

# The First Female Academics in Turkish Theology as Founding Agents

## Kurucu Özneler Olarak Türk İlahiyatında İlk Kadın Akademisyenler

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### Abstract

While the establishment of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in 1949 reshaped the institutional and intellectual landscape of higher religious education in Türkiye, the female academics involved in this process assumed critical roles. Their presence within the faculties extended far beyond mere quantitative representation; they acted as primary agents who laid the methodological foundations, inaugurated new chairs, and transformed the academic perspective. This qualitative study utilizes document analysis as its primary method. Alongside digital databases, institutional websites and biographical works, records from the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity archives were examined—particularly to reach figures with limited available information—and supplemented by personal interviews. The research encompasses eleven pioneering names appointed to academic positions since the 1949 milestone: Kâmuran Birand, Bahriye Üçok, Annemarie Schimmel, Neda Armaner, Beyza Bilgin, Ayşe Necla Pekolcay, Mualla Selçuk, Gülay Cezayirli, Nahide Bozkurt, Yurdagül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu) and Gülgün Uyar. Findings reveal that, contrary to the prevailing belief identifying Bahriye Üçok as the first female theology academic in Türkiye, this pioneering role belongs to Kâmuran Birand. It is observed that these eleven figures introduced methods such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, art, literature, and field research to the academy by synthesizing classical theological formation with the tools of modern social sciences. These academics predominantly worked in the fields of Philosophy and Religious Sciences, thereby leading to the institutionalization of departments such as Religious Education, History of Religions, and History of Philosophy. Their academic activities transcended faculty boundaries, leaving a lasting impact on state religious education policies and international scientific representation. Consequently, through the students they mentored and the schools of thought they initiated, these figures are defined as the "founding subjects" who constructed the intellectual backbone of Turkish theology.

**Keywords:** Religious education, higher religious education, history of Turkish theology, theology faculties, female academics

### Öz

Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi'nin 1949 yılında faaliyete başlaması Türkiye'de yüksek din öğretiminin kurumsal ve entelektüel zeminini yeniden kurgularken, bu süreçte yer alan kadın akademisyenler kritik roller üstlenmişlerdir. Fakültelerdeki varlıkları niceliksel bir temsiliyetin çok ötesinde olan bu öncü kuşak; disiplinlerin metodolojik altyapısını kuran, yeni kürsüler ihdas eden ve akademik perspektifi dönüştüren asıl aktörler arasında yer almaktadır. Nitel araştırma yöntemiyle kurgulanan çalışmada veri toplama sürecinde doküman analizi tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Dijital veri tabanları, kurum internet sayfaları ve biyografik eserlerin yanı sıra özellikle hakkında sınırlı bilgi bulunan isimlerin verilerine ulaşmak adına Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi arşiv kayıtları incelenmiştir. Gerekli durumlarda bazı isimlerle de şahsi görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamına 1949'dan itibaren akademik kadrolarda yer alan Kâmuran Birand, Bahriye Üçok, Annemarie Schimmel, Neda Armaner, Beyza Bilgin, Ayşe Necla Pekolcay, Mualla Selçuk, Gülay Cezayirli, Nahide Bozkurt, Yurdagül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu) ve Gülgün Uyar dahil edilmiştir. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular Türk ilahiyatının ilk kadın akademisyen vasfının yaygın kanaatin aksine Bahriye Üçok yerine Kâmuran Birand'a ait olduğunu kanıtlamaktadır. Yanı sıra incelenen on bir ismin klasik ilahiyat formasyonunu modern sosyal bilimlerin imkanlarıyla harmanlayarak hermenötik, fenomenoloji, sanat, edebiyat ve saha araştırması gibi yöntemleri akademiye taşıdıkları görülmektedir. Kadın akademisyenlerin ağırlıklı olarak felsefe ve din bilimleri alanında yoğunlaştıkları; din eğitimi, dinler tarihi ve felsefe tarihi gibi ana bilim dallarının kurumsallaşmasında liderlik ettikleri tespit edilmiştir. Bu isimlerin akademik faaliyetleri fakülte sınırlarını aşarak devletin din eğitim politikalarından uluslararası bilimsel temsiliyete kadar geniş bir alanda kalıcı etkiler bırakmıştır. Sonuç olarak söz konusu isimler yetiştirdikleri öğrenciler ve başlattıkları ekollerle Türk ilahiyatının entelektüel omurgasını inşa eden "kurucu özneler" olarak tanımlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Din eğitimi, yüksek din öğretimi, Türk ilahiyat tarihi, ilahiyat fakülteleri, kadın akademisyenler

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## Introduction

The evolution of higher religious education in Türkiye functions as a foundational experience for understanding modernization, emerging from an institutional interregnum toward an intellectual rebirth. Following the quests of the early Republican period, the closure of the Darülfünun Faculty of Theology with the 1933 University Reform created a sixteen-year interregnum in the field of religious higher education. This era concluded with the opening of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in 1949. The date in question has been recorded as the true milestone and institutional foundation of the modern theology academy and, consequently, of higher religious education in Türkiye. This study focuses on the founding subjects who played an active role in constructing the institutional memory and intellectual backbone of theology faculties within the historical continuity stretching from this new beginning to the present—namely, the first female academics who served in these faculties.

The primary objective of the study is an effort to fill a prominent gap in the historiography of Turkish theology. When existing literature and institutional histories are examined, it is observed that female theology academics are discussed either individually by name [for instance (Albayrak, 2002; Doğan, 2020; Durmuş, 2003; Er, 2008; Kızılabdullah & Çapcıoğlu, 2016; Koç, 2018; Önder, 1997; Özkan, 2003; Selçuk et al., 2019; Takım, 1998; Tosun, 2025; Uzun, 2008)], within other topics [for instance (Candeğer & Coşkun, 2018; Çapcıoğlu, 2003, 2019)], or through statistical data [for instance (Altın, 2024)]. Consequently, no study is encountered that independently addresses the first female theologians who could be characterized as the founding generation. In this regard, Arpağuş's (2016) article titled *İslâmcılığın Türkiye Serüveni: Kadınların İlâhiyat Tecrübesine Katkıları* stands out as an exceptional work. However, as its title and author explicitly state, the article discusses "the contribution of women within the context of the historical experience of Islamism," which falls outside the scope of our research.

Proceeding from all these points, the aim of the study is to move beyond merely demonstrating the presence of women in academia and to reveal how they shaped the methodology and institutional structure of the theology discipline, particularly in the fields of Philosophy, Religious Sciences, and Religious Education. Thus, while this research is, on the one hand, an institutional history study, it is, on the other hand, an inquiry into the history of religious education. This is because the academic biographies of the subjects under consideration follow a course simultaneous with the journey of modernization, institutionalization, and methodological transformation of religious education in Türkiye.

In this context, the study contends that female academics did not merely assume a "representative" role in theology faculties; rather, they fulfilled a mission as discipline founders, method developers, and school creators in the departments of Philosophy and Religious Sciences and of Islamic History and Arts. Nevertheless, substantiating this claim required the researcher to undertake an arduous data-collection process. In particular, the scattered nature of data on early-period academics emerged as one of the most significant challenges of the investigation. For instance, for figures like Gülay Cezayirli, about whom very few written sources exist, a trail was blazed by following limited citations or information in the literature. Cezayirli's name was first encountered in an article by Çapcıoğlu (2003), which led to initial communication with the author. Subsequently, through the author's guidance and support, limited access to the archives of AÜİF was obtained following a written request. "Non-private" information in the archives was scanned, allowing for the acquisition of significant details not only about Cezayirli but also about Kâmuran Birand and Bahriye Üçok, whose names create gender ambiguity and about whom information was likewise insufficient. Since satisfactory information regarding Cezayirli could not be obtained, direct communication channels were sought, and eventually, a personal interview was secured to construct her biography. Information regarding other names was obtained from digital and printed documents and, where necessary, from interviews with the individuals themselves.

It must be emphasized that, although certain proportions are derived from the findings and classifications, this article does not pursue the fundamental goal of generating quantitative data on female students or academics in theology faculties. Similarly, there is no intention here to draw attention to the social or institutional difficulties experienced by female academics through theories such as the "glass ceiling metaphor" (See Yıldız, 2018). Instead, by moving beyond gender, the focus remains on the knowledge produced by the academics in question, the chairs they established, and the intellectual legacy they left behind. The absence of independent, holistic studies of the history of female theology academics, starting with Kâmuran Birand, makes this research unique and necessary for both the history of religious education and the history

of Turkish academia. The criteria for defining the 'founding generation' in this study are based on three pillars: (i) contributing to the institutional construction of departments and chairs within the post-1949 theology structure, (ii) introducing pioneering academic and methodological tools to the discipline, and (iii) supervising the first generation of doctoral researchers who subsequently formed distinct academic schools.

### Methodology

In this study, which used a qualitative research method, digital databases and biographical works were used alongside institutional yearbooks, news archives, announcements, and personal interviews, thereby triangulating multiple sources to strengthen the historical and institutional context. Document analysis constitutes the primary methodology of this study. Personal communications with three individuals were conducted solely as a complementary tool to fill specific biographical gaps where archival records were incomplete. Given that these informal consultations were not designed as structured qualitative interviews, a formal interview protocol or quantitative logging was not within the methodological scope of this research. During this period, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Şırnak University Ethics Committee (Date: 08.12.2025, No: E-74546226-050.99-152853), and informed consent was obtained from all participants. In accordance with ethical principles and participant confidentiality, certain biographical details were not shared as specific consent for the disclosure of such information was not provided by the individuals concerned.

The scope of the article covers the first women who were "appointed to the academic staff" of any theology faculty in Türkiye and who "performed academic work" in the field of theology, starting from 1949 -the year when modern theology faculties were opened- "regardless of whether they were theology graduates." Consequently, individuals such as Kâmuran Birand, Bahriye Üçok, Ayşe Necla Pekolcay, and, despite her non-citizenship, Annemarie Schimmel, who became part of the memory of the Turkish theology academy through the knowledge they produced or their ties of intellectual belonging, were included in the research framework. For the same reason, although she served as the dean of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity between 1985 and 1990, Meliha Anbarcioğlu (*Fakültemizde Görev Yapmış Dekanlar*) has not been included in the study. Since Anbarcioğlu did not serve on the academic staff but in an administrative capacity, it does not seem possible to speak of her as a theology academic.

Within this framework, institutions such as the Darülfünun Faculty of Theology and Higher Islamic Institutes have also been excluded from the text. This exclusion is fundamentally rooted in the absence of an identifiable female academic presence during the Darülfünun period (Düzgün, 2019; Koştaş, 1999). Such a decision further acknowledges the lack of organic institutional continuity between those early structures and contemporary theology faculties. While the institutional roots of higher religious education in Türkiye date back to the 19th-century Ulûm-ı Şeriyeye Şubesi of the Darülfünun, the first faculty named "theology" was actually opened in 1924, again within the body of the Darülfünun. The closure of this faculty in 1933 was followed by the short lifespan of the Islamic Research Institute (İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü) and a period of interregnum that lasted until 1949. The process was revitalized in 1949 with the opening of AÜİF (Koştaş, 1999; Tosun, 2025). The landscape diversified with the participation of Higher Islamic Institutes in 1958-1959, and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences (İslami İlimler Fakültesi) was established within Erzurum University in 1971; institutional unity was achieved in 1982 when these two forms were converted into theology faculties (Arpağuş, 2016). Apart from Necla Pekolcay, the inability to identify female profiles with academic continuity in the Higher Islamic Institutes, and the divergence of the institute format from the post-1949 theological structure, made this choice necessary. Following the transformation of the institute in İstanbul into the Faculty of Theology affiliated with Marmara University in Türkiye in 1982 (Alper, 2005), Pekolcay transferred to the faculty and is consequently already included in the article.

Thus, the study was initiated with the intention of including the first ten female academics identified chronologically. In the initial stage, the following names were determined: (i) Kâmuran Birand, (ii) Bahriye Üçok, (iii) Annemarie Schimmel, (iv) Neda Armaner, (v) Beyza Bilgin, (vi) Ayşe Necla Pekolcay, (vii) Mualla Selçuk, (viii) Gülay Cezayirli, (ix) Nahide Bozkurt, (x) Yurdagül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu) and, (xi) Gülgün Uyar. Since Konuk and Uyar commenced their academic duties during the same dates in 1991, they both share the tenth rank; therefore, the chronological sequence consists of ten ranks while encompassing eleven pioneering figures. Detailed information regarding the chronological appointment dates and institutional affiliations of these eleven scholars is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

***Chronological Overview of the First Female Academics Appointed to Theology Faculties (1949–1991)***

Name	Appointment Date	Department / Chair	Institution
1. Kâmuran Birand	1952	Psychology of Religion / History of Philosophy	AÜİF
2. Bahriye Üçok	1953	Islamic History	AÜİF
3. Annemarie Schimmel	1954	History of Religions	AÜİF
4. Neda Armaner	1960	Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy	AÜİF
5. Beyza Bilgin	1965	Religious Education	AÜİF
6. Ayşe Necla Pekolcay	1982	Turkish-Islamic Literature	MÜİF
7. Mualla Selçuk	1983	Religious Education	AÜİF
8. Gülay Cezayirli	1986	Sociology and Psychology of Religion	AÜİF
9. Nahide Bozkurt	1987	Islamic History	AÜİF
10. Yurdağül Konuk	1991	Religious Education	MÜİF
11. Gülgün Uyar	1991	Islamic History	MÜİF

(AÜİF: Ankara University Faculty of Divinity; MÜİF: Marmara University Faculty of Theology.)

Regarding the sequence of names in the text, the dates they began their academic duties are taken as the basis, rather than their birth dates or titles. The article chronologically lists the brief lives of the academics in question, their academic and social effects/contributions, and the books they published, along with the names of the individuals whose doctoral theses they supervised, taking into account the thesis completion dates. Consequently, the study follows a course that treats the biographies of female academics through a chronological classification in an encyclopedic style and analyzes the unique aspects, founding roles, and academic legacies emerging from these biographical data.

### Results

In this section, the life stories and academic career stages of the eleven female academics at the center of the research are presented in an encyclopedic style, in chronological order by date of appointment. As will be seen, their biographical journeys stand out not only as a record of data but also as living witnesses reflecting the institutional formation and methodological transformation of divinity faculties. The lack of holistic studies on this process, which began with Kâmuran Birand, renders the following findings significant for both religious education and the history of Turkish academia.

#### Prof. Dr. Kâmuran Birand

Although she is referred to by various names in the literature, such as Kâmıran, Kamıran, and Kâmıran, according to the archives of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity, her name on her identity card is Kâmuran. Again, according to the faculty archives, her journey began in Karaman in the year 1331 of the Hijri calendar (1912 or 1913 in the Gregorian calendar). She completed her primary education in the same city in 1928. After a two-year break from her education, she graduated from İstanbul Cağaloğlu Middle School and then from Erenköy High School in 1938. In 1942, she graduated from the Department

of Philosophy at the Faculty of Letters of İstanbul University (*İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi*). Birand was appointed as an assistant to the department from which she graduated in 1943. Her doctoral studies began under the supervision of Von Aster. Various accounts exist regarding the exact title of her doctoral work. Hilmi Ziya Ülken (1964) notes that the title of the thesis was *Tanzimattan Sonraki Türk Düşüncesinde Aydınlanma Hareketi (The Enlightenment Movement in Turkish Thought After the Tanzimat)*. However, in another article, he mentions that Birand's doctoral research focused on the topic titled "Tanzimat Devrinde Aydınlık Felsefesi İzleri" (*Traces of Enlightenment Philosophy in the Tanzimat Era*) (Ülken, 1973). Anay (1998) cites the dissertation title as *Aydınlanma Devri ve Türk Düşüncesi Üzerine Bazı Tesirleri (The Enlightenment Era and Some of Its Effects on Turkish Thought)*.

Since she could not reach an agreement with Aster regarding the thesis topic after starting the doctoral process (Ülken, 1973), or because her professor lacked interest in the subject, a change of advisor was made, and she completed her thesis in 1948 under the supervision of Hilmi Ziya Ülken (Ülken, 1964). According to archival sources, after receiving her doctoral title, she was first appointed as an assistant at the Ankara University Faculty of Letters, Philosophy Institute, and, in 1952, was appointed to the staff as a Psychology of Religion assistant at the Faculty of Divinity. She became an associate professor in 1953 through her dissertation titled *Dilthey ve Rickert'de Manevi İlimler Görüşü (The View of Moral Sciences in Dilthey and Rickert)*. In 1955, she was assigned to the associate professorship of Psychology of Religion. She went to Germany, France, and Austria at various dates to conduct research. In 1960, she was appointed professor in Philosophy and Logic. A year later, upon the separation of the Systematic Philosophy and History of Philosophy chairs, she moved to the History of Philosophy chair. She passed away in Ankara in 1964. After her death, her entire legacy was bequeathed to the faculty by her brother Hikmet Birand (Ülken, 1973). The Kâmuran Birand Foundation (Kâmuran Birand Vakfı), which was the first foundation of Ankara University Faculty of Divinity, began its activities in 1968 and continued them until 1983 (Aslan, 2019).

Some of her works are as follows: *Dilthey ve Rickert'te Manevi İlimlerin Temellendirilmesi, Aydınlanma Devri Devlet Felsefesinin Tanzimatta Tesirleri, Manevi İlimler Metodu Olarak Anlama, and İlk Çağ Felsefesi Tarihi*.

#### **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahriye Üçok**

She was born in Trabzon in 1919 and received her education at the Ankara University Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography. Following her graduation in 1942, the scholar served as a history teacher. Archival data indicate that she began her academic career in 1953 as a candidate assistant at the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity. One year later, she was officially appointed as an assistant in Islamic History. The researcher attained the title of doctor in 1957 by completing her doctoral thesis titled *İslam Tarihinde İlk Sahte Peygamberler (The First False Prophets in Islamic History)* under the supervision of Neşet Çağatay; subsequently, she received the rank of associate professor in 1964 with her work titled *İslam Devletlerinde Kadın Hükümdarlar (Female Sovereigns in Islamic States)* [Tezler Kataloğu (Bahriye Üçok)]. Along with Neşet Çağatay and Hüseyin Gazi Yurdaydın, Üçok was among the pioneering instructors to deliver Islamic History lectures at Ankara University Faculty of Divinity (Koca, 2019).

The academic retired in 1971 while holding the rank of associate professor. During the same year, she was appointed to the Republic Senate by the President of the period, Cevdet Sunay. She participated in the establishment of the Halkçı Parti in 1982; in the 1983 elections, she was elected to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi - TBMM) as a Member of Parliament for Ordu and served there. Afterward, she continued her activities within the Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti. Üçok, who drew reactions for her interpretations regarding veiling and fasting during a television program in 1988, lost her life on October 6, 1990, as a result of an assassination (Candeğer & Coşkun, 2018; Koca, 2019; Şahin, 2010).

The books written by Bahriye Üçok are as follows: *İslam Tarihinde İlk Sahte Peygamberler, İslam'dan Dönenler ve Yalancı Peygamberler, İslam Tarihi: Emeviler-Abbasiler, İslam Devletlerinde Kadın Hükümdarlar*, as well as the expanded version of this study, *İslam Devletlerinde Türk Naibeler ve Kadın Hükümdarlar*, and *Atatürk'ün İzinde Bir Arpa Boyu*.

#### **Prof. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel**

Born in Erfurt, Germany, in 1922, she developed an early interest in Eastern culture, which led her to begin learning Arabic and memorizing portions of the Qur'an as a child. In subsequent years, she mastered Turkish, Persian, Urdu, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. She entered Berlin Friedrich Wilhelm University in 1939, transitioning from natural sciences to Oriental Studies. In this field, she completed her doctorate in Arabic Philology and Islamic Sciences in 1941 under the supervision of Richard

Hartmann with her thesis titled *Die Stellung des Kalifen und der Qadis im spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten (The Position of the Caliph and the Qadis in Late Medieval Egypt)*. The researcher became an associate professor at Marburg University in 1946, following her habilitation study titled *Die Struktur der Militärschicht unter den späten Mamluken (The Structure of the Military Layer under the Late Mamluks)*, and began working at the Faculty of Theology at the same university. In 1951, she completed her second doctorate, titled *Studien zum Begriff der mystischen Liebe in der frühislamischen Mystik (Studies on the Concept of Mystical Love in Early Islamic Mysticism)*, becoming the first person to receive the title of doctor in the field of history of religions at Marburg University (Albayrak, 2002; Altıntaş, 2024; Kara, 2003; Özkan, 2003, 2005; Takim, 1998).

In 1952, the academic traveled to İstanbul to conduct research. Serving at Ankara University's Faculty of Divinity between 1954 and 1959, the scholar helped establish the History of Religions chair there (Öcal, 2011; Tunç, 2021). During her tenure in Türkiye, besides carrying out her academic duties, she produced significant works on elements constituting the country's tradition, including the history of Turkish-Islamic thought and Sufism.

The researcher returned to Germany in 1959. She taught Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and the History of Islamic Arts at Bonn University in 1961. In 1967, she took charge of the Indo-Muslim Culture chair established at Harvard University. For 25 years at this institution, she delivered lectures on Indo-Islamic culture, Sufism, Mevlânâ, İkbâl, and Islamic arts. After retiring from Harvard in 1992, she taught at Bonn University once again. During the final years of her life, she was honored with awards and medals by many countries. Schimmel, who passed away in Bonn on January 26, 2003, left behind a lasting intellectual bridge between the East and the West (Kara, 2003; Özkan, 2003).

Schimmel penned dozens of books and hundreds of articles. Some of her books include: *I Am Wind, You Are Fire: The Life and Work of Rumi, Aus dem goldenen Becher: Türkische Gedichte aus sieben Jahrhunderten (From the Golden Cup: Turkish Poems from Seven Centuries)*, *Die Zeichen Gottes: Die religiöse Welt des Islam (Deciphering the Signs of God: The Religious World of Islam)*, *as Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam, Cavidname (translated by Annemarie Schimmel)*, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture, Islam an introduction*, and *Dinler Tarihine Giriş*.

#### **Prof. Dr. Neda Armaner**

She was born on 11 March 1920 in Samatya, İstanbul. The scholar completed her primary education in 1927 in İstanbul and her secondary education in 1932 at the Konya Teachers' School. After graduating from Ankara Girls' High School, she began her studies at the Ankara University Faculty of Law in 1937, where she received a two-year associate degree (Koç, 2018). Subsequently, she commenced her theological education and became one of the first graduates of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in 1953 (Şahbaz, 2019). Between 1953 and 1959, the researcher served as a teacher at the Edirne Girls' Teachers' Training School and Edirne High School. In 1960, she entered academia as an assistant in the Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy Chair of the faculty from which she had graduated. By completing her doctoral thesis titled *İnanç ve Hareket Bütünlüğü Bakımından Din Terbiyesi (Religious Education in Terms of the Integrity of Belief and Action)* in 1963 under the supervision of Bedi Ziya Egemen, she attained the title of the first doctor in the field of psychology of religion in Türkiye. She became an associate professor in 1972 and a professor in 1982. In 1983, the academic took on the role of founding director of the Institute of Social Sciences at Ondokuz Mayıs University. She retired in 1987 due to age limits. Armaner passed away on 16 February 2022 in Darıca (Baş & Aslan, 2019; Koç, 2018, 2021).

Some of the books she published are as follows: *Din Bilgisi Ders Kitabı, Din Eğitim ve Öğretiminde Metodik Bilgiler (with A. Z. Ökmen)*; *İslam Dininden Ayrılan Cereyanlar: Nurculuk, Hitabet ve Dini İrşat Üzerine; İnanç ve Hareket Bütünlüğü Bakımından Din Terbiyesi, Din Bilgisi Ders Kitabı, Psikopatoloji'de Dini Belirtiler and Din Psikolojisine Giriş*.

The students she supervised for their doctorates consist of the following names: Fırat Erdoğan, Hüseyin Peker, Recep Yaparel (Baş & Aslan, 2019), Selim Garaağacı, Macit Musazade, Orhan Gizli, Asaf Demirbaş, and Bedri Katipoğlu [*Tezler Kataloğu (Neda Armaner'in Danışmanlığında Tamamlanan Doktora Tezleri)*].

#### **Prof. Dr. Beyza Bilgin**

She was born in İzmir in 1935. The scholar completed her primary education in Karabük, İstanbul, and Eskişehir; she graduated from high school at the Eskişehir Atatürk High School. In 1955, the researcher entered the Faculty of Science at Ankara University (Ankara Üniversitesi Fen Fakültesi). Upon leaving this faculty in 1956, she began her studies at the Faculty of

Divinity of the same university. After graduating in 1960 (Şahbaz, 2019), the academic continued her teaching career, which she began at the Yozgat Imam Hatip School, in various locations until 1965. Consequently, along with her friend Aysel Baranok, who was appointed as a teacher in the same year, she held the title of the first female teacher to serve at an Imam Hatip School (Arpaguş, 2016). Working at the request of the then Mufti of Ankara, Dr. Lütfi Doğan, she served as an honorary female preacher between 1962 and 1964. In this sense, she is the first female preacher (*vaize*) in Türkiye.

The researcher began her duty as an assistant at the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in 1965. She obtained her doctoral title in 1970 under the supervision of Hilmi Ziya Ülken, finishing her dissertation titled *İslam'da Eğitimin Temeli Olarak Sevgi (Love as the Basis of Education in Islam)*, which she had started under the supervision of Bedi Ziya Egemen until his passing. By 1979, the scholar had become an associate professor in Curriculum Development and Instruction, with her work titled *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi ve Liselerde Din Dersleri (Religious Education in Türkiye and Religious Lessons in High Schools)*. Actually, she finished her thesis in 1977. However, the study was first rejected on the grounds that it was "contrary to secularism," and it was accepted in 1979 following a Council of State decision. Later, in 1988, she attained the title of the first professor of religious education in Türkiye with her study, *Eğitim Bilimi ve Din Eğitimi (Educational Science and Religious Education)*. Up until her retirement, she chaired the Department of Religious Education and the Department of Religious Culture and Ethics Education. After retiring in 2002, she passed away on 19 November 2024 (Doğan, 2020; Durmuş, 2003; Kızılabdullah, 2023; Kızılabdullah & Çapcıoğlu, 2016; Önder, 1997; Tosun, 2025; Yıldız & Türkmen, 2025).

Bilgin authored many books, articles, and book chapters throughout her career. She stated that she adopted the words Islam, women, love, and culture as keywords for her work (Durmuş, 2003). Some of her books include the following: *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi ve Liselerde Din Dersleri*, *Eğitim Bilimi ve Din Eğitimi*, *Din Öğretimi*, *Elli Bin Yıllık Bir Gün*, *Beyza Teyzedan Hikayeler*, *İslam ve Çocuk*, and *İslam'da Kadının Rolü-Türkiye'de Kadın*. Among these works, Bilgin described her book *Beyza Teyzedan Hikayeler* as her "favorite" (Durmuş, 2003).

A significant number of scholars, each of whom holds an extremely important position in the field of religious education in Türkiye, completed their doctoral studies under Bilgin's supervision (in chronological order): Selahattin Parlador, Abdullah Özbek, Mehmet Tütüncü, Mualla Selçuk, Muhammed Şevki Aydın, Cemal Tosun, Nevzat Yaşar Aşkoğlu, Mehmet Zeki Aydın, Suat Cebeci, Recai Doğan, Abdurrahman Boran, Şükrü Keyifli, Mehmet Bulut, Saadettin Özdemir, Osman Eğri, Hüseyin Yılmaz and Adem Akıncı [*Tezler Kataloğu (Beyza Bilgin)*].

### **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Necla Pekolcay**

She was born in 1925 in Fatih, İstanbul. Between 1931 and 1936, the scholar received her primary education at the Taş Mektep in Fatih. After finishing her secondary education at the İstanbul Girls' High School in 1942, she graduated from the İstanbul University Faculty of Letters (İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi) in 1946. In 1947, she enrolled in the doctoral program at the same faculty and began teaching at the Cumhuriyet Girls' High School that year. The researcher started working as an index clerk at the Ministry of National Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı) *Encyclopedia of Islam* in 1948. By completing her dissertation titled *Türkçe Mevlid Metinleri (Turkish Mawlid Texts)* in 1950 under the supervision of Reşit Rahmetî Arat, she attained the title of doctor. While joining the permanent teaching staff of the İstanbul Imam-Hatip School in 1956, she continued to serve as a redactor, translator, and author at the Ministry of National Education's *Encyclopedia of Islam* until 1964. During that year, the academic was appointed to the field of Islamic Turkish Literature at the İstanbul Higher Islamic Institute (İstanbul Yüksek İslam Enstitüsü). During the process in 1982 when the institute was transformed into the Faculty of Theology affiliated with Marmara University, her position was transferred to the faculty, and she became an Assistant Professor in 1983. Although she received the title of associate professor from the Department of Old Turkish Literature in 1989, she was appointed to the associate professor staff in 1991. In the same year, the scholar was appointed Head of the Department of Turkish-Islamic Literature. She retired in 1992 due to age limits while serving as the head of the Marmara University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Turkish-Islamic Literature. The researcher continued her academic activities as a contract faculty member at the same faculty between 1992 and 2001, eventually leaving this position of her own volition. She passed away in 2008 (Er, 2008; Pekolcay, 2005; Uzun, 2008).

Pekolcay made significant contributions to encyclopedia writing in theology and literature. She carried the encyclopedic experience she gained at the Ministry of National Education's *Encyclopedia of Islam* into the *Encyclopedia of Turkish Language and Literature (Türk Dili Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi)* prepared by Dergah Publications. Subsequently, the academic

chaired the first redaction committee of the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı) *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Beyond these, she contributed as an entry author to various other encyclopedias (Pekolcay, 2005; Uzun, 2008). Her book titled *İslami Türk Edebiyatı*, published in 1981 and considered the first work in its field, received the Jury Special Award in the literature category from the Türkiye National Culture Foundation (Uzun, 2008). Furthermore, she holds the distinction of being the first female academic to publish in the *International Journal of Theological and Islamic Studies (Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi)* with her 1985 article titled "İslamî Türk Edebiyatına Dair Bir Eserde Şekil ve Muhtevânın Önemi" (Koç et al., 2019).

Being an extremely prolific scholar, Pekolcay also authored numerous books, presented more than fifty conference papers, and wrote 21 encyclopedia entries. In addition, she published more than sixty academic articles (Er, 2008). Some of her books include: *İslami Türk Edebiyatı*, *Mevlid: Vesiletü'n-Necat/Dede Süleyman Çelebi*, *İslami Türk Edebiyatı Tedkik ve Metodlarının Genel Esasları ve Mazmun Anahtarları*, *İslami Türk Edebiyatı (Giriş): İslami Türk Edebiyatında Nev'iler*, *İslami Türk Edebiyatı Metinlerini Tetkik Metotları*, and *Geçtim Dünya Üzerinden*.

The doctoral students she supervised include names such as Selçuk Eraydın, Hasan Aksoy, Hüsrev Subaşı, and Mustafa Uzun [Er, 2008; Tezler Kataloğu (*Ayşe Necla Pekolcay'ın Danışmanlığında Tamamlanan Doktora Tezleri*)].

### **Prof. Dr. Mualla Selçuk**

Born in Mardin in 1956, she completed her degree at the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity as the top student in 1980 (Aslan, 2019). Following a period of teaching at TED College, the researcher began her duty at the same faculty in 1983 as the first assistant to Beyza Bilgin (Selçuk, 2019). The academic obtained her doctoral degree in 1989 with a thesis titled *Okul Öncesi ve İlkokul Çocuklarının Eğitiminde Dini Motifler (Religious Motifs in the Education of Preschool and Primary School Children)*, prepared under Bilgin's supervision (Baş & Aslan, 2019). Attaining the rank of associate professor in 1992, she became a professor in 1999. Alongside her academic responsibilities, Selçuk served as the General Director of Religious Education at the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye between 1998 and 2003 (Aycan, 2019; Çapçioğlu, 2019). Between the years 2001 and 2008, she became the first female member of the High Board of Religious Affairs within the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) in Türkiye (Çapçioğlu, 2019; Dere, 2019; Kızılabdullah, 2023). The academic served as Dean of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity from 2002 to 2008 (İbrahimoglu, 2019). Subsequent roles included the headship of the Department of Religious Culture and Ethics Education at the Faculty of Educational Sciences from 2009 to 2013, followed by the directorship of the Ankara University Continuous Education Center (Ankara Üniversitesi Sürekli Eğitim Merkezi) until 2018. Furthermore, she served as a university senator, a member of the ethics committee, and a board member at various centers (Selçuk, 2013).

As an active figure on the international stage, the scholar served as the term president of ISREV, based in the United Kingdom. In 2008, she organized the congress titled *Religious Education and the Theology of Religions in Ankara* (Kızılabdullah, 2023). By being elected as the president of the Religious Education Association in 2015, the academic became the first Muslim to assume this role (*Prof. Dr. Mualla Selçuk'un Uluslararası Başarısı; REA'nın İlk Müslüman Kadın Başkanı Fakültemizden*). The researcher is a member of the advisory board for the *British Journal of Religious Education* and serves on the editorial boards of the journals *Religious Education* and *Journal of Contemporary Religions*. Having completed numerous projects, papers, and publications in Islamic religious education, as well as inter-religious and intercultural learning, Selçuk was honored with the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2020 and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Lucerne in Switzerland in 2021. Following her retirement in 2022, she was granted the title of "Volunteer Research Professor" by Ankara University. Through the "Resilient Classrooms Movement" (Dayanıklı Sınıflar Hareketi), which she established after the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, she continues to provide teacher training (Kızılabdullah, 2023; Selçuk, 2013, 2022).

A selection of the books she authored or contributed to includes the following: *Kur'an ve Birey* (with Halis Ayhan and Nahide Bozkurt), *Çocuğun Eğitiminde Dini Motifler*, *Din Öğretimi-Özel Öğretim Yöntemleri* (with Beyza Bilgin), *Das Verhaeltnis von Religion und Staat: Grundlagen in Christentum und Islam (Relationship between Religion and State: Foundations in Christianity and Islam)* (ed. with Richard Heinzmann); *Teaching Religion, Teaching Truth, Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives* (ed. with Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Frances, and Mandy Robbins); *İslamiyet-Hristiyanlık Kavramları Sözlüğü* (ed. with Halis Albayrak, Peter Antes, Richard Heinzmann, and Martin Thurner); *Prof. Dr. Beyza Bilgin'e Armağan-Beyza Bilgin'de Din Eğitimi*, *Din Eğitiminde Beyza Bilgin* (ed. with Cemal Tosun and Recai Doğan); and *Teaching Islam within a Diverse Society*

(Taaruf).

In a chronological order, she supervised the doctoral research of prominent academics in the field, such as Nurullah Altaş, Remziye Ege, Mehmet Yaşar, Mücahit Arpacı, Ahmet Yemenici, Aliye Yılmaz, Ömer Demir, Aybiçe Tosun, and Hasan Sözen [Baş & Aslan, 2019; Kızılabdullah, 2023; *Tezler Kataloğu (Mualla Selçuk'un Danışmanlığında Tamamlanan Doktora Tezleri)*].

#### **Dr. Gülay Cezayirli**

She was born in Sivas in 1955. Between 1961 and 1966, the scholar received her primary education at the Sivas Fevzi Paşa Primary School. The researcher graduated from Sivas Atatürk Middle School in 1969 and entered Sivas Kongre High School the same year. Following a two-year hiatus after her third year of high school, she completed her secondary education in 1974. During that period, she worked as a clerk for eight months at the Sivas Provincial Directorate of National Education (Sivas Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü) in Türkiye. Resigning from her post in 1974, the student enrolled at the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity. After her graduation in 1979, the academic taught Religious Culture and Ethics (Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi) courses at TED Ankara College Private High School for seven years.

According to archival records, the researcher joined the Department of Sociology and Psychology of Religion within the Division of Islamic Civilization and Social Sciences at Ankara University Faculty of Divinity as a research assistant in 1986. Findings from a personal interview reveal that, while serving as a research assistant, she taught Religious Culture and Ethics to students in the residential nursing department of the Ankara University Health Vocational High School for approximately one academic year. From 1996 to 2003, she also taught religious studies at the Ankara University Development Foundation Private High School (Ankara Üniversitesi Geliştirme Vakıf Özel Lisesi), established in 1995. The scholar attained the title of doctor in 1996 with her doctoral thesis titled *Ankara'da Bir Mevlevi Topluluğu (Din Sosyolojisi Açısından Bir İnceleme) (A Mevlevi Community in Ankara: A Study from the Perspective of the Sociology of Religion)* (Çapçioğlu, 2003). She was appointed as an Assistant Professor in 2000 and retired of her own volition in 2003 (İbrahimioğlu, 2019).

#### **Prof. Dr. Nahide Bozkurt**

She was born in the Sürmene district of Trabzon on 2 October 1958. Upon completing her primary and secondary education there, the scholar entered the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in 1978 and graduated in 1984 (Şahbaz, 2019). Between 1985 and 1987, the researcher served as a teacher at the Cebeci Girls' Vocational High School. She commenced her doctoral studies at the Institute of Social Sciences at Ankara University in 1985. While her doctoral studies were ongoing, she began her duties as a research assistant in the Department of Islamic History at the Faculty of Divinity, Ankara University, in 1987. The academic obtained her doctoral title in 1991 by completing her dissertation titled *Halife Me'mun Dönemi ve İslam Kültür Tarihindeki Yeri (The Period of Caliph Ma'mun and Its Place in the History of Islamic Culture)* under the supervision of Hüseyin Gazi Yurdaydın (Baş & Aslan, 2019). According to information obtained from a personal interview, she became an Assistant Professor in 1996, an Associate Professor in the same year, and a Professor in 2003. In 1992, she conducted research in Islamic history and the philosophy of history at the University of Manchester in England. The scholar conducted studies at Amman University in Jordan in 2001 and delivered lectures at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 2005 and 2007. She gave lectures and seminars at the Vienna International Christian-Islamic Summer University (VICISU) programs in Stift Altenburg, Austria, on 1–4 August 2016 and 30 July–2 August 2018, as well as at the Al-Qasemi Academy (R.A.) Academic College of Education Graduate Studies in Baqa al-Gharbiyye, Israel, on 9–15 April 2017 (Sönmez, 2019). From 2013 to 2024, the researcher served as the director of the Ankara University African Studies Research and Application Center (Ankara Üniversitesi Afrika Çalışmaları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi). Bozkurt retired in October 2025.

Her primary books are as follows: *Oluşum Sürecinde Abbasî İhtilali, Mu'tezile'nin Altın Çağı, Siyer: Hz. Muhammed'in Hayatı, Kur'an ve Birey* (with Halis Ayhan and Mualla Selçuk), *Abbâsîler, Tarih Felsefesi-Tarihin Doğası ve Belirleyicileri, Me'mûn, Tarih Felsefesi Perspektifinden Kissalarda Tarihsel Bilinçlilik, Monoteist Dinlerde Kadın-Tarihsel ve Çağdaş Yaklaşımlar, Çağının Belirlenimleri ve Algıları Işığında Hz. Muhammed'in Yaşam Öyküsü-Mekke Dönemi* and *Çağının Belirlenimleri ve Algıları Işığında Hz. Muhammed'in Yaşam Öyküsü-Medine Dönemi*.

The individuals who completed their doctoral studies under her supervision are (in chronological order): İlhami Ayrancı, Halit Çil, İsmail Pırlanta, Hakan Öztürk, İlyas Akyüzoğlu, Vesile Şemşek, Cuma Karan, and Mehmet Usluer [Baş & Aslan, 2019; *Tezler Kataloğu (Nahide Bozkurt'un Danışmanlığında Tamamlanan Doktora Tezleri)*].

### Prof. Dr. Yurdağül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu)

Konuk was born in Fatih, İstanbul. She began her education at the Yavuz Selim Primary School and subsequently attended the Fatih Girls' High School. Although initially enrolling in the Department of Psychology at the İstanbul University Faculty of Letters, she eventually abandoned her psychology studies and enrolled at the Marmara University Faculty of Theology. Following her graduation in 1990, the researcher became a research assistant at the same faculty in 1991. She completed her master's degree at the Marmara University Institute of Social Sciences in 1993 with a thesis titled *Okul Öncesi Çocuklarda (5-6 Yaş) Dini Duygunun Gelişmesi ve Eğitimi (Dini Konularda Anne-Çocuk İletişimi) (The Development and Education of Religious Sentiment in Preschool Children [Ages 5-6]: Mother-Child Communication in Religious Matters)*. In 1998, the academic attained the title of doctor at the same institute by finishing her doctoral dissertation titled *1838'den 1920'ye Örgün Eğitimde Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi (Religious Education and Instruction in Formal Education from 1838 to 1920) [Tezler Kataloğu (Yurdağül Konuk)]*. Despite completing her doctorate, the researcher continued to serve as a research assistant with a PhD until 2003, as she was not appointed to an assistant professor position. She was assigned to the Marmara University Faculty of Education in 2001-2002; she was promoted to associate professor in 2003 and to professor in 2008.

Between 2003 and 2006, she served as vice dean of the Faculty of Theology, while simultaneously serving as the Socrates Erasmus Program Coordinator and the manager of the Ankara University Distance Divinity (İLİTAM) program in Türkiye. The scholar served as head of the Department of History of Education from 2006 to 2015 and of the Department of Religious Education from 2015 to 2016. Since 2015, the researcher has been a member of the Executive Board of the Western Studies Platform within İstanbul Aydın University, a role she currently maintains. In 2016, she left her position at Marmara University and began serving as the Head of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences at the Cyprus Social Sciences University, now known as the Social Sciences University of Ankara. Until 2020, she continued her tenure as a faculty member and a member of the faculty board at the same institution. The academic started working as a faculty member at the İstanbul Aydın University Faculty of Education in 2021 and was appointed as the Director of Research Centers in the same year. Resigning from this post in 2021, she established her own art and drawing studio named "Gulaart." Having graduated from the Üsküdar Music Society (Üsküdar Musiki Cemiyeti) in Türkiye, Konuk continues to pursue her interest in music as an amateur.

For academic purposes, she has engaged in various activities across different countries. To conduct research and improve her Arabic language skills, she studied at Cairo University in Egypt in 1993 with a scholarship from the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye. In 2008, the researcher delivered lectures and conferences as a visiting professor at Guru Nanak Dev and Punjabi Universities in India. She spent time as a visiting scholar at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, in 2009, and participated as an observer-parliamentarian in the "Parliament of the World's Religions" organization held in Melbourne that same year. In 2013, the academic gave lectures and seminars as a guest professor at Justus-Liebig University in Germany.

Her primary research interests include philosophy, philosophy of religion, Islamic philosophy, phenomenology, religious education, philosophy of education, aesthetics, philosophy of art, and the relationship between art and religion. The scholar is known for her work that brings together theological traditions with the phenomenology of contemporary art. During her time in Cyprus, Konuk conducted "visual" art workshops. Since 2018, she has held solo exhibitions in New York, Germany, Austria, and Türkiye, and has also served as a curator for some of them. She organized exhibitions in Vienna in 2023, in İstanbul in 2024, and in New York in 2025. Between May 15 and June 4, 2025, she held a personal painting exhibition as a special guest of the Consulate General of Türkiye in New York. The researcher received the "Honorable Mention Award" from the Teraverna International Art Gallery in 2024. Furthermore, Konuk has publications in the field of literature. Among these are two literary works in the "novella" style titled *Sen de Rivayet Etsen* and *Sürüklenmek*, along with numerous essays and art writings published in journals such as *Türk Edebiyatı*, *Türk Dili*, and *Karabatak*.

The academic books she has published or contributed to are as follows: *Okul Öncesi Çocuklarda (5-6 Yaş) Dini Duygunun Gelişimi ve Eğitimi (Dini Konularda Anne Çocuk-İletişimi)*, *Tanzimat Sonrasında Okullarda Din Eğitimi (1838-1920)*, *Erişkin Bireyin Kendilik Bilinci, Ahlakı ve Dini Gelişim-Çocuğum Değerlerimizi Öğreniyor*; *Küreselleşme, Ahlak ve Değerler* (ed. with Ali Ulvi Mehmedoğlu); *Din ve Ahlak Eğitim Öğretimine Yeni Yaklaşımlar* (ed. with Halis Ayhan, Hayati Hökelekli, Mustafa Öcal, and Halil Ekşi) and *İpek Yolu: Ebru ve Hat* (ed. with Hikmet Barutçugil and Faruk Dinçer Eratlı).

In chronological order, she has supervised the doctoral dissertations of the following individuals: Zeynep Kaya, Hatice

Fakioğlu Bağcı, Veysel Karani Altun, and Ahmet Özalp [*Tezler Kataloğu (Yurdağül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu)'un Danışmanlığında Tamamlanan Doktora Tezleri)*].

### **Prof. Dr. Gülgün Uyar**

Born in Ankara in 1967, the scholar graduated from Kadıköy Imam Hatip High School in 1985 and from the Marmara University Faculty of Theology in Türkiye in 1990. In 1991, the researcher began her tenure at the same faculty as a research assistant. She attained the title of doctor by completing her master's thesis in 1993 titled *Hız Muhammed'in Risâlet Öncesi Hayatına Dâir Bazı Rivayetlerin Tesbiti (The Determination of Some Narrations Concerning the Pre-Prophetic Life of Prophet Muhammad)* and her doctoral dissertation in 2003 titled *Siyasi ve İctimaî Hayatta Ali-Fâtıma Evladı (260/873'e Kadar) (The Offspring of Ali and Fatima in Political and Social Life [Until 260/873])*. Both her master's and doctoral studies were supervised by Mustafa Fayda. The academic was appointed as an Assistant Professor in 2009 and attained the rank of associate professor in 2011 with her work titled *Ehl-i Beyt'in İzinde Nakiblik (The Institution of Niqabah in the Footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt)*. She received the title of professor in 2021. The researcher currently continues her duty at Marmara University Faculty of Theology (Prof. Dr. Gülgün Uyar; Uyar, 2011).

The individual works published by Uyar are as follows: *Rivâyet'ten Şerh'e Hilye Yazımında Usûl ve Muhtevâ* and *Ehl-i Beyt*.

She has supervised the doctoral dissertations of Esra Atmaca, Zehra Gözütok, Yıldız Güllü, and Omar Kalhussien [*Tezler Kataloğu (Gülgün Uyar'ın Danışmanlığında Tamamlanan Doktora Tezleri)*].

## **Discussion**

The data obtained from the research reveal that the presence of female academics in the discipline of divinity in Türkiye is not merely quantitative participation but rather that they are the "founding subjects" who determine the intellectual orientation and institutional formation of the faculties. One of the most striking findings in this process is the fact that the journey of female academics settling into divinity faculties began with Kâmuran Birand. While Birand's entry into academia was in 1952, according to available data, Bahriye Üçok's entry into academic life in 1953 renders the widespread public opinion that Üçok was the "first female theologian" in need of correction. Therefore, Birand's academic journey constitutes a true threshold in the institutionalization process of divinity in Türkiye. Birand, the country's first female professor of philosophy, was among the founders of the History of Philosophy chair when the Systematic Philosophy and History of Philosophy chairs were separated; she is also considered the first representative of hermeneutic philosophy in Türkiye (Günay, 2003; Kahraman, 2011). While her academic life reflected the intellectual perspective of the early Republican academy, the Kâmuran Birand Foundation -the first foundation established after her death to support the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity- brought this legacy into institutional continuity.

Within this pioneering generation that began with Birand, Bahriye Üçok emerges as a symbolic figure situated at the intersection of divinity, academia, and modern politics. For Üçok, "modern politics" represents a process where her theological identity was utilized to provide a religious basis for secularist discourse within the legislative and public spheres.

However, as seen, this first generation did not consist only of local names. Annemarie Schimmel stood out as one of the exceptional figures who came from the outside and contributed to the construction of the "inside" of the divinity vision at that time. In a climate where understanding of science during the Republican era was shaped by sociological and philosophical perspectives, Schimmel presented a character outside the period's positivist scientific understanding through her approach, which placed the concept of the "sacred" at the center. In a period where the academic framework primarily engaged with the sociological and historical aspects of religious phenomena, Schimmel's orientation incorporated the "sacred" as a lived reality, offering a phenomenological balance to the prevailing analytical discourse.

Contrary to the conventional Orientalist attitude, Schimmel pursued a course aimed entirely at understanding, through her scientific approach to the concept of the sacred and her proximity to Islam (Tunç, 2021). With this unique approach, Schimmel held an exceptional position for both the divinity circles in Türkiye and the global tradition of Orientalism. The fact that she was among the pioneers in establishing the History of Religions Chair during her years at Ankara University's Faculty of Divinity, delivered lectures in Turkish, and produced works that guided Sufi research positions her within the founding

generation of the field. However, what truly makes her unique is her rejection of the cold distance of classical Orientalism, which marginalizes and objectifies, despite her Western Orientalist formation. Her mastery of Eastern languages, her profound studies on Rumi and Indo-Islamic culture, and her long years at Harvard made Schimmel one of the most influential interpreters of Islamic thought on an international scale. Therefore, she should not be considered merely a German guest lecturer who taught at Ankara University's Faculty of Divinity, but rather as a "founding and indigenous subject" who brought the traditional wisdom (irfan) of Turkish divinity into dialogue with modern academic language.

Neda Armaner, another pillar of the institutionalization process, played a decisive role in the development of the disciplines of psychology of religion and religious education in Türkiye. Her journey, which began as a first-generation divinity graduate, positioned her as a pioneering and decisive figure in the intellectual history of these two fields due to her producing one of the first doctoral theses in her area and the role she assumed in the formation of the Religious Education Chair alongside Psychology of Religion. Although she later continued her work in the field of psychology of religion, she was actually the first assistant of the Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy Chair. Beyza Bilgin, on the other hand, was the third assistant appointed to the chair, although she was listed under the "pedagogy course" registry. Armaner is mentioned alongside Necati Öner and Beyza Bilgin as one of the three figures who pioneered the separation of the Pedagogy course from Psychology of Religion in 1980 and its establishment as an independent field under the name of the Religious Education Chair (Tosun, 2025). When all this is considered, it seems possible to count Armaner's doctoral thesis titled *İnanç ve Hareket Bütünlüğü Bakımından Din Terbiyesi (Religious Education in Terms of the Integrity of Belief and Action)*, completed in 1963, as the third study in the field after Yusuf Yörükhan's doctoral thesis titled *Şahsiyet Terbiyesinde Kültürün Rolü (The Role of Culture in Personality Education)* and Bedi Ziya Egemen's book titled *Terbiye İlminin Problemleri ve Terbiye Felsefesi (Problems of the Science of Education and the Philosophy of Education)* (Aşıkoğlu, 1994; Kızılabdullah, 2009). As the title suggests, the work in question is actually closer to religious education (Tosun, 2025).

However, the name Beyza Bilgin held a more central position in the formation of the discipline of religious education as an independent field. Her appointment as a Pedagogy assistant to the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity, Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy Chair in 1965 is considered the beginning of the institutionalization process of religious education (Doğan, 2020). Particularly as a result of her initiatives, the Religious Education Chair was established in 1980, and she was appointed as its head. After the chair was transformed into a "Department" in 1982, Bilgin continued to serve as its head until her retirement (Tosun, 2025). This makes her the founder of the field. If Armaner's doctoral work is to be considered the third study in the field, Bilgin can be accepted as the fourth academic to conduct independent studies in the field of religious education after Yusuf Yörükhan, Bedi Ziya Egemen, and Armaner. Bilgin's work titled *Eğitim Bilimi ve Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi (Educational Science and Religious Education in Türkiye)* served as a conceptual source for many subsequent studies of religious education. Following the 1980 coup, she played a significant role in making religious lessons compulsory in primary and secondary education (Çapçioğlu, 2019). Furthermore, she was one of the leading figures who pioneered the compulsory introduction of formation courses in divinity faculties (Doğan, 2020; Kızılabdullah & Çapçioğlu, 2016). By removing religious education from the mold of traditional catechism teaching and re-establishing it on the basis of the concepts of "love" and "culture" using the data of modern educational sciences, Bilgin also gained a legitimate ground for the religious visibility of women in the public sphere through her qualities as the first female teacher serving in schools and the first female preacher (*vaize*) in Türkiye. Both her founding identity and the unique approach she developed around these themes have made her a fundamental reference consulted by subsequent generations, as well as her own period.

Ayşe Necla Pekolcay, one of the founding names of Islamic Turkish literature studies, holds a privileged place in institutional history as the first female academic of the Marmara University Faculty of Theology. Her roles, ranging from teaching to encyclopedia authorship, from her position at the Higher Islamic Institute to her headship of the department at Marmara University Faculty of Theology, and her status as the first female academic to publish an article in the *International Journal of Theological and Islamic Studies (Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi)*, clearly demonstrate her strategic role. In this context, Yurdagül Konuk and Gülgün Uyar hold the distinction of being the first female academics appointed to the Marmara University Faculty of Theology who were also graduates of the same faculty. While Ayşe Necla Pekolcay was the first female academic at the faculty, she was not a theology graduate.

A similar academic continuity is observed in Mualla Selçuk, who was trained as Bilgin's assistant. Selçuk carried the legacy she took over from Bilgin to the highest points of institutional representation with her titles as the first female dean of Ankara

University Faculty of Divinity, coming from a divinity formation, and the first female member of the High Board of Religious Affairs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*DİB Din İşleri Yüksek Kurulu*) in Türkiye. Selçuk's academic and administrative duties demonstrated integrity, enabling the theoretical and institutional development of the field of religious education in Türkiye and tracking its international visibility. Her career, which began as Beyza Bilgin's assistant, is full of achievements. Bilgin spoke of her as "my favorite student" (Durmuş, 2003, p. 155). Her academic life expanded to include high-level duties such as the deanship of the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity, membership on the DİB High Board, and the General Directorship of Religious Education at the Ministry of National Education.

From the perspective of methodological diversity, Gülay Cezayirli's work on the Mevlevi community is one of the pioneering examples in the theology of the transition from theoretical discussions to fieldwork, namely to the participatory observation method in the sociology of religion. Nahide Bozkurt, on the other hand, did not view Islamic historiography merely as chronicling; she added analytical and philosophical depth to the field by examining events from the perspective of the philosophy of history. Her works, spanning a wide range of topics, including the Abbasids, the philosophy of history, *sirah* (the Prophet's biography), *fiqh*, and women in monotheistic traditions, have made significant contributions to the methodological and conceptual development of the field. Bozkurt, who lectured in various countries and served as the director of the Center for African Studies for many years, has brought new perspectives to the discipline by sharing her academic experience with different geographies. This accumulation places her as a decisive figure in the development of Islamic history research in Türkiye.

Another name that stands out for her academic diversity is Yurdağül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu). Within the institutional history of the Religious Education Department, she is identified as the third female academic, following the foundational legacy of Beyza Bilgin and Mualla Selçuk. Konuk's academic and artistic activities present a multi-faceted line of work spanning many years at the intersection of divinity, philosophy, education, and art. This accumulation, extending from her research assistantship at Marmara University Faculty of Theology to visiting professorships abroad, and from lectures and research spanning the history of education, philosophy, and international art exhibitions, shows that Konuk's professional life continues in different forms both within and outside the academy. When evaluated alongside the students she trained, the projects she led, and the duties she assumed at various institutions, it becomes clear that Konuk's work forms a multi-layered intellectual path.

Finally, Gülgün Uyar, with her studies tracing historical truth from narrations (*rivayet*), contributed to the sensitivity of source criticism and text analysis in Islamic history methodology, particularly in the case of Ahl al-Bayt studies, grounding them in objective criteria and institutionalizing them.

When all these individual academic portraits are evaluated as a whole, the resulting disciplinary distribution seems directly related to the modernization journey of Turkish divinity. The concentration of approximately two-thirds of the first female academics in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences is an indicator of the critical role women played in the methodological construction of this field. This leadership by women in the institutionalization of departments such as religious education, the history of religions, and the history of philosophy has been decisive in these areas, making them independent disciplines. Conversely, the fact that no female academic presence could be identified in the Department of Basic Islamic Sciences during the period under review indicates a significant imbalance in disciplinary representation (Altın, 2024). The motives behind this silence offer a new research area for the historiography of divinity. Consequently, all these names examined take their place in history as "founding subjects" who laid the intellectual foundation of Turkish divinity through the students they trained and the schools they founded.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, which focuses on the process of reconstituting modern divinity faculties in Türkiye in 1949, the biographical journeys, academic legacies, and institutional impacts of the first female academics serving in these faculties are examined. When the research findings are evaluated holistically, it becomes clear that the presence of female academics in the divinity discipline carries meanings far deeper than mere quantitative participation. It is clear that these names were founding figures who significantly shaped the intellectual orientation, institutional formation, and social impact of the faculties.

Historical data reveal that the process of these female academics settling into divinity faculties began with Kâmuran Birand. This clearly demonstrates that the widespread public opinion suggesting Bahriye Üçok was the first female theologian must be corrected in light of the available data. In the process beginning with Birand, eleven names were examined: (i) Kâmuran Birand, (ii) Bahriye Üçok, (iii) Annemarie Schimmel, (iv) Neda Armaner, (v) Beyza Bilgin, (vi) Ayşe Necla Pekolcay, (vii) Mualla Selçuk, (viii) Gülay Cezayirli, (ix) Nahide Bozkurt, (x) Yurdağül Konuk (Mehmedoğlu), and (xi) Gülgün Uyar.

When classified by the institutions where they served, it is evident that the vast majority of these academics began their academic careers within the Ankara University Faculty of Divinity, while the Marmara University Faculty of Theology played a strategic role in preserving institutional memory during the transformation from institute to divinity faculty. Upon categorization, approximately two-thirds of the female academics were concentrated in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences, while the remainder served in the Department of Islamic History and Arts. These names played significant roles in the institutionalization of departments such as religious education, the history of religions, and the history of philosophy as independent disciplines.

The contribution of female academics goes beyond being annexed to existing academic structures and emerges as a founding will in the construction of the disciplines themselves. As a result of synthesizing classical divinity formation with the methods of modern social sciences, it is evident that approaches such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, art, literature, and field research were incorporated into the divinity vision. Furthermore, significant contributions were made to the continuity of the academic legacy through the students they trained and the schools they established. This sphere of influence, which expands beyond faculty borders from the state's religious education policies to international scientific representation, places the position of the founding female subjects in the history of the Turkish academy on a ground that is impossible to ignore.

However, it is recommended that the historical asymmetry identified in the Department of Basic Islamic Sciences, compared to the aforementioned two departments, be evaluated as a new research area awaiting the historiography of divinity. Examining the reasons behind the disciplinary "silence" observed in this field during the initial periods of meticulous archaeological work can be characterized as a critical step toward filling the missing piece in the intellectual backbone of Turkish divinity. It may be necessary for future studies to focus on the stories of the first women to enter the academy in fields such as Kalam, Fiqh, Tafsir, and Hadith to reconstruct academic history with a holistic perspective.

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