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A Political-Theological Issue: Is Kemalism a Civil Religion or a Political Religion?

Gülbeyaz KARAKUŞ[1] iD

[1]Dr. Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Sosyal Bilimler, Bursa, Turkiye

Corresponding author : Gülbeyaz KARAKUŞ
E-mail : gkarakus@uludag.edu.tr.

ABSTRACT

This article examines early Kemalism from a political-theological perspective. In the context of the religion-politics relationship of the modern nation-state model, the approach of Kemalism toward religion and the concept of "national religion" are discussed. In addition, "secular sacredness" produced through citizenship, the instrumentalization of religion, and legitimacy are also discussed. These secular sacraments, which emerge as a political-theological issue, are defined as a civil or political religion. This article discusses the transitivity between these two approaches and Kemalism. The main question of the article is whether Kemalism has a subjective approach to the oscillation between civil religion and political religion. It also attempts to reveal whether the emerging "national religion" is a reflection of the established religion or offers a different understanding. The answer is sought as to whether the national religion, which was intended to be fostered by liquidating the established religion, has an instrumental function. In the ideology of Kemalism, there has been a process in which religion has not been completely eliminated but defined through the concept of a secular or national religion. In this context, it is questioned whether there is no clear distinction between a political religion and a civil religion, peculiar to the totalitarian regimes, and whether there a new "theology" has been established which is contrary to the established religion.

Keywords: Civil religion, political religion, sacred, secular sanctity, Kemalism, legitimacy

Introduction

The nation-state, as a modern form of governance, has also revealed its own type of "religion" while transforming the religion-politics relationship. In this process, when religion ceased to be the determining factor of a society's identity, the nation state "reproduced" religion as the source of legitimacy, providing the spiritual foundations the people needed.

Jean J. Rousseau considered the situation of the "civil religion" a necessity, as a way to ensure social unity (Rousseau, 2017, p. 124 –125). Afterwards, Carl Schmitt, who discussed the theological foundations of the modern understanding of politics under the political-theological framework (Schmitt, 2022, p. 41), stated that secularization theories emerged as "the metamorphosis of the sacred" (Critchley, 2013, p. 34). The concept of "civil religion," which can be discussed under the title of political-theology, is based on Rousseau's definition of "citizenship religion," while also pointing to religious structures that Émile Durkheim states as providing social solidarity, unity, and continuity. The civil religion, as conceptualized by Robert Bellah for the specific understanding of the US context, has become a field that examines the transforming and intertwined structure of the religion-politics relationship (Karakuş, 2021).

Apart from the concept of civil religion, the concept of political religion, also referred to as "political theology," refers to the sanctification of politics. However, Emilio Gentile, who argues that there are differences between political religion and civil religion, states that political religion is a sanctification of politics by totalitarian, exclusionary regimes (Gentile, 2015, p. 416–419).

Gentile, while revealing the differences between Rousseau's understanding of civic religion and the notion of political religion, says that civic/civil religion is "the sanctification of a politics that are connected with a secular entity but can sometimes be associated with transcendental beings such as God" (Gentile, 2015, p. 423). He argues that political religion, although often confused with civil religion, consists of "a holistic political movement that defies a secular existence or the sanctification of ideology" (2005, p. 20). Gentile, who compares the US's understanding of civil religion with that Nazi Germany and fascist Italy to underline the differences between the two approaches, concludes that civil religion can also turn into a political religion over time, and that there are no clear boundaries between the two approaches.

Despite the lack of clear boundaries, Gentile declares that political religion differs from civil religion in its extreme and privileged nature. This exclusionism manifests itself as the inability to tolerate different political ideologies, an attitude which brings a society closer to eliminating or using established religions for political means (Gentile, 2005, p. 52).

If we approach the topic from the point of view that highlights the politics-religion relationship, both civil religion and political religion reveal the theologization of politics as much as they instrumentalize theology by basing their legitimacy on secular entities and sometimes being inspired by institutional religions.

In this context, we can say that there is no fundamental difference between the civil religion and the political religion, which both terms often refering to the same political and secular structures. In this article, different approaches to this distinction will be examined through the elaboration of the secular sanctity grounded in the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey, with reference to the civil/political religion discussion. In this context, institutions and discourses related to the topic will be evaluated.

In this regard, this article seeks the answer to the following questions: Did the Turkish Republic achieve its goal of secularization or did the political entity it established display the characteristics of a civil or political religion?

In *The Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, states that "intolerance" arises because societies believe in different Gods, and every political war is also a religious war (Rouesseau, 2017, p. 124–125). Therefore, in nation-states, political affiliations and partnerships, independent of religious convictions, were deemed indispensable since they would enable people to unite upon a common ground (Asad, 2007, p. 12). The necessity of a political perspective which concealed the differences of the population brought about the desire for a secular society. However, it is important to determine how separated the result could be from religion. Marcel Gauchet answers this question, albeit indirectly, as follows: "The dimension of authority that piety carries from heaven to earth has not got lost all of a sudden with a magic hand when the period in which power is explained by religion is over." Thus, the absolutist expresses that there is no metaphysical gap between the structure of the state and the modern understanding of the state based on representation, as is thought. Accordingly, the same items are at work in the "representation through delegates" belonging to the age of the Gods as in "representation through embodied" which belongs to the age of Equals. However, these elements are presented differently, and their proportions are also different (Gauchet, 2000, p. 14–15). Therefore, the theories of "apostasy" and "secularism"" have become controversial with the emergence of the religious as another form found within the secular.

"Religionization" in the political life reveals that the institutions and the concepts of modern politics differ only in appearance from the traditional political understanding in the context of "sacredness" and "divinity." The modern

political understanding not only produced its own institutions and values, but also fictionalized and dictated its own concept of the "sacred." One of the most important features of the sacred is the concept of the "halo," which is a unification element for everything and everyone around it. This unity is also provided by the instrumentalization of the sacred, which has become one of the images of worldliness. Religion is an instrumentalized concept of the ideal, or a fiction that represents the past and the future.

As a matter of fact, worldly/secular concepts such as sovereignty, rituals and symbols, and a leader, which are the elements of the nation-state, can be seen as another face of the sacred. While the transformation in the sacred-power relationship revealed the religious form of the nation-state model, it also resulted in the "sanctification of politics" in the transformation of society.

Emilio Gentile states that the "sanctification of politics," which he defines as giving politics a religious dimension, is a structure that imitates religion, occasionally based on the elements of traditional religion, despite its difference from traditional religions. In the case of "political religion" that has a secular basis, society is prioritized over the individual and ideology is sanctified (Gentile, 2015, p. 423). Secularization, which Gauchet considers as "the possibility of making politics" (Kardes 2015, p. 38), has formed the basis of political-theology, as well as the possibility of producings its own politically sacred ideas. In this regard, Carl Schmitt pointed to the theological foundations at the origins of modern political understanding and the state model (Schmitt, 2020).

Unlike the absolutist state form, the nation-state model, while transforming the relationship between politics and religion in the context of the secularism-secularism debate, excluded religion/metaphysics. The state's reliance on the principle of "secularism" did not, as claimed, manifest itself as a complete purification of the state or power from religion. The state's acting with the principle of secularism while maintaining society's connection with religion, which is put forward in secularization theories, could not be reflected in practice. Religion, which was instrumentalized especially in the construction of nation and identity, continued to be the legitimizing power of the state. In Charles Taylor's words, the fact that "feelings of belonging to a group or sect" (Taylor, 2014, p. 539) usually arise in the religious category has also been seen in belonging to a nation, which gives people an identity. This belonging has at times reinforced the instrumentalization of religion through the invention of history and tradition (Hobsbawm, 2006). Thus, on the one hand, religion continued to be active in the sense of belonging of the nation, and on the other hand, it maintained its importance in the secularization process.

In this transformation towards secularization, religion has ceased to be an absolute determinant of politics, but has continued its relationship with politics on a different level as a source of legitimacy. In the nation-state, the difference of which is revealed from the traditional state form through the concept of "sovereignty," the "religious" nature of sovereignty and the source of its legitimacy have been subjected to a new assessment from a political-theological point of view. This assessment can be considered in the context of the politicization of religion or the religionization of politics. Both approaches, which find their place in the political-theological conceptualization, determine the dimensions and nature of the political-religious relationship. Therefore, the emphasis on the theological foundations of politics and the instrumentalization of religion cannot be subjected to a very clear distinction from a political-theological point of view.

In this article, both the basis of the politics on theological foundations and the instrumentalization of theology/religion have been elaborated with a political-theological perspective. Proceeding from the idea that the sacred and the profane cannot be subjected to an absolute distinction, the sanctification of politics on a political-theological basis in a secular nation-state or the instrumentalization of theology, the shaping of the nation-state's own "religious" form will be discussed with reference to the concept of the civil religion. Similar to Rousseau's religion of citizenship, constituting solidarity and respect for the other beliefs of others, civil religion is based on the perception of a common religion in society within a certain political structure that has its own boundaries and scope. The perception in question also strengthens itself by drawing the boundaries of "we" and "the other" with what they leave out. In this sense, civil religion, as a religion of citizenship, provides social solidarity and loyalty, while simultaneously serving as a cover for problems related to history and the time experienced with the same sense of loyalty. It directs individuals to participate in social life with a citizenship identity, develop a sense of religious loyalty, and conduct a behaviour that prioritizes society over themselves. Stating that civil religion is different from the sanctification of politics/political religion in the way mentioned above, E. Gentile emphasizes that civil religion will be understood as the blessing of collective life, regardless of a political movement (Gentile, 2015, p. 419). However, the distinction between civil religion and political religion is not so decisively manifested. In both cases, the worldly/political is legitimized with the religious one and the politic/national concepts and elements are religionized and sanctified with secular content.

As Gentile mentioned, political-religion comes to the fore by attributing holiness to the people, the state, the regime, the leader, through a glorious past and independence (Gentile, 2006, p. 129). As of the civil religion, the same elements constitute the collectivity.

As a continuation of a great empire, but also a nation-state, the Republic of Turkey existed by establishing its own values and institutions. Republican/Kemalist ideology ensured the continuation of the political and religious transformation that started with the Second Constitutional Monarchy, and at the same time, aimed to form an "absolute break" from religion and religious values. However, this rupture could not be realized, resulting in the transformation or instrumentalization of religious perception, ultimately producing its own religious form. Thus, the desire for a society equipped with secular values and a state ripped of religion shaped the "nation" and changed the understanding of sacred-power. Starting from Rousseau's thought that there cannot be a state without religion at its basis, in the context of the political-theology issue, which is a different dimension of the religion-politics relationship, this study examines the sacred power relationship of the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic.

If one considers the politics-religion relationship, both civil rand political religion constitute the theological foundations of politics as much as they instrumentalize theology by grounding their legitimacy on secular entities and sometimes being inspired by institutional religions. In this respect, civil religion and political religion do not differ much in terms of structure and often refer to the same political and secular structures. In this article, while the differences of opinion about the said distinction will be handled through the secular sanctities in the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey, institutions and opinions related to civil/political religion will be evaluated. There will be an attempt to reveal to what extent the ideology of the Republic,[1] which has pursued the aim of secularization since its establishment, has achieved this goal and whether the structure that has been established has the characteristics of civil religion.

Transforming Political Understanding and Secular Sanctities

When holistically looking at the Republican period, we can say that Islam was perceived by Kemalism not as a theology, but as an opposing political ideology. However, this opposition did not prevent political ideology from instrumentalizing institutional religion for legitimacy or basing its theological foundations in a Schmitttian sense (Karakuş 2018, p. 216–218). While the Republic of Turkey was transforming the religion-politics relationship as a nation-state, it produced its own religious form and transformed within that form. The transformation in question started in the context of sovereignty, legitimacy, and national sovereignty since the last period of the Ottoman Empire, gaining a different dimension by institutionalizing it with the Republic. First of all, the reason for the legitimacy of the Ottoman period was based on the idea of God, the "loyalty" shown to the sultan was directed to the "nation" in the context of sovereignty. The "homeland," which is seen as the "piece of land" or the place where religion is experienced (S. Halim 1333, p. 1), has acquired a sacred meaning and has become an ideal to die for (N. Kemal, 1307, p. 57–58). While the homeland, which expresses the area where the religion is dominant, appears as a secular concept, the attributes of "holiness" attributed to the homeland have roots religion. Of course, the Balkan Wars and rapidly lost lands were one of the important factors in this transformation.

Perception of Homeland and Citizenship

While wars are one of the important motives in producing a national identity and providing unity (Smith, 1981, p. 357-397), fighting for the "homeland" instead of "religion" came to the fore for the nation state. Although an "imaginary" sense of homeland was developed in this period, as we will see later, the nation, which is one of the most important elements on which civil religion is based, and with it, loyalty to the "sovereign," gained secular sanctity. Satı Bey, who gave conferences on loyalty to the homeland, states that the idea of the rulers being appointed as a proxy by God is ineffective, and instead argued that the understanding that "the real sovereignty is in the nation" has arose to replace it. While the concept of a nation with a religious content takes on a secular meaning, it also becomes the source of sovereignty to which loyalty and loftiness should be directed (Satı Bey, 1329, p. 7).

When the homeland ceases to be the property of the monarch and becomes the property of the nation, the sovereignty discussions that started with the Constitutional Monarchy also end with the sovereignty being taken from God first and then from the monarch and transferred to the nation/people. Therefore, the religious sanctity attributed to the sovereignty has turned to the nation and has emerged as a supreme element as the source of legitimacy (Tuğrul, 2014, p. 26-27). The understanding of national sovereignty and legitimacy, which has a secular meaning, has been one of the most important foundations on which the Republic was built. Since the beginning of the National Struggle, national sovereignty has emerged as a goal and the sacredness of the struggle has been frequently mentioned (Atatürk, 1927, p.

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[1] Since the official ideology of the Republic of Turkey is Kemalism, when it is called "Republic" or when the term "Republican period" is used, it is used to express the understanding of Kemalism between the years 1920 and 1938.

265). While the source of sovereignty and legitimacy was declared only as the nation after the Republic was declared, with the manifestation of the will of the nation in the Parliament, all the sacred properties attributed to the nation are now directed to the Parliament. While the parliament became the Kaaba of the nation (Atatürk, 1927, p. 403), politics gained sanctity through the Parliament.

This sanctity in question enabled the formation of the structure that Rousseau called the civic religion. With the reconstructed past and future imaginations, nation building, and civic education, the ideology of the Republic has formed its own civil/political religion. If we recall the above discussion, there are different opinions about whether this transformation is a civil religion or a political religion in terms of the religious policy pursued by the Republican ideology and the formation of its own understanding of religion. While Onur Atalay deals with the Republican period (Kemalist ideology) in terms of political religion (Atalay, 2018),Gentile's civil religion is based on the political religion distinction, although he confines political religions to totalitarian regimes. He distinguishes between the civil religion definitions of Rousseau and Durkheim and identifies Rousseau's understanding of civil religion as describing the regimes that are imposed from above but not totalitarian in character (Atalay, 2018, p. 28–30). Durkheim's understanding, on the other hand, is understood as a civil religion based on culture. Atalay, emphasizing the similarities of political ideologies that gained secular sanctity through doctrine, rituals, symbols, and cults in totalitarian regimes (such as Russia, Germany, and Italy) that emerged after the First World War, compares Kemalism with these regimes. In comparing Kemalism with the aforementioned regimes, it is possible to say that there was a similar transformation in France, Italy, and other Western states, especially regarding the pursuit of nation building. In the context of the transformation of citizenship and loyalty, there has been a similar change in the nation's view of religion as was seen in Turkey.

In this period, we see that the emergence of totalitarian regimes and the instrumentalization of wars for social caution were also factors in the sanctification of politics. Especially in regimes where the cult of personality is very dominant and a new concept of humanity was defined (Alp, 1936, p. 75), absolute loyalty to the leader, the ideology, and the nation are constructed as the characteristics of this new person. Atalay expresses that the state is sacred in the mentioned regimes. If we recall Rousseau's civic religion, the sovereign, as a party to the contract, has the right to determine the obligations fulfilled by the individual as the law and to define the articles of faith "related to society." Thus, the sanctity of the state/sovereign is also revealed by the sanctity that is related to the "national will," which ensures the existence and legitimacy of an absolute sovereign. In this way, the Republican period substituted its own sanctity for national sovereignty, while at the same time, resorting the means to arbitrate this sanctity.

Instrumentalization of Religion and Legitimacy

While education has been an important factor in nation building, religion has also been resorted in decisions and practices aimed at the liquidation of traditional religion. As Atalay mentioned, the sanctification of the regime, the ideology, the leader, and the prominence as elements of political religion required a basic education. While civic education starting from the family and the old curriculum was completely changed, the idea of an "unprecedented" nation and country was established (Karakuş, 2018, p. 315–316). It is clear that the "civil religion" imposed from above by the sovereign, which is specifically mentioned in the distinction between political religion and civil religion, is in this sense no different from the "political religion" unique to totalitarian regimes. Both have the vision of a regime, nation, and leader with the "power of God." In the Republican era, although these blessings towards the regime and the leader continued increasingly, the secular sanctuaries were not free from traditional religion. While the republican regime was legitimized as a regime desired by the Prophet, the will of the people was proved by the Qur'an:

"[The Prophet] (...) founded a government of God that would give honour to the nameless, freedom to the captive, truth to the weak, and happiness to the miserable, and its name was the Republic. Fourteen centuries later, my friends! In order to establish such a divine government, Allah has granted to the most pious and greatest nation to create a second miracle, this nation is the Turkish nation. The government that the Prophet Muhammad established on the walls of Mecca fourteen centuries ago, today the Turkish nation has established in Ankara. (...) By God, I bless this government. (...) And under the wings of this prayer, I ask my esteemed friends to honour our government by standing up in front of the spirit of the Republic with respect and saying 'Long live the Republic' three times." (TBMM, Zabıt C., 1339, p. 116)

The instrumentalization of religion was not only active during the establishment stage, but the "national religion" expected to be formed afterwards was also sought from traditional religion. "Religious" books were published in order for the citizens to fulfil their duties with full devotion, and provide loyalty to the homeland, duty, and the leader was conveyed as a religious responsibility in schools (Akseki, 1341).[2] While this education was generally based on the secular curriculum, it was also based on traditional religion to ensure loyalty. Ahmed Hamdi Akseki's 1925

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[2] Akseki, Askere Din Dersleri. The necessity of Turkification of the language of worship was also defended in this way (Karakuş, 2018, p. 256–259).

work entitled *Religious Lessons for the Military*, written at the request of the chief of staff, which he described as a "catechism," is an important example of the place of traditional religion in citizen education. The work was written at the request of the army, and in the presentation, the Chief of the Staff Fevzi [Çakmak] stated that the most important among the spiritual lessons of the army was the "religious education." In the work, expressions such as the "army of Islam," "the soldier of Islam," and "the soldier fighting on the path of Allah" are used frequently. Akseki declares that a soldier who learns religious lessons will first learn his duties to "Allah, his Prophet," and then to "his own soul, family, relatives, hometown, state, and nation," and finally to "his Muslim brothers and fellow people" (Akseki 1341, p. 1–2). Akseki considers the state and the nation above the brotherhood of religion and the state who performs these duties properly will find "peace and comfort both in the world and in the hereafter." The first chapter of the book is devoted to the explanation of the credo and Islamic faith for the soldier. The necessities of Islam, such as basic doctrines and knowledge of *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), as well as the issues of what is haram (forbidden) and halal (permissible), are emphasized. Apart from the "civic education," which is attempted to be given alongside religious evidence, military concepts, such as protection from diseases, faith, working and cleaning, and duties towards the government and the country, are also provided with religious references. Akseki defines the government as "a committee they choose from among themselves" to ensure public order and peace of mind. After listing the duties of the government towards the governed, he states that the first duty of the people is to obey the law and not to violate it. The public chooses "a few intelligent [men]" from among them, agrees with "everything they do," and accepts "everything they say." He wrote that the second duty is property and life tax:

"As we give our property, it is our duty to go and fight the enemy whenever the government wishes, and to use our bodies as a trench in order not to let the enemy into our country. That is what is called a life tax." (Akseki, 1341, p. 205)

If we recall Rousseau's idea that the basis of citizenship religion is patriotism and that individuals should be taught that obedience to the state is obedience to God, we can see that the sanctification of citizenship in general and military service in particular is also a social religious basis. In this respect, Akseki declares that every person who loves Allah, the Prophet, and his country will do his military service, which is a high religious and sacred duty (Akseki, 1341, p. 210). Those who flee from their military service primarily disobey Allah and the Prophet. He also describes those who do military service without their consent as "hypocrites" (Akseki, 1341, p. 211). Obedience to the commander is obedience to Allah through obedience to the Prophet. He states that martyrdom is the highest rank after prophethood, and that those who do not do their military service willingly, in other words, those who flee, should expect great punishments in the hereafter as well as punishments in this world. Expressing that keeping watch in the military is the greatest worship, Akseki supports this view with various verses of the Quran and related hadiths (Akseki 1341, p. 220).

Jean F. Bayart states that Islam is the basic principle in the construction of secular and national citizenship for the regime in the transition period (Bayart, 2015, p. 157). Indeed, Islam became a basis for the "national religion," which required loyalty and unity on a common history and purpose, and it preserved this feature even after the fortification of civil religion. The cult of the leader/person seen in totalitarian regimes, which are stated to have the characteristics of political religion, was embodied in the person of Mustafa Kemal in Kemalism, who was seen as a leader who would realize the aims of God as a reflection of civil religion. Mustafa Kemal consolidated the mentioned cult with *The Speech* he read in the Parliament. As a matter of fact, he became a leader who established a nation out of nothing and attributed divine qualities to it. These attributes allow the founding ideology to emerge as an "opposition theology" that builds its own metaphysics:

"Legends say that from Adam's left side, two ribs were opened and Eve came out; Mustafa Kemal suddenly made these legends a complete truth. A whole motherland came out alive and detached from the two ribs that were broken by falling from her horse in the Sakarya War." (Hâkimiyet-i Milliye, 1933, p. 2)

In addition to the rituals and holidays for the fortification of the regime, the placing of Atatürk statues and busts all over the country to remind the public of the sense of loyalty and civic "debt" reinforced the loyalty to the leader and the nation represented by the leader, in other words, to the regime. At the same time, by fostering a perception of "homogeneity" in the society, a feeling of trust and exaltation towards the source of that trust was produced in the citizens.

While the inclusiveness of rituals and ceremonies provides a "conceal" function with the perception of a homogeneous society, on the other hand, it ensures the domination of a community over different groups (Sarıbay & Öğün, 2013, p. 102–103), a function that civil religion reinforces through its instruments.

The elimination of the "old" with the following politics and discourses has also been decisive in the qualities of the "new." The similarity of the formed civil religion with the metaphysical understanding and elements of traditional religion, while revealing the theological foundations of politics, is also an important evidence of the instrumentalization

of religion. In this context, we can say that the characteristics of the political religion in totalitarian regimes and the civil religion mentioned by Rousseau are seen. Although the distinction between political religion and civil religion is not very clear, both situations can be evaluated together in a political-theological context and can define the secular sanctification in the Republican ideology. However, to come to a conclusion on the similarity or interactions of the period with the totalitarian regimes, or the debates as to whether the state or the regime has been sanctified, it is far from explanatory for a period in which the regime was perceived as the state and the state as the regime.

Karl-Josef Schipperges states that modern ideologies are secularized forms of religion. However, modern ideologies or political ideologies are not only "artificial religions," they are also "anti-religious" because they cannot fully encompass or alienate the mystery and magic of religion (Schipperges, 2007, p. 211). While this opposition to religion became a new "religious form," it also brought the exclusion of established religions as a counter-theology. While the official ideology of the Republic of Turkey excluded Islam, which is the established religion in the context of sanctifying politics or civil religion, as an opposing theology, on the other hand, it saw the religion as the main source of the political-civil religion it was trying to establish.

Conclusion

Ernst Kantorowicz, in his politico-theological work *The Two Bodies of the King*, said, "We are ready to find such human – unsubstantial- strange fictions that the human mind creates in advance and then becomes its slave- in the field of religion, rather than in the supposedly serious and realistic areas of law, politics and the constitution." (Kantorowicz, 2018, p. 25). This prejudice leads us to the idea that phenomena other than religion are far from "superstitions." However, based on Rousseau's idea that there is no state (or society) without religion, we can say that secularism constructs its own sanctities from time to time, and at times, it produces them by imitating traditional religions. Therefore, "strange fictions" are also written within secular structures in order to ensure the faith and commitment of societies.

The Republican ideology, which often expresses the purpose of a secular modern state and society, has also produced a civil/political religion by constructing its own sanctities and occasionally imitating them from traditional religions. However, in the period when Kemalism revealed itself as a theology, and then in the desire to establish a "national religion" by the state, the actions do not paint the image of a regime that is completely detached from traditional religion.

Rousseau stated that societies would be loyal to their nations, homelands, and leaders by means of civil religion. Civil religion provides an atmosphere in which individuals fulfil their mutual responsibilities with a sense of religious loyalty and in which secular sanctions are substituted for sacred ones.
In discussions related to political religion, the ideology of the Republic of Turkey is defined structurally as a political religion. However, it appears that civil religion and political religion cannot be subject to a categorical distinction. The political transformation, which started in the late Ottoman period, continued in the early Republican period, with the concepts of homeland, nation, sovereignty, and legitimacy later gaining secular contents. Through education and politics, the nation and its will have been exalted with secular sanctions; the regime, the state, and the leader have been loaded with divine qualities.

Over time, religious terms and institutions have gained secular meanings. In this context, Islam was both instrumentalized and provided a basis for the theological foundations of the regime.
The redefinition of the transformed political perception of the religious with the secular content has not only failed to ensure the absolute liquidation of the religious, but has also helped to preserve the importance of religion as a source of legitimacy. Although the established civil religion has no categorical difference from the political religion, which is peculiar to the totalitarian regimes, both of them reveal a theology that is either opposed to the existing religion or not.

ORCID :

Gülbeyaz KARAKUŞ   0000-0003-3837-8095

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