

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES IN TURKEY

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By establishing firmly-based states in various places and regions the Turkish nation, has continued to exist uninterrupted since the 7th century B.C. up to the present day always looking for a religion befitting its both national and individual character.

On the strength of this various Turkish clans and groups in different regions, have embraced religions such as Animism, Shamanism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism etc. For example, Khazar (Caspian) Turks, who founded a state on the coast of the Caspian Sea, to which they gave their name, accepted Christianity in 508. Furthermore, Islam began to spread amongst them when the Arabs attacked the Caucasus at the end of the 7th century A.D. This state of which Balanjar was the capital accepted Judaism as the official religion.

The Gagauz Turks who live in Rumania today are Orthodox Christians. They conduct services in their church in Turkish. Turkish states of Turkestan, began accepting Islam as their official religion towards the end of the 10th century A.D. The first Turkish Muslim state (Which existed from 840-1212) was that of the Karahanlis. The Turkish people, who set up this state, which was also called Ilek Hanlar, became Muslims collectively at the end of the 10th century. (in 940 A.D.) Turkish states after this date were all Muslim.

On account of the very nature and composition of the area in which it was founded, and of the character of its Founder, has been a religion that regulates all principles of conduct and behaviour in every community which embraces it. Hence, in communities accepting this religion, the purpose and medium of education becomes Islam, and religious principles it imposes.

The Seljukid and Ottoman empires, who, starting for the 12th century, reigned over almost all the Islamic world, opened Madrasahs Muslim theological school; high school; college or a university everywhere for people to study this religion and its principles and to improve their Islamic knowledge.

The development of theological studies and religious education

Until the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, education, in general, meant "madrasa". In these places, general and professional knowledge as well as theology were taught integrally alongside each other.

The first Madrassa of the Ottoman Empire was opened in Iznik during the reign of Orhan Gazi in 1330, and Professor Davud-u-Kaysari was appointed as administrator. Many madrasas were built not only in Bursa, which was conquered on 6 April 1326 and made the capital of the district (Beylik), but also in Edirne conquered in 1361, and to where the capital was later transferred. Until the reign of Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839), the Ottoman Sultans did not consider the education of the people as the State's duty. Mehmet II could see the necessity and obligation for this, and undertook the responsibility for the education of the masses.

Until that time those who were to work in government offices and the army were educated in the Palace and Janissary schools (Enderun and Acemi Oğlanlar Okulları). These schools take the name Enderun (inside, interior) because of the fact that they were opened inside Topkapı Palace. They were first founded by Sultan Mehmet, the Conqueror (1451-1481). Those who worked in different departments of the Army and Government were educated in these schools.

Only the boys recruited for the Janissary corps were accepted in these schools, which continued until 1st July 1809. Ziya Gökalp's words about these schools are worthy of attention:

"While the Medresse schools were making the Turkish students foreigners, the Enderun schools were Turkifying non-Turkish students". From their foundation until their closure, these Enderun schools trained 79 grand viziers, 3 Sheikh-ul-Islam (dignitaries responsible for all matters connected with canon law, religious schools etc. and coming next to the Grand Vizier in precedence) and 36 admirals.

Madrassas, which were the only educational and cultural centres for the public, from the time of the great Seljuks until the time of Sultan Mehmet, the Conqueror were called after the teachers who taught there. Sultan Mehmet established his famous madrasa, named after him, in eight sections. After some time, thinking that these eight madrasas were not enough for a classical education, he added eight more madrasas. The first group of eight which were called "Sahn Medreseleri", (the madrasas

in the court of the Fatih Mosque in Istanbul), were attended, after the second group had been completed. Each Sahn madrasa contained 19 rooms of which 15 were assigned to students, 2 to those who were in charge and the other two for caretakers and porters.

The one who brought about the second reform in Turkish madrasas was Süleyman the Magnificent. Until 14 January 1863, when the first Ottoman Darulfunun (University) started in struction, all branches of science were taught in madrasas, where great importance was attached to religious education. For this reason, in order to train people for government services and especially for those needed in different fields of theology, new departments were founded in Madrasas: Darul-Hadis (college for the study of the tradition of the words and deeds of the Prophet), Dar uttib (college of Medicine), "Darulhendese" (Mathematical college), "Muallimhane-i Nüvvab" (School of Law). The latter was founded in 1854 and its name was changed into "Mekteb-i Nüvvab" in 1884 and again into "Mekteb-i kuzat" in 1910.

After the adoption of some codes of law from Europe in criminal and legal fields in 1850, conducting daily legal and judicial matters, and training more knowledgeable people in these fields gained more importance. For example in 1850, the criminal code and commercial law codes were adopted, in 1862 the system of commercial courts and in 1864, Maritime code of Law. a commission, headed by Cevdet Paşa prepared a legal code named "Majalla" (civil code) which contained 1851 articles. This attempt was an important step forward in codifying canonical jurisprudence, in other words, Islamic Law, instead of arranging the law by "Fatwas" (opinion on legal matters furnished by a mufti on application).

"Medresetulvaizin", and in 1913 "Medreset-ül eimme ve'l hutaba" were opened, to train preachers and imams for the mosques which were the second places for the education of the public. Later these two schools were united under the name of "Medresetül 'irşad". (irshad)

When Madrasas were first established, there were some which specialized in jurisprudence, theology or philosophy and especially in the commentary of the Quran. These were taught by self-education methods.

After the final rearrangement of the madrasas with the reforms in 1908, the need was felt for opening madrasas which were to teach subjects pertaining to a speciality, according to the "Regulations for the refor-

mation of the Madrasas". A commission of 38 men, formed in 1917 to improve the curriculum of "Dar ül-Hilafet al-aliye" madrasa, decided that "Medresetul mutahassisin" should have three branches, namely Commentary on the Quran and the Tradition, canonical jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence. When this madrasa was reorganized, its name was changed into "Süleymaniye" and the following curriculum was applied:

1. In the Department of Commentary on the Quran and tradition: Commentary, Tradition, Principles of Tradition and the criticism of important men, Biographies of the reciters and commentators of the Quran.
2. In Jurisprudence and the Principles of Jurisprudence: Jurisprudence of Shafii, Hanbali, Hanafi and Mâlîki; principles of Jurisprudence, controversial issues; History of Philosophy.
3. In Philosophy and Dogmatic Theology: Sufism, Islamic philosophy and history; metaphysics, logic, philosophy and ethics, general history of philosophy, history of religions and the religion of Islam.

When the "Medresetul Mutahassisin", (school of specialist studies) was opened in 1914 the departments of "Ulum-u Şeriye" (religious sciences) of "Dar'al-Funün" was closed.

Theological studies after the closure of the Madrasa and the opening of the University

At the beginning of the 20th century, when positive and technical sciences in Europe were advancing with great speed, those who were educated in Madrasas could not keep in line with these sciences, and became hostile towards, not only technology and science, but also patriotics, who were educated in Europe and wanted reforms. Sadrettin Celal Antel, in his article entitled "Tanzimat Maarifi" said the following about these people: "It is obvious that these madrasas become centres of ignorance, fanaticism and intrigue which were obstacles to progress". We can point out briefly the educational system of the medreses which were greatly responsible for the destruction of the Ottoman Empire:

1. prevalence of the Ummet (community) education
2. the scholastic educational system which excluded observation, examination, experiment and criticism and which only commented

upon the verses of the Quran, the Tradition and other texts according to Aristotle's logic, and attached importance to the words rather than the meaning

3. the usage of Arabic instead of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction; lack of private and independent schools and educational materials.

The example S.C. Antel gave is interesting: The fact that Selim Sabit (Şıbay) was forced by the Sheikhul islam to resign and remove the desks, blackboards and maps he had put in a school opened by him in Süleymaniye, shows that the reformers were defeated by this fanatical mentality. Another example during the Balkan wars is as follows: When we were defeated in the Balkan wars the office of Sheikhul islam send a prayer in Arabic to all schools, and asked them to read it 4444 times.

Atatürk, who had seen many examples of this kind of behaviour, which was terrible and harmful to the country, abolished the medreses by his legislation of "the Unification of the Educational programmes", four months after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, However by the closure of the madrasas, religious studies were not abolished altogether. The fourth article of the law ordered the opening of a Faculty of Theology in Darulfünün (University) to train specialists in higher religious studies, and the training of people needed to work as imams and preachers. But the Imam-Hatib schools could not continue teaching nor were the students eager to enter the Faculty of Theology. Because of this, the Faculty of Theology was closed and the Institute of Islamic Research was opened in the Faculty of Arts.

The connections between the Darulfunun-the University and the Faculty of Theology

The temporary education Committee formed during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecit in 1845 decided to open a Darulfunun to train civil servants for government offices. For this reason, Fossatti, the famous architect was called from Milan, Italy, and asked to construct a building with erchitect three floors and 125 rooms. This building which was built between the old "Cephane Kışlası" and "Sultan Sarayları" was burned down in 1933. In fact, during the 70 years of its existence, this building was only used for educational purposes for a short time once the school of law was opened. Apart from this, it was used only for government offices.

When the Idadi schools (preparatory schools, roughly corresponding to senior high school) were opened, following the opening of the Rüştiye Schools (high schools) the first Ottoman University commenced teaching on 14th January 1863. In this University, which had a library with 4,000 volumes and laboratories, famous scholars like the chemist Derviş Paşa, the great statesman Ahmet Vefik Paşa, the physician Salih Efendi, the historian and lawyer Cevdet Paşa and the chief astrologer of the Sultan, Osman Efendi, all gave lectures.

This Darulfunun was moved to Nuri Efendi Konağı in Çemberlitaş in 1865. After a short time, the library and the laboratories were burnt down in a fire, and the Darulfunun was closed for some time. In 1870, a Darulfunun was built next to Sultan Ahmet Türbesi but this was also closed in the same year. The reasons given for this were that the Rector Yanyalı Hoca Tahsin had done an experiment with a pigeon, which he put in an airfree lantern to show the students that living things can not live without air, and also Afghanlı Cemalettin Efendi, one of the lecturers, said that Prophethood was an art.

Thirty years later, a new establishment called "Darulfunun-u Şahâne" started teaching in Cağaloğlu on 1st September 1900. From the beginning, Mülkiye Mektebi (the school for civil servants), Hukuk Mektebi (Law School) and Tıbbiye Mektebi (Medical School) were operating independently from the Darulfunun, as separate institutions of higher education, but within this new Darulfunun, new departments like literature, Mathematical Sciences, Natural Science and philology (which included Turkish, Arabic, Persian, French, German, English and Russian) were opened.

On 21 September 1908 this Darulfunun moved to Zeynep Kâmil Hanım Konağı in Beyazıt, where today's Faculties of literature, Science and Chemistry are situated. Its curricula were revised. The school of law was included in the departments of Social, Religious, Mathematics and biological sciences. The Faculties curricula were rearranged. Meanwhile, because Zeynep Kamil Konağı could not meet the need, new institutes were established: Chemistry in the Yerebatan region; Geology in Feyzullah Efendi Konağı in Vefa; Oriental Languages in Ibrahim Paşa Konağı; and Geography in Saffet Paşa Konağı. Zeynep Kâmil Konağı was burnt down completely in a fire on 1st March 1942. In its place, the present Faculties of Literature, Sciences and Chemistry were built. After the First World War, new regulations were issued on 15th October 1917.

Here I want to say a few words about female students in Darulfunun, who were not accepted in Madrasas. This was an important event in the history of the development of Turkish Universities. The female students were at first allowed to attend free lectures given in Darulfunun on 5th February 1914, as a result of the lesson taken from the defeat in the Balkan wars. After some time new classes were formed for female students.

On 12th September 1914, these classes were gathered in a separate building called "Inas Darulfununu" (Darulfunun for female students), which comprised the Departments of Literature, Mathematics, and Biology. This Darulfunun, whose first graduates emerged in 1917, was closed in 1920 and classes were moved to Zeynep Kamil Konağı and joined again to Darulfunun. After some time these female students boycotted their classes and started attending classes for male students. Confronted with the girls moral courage, the university senate had to accept this "fait accompli" with a decision they took on 16 September 1921. Thus the separation of male and female universities disappeared.

Mixed education started by female students in the departments of literature and science took place in the Faculty of Law in the academic year 1921-22, and in the Faculty of Medicine in 1922-23.

Today, selfish circles who want to harm the country are trying to do their utmost to separate girls from boys. Naturally, the real intention is to exploit them by keeping them behind closed doors and keeping them ignorant so that they are ready for exploitation.

Darulfunun was given autonomy with a law, introduced on 21 April 1924. Thus it was separated from the Ministry of Education and reorganized in 1925 with regulations consisting of 52 articles. The Faculty of Theology was added to the Darulfunun.

After the publication of the law "The Unification of Education" dated 30 March 1924, the number of Medreses in Istanbul which were taken from the Evkaf (The government department in control of estates in mortmain) and turned over to private administration was 192.

With the law dated 31 May 1933 and numbered 2252 concerning the closing of the Istanbul Darulfunun and opening of a new university by the Ministry of Education, the Ottoman Darulfunun was to be abolished and Istanbul University was to be reorganized instead by the Ministry of Education. Thus Istanbul University was established. At the beginning of

the Second World War, 20 professors were called from Germany for the Faculties of literature, Science and Law to strengthen the academic staff.

When the bill about the opening of this Faculty was debated in Parliament, İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu M. P. from Kırşehir, Emin Soysal M.P. from Maraş, Ahmet Remzi Yüregir M.P. from Seyhan, Fahri Karakaya M.P. from Elazığ and Tahsin Banguoğlu M.P. from Bingöl who was also the Minister of Education made interesting speeches. When the Democrat Party, which had some members of Parliament as an opposition party, came to power in the election on 14 May 1950, started to exploit the religious feelings of the people to gain more votes in the coming elections.

The Ezan (the call for prayer) which was translated into Turkish during the time of the Republican People's Party, was turned back into Arabic. The number of Imam-Hatip Schools which were supposed to be religious schools and almost all the graduates of these, who were in fact working in government offices, were increased. When the new Faculties of Theology, which were to be opened according to the Law governing the universities, were not opened, Higher Islamic Institutes were set up by the law and decisions of the Parliament in 1959.

Depending on the authority given by the law dated 17 June 1982 and numbered 2680, concerning the reorganization of the setting up, duties and authority of the public institutions and establishments, the Council of Ministers opened new Faculties of Theology (22nd June 1982). These were opened in the following universities: Erciyes University (Kayseri), Selçuk University (Konya), Uludağ University (Bursa), Marmara University (Istanbul), Dokuz Eylül University (İzmir), Atatürk University (Erzurum), Ondokuzmayıs University (Samsun), With the one which was opened within Ankara University in 1949, the number of faculties of theology reached eight.

The ninth one has opened recently in Urfa (attached to The Gaziantep University).

The Faculty of Theology of Ankara University has two Research institutes: the history of Turkish and Islamic Arts, founded in 1953, and Islamic Sciences founded in 1956. The former organizes an "International Congress of Turkish Arts" once every 4 years, always in a foreign country. The eighth congress held in 1987 in Egypt.

The Faculty of Theology of Ankara University, which for many years continued as one department, now has three departments:

1. Islamic Civilization and Social Sciences.
2. Commentary on the Quran and the Tradition.
3. Islamic Philosophy and Theology.

The other Faculties of Theology have the same departments today. In these faculties, the syllabuses of which are more or less the same, the following subjects are taught:

Commentary on the Quran; Tradition; Theology; Islamic Law; Islamic history; the principles of Islam; history of religious; Islamic sects (madhhabs) the history of Islamic sects; systematic philosophy; logic; history of Islamic arts; Sociology of religion psychology; religious music; pedagogy; Mysticism; Turkish-Islamic Literature; epigraphy; Arabic, Persian, French, English, German (one of these European languages is selected).

Today, the graduates of the Faculties of Theology, like the graduates of Imam-Hatip schools, work in government departments, which are outside their professions and qualifications. The usefulness and productivity of this is questionable.

