

# Preface

In 1990, a group of scholars from Holland, England, Turkey, India, Indonesia, Australia, China, and Japan formulated plans to explore the history of the transfer of science and technology between Europe and Asia. The idea was to examine this transfer over a period of 500 years—from the time when Vasco de Gama first pioneered the sea route between the two countries up until the present. Toward this end, the group had three meetings. A conference held at Leiden University in 1991 covered the years between 1497 and 1780. In 1992, a meeting at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (IRCJS) in Kyoto addressed the years between 1780 to 1880. A 1994 conference in Istanbul covered the period from 1880 to 1994.

Professor Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the Director of the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) in Istanbul, participated in the 1992 Kyoto meeting; and in 1994 Professor Yamada Keiji of IRCJS took part in the Istanbul conference. During the course of these meetings, the two scholars began to discuss plans for a symposium that would compare the introduction of Western science and technology to Turkey and Japan.

Among Asian countries, Turkey is the closest to Europe, while Japan is the furthest removed. Yet the two countries share two prominent similarities. First, neither country was subject to colonization. Second, both Turkey and Japan underwent modernization and westernization at approximately the same time. Such observations suggested to Professors İhsanoğlu and Yamada that comparative study of these countries might shed new and interesting light on the histories of global modernization and westernization.

Their planning came to fruit in the fall of 1996 (October 7<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup>), in a symposium held in Istanbul under the joint sponsorship of IRCJS and IRCICA, with generous financial support from the Japan Foundation. This book gathers together the revised versions of the papers presented at the symposium.

The introduction of modern science and technology to Turkey and Japan entailed dramatic transformations—in social structures, in economic relations, in language, in modes of life and thought. The papers in Part I provide an introductory survey of the historical backdrop against which these transformations occurred.

Parts II through VI then look more specifically at five major topics: 1. the transplantation of industrial technology; 2. the development and impact of new

means of communication and transport; 3. translations, textbooks, and the forging of an indigenous language and literature of science; 4. the creation of educational institutions to propagate modern scientific knowledge; and 5. the introduction of the metric system, and more generally, the standardization of measures.

Part VII concludes the volume with two papers which initiate the enterprise of making explicit comparisons between the experiences of the two countries.

The process by which foreign knowledge and know-how becomes indigenized is, as this volume reveals, complex and tortuous, and conditioned by both the weight of the past and the contingencies of the present. These papers represent just a beginning toward telling the full story. But they make clear that this story is well worth telling.

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