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Re-enactments of Gallipoli: Secular and neo-Ottoman remembrance of pre-independence Turkish history

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The centennial of WWI has seen the emergence of a substantial scholarship around the commemoration of Gallipoli by Australia. Much less attention has been paid to the remembrance of Gallipoli (Çanakkale) by Turkey. The paper begins by detailing the conditions that has seen an increasing public interest in the Battle of Çanakkale in Turkey. The paper then outlines the recent emergence of re-enactment as a commemorative form for the conflict. Empirical analysis is carried out for three cases: the participatory 57th Regiment marches, spectator focused battle re-enactments, and screen portrayals. The intersections between these performative rituals and three recently constructed memorials on and nearby the battlefields are also explored: 57th Infantry Regiment Memorial Park, the open air museum at Eceabat and the restoration of Ataturk's house and accompanying gentrification of the Bigali village. While the central role of municipalities, educational institutions and corporate social responsibility funds in the production of these reenactments and memorials signal a challenge to the monopoly of the state in remembering the past, the cultural engagement with the battle is also situated within a broader political and cultural conflict between secular and neo-Ottoman remembering of pre-independence Turkish history in which the state is a key player.