

Mehmet Fuat Köprülü

Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (December 5, 1890 – June 28, 1966), also known as **Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad**, was a highly influential Turkish Turcologist, scholar, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey. A descendent of the illustrious noble Köprülü family, whose influence in shaping Ottoman history between 1656 and 1683 surpassed even that of the House of Osman, Fuat Köprülü was a key figure in the intersection of scholarship and politics in early 20th century Turkey. As a historian and public intellectual, his books, articles, essays and poems forged a "canon of Turkish culture and national identity" that provided the newly formed Republic of Turkey with scholarly sources of Turkishness.^[1]

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Biography

Childhood and Education

Fuat Köprülü was born in the city of Constantinople in 1890 as Köprülüzade Mehmed Fuad. His paternal grandfather, Ahmet Ziya Bey, was the former ambassador to Bucharest, and Ahmet Ziya Bey was son of the former head of the Imperial Chancery of State (Divan-i Humayun Beylikcisi), Köprülüzade Arif Bey. Köprülüzade Arif Bey descended from the Köprülüs of the 17th century, an exceptional dynasty of Grand Viziers whose reforms and conquests delayed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Fuat Köprülü was named after the first Grand Vizier of the Köprülü Era, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha.

Mehmet Fuat Köprülü



Turkish Foreign Minister

In office

22 May 1950 – 15 April 1955

Preceded by Necmettin Sadak

Succeeded by Adnan Menderes

In office

9 December 1955 – 20 June 1956

Preceded by Adnan Menderes

Succeeded by Fatin Rüştü Zorlu

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister

In office

29 July 1955 – 9 December 1955

Preceded by Fatin Rüştü Zorlu

Succeeded by Ahmet Tevfik İleri

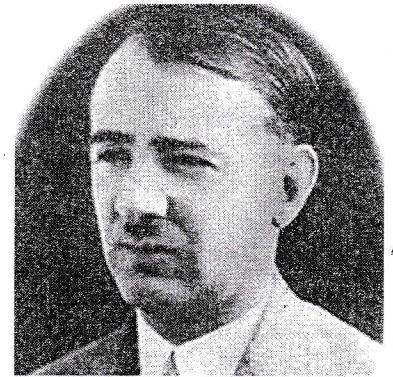
Personal details

Born	December 4, 1890 Constantinople, Ottoman Empire
Died	June 28, 1966 (aged 75) Istanbul, Turkey

Fuat Köprülü received his formal education at Ayasofya Rusdiyesi and Mercan Idadisi, both formed by Ottoman authorities to modernize and reform the Ottoman education system. In 1905, while a student at Mercan Idadisi and only 15 years old, the magazine Musavver Terakki published three poems by Fuat Köprülü. By the time he entered the Istanbul University School of Law at the age of 17, Fuat Köprülü already had an excellent command of French, Persian and Arabic. His first book, Hayat-i Fikriyye (The Intellectual Life), was published when he was 19 years old. After three years of study, Fuat Köprülü abandoned the School of Law because of the poor quality of instruction, saying that diploma was "not worth the loss of time it would entail."^[2]

The Making of a Nationalist Intellectual

From 1910 to 1913, Fuat Köprülü taught Turkish language and literature at various high schools in Istanbul, including the prestigious Galatasaray High School. Fuat Köprülü initially opposed the literary movement known as New Language, which sought to simplify the Turkish language, and wrote articles for the Servet-i Funun magazine using a literary style comprehensible only to the most learned of Ottoman intellectuals. Fuat Köprülü changed his writing style and politics during the Balkan Wars. On February 6, 1913, the day after the Bulgarian army attacked the Ottoman lines in the outskirts of Istanbul, Türk Yurdu magazine, a bastion of simplified Turkish prose and Turkish nationalism, published the first of many popular and patriotic essays by the 23-year-old Fuat Köprülü: "Umit ve Azim" (Hope and Determination), "Hicret Matemleri" (Mourning Migration), "Türk'un Duası" (A Turk's Prayer), and "Türklük, İslamlık, Osmanlılık" (Turkishness, Islamness, Ottomanness).^[3]



An image of Mehmet Fuat Köprülü in his early days

Toward the end of 1913, Fuat Köprülü published his seminal and widely lauded academic article, "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Usul" (The Method in Turkish Literary History), in Bilgi Mecmuası. He argued that historians should not only research kings, viziers, commanders and scholars, but ordinary people as well. Fuat Köprülü believed that in addition to public and official records, historians should also study art, archeology, literature, language, folklore and oral traditions. His plea for historians to study social history was so unique and ahead of its time that the Annales School in France, famous for embracing a similar approach in the journal Annales d'histoire économique et sociale, did not emerge until 1929, a full 16 years after the publication of "Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Usul". One month after the publication of the article, Fuat Köprülü was appointed Professor of the History of Turkish Literature at Istanbul University. He was only 23 years old.^[4]

Fuat Köprülü continued his scholarly research and academic publications through the years, eventually culminating in his magnum opus, Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar (First Mystics in Turkish Literature), in 1918, a book that focused on two Turkish mystics and folk poets, Ahmet Yesevi and Yunus Emre. His Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi (History of Turkish Literature), published in 1920, was another seminal book that traced the history of Turkish literature through millennia. In 1923, at the age of 33, Fuat Köprülü was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Literature at Istanbul University. In a short book entitled Türkiye Tarihi (The History of Turkey) published that same year, he reviewed the history of Turks from ancient Central Asia to the modern Ottoman Empire, continuing the approach he pioneered in his study of Turkish literature.^[5]

Relationship with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

On December 6, 1923, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk sent a handwritten letter to Fuat Köprülü to congratulate him on the publication of *Turkiye Tarihi*, writing: "The works coming from your research will be among the most valuable of contributions toward the nation and the Republic. Together with those who are thirsty for an abundance of knowledge, I will be hoping for further publications, sir."^[6] Shortly after receiving the letter of congratulations, Fuat Köprülü was appointed Undersecretary to the Minister of Education at the request of President Atatürk and remained in this post for eight months. In addition, Fuat Köprülü was appointed the Director of the Turcology Institute, established on the orders of President Atatürk, and began publishing *Turkiyat Mecmuası* (The Turcology Journal).^[7]

International Recognition

Fuat Köprülü won numerous international accolades for his scholarship as well. The Soviet Academy of Sciences granted him a corresponding membership in 1925. The University of Heidelberg honored him with an honorary degree in 1927. The University of Athens and the University of Paris (Sorbonne) granted him honorary doctorates in 1937 and 1939, respectively. In fact, most European Oriental societies made him a corresponding or honorary member, as did the American Oriental Society in 1947.^[8]

In 1933, Fuat Köprülü became a professor ordinarius, a title denoting a professor of the highest rank in Turkey. In 1935, he delivered a series of influential lectures at the University of Paris (Sorbonne) on the origins of the Ottoman Empire. Fuat Köprülü argued that ethnic Turks formed the Ottoman Empire using Seljuk and Ilhanid administrative traditions, and he discredited the prevailing view among Western scholars that the Ottoman Empire was formed by a race of predominantly Greek and Slavic converts to Islam.



Another image of Mehmet Fuat Köprülü in the 1930s

Later Political Life

In 1935, at the request of President Atatürk, Fuat Köprülü joined the single party regime in the Turkish Parliament as a Kars deputy, and was elected again in 1939 and 1943. In 1945, as calls to establish a multiparty democracy increased after World War II, Fuat Köprülü joined the opposition and was dismissed from the ruling party along with Adnan Menderes and Refik Koraltan. In 1946, Menderes, Koraltan and Köprülü, together with Celal Bayar, formed the Democratic Party. Fuat Köprülü became the Minister of Foreign Affairs when the Democratic Party came to power in the 1950 elections, and he served in this post until 1956. Fuat Köprülü also briefly served as Deputy Prime Minister in 1955. On September 6, 1957, Fuat Köprülü resigned from the Democratic Party after disagreeing with the authoritarian tendencies displayed by the party leadership.

Death

Fuat Köprülü died on June 28, 1966.

Works

A prolific scholar and public intellectual, Fuat Köprülü wrote over 1500 poems, essays, articles and books. A *Mehmet Fuat Köprülü Scholarship Programme* was recently established to provide funds for Turkish students to undertake PhD study at the University of Cambridge. His works include the following:

- Yeni Osmanlı Tarih-i Edebiyatı (1916)
- Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar (1918)

- Works by or about Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (<https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Köprülü%2C%20Mehmet%20Fuat%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Köprülü%2C%20Mehmet%20Fuat%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Köprülü%2C%20M%2E%20F%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Mehmet%20Fuat%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Mehmet%20F%2E%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22M%2E%20F%2E%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Köprülü%2C%20Mehmet%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Mehmet%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Mehmet%20Fuat%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Mehmet%20F%2E%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22M%2E%20F%2E%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22M%2E%20Fuat%20Köprülü%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Köprülü%2C%20Mehmet%20Fuat%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Kö>)