

LATE OTTOMAN MODERNIST/RATIONALIST DISCOURSES ON ISLAM:
SUPERSTITION, SUFISM AND ŐEMSEDDİN GÜNALTAY

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study attempts to sketch a general picture of the late Ottoman conceptualizations of Islam through the preliminary observation of the ideas of *M. Şemseddin (Günaltay)*, an important intellectual and political figure of the Ottoman Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918). More specifically this thesis deals with why and how *Şemseddin Günaltay* devised an exclusionary rhetoric on Sufi orders and superstitions. In *Şemseddin Günaltay*'s understanding of Islam, superstitions, folk beliefs and Sufi practices were represented as the "other" of the imagined "true Islam" as an essentialized and homogenized category. While the idea of "true Islam" was thereby identified by *Şemseddin Günaltay* with the notion of "natural religion" which was a product of the Western Enlightenment thought, it was streamlined as a rationalized, scientific and "privatized" religion. In this regard, this study argues that *Şemseddin Günaltay*'s conception of Islam was in some ways emblematic of the late Ottoman patterns to understand and define religion. Therefore studying *Şemseddin Günaltay*'s discourse on true Islam is on the one hand useful to analyze how Islam was undertaken as an ambiguous and functional entity for various social ends like adjusting Islam to the necessities of the time or devising some Islamic reform projects. On the other hand this might contribute to draw at least a partial picture of the underlying transformations in cognitive codes of the late Ottoman intellectual life as well as the new meanings Islam acquired. In order to fulfill these goals, this thesis focuses on *Şemseddin Günaltay*'s intellectual production during the Second Constitutional Period.

ÖZET

OSMANLI SON DONEMİNDE İSLAM'A DAİR MODERNİST/RASYONALİST SÖYLEMLER: HURAFE, TASAVVUF VE ŞEMSEDDİN GÜNALTAY

Hakan Feyzullah Karpuzcu

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Şemseddin Günaltay, hurafe, tarikatlar, gerçek İslam, İslamcılık

Bu araştırma Osmanlı İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminin (1908-1918) önemli entelektüel ve politik simalarından olan *M. Şemseddin (Günaltay)*'in fikirlerinin bir ilk incelemesi yoluyla geç Osmanlı dönemindeki İslam'ı kavramsallaştırma çabalarının genel bir resmini çizmeye çalışmaktadır. Daha özeldense bu tez çalışması *Şemseddin Günaltay*'in niçin ve nasıl tarikatları ve hurafeleri dışlayıcı bir söylem geliştirdiğiyle ilgilenmektedir. *Şemseddin Günaltay*'in İslam anlayışında, hurafeler, halk inanışları ve belirli tasavvuf pratikleri özelleştirilmiş ve homojenleştirilmiş bir kategori olan mütehayyel “hakiki İslam” kavramının “ötekisi” olarak resmedilmektedir. Böylece hakiki İslam fikri *Şemseddin Günaltay* tarafından Batı Aydınlanma düşüncesinin bir ürünü olan “tabii din” nosyonu ile eşleştirilirken, aklileştirilmiş, bilimsel ve “özelleştirilmiş” bir din olarak kurgulanmaktadır. Bu çalışma *Şemseddin Günaltay*'in İslam kavramlaştırmasının belli yönlerden Osmanlı son döneminde İslam'ı anlama ve tanımlama biçimlerine emsal teşkil ettiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amaçlarından birini oluşturan *Şemseddin Günaltay*'in “hakiki İslam” söyleminin incelenmesi bir yandan İslam'ın nasıl muğlak ve işlevsel bir hususiyet olarak, İslam'ı zamanın gerekliliklerine uydurmak veya bazı İslami sosyal reform projelerini hayata geçirmek gibi muhtelif sosyal amaçlar için deruhte edildiğini analiz edebilmek adına faydalı olacaktır. Öte yandan, Osmanlı son döneminde İslam'ın edindiği yeni anlamları ve entelektüel yaşantıda temelden gelişen birtakım bilişsel dönüşümleri kısmen de olsa resmetmeye katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda bu tez çalışması temel olarak *Şemseddin Günaltay*'in İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi'ndeki entelektüel üretimine yoğunlaşmaktadır.

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INTRODUCTION

Popular beliefs and religious organizations, remarkably *tarikats* (Sufi orders), have long been one of the most controversial issues surrounded by a rhetoric of religious obscurantism and backwardness in contemporary Turkish social and political life. However, the disputed position of *tarikats/tekkes* (dervish lodges) and folk beliefs are not peculiar to the Republican discourses on religion but they have been a site of fervent discussions and negative representations in the late Ottoman public. The period following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, called as Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918) has been generally perceived as a watershed for the flourishing of the intellectual production, ideological flows and discussions in the Ottoman Empire. Besides, Second Constitutional Period was also seminal for the outflow of discussions on religion, Sufi orders and superstitions. The articles with negative representations on *tekkes* and *tarikats* constituted a considerable amount, even – usually- in the journals published by devout Muslims, commonly called as Islamists. I think the criticisms and negative rhetoric on Sufi life and popular beliefs by the Islamist intellectuals of the period provide a fertile site to scrutinize the late Ottoman intellectual perceptions and contentions on Islam. Here the broad concern of this study is to observe the perceptions of Islam in relation to the representations of Sufi orders and superstitions in the Second Constitutional Era.

Ottoman modernization starting from the 18th century generated dramatic changes in the social fabric. A deeply buried structural transformation in the meaning and function of Islam during the 19th and early 20th centuries of the Ottoman Empire was in the making. As Serif Mardin asserted, on the eve of the foundation of Turkish Republic (1923) Islam came to mean something different than it meant one century

earlier¹. The outcomes of the changes in the very meaning of religion more or less crystallized in the intellectual context of the Second Constitutional Period. The aim of this study is thus to make a snapshot of the framework through which Islam was essentially and monolithically conceptualized in the Second Constitutional Period through preliminary observation of some of its basic dispositions. More specifically, I deal in this study with the intellectual enterprises to reshape Islam in its “authentic” form which found expression in the catchphrase of “true Islam” in the Second Constitutional Period. Due to the extent of this task, this study concentrates its attention on a particular exemplar, an “Islamist” intellectual of the period, *M. Şemseddin (Günaltay)* (1883-1961). I think his ideas provide a useful mounting to have a grasp of the uses and implications of the idea of true Islam as a monolithic and universal “religion” in the late Ottoman context. Similar to the Islamist trend in the Second Constitutional Era, some Sufi beliefs, rites and values, which were denounced as corrupted and folk beliefs imbued with superstitions were excluded from the content of Şemseddin Günaltay’s ideal true Islam.

There are three basic reasons for me to opt for Şemseddin Günaltay for this study. First, Günaltay may simply be seen as a representative of a group of “modernist Islamist” intellectuals of the period. In this sense, although some recent studies put some doubt about the Islamist nature of Şemseddin Günaltay’s thought², his ideas are I think indicative of the Islamist thinking during the Second Constitutional Period, in its modernist orientation. It must be reminded that a group of devout intellectuals and *ulema* (Islamic scholars) gathered around some journals of the Second Constitutional Period like *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (means Straight Path; named as *Sebilürreşad* in 1912), *İslam Mecmuası* or *Beyanu’l Hak* and involved into an intellectual production in the defense and favor of Islam have been commonly regarded as Islamists. One of the unique features of Second Constitutional Period Islamism in its modernist form was the foothold that modern ideas and intellectual orientations gained, like the trust in modern science and rationality; and the effort at the side of Islamists to reconcile the ideas and

¹ Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 105.

² For an example of this view, see Fahrettin Altun, “M. Semseddin Günaltay” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 6: İslamcılık*, ed. Yasin Aktay, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 160.

values assumed to be modern and Islamic. Günaltay's intellectual make-up with his strong rationalist, scientist and modernist leanings in this respect presents a fruitful example to see the syncretic nature of "Islamic modernism" of the Second Constitutional Period as a *mélange* of modernist and Islamist tendencies.

In this respect Şemseddin Günaltay is not only reflective of the characteristics of "Islamic modernist" trend in the Second Constitutional Era but also one can grasp through his ideas an overall register of the scientist, rationalist, social Darwinist and also modern *Salafi*³ discourses due to his position at a vantage point of various discursive networks and intellectual trends. Namely, he can be recognized as a linchpin through which the transformation in the meaning and functions of Islam in the late Ottoman context can be better scrutinized. Therefore examination of Islam's conceptualizations through Günaltay's ideas is instrumental to understand the hybrid nature of the conception of true Islam woven within a syncretic intellectual and cultural context made up by the reciprocal influences of what might be designated as the modern and the Islamic. Therefore, his position is practically important to better comprehend the "rationalization" and "essentialization" of the conception of Islam. For the examination of Günaltay's ideas on true Islam in my opinion makes it more convenient to follow the traces of the reinterpreted Islamic references and symbols, Enlightenment rationalist and scientist discourses as well as the penetration of Salafi/Islamic modernist thought into the Ottoman intellectual life.

Secondly, I think Günaltay's views on Sufism and superstitions provide us with a useful pattern of the common Islamist discourses on the popular/folk beliefs in the Second Constitutional Period and the related emphasis on the notion of "true Islam". In these discourses, some popular beliefs were counted as superstitions and were brought under biting criticisms by Islamists. This challenge was associated with a stigmatization of some supposedly distorted beliefs/values, rites and life styles in popular religious orders. I prefer to call these negating discourses during this study as "anti-Sufi" and "anti-superstition" criticisms/discourses. Some correlations between superstitions and Sufi orders were established and the anti-Sufi and anti-superstition

³ The term modern Salafi thought was generally used to describe 19th and early 20th century Islamist reformist movement that proposed to reform Islam in the light of the Islam of the pious forefathers (*Salaf*). The major figures of this reformist trend were generally seen as *Jamaladdin Afghani*, *Muhammad Abduh* and *Rashid Rida*.

discourses were interchangeably used in the Islamists' contemplations. Superstitions and degenerate Sufism were believed not only to diverge from pristine Islam but also to corrupt the "spirit of Islam", thereby inhibit the progress of Muslim societies and cause them to decline. Therefore, the trouble of Sufism and superstitions turned into macro scale socio-political problems of Muslim survival and progress in the Islamist discourses. But also I try to examine via Günaltay's ideas in this study how the superstitions and degenerate Sufism were instrumentally depicted as "un-Islamic" to keep the unwelcome elements in the folk beliefs out of the imagined true Islam and thus to keep its purity. In this juncture, the criterion to single out the superstitions and false Sufi traditions had been compatibility of these folk belief elements with the demands of the time, namely modern knowledge, science and rationality. Günaltay's ideas in this respect are of use to observe how Islam was rationalized and its basic tenets were stretched to a great extent in line with the rising values of a new intellectual *Weltanschauung* of the period. Therefore the flexibility of the idea of true Islam also signifies both the detachment of this conception from the traditional mechanisms to bound Islam, and its practical availability to be used for various social and political ends. In this regard, Günaltay's views are instrumental to realize this functionality of the concept of true Islam. To give an example, his turn towards a Turkish nationalist political view following the foundation of republic (1923) was reflected in his contemplation of true Islam in conformity with a nationalist ethos.

Third, Günaltay's political and intellectual career makes him an important carrier of the mentioned discourses and ideas; therefore a remarkable agent of the paradigmatic shift in the sociality of religion. He was a major Islamic modernist intellectual of the Second Constitutional Period and had close affiliations with the *Young Turk party Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)* which administered the empire during the Second Constitutional Period. Günaltay occupied important positions both during the late Ottoman and Republican era. He was a deputy both from CUP in 1910s and for years from the People's Republican Party, the official political party during the early Republican period. Let us not forget that he served as prime minister of Turkish Republic from 1949 to 1950. He also actively participated in religious reform plans of the Republic in 1920s and Republican projects of official history-writing. These connections depict Şemseddin Günaltay's quite influential role in the intellectual and political arena of Turkey and his close affinities with the CUP might shed some

light on CUP's approach to Islam. In this regard the discursive analysis of Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas with a special focus on the construction of an essentialized and purified "real Islam" may suggest modest insights about the instrumental role of Islam during the Second Constitutional Period. They might also help us to roughly make sense of the epistemological and ontological (social) ethos underpinning the formation of the Republican official discourses.

One of the main incentives behind my decision to start this research was to go beyond the dominant trends in the academic studies dealing with Islam and history of ideas in the late Ottoman context. The academic works studying the changes in the Islamic structures in the late Ottoman history have been mostly preoccupied with the political and economical dimensions of the issue. Comparatively little attention was paid to studying Islam sociologically with an emphasis on its cognitive and conceptual make-up. This study therefore attempts to put emphasis on the change in conceptualization and definition of Islam in the late Ottoman context. However, this does not mean a theological reexamination of the conception of Islam. Rather, it involves, through the scrutiny of Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas, an assessment of how religion came to be perceived and what were some of the intellectual orientations that these perceptions signified. In other words, it is important to inquire the perceptions about the nature of Islam and their rhetorical outcomes in order to analyze the ideological, cultural and political motivations for and repercussions of these definitional approaches. This study therefore intends to brush a tangential picture of the very context and the *Weltanschauung* upon which Şemseddin Günaltay based his conception of true Islam.

On the other hand, during the research process what I came to realize was the important impacts of the 19th century religious and intellectual changes, especially during the Abdulhamid period, on the subject of this study. Namely, these changes were conducive not only to the cultivation of Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas but also to the formation of the intellectual/cognitive ground his ideas were based on. In the works on Ottoman Islamism continuities between the Second Constitutional Period and the period prior to Second Constitutional Period have not usually been given the emphasis

they deserve⁴ and Islamism has been studied as a movement confined to the Second Constitutional Period. Actually the new cast of Islam that I mentioned to be important in the very framework to conceptualize an essentialized religion was already in the making during the Tanzimat (1839-1876) and especially Hamidian period (1876-1909) and was not idiosyncratic to Second Constitutional Period. Tanzimat reforms, the change in the position of ulema during the 19th century, Islamic ideas of Young Ottomans and Islamist policies of the Abdulhamid period had already created a “reified” Islamic understanding prior to the Islamist movement of the Second Constitutional Period. In that respect, Second Constitutional Period Islamism and Şemseddin Günaltay were genuinely indebted the very basis of their ideas to the preceding transformations within the Ottoman religious context.

Another important structural influence was the formation of a new *Weltanschauung* on the eve of the 20th century in the Ottoman intellectual landscape which resulted in the emergence of a new type of intellectual with a new “cognitive currency” to interpret the world. The interactions with the Western culture and thought, education in the Tanzimat and Abdulhamid periods were some of the crucial developments of the 19th century that made their imprint on the formation of a progressive and temporal intellectual mind valued science, reason, progress and natural laws and helped the creation of a more rationalized and standardized way of understanding Islam. These helped to spin the intellectual fabric within which new Islamic understanding was given a shape. The formative influences of the Tanzimat and Abdulhamid period both in the function and meaning of Islam and in the intellectual groundwork will be taken as seminal to the formation of the very context and the *Weltanschauung* upon which Şemseddin Günaltay based his conception of true Islam. This is why this study reserves a special section for a brief account of these prior developments.

It should be also reminded that the examination of the ideas of Şemseddin Günaltay is instrumental in this study to take a particular outlook of the new “cognitive currency” through which Islam was conceived. Specifically, this study is forged to

⁴ Some seminal works on Ottoman Islamism were written by Tarik Zafer Tunaya and Ismail Kara; and these works more or less underrate the impact of the pre-1908 period on the formation of Islamist thought.

scrutinize the implicit relation between Günaltay's exclusive representation of superstitions, popular/folk beliefs and Sufi life, and the conception of Islam claimed to be authentic and true. How Günaltay's exclusive depiction of superstitions and Sufi practices came to be instrumental to construct an essence of so-called "true Islam" in Günaltay's discourses will be examined in this study. Then this study on Günaltay's views, which mean more than ideas of an individual, seems useful to sketch a rough picture of the changes in the Islamic tradition and social cognitive codes during the Second Constitutional Period. Understanding the basic outlines of the conception of true Islam is also crucial to discern the instrumentality of this conception and the implications of this instrumentality. So to speak, this makes Islam more malleable for social and political ends as a rhetorical, ideological tool. As was the case for Şemseddin Günaltay, the practical outcomes of this instrumentalization might be to become able to modify Islam in line with the necessities of the time or to meet the challenges leveled against Islam as well as to forge some Islamic reform projects.

This study directs its attention on Günaltay's writings published during the Second Constitutional Period. The particular reason of this selection is the expectation of this study to explore basic dispositions of a perspective for understanding and constructing religion during the Second Constitutional Period. That is due to the conviction of this study that Second Constitutional Period presented the most remarkable crystallization of this perspective if not the sole period in which such a perspective was forged or can be noticed. Observing the tendency to an essentialized understanding of religion specifically in Second Constitutional Period is also related to the transitional and constitutive place of this period towards the Republic. Günaltay's ideas of the Ottoman period might open a path to the examination of the general ideological trends and intellectual currents, namely the *Zeitgeist*, of the Second Constitutional Period, that carved the discursive content of the Republican ideology. On the other hand, the preference for studying the writings of Günaltay during the Second Constitutional Period is also related to the convenience to observe the Islamist reformist tone that constituted the backbone of his ideology more saliently. The Islamist complexion in his intellectual works conspicuously disappears with the Republican period.

Here in this study I would like to carry out my analysis through the textual analysis of Günaltay's works since my intention is to unravel the discourses on Islam

and representations of Sufism and superstitions in Günaltay's writings. I will mainly conduct my analysis over two prominent books of Günaltay, published in the Second Constitutional Period: *Zulmetden Nura*⁵ (*From Darkness to Truth*) and *Hurafattan Hakikate*⁶ (*From Superstitions to Truth*). In order to look for the change in his views after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, I will also try to make some correlations with another book: *Maziden Atiye*⁷ (*From Past to Future*). These are almost the sole books reflecting his political and ideological views. His other works are academic and mostly introductory history books or textbooks. Here I think it should be also reminded that *Zulmetten Nura* is a collection of Şemseddin Günaltay's articles published in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and later *Sebilürreşad* that were mostly written prior to and during the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and the beginning of the World War I (1914-1918). The book seems to be designed by Günaltay to outline the backbone of his social reform plan ingrained within an Islamist and rationalist/modernist understanding. In this regard, *Zulmetten Nura* systematically exposes the reasons of the decline/decay in the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world. *Hurafattan Hakikate* was devised to historically unfold the emergence of superstitions within the Islamic culture. *Maziden Atiye* in this respect can be interpreted as a clear divergence in Günaltay's frame of thinking from a more salient Islamist position to an overtly Turkist viewpoint. The study of these works is sufficient to reflect the general outlook of Günaltay's social and political thought in the Second Constitutional Period since they not only constitute almost all of his writings during this period but also these are the bulk of his written works with ideological and political content.

Here I think brief information about Semsettin Gunaltay's life and intellectual profile might shed light on why he was selected in this thesis to study. I will also try to give a very short review on the academic works written on Gunaltay.

⁵ From now on in this study the name of the book will be used as *Zulmetten Nura*. 1st and 2nd editions of the book were published in 1915, 3rd edition with some major changes in 1925.

⁶ From now on in this study the name of the book will be used as *Hurafattan Hakikate*. The book was published in 1916.

⁷ Published in 1923.

Born in 1883, in the Eastern Anatolian city of Erzincan, Şemseddin Günaltay was the son of a *muderris*, an Islamic professor in the *medrese* (Islamic school). He both had a classical Islamic education together with the study of Arabic and Persian, and a “modern” professional education in the *rusdiyes* (secondary school) and *idadis* (high school) established by Abdulhamid II in Istanbul. He graduated from the *fen* (science) branch of the High Academy of Teachers (*Dar-ul Muallimin-i Aliye*) in 1905. Later he went to France and then he was sent to University of Lausanne in Switzerland by the government to study physical sciences in 1909. Upon his return, he instructed in high schools and after 1909 he started to write for *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and later for *Sebilürreşad*, the most prominent Islamic journal of the 2nd Constitutional period. In these journals he wrote articles mostly about social concerns relating to Islam, modernity, advancement of society and Westernization, emphasizing themes of science and progress. After 1913, he also started to write in *İslam Mecmuası*, the Islamic journal published by the intellectuals with Islamic nationalist tendencies and known with their affinities to *CUP* including Ziya Gökalp⁸. It is commonly argued that he was highly influenced by his personal interactions and conversations with Ziya Gökalp after 1915⁹. He collected his articles written in *Sebilürreşad*, especially before and after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), in his renowned book, *Zulmetten Nura*¹⁰ (*From Darkness to Light*). The first and second editions of this book were published in 1915. The 3rd edition of the book was published after the foundation of the Republic in 1925 with

⁸ Kamil Sahin, “Şemseddin Günaltay”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 14 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi Genel Müdürlüğü, 1996), 286-288.

⁹ Ibid, 286. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 144.

¹⁰ *Zulmetten Nura* in its latest edition consisted of some of the articles starting from the 198th (1910) to 387th (1916) issues of *Sebilürreşad*. For further information see Abdullah Ceyhan, *Sırat-ı Müstakim ve Sebilürreşad Mecmuaları Fihristi* (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 413-416. Günaltay claims in the preface of the book that it was received with great attention and first and second editions were sold more than a few thousands. The book also reflects the traumatic experiences of the Balkan Wars with a sentimental and pejorative nationalistic rhetoric and anti-imperialist and anti-Western stance. Şemseddin Günaltay, *Zulmetten Nura*, (Istanbul: Furkan Yayınları, 1998), 98.

minor but salient changes to its content¹¹. This book mainly focused on the situation in the Ottoman society of its time and Islam in the face of modernity and West with dense emphasis on material progress, civilization and science, superstitions and corruptions in the society.

Gunaltay joined in the Istanbul University (*Darülfünun*) Literature Department as a Turkish and Islamic history lecturer in 1914 and published another important book, *Hurafattan Hakikate*¹² (*From Superstition to Truth*) in 1916. In 1915, he was elected as Bilecik deputy in the Ottoman National Assembly from CUP and thus went on his political career as a deputy from 1923 to 1954 in *Cumhuriyet Halk Firkasi* (Republican People's Party), the official party of the Republic established by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk). In 1924, he started as a lecturer of Islamic history in the Faculty of Theology, at *Darülfünun* and in 1925 he was appointed as the dean of the faculty¹³.

During the Republican period, he took part in various reform plans of the government including the 1928 religious reform project and took some political duties. He was selected a founding member for the Turkish Institute of History in 1931, and after 1941 until his death in 1961, he held the chair of the institute. He also participated in the commission to write history textbooks that were instructed in high schools from 1931 to 1950 but these books were severely criticized as a result of the misinformation they contained about Islamic history¹⁴. He also actively participated in 1930 in the writing of official history thesis of the Republican regime known as *Türk tarih tezi* (*Turkish history thesis*)¹⁵. Between 1949 and 1950, he became the prime minister of Turkey from RPP and later took other important positions in the party. Crucial steps in

¹¹ Kamil Sahin, 286-288; Ismail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 1997), 563-565; Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Ulken Yayıncılık, 2005), 395.

¹² This book was also consisted of his writings in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and *Sebilürreşad* starting from 1910. For further details look at Abdullah Ceyhan, 413-416.

¹³ Kamil Sahin, 286-287.

¹⁴ Ibid, 286-287.

¹⁵ One interesting feature of this nationalistic thesis is its quite phobic and exclusionary narrative towards the Islamic background of Turkish people and Turkey.

religious education like inclusion of optional courses of religion in high school education; establishment of courses for imam and preachers; and foundation of first theology faculty (after the abolition of theology faculties) in Ankara University were taken during Günaltay's prime ministry. In 1954 elections, he was not elected deputy but prior to his death in 1961 he was selected senator of Istanbul from RPP¹⁶.

Günaltay's intellectual production concerning Islam, social problems and modernity intensified in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire, mainly in the 1910s and the early years of the Republican era (1923-1925). These years of his career reflects a more enthusiastic and idealist intellectual profile. As a prolific writer in this period of his life, similar to various Islamic modernists, he endeavored to devise a project of Islamic revision and reform compatible with modern institutions and scientific developments. The imprint of Ziya Gokalp's views can be also felt in his writings in terms of a turn towards a social solidarist and nationalist understanding with an apparent esteem in Durkheimian sociology¹⁷.

However his academic and political career and the new emerging political context of the Republic seem to pull him back from his reformist intellectual idealism. A radical change in the methodology and content of his writings after the establishment of Republic can be noticed, similar to the change or silence in intellectual production of a number of ex-ulema (Islamic scholars) and Islamist intellectuals. In other words, in the intellectual level, he appropriated a more academic and apolitical style of writing and diverted his attention to studies on Islamic and pre-Islamic Turkic history with a conspicuously nationalistic tone. The issues dealing with reforming and modifying the prevalent forms of Islam in the society found less voice in his writings in this later period. This was probably due to the seemingly contrary nature of Islamist idealism to the secular and to some extent anti-Islamist policies of the Republican regime. However, politically he eagerly participated in the revolutionary projects of the Republic. In this regard Mardin calls him as a former cleric who went over to the

¹⁶ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Turkiye'de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi*, 395.

¹⁷ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 144.

Republican forces¹⁸. This case, I think, depicts his ideological ability and flexibility to conform to the practices and philosophy of the Republic.

As a founding member of *Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish History Institution)* in 1931, and later as its chairman, his active participation in the process of the development of the *Türk tarih tezi*, in the writing of official history textbooks or his participation in Islamic reform project of the Republic in 1928 is a good example of this adaptability¹⁹. This is in my opinion indeed related to the accommodating nature of his intellectual stance which enables him to adjust to the changes in the political context. Hence I think he can easily come to terms with the ideals of the Republican elite. On the one hand, probably he had already shared some basic underlying premises, like positivism, scientism, and rationalism, of the Republican ideology that their native versions had been sculpted in the context of the late Ottoman intellectual life. On the other hand, his exclusionary interpretation of the popular Islamic beliefs and Sufi orders may be comparatively interpreted with the understanding of Islam in the Republican ideology. In this study I will mainly focus on Ottoman period of his intellectual life and its affiliations with the Republican ideology in regard to Islam. This is mostly due to the convenience to observe the Islamist reformist tone more saliently during the Second Constitutional Period that constituted the backbone of his ideology extending to the Republican period. Furthermore, his ideas of the Ottoman period might open a path to the examination of the general ideological trends and intellectual currents of the Second Constitutional Period that carved the discursive content of the Republican ideology.

Şemseddin Günaltay has been generally perceived as an important intellectual and political figure of late Ottoman and Turkish history. This perception is one of the reasons for the substantial academic works written on Şemseddin Günaltay's thought. His active participation in politics and official history-writing projects during the Republican period as a generally agreed upon Islamist intellectual of the Ottoman Empire makes him perceived not only as a crucial figure but also a puzzling intellectual

¹⁸ Serif Mardin, *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 234.

¹⁹ Kamil Sahin, 286-288. Ismail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2*, 563-565. Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, 395.

persona of the late Ottoman and early Republican era. Şemseddin Günaltay is one of the few late Ottoman Islamic modernists that a considerable number of Master's theses²⁰, articles²¹ and even a book²² were written on.

From the earlier works that touched upon Günaltay's ideas his intellectual, political and religious identity became a matter of discussion. There occurred some doubts and discussions about his ambivalent and changing intellectual position. Peyami Safa is one of the earliest that displays this ambivalence:

“Sharia-minded, anti-secularist M. Şemseddin Bey who was an alim (religious scholar) and the writer of various religious books and articles was completely different from revolutionist and secular(ist) Şemseddin Günaltay who was a former Republican People's Party (RPP) prime minister, and an

²⁰ Unfortunately most of these MA theses are unreachable due to lack of sharing of these works and hindrance of copyright issues in Turkey's *Council of Higher Education's National Digital Thesis/Dissertation Archives*. Nevertheless, I could achieve to obtain some of these works through personal contacts with the authors of these theses. The theses that I could reach are the following: Huseyin Subhi Erdem, *M. Şemseddin Günaltay'da Turk Toplumunun Problemleri ve Felsefe*, (MA thesis: 1995, Ataturk University). Ali Caglar Deniz, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'in Dini ve Toplumsal Gorusleri* (MA thesis: 2006, Gazi University). Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay ve Fikriyatı* (MA thesis: 1994, Ankara University).

The other theses written on or related to Şemseddin Günaltay are: Sevdıye Yıldız, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'in Tarih-i Edyan Isimli Eserinin Sadelestirilmesi ve Degerlendirilmesi* (MA thesis: 1998, Cumhuriyet University). Unsal Bozkurt, *Osmanli Devleti'nin Son Donemlerinde Yapilan Dinler Tarihi Calismalari Uzerine Bir Arastirma* (MA thesis: 2003, Ankara University). Ilhami Ayranci, *Bir Tarihci Olarak Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay (Hayati, Eserleri ve Islam Tarihi ile Ilgili Eserlerinin Tahlili)* (MA thesis: 2007, Ankara University). Mustafa Sakaci, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'in Felsefik Kisiligi* (MA thesis: 1996, Selcuk University). Huseyin Subhi Erdem, *M. Şemseddin Günaltay'da Turk Toplumunun Problemleri ve Felsefe*, (MA thesis: 1995, Ataturk University). Necmi Uyanik, *Modernist Islamci Bir Aydinin Geleneksel Egitim Kurumlarına Bakisi: Medreseler, Tekkeler ve Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay* (MA thesis: 1996, Selcuk University).

²¹ One noteworthy article is written by Fahrettin Altun. Hilmi Ziya Ulken also reserved a section for Şemseddin Günaltay's views in his book *Turkiye'de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi*. See Fahrettin Altun, “M. Şemseddin Günaltay” in Yasin Aktay (ed), *Modern Turkiye'de Siyasi Dusunce, Cilt 6: Islamcilik*, Iletisim, Istanbul, 2001, 160.

²² Bayram Ali Cetinkaya's MA thesis was also published as a book. I used this book in order to gain information about Bayram Ali Cetinkaya's views. Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, *Turk Modernlesmesi Surecinde Şemseddin Günaltay*, (Ankara: Arastirma Yayinlari, 2003).

opponent of religious education. These two personalities had been living together in the same body for years without any conflict.”²³

Tarik Zafer Tunaya in his seminal work *İslamcılık Cereyani* (Islamism Current) describes Şemseddin Günaltay as a “modernist” and “Westernist” Islamist²⁴. This modernist, rationalist aspect of Şemseddin Günaltay’s thought has been appreciated by Tunaya because of his relative moderateness of adaptability to modern change and efforts to reconcile Islam with the modern compared to other more conservative Islamists²⁵. One distinguishing aspect of Günaltay’s modernism in Tunaya’s writings is his criticism of the Sufi orders and superstitions presented as the indicator of his reconciling attitude²⁶. A similar labeling can be identified in Hilmi Ziya Ulken’s writings. In his view, what makes Şemseddin Günaltay important and unique among Islamists is his effort to reconcile Islamism, Westernism and Turkism similar to Ziya Gokalp²⁷. In this respect, both Ulken and Tunaya likened Günaltay to “Westernists” like *Celal Nuri* or *Abdullah Cevdet* in his utter belief in modern values like rationalism and science, and modernization and progress²⁸. It is remarkable that Şemseddin Günaltay had been seen in an appreciative manner as the most progressivist and open-minded exemplar of the Islamic modernism in this narrative. Moreover, his intellectual profile was addressed as a mixture of various ideological trends and civilizational traits like Islam and the Western cultures.

The MA theses that I could reach also had a similar appreciative approach to Şemseddin Günaltay. These MA theses generally dealt with two issues in Şemseddin Günaltay’s writings. One group of works focused on the scholarly writings of

²³ İslam Ansiklopedisi, 286.

²⁴ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyani: İkinci Mesrutiyetin Siyasi Hayati Boyunca Gelismesi ve Bugüne Biraktığı Meseleler* (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1962), p. 75-76.

²⁵ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyani*, 75-76.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁷ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, 398.

²⁸ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyani*, 75, 76. Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, 398.

Şemseddin Günaltay, mainly on his historical²⁹ and semi-philosophical works³⁰. The other group of writings dealt with his Islamic reformist and political writings³¹. Bayram Ali Cetinkaya and Ali Caglar Deniz's works are two examples of the second approach that I could have access³². These works analyze his writings without much thematic differentiation and analytical insight. So to speak, these are works devoted to the study of Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas as a whole without any theoretical or analytical concern for any specific issue or matter, and they each present descriptive accounts of his views concerning almost all issues he dealt with. These works also lack any efforts to locate Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas in any wider framework or within historical context. Nor do they involve into discussing the specificity or typicality of Günaltay's ideas in the late Ottoman and Republican context. Thus in my opinion these two works do not go beyond simple eulogies for Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas and intellectual, political personality. The main reason behind this apparent celebration of Şemseddin Günaltay is I think the assumption of Şemseddin Günaltay as an embodiment of "enlightened", learned and open-minded (open to change) Muslim intellectual conforming to the Turkish Republican official ideology's commitment to science, reason and secularism proposing religion as a privatized matter. In other words, instead of being a so-called "reactionary" Islamist who is at odds with the Republican policies, he has been introduced as a "moderate", integrative and patriotic Muslim intellectual whose

²⁹ The ones dealing with Günaltay as a historian are: Sevdije Yıldız, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'ın Tarih-i Edyan Isimli Eserinin Sadeleştirilmesi ve Değerlendirilmesi*. Unsal Bozkurt, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Donemlerinde Yapılan Dinler Tarihi Çalışmaları Üzerine Bir Araştırma*. İlhami Ayrancı, *Bir Tarihçi Olarak Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay (Hayatı, Eserleri ve İslam Tarihi ile İlgili Eserlerinin Tahlili)*.

³⁰ The works focused on Günaltay's philosophical works are: Mustafa Sakacı, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'ın Felsefik Kisiligi*. Hüseyin Subhi Erdem, *M. Şemseddin Günaltay'da Türk Toplumunun Problemleri ve Felsefe*.

³¹ Some of these theses are by Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, Ali Caglar Deniz and Necmi Uyanık. Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay ve Fikriyatı*. Ali Caglar Deniz, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'ın Dini ve Toplumsal Görüşleri*. Necmi Uyanık, *Modernist İslamcı Bir Aydınların Geleneksel Eğitim Kurumlarına Bakışı: Medreseler, Tekkeler ve Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay*.

³² Ali Caglar Deniz, *Mehmed Şemseddin Günaltay'ın Dini ve Toplumsal Görüşleri*. Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, *Türk Modernleşmesi Sürecinde Şemseddin Günaltay*.

“modern” ideas might be even applicable to current day circumstances³³. For example, Bayram Ali Cetinkaya proposed Gnaltay’s ideas on Sufi orders as a call for activism and reconciliation with the modern day circumstances for the contemporary Turkish Sufi orders and religious groups³⁴. Therefore he has been presented as a role model for the contemporary Turkish Islamist groups³⁵.

On the other hand, a recent article by Fahrettin Altun brings up a more analytically configured examination of Œemseddin Gnaltay’s ideas. One peculiar aspect of his analysis is I think its critical reconsideration similar to Peyami Safa of Œemseddin Gnaltay’s intellectual makeup as an Islamist³⁶. He especially underlines the changing lanes of Œemseddin Gnaltay’s intellectual stance during the Republican period but criticizes the views that conceive this change as a break in his intellectual route³⁷. To Altun, Œemseddin Gnaltay talked through the pre-eminent ideology of his time both in the Second Constitutional Era and during the Republican years³⁸. He first complied with Islamism as the dominant ideological trend during the Second Constitutional Era and used Islamist arguments as a legitimate way for raising the ideas of saving the nation while getting affiliated with CUP as the central political power³⁹. He later conformed to the Republican official ideology with an overtly Turkist tone⁴⁰. This analysis is important to underscore the accommodating and partially fickle nature of Œemseddin Gnaltay’s ideas and intellectual profile but I think it is mistaken to deem this adaptability idiosyncratic to Œemseddin Gnaltay. It is not unusual to see similar kaleidoscopic and eclectic intellectual features in the Islamic modernism of the Second

³³ Ali Caglar Deniz, 173-174.

³⁴ Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, 64.

³⁵ Ibid, 64.

³⁶ Fahrettin Altun, “M. Semseddin Gnaltay” in Yasin Aktay (ed), *Modern Turkiye’de Siyasi Dusunce, Cilt 6: Islamcilik*, Iletisim, Istanbul, 2001, 160.

³⁷ Ibid, 160, 172.

³⁸ Ibid, 172.

³⁹ Ibid, 172.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 172.

Constitutional Period. Some modernist Islamists like *Ahmet Hamdi Akseki*, *Seyyid Bey* or *Serafettin Yaltkaya* followed similar intellectual and career paths from the Second Constitutional Period to Republic. Especially the efforts to reconcile the Islamic and the modern were inherent in the narratives of some prominent modernist Islamist intellectuals of the period like *Mehmet Akif*. In this regard, it would not be mistaken to conceive Şemseddin Günaltay as an important intellectual figure that Islamic modernist trend and the syncretism of modernist, rationalist and Islamist ideas and discourses can be saliently observed.

After this introduction about Şemseddin Günaltay's life and intellectual profile, and the brief review on the academic works dealt with his ideas I would like to give the basic organization of this study. This study consists of four chapters. First chapter aims to draw a historical background of the intellectual developments of the 19th and early 20th century Ottoman Empire in its central provinces. The main objective of this chapter is to introduce the basic outlook of the *Weltanschauung* of a new intellectual generation that came out towards the end of the 20th century. This section pays special attention on intellectual interactions with the western culture and education during Tanzimat and Hamidian period. Second chapter deals with the change in the meaning and function of Islam during Tanzimat (1839-1876) and especially Abdulhamid (1876-1909) periods. The main aim of this section is to explain the formation of a "newer" conception of Islam related to the structural changes in the religious establishment, and Islam's new functionality utilized by the Ottoman administration and intellectuals. The third chapter introduces a general outline of the Second Constitutional Period Islamism and the influences of Salafi thought on Ottoman Islamist thought and Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas. This chapter also deals with the anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses in the Second Constitutional Period with a brief background knowledge about the roots of these discourses. Fourth chapter presents Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas on Muslim decline, superstitions, Sufism, ignorance and laziness as well as his methods to differentiate superstitions and corruptions in Islam. The second part of the chapter is more theoretically oriented and looks for the theoretical outcomes of anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses of Günaltay's thought for describing his "true Islam". Then, the chapter tries to address what the basic features of his concept of true Islam have been and what the outcomes of this conception might have been.

CHAPTER I

THE NEW OTTOMAN INTELLECTUAL *WELTANSCHAUUNG* IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

To make a rough grasp of the basic intellectual setting underpinning Günaltay and his generation we need to locate it within its historical context. On the eve of the 20th century, there was a new generation of Ottoman intellectuals with a new mindset. Şemseddin Günaltay can be counted among them. There occurred, of course, wide differences and fault lines between their standpoints and ideological inclinations; however, there were some common convictions and underlying discursive similarities, which were unlike their counterparts in the 18th century Ottoman intellectual life. This was surely indebted to the 19th century Ottoman transformations in institutional and intellectual levels. At this juncture we should admit the contribution of the institutional reforms and cultural and intellectual changes in the Tanzimat and post-Tanzimat periods. Especially Hamidian educational reforms were formative in the genesis of this generation of intellectuals. Then, a brief account of the intellectual and cultural transformations during the Tanzimat and Hamidian period and their basic outcomes with specific attention to education might be useful before analyzing the ideas of Günaltay.

In order to make sense of the very context that provided the main dispositions of Günaltay's mindset, the historical developments through which these dispositions were formulated should be presented. Therefore, in the following chapter, first I will try to analyze the impacts of modernization in Tanzimat period (1839-1876) and

Westernization in institutional and educational fields and intellectual life in this context. Second, I will attempt to display a general outlook of the regime of Abdulhamid II and the impacts of modernization, especially through education, on the formation of a new intelligentsia. I will specifically focus on the secularizing impacts of education and intellectual production in the period that prepared the bedrock for the intellectual culture of the 2nd Constitutional Period.

I.1. The Intellectual Changes in the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876)

19th century Ottoman transformations have been described as modernization, Westernization or secularization. I think these all labels are valid to explain certain processes since they described different aspects of the change. Nonetheless, a general methodological approach in the literature is the equation of the 19th century Ottoman modernization with Ottoman Westernization or secularization. Here I think of the 19th century Ottoman social odyssey as an outcome of the interplay between different transformative forces. Hence, I will try in this chapter to distinguish the secularizing and Westernizing drives and their interactive resonances with the Islamic and traditional forces. In order to bring the background of my subject matter to the front I will focus on major intellectual trends and occurrences among the elite or intellectual circles in the mentioned period while trying to find some interrelations with the adoption of Western ideas and their modifications within the Ottoman context.

Ottoman modernization and reform can be traced back to early 18th century, although there can be found some booklets or writings that go back as early as the second half of the 16th century that indicated the decay in the empire and offered some remedies⁴¹. The reform efforts, which mainly focused in the 18th century on military renewal with more practical concerns to arrest the decline and save the empire, had

⁴¹ Some Ottoman “intellectuals” of the previous centuries like *Taskopruluzade, Kinalizade, Mustafa Ali or Katip Celebi* had written about the decline and the possible remedies for the decay in their pamphlets. For a detailed account of these writings see Osman Ozkul, *Gelenek ve Modernite Arasinda Osmanlı Ulemasi* (Istanbul: Birharf Yayinlari, 2005).

already turned into a more comprehensive modernization programme that expanded to administrative and educational areas in Mahmud II's era. The practically-oriented nature of the reforms was retained; nevertheless a relatively more conscious and systematized project was being put into practice while the imprint of European systems and ideas were finding a stronghold among the Ottoman elite. Therefore, Europe with its militaristic, administrative and civilizational superiority came to be a central problematic and thus object of inquiry for the Ottoman administration of the early 19th century⁴².

In 1830s permanent embassies were re-established in major European capitals and resident missions were formed in various other centers of Europe⁴³. Also a group of students were sent to take education in fiscal and legal professions⁴⁴. On the other hand, the number of translations of European medical/physical and mathematical books on the recent knowledge of sciences were growing⁴⁵. The ministry of foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nezareti*) and the chamber of translation (*tercume odasi*) – started functioning in 1821 but formally founded in 1833- within the ministry became important mediums for the penetration of Western ideas⁴⁶. The diplomats sent to Europe, like *Mustafa Sami* or *Sadik Rifat Pasha*, were looking in their writings for the causes of European progress and coming out with a crucial answer which was turning into a predominant “watchword” in the Ottoman intellectual and administrative life: “science” was the basis of the European “progress” and “civilization”⁴⁷. The department of foreign affairs and the chamber of translation were also seminal for the upbringing of a new clique of reform-minded bureaucrats that would undertake the

⁴² Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 83-88.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 83.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 87.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 88.

⁴⁷ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, 2006) 201-202. According to Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma* Sadik Rifat Pasha was the first to enunciate the notion of “civilization” and to underline as an ideal to catch up with.

major government offices during the Tanzimat period⁴⁸. Moreover important members of the Ottoman intelligentsia that would take to the Ottoman public stage in the late Tanzimat period were also being cultivated in these offices⁴⁹.

Education during this early modernization period was appreciated by the elite as an important medium for the acquisition and transmission of necessary knowledge and sciences of the times. Necessarily, educational reform inaugurated during Mahmud II's rule had been the harbinger of the Tanzimat's project of public education. *Mekteb-i Tibbiye* (Medical school), established in 1827, became an important medium for the blossoming of secular and materialist ideas, even before the Tanzimat period⁵⁰. An English visitor to Mekteb-i Tibbiye in 1847 was amazed by the huge collection of materialist books in the library of the school as well as the interest of the students in materialist and scientist ideas⁵¹. Abu-Manneh mentions the appearance of a group of people in Istanbul as early as 1820s, came together to discuss about the recent developments in science and Western philosophy and liberal ideological developments⁵². In 1830s, the respect for the Western sciences and civilization as well as the idea of accommodating with the 'demands of the time' was likely to be an important trend within the Ottoman ruling and intellectual circles⁵³. This trend gained incredible momentum with the Tanzimat reformism.

⁴⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 81-88. These bureaucrats in *Bab-i Ali* (The Sublime Porte) would gradually increase their influence in the government, and came to be major locus of power during most of the second and third quarters of the 19th century Ottoman political life.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 88.

⁵⁰ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, 199. It was also a crucial locus for the cultivation of the intellectuals and reformers of the empire, like *Sinasi*, *Ziya Pasha* or *Fuad Pasha*.

⁵¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, 232.

⁵² Butrus Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century* (1826-1876), (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2001), p. 52.

⁵³ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, 235-239. Sukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, (New York: Oxford University Press: 1995), p. 12-13.

A phase of ardent reform followed the proclamation of the *Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (*Tanzimat* Edict) in 1839. Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) had been an interval that the impetus of reforms in administrative, judicial and educational fields accelerated. Adjusting to the “demands/necessities of the time” to ensure the empire’s survival was likely to be the central tenet of Tanzimat orientation. Ideals of “science”, “civilization”, “progress”, and “reason” were pillars of the practical ethos of Tanzimat⁵⁴. I think the gradual promotion of these ideals in the Tanzimat context neither involve a sheer Westernization-cum-secularization process nor imply an overtly hostile attitude towards Islam or the religious establishment. They were incorporated into the indigenous Ottoman understanding and evolved through the Ottoman experience of change in the 19th century. In other words, they on the one hand had a transformative impact on the Ottoman thought and culture; on the other hand, they were given new meanings and niche during the modernization of the empire. The determination to the cause of Westernization as the principal way to erect the Ottoman state led the “men of the Tanzimat”⁵⁵ to execute expeditious adjustments.

In the Tanzimat understanding, education was generally perceived as the primary means to fulfill the civilizational ideals. As a consequence, “the late Tanzimat reformist elite aimed at a radical change in the existing educational structure, eliminating the cultural compartments imposed by traditional religious divisions and

⁵⁴Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Kalemiye'den Mulkiye'ye Tanzimat Zihniyeti”, in Mehmet O. Alkan (ed), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 1: Tanzimat ve Mesrutiyet'in Birikimi*, İletisim, İstanbul, 2001, p. 54-71. Some of these crystallizing ideals can be already observed in the premises of the Tanzimat Edict.

⁵⁵ These were well versed diplomats in politics and state affairs and had got acquainted with European politics and thought. Famous (or infamous) *Ali* and *Fuad* pashas, kept the government under control, during most of the “late Tanzimat” period (1856-1876), which was pictured as a forceful Westernizing and secularizing period. Ali and Fuad pashas can be better described as pragmatic bureaucrats determined to help the survival of the empire; and from their viewpoint, a top-down modeling of Western civilization within the Ottoman system seemed as the most effective means to achieve this urging necessity; even at the expense of autocratic rule. For further details for their practical and pragmatic thinking, look at Serif Mardin, *Genesis of the Young Ottoman Thought, A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

secularizing government schools”⁵⁶. The Ministry of Public Instruction technically brought the education under the supervision of the state and the financing of the primary schools previously funded by the religious establishment was replaced by a state-led fiscal system⁵⁷. Yet, the religious primary schools went on to enjoy relative independence for some more time. Nevertheless, secular and extra-Quranic contents of the schools were augmented. Another important educational development of the Tanzimat was the establishment of middle level school (*rusdiyye*), although they would not have been systematized and spread sufficiently⁵⁸.

However, the most crucial advancement propounded in the educational system by the Tanzimat was the constitution of “Regulation of Public Education” in 1869. By this regulation, the state took over the control of the instruction in Muslim schools except medreses and united them under one comprehensive law. Moreover, schoolbooks were launched in the instruction of modern sciences and the influence of the ulema over Muslim education was restricted to a considerable degree. Above all, different from previous regulations, the transmission of worldly knowledge had been emphasized as the main aim of education. The natural sciences and education were proposed as the main agents for being a part of the “community of civilization” that was the only way to progress⁵⁹.

This regulation is quite crucial not only because it reflected the worldview of the late Tanzimat elite but also as it suggests a general profile of educated Ottoman subjects’ upbringing. The reforms implemented following the regulation can also be interpreted as the bedrock of the Hamidian educational formation and pedagogies. Parallel to this regulation, *Galatasaray Lycee* inspired by the program of French lycee system was established in 1868. Galatasaray became a bastion of the dissemination of

⁵⁶ S. Aksin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden ; Boston : Brill, c2001), 169.

⁵⁷ In 1847 the state took hold of primary education by replacing the old system of neighborhood schools financed by charitable grants or private support by a system of state financed primary schools. For further details see Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 108.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 108.

⁵⁹ Aksin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 86-87.

Western ideas and the formation of intellectuals in the following years⁶⁰. Also an attempt to institute a university in 1869 was failed due to the reaction of the ulema⁶¹. However, in contrast to these educational reforms, almost no measures were taken to reform the *medreses* (Islamic schools) in the period –even some of the demands were dismissed⁶².

Especially educational reforms and contacts with the West provided an intellectual ‘acculturation’. This surely created a change of mind and admiration for the Western civilization among the high officials and intellectuals who were the first ones that got into contact with the Western ideas and values. Yet these influences gradually bore some discursive dispositions articulated through certain ‘catchphrases’ as I previously indicated, like *fen* (natural science) or *medeniyet* (civilization) which lost their original meanings in time. These discourses also started to spread out and acquired some attention among wider circles. For instance, in the opening speech of the *High Council*, in 1845, Sultan Abdulmecid emphasized the importance of natural sciences and necessity to eradicate ignorance⁶³. Here, the negative rhetoric on ‘ignorance’ –basically in modern sciences- which was despised as an impediment to material progress, was being incorporated into the discourse of science and education. *Safvet Pasha*, the minister of education, in the opening ceremony of the foundation of the university in 1869, also emphasized the prospects presented by natural sciences and reason in order to progress and fulfill the demands of the time⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye’de Cagdaslasma*, 238-239. It also functioned almost like a university after the addition of some faculties into its body in 1874-75. In this process, other high schools were built in various parts of the empire.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 238.

⁶² Amit Bein, *The Ulema, Their Institutions and Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876-1924)*, (PHD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 11. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 110.

⁶³ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye’de Cagdaslasma*, 236.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 237.

At the beginning of 1860s, a scientific academy/association, *Cemiyet-i Ilmiye-i Osmaniye* (Ottoman Association of Science), was founded by *Tahir Munif Pasha*⁶⁵. The first journal of science, called *Mecmua-i Funun* (Journal of Sciences) was published by this association in 1862⁶⁶. *Cemiyet-i Ilmiye* also held some public conferences on natural sciences “in order to enlighten people” and according to Berkes, they succeeded to attract a good deal of public attention⁶⁷. There was a substantial growth in popular science writings in the popular journals of 1860s. Darwinism and the theory of evolution also became major subjects of discussion in popular journals⁶⁸. Scientist, (vulgar) materialist -and even social Darwinist- ideas were also flourishing among the elites, like *Tahir Munif Pasha* or *Tahsin Efendi* (the director of the university). According to Sukru Hanioglu, starting from the early 1850s “modern science began to usurp the authority of religious constructs in traditional Ottoman thought” and this eventually led to the endowment of science “with a transcendent meaning” in the form of a religious belief⁶⁹. These would soon turn into a critical discourse on religion since science was perceived as the sounder guide for humanity and expected to replace religion⁷⁰. Now the precursors of the imminent strife between the science and religion were in the scene.

The institutional reforms introduced during the Tanzimat in administrative, legal and educational spheres also created a sort of duality between religious and secular institutions⁷¹. This dual nature of the Ottoman system went on till the last decade of the empire but steadily the expansion of the secular legal, educational and political institutions and establishments worked to the disadvantage of the classical religious institutions and actors. The westernization and the introduction of new

⁶⁵ Ibid, 236.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 236.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 236.

⁶⁸ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 12-13.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 9-16.

⁷¹ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 104. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 117.

institutions together with mentioned duality induced deep social structural changes. According to Bernard Lewis and Serif Mardin, new institutions that were imported and alien to the people's culture brought the tearing of the old order and morality, solidarities and loyalties while increasing the gap between the ruler and the ruled⁷². This duality between the old and the new, religious and the secular, Western and Ottoman, *a la franca* and *a la turca*, was not constrained in an institutional level but in the long run, appeared within society as dual life styles and worldviews.

There was a large group of people in the society disturbed by the Westernizing and secularizing transformations, foremost were the ulema advocating religious and traditional values⁷³. Not only were some members of the ulema and the supposedly "conservative" sections of the society disturbed by the acute social structural effects of the Westernization but also a new emerging intelligentsia was uneasy with situation and they put the Tanzimat policies under severe criticism.

I.1.b. Emergence of a New Intellectual Coterie: Young Ottomans

One of the landmarks of the Tanzimat intellectual life was the appearance of a school-educated freelance coterie of liberal-minded intellectuals, called *Young Ottomans*⁷⁴. Despite the fact that they were a loose group of intellectuals with quite much differentiation in their thought, to Serif Mardin, Young Ottomans were a group of self-cultivated *homme de letters* (men of letters) who were highly idealist and interested in a wide variety of topics⁷⁵. These were generally of bureaucratic origins and many had been brought up in the chamber of translation. They were generally counted to be liberal in politics and conservative in religious issues. Besides the stamp of

⁷² Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 104. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 117.

⁷³ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 104.

⁷⁴ The most prominent of these intellectuals were *Ibrahim Sinasi, Namik Kemal, Ziya Pasha, Ali Suavi, Mustafa Fazil Pasha, Ayetullah Bey and Ebuzziya Teyfik*.

⁷⁵ Serif Mardin, *Genesis of the Young Ottoman Thought, A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 124-125.

Enlightenment thought on their political views inspired by Montesquieu, Voltaire and J. J. Rousseau, the ideas of progress, science and reason can be discerned as a noteworthy component in their proposals, in accordance with the increasing popularity of these ideas. They were with differing stresses defending some political and legal principles of Western Enlightenment: rule of law, freedom of thought, representative government, parliamentarism, Constitution and so on. According to Namik Kemal and Ali Suavi who represented a more Islamic sensitivity in the group, these principles were more than convenient to Islam since similar principles existed in the origins of Islam. What united them was their oppositional stance against the governance of Ali and Fuad pashas –generally due to personal collision- which they criticized of establishing an autocratic and arbitrary rule. They also charged the imitative Westernizing and secularizing reforms of the Tanzimat with superficiality and rootlessness causing alienation in the society and thus destroying the traditional foundations of Ottoman society. To put it differently, some of them, especially Namik Kemal, were uneasy with the unsettling of the traditional social equilibrium incited by the Tanzimat reforms⁷⁶.

One important development of 1860s and 1870s related to Young Ottoman activities was the appearance of quests for ways to erect the state with the increasing amount of newspapers, journals and publications; and this opened a new “civil sphere” for purposes of discussing Islam⁷⁷. In these discussions, it is interesting that the main question implicitly evolved around whether Islam was an obstacle to human progress⁷⁸ and a source of backwardness for the Islamic societies. Young Ottomans therefore tried to impress the public opinion (*efkar-i umumiyye*), looked for popular support and attempted to mobilize common people. First time in the Ottoman history, they expressed their resentment towards the government with new media technologies like newspapers and journals and Western literary tools, such as novels, plays and stories. Their criticism and ideas came to be more influential among some elites and

⁷⁶ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 118.

⁷⁷ Serif Mardin, “Islam in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Turkey”, in *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey* (Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press, 2006), 268.

⁷⁸ The premise of human progress was also taken for granted as an exalted ideal in its dialectic relationship with backwardness, in Ottoman and Republican positivist discourses.

bureaucrats, especially after they returned to Istanbul from exile in Europe following the death of Ali Pasha in 1871. The patriotic (pan-) Islamic views of Namik Kemal especially gained increasing weight due to increasing Islamic sensitivity in the public opinion for the persecution of Muslims in the Balkans and Central Asia. The impact of Young Ottoman parliamentary and Constitutional views on the institution of first Constitution in 1876 cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the thought of Young Ottomans, particularly Namik Kemal's, put its stamp on the views of following intellectual generation although their intellectual orientations and concerns considerably differed. In the eyes of later generation of intellectuals Namik Kemal turned into a symbol of freedom and patriotism⁷⁹.

I.2. Intellectual Developments during the Hamidian Years (1876-1908)

The catastrophic outcomes of the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878) brought the Constitutional rule and relatively democratic atmosphere of the preceding years into an end and resulted in the long authoritarian years of the sultan Abdulhamid II. In contrast to its infamous reputation, the long reign of sultan Abdulhamid carried the modernizing Tanzimat reforms it inherited forward⁸⁰. Hamidian regime carried out a centralistic modernization abiding by the taken-for-granted pre-eminence of science, progress and civilization⁸¹. The reforms performed under Abdulhamid's autocratic rule became constitutive for the developments in the intellectual and political life of the 20th century Ottoman-Turkish context. The intellectual and educational developments in Abdulhamid's era added a new dimension to the emergence of a new generation of intellectuals whom Şemseddin Günaltay became a part.

⁷⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 196-197. Serif Mardin, *Jon Turklerin Siyasi Fikirleri* (1895-1908) (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 1989), 30, 51.

⁸⁰ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey 2*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976-1977), 251.

⁸¹ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and The Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*, (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 19.

Abdulhamid regime is likely to display the characteristics of an absolutist proto-nation-state that aimed to diffuse into the society in every level and looked for its (proto)-citizens' obedience⁸². Advanced communication and transportation facilities enabled the regime to a certain extent to diffuse its official ideology and to tighten its grip over the population. Abdulhamid era was also distinguished by an application of drastic censorship on any sort of publication concerning politics or criticism against the regime⁸³. The centralistic control of the regime stressed the reconciliation of the modernization with Islam and sought to accomplish material and civilizational progress⁸⁴. Education was the central pillar according to the regime to accomplish this goal⁸⁵.

Education was hence kept to be deemed during the Hamidian era as the important recipient and propagator of modern science and thus the means to material-civilizational progress and modernization⁸⁶. Education was also instrumental to bring up obedient citizens⁸⁷ and necessary professional cadres for the empire⁸⁸. One of the most important successes of the Hamidian regime, as a result of the prolific efforts of grand vizier *Kucuk Said Pasha* in 1880s, was the spread of public education in primary and secondary school levels and the increasing number of professional and higher level schools⁸⁹. Opening of *Mulkiye* (Imperial Civil Service School), the advancement of medical and military schools and establishment of the university, *Darülfünun* (1900) were the main successes of the educational reform of the regime. Ironically medical and

⁸² Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 11, 18.

⁸³ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 251.

⁸⁴ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 19-20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 93.

⁸⁶ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 180-181.

⁸⁷ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 93.

⁸⁸ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 180.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 181.

military schools and *Mulkiye* ended up being the loci of the opposition against the sultan in 1890s⁹⁰.

The educational understanding of Abdulhamid schools with their curricula and pedagogies were one of the main factors behind the emergence of a new intellectual generation with relatively more peculiar state of mind. The curricular content of the school system introduced during the era made stress on religious and patriotic values promoting the loyalty toward the sultan and the state. Nevertheless, this did not produce “an anti-positivistic traditionalism” and “utilization of Islam remained mainly within the realm of political utility and formality” as Aksin Somel mentioned⁹¹. The positivistic and non-Islamic line of Tanzimat education was followed in the curricular content with “increasing emphasis on the moral aspects of Islamic learning”⁹². Proper to the official discourse on the compatibility of Islam and modern sciences, “rational and political learning acquired through modern education was [deemed] essential for the continuing strength of Islam”⁹³. In sum, the stress in Hamidian education was on material progress, loyalty and Islamic morality. Nevertheless, an opposition to Abdulhamid’s authoritarian rule germinated at the end of 1880s among the student body of these schools⁹⁴. One should admit the influence of the circulation of unauthorized books and articles by Young Ottomans, European liberals, materialists and positivists and even some Young Turks in the emergence of anti-regime and revolutionary ideas as well as modernist and Westernist ones⁹⁵. These tendencies were also associated with a deep grievance towards “everything which was Oriental, ranging with it associations of corruption and backwardness”⁹⁶.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 181.

⁹¹ Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 167.

⁹² Benjamin Fortna, “Islamic Morality in Late Ottoman Secular Schools”. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32:3 (2000), 369.

⁹³ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 97.

⁹⁴ Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 267-268.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 267-268. Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 251-252.

⁹⁶ Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 270.

On the other hand, the pedagogical methods instilled into the educational system added new dimensions to Tanzimat educational positivist pedagogies and became constitutive for the intellectual make-up of the emerging generation. Pedagogical measures, namely introduction of the strict functional organization of time and space for classes and out-of-class activities like activities of prayer, instruction, the rehearsing of lessons, nourishment and sleeping, hierarchically organized class promotion system, structurally regulated and centrally controlled instruction through textbooks, and the attention paid to proper attire, posture, manners and cleanliness provided a temporal-spatial and bodily self-discipline which was also conflated with morality⁹⁷. Students were also endowed with a sense of a linear progressive temporality and idea of order and authority, i.e. expressed in their respect for the elders⁹⁸. The educational pedagogy of the Hamidian schools was therefore seminal for the cultivation of “disciplined” Ottoman subjects imbued with a distinguishably new *Weltanschauung*. This intellectual generation had in their minds “temporally” regulated notions of progress and order epitomized in the functioning of the cosmos, society and the body.

Despite the oppressive policies of the regime, there was a decent growth in writing culture, especially in 1880s, with the publication of books, pamphlets, translations, newspapers and journals⁹⁹. The enhanced literacy and book-centrism in learning introduced by the Tanzimat education concerted with the intellectual atmosphere of the early Hamidian period. However, due to the aversion and suppression of the regime of political subjects, the content of the publications during the period revolved around two relatively less dangerous issues: 1) religion, 2) science and literature¹⁰⁰.

Abdulhamid regime looking on Islam as a unifying and legitimizing medium encouraged religious publications, and translations of Islamic classics from Arabic and

⁹⁷ Ibid, 202, 267-277.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 269.

⁹⁹ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 252.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 252.

Persian¹⁰¹ as well as some on the ancient Turkish and Ottoman history. However, the state strictly longed to supervise the process of publication¹⁰² and used these translations in order to make its Islamic official ideology available to a wide range of readers. This initiative allowed the dissemination of these works “in a fashion that had not been attempted before in Islamic history”¹⁰³.

On the other hand, the established authority of the ideals of science and civilization within the elite circles justified in the eyes of the regime the publication of works on popular science, literature and/or knowledge of Western civilization. The pressure on intellectuals by the regime brought about a type of apolitical public intellectual occupied with encyclopedic production and/or with the self-ordained task of educating the nation by disseminating practical knowledge in science and civilization¹⁰⁴. *Ahmet Midhat Efendi*, *Şemseddin Sami* and *Muallim Naci* were examples of this type of encyclopedist, educationist intellectual¹⁰⁵. Especially Ahmet Midhat’s undeniable influence over a wide array of urban population through novels with an instructive narrative style should be emphasized. Novels, stories, newspaper articles and popular science journals became the main mediums that disseminated knowledge in sciences and of Western civilization in the society. This was accompanied by the use of a simplified language aimed at the population. These were important developments intensified the imprint of book culture and growing readership on the population. The trend of increasing readership and book culture have been also indicative of the changing terrains of knowledge transmission and hence the creation of a shared public space by differing strata of the society. Ahmet Midhat Efendi and Muallim Naci on the other hand looked for a middle way for the reconciliation of Islam and Western civilization while carrying the Islamic message and defending Islam

¹⁰¹ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Turkiye’de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi*, 136.

¹⁰² Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 54, 97. Some esteemed intellectuals, like *Muallim Naci* (1850-1893) or scholars/sheikhs were let or even ordered with these translations.

¹⁰³ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 132.

¹⁰⁴ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 252-253.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 252, 253.

against the Orientalists' and materialists' discourses of Islam. This also gave birth to an anti-materialist struggle in Ahmet Midhat's ideas¹⁰⁶.

I.2.b. The Positivist and Materialist Views of Young Turks

The modernist and materialist trends among intellectuals of the period were more than common. Regime's sympathy for ideas of science and material progress provided tolerance for popular scientific and materialist publications. This was paralleled by the spread of 19th century European vulgar materialist, scientist, social Darwinist and positivist ideas¹⁰⁷ among the intellectuals and students of new secular schools, especially in the medical school and the *Mulkiye*¹⁰⁸. The esteem flourishing since the beginning of the 19th century for modern science, rationality, progress and the West reached its heyday towards the end of the century¹⁰⁹. Corresponding to positivism and materialism, deistic and atheistic inclinations among the intellectuals (i.e. *Besir Fuad, Tevfik Fikret, Ahmet Rıza*)¹¹⁰ were unexceptional. Sukru Hanioglu discussed in his influential book, *Young Turks in Opposition* that science had such a 'consummatory value' that a considerable number of the late 19th century intellectuals strongly believed that every aspect of life should be regulated according to science¹¹¹. In this parallel even views on society and politics were derived from vulgar materialistic and popular

¹⁰⁶ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 131-132. Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 252.

¹⁰⁷ There was an increase in the publication of the materialist, positivist and (social) Darwinist writers like *Buchner, Taine, Comte, Spencer, Darwin, Draper, Le Play, Zola* or *Flaubert*.

¹⁰⁸ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 12. Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 181-182.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 12-21.

¹¹⁰ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, 355.

¹¹¹ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 21.

scientific explanations. For instance, the longed-for “progress” had strong materialistic and Darwinist connotations¹¹².

On the other hand, the conflict between science and religion was in progress. The strong commitment to reason and scientific explanations of the nature and life severely impaired the preceding authority of the religious exegesis of the cosmos and the human life within intellectual circles. The idea that history was made by the ongoing conflict between science and religion proposed in Draper’s book *Conflict between Science and Religion* found widespread adherence among the intellectuals of the time and constituted an axis of discussions¹¹³.

The materialist, positivist and modernist ideological tendencies reflected a large variety of internal divisions. Many of these intellectuals were hostile to the regime and there were numerous camps of these oppositional groups as well¹¹⁴. Yet, one group widely known as *Young Turks (Jon Turkler)*¹¹⁵, into which diverse views incorporated, came to the foreground during 1890s and dominated the intellectual life and oppositional movement against the regime after 1902. It is very difficult to cast a well-defined ideological identity to Young Turks. Young Turk movement was more of a loosely organized group for which the opposition to the autocratic rule of Hamidian regime was the main binding element for years¹¹⁶. “Government’s severe measures against those lacking affiliation with a political organization but propagating liberal ideas helped the Young Turk to convert many members of a generation educated at western-type institutions in the empire”¹¹⁷. Already Young Turks stated that their

¹¹² Ibid, 12.

¹¹³ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Turkiye’de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi*, 115. What is ironic is that the book was first translated to Turkish by anti-materialist Ahmet Midhat Efendi and he also wrote a refutation after the translation.

¹¹⁴ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 255.

¹¹⁵ Jon Turk organization was initiated by a few Royal Medical Academy students in 1889: Abdullah Cevdet, Ibrahim Temo, Ishak Sukuti, Mehmet Resit. In the following years, Ahmet Riza, Abdullah Cevdet, (Mizanci) Murat and Prens Sabahattin were some of the major figures of the movement.

¹¹⁶ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 255. Serif Mardin, *Jon Turkler*, 56.

¹¹⁷ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 17.

ideology galvanized all pro-modernists, regardless of political affiliation¹¹⁸. The group later organized itself into an activist organization called *Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress). Many of the influential political and intellectual figures of the post-1908 and republican era were of Young Turks origins. “The CUP as an outgrowth of the Young Turk movement, constituted the major ruling power in the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1918 except for a brief interlude”¹¹⁹.

Within CUP positivist and materialist inclinations were widespread but increasingly towards the revolution in 1908, the presence of Turkist and Islamist ideologies became felt within the organization¹²⁰. The name of the organization “union” and “progress” offered by positivist Ahmet Riza was inspired by the key concepts of August Comte’s positivist thought; “order” and “progress”¹²¹. Social solidarity, orderliness and the integrity of the empire had been central concerns for the Young Turk thought despite its internal diversity¹²².

CUP’s political and social activism was encapsulated by its top down modernist reformism and elitism. This elitist reformism was associated with the central preoccupation of saving the nation¹²³ which also included social engineering and population management policies that were deeply imbedded in a scientist and progressivist frame of thought¹²⁴. In other words, society was in some occasions perceived as a malleable whole to be forged, reconstructed and galvanized. CUP continued to be an umbrella organization during the Second Constitutional period for patriotic reformers from politically and socially diverse ideological viewpoints including modernists, Islamists, Turkists and Ottomanists. Ottomanism, Turkism,

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 16.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

¹²⁰ Serif Mardin, *Jon Turkler*, 51, 53.

¹²¹ Ibid, 29, 136. Sukru Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 313.

¹²² Serif Mardin, *Jon Turkler*, 136.

¹²³ Serif Mardin, *Jon Turkler*, 219.

¹²⁴ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 207.

Islamism and modernism as ideological orientations found their place in the CUP policies with differing proportions and forms and as intricate admixtures throughout the Second Constitutional Period.

I.3. Second Constitutional Period

Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was an important watershed in the late Ottoman history and gave way to a crucial period called Second Constitutional Period between 1908 and 1918. The intellectual paradigmatic shift that was in the making during Tanzimat and Hamidian periods was ripened within Second Constitutional Period. Constitutional regime and freedom brought by the Revolution were widely acclaimed by diverse sections of the society and there was an air of optimism in society. The relative intellectual freedom in the Second Constitutional Period witnessed a burgeoning in publications, journalism and formation of associations¹²⁵. This increase in intellectual production was by some scholars interpreted as the birth of a “public sphere” in Western fashion in the central parts of the empire¹²⁶.

Notwithstanding the growth of various ideological and intellectual predispositions, the intellectuals during the Hamidian years were remarkably preoccupied with the autocratic regime and revolutionary politics. Then the intellectual predispositions abundantly diversified and parted into more crystallized ideologies and discourses in the Second Constitutional Period¹²⁷. It is frequently assumed that in the intellectual public of the 2nd Constitutional period, three alternative ideological positions were straightened: *Garbcilik* (Westernism), *Islamism*, and *nationalism*

¹²⁵ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 141.

¹²⁶ Serif Mardin, “Islam in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Turkey”, 267-268. Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşrutiyet: 1876-1914*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 260-269.

¹²⁷ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 142.

(*Turkism*)¹²⁸. The formation of such ideological/intellectual factions cannot be denied; however, on the one hand there were important similarities and overlaps between the ideas and arguments of intellectuals classified under these three groups. On the other hand, the ideas of intellectuals labeled with the same ideological orientation reflected considerable dissent. One might also recognize alternative intellectual trends like materialism, traditionalism, anarchism, socialism, fascism and so on during the period.

The relaxation of intellectual atmosphere in the Second Constitutional Period not only marked parting of the ways for many intellectuals but also signaled the appearance and reformulation of new concerns, discussions and controversies. The catastrophic political and social events followed the enthusiasm and optimism of the Revolution: the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria's declaration of independence in 1908, counterrevolution of *31March* in 1909, the loss of North African territories in 1911, Balkan Wars (1912-1913) resulted in the loss of almost all European territories of the empire and waves of hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees from the Balkans and Caucasus pouring into the remaining Ottoman territories¹²⁹. Therefore the very survival of Muslim community and the Ottoman state was at stake. Saving the nation turned out as a central concern for the intellectuals of the period; in Mardin's expressions became a "hyper-good" as a collective good¹³⁰. The struggle with the Western powers and brutality of European imperialism also put serious doubt on the belief in the Western civilization as the ultimate ideal to be followed. Tunaya argued that the serious disasters and loss of territories created a sort of strengthening and sharpening in Islamist and nationalist tendencies¹³¹.

¹²⁸ *Yusuf (Akcura)* (1876-1935) and *Ziya Gokalp's* (1876-1924), two prominent intellectual of the period, categorization of three major ideologies of the period as *Islamization*, *Westernization* and *Turkification* had important impacts on this sort of a naming. Moreover, the gathering of like-minded intellectuals within some major journals of the era, like *Ictihad*, *Sebiurresad* or *Turk Yurdu*, contributed to the emergence of this image.

¹²⁹ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 295-299.

¹³⁰ Serif Mardin, "Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes", *Turkish Studies* 6-2 (June 2005), 146.

¹³¹ Tunaya, *Islamlilik Cereyani*, 64.

I.4. Analysis: Late Ottoman *Weltanschauung*

The developments of the 19th century Ottoman intellectual and cultural life brought about a new generation of intellectuals, with a new *Weltanschauung*. Even though they might have differentiated in their motivations and ideas and had fervent discussions about politics, morality, and religion it can be claimed that a newly developing worldview constituted the backbone of the arguments of these intellectuals with diverse ideological stances. Trust in the modern science, commitment to rational thinking, saving the nation, and material advancement of the society were some of the commonly held propositions in their ideas.

Content and pedagogies of the new secular educational system of the Tanzimat and especially Hamidian period were therefore seminal for the upbringing of this generation who shared new cognitive codes. A new systematic and standardized educational methodology with strict organization of time and space and disciplinary measures and the impersonal authority of textbooks (as well as encyclopedias, dictionaries, manuals, novels) as a source of learning were replacing the loosely organized and highly personalized form of traditional Quranic education¹³². This brought new cognitive codes: systematic thinking, rationalization and orderliness, coherence and a sense of linear progressive temporality¹³³. Parallel to Gellner's deliberation of the modern, industrial world vision, the world was conceived by many of these intellectuals as a whole with homogenous time and order, subject to systematic and indiscriminate laws¹³⁴. A utopian understanding of constructing the future had precedence, according to Mardin, over the past and present¹³⁵. As a result, a "speculative", "abstracting", "utopian" and "futuristic" cast of thought now separated

¹³² Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 118-121.

¹³³ Aksin Somel, 271-276.

¹³⁴ Gellner, 21.

¹³⁵ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 120.

these educated classes¹³⁶. They therefore had in their minds “temporally” regulated notions of progress and order epitomized in the functioning of the cosmos, society and the body. That is to say, in the eyes of these intellectuals, the “temporal/secular” gained precedence over the other-worldly and transcendental.

The generation of the late 19th and early 20th century therefore came to share a new system of epistemologies, namely a new *Weltanschauung*. This new *Weltanschauung* I think can be better understood in relation to Gellner’s depiction of “universal cognitive currency”¹³⁷ distinguishing the new mode of thinking emerging in the modern post-agrarian societies:

“that all facts are located within a single continuous logical space, that statements reporting them can be conjoined and generally related to each other, so that, in principle, one single language describes the world and is internally unitary; or on the negative side, that there are no special, privileged, insulated facts or realms, protected from contamination or contradiction by others, and living in insulated, independent logical spaces of their own.”¹³⁸.

This mode of thought increasingly diverged from the classical Islamic-Ottoman world vision. So to speak, this new social basis was since the 19th century replacing the “ancient, complex, all encompassing and flexible philosophical and operational structures”¹³⁹ that had an internal mechanism tolerating the coexistence of “multiple levels of reality”¹⁴⁰, since the beginning of the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire. This traditional “order of things” was characterized by its purposive, hierarchical and meaningful social organization which was not quite unified, consisting of sub-worlds

¹³⁶ Ibid, 119-122.

¹³⁷ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 119. Serif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”, 146.

¹³⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 21.

¹³⁹ Ismail Kara, “Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism and Purge in Contemporary Turkish Thought”, in *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman society: sources, doctrine, rituals, Turuq, architecture, literature and fine arts, modernism*, ed. Ahmet Yasar Ocak (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu, 2005), 549.

¹⁴⁰ Serif Mardin, “Islam in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Turkey”, 262.

each with its own idiom and logic, not subsumable under a single overall orderliness¹⁴¹. Namely, this world was tolerating virtually inconsistent epistemologies, rationalities and the existence of specially privileged facts, sacralized and exempt from ordinary treatment¹⁴². Coexistence of differing claims to reality and inner logics in exoteric and esoteric structures of knowledge and ontology in this system, described as “multiplexity” by Senturk, also explains the esteemed existence of Sufism as an equally valid form of life and Weltanschauung¹⁴³.

In this context, the change during the 19th century was towards a singularly enclosed “secular” cognitive framework which is also described by Senturk as a “unilayered” system of epistemologies originated from the Western intellectual traditions¹⁴⁴. This secular framework can be described as a logically coherent web of meanings made up of a kind of unitary rationality, consisting of “multiple” ideological positions interlinked to each other within this unitary logical matrix. Its inhabitants perceived themselves as embedded in the homogenous and linearly evolving time, which was described by Charles Taylor as the “secular time”, the sine qua non of modern secular condition¹⁴⁵. This brought, according to Mardin, the “carving of a new qualitative sphere, i.e., that of the legitimation of knowledge produced in the Western post-Cartesian style”¹⁴⁶. Now the intellectuals of this period with various backgrounds and worldviews were located within a single continuous logical space and speaking of a similar language describing the order of things in the world.

¹⁴¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 22.

¹⁴² Ibid, 21-22.

¹⁴³ Recep Senturk, “Toward an Open Science and Society - Multiplex Relations in Language, Religion and Society -Revisiting Ottoman Culture”, *Islam Arastirmalari Dergisi*, 6, 2001, 100, 117-118. Senturk exemplifies in his article the coexistence and dialogue of fiqh and tasawwuf as an indication of multiplexity while being configured around even incommensurable interpretations of reality, methodologies, and discourses.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 117-118.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism”, in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*, (Delhi; New York : Oxford University Press, 1998), 31-53.

¹⁴⁶ Serif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”, 155.

The evaluation of this paradigmatic shift in the social cognitive codes is essential to understanding the central role of the notions of “order” and “progress” in the thought of the intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th century intellectuals, mainly Young Turks. The new Weltanschauung is also reflective of the social engineering and population management projects of the CUP in order to regularize and bring order to the society. What is also fundamental to this transformation was the change in the operative role of Islam from an all-encompassing and underlying social dynamic to a contending ideology. Islam took its legitimating place within this frame of thought, while serving its vocabulary to the use of various intellectual arguments. This fundamental change might be explanatory to understand the widespread authority of the science and heavy rationalist tones interwoven with Islamic references, in various intellectual discourses of the period.

The reflections of this mentality valuing objective knowledge and systematic coherence can be seen in Günaltay’s reduction of Islam into a concrete, simple, pure and coherent unit that is straightforwardly comprehensible within a unilayered system of rationality and thus makes it malleable. Therefore his Islamic understanding is of service to a social reform project in the light of the rationally and scientifically inspired methods and practical necessities of the time. Mentioned temporality (this-worldliness) of the new Weltanschauung does also make itself felt in Günaltay’s and quite a few Islamist intellectuals’ comprehension of religion.

CHAPTER II

EMERGENCE OF “NEW ISLAM”: THE RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Studies on the Islamic revival of the 19th and 20th centuries mostly focus on the Arabic spoken (non-Turkish) context of the Islamic development with special emphasis on Salafi and modernist Islamic traditions¹⁴⁷. In this canon of Islamic studies, “Islamist” thinkers like Jamaladdin Afghani, Muhammad Abduh or Rashid Rida have acquired a special attention. The main focus of the studies of Islamic renewal and revival has been streamlined in this axis and their continuation along the contemporary contexts of Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism discourses has been one of the main emphasizes in modern studies on Islam. In this literature, Turkey’s experience of modernization, and the Ottoman-Turkish experience of Islam were more or less excluded or underestimated. The implicit continuities and the radical epistemological ruptures within the historical development of Islamic tradition in Turkey together with its “sui generis” cultural framework make the study of Islam more difficult. This

¹⁴⁷ Some examples of these studies are as follows: Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn "al-Afghānī": A Political Biography* (University of California Press, 1972). Elie Kedourie, *Islam in the Modern World and Other Studies*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981). Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1996). Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi (ed.), *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004). Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

situation can be understood as an indication of the “exceptionalism of the Turkish Islamic experience among its counterparts”¹⁴⁸ which is defined by Serif Mardin as “the non-conformist aspect of Turkish Islam for the contemporary scholars of modern day Islam”¹⁴⁹. The unique characteristics and entangled and multilayered historical flow of Turkish Islamic culture from the 19th century to Republican Turkey was therefore constitutive for the social and political life of the 20th century Turkish social life. This study focuses on a short span of this flow, which encloses the Second Constitutional Period, by the examination of the formations of a new conceptualization of Islam, through the ideas of a particular “Islamist” intellectual, M. Şemseddin (Günaltay).

In order to better apprehend the religious context in which his ideas on religion, Sufism and superstitions were furnished, the basic outline of the change that religion went through in the 19th century Ottoman context should be illustrated. In this regard, I will try to provide a brief account of how Islam acquired new meanings and functions, and what sorts of underlying transformations took place to create the “politicization” and “ideologization” of Islam as well as processes of “(re-)Islamization” in the late Ottoman social life. Before getting into analyzing this change I will first try to present a very rough picture of the basic features of the classical Ottoman understanding of Islam in this chapter. Later I will try to portray the changes in the function and meaning of religion during the 19th century Ottoman life as background of the social setting that gave color to Günaltay’s thought. As a part of this task it is necessary to outline a rough sketch of transformation of the religious establishment in this period. This demands the examination of the ulema’s and major Sufi orders’ role in Ottoman politics and social life. Later on I will try to give a brief account of Young Ottomans’ interpretations of Islam, and Islamic developments and reinterpretation of Islam during sultan

¹⁴⁸ Nilufer Gole, “The Quest for the Islamic Self within the Context of Modernity”, in *“Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey”* ed. by Sibel Bozdoğan and Resat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997). Gole discusses the radical discontinuity between traditional self-definitions and Western constructs as the basis of epistemological break and the exceptionalism of Turkish experience.

¹⁴⁹ About Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism, See Serif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”, 145-165. He refers to the work of Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* as an example of this case. In my opinion, Armando Salvatore’s book “Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity” can be considered as another example of this approach. See Armando Salvatore, *Islam and The Political Discourse of Modernity* (Ithaca Press: 1994).

Abdulhamid II's reign. This necessitates the examination of the fashioning of orthodox Islam and Pan-Islamism by the Hamidian regime and implications as well as regime's relations with the Sufi orders.

II.1. What was Classical Ottoman Islam like?

In order to better comprehend the changes in the role and functions of Islam in the 19th and 20th century Ottoman intellectual and social life, a very brief account of what the basic characteristics of the Ottoman Islamic tradition had been should be provided. It is difficult to comprehend basic characteristics of Ottoman Islamic tradition without also paying attention to its correlations with the Ottoman state and quasi-secular Ottoman political thought.

As the successor of the Seljukid social and political structure, Ottoman rule in its formative period mainly revealed the characteristics of a frontier principality¹⁵⁰. Popular and heterodox religious culture of dervishes and gazis – that also held “the ideal of spreading God's word by conquest”- was the pre-eminent element, both among the rulers and the ruled¹⁵¹. As the Ottoman state expanded towards a centralized empire -starting from the reign of Bayezid I and intensifying with the reign of Mehmed II- the orthodox Sunni trend bolstered in the state organization and a rift appeared between the ruling elite and some Sufi dervishes, who opposed this process of “Sunnification”¹⁵².

¹⁵⁰ Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (New York: Praeger Publishers: 1973), 186.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 186, 187.

¹⁵² Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Turkler, Turkiye ve Islam: Yaklasim, Yontem ve Yorum Denemeleri* (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 2000), p. 40-41. Halil Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 180-182. According to Halil Inalcik, the diminishing influence of the frontier traditions and the growing consciousness of the empire's status as a classical Islamic caliphate, as well as the long and bitter struggle with the Kizilbas movement, that was used by the Shiite Safavid Empire of Iran against Ottoman Empire, had their effects on this strengthening of the Sunni orthodox tendency.

This tendency in the 16th century Ottoman Empire was accompanied by the incorporation of the *ulema* (Islamic scholars; plural of *alim*) into the Ottoman state, and the increasing political power of the secular authority together with the dominance of *Sharia* (Islamic law) in state affairs¹⁵³. Madeline Zilfi and Serif Mardin claimed that the intertwining of religion and the state (*din u devlet*) had been one of the bases of the Ottoman rule¹⁵⁴.

The principles of *Sharia* followed by the Ottoman state were primarily of the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence. The official use of the Hanafi School by the state made it highly influential throughout the Ottoman Empire while leaving space for the application of other schools of Islamic law in different local contexts¹⁵⁵. The Hanafite interpretation of Islam was regarded by Inalcik as the most tolerant and flexible school of jurisprudence based on the use of reason and *icma* (consensus of opinion) – as a basis for religious and legal opinions¹⁵⁶.

Both Halil Inalcik and Ahmet Yasar Ocak argued that the dual functioning of the Hanafite *fiqh* with the secular law, (*kanun*) decrees proclaimed by the sultan under certain circumstances and for differing locations, in the Ottoman official religious understanding opened room for innovations on some legal issues and adaptability to differing circumstances and contexts¹⁵⁷. Moreover, this made Ottoman Islamic tradition

¹⁵³ Halil Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 169-170, 172.

¹⁵⁴ Madeline Zilfi, *Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 26. Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 105-106. Serif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”, 146-147.

The undifferentiated interrelation between religion and politics (as well as law) was already the case since the beginning of Islam, as some scholars discussed. See Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005). Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Nevertheless, the Ottoman example was frequently perceived as the pinnacle of the amalgamation of the state and religion in the Islamic history. For further information see Serif Mardin, *Genesis of the Young Ottoman Thought*, 106.

¹⁵⁵ Halil Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 181-182.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 181. Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Turkiye, Turkler ve Islam*, 35, 41.

¹⁵⁷ Halil Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 181-182. Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Turkiye, Turkler ve Islam*, 40-46.

more open to foreign cultural influences while rendering the Ottoman rulers with enough freedom in their political and executive authority¹⁵⁸.

The emphasis on the combination of intellectual sciences and mysticism in famous Muslim philosopher and theologian *al-Razi*'s thought in the footprints of *al-Ghazali*, was inspirational for the Ottoman Islamic thought and in the organization of Ottoman *medrese* system which was open to the learning of logic and mathematics perceived as the essential elements of all the sciences¹⁵⁹. On the other hand, from the earliest times formal and informal Sufi associations not only played a central role in the Ottoman social and political life, but also in the thought of the Ottoman intellectual elite, including ulema. Throughout the Ottoman centuries, there had been vital interactions and exchanges between the Sufis and ulema; many of the ulema were members of various Sufi orders¹⁶⁰.

The flexibility and socially all-encompassing nature of Islamic fiqh with annotations, footnotes, reinterpretation around a canonical knowledge and basic textuality have been emphasized by various scholars¹⁶¹. Different Islamic legal schools, kanun (secular law), and non-Muslim legal systems coexisted and operated within this system. Practically oriented dispositions of fiqh were the basis of a system of meanings/realities that Islam had been the “all-encompassing and underlying” “operative code”¹⁶². Recep Senturk describes the classical Ottoman Islamic

¹⁵⁸ Halil Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 181.

¹⁵⁹ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 176.

¹⁶⁰ Halil Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 199.

¹⁶¹ For examples of this view, see Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (California: University of California Press, 1993). Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*. Recep Senturk, “Toward an Open Science and Society –Multiplex Relations in Language, Religion and Society- Revisiting Ottoman Culture”, *Islam Arastirmalari Dergisi*, 6, 2001: 93-129.

¹⁶² Serif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”, 147. Recep Senturk, “Fikih ve Sosyal Bilimler Arasinda Son Donem Osmanli Aydini”, *Islam Arastirmalari Dergisi*, 4, 2000: 133-171.

epistemological tradition in terms of “multiplexity”¹⁶³ as a coexistence of alternating ways of knowledge production, cognitive methodologies, and rationalities, not limited within the order of natural phenomena¹⁶⁴. Senturk exemplifies the peaceful coexistence and dialogue of fiqh and tasawwuf as an indication of multiplexity while being configured around even incommensurable interpretations of reality, methodologies, and discourses¹⁶⁵. This social system was distinguished according to Mardin by the interpersonal relations consisting of some sort of arbitrariness and lacking a unilayered rationality that can be observed in the operation of jurisprudence and Sharia¹⁶⁶. This allowed enough elasticity to take into account many different situations¹⁶⁷.

In the formation of the classical Ottoman Islamic tradition, in addition to the Hanafi thought we can distinguish the influences of Islamic political philosophy and Turkic-Persian-Mongolian theory of secular legislation and state supremacy. Ibn Sina’s ideal of Islamic state under the rule of rightful ruler inspired by Plato’s philosopher-king was already integrated to the ideal of state supremacy that had a pivotal place in the Iranian-Turkish and Ilhanid political culture in the 11th century Islamic context; and had founded itself in the literature of “mirror for the princesses”¹⁶⁸. Through the ideas of medieval Islamic thinkers, al-Tusi and Celaluddin Devvani (1424-1502), this synthesized thought had been adopted by the Ottoman statesmen into the classical Ottoman understanding of the state and religion together with the notion of *dair-i adalet* (circle of justice)¹⁶⁹. In this view, *adalet* was the basis of order in the cosmos and thus in the society -which was perceived as the reflection of the cosmos. *Adalet* could be fulfilled by the welfare and concordance of four hierarchical estates (*erkan-i*

¹⁶³ Recep Senturk, “Fikih ve Sosyal Bilimler Arasında Son Donem Osmanlı Aydınları”, 135. Recep Senturk, “Toward an Open Science and Society”, 93-129.

¹⁶⁴ Recep Senturk, “Toward an Open Science and Society”, 100, 117-118.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 117-118.

¹⁶⁶ Serif Mardin, *Bediüzzaman*, 109.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 109.

¹⁶⁸ Osman Ozkul, *Gelenek ve Modernite Arasında Osmanlı Uleması* (Istanbul: Birharf Yayınları, 2005), p. 36-41.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 36, 41.

erbaa)¹⁷⁰ in the society, and this harmony could be achieved under the guidance of a just *imam* (religious and political leader) acting according to Sharia¹⁷¹. Aristotelian hierarchical organicist view can be discerned in the parallels drawn between the four elements in the cosmos, four classes in the society and four substances in the body. We can also find some similarities or underlying connections with the organicist conceptions of the society finding some analogies with the body, popular in the late Ottoman intellectual scene and especially in Günaltay's thought.

Thus, "through *Devvani's* and then *Kinalizade's* works, the means of identifying the sultan with the philosopher-king became available"¹⁷², and from Mardin's perspective, this provided:

"a framework of deep, genuine and all-pervasive concern for the welfare of the Islamic community. This feeling was translated, following the Ottoman ascendance in the Islamic world, into a profound and sincere devotion to the Ottoman state"¹⁷³.

This commitment to sublime ideal of the state in the Ottoman culture was combined with the dedication to religion¹⁷⁴ and embodied in the divinely ordained personality of

¹⁷⁰ In the works of Devvanl the theory of the four orders takes the following new form: "Corresponding to the four elements of the physical temperament there are four classes, which together make up and preserve the equity of the body politic, 'the political temperament.' The first are the men of knowledge... and this class is composed of doctors of theology and law, judges, secretaries, fiscal officials, geometricians, astronomers, physicians and poets who guarantee the maintenance of religion and the world. Next come the warriors and defenders. The combination of pen and sword ensures stability and guarantees public welfare. The third class consists of traders, artisans and craftsmen who provide for the needs of all. Last come the farmers who produce our food. Only the equilibrium and mutual help of these four classes secures political life." Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 101.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 100.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 99-101.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 105.

¹⁷⁴ This coupling of religion and state was expressed in the commonly used expression of *din u devlet* and generally continued with the demands for the protection and well-being of this pair.

the sultan¹⁷⁵. This synthesis that emphasized the loftiness of the state as a “hypergood” and linked it with religion and *Sharia* yielded consequences of which impacts could be scrutinized even in the late Ottoman intellectual milieu.

In the institutional level, the representative of the Sunnism in the empire was the ulema. They were responsible for the application of the Sharia in the Ottoman state and were mainly concerned with practical issues like jurisprudence. Starting with the rule of Mehmed II, a loose group of ulema, who came together from the various parts of the Muslim lands, gradually became organized as a formally unified body and got incorporated into the Ottoman state machinery. Hence, in the higher echelons of the social hierarchies, different from the independence of the past ulema from the state, the Ottoman ulema and the (quasi-)secular ruling class became more and more interdependent on each other. This interdependence in time resulted with a rigid hierarchy of ulema, *şeyhülislam* (the chief judge) at the top of it. Many of the ulema not only made careers in religio-legal professions but also attained political and bureaucratic positions, even as viziers. Seyhulislam occupied a place equal to the grand vizier; and the high ranking ulema owned the authority of confirming and legalizing the deposition of a new sultan. In this regard, the seyhulislam and the ulema of the high echelons were conceived to provide legitimacy to Ottoman sultan’s rule as well as his decisions and policies. Lower ranked ulema, as imams or some local medrese scholars, had influence on the people in the grassroots level. This provided popular support at the side of the ulema, that they even occasionally used for and against the Ottoman administration. Thus, *ilmiyye* (class of ulema) became a key component both in the operation of the Ottoman state machinery and everyday life through judgeship, fiqh and preaching. This rendered ulema an important locus of power. Ideally in Islamic political theory, secular state mechanism was to be subordinate to religion as the means that the religious law would be executed¹⁷⁶. Therefore according to Halil Inalcik,

¹⁷⁵ Ottoman sultans starting with Mehmed II adopted titles that emphasized their divine features as the rulers. Mehmed II was called by Tursun Bey in *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth* as the *zillullah fi'l Arz* (shadow of God on earth) and Suleyman I adopted the title of caliph of God on earth. Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Turkler, Turkiye ve Islam*, 63. Tursun Bey, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1977).

¹⁷⁶ Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 169-172. Madeline Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 13-39.

“the ulema class regarded the secular authority as its subordinate and strove to put this theory into practice. Nevertheless, in practice, the religious head of the Islamic community was always the sultan-caliph, and that the ulema at all times exercised religious authority in his name. In the Ottoman Empire the power of appointing and deposing the ulema always remained in the hands of the sultan and his grand vizier, representing the secular authority”¹⁷⁷.

This situation does not imply a sheer conflict or segregation between the ulema and the secular authority. Nevertheless, I think we can talk about an implicit tension existed between the ulema and the “ruling institution” (the sultan and the executive officers of his household), as Mardin argued, due to uneasiness of the ulema with the possible arbitrariness of the extra-*Shar’i* law (kanun) proclaimed by the secular authority¹⁷⁸. To various authors including Mardin or Abu-Manneh, this tension frequently surfaced in the 19th century, especially between the ulema and the Tanzimat bureaucracy, and implications of this tension can be observed in Young Ottomans’ arguments against the “men of the Tanzimat”¹⁷⁹.

II.2. Ottoman Ulema Challenged

As mentioned above, the role of the *ilmiyye* (class of ulema) was vital in the functioning of Ottoman legal, educational and political systems. In the 18th century, high ulema hierarchy had organized into a quasi-aristocratic family structure and had aligned itself with the military and administrative bureaucracy¹⁸⁰. Ottoman modernization in the 19th century induced great transformations in this structure. First, ulema gradually differentiated from the military and civil elites in terms of educational and cultural outlook¹⁸¹. “The top echelons of the religious establishment and its major

¹⁷⁷ Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, 171.

¹⁷⁸ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 101, 102.

¹⁷⁹ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 102. Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 10, 126.

¹⁸⁰ Madeline Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 232.

¹⁸¹ Some students of the late Ottoman history discussed that the abolition of Janissaries in 1826 had dislocated the power balance between the Sublime Porte, ulema and the

institutions were reorganized under the jurisdiction of a ministry headed by the Şeyhülislâm” and “their relative weight within the state administration steadily decreased from the early nineteenth century”¹⁸². Although they were still politically and socially influential, the state-led educational, administrative and legal reforms of the 19th century according to Mardin and Shaw eroded their basic sources of power – “namely, the endowment revenues, the systems of Muslim education and justice”¹⁸³.

The foundation of the Ministry of Pious Foundations (*Nezaret-i Evkaf*-1826) which took over the administration of pious foundations¹⁸⁴ from the *seyhulislamate*, together with the transfer of the two *kazaskers* from the *Divan* (Imperial Council) to the Office of the Seyhulislam (1837) which would operate as a “religious” judiciary council were the earliest steps in the fiscal and administrative weakening of ulema’s power¹⁸⁵. In this regard, the foundation of the Ministry of Education that was assigned the supervision of the primary and secondary schools (*rusdiyes*) was signaling the relative weakening of ulema’s influence in the administration of education during Tanzimat period. 1869 Regulation of Public Education was a turning point marking the suspension of ulema’s power over Muslim schools except medreses¹⁸⁶. Legal reforms of the Tanzimat period followed educational ones with an increasing pace. A huge corpus of Western laws, regulations and codes, i.e. Commercial and Penal codes and new Land law, after 1850 were transferred into the Ottoman legal system in addition to the assignment of Council of Judicial Ordinances (in 1870s Ministry of Justice) with

military by accommodating the Sublime Porte an unbalanced power in the face of the ulema. Consequently, an implicit tension between these secular-minded officials and ulema arouse in time. Butrus Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 49. Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 69.

¹⁸² Amit Bein, *The Ulema, Their Institutions and Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876-1924)* (PHD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 9.

¹⁸³ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 106, 107. Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 69.

¹⁸⁴ The pious foundations were one of the basic sources of income for the ulema in the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁸⁵ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye’de Cagdaslasma*, 98.

¹⁸⁶ Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 87.

some legislative and judicial functions. After mixed civil and criminal courts began to act in 1840s, the establishment of statutory courts (*Nizamiye mahkemeleri*-1869) operating according to Western criminal and commercial laws heralded the dissociation of the public law¹⁸⁷ from the jurisdiction of the ulema and out of the reach of the Sharia¹⁸⁸. Hence, Sharia was being reduced into a private law that mostly dealt with personal/domestic matters, like inheritance¹⁸⁹. However, it would be misleading to claim that the ulema did lose their power and positions instantly. Many of the cadres of instruction in the secular schools or new magistracy positions in secular courts were occupied by the ulema, due to the lack of trained personnel¹⁹⁰. Moreover, many of the ulema still held onto their government positions. Some among the ulema also supported the Tanzimat reforms and integrated into the reforming elite by defrocking, like Ahmet Cevdet Pasha¹⁹¹. As a result, it is problematic to perceive ulema as a monolithic group that was totally disturbed by the reforms and opposed to it.

There occurred a duality between the secular and religious systems but this did not imply a total separation or conflict between each other. Rather, there were overlaps between the state elites and the ulema; secular -legal and educational- and the religious systems. On the other hand, we can talk about contempt at the side of the practical-minded Westernizing Tanzimat statesmen for the religious establishment and the traditional values. The maintenance of traditional practices and institutions became a subject of particular dissatisfaction, subsequent to 1860¹⁹². In the educational level, as Aksin Somel put forward, “the late Tanzimat [1856-1876] reformist elite ... aimed at a radical change in the existing educational structure, eliminating the cultural

¹⁸⁷ The adoption of European civil codes was proposed by some Tanzimat bureaucrats, in the presence of the criticisms from the ulema and Young Ottomans; and the codification of the Sharia (*Mecelle*-1876) seemed to be a compromise.

¹⁸⁸ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 114.

¹⁸⁹ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 114.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 107. The situation gradually changed in the 1870s, when newly trained secular personnel became available as students graduated from new schools.

¹⁹¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye 'de Cagdaslasma*, 224.

¹⁹² Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 156. Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 169.

compartments imposed by traditional religious divisions, and secularizing government schools”¹⁹³. Concomitantly, “critics [of the religious establishment] emphasized the fact that the medreses remained generally unchanged even as the state schools evolved and expanded as institutions of modern learning”¹⁹⁴. Notwithstanding their collaboration with the ulema against the Porte, Young Ottomans were to charge the ulema with ineffectiveness and ignorance in the sciences and religious matters¹⁹⁵. This was, to Young Ottomans, due to the neglect of the religious sciences in the empire 18th century onwards¹⁹⁶. As a matter of fact, there were very few efforts to reform the *medreses* (Islamic schools) during the late Tanzimat period¹⁹⁷; the men of the Tanzimat overlooked the demands for medrese reform both from the ulema and the intellectuals¹⁹⁸. On the other hand, some reform projects returned empty-handed¹⁹⁹.

Hamidian government ironically continued previous Ottoman administrative attitude of benign neglect towards medrese education, although it paid a conspicuous attention on Islamic symbols and institutions as the sources of legitimacy for its rule, and initiated a series of educational reforms in the state schools²⁰⁰. Therefore,

¹⁹³ Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 169. In this parallel, the courses on religious subjects in Muslim schools were to be controlled by the state and the influence of the ulema on Muslim education was to be put within certain limits.

¹⁹⁴ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 10.

¹⁹⁵ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 141-142.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 141-142.

¹⁹⁷ Safvet Pasha’s efforts to reform the medrese system can be mentioned among these few attempts. Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye’de Cagdaslasma*, 237-239.

¹⁹⁸ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 129. In 1860s, the demands for reform among the Ottoman intelligentsia intensified. Even Ali Suavi would condemn Ali and Fuad pashas of deliberately letting the medreses deteriorate.

¹⁹⁹ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 37.

²⁰⁰ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 37. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 140. The basic reason of this neglect was generally explained in terms of Abdulhamid’s wariness for huge population of the *softas* (medrese students) that had participated in the deposition of the sultan Abdulaziz. One serious attempt to renew the administration, pedagogy, and curricula of the medreses was executed by the Abdulhamid administration in 1892, but this was a Sisyphean task.

according to Selim Deringil, the lower level ulema looked for new avenues of mobility through the tekkes and the officially sanctioned media²⁰¹. The negative rhetoric on the traditional Islamic institutions, especially medreses and the ulema, took further during the Hamidian period. Ulema were regarded by the new emerging Young Turks or devout Muslim intellectuals as scholarly and administratively outdated. They were hence deemed as the Islamic counterpart of the established –European- churches and clergy which positivist and anti-religious movements and revolutions did severely assault in Europe. The ulema were aware that these challenges might have come up with their ultimate marginalization similar to the European clergy²⁰².

The ulema of the Hamidian era were of course not monolithic; how they had been influenced by the changes and their responses (their authoritative positions, views and strategies) revealed variations. Quite a few among them admitted the necessity for reform in line with the modern sciences and ‘demands of the time’ and looked for ways to respond to the challenges²⁰³. While some remained loyal to the sultan and the regime from which they petitioned reform, others aligned themselves with the Young Turk opposition against the Hamidian regime that they perceived as the main cause for the stagnancy of the medreses and the learned class²⁰⁴. These controversies and ulema’s efforts became conducive to the Islamic politics and discussions of the Second Constitutional period. The increasing challenges to ulema’s position in the state and society after 1908 and radical religious reforms carried out by the CUP government after 1915 contributed to the marginalization of the ulema and intensified their efforts to respond these impacts²⁰⁵.

I think it would not be wrong to talk about the partial alienation of the ulema from the administrative, legal and educational affairs throughout the 19th century; yet this did not take place at once. Instead, it would be more proper to argue that the

²⁰¹ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 63.

²⁰² Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 35-36, 65.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 36, 65-66.

²⁰⁴ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks In Opposition*, 50-51.

²⁰⁵ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 13.

process was imperceptibly swinging and its social reverberations were already intimidating a fairly large portion of the ulema. This uneasiness at the side of the ulema in addition to the sore repercussions of deeply buried transformation of the social fabric late 18th century onwards created antagonistic responses among the ulema; first popped up during the late Tanzimat²⁰⁶. Growing discontent of some members of the ulema seems to have been juxtaposed with the increasing frustration in the grassroots level for the Tanzimat²⁰⁷ which was mostly uttered by the Young Ottomans.

II.3. Islamic Thought of Young Ottomans

The Islamic outlook of Young Ottomans', especially Namik Kemal's, criticism of the Tanzimat regime and political claims was distinctive²⁰⁸. Young Ottomans were the first circle of intellectuals in the Ottoman history, out of the ulema, to enunciate an Islamic message implanted with religious symbols and references. They charged Westernizing reforms introduced by the Tanzimat bureaucrats with being superficial, immoral as well as culturally alien and un-Islamic²⁰⁹. According to them, the reforms should be in accordance with the social fabric, traditional customs and Sharia since Sharia had been the basis of Ottoman society²¹⁰. While they were politically

²⁰⁶ The *Kuleli Incidence* in 1859 was probably the first manifestation of the vehement opposition of the ulema for the secularizing social transformations of the Tanzimat. This incidence was interpreted as a response of the ulema to the secular content of the Reform Edict of 1856, especially to the clauses concerning the equal status of the non-Muslims with the Muslims. Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, 253. Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 113.

²⁰⁷ This popular frustration was also related to the social impacts of the economical worsening. Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 156-157.

²⁰⁸ Here we should be reminded that the views of the Young Ottomans displayed a wide variety, also in their aptness to Islamic discourse. For example, Sinasi had very little inclinations to Islam and mainly enjoyed a more holistic idea of Westernization.

²⁰⁹ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 115.

²¹⁰ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 118-119. Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924* (Leiden ; New York : Brill, 1997), 35.

challenging the so-called arbitrary policies of the men of the Tanzimat, they endorsed their liberally inspired ideas with Islamic rules, practices and concepts, and with reference to Islamic history²¹¹.

This resulted with the recasting of some traditional Islamic concepts like *mesveret* or *sura*, in line with the Western political ideals like representative government or democracy. In their view, the Western political principles of representative governance, Constitution and Rule of Law should be adopted but this was different from the superficial cultural content of the West introduced by the Tanzimat elite. For these principles had already concurred with the premises of the Sharia²¹². Namely, the idealized Western political system and concepts had already been inherent in the Sharia and in the Islamic tradition. At this juncture, the superiority of the cultural and civilizational content of Islam was emphasized²¹³. Then, in order “to free the Ottoman Empire of its inferior position”, “going back to the original ‘unspoilt’ sources of Islam” and revitalizing its spirit were urged, prominently by Namik Kemal²¹⁴. This demand was important for being one of the first calls for the original Islam in the modern context that would later be a basic maxim of the imminent Islamic modernist and Salafi movements.

Getting rid of the inferior position of the Ottoman Empire and the Muslims around the world and providing the welfare of the Islamic community were important themes in the Young Ottoman writings. This approach attained a more extensive form

²¹¹ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 115.

²¹² Both Serif Mardin and Bernard Lewis discussed that Sharia was appreciated by the Young Ottomans as the Rule of Law, hence a safeguard against the arbitrary and autocratic rule of the Tanzimat. Serif Mardin, *Genesis*. Also see Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*.

²¹³ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 259. Reacting in particular to Ernest Renan's claims that Islam was the enemy of science and philosophy, Namik Kemal cited the tremendous advances that had been made in all aspects of culture and civilization under the great Islamic empires of the past.

²¹⁴ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 173. Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 82. Mumtaz'er Turkone argued that this “Islamist” call for returning to the origins of Islam was the first in the modern context. Mumtaz'er Turkone, *Siyasi Ideoloji Olarak Islamciligin Dogusu* (İstanbul: İletişim yayınları, 1991).

in the new setting of balance of European powers in 1870s, also when the saddening news of Muslims from the Central Asia were reaching to the Ottoman capital and Pan-Germanist and Pan-Slavist ideologies were on their ride²¹⁵. This aroused the idea of the unification of Islamic people, “Pan-Islam” (*ittihad-i Islam*), which was assumed by Mardin to be a Young Ottoman invention²¹⁶. This initially “defensive and cultural” invention turned into a more political project till the end of the decade while finding stronghold in the Ottoman “public opinion” (*efkar-i umumiye*)²¹⁷. In this context, Islam had come to be a banner to mobilize the Muslim populations, and a “social cement” to bind the Muslim people. It is argued by Turkone that Islam had thereby been instrumentally used by the Young Ottomans in a new form and context²¹⁸. They also sided themselves with the ulema and utilized the traditional methods like preaching or fetwas other than new media technologies to win the public opinion and mobilize the masses²¹⁹.

The codification of Sharia as *Mecelle* between 1869 and 1876 was also important to understand the change in the function and elaboration of religion in the Ottoman context. The codification of Sharia rulings in a Western legal model was generally interpreted as an effort to standardize and rationalize the religious code in the Weberian sense²²⁰. Ahmet Cevdet Pasha who was the head of the commission to codify Sharia indicated the non-systematic and disarrayed situation of the Sharia²²¹. By codification the Sharia would be made up to date and applicable to the demands of the

²¹⁵ Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith, and community in the late Ottoman state* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 119.

²¹⁶ Serif Mardin, *Genesis*, 60.

²¹⁷ Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism*, 38-40. Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 119.

²¹⁸ Turkone, 43.

²¹⁹ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 113.

²²⁰ Ibid, 118. Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 50, 52.

²²¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, 224.

modern times according to Ahmet Cevdet Pasha and the Ottoman ruling elite²²². Therefore the Sharia would get organized in contrast to the looseness and arbitrariness of its application in the local contexts²²³. This surely signaled a shift from the locally diverse and interpersonal nature of the Sharia and religion organically encircling the almost every dimension of the everyday life as described by Nathan Brown and Murteza Bedir²²⁴. In other words, religion was gradually turning into a legal and religious specialization, being separated from its ritualistic shell as practiced in the everyday life²²⁵ and being “reified” instead of being a socially all-encompassing and diffuse structure.

II.4. Sufism and Movement of Re-Islamization

19th century Ottoman modernization created and witnessed noteworthy changes in the Sufi life. The endeavors to bring regularization to Sufi orders under clinging state supervision during the reign of Mahmud II were one of the earliest changes made to the Sufi life. This was indicative of state’s increasing demand to control religious orders and life in grassroots level, and the conviction that Sufi orders needed reform due to their disarrayed condition. Nevertheless, Sufi orders more or less maintained their autonomous status from the state during most of the 19th century. The abolition of Bektashi orders in 1826 which were known with their latitudinarian and unorthodox inclinations was a radically important occurrence. This was actually an outcome of the annihilation of Janissary corps which had organically associated with the order as its religious mentor. After their abolition many of the Bektashi lodges were replaced by

²²² Murteza Bedir, “Fikih to Law: Secularization Through Curriculum”, *Islamic Law and Society*, 11 (2004), 385. Recep Senturk, “Fikih ve Sosyal Bilimler Arasinda Son Donem Osmanli Aydini”, 146-150.

²²³ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 52.

²²⁴ Murteza Bedir, “Fikih to Law”, 389. Nathan C. Brown, “Sharia and State in the Modern Muslim Middle East”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29-3. (1997), 359-376.

²²⁵ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 118.

Naqshbandi order and Bektashis continued their existence under the roof of different lodges till 1860s. However, the influence of Sharia-minded Naqshbandis in the abolition of the Bektashi order was undeniable²²⁶.

Naqshbandi order needs further comment since it was influential in the 19th century Ottoman life. Butrus Abu-Manneh in his book, *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826 - 1876)*, asserts the marching of the Naqshbandi order and one of its sub-branches Khalidi Naqshbandiyya in the Ottoman religious life in the 19th century. In contrast to the ideas identifying Ottoman modernization with Westernization and secularization Abu-Manneh argued that a current of grassroots Islamization with the impetus of Naqshbandi order had taken place starting from the era of Selim III till the Reform Edict of 1856. The increasing leverage of the Naqshbandis was the direct result of the intensified flow of Mujaddidi and Khalidi branches of Naqshbandi order into the Ottoman lands, mainly into the capital. The commitment to Sharia, prayers and Sunnah, rejection of outwardly ecstatic Sufi rites with a missionary activism and commitment to political authority were exclusive features of the order compared to other Sufi orders of the time. These according to Abu-Manneh created a sort of Sunni orthodox trend in the spheres of order's influence. The missionary impetus of the order drove their members into the higher ranks of ulema and bureaucrats to gain some influence in state matters. According to the findings of Abu-Manneh, quite a few members of the ulema including seyhulislams, and state functionaries were coming from Naqshbandis or were Naqshbandi sympathizers till the proclamation of Reform Edict in 1856. This, according to Abu-Manneh, created a sort of Sunni orthodox trend that shaped the orientation of the state policies during the first half of the century²²⁷. These influences

²²⁶ Butrus Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 50-53.

²²⁷ The influence of the Sunni orthodox trend in the Ottoman capital can be felt in the Islamic texture of the Gulhane Hatt-i Humayunu (Tanzimat Edict) in 1839, stating the importance of committing to Sharia principles in state affairs as a means to elevate the state and society. The main reason of the decay of the Ottomans and Muslims was claimed to be breaking off from the Sharia and premises of Islam. The importance of the *daire-i adalet* together with some issues that signify the classical Ottoman Islamic mentality was also emphasized in the edict. This led some scholars like Butrus Abu-Manneh to think that the ideological, intellectual basis of the Tanzimat Proclamation had been classical Ottoman values and dictums. Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 74, 92.

came to an end during the rule of Ali and Fuad Pashas in 1860s. The Sufi orders, especially the Naqshbandi order, were kept under close scrutiny and the Tanzimat regime tried to bring the orders under control by the establishment of an assembly of Sufi leaders (*Meclis-i Mesayih*) in 1866. The recovery of Bektashi order, which was illegal since 1826, was condoned and even favored by Ali and Fuad pashas. These developments according to Abu-Manneh engendered strife between Naqshbandis and the late Tanzimat administration perceiving them as a threat. Abu-Manneh even claimed that the Sunni orthodox message of Naqshbandi order was transmitted through certain communication channels to the Young Ottomans and the Young Ottomans' reverence to Sharia might be observed as an upshot of this influence²²⁸.

One conclusion shared both by Abu-Manneh and Karpat was that Sufi revivalism²²⁹, which had been under way since the 18th century, had been instrumental especially in the 19th century to partially bring a compromise between the values –and Islamicity- of the lower and the higher classes, mainly in the Ottoman Empire²³⁰. These had therefore brought an impetus of “Islamization” in Sunni Orthodox lines. These movements, argued Kemal Karpat, had provided the local Muslim communities with a sense of universal Islamic identity; and acquainted with the codes of the established orthodoxy –mostly of the Ottoman state- and later with modern ones²³¹. The intermediary role and the mobile and accommodative features of the Naqshbandi order have been also emphasized by Serif Mardin²³². Kemal Karpat's emphasis on the inspiring role of the Naqshbandi order on the religious policies of the sultan

²²⁸ Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 48, 103-107, 115, 128-129.

²²⁹ The Sufi revivalism of 18th and 19th centuries was called as *neo-Sufism* by Fazlur Rahman. This revival had been manifestly going on for centuries and reflected some puritanical and activist ideals of rejuvenating the original Islam with the missionary or anti-imperialist activism of some Sufi orders. For further information see Stephen Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, c1973). R.S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", *Der Islam* 70 (1993), 52-87.

²³⁰ Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*. Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 21-22.

²³¹ Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 21-26, 119.

²³² Serif Mardin, "Islamic Exceptionalism", 147-148.

Abdulhamid II is noteworthy²³³. The compromise between the values and religious culture of the lower and the higher classes and the resultant acquaintance of the lower classes with the codes of religious orthodoxy can also be taken into consideration while evaluating the religious revivalism of the Abdulhamid regime. This analysis seems more thorough, thinking the close affiliations between the Abdulhamid government and Naqshbandi order.

II.5. Hamidian Islamic Policies

The growing Islamic ideological affection in the 1870s came under a more compact and conspicuous pattern in the official ideology during the Hamidian rule (1876-1909). Islam -combined with patriotism- had come to be a constitutive element for the official ideology of the Hamidian administration. Especially losing most of the European territories that hosted the majority of the non-Muslim population of the empire pushed the Ottomanist tendencies of the Ottoman state ideology towards “Islamism”²³⁴. As Selim Deringil meticulously argued in his seminal work, *Well-Protected Domains*, Abdulhamid regime that aspired to penetrate into the daily life of the Ottoman society forged a new Islamic orthodox ideology based on the *Hanefi* school of thought as a means of legitimacy²³⁵. In this scheme, the Sharia was redefined as an abstract ideal, and applauded as the foundation of the “imperial/national identity”²³⁶. This new official trend towards Islamic orthodoxy²³⁷ accompanied with a demand for loyalty of the Ottoman subjects to the quasi-sacred sultan as the

²³³ Kemal Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 22.

²³⁴ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 259.

²³⁵ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 11, 47.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 46.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 47, 108.

embodiment of the state²³⁸. This would, according to Karpas, also bear an Islamic patriotic identity that would work as a social adhesive among the subject population²³⁹. Sultan's position as the caliph of all the Muslims turned out to be an overstressed political ideal to sustain the unity of the imagined universal Muslim community²⁴⁰.

The state therefore attempted to make use of differing Islamic symbols, motifs and ideological tools to both display and implant its official ideology in the public²⁴¹. In this parallel, education was employed as a milestone to clinch the religious and authoritarian values in the society²⁴². To realize this goal, curriculums and programs of public schools were successively reworked through religious content to implement the moral disciplining and obedience among the students as discussed above²⁴³.

Sultan took pains to tune well with the religious establishment and persona²⁴⁴. He himself particularly got affiliated with some important Sufi sheikhs who assumed intermediary roles between the sultan and his subjects²⁴⁵. They were therefore entrusted by the sultan with the promulgation and justification of state's Pan-Islamic message spotlighting sultan's status as the caliph of Islam among the people. Foremost among

²³⁸ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi", *Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (1979), 140. The modernizing aspiration was still an underlying impetus of the Hamidian regime. The most salient facet of this trend can be scrutinized in the continuing secular formation of the Hamidian schools.

²³⁹ Kemal Karpas, *Politicization of Islam*, 22.

²⁴⁰ Abu-Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II", 141-142.

²⁴¹ Kemal Karpas, *Politicization of Islam*, 21-22. Some important mosques or some Sufi saints' tombs were restored and various religious monuments were built. See, Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 18.

²⁴² As mentioned earlier, rational and positive aspects of learning and the importance of modern sciences were stressed as much as the Islamic aspects in the Abdulhamid schools. For a comprehensive study of the non-Islamic lines of educational framework in the Abdulhamid era, see Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*.

²⁴³ Aksin Somel, *Modernization of Public Education*, 179.

²⁴⁴ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 63-64. Amit Bein, 38. In practice the sultan embraced a benign neglect towards the medreses and the ulema.

²⁴⁵ Abu Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II", 139-140.

his favorite sheikhs was Abu al-Huda al-Sayyadi of Rifai order²⁴⁶. He and other sheikhs either published an excessive collection of books and articles or actively involved in “defending the legitimacy of sultan Abdulhamid's assumption of the Caliphate and calling upon the Muslims to rally behind him and be submissive to him.”²⁴⁷

One thrust at stake in Abu al-Huda’s writings was the search for justification for absolute rule as the primary system of government in Islam, by sometimes use of heavy mystical content and fatalistic attitude of his Sufi message²⁴⁸. Abu al-Huda's call was basically addressed to the Arabic speaking Muslims of the empire, especially to the Syrian²⁴⁹, while sheikh Zahir’s message was designated to the African Muslims. Yet, to Abu-Manneh, especially Abu al-Huda’s call was extended to Muslims all over the Muslim world with a feeling of pan-Islamic cohesion²⁵⁰. The vocation of Abu al-Huda and some associate Sufis might have been pivotal in delivering the (proto-national) Islamic gist of the Abdulhamid regime’s ideology to the public and inculcating a feeling of universal Islamic belonging among them²⁵¹. Not to this degree but Naqshbandis’ paying homage to the ruler and compliance with the authority of the Islamic ruler/state can be juxtaposed with Abu al-Huda’s submissive call. The fatalistic and obedient quietism attributed to Sufi creed, especially in the form of Sufi claims to submissive obedience to the absolutist rule, had been one of the principal objects of criticism in post-1908 anti-Sufi discourses. This was a salient component of criticism in Günaltay’s thought as well. The close linkages between the sultan and some Sufi sheikhs might have been one of the reasons of the disdain among the Sufi critics.

²⁴⁶ Some activist and loyal sheikhs that sultan valued were *Yusuf al-Nabhani* of Qadiri order, *Sheikh Muhammad Zahir* of Shadili-Madani order, and sheikhs *Haci Fehim* and *Ubeydullah effendis* and *Ahmed Ziyauddin Gumushanevi* of Naqshbandi order. Sultan’s aloof backing of the Naqshbandi order which was likely to be the most active and influential of the Sufi orders in a wide part of Muslim lands in the 19th century should be reminded. Abu Manneh, “Sultan Abdulhamid II”, 139-140.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 140.

²⁴⁸ Abu-Manneh, “Sultan Abdulhamid II”, 141-145.

²⁴⁹ Yusuf al-Nabhani was similarly addressing a Syrian population.

²⁵⁰ Abu-Manneh, “Sultan Abdulhamid II”, 148.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 141-142.

Sultan's commitment to ensure that the public be exposed only to the sanctioned religion²⁵² brought the tight restrictions on and rectification of the religious beliefs and practices. The Hamidian rule was wary of the freelance religious publication and preaching; and tried to keep it under control. This has of course a lot to do with the state's desire to suppress any political or ideological opposition that can be expressed and legitimized through religious mediums against the sultan. This trend was ironically furthered to establish official control on the printing of *Quran* or basic *ilmihal* (catechism) books²⁵³. Another dimension of this unifying attitude was displayed in the organized efforts to inculcate the "true Islam" in the local level by conversion. In other words, the heretical and heterodox beliefs of the local communities would be "corrected" in accordance with the Hanefi mezheb²⁵⁴. This rhetoric of "correction of beliefs" (*tashih-i akaid*) was a common theme of the Abdulhamid administration and the government sought to actualize this enterprise by sending missionary troops of ulema or preachers to the provinces, and/or by educating the local imams, in order to incorporate the local heretics into the mainstream Islam²⁵⁵. One of the most comprehensive of these attempts was the campaign conducted in 1891-92 to convert Yezidis²⁵⁶. This mission entailed an official upbringing of a group of preachers and missionaries through a formalized education by the ulema²⁵⁷. This was one of the first initiatives of constructing the society in line with the official imagination of the subjects by the state. It is also worthy to note that the conception of a sanctioned "true Islam" integrated to a practical programme of correction of beliefs would be an important motif that came across within the discourses of quite a few devout

²⁵² Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 53, 64.

²⁵³ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 54. Riza Tevfik indicated that the government tried to control the books dealing with Islamic jurisprudence, while more obviously harmful publications such as the works of Buchner, Darwin, Spencer and Mill were sold freely in the Istanbul bookshops.

²⁵⁴ Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 49.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 75-77.

²⁵⁶ Also some missions were sent to Asia Minor and Syria to convert Kizilbas, Kurdish and even Christian local populations. For further detail, see Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 40-49.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 75.

intellectuals after the 1908 Revolution of Young Turks; especially in Semseddin Günaltay's.

II.6. Analysis: Change in the Conception and Social Operation of Islam

This chapter tried to provide a historical account of how the meanings and social operations related to Islam transmuted throughout the 19th century at the central parts of the Ottoman Empire. It is argued by Serif Mardin and Mumtaz'er Turkone that Islam had acquired a new cast in the late 19th and early 20th century and this was a "newer" Islam which implied a break with the traditional Islam²⁵⁸. Whether changing outlook of Islam had been traditional or post-traditional, this change can be observed in Hamidian contemplation of official orthodox Islam. This surely had something to do with the 19th century transformations in the status of the Ottoman religious establishment. In the previous chapter, I made a brief evaluation of the uneven differentiation that the religious establishment went through from the administrative, legal and educational affairs/domains throughout the 19th century although this was not a smooth and outright "disestablishment"²⁵⁹. The weakening of the ulema's power and disengagement from the administrative –and thus indirectly in the social- affairs generated profound transformations in the Ottoman political, social and religious fabric²⁶⁰. This according to Mardin brought Islam's gradual segregation to an autonomous sphere distinct from the political, economical and legal domains²⁶¹. In other words, towards the end of the century, Islam in the Ottoman context came to be

²⁵⁸ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 115. Mumtaz'er Turkone, *Bir Siyasi Ideoloji Olarak Islamciligin Dogusu* (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 1991), 25-32. Kemal Karpat also proposes a similar view. See, Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 21.

²⁵⁹ Surely, this process took a more severe form in the second decade of the 20th century.

²⁶⁰ According to Serif Mardin, this went side by side with the emergence of autonomous spheres for politics, economics, law or religion despite their complex intersections and superpositioning with each others.

²⁶¹ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 106.

more of a theological matter of which pervasive influence on the political, economical, and even legal issues waned²⁶². Therefore Islam became more “religious” in the post-Enlightenment (Cartesian) sense inheriting the dismemberment of religion from its social functions within “its self-delineated space”²⁶³. This was closely related to Tanzimat process of loosening in Sharia’s pervasive social functions; what Serif Mardin and Recep Senturk defined as a process of *fiqh*’s reduction into a specialty and problem solving technique dealing with private matters, namely familial issues like inheritance²⁶⁴. This confinement of Islam into its self-lineated space was followed by what has been called as “privatization of religion”²⁶⁵. Therefore this new form of Islam according to Serif Mardin, Mumtaz’er Turkone and Ismail Kara diverged from its historically formed, socially all-encompassing traditional arrangement composed of a web of social relations and obligations²⁶⁶.

On the other hand, this non-unilinear evolvement of the “religious” in its new layout generated a certain degree of “reification” in the conceptualization of Islam. Namely, the ritualistic, disciplinary and socially imperative sides of religion were downplayed and its cultural and civilizational component or essence was prioritized²⁶⁷. Therefore, a transcultural and transhistorical essence was attributed to Islam. Both

²⁶² Ibid, 111.

²⁶³ Ibid, 118.

²⁶⁴ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 121. Recep Senturk, “Fikih ve Sosyal Bilimler Arasinda Son Donem Osmanli Aydini”, 150.

²⁶⁵ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 32, 35. The mark of this privatization of Islam can be observed in the post-1908 Young Turk reforms in religion. Ziya Gokalp’s conceptualization of religion as a private matter and *fiqh* as a social scientific method hints this development. Already his religious thoughts were constitutive to change since he was the architect of 1915-1916 religious reforms. For further information on this topic, see Recep Senturk, “Fikih ve Sosyal Bilimler Arasinda Son Donem Osmanli Aydini”, 157-161. Sait Ozerverli, “*Transferring Traditional Islamic Disciplines into Modern Social Sciences in Late Ottoman Thought: The Attempts of Ziya Gokalp and Mehmed Serafeddin*”, *Muslim World* 97 (2007), 317-330.

²⁶⁶ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 111. Turkone, *Islamciligin Dogusu*, 24-27. Ismail Kara, “Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism”, 549.

²⁶⁷ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 118.

Turkone and Mardin argued that this reification provided a certain ideologization and intellectualization of Islam which is noticeable in Young Ottomans' borrowing of Islamic signs and concepts in their political discourses²⁶⁸. The reification of Islam was also inherent in the codification of *Mecelle* as a rationalized and standardized univocal edition of Sharia which had previously been an organic component of everyday life. This univocal-ity and essentialization of Islam was juxtaposed with the necessities of the time as explained by Ahmet Cevdet Pasha. By this means, political and ideological claims on and through Islam came to be more convenient. In a way, Islam turned out to be perceived as a subject matter as a rationally comprehensible unit. This gave power to claims on Islamic orthodoxy or true Islam as was in the use of Hamidian regime. This reified, transhistorical and non-phenomenological Islamic understanding was the legacy of 19th century developments to the 20th century Ottoman discussions on religion. This transformation is crucial to understand the ground for the Islamist discourses and Günaltay's ideas within its context.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 113, 115, 117. Turkone, *Islamciligin Dogusu*, 24.

CHAPTER III

Islamic Revival In The Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918)

This chapter is devised to provide basic developments in the Ottoman religious life and Islamic reformist trends following the Young Turk Revolution (1908) in order to have a better grasp of the context in which Şemseddin Günaltay raised as an Islamic modernist intellectual. Therefore this chapter first concentrates on the CUP policies on Islam and mobilization of Islamic groups including Sufis and ulema during the Second Constitutional Period. Islamism of the Second Constitutional Period and the impact of the Afghani and Abduh's ideas on Islamists and Şemseddin Günaltay constitute another concern of this chapter. Late Ottoman discourses on Sufi orders and superstitions will be also examined.

III.1. Views of Young Turks on Islam

Young Turks' views about Islam were not monolithic. Serif Mardin argued in his book *Jon Turklerin Siyasi Fikirleri (1895-1908)* that leading Young Turk intellectuals were less learned about Islam and their arguments concerning religion were more or less superficial and instrumental in nature compared to Young

Ottomans²⁶⁹. Although there were some Islamists or ulema within the Young Turks and Islam still had been paid some attention within the group due to its foundational and rhetorical importance, it did not occupy anymore the underlying place in the Young Turk thought and their future plans. Nevertheless, many of the materialist and positivist members of the CUP both before and after 1908 Revolution could not underestimate the pivotal role of Islam as the underlying social, cognitive and lingual foundation in the Ottoman life, especially in terms of providing social solidarity and social/political legitimacy²⁷⁰. *Ahmet Riza* as a positivist or *Abdullah Cevdet* as a materialist therefore brought the socially binding aspects of Islam to the fore. *Ahmet Riza* discussed Islam's compatibility with the basic premises and visions of positivism like progress or social union in contrast to Christianity's inhibitive nature to progress, science and modernization²⁷¹. Yet Islam was the most suitable religion to come into terms with modern necessities and developments, and useful for political and social ends²⁷². Therefore Islam was seen through a more instrumental perspective by a fairly large number of Young Turks such as *Ahmet Riza*, *Riza Tevfik* or *Abdullah Cevdet*²⁷³.

As a consequence, Young Turks during their oppositional years in 1890s looked for cooperation with some Islamic groups against the Hamidian regime. CUP collaborated with some Sufi orders and members. *Hanioglu* indicates the active support of some *Bektashi*, *Melami* and *Mevlevi* sheikhs and lodges for CUP²⁷⁴. On the other hand, the support of some Sufi sheikhs and orders for the Hamidian regime as well as some ulema turned out as a source of criticism against Sufi orders and ulema. As *Abu-Manneh* construed, Sufi orders were suggested by some of their anti-Hamidian contemporaries as a cause of blind obedience to the despotic regimes, namely Hamidian rule, with their quietist understanding revering authority and

²⁶⁹ *Serif Mardin, Jon Turkler, 17.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid, 17. Sukru Hanioglu, Preparation for a Revolution, 306.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid, 93.*

²⁷² *Ibid, 93.*

²⁷³ *Ibid, 60.*

²⁷⁴ *Sukru Hanioglu, Young Turks in Opposition, 50-55.*

submissiveness²⁷⁵. This might have been one of the reasons that Sufi orders and sheikhs were brought under severe condemnations during the Second Constitutional Period.

On the other hand, although they were not natural allies, CUP also got cooperated with some members of ulema who were disturbed or unsatisfied by the Hamidian policies in general and by regime's negligent approach to medreses and religious establishment²⁷⁶. Hoca Muhiddin, Hoca Kadri²⁷⁷, and Ubeydullah Efendi and Musa Kazim Efendi -who was to be the sheikhulislam after 1908 Young Turk Revolution- were some among these ulema. CUP also attempted to make use of some *fetwas* (jurisprudential opinions) against the Hamidian regime²⁷⁸. Ubeydullah and Musa Kazim effendis actively participated in the committee after the revolution. Some Islamist intellectuals or journals also got affiliated with and supported CUP both before and after 1908. *Manastirli Ismail Hakki, Musa Kazim Efendi, Serafettin Yaltkaya, Mehmet Akif, Seyyid Bey and Semseddin Günaltay* were some influential Islamists of the Second Constitutional Period who were charged with crucial tasks in CUP as members of the Committee²⁷⁹. Many of the Islamic publications celebrated the Constitutional regime after 1908 with enthusiasm and decried the autocratic rule of Abdulhamid despite its Islamic outlook²⁸⁰. The calamitous political events of the following years and the anti-religious views of some members of the CUP faded this enthusiasm and augmented critical voices against the committee²⁸¹. Nevertheless some journals like *Sebilürreşad*, the most important Islamist journal of Second Constitutional

²⁷⁵ Butrus Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 158.

²⁷⁶ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 50, 53. Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 37-40.

²⁷⁷ Hoca Muhiddin and Hoca Kadri were highly influential in the Egyptian branch of the CUP. Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 52.

²⁷⁸ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 50, 73.

²⁷⁹ S. Aksin Somel, *Sirat-ı Müstakim: Islamic Modernist Thought in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1912)*. (MA thesis, Bogazici University, 1987), 4, 38-42.

²⁸⁰ Sukru Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 306-307.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, 307.

Period Ottoman intellectual life, did not entirely cut their support and shift toward a severe opposition against the CUP²⁸².

Islam acquired a more functional role as a social cohesive, reforming impetus and legitimizing tool following the Constitutional Revolution in the eyes of CUP administrators. According to Mardin, the Young Turks were sympathetic to a deistic approach to religion because it allowed them to praise Islam as the most excellent and advanced of all religions while engaging in positivistic reforms of society²⁸³. Tunaya has remarked that Islamist and Turkist policies had increasingly found more and more stress in CUP's program following the calamitous losses of Muslim lands in the Balkan Wars (192-1913)²⁸⁴. The majority of the Ottoman population was now Muslims and pan-Islamic policies emphasizing the caliphate were apparently of more use. Hence Islamic symbols were more frequently employed by the government. Hasan Kayali has pointed out that the Hamidian policies of conversion and sending missions continued during the Young Turk period²⁸⁵. CUP tried to use Islam as a means of propaganda and social cement in order to thwart the centripetal forces of the Ottoman ethnic groups²⁸⁶.

Islamist journal *Islam Mecmuasi* started publication in 1913 by the government was another undertaking for Islamist policies of the CUP. It can be considered in regard to CUP's increasing aspirations for an Islamist policy and need for a reformist voice and opinions of Islam apart from the classical ulema which they deemed as conservative²⁸⁷. In *Islam Mecmuasi*, some of the intellectuals close to CUP like *Şemseddin Günaltay*, *Serafettin Yaltkaya*, *Mansurizade Said*, *Seyyid Bey* and *Ziya Gokalp* published articles. Especially *Ziya Gokalp's* articles about Islamic

²⁸² Ibid, 307.

²⁸³ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 142.

²⁸⁴ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 78-87.

²⁸⁵ Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Quoted in Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 41.

²⁸⁶ Sukru Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 307-308.

²⁸⁷ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 109. Somel, *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, 12-13.

jurisprudence through the lens of Durkheimian sociology were remarkable²⁸⁸. The journal also became an important means for Şemseddin Günaltay to get closer with Ziya Gokalp whose intellectual influences on Şemseddin Günaltay's ideas are undeniable.

However, to Amit Bein, Ottoman administrations of the Second Constitutional Period “were much less invested in nurturing a positive image and maintaining the influence of the religious establishment” and they implemented a modernization program that added to the marginalization of the ulema and Sufi orders²⁸⁹. By the enactment of a reform proposal by Ziya Gokalp in 1915 and 1916, to further standardize and secularize the organization of the state and the religious establishment, a strict government control over the religious establishment was sustained. The medreses were given under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Sharia courts under the Ministry of Justice and secular legal regulations turned operative over the religious law; seyhulislam's position was turned into a purely religious one²⁹⁰. Therefore the political and even social influence of the religion was technically minimized and confined into a “religious” range which was perceived to be purely theological²⁹¹.

Although almost no members of the CUP outspokenly disparaged Islam, criticisms to religion still appeared but as an overtone in the form of challenges to some allegedly “corrupted” religious institutions and social manifestations of religion²⁹². Some intellectuals like Abdullah Cevdet or Ahmet Rıza believed that religion was an archaic social phenomenon (a form of philosophy or complex social organization) and thus incompetent to respond the demands of the time²⁹³. The native culture and

²⁸⁸ Sait Ozervarli, “*Transferring Traditional Islamic Disciplines into Modern Social Sciences in Late Ottoman Thought*”, 323.

²⁸⁹ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 12.

²⁹⁰ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 306-307.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 307.

²⁹² Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 12.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, 15.

traditional epistemologies were depicted as outmoded and backward. Sway of the atheist and anti-religious views of Buchner or Vogt created an outright “criticism against religion but disguised as refutations of superstitions”²⁹⁴. These anti-religious challenges, in the footprints of the European criticism of the Church and clergy, were leveled against the religious establishment, namely against the ulema, *medrese* system and Sufi lodges²⁹⁵. Superstition and fanaticism were the main impediments before progress and civilization just had been in Europe and they had to be wiped out just as in the European history²⁹⁶. These challenges continued crescendo after the Young Turk Revolution.

III.2. How to Understand Islamism (Islamcilik)

According to Serif Mardin, the increasing amount of newspapers, journals and publications after 1908, opened a sphere in which Islam was passionately discussed²⁹⁷. In this juncture, organizations and publications by a wide group of religiously oriented intellectuals flourished and created a movement, named by many as *Islamcilik* (Islamism). *Sırat-ı Müstakim (Sebilürreşad)*, *Islam Mecmuasi*, *Beyanu’l Hak*, *Volkan*, *Tasavvuf*, *Ceride-i Sufiye*, *Hikmet* and so on were some of the journals associated with Islamist intellectuals, ulema or Sufi orders.

A group of intellectuals wrote articles in these journals, especially in *Sebilürreşad*, *Beyanu’l Hak* and *Islam Mecmuasi* have been generally acknowledged as Islamists, and their non-cohesive but diversely collective intellectual production has been called as Islamism²⁹⁸. Yet what late Ottoman *Islamism*²⁹⁹ had been is a complicated

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 12.

²⁹⁵ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 88.

²⁹⁶ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 15-16. Amit Bein, 84.

²⁹⁷ Serif Mardin, *Islam in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Turkey*, 268.

²⁹⁸ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 3-4.

question since there has been no simple definition of or clear-cut boundaries drawn for Islamism as an ideology or movement. Answering this question is already an overambitious task that goes beyond the objective and scope of this study. Also it is almost impossible to regard Islamism as a socially and politically structured project with a sui generis and coherent programme³⁰⁰. Intellectuals who were retrospectively called as Islamist did not already call themselves as Islamist³⁰¹. Nevertheless, a self-consciousness and idealism as well as intellectual attachment pertaining to Islam and being a Muslim can be recognized among a group of devout intellectuals after the Second Constitutional Period.

On the other hand, although there were important commonalities in the themes and discourses of some intellectuals wrote in certain journals and thus called as “Islamists”, we can talk about internal differentiations in their discourses and themes; even there occurred crucial alterations in the writings of a particular author in time or according to context. The definitional ambiguities of Islamism and internal intellectual differentiations of so-called Islamist group led the students of late Ottoman Islamism to make distinctions between differing forms of Islamism(s): Islamic modernists (or modernist Islamists), traditionalist Islamists, conservatives and so on.

²⁹⁹ One of the first uses of the term Islamism in the Ottoman context has been furthered back to Yusuf Akcura’s famous article *Uc Tarz-i Siyaset* (1904), by Niyazi Berkes in *Turkiye’de Cagdaslasma*; while Ismail Kara attributed to Ziya Gokalp’s article called “Three Currents: Turkification, Islamization, Modernization” (*Uc Cereyan: Turklesmek, Islamlasmak, Muasirlasmak*) written in 1913. Probably, Kara’s preference of a later usage seems to be related to Akcura’s use of the term in relation to the Pan-Islamism more as a policy matter and Gokalp’s reference to a broader ideological/intellectual Islamic involvement. Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye’de Cagdaslasma*, 461. Ismail Kara, *Turkiye’de Islamcilik Dusuncesi 1*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayinlari, 1997), 33.

³⁰⁰ Ismail Kara also asserted that Islamism of the Second Constitutional Era lacked a sui generis and comprehensive program. See Ismail Kara, *Islamcilarin Siyasi Gorusleri*, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1994), 6. Ismail Kara, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e *İslamcılık Tartışmaları*” in Yasin Aktay (ed), *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 6: İslamcılık*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 37.

³⁰¹ Babanzade Ahmet Naim rejected the term “İslamci” in the 293th issue of the *Sebilürreşad* in 1914 since he thought that it was not indigenous and expressive to explain anything “Islamic” within its own context. For further detail, see M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Türkiye’de İslam ve İrkçilik Meselesi* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1983).

One discussion has been whether Ottoman Islamism was a phenomenon peculiar to Second Constitutional Period or had some precedence in the Abdulhamid era or among the Young Ottomans. For example, Mumtaz'er Turkone has taken the emergence of Islamism back to Young Ottomans due to the use of Islam as an ideological banner by Namik Kemal or Ali Suavi³⁰². In other words, *ideologization* of Islam understood within a Geertzian sense as a sort of “temporalization” and rationalization of Islamic legitimacy gives birth to Islamism as an ideological and political movement in Turkone's contemplation³⁰³. Turkone's analysis presents useful insights about the importance of ideologization of Islam related to its reification -as discussed in the previous chapter- for the emergence of an Islamist impetus. Nevertheless, Turkone's categorical touchstone of ideologization of Islam to define Islamism is too vague and unelaborated to define what Islamism is and why it should be attributed to Young Ottomans.

Ismail Kara also discusses on this issue and concludes that Young Ottomans were not Islamists since their thought was not mainly based on Islam –whether traditional or as a new ideological form of Islam- but on liberal Western philosophy and patriotism as well as Islam³⁰⁴. Despite the insufficiency of Ismail Kara's counterclaim that Young Ottomans were not Islamists, I think his view implies the lack of a more or less self-conscious and organized ideological alignment mainly –and singularly- around Islam –at least in rhetoric- and use of it as a foundational ground for ideological production that makes it an “ism”. This does not need to reckon without the fact that some of the themes that crystallized in the Second Constitutional Period Islamist discourse can be identified in Young Ottoman thought and Young Ottoman thought lent its intellectual tools and arguments to the Second Constitutional Period Islamists like Mehmet Akif or Manastirli Ismail Hakki³⁰⁵.

³⁰² Turkone, *Islamciligın Dogusu*, 32.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, 24-26.

³⁰⁴ Ismail Kara, *Islamciların Siyasi Gorusleri*, 22.

³⁰⁵ For further details about the inspirational role of the Young Ottomans on Second Constitutional Period Islamists, please see Aksin Somel, *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, 33.

Both Kemal Karpat and Ismail Kara then look for the roots of Islamism in Abdulhamid regime's emblematic use of Islam as an ideological credo³⁰⁶. Nevertheless, as both indicated this Hamidian official Islamism did not generate an intellectually framed current or intellectual body aligned around Islam as an ideological, cultural and theological foundation for their ideas. This can be seen as a phenomenon that would appear in the Second Constitutional Period. Therefore Tarik Zafer Tunaya, Ismail Kara and Serif Mardin all entrenches the ripening of Ottoman Islamism as an ideological/intellectual movement into the Second Constitutional Period³⁰⁷.

One of the earliest scholarly attempts to provide a relatively more comprehensive explanation for Ottoman Islamism was made by Tarik Zafer Tunaya. According to Tunaya, Islamism was an ideological as well as politicized *cereyan* (current) of the Second Constitutional Period and it was a quest for an 'Islamic Renaissance' epitomized by the demand to return to the original sources of Islam³⁰⁸. In his definition, in the ideological level, Islamism claimed to be a system of belief and thought that also looked for social and political institutions; and in the political level, attempted to lead the Ottoman Empire to a certain ideal in order to save it and keep its integrity³⁰⁹.

Despite Tunaya's *Islamcilik Cereyani* (1962) was the first scholarly work that could provide an analytical framework to understand the Ottoman Islamist movement, it nonetheless lacks to give a satisfying account of content and method of the Islamist movement of the Second Constitutional Period in a contextualized manner. Moreover, he especially overlooks the considerable differences within the "current" by identifying Islamism with a mobilized form of traditionalism and conservatism against the modernization movement. What is remarkable in Tunaya's account is his acknowledgement of a "modernist" group within the Islamist current, personified by

³⁰⁶ Kemal, Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 12. Ismail Kara, *Turkiye'de Islamcilik Dusuncesi*, 29.

³⁰⁷ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 19. Ismail Kara, *Turkiye'de Islamcilik Dusuncesi*, 29. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 141-142.

³⁰⁸ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 1-2.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 1-2.

thinkers like *Ismail Hakki (Izmirli)* or *M. Semseddin Günaltay* since they were partially “rationalist” and relatively more “open-minded”, “progressive” and accommodative in terms of embracing some modern tools or ideas to perpetuate Islamic ideals³¹⁰.

A similar vein of thought can be distinguished in Berkes’ *Secularization in Turkey (1964)*. Despite its accomplishment of bringing in a huge bulk of knowledge about the late Ottoman history, the book presents a teleological account of Turkish secularization in which Islamists again appears as reactionaries who reposed in the traditional and thus stood against the destined secularization of the Ottoman-Turkish society³¹¹. In Berkes’ narrative again Islamists were categorized in a dichotomous progressive-obscurantist frame of thought. One important strain in both Tunaya and Berkes’ works is the negative meaning attributed to Ottoman Islamic tradition as something corresponded to obscurantism and stagnancy. In this account, despite the effort put by Tunaya to partially separate Islamists from Ottoman-Islamic tradition in general they were still implicitly identified with an unchanging and remote tradition³¹².

On the other hand, the need to make a more nuanced classification among Islamists seems to be taken as an important problematic by Hilmi Ziya Ulken in his book *The History of Modern Thought in Turkey (1966)*. Ulken distinguishes Islamists into four groups: 1) Traditionalist Islamists (Babanzade Ahmet Naim); 2) Islamic modernists who looked for ways to reconcile medrese learning with the secular learning (Semseddin Günaltay, Ismail Hakki Izmirli, Halim Sabit, Serafettin [Yaltkaya], Ziya Gokalp); 3) Ones tried to find a middle way between traditionalism and modernism (Seyhulislam Musa Kazim Efendi); 4) Anti-modernists (Mustafa Sabri)³¹³. Despite the ambivalence of this categorization due to lack of explanation by Ulken, it still provides a better grasp of the divergences among differing views of supposedly Islamist intellectuals. Even with the operation of the dichotomous frame of analysis between the traditional and the modern, an important aspect in Ulken’s

³¹⁰ Ibid, 18, 75-76.

³¹¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye’de Çağdaşlaşma*, 421.

³¹² Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyanı*, 4, 20.

³¹³ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, 276.

account is the emphasis on the modernist tendencies within the Islamist thought. According to Ulken modernists looked for ways to reconcile the modernity mostly understood in terms of science and reason with basic Islamic tenets³¹⁴.

This modernist pillar in the Islamist thinking has been emphasized both by Serif Mardin and Ismail Kara. Serif Mardin in his book on *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, named the “forward-looking” flank among the Islamist intellectuals and *ulema* as Islamic ‘reformists’ who were in the footprints of *Jamaladdin Afghani* and *Muhammad Abduh* who have been commonly regarded as the fathers of the modern Islamic movement called as Islamic reformism, Islamic modernism or *Salafism*³¹⁵. Mardin counted some of these reformist Islamists as *Mehmet Akif*, *Mardinizade Ebulula*, *Bereketzade Ismail Hakki*, “*Manastirli*” *Ismail Hakki* and again our *Şemseddin Günaltay*. To him, the journal *Sırat-ı Müstakim (Sebilürreşad)* was the mainstay of this reformist movement³¹⁶. The main unifying factor of these intellectuals with Islamical leanings was their demand for reform in Islam according to Mardin; and these reformers were in disagreement with some traditionalists, namely *ulema*, led by *Mustafa Sabri Efendi*³¹⁷. However, different from the literature identifying traditionalist Islamism with obscurantism, Mardin interprets anti-reformist inclination in the late Ottoman Islamic thought as a defensive response to possible dangers of opening the Islamic field to an unprecedented flow of free interpretation and extreme rationalization which might have resulted in “bypassing the precedents established by the classical commentators of Islam”³¹⁸. This could also have brought “the destruction of the accommodation which Islam had reached with localistic practices”³¹⁹. This surely signals a different approach among its counterparts to tradition and reform within the

³¹⁴ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, 200-203, 277.

³¹⁵ Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 144.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 144.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, 144.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, 143.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 144.

late Ottoman Islamist thought that partly goes beyond the dichotomy of progressiveness and reactionism associated with the modern and the traditional.

Ismail Kara reveals a more radical but comprehensive approach to contextually analyze Islamism. According to Kara, late Ottoman Islamism as a whole was a ‘reformist’ movement that took place within a modern paradigm instead of being a movement of *tecdid* (renewal), *islah* (reform) or *ihya* (revival) that has been perceived to take place “within the boundaries of Islamic tradition”³²⁰. In this regard, Ismail Kara provides a more comprehensive explanation for Islamism:

Islamism can be described as a movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that would make Islam as a whole (belief, worship, ethics, philosophy, politics, law, education) dominant ‘again,’ and through rational methods would rescue Muslims and the Islamic world from Western colonialism and imperialism, tyrannical leaders, slavery, imitation, and superstition. It includes a whole range of particularly eclectic, activist and modernist approaches to political, intellectual and scholarly work, research, proposals and solutions in an effort to civilize, unify, and develop. In the Islamic world terms and expressions such as *tecdid*, *islah*, *ittihad-i Islam* (usually translating ‘Pan-Islamism’), and *ihya*, have been employed to refer to Islamism, while in the West such terms as ‘Pan-Islamism’ and, especially in more recent works, ‘modern Islam,’ ‘contemporary Islamic thought,’ and ‘reformist thought in Islam,’ have been used. . . . In this sense then the Islamist movement that emerged in the nineteenth century, for all that it professed an emphasis on returning to the sources, generally remained far from a thorough reform and renewal, and in fact did not even try to carry it out. Since [Islamists] were after emancipation, development, power and control, rather than looking to the past it was much more attractive to think of the future and find urgent solutions to the pressing problems of the day³²¹.

In his understanding, Kara does not reserve any place to modernist, reformist or traditionalist strains of Islamism but collect them under the rubric of Islamism as a modern and modernist phenomenon. Actually the emphasis in Kara’s definition on the exertion of eclectic, activist and modernist approaches and rational methods as well as civilizing and progressive ideals within the ‘Islamist movement’ juxtaposes with Charles Kurzman’s definition of Islamic modernism in a more global context as a modernist approach that self-consciously adopt “modern” values –i.e. rationality and

³²⁰ Ismail Kara, *Turkiye’de Islamcilik Dusuncesi*, 1, 17.

³²¹ Ibid, 17. The English translation of Kara’s definition has been cited from Brian Silverstein, “Islamist Critique in Modern Turkey: Hermeneutics, Tradition, Genealogy”, in *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 47:1 (2005), 138.

science- and use Islamic discourse³²². In this vein, I think Kara's characterization of Islamism seems more likely to be an Islamic modernism in the sense that Kurzman understood.

According to Basheer Nafi, the Islamic reformist movement of the late 19th and early 20th century was primarily an Islamic movement, and to be seen as such it had to employ Islamic tools and idioms and to express itself in Islamic discourse³²³. To him, Islam was the mere frame of reference that reformist could imagine. They were genuinely concerned about Islam's position in the modern world against Western penetration and thus their call for Islam was not a sheer strategic act³²⁴. Basheer Nafi's approach is then useful to underline the Islamic aspect of the Islamist movement in the transnational context in contrast to the stress on modern aspects of the movement. Roxanne Euben approaches Islamic modernism as "an amalgamation of multiple cultural influences, an intricate and dense fabric spun not only from the threads of Western and Enlightenment influence but also from the 'Islams', orthodox and heterodox, that comprise their indigenous traditions"³²⁵. Therefore Islamist ideology was fashioned within a 'syncretistic context' while Islamists were looking for Islamic 'authenticity'³²⁶. I think Euben's explanation gives a more contextually in-depth account of Islamist movement and this approach can be reflected to explain the complex nature of late Ottoman Islamism as a syncretic movement of modern and Islamic influences.

Here I do not make a strict separation between the modern and the traditional or between Islam/Islamic tradition and modernity since they do not hold unchanging,

³²² Charles Kurzman (ed.), "Introduction" in *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

³²³ Basheer M. Nafi, "The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought" in *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* ed. Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 39-40.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 44.

³²⁵ Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, c1999), 115.

³²⁶ *Ibid*, 115.

timeless and dichotomous essences; rather they have been overlapped and also fashioned and reconfigured reciprocally. I am not in favor of labeling Islamism as an untraditional or out-of-traditional phenomenon of renewal like Kara while I do not understand ‘Islamic tradition’ in the stagnant sense that Berkes and Tunaya referred. Rather I am more inclined to see Islamism as a movement brushed by the interactive and overlapping resonances of the Islamic tradition and modernity. In this regard, Islamism employed both traditionally Islamic and modern intellectual and ideological arguments and methods, although again I do not use Islamic and modern exclusively. Even more radically one can interpret late Ottoman Islamism as an extended “subtradition” of the “Islamic discursive tradition” in the sense that Talal Asad and his interlocutors reciprocally defined³²⁷. Nevertheless, this is a claim that should be discussed more elaborately and goes beyond the scope of this study.

Simply speaking, I hold a view of Islamism similar to Euben’s syncretism argument while taking Kara’s and Kurzman’s prioritization of modern impacts on the Islamist thought and Nafi’s emphasis on the Islamicity of the Islamist movement. This understanding of tradition and traditionalism is I think in tune with Mardin’s explanation of traditionalist groups’ reactions. In this regard, I am of the opinion that Kara’s above quoted definition of Islamism also makes enough sense to understand the main outline of the late Ottoman Islamist movement but with some reservations about his claims on Islamism’s relation to Islamic tradition.

I also find it useful to make a distinction between the relatively modernist and more traditionally inclined Islamisms. In this regard, I will use the terms Islamic modernism (or modernist Islamism) and traditionalist Islamism. I therefore locate Şemseddin Günaltay to the modernist side of the spectrum.

³²⁷ Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam”, *Occasional Papers, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1986). For Asad’s interlocutors discussing Islam as a discursive tradition see Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, c2006). Charles Hirschkind, David Scott (ed.), *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006).

III.3. Islamist Mobilization in the Second Constitutional Period

As mentioned earlier, Second Constitutional Period witnessed an Islamist mobilization thanks to the intellectual freedom of the period and various contextual influences and changes. Articulations of Islamist ideological inclinations were forged in close connection to changing context of social, political, and economic institutions and practices. In other words, the ongoing Ottoman transformations since the late 18th century furnished the very context in which the gist of Islamist discourses were unfolded. More specifically, the new *Weltanschauung* of the 20th century Ottoman intellectual life preceding the Second Constitutional Period brushed Ottoman-Islamist discourse with profound strokes. Second Constitutional Period Islamism was indebted to the profound transmutations in the position and function of religion within the Ottoman context since the Tanzimat period as well as new configuration and conceptualization of Islam, especially during the Hamidian period.

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to reckon Second Constitutional Period Islamism as an organized social/political project which proposed a comprehensive reform plan or theoretically discussed the fundamentals and possibilities of change and foundations of a modern Islamic reform. Rather, it was more or less contingently carved out in relation to the actualities and intellectual interactions/discussions of the Second Constitutional Period and enterprises about how to hinder the alarming disintegration of the empire³²⁸. Therefore challenges facing Islam at the beginning of the century were also conducive to the configuration of the Islamist preoccupations and agendas³²⁹. Moreover, the Islamic modernist and Salafi ideas made their imprint in the Ottoman Islamist discourse. Then I think the dispositions of Şemseddin Günaltay's thought should be taken into consideration against the background of these formative influences.

The challenges directed against Islam in principle and in life became one of the impetuses for a group of devout Muslims to mobilize. The challenges to the religious

³²⁸ Ismail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri*, 6.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, 6-8.

establishment, even sometimes proposed by some Islamist intellectuals, became a real menace for the ulema and the Sufi orders after 1908. More often than not, derogatory arguments were brought about representing these groups as socially useless and even harmful with a political and unscholarly language. As a result, some ulema and Sufis established some associations and published some journals. These factors as well as the demand for reform in the medreses and for betterment in their social and political status became conducive for the ulema to adopt new media like journalism, and to get involved into political and civil activities like parties and voluntary associations³³⁰. Some supported cooperation with the CUP-dominated government while others opted for opposition. Some reform-minded ulema like *Musa Kazim Efendi* or *Ubeydullah Efendi* allied with CUP and occupied important government offices like *Seyhulislamate*³³¹. Some others organized themselves into an association called *Cemiyet-i Ilmiye-i Islamiye* (the Ulema Association) in 1908. Shortly after, they initiated the publication of a journal called *Beyanu'l Hak* (Pronouncement of the Truth) by which they would try to resist the increasing pressure on the religious establishment and stigmatizing attitudes by some intellectuals³³². Mustafa Sabri Efendi came to the fore as the leading figure of the journal in order to defend the ulema. He and major contributors of *Beyanu'l Hak* were represented as conservatives defending the status quo and opposing a reform in the religion and religious establishment³³³. However, the journal demanded betterments in medreses and the establishment of the ulema although they generally approached reformist and modernist Islamic attempts/trends with crucial disinclination³³⁴. The association after a brief support it gave to CUP opposed the Committee's administration due to the disregarding and even hostile attitude towards the ulema by some officials³³⁵. Later, the association got close ties with a new political party, *Ahali Firkasi* (People's Party-1910) and Mustafa Sabri became one of the

³³⁰ Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 7.

³³¹ *Ibid*, 95.

³³² *Ibid*, 95.

³³³ For a similar view, see Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 111-115, 127.

³³⁴ For further information, see Amit Bein, *The Ulema*, 71.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 61, 65.

founders of the party which stayed in opposition against CUP during the following decade. Especially Mustafa Sabri Efendi and related ulema put considerable effort through publications to distance themselves from the counterrevolutionary incidence of 31 March (1909) which was perceived as the insurgency of a reactionary group called *Ittihad-i Muhammedi Cemiyeti (Muhammadan Union Association)* led by a Bektashi dervish, *Dervish Vahdeti*³³⁶.

Some Sufi orders and sheikhs also got organized and a group among them founded *Cemiyet-i Sufiye* (Sufi Society) in 1909 under the presidency of *Seyhulislam Musa Kazim Efendi* who was also a devout Naqshbandi. Moreover, the governmental council *Meclis-i Mesayih* which was originally founded in 1866 (The Council of Sheikhs) was reactivated³³⁷ and the foundation of a medrese, *Medrese-i Mesihat*, in order to educate Sufi sheikhs in religious sciences was proposed by some Sufis in 1913 but this project did not work³³⁸. Some journals³³⁹ and books were published by the Sufis and encyclopedic projects for the history of Sufism were launched in order to remedy the deteriorations in Sufi beliefs and practices, to educate Sufis and to spread Sufi values in the society³⁴⁰. These activities were believed by Sufis to cleanse the negative representations of Sufi orders common in the public and therefore to spotlight the social services held by Sufi orders to refine morality and advance the society³⁴¹.

³³⁶ Ibid, 61-95.

³³⁷ Another association was *Cemiyet-i Sufiye-i Ittihadîye* (United Sufi Organization) that was attempted to be established by *Seyh Naili Efendi* in 1908 failed due to the unexpected death of Naili Efendi. Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osmanlılarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (İstanbul: Sır Yayıncılık, 2004), 318.

³³⁸ Ibid, 322.

³³⁹ Some of these journals were *Ceride-i Sufiye*, *Tasavvuf*, *Muhibban*, *Hikmet* (This journal was published by *Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi*) and *Mihrab* (started publication in 1923). The articles in the Sufi journals reflected a great excitement for the Constitutional rule and celebrated it as one of the basic foundations of Islam. For further details, please see Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osmanlılarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 320.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 320.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 320-321.

Surely, the most important among the journals and organizations associated with the Islamist movement of the Second Constitutional Period was *Sırat-ı Müstakim*. Starting its publication in 1908 soon after the Revolution, journal continued till 1925 and changed its name to *Sebilürreşad* in 1912. Islamist intellectuals, members of the ulema, some Sufi-minded intellectuals and during earlier years, non-Islamist intellectuals, who were mostly nationalists, constituted the main body of contributors to the journal. Some of the most famous of these contributors were *Aksekili Ahmed Hamdi, Iskilipli Mehmed Atif, Esref Edip, Manastirli Ismail Hakki, Musa Kazim Efendi, Semseddin Günaltay, Serafettin (Yaltekaya), Mehmet Akif, Bereketzade Ismail Hakki, Babanzade Ahmet Naim, İzmirli Ismail Hakki, Halim Sabit (Sibay), Mardinizade Ebul'ula, Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi, Ferit (Kam), Ismail Fenni (Ertugrul), Mehmet Ali Ayni, Ahmet (Agaoglu), Ahmet Midhat Efendi and Yusuf (Akcura)*. Many of these intellectuals, including Şemseddin Günaltay, had had secular education distinct from the traditional Islamic schools. They “were aware of the products of the European thought of their time: Le Bon, Comte, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer etc”³⁴². Epistemological authority of modern science and reason in the late Ottoman intellectual scene was widely acknowledged by the Islamists.

The discussions that Second Constitutional Period Islamists involved and anti-religious and Orientalist challenges they tackled were influential in the maturation of their ideas. First, we should be reminded that some crucial Second Constitutional Period Islamists frequently got into polemics with some popular intellectuals like Abdullah Cevdet, Tevfik Fikret or Baha Tevfik³⁴³. In these polemics, westernization turned out to be a burning issue associated with the continuing wars in the north-western provinces of the empire³⁴⁴. While Abdullah Cevdet manifestly argued a systematic Westernization entailing the full adoption of Western culture, quite a few Islamists led by Mehmet Akif and Manastirli Ismail Hakki harshly opposed Abdullah Cevdet and recommended a partial reception of European civilization, namely

³⁴² Serif Mardin, “Islam in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Turkey”, 271.

³⁴³ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyanı*, 73.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 73-75.

acquisition of modern sciences and technology³⁴⁵. Moreover, both in *Sebilürreşad* and *Beyanu'l Hak*, “superwesternization” in social life and its supposed consequences like moral corruption, excessive consumption, foppishness and transgression of proper veiling by women in the public were severely criticized³⁴⁶. This brought endless discussions on status of woman in the life, veiling, polygyny, proper family life, morality and so on³⁴⁷.

Keeping the society and social mores upright was then closely associated with the preservation of Islam as a religion. During the Second Constitutional Period anti-religious criticisms mostly by the ‘freethinkers’ or materialists were relatively more frankly expressed. In addition to the unorthodox views and disguised criticisms on Islam by *Abdullah Cevdet* or *Celal Nuri* in *Ictihad*, *Baha Tevfik* set forth materialistic arguments more manifestly against the existence of God and attacked religious establishment in journals *Intelligence* and *Philosophy*³⁴⁸. The assaults on religion and traditional values, institutions created an apologetic sentiment among the ulema and non-clerical devout intellectuals to confront the criticisms. *Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi*, *Ismail Fenni (Ertugrul)*, *Ferid (Kam)*, *Mehmet Ali (Ayni)* and *Ismail Hakki (Izmirli)* wrote anti-materialist, philosophical treaties refuting arguments of Buchner or similar materialists and re-emphasizing the unity of God by gathering evidences derived from Quranic reasoning, anti-materialist philosophy, logic, Western spiritualism as well as modern scientific discoveries³⁴⁹. Şemseddin Günaltay also published two booklets (*İsbat-i Vacib* and *Felsefe-i Ula*) based on translations and substantiating the existence of metaphysics and God against materialists’ claims on the eternity of the matter.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 71, 73.

³⁴⁶ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdas Düşünce Tarihi*, 207.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 207. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyanı*, 74. For examples of the discussions concerning the issue of women, veiling and feminism during Second Constitutional Period see Sadık Albayrak, *Meşrutiyet İstanbul’unda Kadın ve Sosyal Değişim* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Kitap Dağıtım, 2002).

³⁴⁸ Mehmet Akgun, *Materyalizmin Türkiye’ye Girişi ve İlk Etkileri* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1988), 237-238.

³⁴⁹ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye’de Çağdas Düşünce Tarihi*, 281-303.

Islamist circles of the Second Constitutional Period were also quite preoccupied with revisionist accounts of Islam in the Orientalist literature and their articulations in the Ottoman public. Especially *Ernest Renan's* and *Dozy's* ideas about Islam attained important reception in the intellectual circles³⁵⁰. It should be pointed out that Ernest Renan's famous talk named *L'Islamisme et la Science* (1883) that questioned whether Islam had been compatible with modernity, civilizational progress and modern science made profound and long-term impacts on the Ottoman Islamist intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th century and created an apologetic³⁵¹ mode of argumentation in defense of religion which was novel according to Serif Mardin³⁵². Abdullah Cevdet's translation in 1909 of the Dozy's renowned book *Essai sur l'histoire del'Islamisme* (1863) and especially his preface praising Dozy's book in *Ictihad* blew a storm about the truthfulness of Islam and Islamic sources among the Islamists of the empire³⁵³. The book and Cevdet's preface put some doubt on the authenticity of Islamic sources, i.e. *hadiths*, various traditional knowledge transmission channels and Islamic history. Various responses and answers in the defense of Islam were written to both Dozy and Abdullah Cevdet, by Ferid Kam, Mehmet Akif, Manastirli Ismail Hakki and Ismail Fenni³⁵⁴. Islamist intellectuals were looking for the ways to substantiate the cultural and civilizational adaptability of "Islam" to the modern times while trying to divert the challenges. To Kara, this demand led Islamists to attempt to eliminate, modify or disguise the suspected or attacked elements in the religion³⁵⁵.

III.4. Influences of Salafi/Modernist Islamist Thought

³⁵⁰ Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi*, 27.

³⁵¹ Namik Kemal and Jamalladin Afghani wrote responses to Renan's talk. Niyazi Berkes, *Turkiye 'de Cagdaslasma*, 298.

³⁵² Serif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*, 112.

³⁵³ Ibrahim Hatiboglu, "Osmanlı Aydınlarınca Dozy'nin Târih-i İslâmiyyet'ine Yöneltilen Tenkitler", *Islam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1999): 197-213.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 203-208.

³⁵⁵ Ismail Kara, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e *İslamcılık* Tartışmaları", 38-39.

Hilmi Ziya Ulken and Niyazi Berkes argued that the thought of Jamaladdin Afghani and Muhammad Abduh had been the very source of the proposals of Ottoman Islamists³⁵⁶. The epoch that Afghani and Abduh opened has been cited with different names: Islamic modernism, Islamic reformism or modern Salafism. Whether they were the forefathers of Ottoman Islamism or not, it cannot be repudiated that their ideas made their impact felt in the contents of the Ottoman Islamist thought. There were some translations published in *Sebilürreşad* of the writings of Egyptian Islamic modernist thinkers like *Muhammad Abduh, Ferid Vecdi or Qasim Amin*³⁵⁷. Moreover, Mehmet Akif, Manastirli Ismail Hakki, Babanzade Ahmet Naim and some other Islamists had followed (and translated) the writings³⁵⁸ in Islamic modernist/Salafi journal *el-Menar* edited by famous Egyptian Salafi intellectual *Rashid Rida*, who was a disciple of *Muhammad Abduh*. El-Menar was the major Islamist journal during the early decades of the 20th century in the Arabic spoken Muslim world.

The impact of Afghani and Abduh's ideas on Günaltay's thought is conspicuous. Şemseddin Günaltay himself outspokenly mentions Afghani as his mentor³⁵⁹ and recurrently quotes Afghani and Abduh's ideas in his writings. Apart from his statements and references, their touch can be easily felt in his texts. This chapter does not attempt at an analysis of Afghani's and Abduh's lives and thought in their entirety, nor does it aspire to be a full account of Islamic modernism. Although I am well aware that Afghani and Abduh diverged in their comments on some issues and even their ideas evolved in time, I will just try to outline the basics of their views which had very much in common. Here is just a brief review about their ideas and the way these ideas swayed Şemseddin Günaltay's Islamist thought.

³⁵⁶ Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Türkiye'de Çağdas Düşünce Tarihi*, 201. Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaslaşma*, 440.

³⁵⁷ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyanı*, 17.

³⁵⁸ Aksin Somel, *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, 23.

³⁵⁹ M. Semseddin, "Muslumanlık Aleminde İntibah Emmareleri", *İslami Mecmuası*, 1:4 (1916); in Ismail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 1997), 568.

What distinguished the modernist movement of the late nineteenth century from earlier attempts at Islamic “purification” was its profound engagement with the external threat posed by Europe. Afghani and Abduh were both distressed about the decay of the Muslim community in the face of the encroachments of Western imperialist power and were devoted to find some panacea for this deterioration. The main reason of Muslim decadence in their eyes was not ‘true Islam’ but the deviance of true Islam from its truthful core symbolized in the golden age of the earliest generations, *Salaf-i Salihin* (pious forefathers). Then Islam was the main force, both socially and politically, to meet the pushing challenge of Western power, and modernity. Afghani and Abduh thus believed in the necessity to revitalize and reform Islam in the image of its golden age. In other words, there was an urgent need to return to the original sources of Islam: Quran, *Sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet) and traditions of the *Salaf* (pious forefathers)³⁶⁰.

Afghani and Abduh’s ideas about *Salaf*, true Islam, prevalent Islamic traditions and renewal I think need further attention. They both argued that the current state of Islam in Muslim societies was far from the ideal Islamic community of the *Salaf*, namely the community of the Prophet and three generations of his successors. Due to inability of Islamic scholarly tradition to adapt to changing needs after the formative period of Islam, Islamic community had sunk into inertia by which religious life had been filled with *bidats* (innovations), superstitions and irrationalities. For Afghani and Abduh, this divergence from true Islam was then the main reason for Muslim decadence. According to Abduh, one major reason of this decline was the passivating influences of Sufism and superstitions. In this juncture, the true-corrupt Islam dichotomy displayed an apologetic function: the lived, corrupt Islam, which replaced true Islam, was the main cause of decline and real Islam was immune to any charges for hindering Muslims from progress³⁶¹.

³⁶⁰ Cemaleddin Efgani, Muhammad Abduh, *Urvetu’l-Vuska* (Istanbul: Bir Yayincilik, 1987), 87-126. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 113-123, 126-127, 137-150. Roxanne Euben, *Enemy In the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and The Limits of Modern Rationalism*, 96-113. Basheer M. Nafi, “The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought”, 36-40.

³⁶¹ Albert Hourani, 118-123, 126-127, 137-138, 140-141, 143-150. Roxanne Euben, 96-113. Basheer M. Nafi, “The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought”, 36-53. William

Afghani and Abduh also argued that the Islamic legal traditions and scholarship had been stagnant, and juristic opinions developed hundreds of years ago could not have met the demands of radically changing times. They strictly challenged *taqlid* (adherence to past legal opinions and methods in Islamic tradition) in the Islamic tradition supported by the ulema, and the “closure of the *gate of ijtiḥad*”³⁶² (independent interpretation). They frequently iterated the urgent need for adaptation to the modern condition and Islam was originally dynamic and unclosed to change. Therefore *ijtiḥad* was regarded as the means by which general Islamic truths are realized and adjusted to the demands of the times. Ijtiḥad was not only recommended but also imperative for Muslims and it was not an innovation but purely Islamic. While Afghani was more enthusiastic about encouraging ijtiḥad by individuals, Abduh was more cautious by delimiting its exertion in compliance with Islamic law supported by requisite scholarly knowledge and intellectual acuity. The quest for ijtiḥad was then turned into a challenge by Afghani and Abduh against the authority of the ulema that held the scholarship under their superintendence³⁶³.

In Abduh’s frame of thought, the return to the original sources and opening of the gate of ijtiḥad would supersede the disarray of Islamic beliefs and legal schools and unify them in the basic Islamic idea of tawḥid (unity in the Oneness of God) as the main source to liberate man from superstition, myth and irrationality while being the road for Western progress³⁶⁴. The idea of returning to the Salaf, and ijtiḥad and tawḥid signaled the revitalization of Muslim societies morally and politically by circumventing the prevalent Islamic traditions which were deemed by both Afghani and Abduh as

Shepard, “The Diversity of Islamic Thought”, Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi (ed.), *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 70-71.

³⁶² The closure of the gate of ijtiḥad (*bab-i ijtiḥad*) was the common Islamic idea that after the formative period of independent/creative interpretation on generic religious-legal issues remained out of the touch of basic Islamic sources (Quran and sunnah), the main framework of the legal-religious knowledge had been completed in the 11th and 12th centuries. The application of ijtiḥad was no longer needed for basics of the Islamic law and further cases can be dealt with minor practical interpretations within the framework of the basic interpretations of previous scholars.

³⁶³ Albert Hourani, 119, 126-127, 140-141, 145-150. Roxanne Euben, 98-101, 109-113. Basheer M. Nafi, “The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought”, 36-53.

³⁶⁴ Basheer M. Nafi, 41.

corrupt and stagnant. This would entail a reinterpretation of the basic sources and application of *ijtihad* in line with the results of the modern sciences and reason³⁶⁵.

As a result, Afghani and Abduh highly respected reason and science as sound epistemological sources if basic Islamic sources do not provide sufficient guidance in particular circumstances. However they were also deeply convinced that knowledge and science were prerequisites to the power of the West and the decay of Muslim societies was inextricably bound to disregard for science and rational thinking. Both Afghani and Abduh attempted to persuade their audience that Islam when properly understood was not only compatible with science, reason and progress but these were inherent in the true Islam and even commanded by it. Both saw the use of rational methods essential to a proper understanding of religion and interpretation of Quran. In this regard, Afghani sought to display that the results of science were not culturally specific to West but self-evident and universal. This emphasis worked two sided: first to sidestep any charges of infidelity from their opponents; second to explain their Western audience that Islam was compatible with reason and science and thus not a hindrance to progress. Abduh claimed that reason was inherent in human beings, thus it was God-given like revealed truth and as a result the Scripture and reason should not have contradicted with each other. He proposed a similar argument for the harmony of natural and divine laws since natural law was the book of nature and Quran was the book of revelation. Afghani radically claimed that when Scripture apparently contradicted reason or findings of science on a specific matter Scripture should have been reinterpreted in the favor of reason³⁶⁶. Günaltay held the same hermeneutical approach when he favored reason over the traditional interpretations of revelation.

When juxtaposing reason and science with Islam and setting the limits of religious interpretation, according to Roxanne Euben, Abduh was more attentive than Afghani³⁶⁷. He was then relatively more aware of the “costs and dangers of unchecked

³⁶⁵ Albert Hourani, 126-127, 145-150. Roxanne Euben, 98-101, 109-113.

³⁶⁶ Albert Hourani, 126-129, 143-150. Roxanne Euben, 98-101, 109-117. Basheer M. Nafi, “The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought”, 36-53.

³⁶⁷ Euben, 109.

reason for the religious truths beyond human comprehension”³⁶⁸. According to Abduh reason had certain limits in religious matters and it must have conformed to the Islamic law as some knowledge was entirely inaccessible to man like the existence of God and there had been knowledge in Quran beyond the level of current scientific knowledge³⁶⁹. Nevertheless, they both commanded that the Quranic premises and religion had been in accord with reason, the findings of new sciences and natural law. In short, in Afghani and Abduh’s vision true Islam was a religion of reason and science. Therefore Islam was represented by Islamic modernists as a crucial associate of modernity and civilizational advancement³⁷⁰.

Nevertheless, they argued that Muslims need not and should not turn to secularism because Islam, properly understood, is adequately suited to modern needs. Christianity might be authoritarian, intolerant and obscurantist, but Islam was rational and encouraged science and learning, rejected the blind acceptance of authority and allowed a wide range of interpretation. This illustrates the apologetic tendency that characterizes much Islamic modernism³⁷¹.

In this respect, Roxanne Euben argued that Afghani and Abduh’s reformist rationalism and scientism, and their opposition to the authority of the ulema and the leverage of habit and tradition were highly influenced by European Enlightenment³⁷². Nevertheless, their thought was a coalescence of various cultural influences of the thread of Western thought and Enlightenment and ‘Islams’³⁷³. Therefore their ideology was fashioned within a ‘syncretistic context’ while ironically they were looking for

³⁶⁸ Ibid, 109.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 109-112.

³⁷⁰ Albert Hourani, 124-125, 145-148. Roxanne Euben, 98-101, 109-117. Basheer M. Nafi, “The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought”, 36-53.

³⁷¹ Albert Hourani, 118, 123, 144, 148. Roxanne Euben, 98-101, 109-117. William Shepard, “The Diversity of Islamic Thought”, 70-71.

³⁷² Euben, 115.

³⁷³ Ibid, 115.

Islamic ‘authenticity’³⁷⁴. The same syncretism argument seems accurate for Ottoman Islamist thought and Şemseddin Günaltay in particular.

Moreover both Hourani and Euben interpreted Afghani’s ideas less theologically and theoretically oriented but defensive of the culture compared to theological and philosophical nature of Abduh’s work³⁷⁵. Abduh also as a scholar in *Al-Azhar* was hence more theologically and scholarly concerned about the outcomes of his ideas and this provided him with a kind of self-reflexive boundedness to comply with the Islamic tradition. Afghani was then perceived by Hourani and Euben as more libertarian in his Islamic reformism and open to unconventional interpretations by the use of self-delineated rationality³⁷⁶. Even Nikki Keddie argued that Afghani valued Islam for its usefulness as a source of a cohesive political identity for the uneducated masses, rather than as a true religion³⁷⁷. This interpretation seems a little bit overstated yet the relative volatility of Afghani’s thought is remarkable while thinking his inspirational position for Şemseddin Günaltay’s thought. It is arguable if Günaltay found a fertile example in the latitudinarian rationalism and modernism of Afghani’s thought for his protean and accommodative ideas and conceptions for an Islamic reform.

III.5. Basic Pillars of Ottoman Islamist Thought

Many of the threads and concerns of Afghani and Abduh’s ideas can be detected in the discourses of the Ottoman Islamist intellectuals. The Ottoman Islamists had a real concern about Islam’s position in the modern world and the deepening sense of self-decline and more specifically about survival of the Ottoman Empire as the sole

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 115.

³⁷⁵ Euben, 106, 114. Hourani, 144.

³⁷⁶ Euben, 114-115. Hourani, 162.

³⁷⁷ Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* (Berkeley: Iniversity of California Press, 1968), 38.

independent Muslim nation³⁷⁸. On the other hand, they felt self-obliged to counterbalance the intellectual, theological and political challenges leveled against Islam³⁷⁹. Therefore they sought to chart a way between accommodating the new condition and preserving the Islamic identity of society by reviving the meaningfulness of religious beliefs and maintaining the relevance of Islamic faith to the radically changing times³⁸⁰. Then reaching reconciliation between the modern condition and what they perceived to be Islamic was an urgent call to fill the opening gap between the West and the Muslim world³⁸¹.

Science, modern techniques and reason were the most vital and justifiable mediums which Muslims needed to survive and progress while protecting the very core of the Islamic identity of the Muslim societies³⁸². Therefore they engaged into arguing that not only modern sciences and rationality were compatible with Islam but also the revelation in its nature inhered rationality and scientific truths and Sharia obliged the application of rational thinking and scientific endeavor³⁸³. Sehbenderzade, Said Halim Pasha, Mehmet Akif, Said Nursi, Seyyid Bey, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, Şemseddin Günaltay and even Mustafa Sabri Efendi –who was deemed as more conservative compared to other Islamists- passionately argued the central place of reason in Islam. Said Halim Pasha argued that Islam actually contained positivism in itself³⁸⁴ and Ahmet Hamdi Akseki³⁸⁵ embarked upon writing a treatise on the central place of reason in Islam by demonstrating how frequently reason (*akıl*) was referred and promoted as a

³⁷⁸ Ismail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri*, 7.

³⁷⁹ Ismail Kara, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e *İslamcılık* Tartışmaları”, 37-38.

³⁸⁰ Ismail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri*, 19.

³⁸¹ Ismail Kara, *Türkiyede İslamcılık Düşüncesi 1*, 27.

³⁸² Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Cereyanı*, 18-19, 89.

³⁸³ Ismail Kara, *Türkiyede İslamcılık Düşüncesi 1*, 57.

³⁸⁴ Said Halim Pasa, *Buhranlarımız ve Son Eserleri*, (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2006), 201.

³⁸⁵ For Ahmet Hamdi’s views on reason’s place in Islam see Ismail Kara, *Türkiyede İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2*, 301-306.

foundation of religious knowledge and individual responsibility in Quran and Sunnah. They also promoted Islamic reasoning since it encouraged skepticism towards, rather than an unquestioning obedience to, the authority of tradition. Reason and science were also important means for arriving at a better understanding of Islam and freeing Muslims from the shackles of *taassup* (fanaticism), *hurafat* (superstitions) and *taqlid* (blind imitation) of the current Islam³⁸⁶.

Islamist modernists also complained about the current degeneration in Islamic tradition and narrow-mindedness of the Islamic scholars. Centuries of *taqlid* of predecessors and the effects of innovations and superstitions had resulted in a disarray and corruption of the latter-day Islam, drawn apart from the pristine Islam of the early ages³⁸⁷. Islamic scholarship had fallen into the clutches of irrational dogmatism and idle scholasticism. Islamists also severely criticized clericalism as an irrational and monopolistic exploitation of religion by a privileged class and argued that there had not been any sort of clericalism in Islam unlike Christianity. By this rejection of clericalism they were actually defending Islam against the anti-religious criticisms originally sprang in Europe to challenge the Church but transferred to Islamic context by some freethinkers or materialists. In other words, Christianity was a serious impediment to progress as an irrational, anti-scientific, dogmatic, power-seeking and exploitive religion but Islam was untainted by any similar association. This anti-clerical discourse was also formulated as a challenge to the authoritative religious position of the ulema that were now archaic; and they could thereby contest the ulema and Sufi sheikhs for the interpretation of religious issues³⁸⁸. Popular beliefs were in the grip of superstitions, innovations (*bidats*)³⁸⁹ and quietist convictions of Sufism. The outcomes of degeneration in Muslim community were claimed to be the scattering of ignorance and deviant beliefs/mezhebs among the populace by Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, Mehmet Akif, Ismail Hakki Izmirli, Seyhulislam Musa Kazim, Seyyid Bey, Sehbenderzade, Elmalili Hamdi, Mehmet Ali Ayni and Günaltay.

³⁸⁶ Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 1*, 62.

³⁸⁷ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 7-8.

³⁸⁸ Ismail Kara, *Turkiye'de Islamcilik Dusuncesi 1*, 59-62.

³⁸⁹ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Islamcilik Cereyani*, 9.

The cure for the corruption and decline was returning to the basic sources, the Quran and Sunnah, by modeling the Islam of the early ages of Islam called *Asr-i Saadet* (Golden Age)³⁹⁰. This entailed the reinterpretation of Quran and other Islamic sources in the light of advanced knowledge and vision of the time. That involved a call for *ijtihad*, which would make room to accord religious matters with the necessities of the time, not being bound by the *ijma* (consensus) of the legal schools (*mezhebs*; plural, *mezahib* – *madhabs* in Arabic form) of Islamic jurisprudence. This would help rejoin *tawhid* (unity) (of the *mezahib*³⁹¹) which was a basic tenet of the “true Islam”. Therefore, returning to the original Islam and the use of *ijtihad* would sustain the creation of an ideal Islam dissociated from the unwelcome bearings of traditional religious life³⁹².

There emerged the rhetoric of “true Islam” among Islamists counterposed to degraded modes of traditional Islam. The call for returning to the early Islam and original sources was commonly associated with uncovering of the “essence” or “spirit” of Islam. Similar to Şemseddin Günaltay; Said Halim Pasha³⁹³ and Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi³⁹⁴ mentioned the necessity to bring out the essence of Islam while Mehmet Akif³⁹⁵ and Seyyid Bey³⁹⁶ expressed this essence as *ruh-i Islam* (spirit of

³⁹⁰ Ismail Kara, *Turkiye’de Islamcilik Dusuncesi 1*, 57. The references to *Asr-i Saadet* can be observed in the works of Mehmet Akif, Said Halim Pasha, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, Ismail Hakki Izmirli, Seyyid Bey and Şemseddin Günaltay and so on.

³⁹¹ This idea was expressed as *tevhid-i mezahib* by Ottoman Islamists.

³⁹² *Ibid*, 60-62.

³⁹³ Said Halim Pasha also used the term *sahs-i manevi* (embodiment of the spirit) of Islam. Said Halim Pasa, *Buhranlarimiz*, 230.

³⁹⁴ Sehbenderzade expressed these ideas in his booklet, *Tarih-i Islam (Dozy’nin Tarih-i Islam’ina Reddiye)*. For further details on his ideas about the spirit of Islam see Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcillik Dusuncesi 1*, 84.

³⁹⁵ Mehmet Akif mentioned spirit of Islam in his poem “*Din*” (religion) which took place in his poetry collection *Suleymaniye Kursusu* in 1912. Mehmet Akif Ersoy, *Safahat*, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), 184-185.

³⁹⁶ Examples of Seyyid Bey’s views on spirit of Islam can be observed in his article “*İctihad ve Taklid*” published in *Islam Mecmuasi*’s 4th and 5th issues in 1914. For this article see Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcillik Dusuncesi 2*, 306.

Islam). Ruh-i Islam should have been the substantive inner logic of Islamic religion which would operate like a backbone through which drift of Islamic reform would have been derived and out of which the destructive shell of traditional practices would be eliminated. In this regard, Sehbenderzade bid to single out the very logic/essence of Islam out of the subsidiary (*tali*) ideas and taassup³⁹⁷. Therefore superstitions, taassup, deteriorated customs of Sufism, taqlid, dogmatism, ignorance and so on had been represented as the harmful shell of the Islamic traditions that adulterated the quintessence of Islamic message³⁹⁸. Therefore an exclusionary and dichotomous discursive mode was rendered to pinpoint the Islam in its unspoilt form within the Islamist thought. The result was not only a dichotomous idealism of Islam but also the essentialization of Islam as a “religion”, in line with its reification as previously presented. This essentializing approach can be observed as a crystallizing tendency in the Islamist circles during the Second Constitutional Period.

In my opinion, in Günaltay’s ideas and language we can find the most conspicuous exemplar of essentialized conceptualization of Islam. One salient feature which makes him noteworthy is the instrumental use of the exclusionary dichotomy of true and corrupt Islam.

III.6. Views on Sufism and Superstitions in the Late Ottoman Period

It should be noted that the anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses were not new to the Islamic intellectual milieu. There was a centuries old indigenous tradition of internal criticism towards Sufi practices and beliefs as well as superstitions³⁹⁹. The earliest example of this criticism can be distinguished in the ideas of famous *Hanbelite* scholar *Ibn Taymiyya* (1263-1328) who has been received as the forefather of the *Salafi*

³⁹⁷ Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islammillik Dusuncesi 1*, 82, 84.

³⁹⁸ Ismail Kara, “Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism”, 550.

³⁹⁹ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 59.

thought. Ibn Taymiyya launched a serious criticism denouncing the practices and beliefs, which were incorporated into the Islamic tradition after the time of the Prophet and the *Salaf-i Salihin* (pious forefathers of Islam) and contradicted with the basic premises of Islam. These were labeled as *bidat*, innovations that diverged from the basic *akaid* (creeds) of the *Salaf*. His criticisms were particularly leveled against some folk beliefs like reverence to saints, tomb visits; pantheistic Sufi beliefs, mostly instilled within the Sufi tradition by Ibn Arabi, and ritualistic aspects of Sufi orders like *zikr* (ceremonial mentioning of God) or *sama* (dervish whirling). His criticisms became influential within the latter-day Islamic thought, especially among some *Hanbelite* scholars and major Sufi orders like Naqshbandiyya, as well as Salafi modernist thought. For instance, in 18th century Hanbelite scholar *Muhammad Ibn Wahhab* and his followers with a radicalized interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya's rhetoric on *bidat* staged an offensive ostracizing campaign against all the practices that cannot be trailed back to the Prophet's time within the Islamic tradition⁴⁰⁰.

Anti-Sufi criticism following Taymiyyan line of thought found adherence in the central Ottoman territories 16th century onwards. An alim, *Mehmed Birgivi Efendi*⁴⁰¹ came up with a puritanical challenge to some practices in the Sufi circles as well as

⁴⁰⁰ Ellizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, 3-11. Hourani, *Arabic Thought In the Liberal Age*, 18-22. Basheer M. Nafi, "The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought", 29-37. We can trace this renewing tendencies in Islamic world about the doctrine and practices through scholars like *al-Harawi* (d. 1606) or Sufi ulamas like *Ibrahim al-Kurani* (1616-1689) or *Ahmad Sirhindi* (1564-1624). Especially Sirhindi's rejection of more ritualistic features of tariqas like *sama* and devaluation of the retreat from the world resulted in the convergence of Naqshbandi order to the orthodox Islamic doctrine and sharia, and the missionary activism of the order. His revivalist activity was one of the first attempts of fundamental reform within the Sufi tradition that will later go on with various waves and spread from India and Turkestan to other Islamic territories like Iran, Anatolia and Fertile Crescent. We can also talk about the genre of *el-Milel ve 'n-Nihal* or books of *Elfaz-ı Küfür ve Kebair* that aim to expose the heresies and deviances and hurafat and *bidat* in the society with their sources and entrances into the Islamic life. Abdulkerim es-Shehristani has a famous book in this genre; look at, Muhammed eş-Şehristânî, *Milel ve Nihal: Dinler, Mezhepler ve Felsefi Sistemler Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2008).

⁴⁰¹ Birgivi also had strong Sufi ties similar to Ibn Taymiyya. Moreover, his condemnation consisted of the central Ottoman ulema due to their close linkages with the Sufis and pious endowment controversies. For further information see Madeline Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 143-145.

superstitions and bidats in the social life⁴⁰². His followers *Kadizade Mehmed, Ustuvani Mehmed and Vani effendis* popularized and radicalized his criticism through preaching in some major mosques of Istanbul⁴⁰³. Recent scholarship displayed that Birgivi's and Kadizade Mehmed Efendi's main arguments revolved around the realignment of Sufi practices and beliefs within the boundaries of orthodox Islam with reference to original sources and by purging of degenerative elements within traditional Islam⁴⁰⁴. This trend can be juxtaposed with the tendency towards Sunni orthodox Islam during the sheikhulislamate of *Ibn Kemal* and *Ebu Suud* effendis. Their belligerent religious opinions (fetwas) on heresy and blasphemy (*zindiklik* and *ilhad*) to describe what is truly Islamic, and on some Sufi orders/sheikhs or practices and rites like *sama* reminds us the centrality of the internal controversies about Sufi practices and endorsing the true beliefs within the Islamic tradition. Also one important aspect in the rhetoric of Ibn Taymiyya or Imam Birgivi is the diligence to detach 'true Sufism' from the false which can be also scrutinized as a common approach in the modern anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses⁴⁰⁵.

The pre-modern *bidat* and *hurafat* language inherited by modern Salafi and Islamist thought was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries combined with new Western-inspired anti-Sufi tools and discourses⁴⁰⁶. According to Itzshak Weissman:

In the wake of the increasing consolidation of the state and the spread of Western rationalism, Sufis came to be regarded as a major cause of the so-called decline of Islam and an obstacle to its adaptation. In the Arab world, the anti-Sufi feeling was generally associated with the *Salafiyya* trend ... discrediting the latter-day tradition, which was described as cherishing mystical superstition

⁴⁰² Madeline Zilfi, *Politics of Piety*, 129-145.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 129-145.

⁴⁰⁴ Dina Le Gall, "Kadizadelis, Naksbendis, and Intra-Sufi Diatribe in Seventeenth-century Istanbul" *The Turkish Studies Association Journal*, 28(1-2), 3, 7-8. Derin Terzioglu, *Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyazi Misri (1618-1694)* (PHD diss., Harvard University, 1999), 192-193, 209, 211, 212.

⁴⁰⁵ Derin Terzioglu, *Niyazi Misri*, 192, 209, 212.

⁴⁰⁶ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, 59. The linkages between the Wahhabi and 19th-20th century Salafi and modernist thoughts can be reminded in this parallel. Yet this would be another topic of study.

as well as scholarly stagnation and political quietism. Under the burden of this critique, and as a response to the general expansion of education and literacy, Sufism has been forced to assimilate new ideas and to make room for a new form of organization; the populist Islamic association⁴⁰⁷.

Starting from 1870s, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Afghani voiced serious condemnations of the Sufi orders for encouraging laziness, inactivity, fatalism and blind obedience to sheikhs and authorities among people and running counter to reason⁴⁰⁸. According to Abduh much of the existing Sufism had departed from the authentic Islamic faith and they were contributing to the social malaise and decline of the Muslim societies. Sufis had Muslims retreat from the worldly affairs and working, while assuming intermediary roles between the believers and the God⁴⁰⁹. Even conservative sheikh Abu al-Huda admitted that Sufism was in decline and he thus attempted to distinguish true Sufis from the degenerated ones⁴¹⁰. Anti-Sufi critique was sharpened at the outset of the 20th century by Rashid Rida's famous avant-garde Salafi journal *al-Menar* which was also quite influential on the Ottoman Islamist intellectuals of Second Constitutional Period⁴¹¹.

As Casanova claimed, the militant secularist branches of the post-Enlightenment thought, degrading the religious knowledge and worldviews as pre-scientific and pre-logical, had even gone further to identify religion with superstition

⁴⁰⁷ Itzhak Weissman, "Between Şūfī Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafīyya from the Damascene Angle". In *Die Welt des Islams, New Series*, Vol. 41, Issue 2, (Jul., 2001), p. 39.

⁴⁰⁸ According to Sirriyah, Afghani's impressions of the Sufi orders in the Ottoman capital between 1869 and 1871 led him to a more severe criticism of Sufi orders in contrast to the true Sufism in Afghanistan and Herat region. Afghani mentions his impressions of Sufis of the capital as follows: 'Later these people sank into ease and laziness. It remained in the corners of the madrasas and the dervish convents; to such a degree that the lights of virtue were on the point of being extinguished; the banners of education were about to disappear. The suns of prosperity and the full moon of perfection began to wane.' Elizabeth Sirriyah, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, 68, 72.

⁴⁰⁹ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, 92-94.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid*, 80.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid*, 101.

and ignorance⁴¹². Therefore the “light” of reason and science was perceived as the cure to “the darkness of religious ignorance and superstition”⁴¹³. The idea that Sufi orders and superstitions are one of the main impediments before Muslim regeneration and progress was a discursive outcome of these intellectual trends mostly found adherence in the Ottoman versions of the materialist/positivist anti-religious criticism. Post-Enlightenment rationalist critique of religious mysticism, metaphysics and religious establishment had already started to make their weight felt in the Ottoman Empire since the Tanzimat period⁴¹⁴. *Ali Suavi* denounced Sufi orders as the main cause of civilizational backwardness of Muslim people⁴¹⁵. Similar views were held by some Young Turk intellectuals, despite the fact that Young Turk group included some Sufi members, and secular Young Turks were mostly cautious about religious issues. While *Ahmet Rıza Bey* in 1896 depicted sheikhs as agents degenerating the morality and ideas in the society in Young Turk journal *Mechveret*⁴¹⁶, Abdullah Cevdet was frequently tilting at superstitions and folk beliefs in *Ictihad*⁴¹⁷.

In the Second Constitutional Period intellectual setting, the intellectual tools and methods of post-Enlightenment and *Salafî* anti-Sufi and anti-superstition criticisms were amalgamated. A negating rhetoric on Sufism and *hurafat* (superstitious beliefs) became more visible. The discussions around the Sufi lodges and superstitions mainly took place in some important journals of the period: *Ictihad*, *Sirat-ı Müstakim (Sebilürreşad)*, *İslam Mecmuası*⁴¹⁸. Materialist Baha Tevfik involved into the discussions with his writings in journals his *Philosophy* and *Intelligence*. Abdullah Cevdet was a severe critique of superstitions while Kiliczade Hakki, Celal Nuri harshly

⁴¹² Jose Casanova, *Public Religions*, 31.

⁴¹³ *Ibid*, 32.

⁴¹⁴ Sukru Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 12.

⁴¹⁵ Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osmanlılarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 316.

⁴¹⁶ Serif Mardin, *Jon Turkler*, 136.

⁴¹⁷ Sukru Hanioglu, “Blueprints for a Future Society” in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. **Elizabeth Ozdalga** (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2005), 34.

⁴¹⁸ Some contributors to *İslam Mecmuası* like Serafettin Yaltkaya also involved into these discussions.

attacked Sufi orders⁴¹⁹. Ahmet Hamdi (Akseki), Seyyid Bey, M. Şemseddin (Günaltay), Manastirli Ismail Hakki, Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi, Mehmet Akif, Mehmet Ali Ayni and Said Halim Pasha were some of the Islamists/Islamic modernists who were concerned about Sufism and criticized the degeneration in the Sufi lodges, and superstitions. Nevertheless, unlike materialists, they were looking for a reform in the Sufi orders⁴²⁰. In relation to the generic view that Muslim societies were in decline, it is prevalently discussed by these Islamists and materialists that Sufi orders were in a downfall and superstitions infested the social life in the Muslim world⁴²¹. Even it is argued that superstitions and the deteriorations in Sufi orders were of the reasons of the social/political decline and backwardness in the Ottoman Empire⁴²².

There were visible similarities between the language on Sufi orders and superstition of the Islamists and authors of *Ictihad*. According to Sukru Hanioglu, Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik's criticisms of superstition were disguised challenges originally targeted to religion⁴²³. According to Kiliczade Hakki tekkes and zawiyas, had become a source of laziness/passivity and weakness and ignorant sheikhs who knew nothing but superstitions and incantations like *hu*, *eyvallah*, *erenler* had

⁴¹⁹ Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Gunumuz Tasavvuf Hareketleri* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayinlari, 2002), 53-56.

⁴²⁰ Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 549.

⁴²¹ An example of this view can be observed in Halim Sabit (Şibay)'s article named "Dinin Sekl-i Aslisine Irca'i Luzumu (The Reversion of Religion to its Original Form)" in the 278th issue of *Sebilürreşad* in 1913:

"Our beliefs have mixed up with many superstitions; many of the things, which we teach and apply, thinking that they spring from our beliefs, are nothing more than problems deriving from the passage of time, enmities and misguided policies. In this way we have made the simple beliefs of Islam more complex. As this complexity has increased we have moved farther and farther away from the spirit of Islam and from the words of the prophet". In Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 548.

⁴²² The rhetoric interlinking superstitions and decline can be observed in *Sirat-ı Müstakim*'s 176th issue in 1911 quoted from an article, "Muslumanlari Hayata Davet" originally published in *Hak Yolu* journal published in Baku:

"For a long time one has been hearing in the mouths of the public some superstitious statements that are the main cause of our decadence and decline. One of these and maybe the most destructive is the statement "the world is theirs (infidels), but the other world is ours." Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 554.

⁴²³ Sukru Hanioglu, "Blueprints for a Future Society", 34.

harmed the population both mentally and spiritually while tricking people⁴²⁴. In this narrative, Sufi orders and so-called superstitious beliefs were portrayed as contaminated -and thus as the main sickness of the society- and as “enemies” of the social life and progress⁴²⁵. Even Celal Nuri went further to claim that Sufism had been the spiritual opium for the society⁴²⁶. Similar views about the contaminating effects of superstitions and some Sufi orders were set forth by some Islamists like Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, Seyyid Bey and Şemseddin Günaltay.

The discourse of proliferation of superstitions and deterioration of Sufi orders can also be discerned in Islamists’ writings. Similar to Günaltay’s historical inquiry for the emergence of superstitions, Said Halim Pasha evaluated the leading cause for the

⁴²⁴ Kiliczade Hakki’s social reform proposition disguised as a dream explained in the article with the heading of “Pek Uyanık bir Uyku” (A very Awake Sleep) published in the 6th and 20th of March issues of *İctihad* in 1913:

“tekkes and zawiyas, which nowadays have become a source of laziness, have up to now been considered subsistence income for the sons of sheikhs, instead of being transferred to benevolent institutions to the needy. The other ignorant sheikhs who have inherited their positions (learned and virtuous sheikhs) and who know nothing but superstitions and incantations like hu, eyvallah, erenler and that have harmed the population up to now, will be made to work to earn their living and those among them that persist in the dishonorable trick of nefes etmek (spells done to cure illnesses by breathing on people) will be punished”....”Offers to saints will be forbidden and channeled towards the Navy or National Defence Associations”. Ismail Kara, “Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism”, 545. For the articles of Kiliczade’s reform proposal see Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkilabi Tarihi cilt II, kısım IV* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 441-443.

⁴²⁵ In his article “İtikadat-i Batılaya İlan-ı Harb”(Declaration of War to the Superstitious Beliefs) published in *İctihad*, issue 51, in March 27, 1914, Kiliczade declared dervishes as ‘internal enemies’. “softalarla dervişlerle ilan-ı cihad etmek artık farz olmuştur. Bu iki düşman-ı dahiliyyeye...” “...Diyebilirim ki Muslumanların tedenniyat-i avamilinden ve ehemlerinden birisi de şu softalık ve dervişlik efkârının ruh-u millete sirayet etmesidir”. See in Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkilabi Tarihi cilt II, kısım IV*, 447. Seyyid Bey also expressed superstitions as the biggest sickness of Muslims. For Seyyid Bey’s views see Ismail Kara, *Türkiyede İslamcılık Düşüncesi*, 305. This article was originally published as “*İctihad ve Taklid*” in *İslam Mecmuası*’s 4th and 5th issues in 1914.

⁴²⁶ In order to express the narcotic effects of contemporary Sufi beliefs Celal Nuri used the expression “*adeta sinirleri uyusturmıştır*” in his book *Tarih-i Tedenniyat-ı Osmaniye* published in 1913. Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkilabi Tarihi cilt II, kısım IV*, 444. For similar views by Şemseddin Günaltay proclaiming the narcotic effects of degenerated Sufi practices, please look at Semseddin Günaltay, *Hurafattan Hakikate (Hurafeler ve İslam Gerçeği)*. (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları,1997), 304.

degeneration of Islam as the penetration of superstitions to Islam from other Middle Eastern beliefs during its classical period⁴²⁷. Said Halim Pasha, Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi and Seyyid Bey like Şemseddin Günaltay argued that syncretism of cultural elements from local religions, ungrounded customs, traditions and Islam created superstitious beliefs in Islam⁴²⁸. Degenerate Sufi orders, some ignorant sheikhs, unlearned imams and ulema were argued to be the agents that generated superstitions in Islam by Manastirli Ismail Hakki, Seyyid Bey, Ahmet Hamdi (Akseki) and Şemseddin Günaltay⁴²⁹. In addition to Manastirli, Seyyid Bey and Ahmet Hamdi (Akseki), Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi argued that folk beliefs were under the yoke of superstitions and digressions from Islam⁴³⁰. According to these Islamic modernist intellectuals, the populace was ignorant and prey to delusive effects of the superstitions that kill the spirit of Islam⁴³¹. As a result Islamists advocated educating people as a necessary measure to fight superstition. Superstitions were not only perceived to be contrary to the spirit of Islam but they were also incompatible with the modern knowledge, sciences and reason⁴³².

On the other hand, tekkes and dervishes/sheikhs were held responsible for the emergence of superstitions that harmed the Islamic beliefs and rites by giving way to

⁴²⁷ Said Halim Pasa, *Buhranlarımız*, 195-197.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, 196. For Sehbenderzade's views on the issue of syncretism see Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 553. For Seyyid Bey's views see Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 2*, 304.

⁴²⁹ For Manastirli's views look at Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 560. These views were originally explained in the article "Vucub-i Intibah", *Sirat-ı Müstakim*, 136, p. 85-86. For Seyyid Bey's views see Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 2*, 305-306. For Akseki's views, See Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 2*, 361, 369. The original article: "Dini Muesselerimiz Hakkında Bir Rapor", *Islam*, 34 (1960). (This was a report presented to the government by the Chairmanship of Religious Affairs in 1950). This is also important to show continuity of anti-Sufi discourses into the Republican realm in the religious and governmental level.

⁴³⁰ For a sample of Sehbenderzade's views on the agents of degeneration see Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 1*, 73-75, 82.

⁴³¹ Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 1*, 82, 305-306.

⁴³² Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 559.

pre-Islamic beliefs in Islamic tradition. Dissimilar to mentioned views on superstitions, it is quite difficult to talk about the existence of a wholesale negative vision on Sufism among Islamists. According to Ismail Kara, Sufism was perceived as a legitimate way of comprehending and interpreting Islam and part of Islamic sciences and life style⁴³³ and it was also necessary for social life, namely social morality and solidarity⁴³⁴. For example, Ziya Gokalp emphasized the functionality of Sufi orders for creating social cohesion and ethical foundations for individuals in his articles⁴³⁵. In the meetings for the foundation of *Dar'ul Hikmet-i Islamiye* (Academy of Islamic Knowledge/Wisdom) in the parliament in 1918, Bahri Efendi, the director of Council of Sheikhs and Şemseddin Günaltay insisted on the pivotal function of Sufi orders to elevate the national spirit by solidarity and by maintaining social morality⁴³⁶. However, a distinction was made between Sufism in its true form and current form of Sufi life. In other words, “true Sufism” that was valuable in the past and helped building Muslim community, had now lost with reality and caused the decline of Islam⁴³⁷.

In the Islamist discourses, fatalism, passivity, resignation and laziness were seen as main features of the contemporary religious orders. Ismail Kara argued with various examples that the Sufi dictums *bir lokma, bir hirka* (one piece of bread and a cloak), *dunyadan el etek çekmek* (resignation from the world) expressing *kanaat* (contentment), *tevazu* (humility) and *riza* (compliance) were reinterpreted as the symbols of passivism, laziness, abasement and extreme poverty inflicted by misinterpreted Sufism⁴³⁸. Main Sufi morals like acquiescence (*teslimiyet*), ascetism (*zuhd*) and contentment were downgraded in the face of the increasing importance of new values like enthusiasm,

⁴³³ Ibid, 553.

⁴³⁴ In this respect for example Mehmet Ali (Ayni) interpreted Sufism as a moral police for the individuals to keep them from the evil. For further details, see Mehmet Ali Ayni, “Bizdeki Tarikatlar”, *Intikad ve Mulahazalar*, 1923, p. 140; in Ismail Kara, *Turkiyede Islamcilik Dusuncesi 2*, p. 86.

⁴³⁵ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, 119.

⁴³⁶ Mustafa Kara, *Metinlerle Osmanlilarda Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 315.

⁴³⁷ Ismail Kara, “Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism”, 553.

⁴³⁸ Ibid, 554.

perseverance, richness, owning property which previously had not been given much emphasis⁴³⁹. Manastirli Ismail Hakki, Seyyid Bey, Mehmet Akif and Şemseddin Günaltay argued that Sufi orders enjoining indolence, fatalism and otherworldliness had distorted the ideal Islamic community composed of active people giving necessary weight to the worldly living⁴⁴⁰. This influence was the main reason for the decay of the Muslim societies. Another question arose about the Sufi orders was related to their methodologies like inspiration, miracles or spiritual exploration which were deemed as irreconcilable with modern sciences and rationality⁴⁴¹.

These claims were even –partially- appropriated –or admitted– by some intellectuals with Sufi inclinations and by some Sufi sheikhs in the empire. Mehmet Ali Ayni who was a Sufi devotee wrote with an apologetic language that the current state of Sufi orders was a consequence of misinterpretations and abuses not Sufi institutions and precepts⁴⁴². The writings of sheikh Naili Efendi in the journal *Muhibban* gave a clear indication of the state of mind of the Sufis in the Second Constitutional Period. To him, under the control of Meclis-i Meşayih (Council of Sheikhs) some measures should have been taken:

1. Steps should be taken to refute the widespread belief that “the lodges are havens of idleness”.
2. In addition to the true, genuine dervishes there are also fake, bogus dervishes.
3. One must therefore confess that the lodges are in need of reform.
4. Inspections should be carried out and guidance given to ensure that life in the lodges is kept at a certain standard⁴⁴³.

⁴³⁹ Ibid, 554, 560.

⁴⁴⁰ In this respect Manastirli Ismail Hakki presented a negative picture of otherworldly, resigned and indolent people. To him, such people could not be considered as being part of a human community. To refer to them as “people” was nonsense and they could not be considered members of this society. Ismail Kara, “Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism”, 560.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 557.

⁴⁴² For his views on this issue, see his article called “Bizdeki Tarikatlar” in Ismail Kara, *Türkiyede İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2*, 88.

⁴⁴³ Mustafa, Kara, *Din, Hayat, Sanat Açısından Tekkeler ve Zaviyeler* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1999), 587.

There was a general view among the Islamists that Sufi lodges were in need of reform to recover their original true forms and to conform to the “necessities of the time”⁴⁴⁴. Therefore healing or reforming (*islah*) the lodges by purging the superstitions became one of the objectives of Islamists. Tekkes and zawiyes should have been reorganized in order to prevent from becoming an impediment to the progress of the society and their members should be mobilized and educated in order to enlighten the society.

Here, Günaltay is an important representative of the late Ottoman Islamists to understand anti-Sufi and anti-superstition rhetoric running interdependently with religious essentialism in the late Ottoman context. The exclusionary dimension of his attitude depends on the portrayal of the “un-Islamic” elements in the prevalent Islamic practices and behaviors in social life. This dichotomy operated through the negative representation of popular Islamic beliefs, Sufi customs, institutions and superstitions. Therefore a closer scrutiny of his ideas on superstitions and Sufi orders might provide a more detailed account of late Ottoman anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses.

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CHAPTER IV

Semsettin Günaltay's Ideas on Superstitions, Sufism and Conception of "True Islam"

In this chapter, I will try to analyze Günaltay's ideas on the general role of Islam in the society, superstitions and Sufi orders. First I will discuss his ideas on the assumed correlation between Islam and decline of the empire, and discuss how this laid the groundwork for his interpretation of the superstitions and Sufi orders. Later I will go on with the analysis of the role of the rhetoric of superstitions in his narrative. In that subsection, the issues of ignorance and inertia (atalet) will be uncovered in order to give a better grasp of the place of superstitions in his understanding. Later, attention will be paid to the anti-Sufi discourses in Günaltay's writings. These will provide us with a general body of material about his intellectual profile and worldview and will help locate my analysis in the context.

In this context, Günaltay's approach to Islam necessitates a very brief theoretical reconsideration before going into detailed analysis of his viewpoints. Similar to the descriptive approaches to Islam by various Islamists of the 2nd Constitutional period, Günaltay tends to apply an exclusionary approach to construct a category of true Islam. Here the exclusionary dimension of his attitude depends on the portrayal of the "un-Islamic" elements in the prevalent Islamic practices and behaviors in social life. In this narrative, superstitions, religious fanaticisms and corrupted institutions of Islam, mainly *tekkes* (Sufi lodges) and *tarikats* (Sufi paths) constitute the backbone of the excluded. Then I think it is necessary first to make a descriptive

analysis of superstitions and Sufi orders in Günaltay's writings in order to understand his conception of true Islam.

Here I would like to carry out my analysis through the scrutiny of two prominent books of Şemseddin Günaltay, published in the Second Constitutional Period: *Zulmetten Nura* (1913, 1915, 1925) and *Hurafattan Hakikate* (1916). In order to look for the change in his views after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, I will also try to make some correlations with another book reflecting his political and ideological views: *Maziden Atiye* (1923).

Zulmetten Nura seems to be designed by Günaltay to outline the backbone of his social reform plan ingrained within an Islamist and rationalist/modernist understanding. In this regard, the book was devised to systematically expose the reasons of the decline/decay in the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world. This fact should be thought together with the pessimist and defeatist air in the book as well as its offensive nationalist tone, and social Darwinist contemplation. In this context, *Hurafattan Hakikate* is more likely to be an auxiliary book to elaborate the content, and support the arguments in *Zulmetten Nura* by historically unfolding the emergence of superstitions within the Islamic culture. *Maziden Atiye* in this respect can be interpreted as a clear divergence in Günaltay's frame of thinking from a more salient Islamist position to an overtly Turkist viewpoint.

IV.1. Basic Features of Gunaltay's Superstition and Sufism Discourse

IV.1.a. Islam and Decline: Saving the nation by saving Islam

In line with the intellectual and political agenda of the late Ottoman period, the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world was the central problematic in those books of Şemseddin Günaltay. This theme of decline evolved hand in hand with the idea of "progress" as a commonly applauded social ideal. This dichotomy of progress and backwardness/decline was conceived in terms of modernization in Şemseddin Günaltay's thought. In other words, the progress he sought designated

betterments in institutional, educational, bureaucratic, military and social levels, social prosperity and advancement in science and technology.

Besides, the supposedly disastrous situation in the Muslim world was expressed in despair, in terms of inertia/immobility, stagnation and bankruptcy. This desperate condition of the Muslim lands was metaphorically reiterated numerous times by Günaltay as misery, abasement/degradation (*zillet*), servitude, darkness (*zulmet*), sickness or a deep sleep; just as the title of his book points out: *Zulmetten Nura* (from darkness to light). In this book he aims to render the goal pointed out in the title possible: to reveal the ways to enlighten and save the Muslim world from darkness and decadence; thus, to achieve advancement, and to raise the level of society.

In this respect to better comprehend his metaphorical language, it should be indicated that Günaltay had written in an organicist/vitalist, and social Darwinist frame of thought. To him, life is a struggle and the aim of the life is survival; the organisms that do not fit to the natural laws (*kavanin-i fitriye*) undergo atrophy⁴⁴⁵. Human societies are not exempt from this rule and they should conform to the necessities of the time (*asrın icabati*) to survive⁴⁴⁶. In this paradigm, Şemseddin Günaltay contemplates the society as an organism and draws parallels between the society and the human body⁴⁴⁷. More specifically, society is portrayed as a large embodiment of the members that it was composed of. Then, he attributes sickness to the Muslim/Ottoman social body which was once upon a time robust (*gurbuz*)⁴⁴⁸. Even this body (personified as Muslim community and/or Anatolian people in differing sections) is illustrated as almost dead or as zombie-like⁴⁴⁹; and Şemseddin Günaltay asserted that “ramshackle lands [of ours]

⁴⁴⁵ *Zulmetten Nura*, 53, 91.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, 53. Here the social order described by Günaltay in social Darwinist terms also resembles the “state of war” used to explain the “state of nature” in Hobbesian terms. This naturalist and social Darwinist style of narration can be also conceived related to his educational background in natural sciences.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, 203.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 203.

⁴⁴⁹ Günaltay explained this zombie-like situation with the statement that “the members of the nation transformed into a corpse that is in reality dead but seemingly animated”. Ibid, 84, 213, 214.

turned into a graveyard embedded within misery”⁴⁵⁰ or into a “hospital infected by microbes”. Here the tragic and pessimistic narration of Şemseddin Günaltay to describe the social condition might have something to do with the traumatic effects of the Balkan Wars and WW1.

I think from this perspective, the general mood and intention of Şemseddin Günaltay’s writings can be better comprehended. Perceiving the current social situation of the Ottoman Empire in terms of disease, he himself assumes the function of a doctor as a social observer. In the foreword of the second publication of *Zulmetten Nura*, he was already praised as a “doctor of society” by Mehmet Akif⁴⁵¹, and in the foreword of the first publication, Ferid (Kam) asserted that Şemseddin Günaltay diagnosed (the social) disease and prescribed its cure⁴⁵².

The organization of *Zulmetten Nura* is likely to follow a similar order in an evolutionary structure: first to diagnose the social malaises, and then to find out remedies for them and to make a social surgery if necessary. In this regard, *Hurafattan Hakikate* is functional to expound the sources and evolution of these malaises in the Islamic social body more elaborately. This action of healing the social body can also be juxtaposed with the ideal of saving -and elevating- the empire/nation as the “hypergood” that I mentioned to be a common denominator of the intellectual trends in the Second Constitutional Period. Therefore social scientific observation based on a Durkheimian sociological understanding was loaded with constructive and pragmatic functions in order to solve the social problems and diseases by exposing/diagnosing them and then restructuring a healthier social body.

Then what were the maladies in the Muslim social body according to Günaltay? What were the reasons of decadence of the Muslims and the impediments to their progress (*mani-i terakki*)? These questions regarding the causes of the decline was also particularly important for Günaltay’s political agenda. According to a particular conviction in the intellectual circles of Second Constitutional Period, the main cause of

⁴⁵⁰ *Zulmetten Nura*, 84.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*, 14.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, 13.

the social decay was perceived to be related to Islam, which was also indirectly represented as the impediment to development. This argument, as I explained in the previous chapter, was surely related to the discussions took place in the Western intellectual debates (especially Orientalist ones) concerning religion and particularly Islam. Moreover, the receptions of these Western discourses in the Ottoman intellectual milieu of Second Constitutional Period concerning Islam's social role should also be considered. Similar to a considerable number of intellectuals of the period, especially Islamists, Günaltay grappled with this question of Islam and decline:

“Is religion the main factor preventing our progress and causing our decline? If one looks at the miserable situation in which Muslims living in various continents of the world find themselves, one cannot dismiss out of hand such a question. The fact that Muslims all over the world are condemned to a life of servitude and live in degradation and misery is an incontrovertible truth. Nevertheless reaching a judgment merely by looking at the shape religion had acquired in our times ... will not be correct or logical.”⁴⁵³

Therefore he was rigorously striving to refute the assumed correspondence between Islam and decline. To him, contrary to these claims, Islam was completely convenient to material progress that basically manifested itself in Europe, primarily in science and technology⁴⁵⁴. In his overall understanding, religion should be able to progress (*tekamül etmek*) as a pair to the spiritual and mental development of the society⁴⁵⁵. When Muslims understood religion truly and religion was exalted in society, advancement and prosperity were realized in the Muslim history but when religion regressed and Islam was misunderstood, Muslims went down as well⁴⁵⁶. Even he argued that it had been a prophetic message that it was the cause of the wrath (*gazab*) of God to claim to be a Muslim despite not pursuing material (*maddi*) and spiritual (*manevi*) progress (*terakki*) and evolution⁴⁵⁷. These propositions were enough according to Günaltay to prove that Islam had not been an obstacle in front of development. On the contrary,

⁴⁵³ *Zulmetten Nura*, 99-100.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 83.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 69.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 71.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 82.

Islam actually possessed the potential to be the main driving force of progress. Thus, the causes of the decline and ineptitude to progress should be sought in factors other than Islam. Therefore to discredit anti-religious arguments Günaltay insisted that Islam, bona fide, must be examined⁴⁵⁸. This kind of a scrutiny would ratify Islam's congruity with social progress. In this regard, to Günaltay:

“...one has to analyze religion itself to see if religion is an obstacle for progress...It will be only after such a study that one will understand that the real obstacle in front of our progress is not true Islam, but the superstitious beliefs and myths that are very far from natural religion and held by contemporary Muslims.”⁴⁵⁹

In other words, the main causes of decline were corrupted beliefs and practices in Islamic tradition, namely superstitions; but not “true Islam”⁴⁶⁰. Yet in addition to superstitions, Günaltay counted ignorance and inertia (*atalet*) prevalent among the Muslims' lives as the main sicknesses that decomposed original Islam and caused the decadence in Muslim populations⁴⁶¹. In Günaltay's contemplation, superstitions, ignorance and inertia/laziness were vitally interconnected to each other by being the cause and consequence of each other. Through this historically deployed interconnectedness of superstitions, ignorance and inertia in his contemplation, he provided a macro-level explanation to how Islam strayed away from its origins/essence and transmuted into a corrupt cultural entity that prevented Muslim nations from progress. The superstitions occupy a focal place in this deliberation. In order to understand the appearance of the anti-superstition discourse in Günaltay's thought analyzing his understanding of ignorance and superstitions is crucial. Then in the following pages I will try to give a brief analysis of the place of ignorance and inertia in their relations to superstitions in the understanding of Günaltay. I believe that this surely assists us to further analyze the meanings of reason, science and activeness in his thought together with the deliberation of true Islam.

⁴⁵⁸ *Zulmetten Nura*, 100.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 100.

⁴⁶⁰ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 34.

⁴⁶¹ *Zulmetten Nura*, 53-55.

IV.1.b. Superstitions as the other of “True Islam”

In Günaltay’s books the rhetoric of *hurafe* (superstition) holds a central place; however, not a clearly elaborated description of superstition has been provided in these books. Rather, *hurafe* seems to acquire a rhetorical function. In other words, in his narration, *hurafat / batil itikatlar* (superstitions) intermixed with *bidats* (innovations) come out as a category to name all sorts of divergences from Günaltay’s conception of true Islam. The superstitious beliefs and practices were mainly described in his books in the form of reverence to saints, tomb visits, lighting candles, tying cloths to trees or tombs assumed as sacred, drinking healing water, mythological stories, fortune-telling, *muska* (written charms), *cifir hesabı* (mystical calculations from Quran), beliefs/practices of pervert sects and tarikats, and so on⁴⁶². The term *hurafe* was usually used interchangeably or together with the expressions *yanlış kanaatler* (wrong convictions), *münasebetsiz itiyadlar* (inappropriate customs), *esatir* (myths) and *uydurulmuş bidatlar* (fabricated innovations) in his writings⁴⁶³. Yet he does not differentiate between the expressions given above and differing forms of superstitions. I think superstition stands as an umbrella term that consists of various forms of un-Islamic practices and beliefs in the manner that Günaltay understood them. In this regard, this category of superstition of which boundaries were not clearly cut is represented by Günaltay as “totally evil” as the perversion from truthful core of Islam. In the following sections I will try to analyze how this rhetoric of superstition has been described in Günaltay’s narrative together with its relation to the notions of ignorance, laziness, reason and science; how this rhetoric has been instrumentalized in his thought in order to construct the imaginary category of true Islam.

Seemingly, the problem with the superstitions according to Günaltay was the divergence that they rendered from the basic premises of the original Islam. However, the significance of the proposed incompatibility of superstitions with reason and science as a central problematic in Şemseddin Günaltay’s writings should be underlined. I will later theoretically analyze this relationship between science, reason

⁴⁶² *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 305.

⁴⁶³ *Zulmetten Nura*, 98. Also for similar terms used by various other intellectuals see Ismail Kara, “Modernleşme Donemi Türkiye’sinde Ulum, Funun ve Sanat Kavramlarının Algılanışı Üzerine Birkac Not”, *Kutadgubilig* 2 (2002), 252.

and superstitions in more detail; however, it should be admitted that this consideration of incompatibility had something to do with the widespread assumption of superstitions as source of ignorance, passivity, lack of wisdom, abasement, misery and decline in the Muslim world. In this regard, in line with Şemseddin Günaltay's organicist understanding of society, superstitions were depicted as "pathologies" decomposing and infecting the Islamic truths. To Günaltay, superstitions were the biggest disease of the Islamic society⁴⁶⁴ and they were killing the spirit of Muslims⁴⁶⁵. Günaltay argued that superstitious convictions had diffused into Islam and had settled down in Muslim societies for centuries⁴⁶⁶. Thereby these "rotten" convictions were deeply ingrained within the beliefs of the *avam* (populace) for years and had become cradle of microbes radiating seeds of sicknesses⁴⁶⁷; sickness of laziness and ignorance⁴⁶⁸. Therefore to heal the society by unraveling the core of true Islam, there was an urging necessity to purge the pathological superstitious elements diffused into the social life. This could be achieved by picking the superstitious and corrupt practices out of the Islamic truths and thus disinfecting the Islamic core from the harmful shell⁴⁶⁹. The (truthful) core and (harmful) shell dichotomy is imminent to understanding the relation between superstition and true Islam in Günaltay's narrative.

According to Günaltay, in order to achieve disinfection, the superstitions should be detected. In this level, the characteristics that distinguish these superstitious dispositions from the true Islam acquired great importance as there had been a need to clarify how they could emerge in Islam. His book, *Hurafattan Hakikate* (From Superstitions to Truth) in this regard was dedicated to reveal a genealogy of the formations of superstitions in Islam, and to explain how so-called "true Islam" was corrupted. The book gives a historical account of how superstitious beliefs, practices

⁴⁶⁴ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 136.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 319, 320.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 27.

⁴⁶⁷ *Zulmetten Nura*, 26.

⁴⁶⁸ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 321.

⁴⁶⁹ M. Semseddin, "Muslumanlık Aleminde Intibah Emmareleri", *İslami Mecmuası*, 1:4 (1916); in Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2*, 571.

and irrational religious rites diffused into Islam. It also deals with the emergence of heretical sects and corruption in religious institutions that were believed by Günaltay to “poison the essence of Islam”⁴⁷⁰. The book in its methodology and arguments likens to the classical Islamic literature trying to identify heretical sects and beliefs⁴⁷¹.

To Günaltay, the main cause was the additions to the original Islam –lived in *Asr-i Saadet* (the lifetime of the prophet and the first 2 caliphs⁴⁷²) - by various cultures and religions on Islam’s route of expansion. In *Hurafattan Hakikate*, Günaltay proposed that the first degenerations in Islam had started in the Umayyad period and had speeded up with the succeeding generations. In this account, the original Islam could not resist the long-term degenerating effects of the Mesopotamian and Iranian cultures because the new converts to Islam were carrying their local beliefs and superstitions to Islam⁴⁷³. Quoting Jamaladdin Afghani’s views, Günaltay argued that “ungrounded beliefs, practices and myths” from Indian and Persian cultures and religions, Christianity, Greek mythology, shamanism and so on were blended with the Islamic doctrine and practices⁴⁷⁴. The “syncretism” produced by this mixture had been presented by Günaltay as the basis of deterioration in the genuine Islam. In this narrative of syncretism, it is asserted that Eastern, mainly Indian beliefs had caused Islam to stick into a deep and irrational mysticism⁴⁷⁵. To Günaltay, together with the penetration of the Indian mysticism and Christian pietism, Islam had acquired a more ascetic, esoteric and otherworldly (and inner-worldly) character that resulted in

⁴⁷⁰ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 320.

⁴⁷¹ For the systematic and organized pre-modern examples of this literature we can be reminded of the genre of *el-Milel ve'n- Nihal* or books of *Elfaz-ı Küfür ve Kebair* as mentioned earlier.

⁴⁷² *Asr-i Saadet* was described by Günaltay as the lifetime of the prophet and the first 2 caliphs, controversially diverse from the inclusion of 4 caliphs in the traditional view. This might be related to the increasing breaches within the Islamic community, intensifying interactions with peripheral cultures, and augmenting Arabic influences and tone starting with the reign of the third caliph Osman, from Günaltay’s perspective.

⁴⁷³ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 80.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 134, 325-327.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 130-147.

passivity and fatalistic tendencies in the lived Islam, especially in the Sufi culture. Moreover, reverence to saints and the construction of tombs (*türbe*), which are alien to true Islam, had been plunged into Islam from the cult of the sainthood in Christian culture⁴⁷⁶.

Yet Günaltay's criticism for the influences of Persian culture is more severe. Employing the tools of traditional criticism of heresy, Günaltay denounced Persian culture as the earliest and most effective source of the coming out of the deviant *mezhebs* (sects) and heresies as well as *bidats* in Islam. While dealing with the Persian influences and the emergence of deviant sects in Islam, I think Günaltay's analysis converges to an indigenous line of criticism of heresy⁴⁷⁷. For instance he more elaborately discusses the theological fallacies of these heretic beliefs by using traditional Islamic historical sources and arguments like the rhetoric of *bidat*.

In *Hurafattan Hakikate*, Iran is presented as the center that the debauched ancient philosophical/theological views and comprehensions of divinity were deliberately stitched into an Islamic jacket and enveloped with an esoteric/mystic aura. This gradually resulted according to him in the appearance of *Batini* (namely esoteric) sects or underground heretic organizations like *Ismailites*; or religio-political groups/states like *Qarmatians* and *Fatimids*. These sects and states according to Günaltay –sometimes intentionally- filled the religion with superstitions and undermined the true Islamic beliefs. In this narrative, the *Rafizi*⁴⁷⁸ communities in

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 279.

⁴⁷⁷ Here the fatwas by sheikhulislams Ibn Kemal and Ebu Suud Efendi on *ilhad* and *zındıklık* to describe what is truly Islamic and what heresy is can be reminded. Especially some Sufi practices and rites like some versions of *zikrs* in some Sufi orders or Melami and Bektashi ways of lives were condemned as un-Islamic. It should also be kept in mind that these efforts to determine heresies had vital connections with the political circumstances and power struggles of the period. Wahhabi arguments that linked *bidats* and the Islamic understanding of the Ottoman Empire as the source of degeneration in Islam after its Arabic origins can be considered in this parallel. We can also see Ebu Suud's fatwas condemning the insurgent heterodoxy in the Anatolian lands of the empire with blasphemy in this parallel. For further detail, please see, Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mulhidler: 15-17. Yuzyillar, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfi Yurt Yayinlari, 1998)*.

⁴⁷⁸ *Rafizilik* is literally a Shiite sect but its usage changes depending on the political and religious context. It sometimes refers to the group of Shiites that deny the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Umar; in some occasions it consists of all Shiite subgroups. It has been

Anatolia were the offshoot of these pervert Iranian and Shiite communities and they have been represented by Günaltay as ignorant communities that sunk into superstitions and heretical syncretic beliefs. In this respect, Iranian Islam was laid counter to true Islam which would later be bracketed with “Turkish Islam” in Günaltay’s narrative. Therefore Turks were exculpated from the responsibility for the emergence of superstitions.

In addition to these sects, Günaltay also emphasized the impact of specific actors that degenerate religion by inventing some bidats and causing the superstitions to grow in Islam. Some so-called hypocrites like *Abdullah ibn Sebe* or the founder of the Ismailite belief, *Hasan Sabbah* were exemplified by Günaltay as the apostles of the intentional creation and spread of superstitions to damage the truthful essence of Islam. In this regard, a linguistic distinction can be noticed, in Günaltay’s books, between the deliberately invented superstitions and superstitions that emerged in the course of history in a more contingent manner. He is likely to attack the intentionally produced ones and their agents more severely.

Moreover, fabricated *hadiths* (written accounts of prophet’s sayings and deeds) were the most influential medium of the production of superstitions according to Günaltay. These were called as *mevzu hadith* in the Islamic literature and many of the irrational beliefs and absurdities that are contrary to science were transferred into Islam in the form of a fabricated hadith⁴⁷⁹. Especially many of the popular beliefs and stories about the natural happenings and ancient incidents attributed to hadiths of prophet were claimed by Günaltay to originate from Judaistic beliefs (*Israiliyat*)⁴⁸⁰.

also used to depict *Kizilbas/Alevi* communities in Anatolia. Parallel to these meanings, the term was also used by the Ottoman orthodoxy to depict the unorthodox religious creeds and groups in Anatolia. Günaltay uses the term in this sense to refer to heterodox religious groups in Anatolia like Alevis and some Bektashis, and clearly separates Rafizilik from Shiism. For further details on Rafizilik see Ahmet Y. Ocak, *Turkler, Turkiye ve Islam*, 49-50.

⁴⁷⁹ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 251.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 265. This *Israiliyat* rhetoric that means calling a specific conviction or practice as *Israiliyat* was not specific to Günaltay but it had a history in Islamic tradition. Similar to the syncretism with other belief systems, the inclusion of *Israiliyat* was seen as one of the basic causes of the appearance of superstitions in Islam. Especially in the late Ottoman period, *Israiliyat* was identically used to indicate a superstition by various

IV.1.b.i. Ignorance and superstitions

Here it should be highlighted in Şemseddin Günaltay's comprehension that the historical evolvement of superstitions was accompanied by the scattering of ignorance in the Muslim societies. The flood of superstitions in Islam nurtured the ignorance in society; and ignorance of the people induced the blossoming of superstitions in Muslim societies. So to speak, to Günaltay, ignorance and superstitions were reciprocally both the cause and consequence of each other. The main cause of the mushrooming and spread of ignorance was the regression of the *ilm*⁴⁸¹ (science) and *ilmiyye* (class of Islamic scholars) according to Günaltay. In this narrative, scientific knowledge, critical thinking and curiosity flourished in "the golden age of Islam" were assumed to be lost by Muslims. Moreover, scientific institutions like *medreses* had deteriorated and learned classes had disappeared or substituted by illiterates⁴⁸². These illiterates in the garment of sheikhs or scholars like *Sivasi Efendi* had occupied the positions of *Gazalis*, *Ibn Sinas* (Avicenna), *Ali Kuscus* and *Molla Guranis* and instructed the superstitions to people as religion, indolence as religious fortitude, and abasement and misery as consequences of fate⁴⁸³. What is also noteworthy here is the criterion Günaltay exerted in order to distinguish the golden age of Islam which is not only confined to the early years of Islam. The classical period of Islam and early Ottoman years that scientific observation, philosophy, critical and free thinking, and curiosity flourished were represented as the golden age of Islam by Günaltay. Therefore, the golden age was evaluated through Günaltay's lens of scientism, free thinking and rationality. This approach in Günaltay's writings seems to be stemmed from Afghani and Abduh's ideas.

intellectuals including Günaltay. Ismail Kara, "Modernlesme Donemi Turkiyesi'nde Ulum, Funun ve Sanat Kavramlari", 252.

⁴⁸¹ In Günaltay's understanding *ilm* not only meant religious sciences but also included natural sciences.

⁴⁸² *Zulmetten Nura*, 151.

⁴⁸³ Ismail Kara, *Turkiye'de Islamcilik Dusuncesi* 2, 569.

In this regard, the ignorance and lack of knowledge of the populace and men of religion was repetitively emphasized by Günaltay. To him, *avam* (populace) in the current Muslim world -and especially in Anatolia- was deprived of the religious knowledge and necessary education, and therefore they had fallen into clutches of erroneous convictions, superstitious beliefs and practices. In this regard, the folk is depicted by Günaltay as illiterate and docile enough to believe in every superstition presented them as religion because superstitions were quite proper to the people's low level of understanding⁴⁸⁴. Especially *Rafizis* were attacked by Günaltay as the most ignorant community that submerged into superstitions, by being tricked by their religious leaders, *dedes*⁴⁸⁵. Folk was actually innocent because they of course could not understand anything from the books of great scholars, from Quran's commands, and clear statements of true hadiths⁴⁸⁶. This was why they were easily deceived by the ignorant men of religion⁴⁸⁷.

In addition to the people, almost all men of religion in Anatolia, without providing any specific historical data, were portrayed by Günaltay as devoid of religious -and scientific- knowledge. Some *ulema* (religious scholars), *sheikhs*, *imams* (prayer leaders) and *vaizs* (preachers), had usurped the ranks of real *alims* and spiritual guides by pretending to be scholars, dervishes or sheikhs, even though they knew nothing of science and knowledge⁴⁸⁸. These illiterates according to Günaltay were the most dangerous enemies of true Islam and the main agents of the scattering of superstitions in the society⁴⁸⁹. Especially through *vaazs* (sermon) and *sohbet halkalari*

⁴⁸⁴ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 136.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 209.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 312.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 313. The ignorance of the people was also held by Seyyid Bey, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki and Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi. What was also visible in their thought was the emphasis on the innocence of the folk for believing in superstitions.

⁴⁸⁸ *Zulmetten Nura*, 99-100. In Günaltay's narrative, these people appear as "mossy headed", ignorant, bigot and malevolent *sheikhs* (religious teacher, hodja), *imams* (mosque leaders) or "*cinci hoca*"s (witch doctors), "*dinden habersiz kara cahiller*", "*ilimsiz, idraksiz bir suru mahlukat*"; deprived of religious knowledge, and embedded within the shackles of superstition.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 320.

(circles of religious conversations) they were inculcating superstitious stories/tales and *Israiliyat* to the populace⁴⁹⁰. These superstitions, mythological rumors and ungrounded stories were tricks to narcotize the minds of Muslims and kill the sense of curiosity, free thinking and necessity of examination which were counted as the commands of Islam⁴⁹¹.

The population that was deeply buried in the darkness of ignorance and superstitions should be enlightened and thus saved. Therefore, enlightening the men of religion with the positive sciences of the day and appointing them to villages by the government came to be an indispensable measure to eradicate the filth of superstitions and ignorance⁴⁹². By education, the “darkness” of the superstitions and ignorance could be dissolved and the “light” of the true Islam enriched with reason and sciences could be acquired.

Besides, ignorance and superstitions had been promoted by the despotic rulers because they occasioned extreme docility and submissiveness of the Muslims to the religious and political authority. In this regard, Sufism turned into an instrument in the hands of despotic rulers in order to perpetuate their rule over an acquiescent population and to provide legitimacy. In this frame of thinking, Günaltay explained that ignorance and superstitions killed the spirit of Islam and of courage, and thus laid the ground for the heavy defeat of Muslims in the hands of Western powers and resulted in the occupation of the Muslim lands by imperialist powers⁴⁹³.

Related to these effects of ignorance and superstitions, Günaltay’s interpretation of ignorance on the one hand designated the lack of knowledge or misinformation about the Quran and Sunnah and the practices and writings of *Salaf-i Salihin* (forefathers of the Islamic doctrine). On the other hand, this criticism of ignorance and superstitions prioritized the lack of knowledge of the recent explorations of the modern sciences and inability to use reason as a fundamental problem. This understanding also

⁴⁹⁰ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 265.

⁴⁹¹ *Zulmetten Nura*, 153.

⁴⁹² *Ibid*, 312.

⁴⁹³ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 321.

implies a manifest challenge to the dependence on *taqlid* by the scholars and the folk instead of *aql* (reason) and *ictihad* (or *ijihad* - independent interpretation). In this regard, Günaltay's criticism is also directed to the oral sources of the reproduction and dissemination of Islamic knowledge like sermons or *sohbets*. This can be also interpreted as a challenge to the traditional forms of religious authority, maintained through oral channels in local contexts, of sheikhs, *vaizs*, and imams and so on. I will discuss in the following chapter how authentic ways of acquiring religious knowledge, reason and religious authority underwent a critical reconsideration in Günaltay's contemplation of true Islam.

IV.1.b.ii. Passivity as a sin

Another outcome of superstitions according to Günaltay, as important as ignorance, was *atalet* (inertia/inactiveness) into which Muslims were dragged. To Günaltay, superstitions had withered the spirit of Muslims, and Muslims had forgotten *say u gayret* (zeal and ardor), *izzet* (dignity), hardworking, determination and acquisition of wealth and prosperity. *Meskenet/miskinlik* (passivity/inactiveness), *tembellik* (laziness), *zillet* (abasement), *fakr* (poverty), and lack of determination had become the characteristics of Muslim societies. Muslim lands were depicted by Günaltay as places where people were happy to lazily live and ascetically worship in the corners of *tekkes*, *medreses* or *kahvehanes* (coffeehouses). People were indoctrinated with the understanding of *bir lokma bir hırka* [*Müslüman'a kafidir*] (one bit and one dervish's coat is enough for Muslims). In this understanding, living in poverty (*fakr*) and *dünyadan el etek çekmek* (resignation from this world) were promoted while working for this life and acquiring wealth were underrated. According to Günaltay, these had been the fundamental cause in the downfall of Muslims in the face of hardworking, wealthy and determined European nations.

This imagery of Muslim societies as inert and inactive and hence weak and backward was quite popular within the intellectual circles of the Second Constitutional Period. Aside from its relative validity, this imagery seems to be forged under the influence of materialist, organicist/vitalist and Social Darwinist contemplations of nature and social life. At least this seems to be the case for Günaltay. To him world was

a field of struggle and only the societies consisted of zealous and hardworking individuals were able to survive and progress⁴⁹⁴. In this social Darwinist frame of thought Günaltay assumed that societies in the clutches of inertia, passivity and ignorance would be swallowed by hardworking, determined and affluent nations⁴⁹⁵. In a vitalist/organicist frame of thought he also proposed that all non-living and living things were in motion and struggle, they were working; except [us] Muslims⁴⁹⁶. Günaltay thought the order and laws in nature as the basis of the social and political necessities of modern time; and that advanced societies were fulfilling the necessities of this order. In this order that Günaltay proposed, hardworking, initiative, determination and wealth accumulation were fundamental virtues and there was no way of survival for Muslims other than fitting to these rules. Namely, the only means to salvation for Muslims was their own zeal and ardor⁴⁹⁷. Therefore there was no place in the [today's] world for *meskenet*, extreme *tevekkül*, resignation from the world and the understanding of *bir lokma, bir hurka*.

In relation to his understanding of natural laws and society, Günaltay had established a dichotomy between passivity and activity and realigned various Islamic values and concepts in this dialectical relationship. On the one hand, norms like hardworking, activeness and wealth accumulation were prioritized and glorified as fundamental virtues that true Islam actually demanded from Muslims by Günaltay. On the other hand, concepts like *bir lokma-bir hurka*, *tevekkül* or *meskenet* were given negative meanings as fatalism, laziness or docility, or reinterpreted by being decontextualized from their own frame of meaning in the Islamic tradition and Sufi culture. Ismail Kara interprets this realignment as a selective reconfiguration in the Islamic normative hierarchy through the lens of a foreign logic⁴⁹⁸. In order to demonstrate the Islamic authenticity of his revaluation of concepts like activity, *servet* (wealth), hardworking and inactiveness, *meskenet* and laziness, Günaltay resorted to

⁴⁹⁴ Zulmetten Nura, 91.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 53.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, 56.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 53-56.

⁴⁹⁸ Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 547.

Islamic sources, basically by referring to hadiths and exemplifying the life of *sahabe* (companions of the prophet). Yet here we should be warned about the conspicuously selective and decontextualized use of hadiths with lack of sufficient examination of authenticity in Günaltay's examples.

In accordance with this understanding, referring to some hadiths, notions like *meskenet*, resignation from the world, *uzlet* (resignation from people to worship God) and *tevekkül* were presented as sinful or alien to the true Islam; or some of them were interpreted different than traditional Islamic meanings by Günaltay. For instance *meskenet*⁴⁹⁹ and laziness were denounced by the prophet as the greatest dangers to the *ummah*⁵⁰⁰. Prophet had also banned Muslims from worshipping in *uzlet*; inactively alone in a corner. There was no Muslim in prophet's life time that resigned into a corner in a *miskin* (inactive) manner⁵⁰¹. This view surely neglects the role and importance of *Ashab-ı Suffa* that was a group of people constituted by the Prophet himself and resigned from all worldly affairs and devoted to religious studies and worshipping. However Günaltay discusses that all *Aşere-i Mübeşşere* (ten companions of the prophet promised with paradise in their lifetimes) were *faal* (active) people⁵⁰². *Tevekkül* had been also misinterpreted by Muslims; in Günaltay's account of "true Islam" the meaning of *tevekkül* in its correct form was redefined as conforming to the natural laws (namely God's laws [*sunnetullah*]) and *esbab* (natural causes) and then trusting in God. Quoting Muhammad Abduh, Günaltay considered that this misinterpretation had led Muslims to submissiveness and extreme unconcern to the worldly affairs. This at the end had acquired the shape of fatalism in Muslims' lives; and Günaltay complained that

⁴⁹⁹ Here the meaning of the term *meskenet* (*miskin* as its adjective form) were consciously changed by Günaltay. Ismail Kara provides a useful account of conceptual history about how the meaning of *miskin* gradually turned into negative in the late Ottoman period. From a meaning to refer to be "in need" and also spiritual quite, it was turned into a word implying laziness and personal insufficiency. For further analysis look at Ismail Kara, "Sufism and Sufi Orders as a Target of Criticism", 549.

⁵⁰⁰ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 76.

⁵⁰¹ *Ashab-ı Suffa* was also perceived as a model for the *tekkes* and *tarikats* and *medreses* in the traditional Islamic culture.

⁵⁰² *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 278, 279.

this was used by the Westerners to criticize Islam⁵⁰³. This understanding of otherworldliness and *tevekkül* was surely out of Günaltay's understanding of Islam.

In this sense, working for worldly ends or acquisition of wealth had been elevated to the level of religious obligations in Islam in Günaltay's writings. For instance working was perceived as a *farz* (obligatory deed in Islamic *fiqh*)⁵⁰⁴ and people demanding this world were equal to martyrs. In this regard, *bir lokma, bir hurka* understanding was quite contrary to the so-called true Islam in Günaltay's scheme of thinking; and *fakr* (poverty) was a sinful state of human life. According to the prophet, the life was a struggle and every Muslim was charged with striving to win in this struggle. In this understanding of the prophet, "working and endeavor were the spirit of Islam"; and affluence was the most important principle for the ummah. This world was actually as important as the other world in "true Islamic understanding". By this way the extreme importance attributed to the otherworld was being challenged by Günaltay because the otherworldliness of the Muslims had led them to passivity and to resign from the world; and the outcome was surely the decline of the Muslims in this world. This did not only mean a clear subversion of the hierarchical superiority of the otherworld over this-world in Islamic understanding but also signified a clear "temporality" in the interpretation of the life and cosmology, and even religion in Günaltay's thinking. This surely signals the new *Weltanschauung* of the late Ottoman intellectual.

This worldly understanding of religion and life resulted in construction of an idea of active individual by Günaltay. This individual who was educated with modern pedagogical tools would abstain from lazily spending life in a corner of *tekke* or *medrese* and would continuously work in order to make use of his lifetime according to Günaltay. This individual would be industrious, have an entrepreneur spirit and only depend on his capacities with a complete self-confidence. In this respect he interpreted the "good servants" in the verse "the earth has been inherited to good servants of mine" as people that are able to properly live and survive on the earth⁵⁰⁵. His notion of active

⁵⁰³ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 329, 340-341.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 329.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 53.

individual reminds the Protestant worldly asceticism in which working for this world turned into a religious practice. What Günaltay was imagining with activeness and working for this world was also related to the ideal of material progress which is also interpreted as an industrial advancement in a capitalistic sense. Laziness and passivity becomes an instrumental “evil” in this respect in order to crystallize his “true Islam” in the spirit of Protestantism and capitalist industrialism. These ideals of activism, material progress and excessive importance given to this-worldliness were not peculiar to Şemseddin Günaltay but these were some visible proposals among the Young Turks.

IV.1.c. Rhetoric on Sufi orders: Under the garment of a sheikh, in the corner of a tekke

The criticism of superstitions in Günaltay’s writings displays a more abstract characteristic; in other words, the notion of superstition has a more abstract function to depict the cultural, ideational and normative deviations from the so-called “true Islam”. The criticism directed against Sufism constitutes the institutional dimension of anti-superstition criticism of Günaltay. So to speak, his criticism focused on the institutional and practical deteriorations in tekkes and tarikats, instead of a philosophical or theological debate on the authenticity of Sufism as a legitimate field of Islamic life. On the contrary he overtly refrains from involving into discussion of theological and philosophical aspects of Sufi doctrine like *Vahdet-i Vucut* (simply oneness of all beings in God) or so on. Günaltay approved the truthfulness and necessity of Sufism as a pedagogical institution in Islam for spiritual education and cultivation of Muslims. During the discussions that he attended, about the reform of Sufi lodges in 1918 in the Meclis-i Mebusan (parliament), he appreciated the necessity of the mystical life for the society⁵⁰⁶. However, he also mentioned that the decay and corruption in the Muslim societies had infected the dervish lodges. In this rhetoric of decay, Günaltay proclaimed

⁵⁰⁶ Mustafa Kara, “Social and Cultural Activities of the Dervishes under the 2nd Constitution”, in *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman society : sources, doctrine, rituals, Turuq, architecture, literature and fine arts, modernism*, ed. Ahmet Yasar Ocak (Ankara:Turk Tarih Kurumu, 2005), 535.

Sufi lodges as the locus of passivity and laziness and the sheikhs and dervishes as the means to disseminate superstitions and ignorance in the Muslim world.

To explain the decay of Sufism, Günaltay makes a distinction between the past examples of tekkes that were loyal to their origins, and corrupt Sufi institutions of his times. According to Günaltay, tekkes were formerly established as centers of *irfan* (wisdom) in order to help the spiritual and mental advancement and enlightenment of the people by instructing the essence of moral virtues and spiritual purity. He repetitively indicated in his books that in the course of time the tekkes and tarikats swerved from their original purposes and original Islamic principles, and as a result they deteriorated. This idea was also associated with the assumption that Sufi orders loyal to the premises of true Islam were left in the past.

In this narrative of decay, Günaltay represented tekkes of his times as “dens of passivity” that “killed the spirit of living and working in the society”⁵⁰⁷. When the Sufi orders deteriorated, lazy and ignorant people had got established in them according to Günaltay, had substituted positions of rightful sheikhs and obtained weight on the populace. These deceitful people under the guise of Sufism and sheikhdom looked for ways of amply abusing the ignorance and credulity of people, condemned their minds and bodies to passivity and pushed them to a “narcotic” submissiveness⁵⁰⁸. This was the main reason to Şemseddin Günaltay that condemned part of the Muslim populations to a passive life. As a result, tekkes were not able to carry out their missions⁵⁰⁹ defined by Günaltay as enlightening the people, consolidating the social order, providing solidarity and strengthening the morality in society. In contrast to their missions, they had turned into places that produce and maintain superstitions, erroneous convictions and passivity. The situation of these orders was totally irreconcilable with the necessities of the time and science. To Günaltay this decay in the orders became the

⁵⁰⁷ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 281.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 304.

⁵⁰⁹ These missions were also put by Günaltay in the discussions for the reform of Sufi lodges in 1918 in Meclis-i Mebusan as, “to educate and enlighten the masses, to arouse the social life in the nation, to provide solidarity, and love and sincerity among nation’s members.”

“most” effective factor causing the decline of the Islamic lands (maybe more “most effective” than other “most effective” factors he described).

This idea of decay of the orders was associated with the discussions in Günaltay’s books or in his speeches in the Ottoman period about the possibility of a reform for the tekkes and tarikats in accordance with the necessities of time by the use of the methods of modern “sociology”. In the discussions in Meclis-i Mebusan about the situation of tekkes and tarikats in 1918, he seems to be more hesitated about a possible betterment of Sufi orders towards a modern institutional structure; and he argued that the money and efforts spent to these institutions could have been better used for other purposes for the good of nation. In this respect, it is noteworthy to underline the serious change in his views on Sufi orders after the establishment of Republic. In 1925 publication of *Zulmetten Nura*, exemplifying the uprising of Sheikh Said against the Republican government, he added a passage arguing that Sufi orders had completed their missions and they became harmful to the society “as abscesses on the social body”⁵¹⁰. Therefore similar to the views of the ruling elite he advocated that their abolishment in the same year was inevitably essential and just⁵¹¹.

On the other hand, Günaltay’s generalized and reductive representation of Sufi orders in a complete decay sweeps all the differentiations and specifications of Sufi orders that took place in the historical flow and in different contexts. Günaltay does not elaborate which tarikats or tekkes –except the indication of Bektashis once - paved the way for corruption or how the corruption occurred. Collecting all possible and quite diverse practices and mores of tekkes and tarikats under the reductive vocabulary of corruption of tekkes and tarikats seems to be instrumental to explain the decline in Muslim world and to construct his understanding of true Islam. This approach might be the reason behind his omission or maybe unawareness of the Sufi revivalist movements of his time, called as “Neo-Sufism” by Fazlur Rahman, especially of the Naqshbandi movement. These revivalist movements reflected some correspondence with Günaltay’s puritanical and activist ideals of rejuvenating the original Islam with their

⁵¹⁰ *Zulmetten Nura*, 175.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, 175.

missionary or anti-imperialist activism in contrast to his stereotype of the passivity of the members of the tekkes⁵¹².

I think Günaltay believed that the historical transmutation of Sufism created an incommensurable gap between the condition of tekkes and tarikats in his times and their idealized past examples. Therefore similar to his distinction between real and corrupt Islam, he separates between the categories of “true Sufism” that was left in an ideal part of history and “corrupt Sufism” prevailing in the Sufi orders in his times⁵¹³. In short, Sufism as an ideal methodology and institution might have been included into his idealized conception of true Islam but current condition of Sufi lodges and orders were completely incongruous to his category of true Islam. Sufism in its “true spirit” was perceived by Şemseddin Günaltay to be essential for deriving individual ethics for the members of the liberal society he imagined and thus it was instrumental to keep the social order and morality. This is surely a functionalist interpretation of Sufism for societal ends distinct from its native form and functions consisting of esoteric and other-worldly spiritual techniques and institutionalization.

Günaltay also targeted the sheikhs and dervishes as the agents of the degeneration in Sufi orders. To him they were leading the minds of people astray from Islam while hiding their political and worldly ambitions under the garment of a sheikh or dervish⁵¹⁴. They were using their positions to obtain political or economic profit; in other words, they were making the religion an instrument to the politics (*dini siyasete alet etmek*)⁵¹⁵ or acquisition of wealth. Instead of serving for the regulation of social

⁵¹² Stephen Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Bernard Radtke, O’Fahey. *Neo-Sufism Reconsidered*.

⁵¹³ This true and corrupt Sufism distinction can also be seen in the indigenous anti-Sufi discourses like Ibn Taymiyya’s or Imam Birgivi’s. For further detail, see Derin Terzioğlu, *Niyazi Misri*, 209. Dina Le Gall, “Kadizadelis, Naksbendis, and Intra-Sufi Diatribe”, 14.

⁵¹⁴ *Zulmetten Nura*, 173.

⁵¹⁵ İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi 2*, 585. Making the religion as an instrument to the politics (*dini siyasete alet etmek*) has been a commonly used by the Republican ideology in order to signify the danger of the religious social organizations or mobilization. For further details see Bekir Berat Özipek, “İrtica Nedir?” In *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 6: İslamcılık* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 236-244.

life and the elevation of the masses they helped them corrupt and decay⁵¹⁶. This might in Günaltay's account be an indication of the tendency to crystallize the newer Islam by personifying the un-Islamic counterparts of it as the stereotypical "other".

Although this sweeping negative representation of bigot imams, deceitful sheikhs or *cinci hocas* was not an innovation of Şemseddin Günaltay - they had roots in the *31 March Incident* with the emergence of the rhetoric of *irtica*⁵¹⁷ (reaction)-Günaltay's reiteration of these imageries contribute to the reproduction of these representations. It should be reminded that the representation of a type of malevolent sheikh has been the main means to the representation of religion as evil in the anti-religious and anti-Sufi imagery. This also seems to have vital connections with the legitimization and construction of the similar otherizing discourses of the Republican ideology towards sheikhs and imams (prayer leaders), *yobazs* (fanatics), *murtecis* (reactionaries) or *cinci hocas* (witch doctors). This issue is also related to the discourses of *irtica* and using religion for political/economic ends. In this regard, these negative stereotypical imageries of pervert and radical Muslims accompany the discourses of *irtica* and *dini siyasete alet etmek* (similarly *din bezirganligi*- "selling religion"). It should be scrutinized how these discourses were inherited and also did become such popular discourses.

IV.2. Semsettin Gunaltay's Attempts to Design a Modern Islam

After the introduction of Günaltay's ideas about Muslim decline, superstitions and Sufi orders, this second part of the chapter will conduct a theoretically concerned examination of Gunaltay's methods to distinguish superstitions and basic guidelines of his conceptualization of true Islam.

⁵¹⁶ *Zulmetten Nura*, 176.

⁵¹⁷ Bekir Berat Ozipek, "Irtica Nedir?", 236-244.

IV.2.a. How to Determine Superstitions: Problem of Sources and Methodology

The essential question about the nature of superstitions concerning Günaltay's understanding arises about the methods to distinguish superstitions: What are the main criteria determining one belief or practice to be superstition? What were sources and the methodology of Günaltay's thoughts in order to differentiate superstitions from his contemplation of "true Islam"? In other words, what were the sources of true Islam?

First, it should be mentioned that Günaltay did not provide a theoretically satisfactory ground for labeling a particular cultural practice as superstition. Only the rhetoric of returning to the "origins" or "sources" of Islam can be discerned in relation to this grounding in Günaltay's books. These sources were Quran and *sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet). However, it is remarkable that even though he announced that main religious guide of Muslims is Quran, Quranic verses were hardly quoted in his books in order to distinguish basic dispositions that make a cultural element un-Islamic. Günaltay's excessive use of *hadith* (accounts of prophet's sayings and deeds) quotations should be also remarked. Yet as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the authenticity of these hadiths is quite questionable since Günaltay did not provide sources of the hadiths in *Zulmetten Nura* and *Hurafattan Hakikate*⁵¹⁸. These hadith quotations seem to be picked out as single sentences from their frames, without sufficient information about their social contexts. Besides, they were given overinterpreted meanings conforming to Günaltay's insights.

Here another -and even more important- criteria that Günaltay deemed necessary to check the truthfulness of cultural practices were science and reason. Reason and *irfan* (wisdom/science) were proposed by Günaltay as the worldly guides while Quran as the religious guide of Muslims. Looking for a *mürşit* (guide) other than science and reason would not accord with both the spirit of Islam and the mentality of the age⁵¹⁹. It is also frequently reiterated by Günaltay that Islam was based on reason, and according to a hadith -of which authenticity is doubtful by the way- Muslim's

⁵¹⁸ In the 1996 publication of *Hurafattan Hakikate* the editor of the book provides sources of the hadiths Şemseddin Günaltay used from Camiatü's Sagir and most of these hadiths are weak ones.

⁵¹⁹ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 316.

religion was his reason⁵²⁰. In this regard, by the excessive exemplification of hadiths, the use of reason and study of science⁵²¹ had been dragged into the place of fundamental tenets of Islam by Günaltay. However, he perceived *ilim* mainly as the highest form of knowledge of times and thus it came to mean mainly the modern science in his view mostly separate from the knowledge of the classical Islamic scholarship and Sufi teaching. Here it can be also asserted that fitting to the mentality/necessities of the age/civilized world came to be an underlying premise to determine Islamic and un-Islamic practices as well. What is remarkable here in Şemseddin Günaltay's approach is the idea of examining the authenticity of hadiths by their compatibility to reason. Namely, the hadiths that do not fit to reason should be proclaimed inauthentic according to Günaltay. Manifestly in the footsteps of Afghani and Abduh⁵²² he was also prioritizing the *aql* (reason) before *naql* (-oral- transference of traditional religious knowledge) and Scripture when a contradiction emerged between them⁵²³.

Moreover, similar to the change in the meaning of the understanding of *ilim*, it is possible to discuss that the characteristics of *aql* were reconfigured in line with the post-Enlightenment understanding of instrumental reason, different than its connotations in the Islamic tradition. In this frame of thinking, reason came to be perceived as an underlying criterion to examine the validity of the traditional sources of knowledge in Islam. The authoritative role reason acquired in Günaltay's thinking is also indicative of the challenge he pointed at the traditional methodologies and sources of knowledge. By prioritizing the authoritative role of reason, Günaltay brought traditional discursive/oral channels of knowledge like *taqlid* or *naql* under scrutiny due to their lack of epistemological impersonality and openness to critical rational scrutiny.

⁵²⁰ *Zulmetten Nura*, 81.

⁵²¹ Here *ilim* (science) was interchangeably used to meet the meaning of Islamic sciences and positive sciences.

⁵²² *Zulmetten Nura*, 146-150. By referring Abduh, Günaltay approves the harmony between the science and Islam with examples to Islamic history. According to Günaltay, Abduh argues the main cause of the decline as the emergence of lack of knowledge in sciences and ignorance. This had led to the *ifrat* (excessiveness) in superstition.

⁵²³ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 328.

In other words, from Günaltay's lens, these were discordant to Günaltay's ideals of free thinking, impersonal (textual) learning, systematic thought and internal logical coherence promoting the authority of reason in the interpretation of religious/worldly matters. In this frame of thought, Quran was emphasized as the sole authoritative source against traditional religious methodologies like *ijma* (consensus) or reinterpretive but restrictive methods of fiqh like commentaries. This envisioned a new hermeneutical approach to Quran proposing the interpretation of the revelation through the lens of reason and scientific knowledge with an awareness of the necessities of modern times. This view was centralizing an intellectually enlightened and self-dependant subject competing for authority in religious matters with the traditional religious authorities. Therefore Günaltay pressed against conventional religious authority, maintained through oral channels in local contexts, and held by *sheikhs*, *alims* (classical Islamic scholars) or *vaizs* (preachers) and so on. From a different point of view, this rearrangement of the hierarchies of epistemological tools like *hadith*, reason, science, commentaries, *naql* or *taqlid* can be interpreted as an attempt to narrow down and dominate the valid forms of epistemologies in Islam in line with Günaltay's agenda.

In this realignment of epistemological hierarchies his critical lens had been directed to the belief in the supernatural phenomena and trust in occult powers and metaphysical elements as was the case for the beliefs in *veli kerametleri* (miracles of saints) and appealing saints for the fulfillment of wishes. These beliefs and practices alluding to alternative orders of things and realities beyond the natural order and causality of this world, even at the expense of rationality, were quite contrary to the naturalist cause-effect relation and rationality of Günaltay, which was framed in a plain terrestrial and scientific "episteme" of knowledge and existence.

Then, the main concern here about the popular beliefs, superstitions or Sufi practices seems to be their incompatibility with scientific findings and rational thinking. In this new paradigm of rationalism, superstitions, some popular beliefs and convictions within the Islamic culture were identified as irrational and unscientific⁵²⁴ although this "rationale" overlooked their inner logics, and practicalities or methodologies that might have given way to their emergence. They were constructed as

⁵²⁴ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 281, 305.

totally unrelated to religion as well as to reason since Islam was based on reason⁵²⁵. By excluding them from the imagined autonomous field of true Islam, the elements incompatible with the findings of natural sciences and reason would be eliminated and thus the full convenience of Islam with science and reason would be proved. Therefore there is a continuous repetition of the compatibility of Islam and sciences and reason in Günaltay's writings. As a result, Islam was overtly rationalized in Günaltay's scheme of thinking; in other words, rationality and science became indispensable components of the so-called "true Islam" of Şemseddin Günaltay.

IV.2.b. What is True Islam?

In the beginning of the chapter dealing with superstitions I mentioned that superstitions had a rhetorical function in Günaltay's thought. This is actually related to the ambiguous nature of the superstitions as a category containing the un-Islamic cultural elements represented by Günaltay as "totally evil". Nevertheless, it is difficult to say that a comprehensive theoretical or methodological analysis of the dispositions or a clear-cut definition of superstitions was rendered by Günaltay. Günaltay also hardly discusses how the cultural elements that he described as superstition were improper to Islam and how some specific social practices/beliefs diverged from the so-called true Islam with thorough theological arguments and references. To evaluate the properness of a cultural fragment to Islam he just employs some hadiths of which authenticities were doubtful, or examines that cultural fragment according to its convenience to reason or findings of the science. The notion of superstition is more likely to be used arbitrarily to determine all sorts of divergences from true Islam as Günaltay understood it. He appears to be more interested in the social outcomes of superstitions, instead of what they are. The descriptive ambiguity and arbitrariness of the discourse of superstitions in Günaltay's narrative seems to be instrumental in two ways. First, by arbitrarily deciding on what the deviations from the true religion were, what corrupted the society and caused decline in Islamic societies would be revealed. Second, by arbitrarily excluding or including these elements, the ambiguous category of true Islam would be fashioned. To put differently, clear exclusionary approach of

⁵²⁵ *Zulmetten Nura*, 81.

Günaltay to the superstitions makes the delimitation of an essentialized category of true Islam more explicit in contrast to superstitions. In this frame, exclusion applied to specific cultural practices, in line with a certain political and social agenda, comes to be the main characteristic of Günaltay's analysis of superstitions.

Nevertheless, this sort of an ideational segregation and exclusion does not seem to be easily applicable for the premises and rites of *tasavvuf* (Sufism). This was probably due to the fact that Sufism in a level of abstraction had been commonly considered within the Islamic tradition as an authentic Islamic way of spiritual learning, despite centuries of discussions in Islamic tradition about its legitimacy. In this respect, Şemseddin Günaltay cannot declare Sufism as the ultimate negative other of his essential true Islam, like superstitions, simply by assuming as un-Islamic. Therefore, he makes a distinction between Sufi practices in their so-called truthfulness or corruptness in terms of their suitability to true Islam. Thus, his criticism was directed to the practices and beliefs that he perceived as corrupt in Sufism. Instead of being deployed as an opposite category to true Islam, Sufism and Sufi orders were portrayed -in their corrupted form- as a significant source of the emergence of superstitions and bidats by Günaltay. In this respect, Sufi orders became more instrumental in the institutional level of Günaltay's analysis (criticism) to crystallize a category of superstitions.

In this regard, some mixed and complex folk beliefs and religious practices that might also contain some syncretism, superstitions and so on were also homogenized as an ambiguous category of "lived Islam" or "folk Islam" in Günaltay's contemplation. El-Zein argues that the idea of "local islams", namely "local variants of Islam as a diluted form corrupted by magic and superstition", implies that a "pure and well-defined essence of Islam" exists, even if it cannot be readily found⁵²⁶. This ambiguous category of lived/local/folk Islam in Günaltay's contemplation implies such a "pure and well-defined essence of Islam". In other words, the conception of Günaltay's true Islam as a "transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon" is constructed in contrast to the historically and culturally embedded popular beliefs, superstitions and corrupt Sufi practices. In this sense, we can mention a binary opposition between the "ahistorical" "true Islam" and the corrupt "historical Islam"/"lived Islam" in Günaltay's narrative.

⁵²⁶ Abdul Hamid el-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 6 (1977), 243.

This dichotomy can be aligned with similar binary oppositions proposed to describe Islam in Muslim societies by various social scientific disciplines like “scholarly Islam” and “folk Islam” or “little tradition” and “great tradition” (like Gellner defined⁵²⁷) or orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

In this regard, El-Zein describes the dichotomy of folk Islam versus elite Islam as part of and Islamic [intellectual] elite’s attempt to dominate the discourse about what constitutes real religion⁵²⁸. In my opinion, Günaltay’s definition of true Islam based on a dichotomy might be comprehended in relation to a similar attempt for domination and power relations. Günaltay’s conception of real and lived Islam has vital connections with the dominant discourses of the period. In one level, this might be to deal with the Western/Orientalist and anti-religious claims against Islam; and in another level, to streamline Islam with the values of a new mind set came out of a new cognitive paradigm. In this regard, the discourse emphasizing the existence of superstitions and corrupt cultural practices within the lived/historical Islam in Günaltay’s narrative seems instrumental to shield the original Islam from the contemporary charges of corruption pointed by Orientalist and anti-religious/materialist discourses. According to Günaltay the reason behind the backwardness of Muslims was not the true Islam but the superstitions of the past societies and today’s religion that lost its origin⁵²⁹. Therefore he reiterated statements like “(real) Islam cannot be condemned”, “the fault does not belong to true Islam”, and “all the flaws should be searched in our living of Islam”⁵³⁰. In this regard, the idea of an idealized and nostalgic origin, *Asr-ı Saadet*, devoid of a substantive content, became a safe ground to escape from an undesirable baggage of cultural elements –like superstitions, popular practices or some Sufi beliefs–mushroomed in Islam in the course of history.

I think Günaltay’s emphasis on superstitions as the historically and culturally defected “other” of true Islam is also functional to address an essence of Islam

⁵²⁷ Ernest, Gellner, *Muslim Society*.

⁵²⁸ el-Zein, “Beyond Ideology and Theology”, 252.

⁵²⁹ *Zulmetten Nura*, 34.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid*, 100.

compatible with the “necessities” of the modern times. As I mentioned before, Günaltay had excessively written that Islam was totally compatible with the necessities of the civilization; it was based on reason, supporting science and elevating the level of the society by supporting progress⁵³¹. Therefore in order to ensure this compatibility, the meanings of Islamic concepts like *tevekkül*, *meskenet* or *ilim* could be redefined; or the hierarchies of values in the classical Islamic understanding like hardworking or ascetism could be reconfigured in Günaltay’s model of Islam as previously analyzed. In this regard this study argues that Günaltay stretches the basic tenets and concepts of “traditional Islam” in order to devise his “purified” and “reified” concept of “true Islam” in accordance with modern sciences and rationality⁵³². Beyond being exempt from any negativity, Islam would contain all the positive features and open to positive developments according to Günaltay. This approach, I think, proposes Islam as an obscure and universal entity, adaptable to changes and even going beyond the changes in the hierarchies of normative values, good and bad. This new ambiguous perception of Islam as a universal framework of “good” is more likely to be useful for political ends, instead of a concern for theoretical and theological methodology. Then what makes this approach towards Islam noteworthy is the split that it implied in the perception and use of Islam as a “thing” loaded with moral and political meanings in more interchanging forms, especially during the process of transition from the “traditional Islam” towards its newer cast.

IV.2.c. True Islam as “Natural Religion”

In this regard, Günaltay envisioned a homogenous and universal religion which is *ictimai* (social), *sade* (simple) and especially *fitri* (natural). Günaltay’s emphasis on Islam’s being a natural religion; *la religion naturelle (din-i fitri, Hanif dini)* draws close parallels to the Enlightenment conception of “Natural Religion” developed in the 17th and 18th centuries’ European context. Natural Religion presumed an abstracted and universalized religion, and implied a shift in attention from “God’s words” to “God’s

⁵³¹ *Zulmetten Nura*, 103-144.

⁵³² *Ibid*, 103-144.

works” and a clear separation from the institutional religion. In this contemplation of natural religion, morality had replaced the disciplinary practices as its central tenet. To Talal Asad, this was by Kant transformed into a “fully essentialized idea of religion⁵³³ which could be counterposed to its phenomenal forms”. Kant’s contemplation as an extension of Natural Religion was a crucial step according to Asad in the formation of the modern concept of a universal religion in terms of belief, conscience and morality rather than a concrete set of practical rules and discipline, detached from its institutional organization like Church. To him this conception would later lead to understanding of religion “as a mode of consciousness” or a “belief as a state of mind rather than as constituting activity in the world”⁵³⁴.

I think we can find clear similarities with this idea of religion in Günaltay’s abstraction of Islam distant to institutional religion and disciplinary practices. It is clear that Günaltay’s perception of religion was influenced by Jul Simon and Kant’s views on religion. In *Zulmetten Nura*, he mentions Kant’s argument that the only true religion should be unadulterated by myths and superstitions and should contain some laws and regulations dependent upon absolute knowledge⁵³⁵. This view seems to be inspiring for Günaltay to detach Islam from all the cultural and institutional deficiencies. To him original Islam was a *sade* (simple) and natural religion that would respond to the natural dispositions and necessities of people but it was made complicated by the intrusion of various practices, cultural habits and superstitions by the time past⁵³⁶. Its being natural was presented as a proof by Günaltay that true Islam must fit to reason -as the nature of human beings- and to natural laws -explored by the science.

It is here conspicuous that despite his pages long discussion of the place of reason, science and morality in religion Günaltay hardly talks about the place and necessity of *ibadet* (religious practicing) in Islam. Even *ibadet* has been reduced to a

⁵³³ Kant discussed that there can only be one religion which is valid for all men and at all times. In Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993), 44.

⁵³⁴ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 41-44.

⁵³⁵ *Zulmetten Nura*, 59.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid*, 146.

formal and secondary procedure after principles of reason, *ilim* or virtues like hardworking and activeness. Quoting a hadith Günaltay mentioned that *ilim* was superior to *ibadet*; and praying not only 5 times but 15 times in a day or continuously fasting (*oruc/savm*) would not be sufficient for the salvation of the ones sitting in the corner of *tekkes* or coffeehouses lazily⁵³⁷.

In this respect, *ahlak* (morality) becomes a constitutive element in his understanding of true Islam which was consisted of reason and science. Quoting a hadith he argued that Islam had been made up of moral virtue. In his understanding, the meaning of morality underwent a serious transformation together with religion. In this deliberation all the principles that drive humankind to progress and evolution were asserted by Günaltay to fit to true Islam⁵³⁸. The outcome of this fickleness in his definition of true Islam was a radical changeover in the moral hierarchies as I argued in the previous chapter. Therefore, zeal and ardor (*sayu gayret*), dignity (*izzet*) and acquisition of wealth (*servet*), (contributing to) worldly happiness (of people) have been described by Günaltay as basic moral tenets in true Islam in contrast to *meskenet* or the understanding of *bir lokma, bir hurka*.

More remarkably, similar to the deliberation of Natural Religion morality has been understood in a manner detached from *ibadet* and even put contrary to it. Quoting again a hadith Günaltay claimed that someone characterized by moral virtues would attain elevated ranks in the otherworld even if he had very little *ibadet*; and someone deprived of moral virtues even if he practiced day and night would fall down into lowest layers of the hell⁵³⁹. In this frame of thought, I think spiritual interconnectedness between *ibadet* and *ahlak* in religious methods and pedagogies of discipline and self-cultivation has been disavowed. The promotion of this sort of a moral understanding can be interpreted as a quasi-secular morality conflated with the cultivation of a new form of modern subject –as a citizen⁵⁴⁰.

⁵³⁷ *Hurafattan Hakikate*, 318.

⁵³⁸ *Zulmetten Nura*, 89.

⁵³⁹ *Zulmetten Nura*, 89.

⁵⁴⁰ I think Günaltay's model of active and free thinking individual that I analyzed in the previous chapter is a product of a similar set of thinking.

One can perceive this modern subject as a liberal/secular and/or Protestant subject seen through the lens of worldly working, free entrepreneurship, wealth accumulation and material progress in Günaltay's viewpoint. This can be juxtaposed with the pedagogies and disciplines of the active productive individual model of the CUP and especially republican regime; in order to delineate the new emerging imagination of the citizen as a vital and disciplined member of the nation-state, also in its service.

Another strain of thought in his structure of morality was constituted under the manifest influence of Durkheimian sociology. In this structure, religion has been promoted by Günaltay as a moral system to protect the humans from social violations and to keep the order and harmony in the society⁵⁴¹. In this frame, religion was perceived as a totally social (*ictimai*) phenomenon and he overtly announced religion as a solidarist system from the perspective of Durkheimian sociology which was enunciated by Günaltay as the best way to comprehend religion⁵⁴². Namely, the aim of the religion was just to provide the *saadet* (happiness) and *selamet* (safety) of human society, by driving people to *fazilet* (virtue), *ahlak-i hasene* (morality) and *say u gayret* (zeal and ardor). In this understanding, religion was reduced into a functional unit of morality to keep the human society sound and safe and to provide solidarity among the members of society⁵⁴³, since religion was indispensable for a nation to live⁵⁴⁴. "True Sufism" took its part in this functionality as a spiritual institution to supply people with personal ethics and morality.

Şemseddin Günaltay in this sense also employed Muhammad Abduh's unifying notion of *tawhid*⁵⁴⁵ that proposes a coherent belief forged in a singular rationale of

⁵⁴¹ *Zulmetten Nura*, 89.

⁵⁴² *Ibid*, 66, 68.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*, 61.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 61.

⁵⁴⁵ Basheer Nafi, "The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought", 41. In Abduh's reformist frame of thinking, *tawhid* was the main source to liberate man from superstition, myth and irrationality while being the road for enabling him with two fruits that had been the major sources for the Western progress: free will and independence of mind. William Shepard, "The Diversity of Islamic Thought", 70.

Islam. This unifying principle was therefore practical to construct a more simple, coherent, graspable and applicable totality of Islam. This was a more formulaic, and malleable categorization. However, his category of “true Islam” is mostly deprived of a “real” substance. It can be claimed that this categorization did not provide a program for the fundamentals of living original Islam. In other words, he cannot give a satisfying explanation for what this category of Islam was made of, except redefined notions of science, morality and reason in a high level of abstraction. Paradoxically, in contrast to the ambiguity and internal emptiness of the concept of true Islam it was quite practical as a formulaic ideological tool. This enables Günaltay to strategically use the concept to include or exclude social practices/beliefs, in line with their rationality or worldly advantages. For example, he can claim that “the means resulting in misery and degradation in this world cannot be included into the conception of Islam”⁵⁴⁶ or he can equate Islam with reason while identifying *ilim* with modern science, especially by the employment of the overinterpreted verses or hadiths.

Günaltay’s concept of true Islam also sustains a sort of functionality for social and political ends. The functional homogenization of true Islam was ready to be used in the service of politics for bringing religion under central state control and for reform projects targeting a large national population⁵⁴⁷. Educating the population in recent sciences and knowledge, saving people from superstitions and wrong convictions; removing poverty and misery, and remedying public health were some of the reform objectives to save and advance the nation, proposed by Günaltay. Religion and religious figures were the basic means to diffuse into the society and maintain these objectives. In compliance with Hamidian and CUP religious policies, this entailed sending of missionary troops to the countryside in order to render *tashih-i akaid* (correction of beliefs); educating the *imams* (mosque leaders) and *vaizs* (preachers); and converting heterodox communities to true Islam. This also comprised the -top

⁵⁴⁶ *Zulmetten Nura*, 71.

⁵⁴⁷ Here I think we should also mention Günaltay’s intense references to Anatolia as his target population. There was more or less a national Turkish community living in Anatolia, anymore. This is surely related to the shrinking boundaries of the Otoman Empire with a considerable amount of ethnic Turkish population and Günaltay’s nationalist inclinations in addition to the rising nationalist discourse’s emphasis on Anatolia as the homeland of Ottoman Turks.

down model of- modernization of the subject population, which was perceived as an ignorant and docile mass by Günaltay, through the use of religion which had a strong social basis.

The change in Günaltay's understanding of Islam into the Republican period also signifies the utility of the concept of true Islam. Günaltay conspicuously Turkified the notion of true Islam in his *Maziden Atiye* in 1923. In this book Turk's *sade* (simple) spirit was amalgamated with the *sade* essence of true Islam by Günaltay⁵⁴⁸. In this regard, he anachronically argued that Turks had met Islam before it was corrupted, and that its essence could easily fit with Turks' sublime spirit. Therefore the spirit of Turkness and Islam fused into each other; and superstitions deteriorated both true Islam and the high spirit of brave and active Turks. Thereby true Islam was given a Turkish ethos by Günaltay and even Islam acquired a secondary and complementing status in Günaltay's account. Moreover the disinfection of religion by the elimination of superstitions was declared as the most vital mission of the new established national state to provide the progress by Günaltay. Disinfection of religion would also align religion with its true nature which implied Islam as the Natural Religion. Namely, Islam as the Natural Religion was identified with Turkish spirit in order to fulfill political ends.

This does not only display the change in Günaltay's intellectual outlook but also the accommodating nature of his understanding of Islam due to its substantive emptiness. This can also be ascribed to the deliberate ideological utility of the ambiguity and functionality of "true Islam". This arbitrary use of the constructed ideal of Islam as a legitimating package by stretching the meanings of religious symbols can be searched in the policies of the CUP or Republic utilizing the social basis of Islamic symbols⁵⁴⁹.

⁵⁴⁸ Şemseddin Günaltay, *Maziden Atiye (Geçmişten Geleceğe)*, (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 2000), 50.

⁵⁴⁹ Serif Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Revolution"; in *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 201. M. Sukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks*, 12–13.

IV.2.d. Where to Locate True Islam?

Günaltay aspires to propose a universally applicable model of “natural religion” based on a singularly objective structure of knowledge similar to Kant’s proposal of true religion containing some laws and regulations dependent upon “absolute knowledge”⁵⁵⁰. The worldview in which Günaltay’s model of true Islam was framed was quite dependent on a rationalistic and scientific plane of epistemology and ontology. In other words, this *Weltanschauung* was a post-Cartesian “unilayered cognitive space” based on the supremacy of knowledge acquired through empirical ways and rational deduction. Therefore this unilayered framework had a monopolizing effect in terms of knowledge acquisition and reasoning⁵⁵¹. In a related manner, Şemseddin Günaltay also understood the nature and universe through the lens of this new cognitive currency; namely, in a quite terrestrial plane, which implies a heavy dependency on the natural laws and cause-effect relationship. His understanding of the cosmos/nature fashioned under the influence of vitalist, vulgar materialist and evolutionary views fits to this unilayered discursive framework. In this sense, he extends the operations of the natural order into the social life in the form of social evolutionary and social Darwinist views. He questions and even belittles the presence of heavenly orders, supernatural phenomena or logical systems extending beyond the boundaries of natural laws and casual relations. In this regard, Günaltay’s unitary cognitive model was quite discriminatory to differing beliefs, logics and *Weltanschauungs* referring to alternating forms/layers of realities and cosmologies, as was the case in Sufi practices or folk beliefs and customs. For example, Sufi methods of meditation, like spiritual knowledge, *keşif* (discovery), *ilham* (inspiration) which can contradict with the ways of rational thinking or reaching to alternative levels of realities like in the *seyr-i süluk* were seen by Günaltay as unreliable, aberrant or even dangerous ways of knowledge. Trust in the occult powers both in transcendental forms and in the personality of sheikhs or saints was also similarly denied in an exclusionary manner by Günaltay. These methodologies or pedagogies were tested by Günaltay through the logic of the new frame of thought, tools of which were mainly attained

⁵⁵⁰ *Zulmetten Nura*, 59.

⁵⁵¹ Serif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism”.

through interactive encounters with Western intellectual traditions. The result was typecasting of various folk beliefs as superstition or ignorance; and thus discriminating from the domains of Islam newly demarcated through the lens of a non-native form of thought. From this perspective, his exclusionary and essentialized interpretation of Islam seems to be forged within this singular and unlayered worldview using “one universal cognitive currency” which was “located within a single continuous logical space” as Gellner phrased, in order to explain the underpinning cognitive and epistemological ethos of secular modernity⁵⁵². The normative ground furnished by this framework of thought I think became the ultimate indicator to determine good and bad in Günaltay’s thought.

The ambivalences and discrepancies in Günaltay’s contemplation of Islam can be read as a sign of the epistemological split of his intellectual positioning from the traditional paradigm toward a new intellectual/cognitive setting. In this regard, Günaltay’s transhistorical and abstract entity of Islam as a unifying principle is indicative of the paradigmatic change during the 19th and early 20th century in the understanding and operation of Islam. What is fundamental to this transformation was the change in the operative role of Islam from its traditionally all-encompassing and underlying social niche to an essentialized and reified “natural religion” of Enlightenment within a new cognitive currency.

In other words, Günaltay in conformity with the idea of the supremacy of science and reason viewed a unitary Islam through the lens of a rationalized and unified *Weltanschauung*. In this regard, his intellectual stance representing a new state of mind implies a more radical split from the traditional content of Islam compared to for example Namik Kemal. Young Ottomans also had similar views to Second Constitutional Period Islamists like returning to the original sources of Islam. Yet they were openly adhering to Islamic tenets and institutions like fiqh or Sharia in a more traditionally oriented manner compared to Günaltay and many of the Islamist intellectuals of his generation like Sehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi or Ismail Hakki Izmirli. Namik Kemal or Ali Suavi can be regarded in this respect as intellectuals in between the traditional Islamic social episteme and a newly emerging *Weltanschauung*. For example Namik Kemal was emphasizing that hundreds of years of evolvement of

⁵⁵² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 21. Serif Mardin, *Bediuzzaman*, 119.

Sharia through traditionally constituted channels of knowledge production was providing its very soundness and perfection. This perspective surely diverges from Günaltay's clear negation of the Islamic historical traditions as a source of degenerations and deviations in Islam. Günaltay's definition of Islam is more in line with Hamidian regime's and CUP's authoritative and functionalist approach to religion while defining it as Islamic orthodoxy and exclusionary attitude to the heterodox religious elements and folk beliefs as well as their population management and conversion policies. They also share a singularized understanding of religion which was brought under a centralized and monopolized control of the state which is modern in nature and that makes claims on its population by control, supervision, and construction.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to analyze how the negating rhetoric on Sufi orders and superstitions was instrumentally utilized by Şemseddin Günaltay as an excluded category to portray true Islam. This study thus aimed to take a snapshot of the framework through which Islam was essentially and monolithically conceptualized in the Second Constitutional Period through preliminary observation of some of its basic manifestations. It was later argued in this work that Şemseddin Günaltay tried to superpose Islam with an essential and singularized thrust of rationalism and science as a “natural religion” in the Western Enlightenment sense. True Islam as a natural religion was conceived in Günaltay’s thought to be a “privatized” religion concerning personal ethics and useful for social solidarity and keeping social morality. Therefore this study discussed that true Islam conception of Günaltay on the one hand turned Islam into an ambiguous and functional entity for various social ends like adjusting Islam to the necessities of the time, meeting the challenges leveled against Islam as well as devising some Islamic reform projects. On the other hand it signified the underlying transformations in the social, cognitive and mental states of the late Ottoman society.

In order to understand Şemseddin Günaltay’s contemplation of true Islam this study examined the newly emerging *Weltanschauung* and the new cast Islam acquired at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th century of the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore this study attempted to present a rough picture of the formation of a new *Weltanschauung* on the eve of the 20th century in the Ottoman intellectual

landscape which resulted in the emergence of a new “cognitive currency”. The interactions with the Western culture and thought, education in the Tanzimat and especially Abdulhamid periods were some seminal developments of the 19th century that made their imprint on the appearance of a progressive, forward-looking and “temporal” intellectual mind that highly respected science, reason, progress and natural laws and helped the creation of a more rationalized and standardized way of understanding the world, society and religion. The world was conceived by a generation of intellectuals in the last three decades of the Ottoman Empire proposing “temporally” regulated notions of progress and order with homogenous time and order and subject to systematic and indiscriminate laws. These helped to spin the intellectual and social fabric within which new Islamic understanding was given a shape. Upon this new cognitive currency Şemseddin Günaltay based his conception of true Islam. True Islam was thus assumed to be in conformity with science, reason and the demands of the time. It was also functionalized within a social Darwinist and this-worldly intellectual setting proposing an active and disciplined modern subject whose work was committed for this-worldly ends. This mental engagement also laid the ground to condemn and exclude epistemologies and ontologies that seemed to unfit the rationalistic, temporal and partly capitalistic social and intellectual codes. In this regard, Şemseddin Günaltay’s contemplation of true Islam and superstitions and Sufism is indicative of the new state of mind and changing scale of priorities and values.

This study also tried to provide a historical account of how the meanings and social operations related to Islam transmuted throughout the 19th century in the central parts of the Ottoman Empire. It was argued in this thesis that “newer” Islam which implied a partial break with the traditional Islamic culture had something to do with the 19th century transformations in the status of the Ottoman religious establishment. The weakening of the ulema’s power and their disengagement from the administrative, legal and educational affairs/domains brought profound transformations into the Ottoman political, social and religious fabric. Islam gradually segregated to an autonomous sphere distinct from the political, economical and legal domains. Towards the end of the century, Islam in the Ottoman context came to be more of a theological matter of which pervasive influence on the political, economical, and even legal issues withered. This new form of Islam diverged from its historically formed, socially all-encompassing traditional arrangement. Islam turned out more “religious” in the post-

Enlightenment sense within “its self-delineated space”. This generated a certain degree of “reification” in the conceptualization of Islam which can be partially observed in the Islamic ideas of Young Ottomans and Hamidian official ideology. The cultural and civilizational component and essence of Islam came to be more and more emphasized over its ritualistic, disciplinary and socially imperative aspects. Therefore, a transcultural and transhistorical universal essence which was assumed to be in compliance with the necessities of the time was attributed to Islam. This brought a political and ideological instrumentality and monopolistic interpretation of Islam which was more manifest in Hamidian contemplation of the official “orthodox Islam”. This reified transhistorical and non-phenomenological Islamic understanding was surely a crucial transformation in the meaning and function of Islam. Şemseddin Günaltay’s true Islam was indebted to these profound transmutations in the position and function of religion and the new configuration and conceptualization of Islam, especially during the Hamidian period. His ideas were also instrumentally analyzed in this study in order to take a snapshot of these transformations within the intellectual context of the Second Constitutional Period.

On the other hand, it is argued in this study that in line with the Islamist trends of the Second Constitutional Period, Şemseddin Günaltay’s social and political ideas about Islam, Sufism and reform were more or less contingently given shape in relation to the actualities and intellectual discussions of the Second Constitutional Period like the alarming disintegration of the empire. Therefore challenges facing Islam at the beginning of the 20th century were also conducive to the configuration of the Islamist preoccupations and agendas of the Second Constitutional Period. Şemseddin Günaltay as an important figure of this period revealed these contextual marks. Moreover, the imprint of Islamic modernist and Salafi ideas can be overtly distinguished in Şemseddin Günaltay’s thought. Especially, his rationalized and scientific understanding of true Islam and his exclusionary rhetoric on Sufi orders and superstitions reflect the direct impacts of Afghani and Abduh’s Islamic modernism. Then this study tried to analyze the very dispositions of Şemseddin Günaltay’s thought against the background of these formative influences.

In order to understand true Islam and how it was configured, this study focused on how superstitions and Sufi orders/belief/practices were elaborated in Şemseddin Günaltay’s overall thinking. Concerning Günaltay’s use of superstitions, this study has

come to the conclusion that superstition had been an umbrella term of which boundaries were not clearly cut and thus consisted of various forms of so-called “un-Islamic” practices and beliefs represented as “totally evil” out of the truthful core of Islam. Therefore this study aimed to analyze how the superstition rhetoric in its relation to the notions of ignorance, laziness, reason and science had been instrumentalized in Günaltay’s contemplation in order to construct the imaginary category of true Islam.

In Günaltay’s view superstitions were the biggest disease of the Islamic society causing ignorance, passivity, inertia and thus decline in the Muslim world. They were depicted in an organicist frame of thinking as pathological elements killing the Islamic truths and the “spirit” of Muslim societies. In this frame of thought Günaltay “diagnosed” ignorance, the intrusion of ungrounded beliefs, practices and myths from various cultures into Islam and the syncretism as the cause of superstitions. As a result, he proposed the eradication of superstitions through “proper” religious education and instruction of modern knowledge and sciences. The rhetoric of superstitions was also associated with the imagery of Muslim societies as inert and inactive and hence weak and backward. Günaltay established a dichotomy between passivity and activity and realigned various Islamic values and concepts while promoting activeness against passivity. On the one hand, hardworking, activeness and wealth accumulation were prioritized as fundamental virtues of true Islam; on the other hand, values like resignation from the world, acquiescence, patience and humbleness were negatively reinterpreted out of their traditional contexts and downgraded in Günaltay’s narrative. In this thought, the material progress and worldly welfare prevailed over the otherworldliness which according to Günaltay led Muslim’s to passivity, resignation from the world; and thus resulted in Muslim decline. Laziness and passivity became an instrumental “evil” in this social Darwinist and organicist mentality in order to illuminate “true Islam” in line with activeness, material progress and capitalist spirit. The temporal understanding of religion and life in Günaltay’s thought resulted in construction of an idea of active individual who would be industrious, and have an entrepreneur spirit and self-confidence.

Without a comprehensive theoretical or methodological analysis or a definition of superstitions, the notion of superstition is used by Günaltay to arbitrarily determine all sorts of divergences from true Islam. This study argued that this ambiguity of the use of superstitions had two practical outcomes in Günaltay’s thought: first,

determining the deviations from the true religion and causes of decline in Islamic societies. Second, by arbitrarily excluding or including some fragments of culture related to belief, delimiting an essentialized category of true Islam explicitly against superstitions.

Unlike superstitions and folk beliefs, Şemseddin Günaltay did not denounce Sufism as the ultimate negative other of his essential true Islam but Sufi orders were portrayed as the agent for the emergence of superstitions by Günaltay. In this respect, Sufi orders became more instrumental in the institutional level of Günaltay's analysis to crystallize a category of superstitions. The criticism directed against Sufism in Günaltay's thought paid particular attention to the institutional and practical deteriorations in tekkes and tarikats, instead of a philosophical or theological debate on authenticity of Sufism in Islam. In this narrative, lodges were pictured as the locus of passivity and laziness and the sheikhs and dervishes as the propagator of superstitions and ignorance in the Muslim world. According to Günaltay, Sufi orders had swerved away from their historical missions of enlightening people, consolidating social order, providing solidarity and strengthening the morality in society. However, although during the late Ottoman period he advocated the view that tekkes and tarikats were in need of an urgent reform, in the Republican era he argued that the Sufi orders had completed their missions and became harmful to the society; and therefore he defended their abolishment. Similar to his distinction between real and corrupt Islam, he separates between the categories of "true Sufism" that was left in the golden age of Islam and "corrupt Sufism" that contemporarily prevailed. In other words, Sufism as an ideal methodology and institution might have been included into his idealized conception of true Islam but current condition of Sufi lodges and orders were completely incongruous to this true Islam.

As a result, this study discussed that the conception of Günaltay's true Islam as a "transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon" was constructed in contrast to the historically and culturally embedded category of lived/local/folk Islam. Günaltay's emphasis on folk beliefs, superstitions and some Sufi rites and beliefs as the historically and culturally deviated "other" of true Islam was forged vis-à-vis the actualities of his time and various power relations. In one level, this dichotomy was rhetorically used to cope with the Western challenges leveled against Islam by safeguarding original Islam from any charges of corruption. In another level, it was functional to address an essence

of Islam totally compatible with the “necessities” of the modern times: reason, science and progress.

In this frame of thinking, the main concern according to Günaltay was the incongruity of popular beliefs, superstitions or Sufi practices with scientific knowledge and rational thinking. Popular beliefs and superstitions were represented by Günaltay as totally discordant to ideals of free thinking, objective knowledge, empiricism and internal logical coherence. By excluding popular beliefs, superstitions or Sufi practices from the imagined autonomous field of true Islam, the elements in Islamic tradition incompatible with the findings of natural sciences and reason would be eliminated and thus the full convenience of Islam with science and reason would be proved. As a result, rationality and science became indispensable components of the so-called “true Islam” of Şemseddin Günaltay as the authority to interpret religious/worldly matters. However, this approach overlooked the rationale and practicalities and methodologies of folk beliefs and narrowed down and dominated the valid forms of traditional Islamic epistemologies in line with Günaltay’s agenda.

Moreover, in order to ensure this compatibility, the meanings of Islamic concepts like *tevekkül*, *meskenet*, *aql* or *ilim* were redefined; and the hierarchies of values in the classical Islamic understanding like hardworking or ascetism were reconfigured in Günaltay’s model of Islam. In this regard this study argued that Günaltay had stretched the basic tenets and concepts of “traditional Islam” in order to devise his “purified” and “reified” concept of “true Islam” in accordance with modern sciences and rationality. In this scheme of thinking Islam would not only be exempt from any negativity, but would also contain all the positive values of the day and would be open to “progressive” developments according to Günaltay. This new ambiguous perception of Islam as a universal framework of positivity is more likely to be useful for political ends, instead of a concern for theoretical and theological methodology.

Günaltay’s unitary cognitive model was quite discriminatory to differing beliefs, logics, pedagogies and disciplinary methods referring to alternating forms/layers of realities and cosmologies, as was the case in Sufi practices or folk beliefs and customs. These methodologies and *Weltanschauungs* were tested by Günaltay through the logic of the new cognitive currency and were thus discriminated by being typecast as superstition or ignorance from the domains of Islam newly

demarcated through the lens of the new *Weltanschauung*. From this perspective, his exclusionary and essentialized interpretation of Islam seems to be forged within the singular and unlayered worldview using “one universal cognitive currency”.

This study also argued that Şemseddin Günaltay’s true Islam had been devised as a “natural religion” of which moral and social functional aspects were overstressed. To Günaltay original Islam was a *sade* (simple) and natural religion that would respond to the natural dispositions and necessities of people but it was made complicated by the intrusion of various practices, cultural habits and superstitions by the time past. In this contemplation of natural religion, Islam was divorced from its disciplinary practices and socially obligating aspects. These were replaced by morality and personal ethics as the central tenets of Islam, and religion was reduced into a “private” matter concerning the personal conscience. In the social level, true Islam as a natural religion was conceived through the lens of Durkhemian sociology as a solidarist system providing social harmony and keeping social morality and order. This new casting of Islam was also highly convenient with the CUP reforms of religion after 1915 and Republican ideal of religion as a private matter. Moreover, a Turkish ethos was amalgamated with the simple and homogenous essence of true Islam in Günaltay’s account. Günaltay conspicuously Turkified the notion of true Islam in his *Maziden Atiye* in 1923 and Islam as the Natural Religion was identified with Turkish spirit in order to fulfill political ends. The change in the conceptualization of Islam surely signaled a functionalist understanding of religion which was quite different than the traditional Islam.

In this regard, Günaltay’s transhistorical and abstract entity of Islam as a unifying principle is indicative of the paradigmatic change during the 19th and early 20th century in the understanding and operation of Islam. What is fundamental to this transformation was the change in the operative role of Islam from its traditionally all-encompassing and underlying social niche to an essentialized and reified “natural religion” of European Enlightenment thought within a new cognitive currency. This study argued that Günaltay’s understanding of Islam furnished by this framework of thought was indicative of both the changing framework in which Islam was understood and conceptualized, and the *Weltanschauung* that this framework was constituted within the late Ottoman intellectual context.

The homogenous and unifying aspect of true Islam was also practical to construct a more simple, coherent and comprehensible totality of Islam as a formulaic, and malleable categorization. This enabled Günaltay to strategically use the concept to include or exclude social practices/beliefs, in line with their rationality or worldly advantages. The functional homogenization of true Islam was ready to be used in the service of politics for bringing religion under central state control and for reform projects targeting a large national population. Educating the population in recent sciences and knowledge, saving people from superstitions and wrong convictions; removing poverty and misery, and remedying public health were some of the reform objectives to save and advance the nation, proposed by Günaltay. Religion and religious figures were the most convenient agents to fulfill these social and political objectives. This arbitrary use of the constructed ideal of Islam as a legitimating package by stretching the meanings of religious symbols can be searched in the policies of the CUP or Republic utilizing the social basis of Islamic symbols.

Against this background, Günaltay can be seen as an intellectual accommodating to the changing sociopolitical necessities of his time with a *mélange* of Islamic ideas and ideological/intellectual tools of his time derived from the new system of universal cognitive currency. In this regard, Günaltay's conception of Islam decontextualized from its cultural and historical setting can be comprehended both as an outcome of this transition and as a response to adapt this transformation.

In sum, beyond Günaltay's intellectual personality this study conceived Günaltay's ideas on Sufism and superstition and conception of true Islam as discursive dispositions that can be traced in the intellectual circles of the Second Constitutional Period. In this respect, the scrutiny of Günaltay's ideas has been deemed as an important task by this study in order to provide a general picture of these discourses. However, it should be admitted that methodologically a wholesale grasp of these discursive dispositions is far beyond the scope and mission of this study. This study also cannot -and does not aim to- provide an account of the inroads of these discourses into the Republican period both in the official discourses and in the popular level due to the extensive demands of such a research and the limited scope of this study. Therefore this thesis tried to bring out a modest and limited cross-section of anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses and concept of true Islam with their political and social outcomes through Günaltay's vision and intellectual/political position. This endeavor

was juxtaposed with the task of taking a snapshot of the changing lanes of the concept of religion during the Second Constitutional Period.

Concomitantly, we can think of Günaltay as a prominent intellectual and political actor of the new emerging public spaces contributing to the construction of anti-Sufi and anti-superstition rhetoric as well as monopolizing and homogenizing discourses of Islam. In this context it might be reminded that these discourses were shared within the political circles and hence by the Young Turk elite and were occasionally utilized by the CUP policies related to the social effectiveness of religion. These discourses were also inherited by the Republican regime and its official ideology. A more radical vision of Sufi orders and superstitions can be witnessed in the ideas of the Republican elite. It would not be inaccurate to assume Şemseddin Günaltay as an agent for the conduction of anti-Sufi and anti-superstition discourses into the Republican official ideology and popular public discourses through state's ideological apparatuses, thanks to his active involvement in the production of official historical and social ideological materials. A closer scrutiny of the ideas of Republican elite or textbooks of religion and history courses might provide with sufficient knowledge of the continuities of mentioned discourses into the Republican period. Official state department of religion, *Diyanet Isleri Başkanlığı* (Chairmanship of Religious Affairs) conducted a comprehensive research of superstitions in the local contexts in 2005. One issue of Diyanet's monthly journal (*Diyanet Aylık Dergi*)⁵⁵³ in June, 2006 was dedicated to the study of superstitions with a similar anti-superstition discourse of Şemseddin Günaltay. These are few examples of the contemporary manifestations of anti-superstition discourses that reflect the current weight of these discourses and the preoccupation of the state to control and supervise the sanctioned religion. These examples need further examination that reaches beyond the limits of this study. Nevertheless, these examples are indicative of the contemporary prevalence of the rhetoric on superstitions and Sufi orders as well as the domineering endeavors to demarcate the religion that extend beyond the timespan of Second Constitutional Period.

⁵⁵³ *Diyanet Aylık Dergi*, 186 (June, 2006: Diyanet Isleri Başkanlığı Yayınları).

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