POLITICS OF RELIGION AND SECULARISM IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE; 14TH TO 20TH CENTURY: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this article is the movements and processes of secularism in the Ottoman Empire from its years of foundation to its collapse. The main argument of the article is that while the Ottoman Empire was a substantially religious state in terms of its legal, political, administrative, educational, economic, social and cultural institutions during its classical period, beginning with the late 17th century it was introduced to a gradually strengthening secularization process reaching to its peak during the collapse of the Empire in terms of depth and content. The major reason for this development was the weakening of the Ottoman state power relative to its European counterparts and thus the necessity envisaged by the statesmen and the intellectuals to change the traditional domestic institutions with more effective and productive western institutions. The process being initiated in the military domain first, it was to gradually spread over other domains of Ottoman state and society.

Keywords: Ottoman History, secularism, democracy, politics of religion

INTRODUCTION

This article investigates the emergence and development of secularism in the Ottoman Empire. An in-depth historical analysis is offered for this purpose covering the examination of secularizing trends in Ottoman education, law, economy, bureaucracy, society, culture and intellectual life. The research shows that while the Ottoman Empire was a classical example of a theocratic state in its establishment, due to a process of decline experienced against the West in military, economic and technological realms, it was introduced to a process of westernization in various domains leading to the adoption and settlement of secular ways, practices and institutions in state and social structures. Starting to insert its impact in progressively greater scales after the introduction of the Tulip Era, a policy of reform was in the implementation purporting to replace traditional structures mostly shaped by the religious institution by then with their European, scientific, rational and more effective counterparts. During the development and implementation of reforms, the prevalent idea held about the religious institution by the reformists was that religion was not able to meet with the challenges of the time and that it was often standing as an obstacle against recovery and progress. For this reason, particularly during the 19th and 20th century, there were proposals from intellectual and political chambers to remove the dominant nature of religion in Ottoman social and cultural life too in addition to administrative and legal domains as part of a successful reform process.

1. THE CLASSICAL PERIOD (EARLY 14TH TO LATE 16TH CENTURY)

According to Shaw (1982: 33), one of the most important factors contributing to the emergence of the Ottoman Empire was the goal to serve to the religion. The idea of spreading religion and expanding the borders of the Islamic world provided the Ottomans with an immense source of motivation and spiritual power in their expeditions to the west. Religion and state were two major components of the legitimacy of the Ottoman statecraft. They were often used in unison as din-u devleti Osmani in official documents issued by the authorities (Mardin, 1983: 139; Davison, 2002: 223-224). The founders of the Ottoman Empire including Ertuğrul Gazi, Osman Bey and Orhan Bey were all decorated with titles of Gâzi (veteran of holy war), iftiharul mujahidîn (the pride of mujahedeen), şereful guzzât (the honor of veterans), al-muazzamul mujâhid (great mujahed), sultânul guzzât (the Sultan of the Veterans) etc. to demonstrate their involvement in the holy war –
jihad – as the head of the state (Dursun, 1989: 110-111).

In addition to the religious character of the state and the Sultans, the Ottomans were supported by many notables of religious origin in their military campaigns as well as administrative and religious affairs. The leader of the Âhis order in Ankara Sheikh Edebali (who is claimed to be the father-in-law of Osman Bey), his son Şeyh Mahmut, Âhi Şemsettin and many other religious dignitaries and dervishes had taken part in gazi and conquests (holy wars) and they were assigned various administrative, political and legal posts in the statecraft. The sheiks and other members of the religious society were often gifted villages and towns by the Ottoman Beys to contribute to the Islamic life and practice in the country. The religious elites enjoyed a policy of protection, proximity and tolerance from the Ottoman Rulers. Some of them were appointed as muftis as a supreme office of fatwa towards whom the rulers and the subjects were equally accountable. Their views pertaining to religious aspects of the matters were highly respected (Gündüz, 1989: 14-20; Köprülü, 1959: 89-93; Ocak, 1999: 241-243). The influence of the Âhis and other religious orders was manifest in their powers to select the Beys too in consultation with viziers and provincial governors (Beylerbeysi). Orhan Bey and Murat II were selected as Beys after the decision of the Âhis, for instance. The seizure of Ankara from the control of the Âhis was an important event which shows how powerful the Âhis had grown during the establishment of the state (Uzunçarşılı, 1984: 496).

1.1. Religion in Educational Life: Medreses

During the foundation years of the state in early 14th century, administrative cadres were occupied by the imams; bureaucrats of preceding states; members of various sufi orders; Islamic knights; and dervishes who were educated in medreses of Iran, Egypt and Crimea. One of the first things adopted by the Ottoman rulers after the conquest of a land was the establishment of medreses with the aim to contribute to religious, social, cultural, scientific awareness of the public as well as to educate the special work force to be employed in administrative posts. The first Ottoman medrese was established in Iznik in 1331 to proliferate in numbers in a short time. After a successful education in medreses, the students were able to be judge, mufti and teacher (Akgündüz, 1997: 247-300; Baltaci, 1976: 56-58). The leading members of the Ottoman Imperial Court including the grand vizier, some other viziers, the army judge (kadaskers), court calligrapher (nisancı) as well as the Şeyhülislam were all appointed from among medrese graduates. Until the seizure of Istanbul by Mehmet II, the religious bureaucracy enjoyed a great influence on the government. Yet after the conquest they encountered a serious challenge from the slave bureaucracy. The Çandarlı Family of ulama origin occupying the office of Grand Vizier since the foundation of the state was eliminated soon after the conquest of Istanbul and the office was transferred to the slave bureaucracy (Dursun, 1989: 122-123).

The number and qualifications of medreses proliferated by time in par with the necessities and initiatives of the ruling elite. While in the beginning they gave education at a basic level, starting with the reign of Mehmet II., medreses were established with names Sahni Seman, Darül Hadis, Süleymaniye, Müssi-i Süleymaniye among others specializing in areas of traditions of the Prophet (Hadis), Koranic Exegesis and Jurisprudence. In addition to these religious sciences, the educational curriculum in medreses included such secular sciences as mathematics, geometry, astronomy, medicine, logic and literature as well (Uzunçarşılı, 1988: 20-23; Baltaci, 1976: 16-37; İnalıçık, 2003: 174-179).

1.2. Religion in Ottoman Law

The legal system in the Ottoman Empire was based on sharia in essence. The Ottoman Sultan was required to obey the Islamic law much as the rest of the people. It was one of the duties of the Sultan to apply the sharia and oversee its implementation. There had developed a domain of law called as customary law (örфи hukuk) over time. It had been inherited from earlier Arab and Turkish Muslim states. The customary law was not a rival legal system to Islamic law. It had emerged to fill in the gaps of the Islamic law, to regulate those areas that are not covered by the Islamic law and to give prompt response to the necessities of the time. As the head of the state, the Ottoman Sultan was endowed with the authority to introduce laws about the political order and organization in service to public good and in the context of following good traditions. The customary law originating from the Sultan was incorporated in legal documents issued by the Sultan which include Kanunnames, Adaletnames and fermanas (İnalıçık, 2000: 27-36; Aydın, 1994: 375-391).

1.3. Religious Bureaucracy in Central Government and Their Duties
The Ottoman state structure incorporated a plenty of bureaucrats from the ulema who enjoyed sizable power sources and authority. During the foundation of the state, the judge of Bursa (Bursa kadısı) was the leading member of the religious bureaucracy. He was the highest legal authority in the country with his duties covering the administration of the judges and teachers, and the resolution of cases brought by the residents of Bursa and the army. Due to the increasing workload of the judge of Bursa with the growth of the state, another legal office was introduced by Murat I. called as the Kadiasker (judge of the army) in 1363 (İpşirli, 1994: 267-269).

Kadiasker was responsible for administering the educational and legal organizations, seeing to legal needs and disputes of the army and the ruling elite in time of war and peace. Kadiasker was a founding member of the Divan-i Hümâyün (The Imperial Court). He was granted the authority to issue judgments on behalf of the Sultan in Kanunname issued by Mehmet II., as one of three offices endowed with it. The duties of Kadiasker in Divan-i Humayun included delivering opinions in the area of Islamic law when needed, undertaking various responsibilities in statecraft, and seeing to the lawsuits falling under his authority. Kadiasker was the representative of the ulema in Divan-i Humayun and he was coming after the grand vizier in protocol (Uzunçarşılı, 1988: 151-157; Uzunçarşılı, v. 2, 1995: 589).

Another leading member of the ulema playing an important role in Ottoman state structure was the Şeyhulislam. The office of Şeyhulislam was established during the reign of Murat II. in 1425 as an office of fatwa and Molla Şemseddin Fenari was appointed as first Şeyhulislam. The office remained as a supreme religious authority until 1922. While Şeyhulislam was a modest office in the beginning, it was nominated as the head of the ulema and was promoted over the Kadiasker in religious hierarchy during the reign of Mehmet II. to acquire a remarkable significance and respect during the tenor of Zenbili Ali Efendi, Ibn Kemal and Ebussuud Efendi in the 16th century. Şeyhulislam was responsible for the appointment and promotion of the judges, muftis and medrese teachers. But more importantly, Şeyhulislam was a supreme office of fatwa. The domain of issues covered by the fatwas included by time the declaration of war and peace, taxation, deposition and execution of the Sultan or those issues of lesser political importance like prayers, interactions (muamela) and innovations like coffee and tobacco (Uzunçarşılı, 1988: 173-214; İpşirli, 1991: 269-271; Uzunçarşılı, v.3, 1995: 449-450). The ruling elite and the slave bureaucracy were hard up when they were not granted fatwas for various practices. As an example, the call of the II. Bayezid for fatwa from the Şeyhulislam Mevlana Zeynel Arabi to organize an expedition to Memluk for their sanctuary to Cem Sultan was rejected and the expedition was cancelled. The names of Sultans deposed and executed by fatwa include Sultan Ibrahim, Mustafa IV., Abdul-Aziz, Murat V. and Abdulhamid II. (Dursun, 1989: 243-247).

1.4. Religious Bureaucracy in Kaza and Sanjak Administration: Judges (Kadıs and Mevleviye
ts)

Starting with the foundation of the state, the Ottomans appointed a judge to the conquered lands with the purpose of instituting justice. The conquest of a land was considered complete with the appointment of judges and subaşıs (military governor). The judge of the Kazas was the highest legal, political and municipal authority in Kaza administration. He was appointed directly by the central authority and was not subject to the sanjak or provincial administrations. His main duty was to solve disagreements among the public according to the laws of the sharia and the traditions. He was also the head of administrative, financial, military and municipal matters in Kazas. The judge of the sanjaks, mevleviyet, was the highest legal authority in his unit, but was supposed to work in cooperation with Sanjak Beyi and Beylerbeyi in political and municipal matters. Thus it can be said that the members of the religious bureaucracy were granted extensive powers and authority in Ottoman peripheral government observing the application of Islamic law and order in their domain of government (Akdağ, 1974: 400-406; İpşirli, 1994: 263-267).

2. THE PERIOD OF DECLINE (LATE 17TH CENTURY ONWARDS):
INNOVATIONS AND REFORMS

The Ottoman Empire was introduced to an accelerating process of innovations and reforms in its domestic structures starting with late 17th century due to a period of decline shadowed out with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at Vienna in 1683. The defeat and the ensuing period of decline is often attributed to the shift of the balance of power between the Ottomans and the West against the Ottomans in military, economic and technological domains. With the help of technological and scientific advancements achieved, Europe had discovered the New World
and had found new routes to the East to grow huge gold reserves in treasure. European states had also improved their military and naval powers substantially. With the shift of superiority to the West in military and economic power, the Ottomans were not able to deal with their traditional enemies anymore and they were thus introduced to a process of decline. The defeat in wars against Austria and Russia was also an additional source of economic deterioration as the wars were an important revenue gate of the Ottomans. The process was further exacerbated with the capitulations (trade concessions) granted to some European states leading to the destruction of Ottoman economic and industrial development in progressively greater scales (Berkes, 1998: 23-25; Karpat, 1959: 3-8; Zürcher, 2007: 15-19; Ahmad, 2002: 34-43).

2.1. The Tulip Era and Secularizing Trends

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1714-1717 War against Austria and the signing of the Treaty of Passarowitzi in 1718 remain a critical date in the history of Ottoman secularization. The defeat was interpreted by the Ottomans in the way that it would not be possible to defeat the European powers with traditional military means and technology anymore and that the Ottomans had to turn to Europe for inspiration and innovations. Furthermore, the perception of growing threat from Russia and Austria was compelling the Ottomans to look for allies, France being the most notable candidate as it was also in trouble with the same countries in this period. With the Treaty of Passarowitzi, the Ottomans were thus introduced to a process of close relations with Europe. They had a chance to observe European technological and scientific developments for purposes to employ it in building domestic military power in the first place leading to a rise of interest in French civilization and culture also as a byproduct (Karagöz, 1995: 173-182; Ergil, 1987: 8). This particular period in Ottoman History, lasting until the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730, is named the Tulip Era and had underlying effects in the process of innovations and reforms adopted in following years with substantial secularizing tendencies.

Envoys were sent to various European countries like Mehmet Çelebi for education and to make observations on European civilization (Lewis, 2003: 45-46). Mehmet Çelebi had noted during his observations in France the effective usage of technology and science in military domain. He had delivered a report to the incumbents for the removal of traditional military system, adoption of more effective technology and methods, and invitation of foreign officers and technicians (Berkes, 1998: 33-36). The invitation of foreign officer corps and attempts to build European style military structures had some implications for secularist politics because the transfer of the elements of material culture involved the importation of various non-material cultures too attached to them in various ways. The employment of non-Muslim officer corps in the army was opposed by the ulema for they deemed, firstly, the transfer of the Muslims under the authority of non-Muslims against the religion. Secondly, there were issues and practices prescribed by religion in the education and application of even such very rigid areas of knowledge as mathematics, geometry, medicine and geography.

The Tulip Era was important in the process of Ottoman secularization for also because of a spirit of worldliness that it generated. It was a period of time characterized with decline in moral and religious concerns and a rise of interest in the material world exemplified with the cherishing of the elements of Western civilization, culture, literature, architecture and arts. The traditional rich segments of the Ottoman society liked spending money for mosque constructions and various religious endowments in the past, but the Tulip era saw the construction of palaces, manors, pools, parks, gardens and fountains. It saw the emergence and proliferation of operas, taverns, parties and coffee houses (Berkes, 1998: 26-30).

Ibrahim Müteferrika appears as the most leading reformist intellectual of the Tulip Era. He was the person opening the first official Ottoman printing, which was permitted to be used for publication of non-religious items only in the beginning. Ibrahim was concerned with innovation and awakening in Islam. He defended the importance of introducing new methods and ideas from the west. In the book that he wrote on the causes of Ottoman decline titled Usûlül Hikem fî Nizâmül Umem, he argued that the Ottomans were receding because of their weaknesses in following Europe in technological developments as well as because of the failure to devise wise political methods, laws, procedures and principles to establish viable political regimes unlike west. Ibrahim made a distinction between three types of government including monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, and went on with the virtues of democratic government with its promotion of popular representation and parliamentarianism. According to Ibrahim, the good governance that came with democratic movements in Europe was closely associated with their advance in front of the Ottomans. The Muslims were in a
state of ignorance. While adopting the latest military technology and methods, in the first place, the Muslims had to employ modern technological and political means to gain wealth and establish unity among the Muslims with viable political and administrative methods (Altuntek, 1993: 196-197).

A class of conservatives was in the rise in the same period opposing a total campaign of Westernization. Christianity was still an enemy of Islam for them. It was wrong to rely on the Christian states for alliance. Cultural and social westernization would mean a denial of traditional Islamic heritage, which was never acceptable. The betrayal of France in 1807 was a proof of this. French was indeed motivated to expand over the Ottoman lands. They argued that if the harmony of traditional institutions was being broken, it would not be possible to unite them again (Dursun, 1998: 251-257).

2.2. Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca

The Period of Ottoman decline going on with the defeat of the Ottoman Army in Turco-Russian War of 1768-1774 and the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca generated a greater tide of innovations and reforms following the Tulip Era. The War was mobilized with a discourse of Jihad, but the defeat meant that it would not be possible to deal with Russia with religious zeal and traditional military methods. It was not enough for the Ottomans to adopt new military techniques and methods for there was also a need to change their traditional social and cultures structures too. The failure was indeed related with some cultural and traditional traits of the Turkish people who were not adaptive to new methods and technologies. Therefore, there was a need for a radical transformation in body politic (Shaw, 1971: 167).

There were conservative oppositions to this thinking, however, stemming from an alliance of the ulema and the military. The conservatives stressed the importance of religious differences between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Their methods were unacceptable sometimes, as seen in the denial of the European experts of the authority of the God on earth. They believed that wars could be won with military means only. Based on the history of wars between members of two religions, the conservatives never approved cooperation with Christian states. For them, the reformers were more like traitors. Modern methods and ideas of the West were a new stratagem to enslave the Muslims. The dispute turned violent at times, and conservatives were organized in various assaults against the reformists; they ruled fatwas, agitated the army and preached for the repudiation of certain reforms and the punishment of those who introduced them (Zürcher, 2007: 24; Ahmad, 2002: 34-43; Ahmad, 2007: 25-26).

The reformist Sultan of the time, Selim III., was a prominent supporter of the reforms. He supported the idea of comprehensive reform that would cover all aspects of the life. He thus launched a reform package called New Order (Nizamı Cedid) to implement desired reforms. Most remarkable reforms related with secular politics was the opening of the Military Engineering School (Mühendishâne-i Berri Humâyun) in 1795 by the side of the Naval Engineering School (Mühendishâne-i Bahri Humâyun) established by Mustafa III. in 1776. These schools were intended to replace the Janissary army, which was the most threatening member of the conservatives. The curricula of the schools did not include the traditional Islamic areas of knowledge covered in medreses except the Arabic language but were rather decorated with modern sciences and areas of knowledge. Many of the teachers working in these schools were French officers and specialists. In addition to these, many other cartographers, astronomers, geographers, and even poets and painters were invited and recruited from France to raise the qualifications of Ottoman Army. Many of the students who graduated from these schools would be the intellectual fathers of Ottoman modernization. There was a sizable increase in the number of foreigners in the Ottoman Empire in this period. An important influence of these officer corps on Ottoman secularization was their introduction and enjoyment of some western manners and ways of life (Lewis, 2003: 57-60; Berkes, 1985: 111-112).

There was a remarkable debate against religion during the period of New Order. Some reformists sought the causes of Ottoman decline in religious fanaticism and superstitions. Selim III. was in agreement with them and he was motivated to crash the ulema and the Janissaries as well as the authority of the Şeyhulislam for a more effective reform process. However, the ulema, Janissaries, ayans and derebeys united against him. According to them, Selim was not a defender of Islam any more. He was more like a Frenchman (Berkes, 1998: 82-85; Ergil, 1987: 12).

2.3. Mahmut II.

The forerunner of the Tanzimat period II Mahmut was an intimate devotee of western civilization. For
him, the recovery of the Ottoman Empire required a comprehensive reform process covering military, political, administrative, legal and social domains. To do this, he knew that he had to break the powers of the Janissaries and the ulema as they had aborted many reform attempts in the past.

The Janissary army was abolished successfully in 1826 and a list of reforms were adopted in its aftermath. Mahmut II. maintained the tradition of inviting foreign officer corps to train and improve the army. A growing practice in the military domain, which was learnt from the Governor of Egypt Mehmet Ali, was the sending of military students to various countries of Europe for education. Two more military schools were opened by Mahmut II. for the modernization of the army in European style in addition to previously established military and naval engineering schools, i.e., Imperial Music School (Mızıkayı Humayun Mektebi) in 1831 and School of Military Sciences (Mektebi Ulumi Harbiye) in 1834. The first school was established by an Italian instructor Donizetti Paşa, to replace Mehterhaneyi Humayun to educate drummers and trumpeters for the army. The second was opened as an example of French School of Military Sciences with the medium of education being French and the curriculum being imported from its French model (Lewis, 2003: 80-84; Metin, 2010).

In the realm of civilian education, a School of Medicine (Mektebi Tibbiye Şâhâne) was established in 1827. Dârul Ulûmu Hikemiyê-i Osmaniye ve Mektebi Tibbiye Şâhâne (Ottoman Imperial School of Physical and Medical Sciences) was established in 1838 as an improved form of the medical school. All the Ottomans were able to go to these schools. Mektebi Mârrîfi Adliye and Mektebi Ulumi Edebiye were established to educate government translators and to translate scientific books from European languages (Berkes, 1985: 111-112; Göktar, 2009: 19-21; Metin, 2010). These schools were built as secular schools attached to the Ministry of Education outside of the jurisdiction of Şeyhulislâm. Many of the intellectuals, reformists and leading statesmen of the 19th century were graduates of these schools (military and civilian) to function as the vanguards of social, political, intellectual and educational modernization of the Ottoman Empire. They were the barracks of the emerging secular bureaucracy. While some of these schools gave education in French language, some others required the knowledge of French language and they had Muslim and non-Muslim teachers. (Karagöz, 193-194; Shaw, 1983: 78; Mardin, 1983: 139-143; Cizre and Çınar, 2003: 232-233;).

An important development in secularist politics during the reign of Mahmut II. was the introduction of a central bureaucratic system and transfer of the powers and authority of the ulema to various ministries and directorates. The ulema was highly independent in terms of its revenues, employees and establishments in the past. They held courts and issued rulings from their own residences. But Mahmut II. opened an office and department of Chief Mufti and made it accountable to the palace. The Chief Mufti was directly appointed by the government. With the establishment of the Ministry of Justice afterwards, the powers of the ulama were further minimized as the appointment of teachers and judges, and administration of schools and colleges were then transferred to the Ministry of Justice. Another important development in terms of the weakening of the ulama was the establishment of Directorate of Foundations. Religious Foundations (Evkaf) constituted a serious revenue gate for the conservative ulama. To break one of the economic power bases of the ulama, II. Mahmut established the Directorate of Foundations. The directorate took the foundations under a central authority by which the revenues were collected from one hand and distributed directly for religious purposes in constructing mosques, paying the salaries of religious staff and in other religious activities (Lewis, 2003: 92-94; Berkes, 1998: 98-99).

2.4. Tanzimat Period

Tanzimat period was the real beginning of Ottoman modernization. The reforms that it brought were far more extensive than its previous examples penetrating to almost all domains of Ottoman life. It was an important milestone in Ottoman secularization with various reforms introduced in political, administrative, legal, social and educational realms. The period started with the declaration of the Gülhane Edict in 1856. As a part of this, the non-Muslim members of the society
were allowed to benefit from many rights and privileges granted to the Muslims. The notion of justice and equality was taken to the center of legal, political and administrative processes (Karpat, 1959: 10-11).

2.4.1. Secular Reforms in Legal Domain

In the legal domain, an important development was the introduction of a Penal Code in 1840 with parts of its articles and methods borrowed from the French Penal Code. Another Penal Code was prepared in 1858 with more borrowings from western sources. A Commercial Code was adopted in 1850 based on its French model by which first time the concepts of interest and bill of exchange were introduced to the Ottoman legal system. Statutory Courts (Nizamiye Mahkemeleri) were established in 1840 operating according to secular principles to see to criminal and commercial cases. As a deviation from the traditional Islamic legal system, Statutory Courts embodied Muslim and non-Muslim judges at the same time and they accepted non-Muslim witnesses too in the courts. A Land Law was introduced in 1858 according to which ownership and inheritance was regulated according to secular principles of equality of man and woman. A process of the codification of the sharia was in order sometimes in itself and sometimes in unity with secular European laws. A Civil Code was prepared by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa according to Hanefi school of Jurisprudence completed in 1876, but aspects of family and personal law were excluded from the codification as a deviation from classical Islamic law. Codification of Islamic law was important insofar as it opened the gate of ijtihad as a chance to introduce some changes in Islamic law (Ortaylı, 1986: 165-167; Ergil, 1987: 24-27).

and military schools. Galatasaray Sultanisi was characterized as a very highly secular school giving education in French language. Many of the teachers were French and many of its students were non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. The school was under the authority of French Ministry of Education. Appointments were made by the French ministry. Its curriculum included education of modern and ancient European languages, modern social and natural sciences, and law (Lewis, 2003: 122; Davison, 1990: 173; Ortaylı, 2005: 184; Berkes, 1985: 116-117).

At a level of higher education, in 1859 Mektebi Mülkiye (School of Government) was established to educate students for non-military government offices. The graduates of Mülkiye would work in administrative, legal and municipal jobs. The

2.4.2. Secular Reforms in Education

There were remarkable secular reforms in the educational realm also. At the primary school level, priority was given to the opening and proliferation of Rüşdiyes to educate students for government offices, military and medical schools. The traditional sibyan mekteps and medreses run by the ulema were not able to raise up students for newly established bureaucratic cadres and high schools, and instead of reforming the traditional religious schools which would agitate the conservatives, a decision was made to establish new schools under the authority of Ministry of Education. The curriculum of Rüşdiye’s was filled with modern sciences including mathematics, geography, history, French language, painting in addition to a limited number of courses on Arabic, Persian and religion. Rüşdiyes did not have the heavy load of religious courses taught in medreses and sibyan mekteps. In 1845, idadis were established as the secondary school division of the Rüşdiyes to serve to the same purpose. Another important development was the opening of Darulmuallimin in 1848 and Darulmuallimat in 1970 (Male and Female Teacher Schools) with the purpose of meeting teacher needs of Rüşdiyes and Idadis based on secular thinking and modern educational curriculum (Berkes, 1998: 175-192; Ortaylı, 2005: 183-185; Metin, 2010).

In addition to Rüşdiyes and Idadis, the Tanzimat period saw the opening of Sultanis, first one being the Galatasaray Sultanisi established in 1868 with an intention to give high quality education for government offices students in this school were taught economy, law, international relations, statistics etc. with addition of some other courses afterwards. Mektebi Hukuk (School of Law) was opened in 1860 to meet the personnel needs of Statutory Courts like judges and the others, the offices formerly occupied by the graduates of higher medreses (Davison, 1990: 171). Şinasi appeared as a leading intellectual of the Tanzimat period who advocated and supported the necessity of westernization reforms in the Ottoman Empire. He is known as the father of the movement of constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire. In his writings, he elaborated on ideas of citizenship rights, freedom of expression, public opinion, liberal ideas, national consciousness, constitution and liberty. He introduced many literary works and forms from European literature including theatre,

2.5. The Constitutionalist Period

The Ottoman Constitutionalist period, starting with the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution and the opening of the parliament, had many implications for secular politics. While Article 11 of the Constitution indicated that “the religion of the state is Islam,” the removal of the Muslim and non-Muslim differentiation, institutionalization of the concept of Ottoman citizenship, and introduction of various rights and liberties were important steps towards secularization. The articles of the Constitution from 8 to 26 pertaining to common rights of the subjects incorporated provisions about freedoms and rights of the citizens including citizenship rights, personal freedom, personal safety, freedom of belief, freedom of press, right to petition, right to be civil servant, inviolability of private property, prohibition of torture among many others (Shaw and Shaw, 2004: 222; Ortaylı, 1986: 167-168).

2.5.1. Influence of the Young Ottomans

It is argued that behind the declaration of the first Ottoman constitution, there was the influence of intellectual currencies of thought propagated by the Young Ottomans (Genç Osmanlılar). Young Ottomans were intelligent much as they were intellectual. They were aware of the potential of a conservative backlash against reform attempts and thus they followed a road from within Islamic doctrines. They often argued that Islam was not irreconcilable with reform and many of the European political institutions and principles were embodied within the text of Islam. What needed was a careful interpretation (Davison, 1963: 219-233).

Namık Kemal was a leading member of the Young Ottomans. For him, the cause of the Ottoman failure was political and economic and the recovery was through education and constitutionalism. He argued that Islam and liberal constitutionalism were not in contradiction. While there were significant differences between classical Islamic political doctrines and contemporary political ideas, Islam was open to renovation and change depending on the circumstances. The west had been superior to the Ottoman Empire due to the promotion of the ideas of liberty and progress. The Ottomans thus also had to adopt contemporary political and legal developments in the west by establishing a republican regime, a parliamentary government assigning the sovereignty to the people, and taking the public will and consent as the source of political action (Davison, 1963: 223-231; Berkes, 1998: 209-213; Karpat, 1959: 12-13).

According to Namık Kemal, the Tanzimat reforms had many erroneous applications. The idea of cultural westernization was not right in case of the Ottoman Empire for it did not have anything to do with Ottoman progress and recovery. The Ottomans had to keep their loyalty to traditional Islamic values. They were the foundations of the Ottoman society and attempts to remove them would be an attempt to our existence. Reforms had to be worked from within Islam (Berkes, 1998: 216-217).

The life of the first Ottoman Constitution and the parliament did not last long, however, due to the outbreak of the War with Russia in 1877. They were suspended indefinitely. The period was followed with a regime of oppression. The intellectual chambers were occupied by the Young Turks this time who defended the restoration of the Constitution and the Parliament. Contrary to the Young Ottomans, the Young Turks displayed a positivist outlook in their approach to religion and politics (Bellah, 1958: 2). They were reactive to the authoritarian and dictatorial Hamidian regime. They were closer to the secular constitutionalism of the Tanzimat reformers in outlook.

2.5.2. Secularist Policies during the Second Constitutionalist Period

During the beginning of the Second Constitutionalist period, Şeyhülislam enjoyed extensive powers and authority over various political, administrative, educational and other institutions. He had a seat in the cabinet and he was the head of Şeriat Courts as well as the Ministry of Foundations. Turkists and the Westernists were against an office of Şeyhülislam with extensive powers. They had an opportunity to curb the powers of Şeyhülislam during the First World War when the Union and Progress Party had taken the government under its total control. He was first removed from the cabinet in 1916 and his jurisdiction over Şeriat Courts was transferred to the Ministry of Justice. A secular court of appeals was established above the religious courts, and the duty of the appointment of judges was transferred to the Ministry of Justice. The administration of the foundations was transferred to the Ministry of Foundations. And finally his traditional authority over the medreses was

In legal and administrative domains, the Law of Family Rights was adopted in 1817 in which the secular and religious concerns were united. In the new Family Law, the women were allowed to start a divorce case. In case of an attempt to polygamy by the husband, the wife would be able to apply to the court for divorce. Various public, educational, and participatory rights were granted to women in sociopolitical life. In 1916 and 1917, western calendar was adopted in place of the Hijri calendar with an excuse of removing the problems encountered in temporal and fiscal matters (Shaw and Shaw, 2004: 365-367).

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the main points of the article, religion was one of the most important sources of legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire during the classical period with its substantially Islamic legal, educational, bureaucratic systems. However, with the entrance of the state to a period of decline due to the failure to match up with European military, economic and political power, religion was introduced to a process of retreat in shaping Ottoman state and social structures. Reforms were adopted to replace traditional ways and institutions with more effective and advanced European ones in order to recover the state from decline. An important development in this context was the opening of European model educational institutions with their secular curricula. These schools were to raise up the intellectual and bureaucratic cadres of the state which were traditionally occupied by medrese graduates. More comprehensive reforms were adopted during the later periods of the Ottoman decline with the prominence of a thinking that survival and recovery of the state was possible only if a total transformation project was adopted covering social and cultural arenas too which were formerly excluded from the reforms. During and after the Tanzimat period, reforms were adopted in legal and administrative domains with remarkable secular contents. Ideas of republicanism, secularism, equality, freedom of thought and conscience etc. were adopted as legal and constitutional norms. The power and authority of the religious institution was significantly minimized to be transferred to secular offices, directories and ministries during the Constitutionalist period.

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