rather an integral part of our cultural heritage (Eyüboğlu, 2002). Expanding his ideas about Anatolia, Eyüboğlu plays a critical role in opening up thought to the public. By highlighting the shared spirit among Turkish poets like Yunus Emre and figures from the Greek and Roman periods, he believes that the cultures of the lands are interconnected. He also endeavors to make the cultural heritage witnessed during his journeys resonate with the public, asserting that these cultural remnants are living examples of such interconnectedness. Beyond his literary works, Eyüboğlu seeks to communicate with the public through documentary films. Starting as a lecturer at İstanbul University in 1950, he, along with Mazhar Şevket İpşiroğlu, founded the İstanbul University Film Center in 1954 and produced a total of 11 documentary films⁵ (Demirkıran, 2022). Each film delves

into the traces of a specific era or civilization, aiming to shed light on the cultural values of Anatolian history (Eyüboğlu, 2000). Eyüboğlu connects the tunes of Anatolian folk songs, the colors and shapes of its carpets, and the remnants of civilization embedded in its emotions and thoughts to the present day through cinema (Avcı, 1996). He focuses on the similarities between scenes from daily life seen in Hittite reliefs or Roman mosaics and contemporary lifestyles, traditions, and customs. In these films, Eyüboğlu avoids adopting a biased approach, neither embracing nor diminishing specific periods of Anatolian history (Eyüboğlu, 2000). He approaches all ages—be they pagan, Christian, or Muslim—with the same curiosity, presentation, and evaluation effort. Whether depicting a church alongside an Ottoman miniature book, a Roman aqueduct with a Seljuk caravanserai, or the frescoes of Göreme with an album from the Ottoman era, he treats them all with equal importance. For instance, in his film 'Hittite Sun' (1956), Eyüboğlu showcases people drawing water from Hittite wells in Boğazkale, selling carpets at the market, and women spreading wheat under the sun. In the film, he voices the following sentences (Demirkıran, 2022: 47):

This handful of people in the marketplace, this gathering of people sharing the abundance of the plain, in many scenes, faces inevitably bring to mind Hittite reliefs. In the carpets made by the women in Boğazkale, traces of Hittite gods are hidden. They probably made the cartwheels just like this in Alacahöyük, pulling the wagons with these horns, as you will see in the reliefs there.

Erhat, a classical philologist, aimed to achieve a similar purpose through her travel writings, essays, and translations. Like Eyüboğlu, her works have played a significant role in nourishing and enhancing the productivity of thought. Erhat initially encountered Kabağağaçlı in İstanbul during his studies on the Iliad and, at first, did not believe in his ideas, even finding them absurd. However, after visiting him in İzmir, witnessing some ancient sites

⁵ The documentary films are as follows: Hittite Sun (1956); Black Pen (1957); Colors in Darkness (1959); Surname (1959); Roman Mosaics in Anatolia (1959); Anatolian Roads (1959); To Live (1962); Gods of Nemrut (1964); Waters of

Footnote 5 (continued)

Old Antalya (1965); Mother Goddess (1966); Karagöz's World (1972).

in the city, and subsequently participating in Blue Voyages, her perspective underwent a transformation (Erhat, 1985). She penned his initial books, 'Blue Anatolia' (1960) and 'Blue Voyages' (1962), as a result of these journeys. Furthermore, her writings on Blue Anatolianism in the *Yeni Ufuklar* (New Horizons) magazine were composed after her initial travels (Gelir, 2007). Impacted by the lack of awareness and significance attributed by the public to the remnants of Anatolian civilizations that fascinated her during the Blue Voyages, Erhat focused on human-centric perspectives. In her works 'The Human' (1969) and 'The Management of Love' (1979b), she expressed that human understanding can be achieved through a culture with a humanistic spirit. In this regard, there is no need to venture far to adopt such an approach towards humanity, as Anatolia is the birthplace of humanistic culture. Erhat believed that this humanistic spirit is evident in Homer's *Iliad* (1975) and *Odyssey* (2008), which she co-translated into Turkish with poet A. Kadir. Consistently applying a similar stance to mythologies and legends, Erhat argued that the common value of humanity, embodied in mythologies, is not limited to the Greek and Latin worlds alone. She asserted that Anatolia served as a source for many mythologies. In 'Dictionary of Mythology' (1996), she claimed that Anatolia is at the core of the humanistic and mythological spirit that shaped the world. Erhat believed that a better understanding of Anatolia's importance could be achieved by reading more works from the ancient world and uncovering remnants of various civilizations (Erhat, 2019b). As she put it (Erhat, 1956: 732):

While walking among the stones covered with herbs in Troy, Bergama, and Ephesus, do these stones narrate tales to us about the poet Homer, King Attalos, philosopher Heraclitus, and the adventures of countless others who once inhabited these places? I believe that these stones must have conveyed something to the Anatolian villagers who lived among them for centuries. The civilizations intricately woven into these lands in ancient times undoubtedly influenced the traditions and customs of the people living there today. However, the traces have faded away. We, as urban intellectuals, have become incapable of sens-

ing these influences because, without examining them through the lens of reason, we cannot see or comprehend them.

The second significant impact of Blue Voyages is associated with the convergence of prominent intellectuals, scholars, and artists of the time during these journeys. This gathering contributed to the increased recognition of Blue Anatolian thought among the Turkish intelligentsia, and the role it played in reflecting this imagination in the works of intellectual circles.

Throughout the journeys, discussions on various subjects ranging from history to culture, mythology to literature, influenced the participants and facilitated the gaining of new allies for Blue Anatolianism. One such ally was the writer and poet Melih Cevdet Anday, who emphasized the integrity of Anatolian history. Starting from the Hittites, Anday advocated for considering Anatolian history as our own and asserted that our culture is an inheritance of this past (Anday, 1974). Emphasizing the intermingling and synthesis of civilizations in Anatolia, Anday believed that Kabağağaçlı's emphasis on where we live rather than where we come from was of great significance (Anday, 2008). Anday illustrated traditions, customs, sayings, and superstitions to showcase their ancient roots. He argued that understanding these could only be achieved through a perspective that acknowledges the intertwining of all civilizations in Anatolia (Anday, 2008). According to Anday, the origins of these cultural elements date back significantly, and a comprehensive understanding requires an acceptance of the fact that all civilizations in Anatolia have coexisted and influenced each other.

Author Yaşar Kemal, who participated in some of the journeys and formed friendships with Eyüboğlu and Erhat, particularly found harmony with Eyüboğlu's views on folk literature (Erhat, 1999). Examining the interactions between different cultures through folk songs, sayings, and rhymes, as discussed by Eyüboğlu, Yaşar Kemal contributed to their joint book 'The Sky Remained Blue' (1994), which features both well-known and unknown folk songs from Anatolia. In the preface to the book, written after Eyüboğlu's death, Yaşar Kemal stated that the tradition that began with Homer continues within the people through various genres such as poetry, fairy tales, folk songs, and stories (Eyüboğlu & Kemal, 1994).

According to him, the traces of rooted folk literature and the troubadour tradition in Anatolia represent the final form of a tradition that started with Homer.

Another figure who opened up avenues for Blue Anatolianism through publishing activities alongside literary works is Vedat Günyol. Although he had known Eyüboğlu and Erhat from earlier times, Günyol participated in two Blue Voyages alongside Kabağaçlı and later combined his humanist identity with Blue Anatolianism (Günyol, 1995). Günyol, in line with the construction of a humanist culture, wrote essays and worked on translations to establish the foundation of thought. The observation that the public had limited knowledge about cultural remnants during the journeys became a guiding factor for publishing. Co-founding Çan Press with Eyüboğlu, Günyol undertook the translation of sixty two works by authors and philosophers such as Plato, Thomas More, Campanella, Rousseau, B. Russell, Babeuf, Camus, and Sartre into Turkish. Through these efforts, Çan Press aimed to build a humanist culture and raise public awareness (Akagündüz, 2007).

Blue Voyages have been influential in the re-creation of Blue Anatolian thought through various artistic performances. In this regard, sculptor Şadi Çalık, ceramic artist Alev Ebüzziya Siesbye, playwright Güngör Dilmen, and architect Cengiz Bektaş, among others, have reflected the inspiration they gained from Blue Voyages in their works. Şadi Çalık, a sculptor and a Blue Voyager, incorporated the regions he encountered during Blue Voyages into his works, such as the 'Ancient Aegean Relief'. Alev Ebüzziya Siesbye, renowned for her blue ceramics, showcased these plates in numerous international exhibitions, turning the inspiration from Blue Voyages into tangible art. Playwright Güngör Dilmen, through his theater play titled 'I am Anatolia', portrayed Anatolian women with 16 different characters. Creating portraits of 16 different women characterizing Anatolian history, including the mother goddess Cybele, Hittite queen Puduhepa, Ephesian Artemis, Byzantine empress Theodora, the first female historian Anna Komnini, Nilüfer Hatun, female poet Şair Nigar, and Halide Edib Adivar, Dilmen brought together women from different times and cultures in the same setting. Architect Cengiz Bektaş, having incorporated Anatolia into his life and architecture through Blue Voyages, aimed to contribute to both the recognition of Anatolia and the development of architecture in line

with Anatolian culture (Akyol, 2019). In his work 'Mediterranean Bards' (1999), as a reflection of Blue Voyages, he transformed the presentations of poets from countries bordering the Mediterranean, led by himself, into a book. By doing so, he attempted to connect the voices of the present with the past, creating a bridge between different eras.

It seems that the Blue Voyages play a critical role in transforming Blue Anatolian thought from its actor-dependent context into a broader geographical imagination. Through voyages that serve as realistic and concrete presentations of a space-focused new identity construction, Blue Anatolianism acquires a core, while simultaneously gaining allies among the Turkish intelligentsia. As a result, ideas related to Blue Anatolianism circulate within a broad intellectual environment, garnering new allies over time and eventually assuming an imaginative form. These journeys, which are not merely sea expeditions but also intellectual explorations, persist not only during the summer seasons but also indirectly during the off-seasons. Thanks to these voyages Kabağaçlı's ideas obtained the opportunity for continuous reproduction through various intellectual performances.

Conclusion

Blue Anatolianism experienced its most influential period during the third quarter of the twentieth century. In this era, intellectual endeavors demonstrated high productivity through the creation of notable works, while simultaneously, the dissemination of Blue Anatolianism were facilitated by the contributions of blue voyages. However, even during its most fruitful period, Blue Anatolianism remained largely confined to the intellectual sphere and failed to find resonance within the broader societal context. This circumstance is intricately linked to Türkiye's societal conditions since the Second World War.

The post-war policies of the Turkish authorities against communism dismantled the environment where Blue Anatolianism could establish connections with society, relegating it to a confinement within intellectual realms. Additionally, the socio-political landscape after the military coups of 1960 and 1980 imposed limitations on the societal expansion of thought, leading to its attenuation. The emergence of opposing ideologies and the growing popularity

of socialism among intellectuals since the 1960s hindered the acceptance of culture-centric solutions proposed by Blue Anatolians (Belge, 1987). Consequently, in an atmosphere encompassing socialists, and nationalists-conservatives, Blue Anatolians failed to garner support for their cultural solutions. The military coup of 1980, in a significant way, brought an end to all aspirations of Blue Anatolianism. The post-coup promotion of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis ideology as an antidote to socialism (Ahmad, 1993), coupled with the development of a societal imagination centered around nationalism and conservatism, effectively suppressed other perspectives (Karacasu, 2009). Additionally, during this period, blue voyages lost their contextual relevance. With the deaths of Eyüboğlu, Kabağağaçlı, and Erhat, blue voyages became commercialized as part of yacht tourism (Yılmaz & Yetgin, 2018).

In examining the decline and possible resurgence of Blue Anatolianism, it is essential to situate its significance within the broader landscape of competing geopolitical imaginations. The “clash of civilizations” thesis (Huntington, 1996), which rose to prominence in the post-Cold War period, underscores the inevitability of conflicts between distinct cultural identities. In contrast, Blue Anatolianism provides a counter-narrative, advocating for cultural synthesis and a shared heritage as avenues toward peace and mutual understanding. The growing recognition of Blue Anatolianism as an alternative to conflict-driven ideologies highlights its potential to foster a more inclusive and cosmopolitan identity (Warf, 2012) for the country.

While Blue Anatolianism may not have found resonance among broad segments of society as a geographical imagination, today it presents new horizons for the people of Anatolia. Its inclusive, pluralistic, cosmopolit, tolerant, and humanistic approach, reveal a potential for overcoming issues based on identity conflicts in the country. The approach of Blue Anatolianism, claiming to transcend differences such as race, blood, language, and religion and bringing together various cultures in a shared space, emerges as a robust alternative for overcoming political conflicts in Türkiye and prejudices towards other identities, both within the country and beyond its borders.

In order to fully realize the potential of Blue Anatolianism in the twenty-first century, it is imperative to extend and develop its geographical imagination

beyond its original context. Although Blue Anatolianism emerged under the significant influence of the nation-state ideology, with a distinct emphasis on Turkish ethnicity, and exhibited a predominantly humanistic and anthropocentric perspective, its ethos must now evolve. This evolution should involve positioning Blue Anatolianism within a post-humanist framework that transcends anthropocentrism, allowing for a more comprehensive engagement with both human and non-human actors. Moreover, as Blue Anatolianism emphasized Turkish ethnicity in its early development, its contemporary reimagining should also encompass the rich tapestry of ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes Anatolia. By embracing this inclusivity, the Blue Anatolian imagination can offer a more robust and inclusive vision, one that is not only reflective of the diverse cultural landscapes of Anatolia but also responsive to the broader challenges of our time, especially when compared to the exclusionary imaginations fostered by the recent ‘local and national’ discourses that have marked Türkiye’s contemporary era. This reimagining will ensure that Blue Anatolianism remains a relevant and dynamic force in addressing contemporary identity conflicts and fostering a deeper, more holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of all life.

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