

Visualizing Population Policies: An Iconographic Analysis of Turkish Postage Stamps (1927-1965)

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Abstract: *This study examines the visual representation of population policies on Turkish postage stamps from 1927 to 1965, a period marked by significant demographic shifts and policy transformations. While extensive research has explored the use of postage stamps in nation-building and public communication, there remains a lack of scholarship investigating their role in articulating evolving population policies. This research addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of Turkish census and population-themed stamps, situating them within the broader context of the nation's demographic objectives and sociopolitical landscape. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative iconographic interpretation to decode the visual rhetoric of these philatelic materials. Drawing from the PTT Stamp Museum Archive, we systematically analyzed stamp designs, symbolism, and textual elements to trace the evolution of population policy messaging over time. Our findings reveal a visual narrative that mirrors Turkey's transition from pronatalist to antinatalist policies. Early stamps emphasized total population figures and national mapping, reflecting the young republic's focus on demographic growth and territorial consolidation. As Turkey's population policy shifted, stamp iconography evolved to incorporate modern family imagery and infographic elements, subtly promoting smaller family sizes and population control. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on visual culture in policy communication and offers insights into the intersection of philately and demography.*

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Nüfus Politikalarının Görselleştirilmesi: Türk Posta Pullarının İkonografik Analizi (1927-1965)

Öz: Bu çalışma, 1927-1965 yılları arasında Türkiye'deki nüfus politikalarının görsel temsillerini Türk posta pulları üzerinden incelemektedir; bu dönem, önemli demografik değişimler ve politika dönüşümleri ile karakterizedir. Posta pullarının ulus inşası ve kamusal iletişimdeki kullanımı üzerine kapsamlı araştırmalar yapılmış olsa da, bu pulların değişen nüfus politikalarını ifade etmedeki rolünü inceleyen çalışmalar sınırlıdır. Bu araştırma, Türk nüfus sayımı ve nüfus temalı pullarının kapsamlı bir analizini yaparak bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlamaktadır ve bu pulları ülkenin demografik hedefleri ve sosyopolitik bağlamı içinde konumlandırmaktadır. Araştırma, görsel retoriği çözümlmek için nicel içerik analizi ile nitel ikonografik yorumu birleştiren karma yöntemli bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. PTT Pul Müzesi Arşivi'nden yararlanarak, pul tasarımlarını, sembollerini ve metinsel unsurlarını sistematik bir şekilde analiz ettik ve nüfus politikası mesajlarının zaman içindeki evrimini izledik. Bulgularımız, Türkiye'nin pronatalist (nüfus artırıcı) politikalarından antinatalist (nüfus azaltıcı) politikalara geçişini yansıtan görsel bir anlatı ortaya koymaktadır. Erken dönem pullar, genç cumhuriyetin demografik büyüme ve toprak bütünlüğü konusundaki odaklanmasını yansıtarak toplam nüfus rakamlarına ve ulusal haritalamaya vurgu yapmıştır. Türkiye'nin nüfus politikası değiştikçe, pul ikonografisi de modern aile imgelerini ve infografik unsurları içerecek şekilde evrilmiş, küçük aileleri ve nüfus kontrolünü ince bir şekilde teşvik etmiştir. Bu araştırma, politika iletişiminde görsel kültür üzerine büyüyen literatüre katkıda bulunmakta ve filateli ile demografinin kesişimine dair içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Posta pulları, nüfus politikası, nüfus sayımı, ikonografik analiz, Türkiye

Introduction

The miniature medium of postage stamps has long been recognized as a powerful tool for communicating cultural and political identities, serving as both artistic expression and archival record (Katz, 1999; Deans, 2005; Raento, 2008; Wagner and Bozzo-Rey, 2014). Despite their often overlooked status as mere collectables, these philatelic materials offer invaluable insights into the history and heritage of states and societies worldwide (Dimson and Spaenjers, 2011; Franses and Knecht, 2016; Gelber, 1992; Grant, 1995; Roberts, 1894; Frewer, 2002). As Reid (1984) observes, postage stamps transcend their utilitarian function to become essential primary sources for information dissemination, encapsulating complex narratives within their diminutive frames.

In recent years, scholarly interest in postage stamps as instruments of information, education, and communication has burgeoned. Researchers have explored the intricate relationship between stamp iconography and nationalism in post-colonial states (Brunn, 2000; Cusack, 2005; Efrati, 2018; Hammett, 2014; Inyang, 2021; Limor and Zelkovitz, 2021; Wilburn, 2012), as well as their intersection with territorial sovereignty (Davies, 1985; Sharma, 2021; Wood-

Donnelly, 2017), public health initiatives (Chandrasekhar, 2021; Woloshin and Schwartz, 1999; Wood, 1974), and environmental awareness campaigns (Brunn, 2017; 2020). This growing body of literature underscores the role of stamps in shaping public discourse and policy perceptions.

Of particular relevance to this study is the use of postage stamps in articulating and disseminating population policies. The global population control movement of the 1960s and 1970s marked a watershed moment in the deployment of philatelic imagery for demographic messaging. During this period, stamps emerged as unique and potent mediums for promoting family planning and birth control ideologies (Johnson, 2018). The groundbreaking work of Golda (1972) and Cernada (1974) showed the significance of commemorative census and family planning postage stamps as educational strategies, highlighting their potential to reach wide audiences with complex demographic concepts.

Countries worldwide leveraged stamps to convey population control messages, employing sophisticated visual rhetoric to depict small, happy families, symbols of national progress tied to controlled growth, and representations of statistical data on population trends. These stamps often reflected broader modernization narratives, using infographics and modern artistic styles to simplify and normalize discussions about family size and reproductive choices. While the direct impact of these campaigns on demographic trends remains challenging to quantify, their prevalence underscores the complex nature of population control efforts during this pivotal period in global demographic history.

Within this broader context, Turkey presents a compelling case study for examining the evolution of population policies through philatelic imagery. The nation's demographic trajectory from the early Republican era to the mid-1960s encompasses a significant shift from pronatalist to antinatalist approaches, mirroring broader global trends in population management. However, there remains a notable gap in the literature examining the relationship between postage stamps and population policy transformation within Turkey's specific historical and cultural context.

This study aims to address this research gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of Turkish census and population-themed stamps issued between 1927 and 1965. The study seeks to decode the visual rhetoric of these philatelic materials and trace the evolution of population policy messaging over time. Drawing from the rich resources of the PTT Stamp Museum Archive, our analysis encompasses stamp designs, symbolism, and textual elements, situating them within the broader sociopolitical landscape of Turkey's demographic objectives.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of the strategies employed by states to disseminate population policies and shape public perceptions of ideal family structures and national

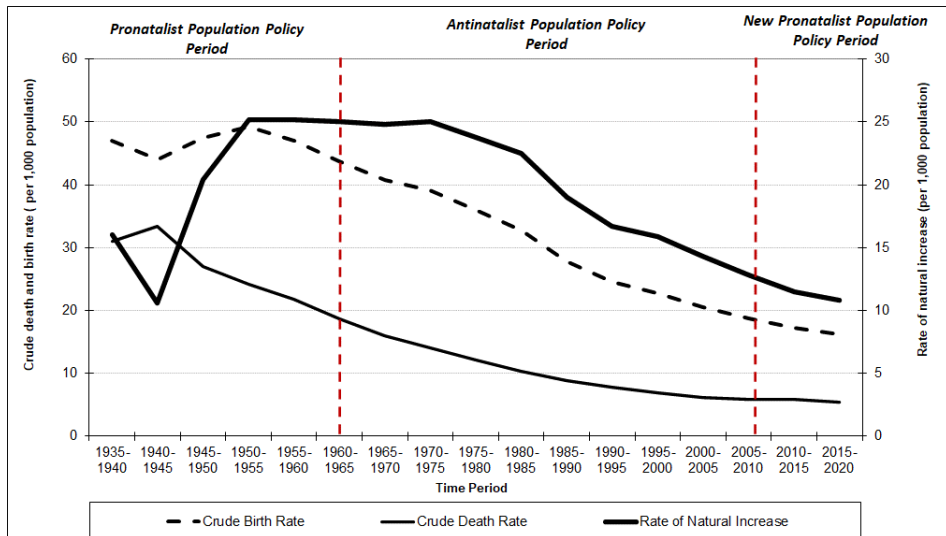
growth trajectories. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on visual culture in policy communication and offers novel insights into the intersection of philately and demography.

The State and Population Policy Transformation in Turkey

Population policies are a crucial aspect of public administration, as they aim to address the disparities between demographic changes and social, economic, and political objectives (May, 2012: 42). These policies can be direct or indirect, and they target various components of demographic change, including fertility, mortality, and migration. The fundamental question in population policy is how states attempt to increase or decrease population growth by influencing demographic processes (Poston Bouvier, 2010).

Most states utilize propaganda and legislation to shape public opinion and influence population policy. In Turkey, population policies are closely linked to the establishment of the nation-state. Following wars, displacement, territorial losses, and forced emigration, early nation-states implemented policies to increase the population. To monitor the effectiveness of these policies, censuses were conducted, which led to the institutionalization of data-driven policy interventions through the establishment of the Statistical Public Directorate in 1930. This directorate standardized demographic and statistical sciences for measuring, analyzing, and monitoring the population.

Figure 1. Demographic Change and Population Policy in Turkey.



Source. Ergöçmen et al. (1995), UNDESA (2019).

Turkey's population policy has undergone three distinct phases since the establishment of the Republic, as depicted in Figure 1 (Eryurt et al., 2013; Yüceşahin et al., 2016). The initial period, spanning from the founding of the

Republic until the mid-1960s, was characterized by pronatalist policies that encouraged rapid population growth. This was followed by a shift towards antinatalist policies, aimed at reducing population growth rates, which lasted from the mid-1960s to 2008 (Table 1). The third and current policy period, beginning in 2008, has seen a resurgence of pronatalist policies aimed at increasing population growth, as posited by Yüceşahin et al. (2016). These policy periods coincide with Turkey's demographic transition, social transformation, and modernization dynamics.

Table 1. Population Policy Timeline in Turkey (1923-2020).

Population Policy	Date	Events
Pronatalist Population Policy (1923-1965)	25/04/1926	<i>The Central Statistics Office (Merkezi İstatistik Dairesi)</i> was established under law No. 3517
	1926	The criminalization of abortion under the Turkish Penal Code
	28/10/1927	The first general census of the Republic of Turkey was conducted.
	1929	Families with more than 5 children are exempt from road tax.
	1930	Under law No. 1554, the name of the Central Statistics Office was changed to <i>The Statistical Directorate (İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü)</i> . The name was subsequently changed to the <i>General Directorate of Statistics (İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü)</i> in 1945
	1930	Awarding medals to families with more than 6 children
	1930	<i>The Public Health Act 1593</i> was passed.
	1934	<i>The Housing Act 2510</i> was passed.
	20/10/1935	<i>The Second General Census</i> was conducted.
	1938	The amendment of the Turkish Civil Code reduced the legal age of marriage from 18 for men and 17 for women to 17 and 15 respectively
	1942	Child benefit for families with 4 children and above was passed into law. Assistance for each child began in 1944.
	1955	<i>A General Census</i> to be conducted in the years ending with zero (0) and five (5) was passed into law.
	1960	<i>The State Planning Agency (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı)</i> was established.
1962	<i>The State Institute of Statistics (Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü)</i> was established.	
Antinatalist Population Policy	1965	The first population planning law <i>Law on Population Planning (Nüfus Planlaması Hakkında Kanun)</i> No. 557 was passed by parliament. The General

		Directorate of Population Planning was established under this law.
	1967	<i>The Institute of Population Studies</i> was established at Hacettepe University.
	1968	The consideration of the <i>1968 Population Problems</i> in Turkey's <i>Population and Health Surveys and Family Structure Research</i> .
	1982	Article 41 of the Constitution included the concept of <i>family planning</i> .
	1983	The <i>Law on Population Planning</i> No. 2827 was passed.
	1984	Turkey participated in the <i>International Conference on Population</i> (Mexico City).
	1985	<i>Family Health and Planning Foundation of Turkey</i> was established.
	2005	The restructuring of Turkey's Statistical System and Institution under Law No. 5429. The name of the institution was changed to Turkish Statistical Institute.
New Pronatalist Population Policy (2008 – After)	2013	<i>The tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2014-2018)</i> laid the foundations for the new pronatalist policy.
	2015	The <i>Action Plan to Protect the Family and the Dynamic Structure of the Population</i> was adopted by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.

Source. Compiled by the authors

An examination of pronatalist population policy in Turkey from 1923 to 1965

The Turkish Republic's population policies during its early years were characterized by a pronatalist approach, aimed at increasing population growth. This was in response to the significant population loss that occurred as a result of forced migrations and the long wars (World War I and the War of Independence) (Shorter, 1985). The gender and age structure of the population was also impacted, with a notable imbalance between men and women, particularly in the 20-54 age range (TÜSİAD, 1999). This created opportunities for women's participation in the labor force during the war periods.

Turkey experienced a period of high fertility, low mortality, and high population growth during the first phase of the demographic transition in the mid-1950s, leading to concerns about population growth and opposition to pronatalist policies (Eryurt et al., 2013). Pronatalist policies were abandoned by 1965, when Turkey's population had more than doubled to 31.3 million.

Notable pronatalist policies included the *Public Sanitary Code (Umumi Hıfzıssıhha Kanunu)* passed in 1930, which was the most significant policy of the period (Akin, 2007). Changes to the Turkish Penal and Civil Codes also penalized

abortion practices, while the legal age of marriage was reduced to 17 for men and 15 for women (Eryurt et al., 2013). Pronatalist policies also included incentives, such as exemptions from road tax for families with five or more children in 1929 and medals awarded to families with six or more children in the 1930s (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Medal to Families with 6 or More Children in the 1930s.



Source.https://www.kitantik.com/product/ESKI-TURKIYE-CUMHURİYETİ-COK-COCUKLU-ANNE-MADALYASI-A7935-INDIRIMLI-FİYAT-ORJINAL_0z8kgtjpskyl851a1s (21.01.2022)

Turkey's population policy during the period spanning from 1920 to the 1950s was characterized by the implementation of pronatalist policies, aimed at increasing the population through various measures, such as the Celibacy Tax (*Bekarlık Vergisi*) and the Income Tax (*Gelir Vergisi*), also known as the Celibacy Hike (*Bekarlık Zammi*) (Akkoyun, 2013; Özer, 2013; Semiz, 2010). Additionally, the 1934 Settlement Law encouraged the settlement of predominantly Turkish and Muslim populations in the country, thereby contributing to the shaping of Turkey's population policy (Dündar, 2021; Yakar and Südaş, 2019).

To enhance the implementation of pronatalist policies, new institutional structures were established, with the Ministry of Health being a prime example. The primary objective of these institutions was to increase fertility, reduce mortality, improve health conditions, and eradicate infectious diseases (Vergili, 2020). Despite debates surrounding the effectiveness of the state's interventions, significant progress was made in improving average life expectancy through programs such as the *raising healthy generations* initiative (DPT, 1983; Shorter, 1995).

Censuses were a crucial aspect of population policy during this period, with the first census in 1927 being particularly noteworthy for its far-reaching implications beyond mere population count (Tamer and Bozbeyoğlu, 2004). The

census was perceived as a *National Cause* in the new Turkish state (Arı, 1992; Dağhan, 1946), as evidenced by its inclusion on postage stamps. The censuses focused on gathering data regarding the distribution of the population based on language, religion, belief structure, ethnicity, and nationality, among other factors (Erdal, 2011).

A shift from pronatalist to antinatalist population policy (1965-2008)

Turkey's population policy underwent a significant shift in the mid-1960s, transitioning from a pronatalist to an antinatalist approach in response to rapid population growth post-World War Two. The *First Five-Year National Development Plan (FFYDP)* outlined the new population policy aimed at mitigating the effects of rapid population growth on economic development (Fişek, 1973; Türkiye Çevre Sorunları Vakfı, 1983). The policy change was motivated by concerns raised in the late 1950s about the negative impact of population growth on development, perceiving it as an obstacle to economic progress (Gallagher, 1982).

To address these concerns, various policy strategies were implemented, including the establishment of the State Planning Organization in 1960 and the FFYDP between 1963 and 1967. The FFYDP was the first to acknowledge the issue of rapid population growth, and subsequent development plans, such as the Population Planning Act of 1965, the Second (1968-1972), Third (1973-1977), and Fourth (1979-1983) Five-Year Development Plans expanded family planning and primary child health services (Üner, 1984). However, these efforts failed to significantly impact the population growth rate during the first 15 years of antinatalist policies (TÜSİAD 1999).

A closer examination of the second stage of Turkey's demographic transition reveals a notable decrease in mortality indicators in the mid-1950s. The fertility rate dropped significantly, from 6 children per woman in the late 1960s to an average of 2.5 children per woman in the mid-1980s (Yüceşahin, 2009). Similarly, the population growth rate declined from above 2.5% in the 1950s to below 2% in the mid-1980s, signaling the completion of the second phase of the three-stage demographic transition (HUIPS, 2010). As a result, Turkey's population more than doubled, growing from 31.4 million in the mid-1960s to over 71.5 million by 2008.

Besides demographic changes, the period saw significant social and economic transformations, such as migration-induced urbanization. By the mid-1980s, over half of Turkey's population lived in cities due to accelerated rural-urban migration. To address the population growth rate, the government introduced population and family planning policies during the antinatalist period. These policies were supported by legislative instruments and national development plans aimed at achieving the antinatalist agenda.

A renewed focus on population growth through pronatalist policies (2008-present)

Following 2008, population policy formation in Turkey has been dominated by pro-birth political discourse, as observed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2013). In 2008, the Prime Minister advocated for pro-birth rhetoric, emphasizing the goal of *at least three children* per family. This pro-birth agenda evolved into the *Action Plan to Protect the Family and the Dynamic Structure of the Population* in 2015 (Yüceşahin et al., 2016). However, despite these efforts, Turkey's fertility rate has steadily declined, reaching 2.1 in 2016 and 1.7 in 2020, while the proportion of the elderly population (65+) has increased between 2000 and 2020 (Özgür, 2020; TÜSİAD, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d).

Shorter (1995) highlighted that Turkey is undergoing a significant demographic transformation, which will have far-reaching consequences in various spheres, including social, economic, and political domains. Shorter (1995) referred to this phenomenon as a demographic information crisis. Güvenç (1997) noted that the approach to demographic transformation in Turkey has been primarily centered on quantitative discourse. Güvenç (1997: 72-73) proposed a shift from a quantitative to a qualitative discourse to address the issue. The recent shift towards new pronatalist policies has reignited debates surrounding sustainable population growth, with a focus on issues such as unemployment, quality education, and welfare (Ateş and Bektaş, 2018; Attar, 2013; Sayan, 2013; Yüceşahin et al., 2016).

From Empire to Nation-State: A Brief History of Postage Stamps in Turkey

According to Raento and Brunn (2005, 175), postage stamps offer profound insights into a state's outlook on everyday life for ordinary citizens. Limor and Mekelberg (2017) further suggest that stamps convey overt and covert messages designed to mirror the mindset of the state, influencing both domestic and international audiences. As a powerful tool for manipulation, persuasion, and education, stamps have been used to promote national identities, sovereignty, and administration (Child, 2008; Grant, 1995; Modarresi, 2017; Raento, 2006; Wood-Donnelly, 2017: 240; Zeigler, 2002). While postal services have a long history, the use of postage stamps began in England in 1840 (Cusack, 2005). The issuance of stamps also coincides with the formation of new nation-states, such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, who began issuing stamps after gaining independence in 1991 (Brunn, 2000; Yazıcı, 2016). Subsequently, postage stamps became official propaganda tools for newly formed nation-states (Brunn, 2011; Davis, 1985; Dobson, 2002; Grant, 1995; Raento and Brunn, 2005). Over time, postage stamps have served various functions, and their features, such as shape, form, content, and dimensions, have also evolved.

Postage stamps emerged in Turkey during the late Ottoman Empire and the nation-state's founding. During the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), postage stamps were utilized as propaganda tools (Ginio, 2005). In 1863, the *Turkish Ministry of Postal Affairs* issued the first stamps, endorsed by Sultan Abdülaziz and featuring a crescent moon, the Sultan's signature, and the phrase *Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye* (Anameriç, 2006; Kış, 2015; PTT, 2007). Initially, the stamps were simple and unpretentious, using black lithography on white paper. The inscriptions and motifs on subsequent postage stamps were later changed (Elal, 2018).

Figure 3. First Postage Stamp in The Ottoman Empire.



Source. İSFİLA, 2018.

The history of postage stamps in Turkey can be divided into two distinct periods: the pre-philatelic era (before 1863) and the philatelic era (after 1863) (Akoba, 1963; Düzenli and Kavuran, 2004). During the pre-philatelic period, postal services were available in the Ottoman Empire, but the use of postage stamps was not widespread. The philatelic period, which began in 1863, marks the introduction and circulation of the first postage stamps in Turkey. This period can be further subdivided into two sub-periods: the Ottoman Postal period (1863-1922) and the Republic of Turkey Postal period (1923-present) (Akoba, 1963; Düzenli and Kavuran, 2004).

The introduction of postage stamps in Turkey during the reign of Sultan Abdullaziz (1861-1876) marked the beginning of a new era in the country's postal system. The earliest stamps featured the sultan's monogram, and the Ayyıldız motif was introduced between 1865 and 1876 (Figure 5). In 1865, the phrase *Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye* was replaced by *Posta-i Devlet-i Osmaniye* on the first stamps. The perimeter of the postage stamp in 1892 depicted Turkish motifs, with the Ottoman coat of arms placed in the middle. The stamp issued after the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy in 1908 featured the inscription *Memorial Constitutional Monarchy* (Düzenli and Kavuran, 2004). However, the image did not appear on the stamps until 1913. In 1917, a picture of the *Selimiye Mosque* in Edirne (Figure 4) was published to commemorate the liberation of

Edirne. To prevent counterfeiting, subsequent editions of stamps were produced in European cities such as London and Vienna, rather than in *Tophane-i Amire*, where they were first printed.

Figure 4. Stamp Showing The Selimiye Mosque.



Source. <https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9Eablon:GSR/2010-07-22>
(15.01.2022)

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire, particularly the occupation of Istanbul on March 16, 1920, had a profound impact on the functioning of the postal organization (Elal, 2018). In the midst of the National Struggle, the new administration shifted the collection of postage stamps from the Istanbul-based postal organization to Ankara and surcharged them. As a result of postage stamp shortages, other official institutions imposed surcharges on stamp fees for usage. Additionally, local stamps were issued to supplement these stamps during the War of Independence. In 1922, the Ankara government printed the first stamps in Genoa, Italy, to commemorate the victory of the War of Independence. The following year, the new government issued the *Memorial of Peace* series in honor of the Lausanne Treaty and to celebrate the triumph of the National Struggle. The stamps in the series feature an image of the founding leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and a map of the national borders (Demir, 1998). In 1923, during the republic period, the first Ayyıldız series was published, followed by the second and third series in 1924 (Elal, 2018). These initial stamps issued by the newly established Turkish state showcased themes such as victory, local culture, and architecture. In 1926, the Latin alphabet was introduced alongside the Arabic alphabet on the third series of Turkish stamps, published in London. The themes on this stamp include *Turkish Posts* and its economic value. Subsequent editions, such as the 1929 stamp, were entirely published in Latin letters (Elal, 2018).

Figure 5. The First Ayyıldız Stamp Series.

Source. <http://koleksiyonodasi.com/1923-yili-turk-pullari/> (10.01.2022)

According to Düzenli and Kavuran (2005), postage stamps can commemorate the establishment or celebration of nation-states' anniversaries. Republic-themed stamps issued to commemorate the founding of the Turkish Republic illustrate this concept (Düzenli, 1998). Philatelic materials, including stamps, also serve as collectibles for enthusiasts (Anameriç, 2006). The PTT Stamp Museum in Ankara, which opened in 2013, houses approximately 4404 original local artifacts and 1,500 world collections (Subaşı, 2019). In Turkey, the philatelic community comprises public institutions, non-governmental organizations, philatelist groups (with 20,000 philatelists as of 2020), stamp associations (13 philatelic associations and clubs as of 2020), personal savings holders, and amateur stamp collectors (Aycil, 2021).

Data and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative iconographic interpretation to examine the visual representation of population policies on Turkish postage stamps from 1927 to 1965. The methodology is grounded in the theoretical framework of visual culture studies and draws upon established techniques in philatelic research.

The primary data source for this study is the PTT Stamp Museum Archive, a comprehensive repository of Turkish postal history. We systematically collected and digitized all postage stamps issued between 1927 and 1965, a period chosen to coincide with significant transformations in Turkey's population policies. This timeframe encompasses the early Republican era's pronatalist policies and the subsequent shift towards antinatalist approaches in the 1960s, providing a rich context for analysis.

We conducted a three-tiered iconographic analysis of the collected stamps involving the identification of primary visual elements, including figures, objects, and compositional structures. Secondly, we interpreted the themes and concepts represented by the visual elements, with particular attention to symbols and allegories related to population policies. Finally, we conducted a contextual analysis of the stamps within the broader socio-political and cultural framework of Turkish population policies.

We developed a comprehensive coding system to categorize and analyze the stamps systematically. The coding process involved two phases, specifically, the classification of all stamps based on their primary thematic content (e.g., census-related, family-oriented, health-focused). The stamps were further analyzed using a set of interpretive codes, including visual elements (e.g., human figures, symbolic objects, text), demographic themes (e.g., fertility, family size, gender roles), policy messages (e.g., pronatalist, antinatalist, modernization), and artistic style and compositional techniques.

We conducted a frequency analysis of the coded data to identify trends in the visual representation of population policies over time. This analysis allowed us to track shifts in thematic emphasis and policy messaging across different periods within our study timeframe. Complementing the quantitative analysis, we performed an in-depth qualitative interpretation of selected stamps, focusing on those that exemplified key themes or marked significant policy shifts. This interpretive process considered the stamps' visual rhetoric, symbolic language, and contextual significance within Turkey's evolving demographic landscape. To situate our findings within the broader historical and policy context, we conducted a comprehensive literature review of Turkish population policies and demographic trends during the study period. This contextual analysis informed our interpretation of the stamps' imagery and messaging.

Results

The utilization of postage stamps as a means of disseminating information and promoting population policies is a common practice in various countries. In Turkey, the first two population censuses following the establishment of the Republic were conducted in 1927 and 1935. A thorough examination of stamp catalogs from the PTT (Organization of Post and Telegraph) Stamp Museum archives reveals that the first census-themed postage stamps were issued on October 20, 1940, to commemorate the general population census (Figure 6). The

stamp design features the 1927 and 1935 population figures and the 1940 census estimate on a map of Turkey, illustrating a gradual increase in font size for the census year and population size. For instance, the census results were 16,158,018 in 1935 and 17,820,950 in 1940. The emphasis on the total population in the stamp design is significant in understanding the population policy of the period. In this respect, postage stamps serve as propaganda mechanisms in population policy formulation (Cernada, 1974).

figure 6. Stamp Samples From The 1940 General Census.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive

To commemorate the fourth general population census in Turkey, which took place on October 22, 1945, four stamps were issued on October 21, 1945 (Figure 7). The stamp design depicts a male officer taking notes on the right column of the census book (Elal, 2018: 128). Notably, the 1945 census stamp diverges from the 1940 stamp in terms of design, shifting the focus from the census results to the enumeration process itself. It is worth mentioning that the 1945 census marked the end of the Second World War.

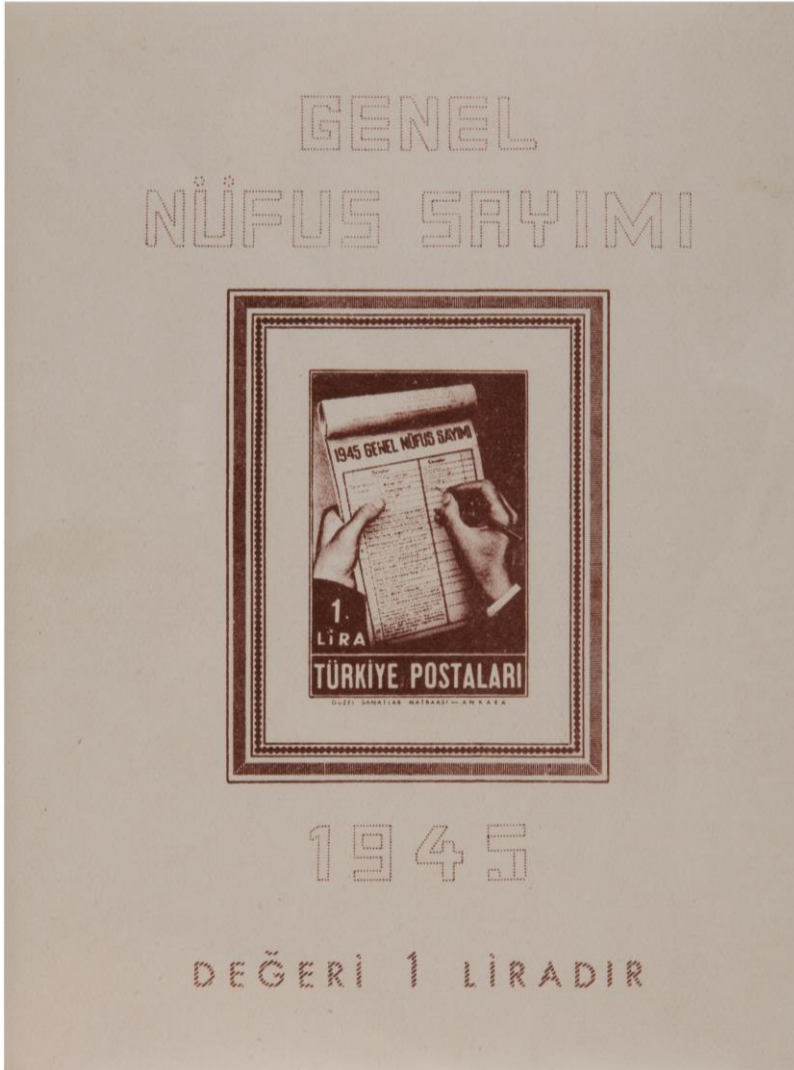
Figure 7. Samples of Stamps From The 1945 General Census.



Source. PTT AŞ, General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive.

Alongside the general census stamps, a commemorative census block was printed in 1945 to honor the occasion (Figure 8). The fact that this block represents the third commemoration block printed by the PTT underscores the significance attached to this issue (Elal, 2018: 130). The stamp and the block share similar design elements, with the primary distinction being the frame surrounding the commemorative census block (Figure 8).

Figure 8. 1945 Census Memorial Block.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive.

The Turkish government issued two postage stamps on October 22, 1950, to commemorate the 5th census (Figure 9). At first glance, the stamps bear a resemblance to the 1940 stamp in terms of design. Upon closer inspection, however, notable differences become apparent. The stamps depict the census results of 1950 and previous censuses against a backdrop of a map of Turkey, while a piece of paper covering the map reveals the census results. The physical map of Turkey itself is a distinguishable feature between the 1940 and 1950 census stamps, with topographical elements such as mountainous areas included in the latter. Unlike previous census stamps, the 1950 stamp showcases the

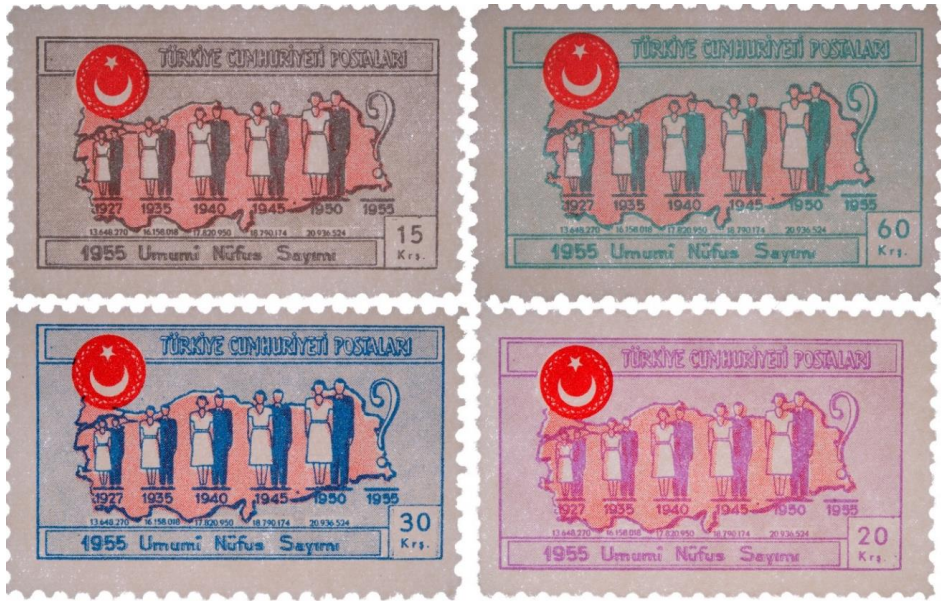
complete census results, and the earlier census results are not rounded to millions as seen in the 1940 stamp. The design of the 1950 census stamps also draws attention to the total population size, which underscores the continuity of the pronatalist policy that advocates for population growth.

Figure 9. Stamp Samples From The 1950 General Census.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive.

The study revealed that four stamps in various color tones were issued to commemorate the population census held on October 23, 1955 (Figure 10). Compared to the 1950 census stamps, the 1955 stamps display distinct design elements. Notably, the map of Turkey is a recurring theme on these stamps, while the stamp depicts the previous census counts from the bottom right to left, with a question mark replacing the 1955 census count. Unlike previous census stamps (1940 and 1950), the 1955 stamps feature a man and a woman side by side, with their choice of modern attire, such as a white dress and black suit, conveying a message of modernization. Additionally, children are not depicted on the stamp. The background color of the map of Turkey is pink, with a star and crescent in the upper left corner.

Figure 10. Samples of Stamps From The 1955 General Census.

Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive.

The examination revealed two distinct stamps commemorating the 7th census in Turkey on October 23, 1960 (Figure 11). The 1960 stamps feature a grid-like design with the lateral profiles of five individuals, reminiscent of millimetric drawing papers used in graphic drawings. An oblique dashed line runs through the lateral faces, possibly symbolizing population growth. The drawing, which appears to depict male faces, can be interpreted as a representation of population growth. The second stamp, located at the bottom, boasts a divergent design. It portrays an infographic drawing of a nuclear family unit, comprising a woman, a man, and a child positioned by her side. Notably, the single child on the stamp is set against the backdrop of a high fertility rate during that period, specifically, 6.3 children per woman (Özgür, 2004). The depiction of a family with one child signals a shift away from the pronatalist policy in its current form. Unlike previous census stamps, the second stamp at the bottom does not depict the population size.

Figure 11. Samples of Stamps From The 1960 General Census.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive

The study revealed that three distinct stamps were issued to commemorate the 8th census in Turkey on October 24, 1965 (Figure 12). The upper-left stamp depicts seven individuals of varied ages and genders holding the map of Turkey, with the year 1965 inscribed on the map. Notably, the stamp showcases a sense of inclusivity by featuring women and children alongside men,

thus highlighting a burgeoning population. This stamp coincides with Turkey's shift from a pronatalist to an antinatalist population policy in 1965. The second stamp, also located in the upper-left corner, features the year 1965 in light yellow on a green background. The third stamp at the bottom depicts a cartoon-like character walking under a watchful eye drawn on a gray background, with the year 1965 inscribed on the stamp. The symbolism of the eye emphasizes the significance of the census results in monitoring population growth and underscores the importance of population policy transformation in Turkey.

Figure 12. Samples of Stamps From The 1965 General Census.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive

The study revealed that no census stamps were issued after 1965, a period that coincided with Turkey's transition from a pronatalist to an antinatalist population policy, aimed at reducing the rapid population growth rate. However, two separate stamps were found to have been issued after 1965, specifically in 1974 and 1983. The 1974 stamp was issued to commemorate the *World Population Year* held at the World Population Congress in Bucharest (Figure 13), which aligns with the global population control movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Johnson, 2018; 2020). Scholars such as Sharma (2021), Golda (1972), Cernada (1974), and Cernada et al. (2007) recognize the significance of stamps as a

powerful communication tool for implementing population and family planning programs. Golda (1972: 7) emphasizes the role of commemorative census and family planning stamps as indispensable teaching aids. In the context of Taiwan's Island-Wide Family Planning Programme, Cernada (1974) proposed the use of a *postal franking device to stamp all letters: Practice Family Planning*' and a *'postage stamp advocating family planning* (Cernada, 1974 :107) to support family planning education efforts.

Figure 13. A stamp of The 1974 World Population Year.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive

The 1980s marked a significant turning point in Turkey's population growth policies, with the Ministry of Health implementing family planning and maternal and child health policies. As a result, postage stamps became a tool for communicating these policies, conveying messages aimed at promoting smaller family sizes. Illustrative of this is the stamp on the left (Figure 14), depicting a woman carrying a child against the backdrop of a rising sun. Another stamp, shown on the right, portrays a family of four, comprising two children, a girl, and a boy, superimposed on a map of Turkey. Notably, the stamp highlights the ideal family size of two children per family, a topic that has been central to both historical and contemporary debates surrounding family planning policies in Turkey.

Figure 14. Stamps Showing Family Planning and Maternal Child Health.



Source. PTT AŞ. General Directorate – PTT Stamp Museum Archive

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings on Turkey's census stamps offer a valuable case study for comparison with the use of stamps in other countries during the same period. While the study focuses specifically on Turkey, we can draw some insightful comparisons based on the broader literature on philatelic propaganda and population policies. Firstly, Turkey's use of census stamps from 1940 to 1965 aligns with a global trend of using postage stamps for demographic messaging (Britt, 1977; Yang et al., 1966; Narain, 1968; Goodman Jr, 1972; Rosen and Furgerson, 2024; Pramanik et al., 2004; Pauchard, 2024). Many countries, particularly those undergoing nation-building processes or experiencing significant demographic shifts, employed similar strategies. For instance, as noted in the literature review, Taiwan also used stamps to promote family planning initiatives (Cernada, 1974). However, Turkey's approach appears to have been more consistent and long-term, with regular census-themed stamp issues over several decades. The evolution of Turkey's stamp designs from emphasizing total population figures to depicting ideal family sizes mirrors similar transitions in other countries. This shift reflects a broader global movement from pronatalist policies in the post-war era to concerns about overpopulation in the 1960s and 1970s. Countries like India, facing similar demographic challenges, also used stamps to promote smaller family sizes during this period (Narain, 1968; Kumar, 2022). However, the specific visual rhetoric employed in Turkish stamps, such as the use of modernized couple imagery and infographic-style population data, may have been unique to Turkey's cultural context.

Interestingly, Turkey's cessation of census stamps after 1965 contrasts with the practices of some other countries. While Turkey shifted to more general family planning themes in its stamps of the 1970s and 1980s, some nations continued to use explicit census-themed stamps (Allen, 2018). This divergence might reflect differences in national priorities or approaches to population policy communication. The use of stamps to commemorate international events, such as Turkey's 1974 World Population Year stamp, was common practice globally. Many countries issued similar commemorative stamps for UN-sponsored events, demonstrating how national philatelic practices were influenced by international demographic discourses. One notable aspect of Turkey's approach was the consistent use of national symbolism, such as maps of Turkey, alongside demographic messages. While not unique, this persistent linking of population data with national identity on stamps appears to have been particularly pronounced in the Turkish case. This may reflect Turkey's specific historical context of nation-building and modernization efforts.

It's important to note that while we can draw these comparisons, the study's focus on Turkey limits our ability to make comprehensive cross-country analyses. Different countries likely had varying motivations, cultural considerations, and policy goals influencing their use of stamps for population

messaging. Furthermore, the effectiveness of these stamp campaigns in shaping public opinion or behavior would likely have varied across different cultural and social contexts.

In conclusion, Turkey's use of census and population-themed stamps generally aligns with global trends of the period, particularly in the transition from pronatalist to antinatalist messaging. However, the specific visual strategies, the consistency of census stamp issuance, and the strong tie to national identity appear to be distinctive features of the Turkish approach. These findings highlight the value of country-specific studies in understanding the ways in which governments used philatelic materials to communicate population policies, while also demonstrating the potential for broader comparative research in this area.

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