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Islamic Education in Late Ottoman Istanbul: Ulema and Madrasa Reform (1908-1924)

BY

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

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Presented by

Ayaz Asadov

For partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
the Study of Contemporary Muslim Thought and Societies

Supervisor:

Dr. Frank Peter

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the Late Ottoman debate on educational reform by exploring journals, scholarly treaties and administrative documents published in Istanbul from 1908 to 1924. It seeks to complement the existing literature on Late Ottoman education and the wider scholarship on the question of Islamic reform. The research particularly highlights the contribution of ulema to the debate through analyzing their participation in the discussions on madrasa reform. The analysis illustrates how ulema responded to the critiques of madrasas by offering their own diagnoses and reform agendas.

The thesis also studies the administrative, curricular and pedagogical aspects of the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasa project in dialogue with the questions from the existing literature on Islamic educational reform. It identifies the new role of teachers and assessment of knowledge as the major two shifts from the madrasa tradition brought by the project. The last part of the research provides an account of discussions on the Law of Unification of Education which eventually resulted in the abolishment of madrasas.

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث مناقشة العثمانية المتأخرة على إصلاح التعليم من خلال استطلاع المجلات والكتيبات العلمية والوثائق الإدارية التي نشرت في اسطنبول من 1908 إلى 1924. يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكمال الكتابات الموجودة عن التعليم العثماني المتأخر ويهدف اتمام الأدب العلمي الوفير بشأن مسألة الإصلاح الإسلامي. يسلط البحث الضوء بشكل خاص على مساهمة العلماء في النقاش من خلال تحليل مشاركتهم في المناقشات المتعلقة بإصلاح المدرسة الإسلامية. ويوضح التحليل كيفية ردود أفعال العلماء للانتقادات على المدارس الدينية من خلال تقديم تشخيصهم وأجندة الإصلاح.

ثم يدرس الأطروحة الجوانب الإدارية والمناهج الدراسية والأساليب التربوية لمشروع مدرسة 'دار الخلافة العالية' (Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye) في حوار مع الأسئلة من الكتابات الموجودة عن الإصلاح التربوي الإسلامي. تحدد الأطروحة الوظيفة الجديدة للمعلمين وتقييم المعلومات كائنين من التغييرات الكبيرة من التقليد المدرسي التي سببتها المشروع. الجزء الأخير من البحث يوفر عددا من مناقشات حول قانون توحيد التعليم التي في نهاية المطاف أدت إلى إلغاء المدارس الدينية.

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Introduction

Islamic education and Modernity: The Ottoman Context

Islamic education is among the key themes in the “Islam and modernity” debate. Apart from being an essential element of *reform* or *revival* projects of Muslim intellectuals, it has been a field where academic scholarship has identified significant transformations brought by the modern context. One of the main questions that Muslim intellectuals have tried to answer under this theme is to what extent “Islamic education” needs to be reformed or modernized in order to keep its continuity or relevance. A more “conservative” formulation of this question has been: “To what degree can modern methodologies or tools be incorporated into Islamic education while remaining faithful to the goals of traditional learning practices?”

There is a considerably large body of scholarship which has looked at different Muslim contexts to analyze various responses given to this question by Muslims. Some of them have made important contributions to the general scholarship by identifying major ruptures and shifts from pre-modern tradition of Islamic learning in those responses. Studies by Brenner (2000) and Ware (2014) on West African Muslim communities, Messick (1997) on Yemen, Eickelman (1992) on Morocco and Gesink (2010) on Egypt are exemplar works in which authors have traced various transformations in the epistemology of knowledge and educational practices in Muslim educational reform projects.

The Ottoman context at imperial level, however, stays under-researched in relation to this particular theme. Even though the Ottoman historians working on the Arab provinces have dealt with the question, the studies on the Turkish-speaking center of the

Empire¹ focus mainly on the emergence and expansion of the modern state school system² and do not pay due attention to the developments in the traditional institutes of learning such as madrasas and sufi lodges.

This is partly because of the disconnect between the fields of Islamic Studies and the sub-field of Ottoman Studies that deals with the Turkish-speaking part of the Empire. Due to this disconnect, the relevance of Ottoman intellectual history to the wider questions of Islamic intellectual tradition has not received adequate attention. The problem has also been amplified with the negatory way the Turkish Republic had placed itself in relation to the Ottoman intellectual heritage, which has delayed the emergence of academic works dealing with the “Islamic” questions in Ottoman history by Turkish researchers (Kalin, 2013).

In this present research, I examine the debates that occurred among Muslim scholars on the topic of Islamic education during the late Ottoman period. I focus primarily on the early 20th century, particularly the period which began with the establishment of the Second Constitutional Era in 1908 and ended with the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the subsequent abolition of traditional learning institutes such as madrasas and tekkes.

The selected time period is highly critical for the study of this phenomenon and worth exploring for two main reasons. First of all, it was marked by intensifying debates on the traditional Islamic education system concerning its purpose, content, pedagogy and administration. Madrasas in particular were vilified, with the very need for their existence questioned publicly at times (Bein, 2011, p. 57). With the removal of censorship in Istanbul in 1908, the bulk of this debate was recorded in the Ottoman journals of the time, representing the views of various groups.

¹ This part of the empire is often studied under the sub-field of Turkish studies or Turkology.

² See for instance Fortna (2002), Somel (2001) and Deringil (2011). Bein’s (2011) book on Ottoman Ulema remains exceptional in this regard.

The second reason why this period deserves special attention is related to the reform policies of the Ottoman government. In 1914, a reform program for madrasas was initiated by Sheik ul-Islam Mustafa Hayri and sanctioned by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress. This was a comprehensive reform project targeting madrasas, for the first time by the government since the beginning of Ottoman modernizing reforms almost a century ago (Bein, 2011, pp. 61-62).

A number of questions have directed my inquiry of the selected primary sources. Firstly, I have explored whether there was an overall agreement on the assessment of the situation of traditional institutes of Islamic education. The secondary sources almost unanimously suggest the existence of a consensus in the Ottoman society about the ‘backwardness’ of traditional pedagogy and its failure to respond to the needs of the time³. Such an assessment derives from a simplistic approach which considers the abolition of traditional learning institutes a natural development on the path to modernization. It also creates the binary categorization which is incapable of capturing the agency of Ottoman scholars.

Gesink (2014) has convincingly shown that in the case of al-Azhar some ulema did not agree to this portrayal of traditional pedagogical methods, including *halaqa*, *oral transmission* and the *emphasis on memorization*. I have surveyed my sources to look for possible alternative representations of Islamic education institutes and their pedagogical practices in the late Ottoman period too.

The second question concerns the issue of reform. I have analyzed the proposed and implemented madrasa reform projects in late Ottoman Istanbul in order to understand what kind of changes were introduced into the madrasa tradition. Did those changes transform the madrasas into institutions of a new nature?

³ See Fortna (2002) and Bein (2006) for instance.

Lastly, a more general question that underlies my study is about the issue of modernity and continuity of tradition. Based on my study of the late Ottoman debates, I purpose to explain how the continuity of Islamic tradition in the field of education was understood by Muslim scholars. What kind of borrowing or adaptation was accepted by them? Which changes were considered to be a break from Islamic tradition? What was their perception of ‘the needs of the time’?

Through answering these questions, my research not only seeks to fill the gap related to the Ottoman experience in literature, but it also aspires to contribute to our understanding of wider issues within Muslim societies, including the questions of identity, religious authority and reform. In an exemplar study of the West African Muslim context, Wright (2015) has already demonstrated how the study of Islamic learning can help us to come up with more sophisticated accounts of Muslim identity and religious authority beyond the narratives of power struggle by self-seeking religious scholars and antagonism over “spiritual capital”. In the Ottoman context, this could be key to explain the agency of one of the main Ottoman social classes - the learned institution (‘ilmiyye) - in the discussions of modernization.

Methodology and Primary Sources

The thesis is a historical study based on research on late Ottoman newspapers, journals, booklets and official documents which were published in Istanbul in the time period between 1908 and 1924. Hence throughout the study the term Ottoman mostly refers to the Turkish-speaking Ottomans. With the exception of one document, my primary sources are in Ottoman Turkish, one of the languages referred to as ‘*ajami*’ in the field of Islamic studies.

For the transliteration I have followed the guidelines of *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*. I have opted for using Ottoman Turkish and Arabic transliteration rules, instead of employing modern Turkish orthography.

I have accessed those sources mainly through the electronic databases provided by Istanbul-based *İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi* (ISAM) – Centre for Islamic Studies. The two major databases I have used are “*Article Database in Ottoman Language*” and “*Treatise Database in Ottoman Language*”.

I have also utilized the online database of the *Turkish National Grand Assembly* for the meeting minutes of the discussion on the law of Unification of Education.

There follows a brief presentation of the three major Ottoman journals which I have drawn upon. Sample cover pages of these journals have been included in the appendices.

Beyanülhak, (بيان الحق), was published weekly between 1908 and 1912, as the official journal of *Cem‘iyyet-i İlmiyye-i İslâmiyye (Islamic Science Society)*, which was an organization established by some *ulema* following the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era. In one of the articles in *Beyanülhak*, the founding aim of the Society was announced to be the fulfillment of the *ulema*’s responsibility, which had been performed inadequately due to *istibdad (despotism or absolutism)* – the term used to describe Hamidian rule (Boyacıoğlu, 1998). The journal had three main sections: *makalât-ı dîniyye, ictimâiyye ve târîhiyye (religious, social and historical articles)*, *kısm-ı edebî (literary section)* and lastly *müteferrikat*, which was for answering the religious inquires of ordinary people, open letter exchange and announcements.

As the articles in the journal contained *ahadith* and verses from Qur’an, on the cover of each issue there was a notice calling on the readers to avoid a disrespectful (*riâyetsizlik*) attitude.

The contributors to *Beyanülhak* were comprised of mainly madrasa graduates (Bektaş, 1992) and among them were prominent figures like Mustafa Sabri (1869-1954), who later became the Ottoman sheikh ul-Islam and Elmalı Hamdi (1878-1942), the author of well-known Turkish exegesis of the Qur'an, perhaps the most widely read today. The articles I have examined included the "Our Madrasas" ("*Medreselerimiz*") series, "Reform of Madrasas" (*Islah-ı Medaris*), Teaching and Madrasas (*Tedrisat ve Medaris*) and "To the Students of Knowledge" (*Talebe-i Uluma*).

Sebilü'r-Reşad (سبيل الرشاد): The journal was published in 1908 for the first time under the title of *Sırât-ı Müstakîm*. For three years, it was released under this name and during this period its fame went beyond the borders of Ottoman Turkey. The journal featured news and commentary about different parts of the Muslim world through its reporters in those regions. It was closed in 1911 for "misunderstanding" and re-opened a year after that, but with a new name - *Sebilü'r-Reşad* which was inspired by a Qur'anic verse like its previous title (Efe, 2009). For thirteen years, it functioned as a weekly journal under this name, each issue constituting sixteen pages (Arabacı, 1999). The authors of the journal represented both reformist intellectuals, emphasizing *ijtihad* and calling for "purification of religion from superstitions and innovations", and traditionalist intellectuals who opposed those reform attempts. Memet Akif Ersoy (1873-1927), a well-known poet and intellectual of the time who authored the current national anthem of Turkish Republic, was the editor in chief of the journal (Efe, 2009).

A unique contribution by *Sebilü'r-Reşad* to the Islamic education debate was made through publishing letters from madrasa students. The journal had made more than ten letters available to the public, in which madrasa students described their situation and put forward some suggestions for improvement. Apart from those letters, I will be looking at other related articles in *Sebilü'r-Reşad* such as "*Medrese Tahsilinde Gaye*" (The Purpose of

Madrassa Education), “*Islâhat-ı Medaris Hakkında Bir Mütalaa*” (A Reflection on the Reform of Madrasas), “*Milletin En Büyük İhtiyacı: Münkarız Olan Medreselerin İhyası*” (The most important need of the Nation: Revival of Ruined Madrasas), *Medrese, Mektep Birleşmeli* (Madrassa and School should be unified) and “*Kütüb-i Kelamiyenin İhtiyacat-ı Asra Göre Islah ve Telifi, Beynelmüslimin Mezahib-i Muhtelifenin Tevhidi, Medreselerde Tedrisatın Islahı*” (Reform and Adaptation of Kalam Books for the needs of the time, Unification of Varying Schools of Thought, Reform of Instruction in Madrasas).

Ceride-i İlmiyye (جريدة علمية) was the official publication organ of *Bâb-ı Meşihat*⁴ from 1914 till 1922. The journal covered the activities of *Bâb-ı Meşihat* and other institutes that were related to it such as *Dârü'l-hikmeti'l-İslâmiyye*. The journal contains some useful information about the decisions made by *Meşihat* on madrasas and *tekkes*. It had a special edition on the reform of madrasas entitled “Special Issue on Reform of Madrasas” (*Islâh-ı Medârise Dair Nüsha-i Fevkalâde*). (Yazıcı, 1993)

In addition to those three, I have incorporated a number of articles from “*Tearüf-i Müslimin*” (Knowing the Muslims) and “*İslam Dünyası*” (Islamic World) journals.

Chapter Outlines

The chapters of this thesis follow a chronological order. Each chapter has also been centered around a major theme.

The first chapter covers the discussions between 1908 and 1914. The primary purpose of the chapter is to identify the main themes in the madras debate and to analyze various positions taken by the intellectuals and ulema. Special attention has been given to the accounts of ulema to examine their assessment of the madrasas. This is also the chapter where I have incorporated the journal articles most extensively.

⁴ *Bâb-ı Meşihat* was the name used for the Sheikh ul-Islam’s official place of residence in the late Ottoman Empire particularly after the dissolution of the Janissary institute (İpşirli, 1991)

The second chapter is devoted to the study of a madrasa reform project that was implemented in 1914, known as Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye. I have given a detailed presentation of the charter of the new madrasas. The chapter also entails my analysis on the implication of changes to the madrasa tradition particularly in relation to the role of teachers in the new system.

The third chapter deals with the questions of the post World War Ottoman context. After presenting a number of discussions which belonged to that period, the chapter then turns to examining the Unification of Education law, the abolition of madrasas and reactions given to it.

Late Ottoman Education in the Literature

Two main approaches have dominated the scholarship in treating the subject of education in the late Ottoman Era. The first one, which was quite popular in the earlier scholarship, was theorizing the Ottoman educational developments as part of the secularization, modernization or westernization process (Fortna, 2002). Later on, the scholarship moved away to a new direction by placing an emphasis on Ottoman agency. In very general terms, the central argument of this scholarship was that the modernization process can be reduced neither to westernization nor to secularization, as it contained lots of local elements (such as continuity of Islamic and Ottoman traditions) and often was driven by indigenous concerns. The reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) particularly was utilized within this approach. In what follows, I will present a number of key studies representing this approach and elaborate on how they relate to this project.

In his study of Ottoman attempts to restore state legitimacy during the Hamidian period, Deringil (2011) identifies two main aspects of late Ottoman education policies. According to him, this period was marked by the expansion of mass education through

which the empire was becoming an “educator state”. The main purpose of those educational policies was to indoctrinate its subjects so that they would become obedient citizens and internalize the values of the center (p.93). Deringil (2011) suggests that what signified the policies of this period was the emphasis on the usage of Turkish for achieving ‘national unity’ (p.94) and also the increasing importance given to religious education for combating rival ideologies. The latter is very central to this project, as some studies have argued that the modernization of education system did not lead to a discontinuity of Islamic tradition by using this as evidence.

Deringil (2011), however, draws attention to the similarities between the late Ottoman educational policies and the ‘civilizing mission’ of the other empires of the time. He provides a number of examples in support of his argument from the rhetoric used by Ottoman statespersons. Osman Nuri Pasha, the governor of Hijaz and Yemen, is one of the examples provided by Deringil (2011). For Nuri Pasha, although religious education was important to maintain the “*asabiyyati Islamiye*”, there was a need for national education - *maarif* - through which the Arab tribes could be “civilized” and put aside their customs. He also suggested that the Turkish language had to be the medium of teaching in order to achieve a unity of language (*tevhid-i lisan*) and homogenization of different ethnic groups within the empire. The Pasha also complained about the presence of “non-ottoman” foreigners in the Holy Lands benefitting from already scarce ‘Ottoman educational resources’ without paying taxes. (p. 98-99)

Drawing on materials of this kind, Deringil (2011) is of the opinion that Ottoman tribal schools (*Mekteb-i Aşiret*)⁵ were established for Arab and Kurdish students with the ideals of achieving the civilizing mission and national unity. He sees this project as

⁵ On Ottoman Tribal Schools see Rogan (1996), “Asiret Mektebi: Abdulhamid II’s school for Tribes”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28 (1996): 83-107

identical to the Russification of non-slavic subjects under the Russian Empire. The popular example of it was well-known: Sheykh Shamil's son Cemaleddin was taken as a captive by Russians. Cemaleddin was raised as a member of Russian aristocracy and later on appointed in the special imperial guard. According to Deringil (2011), in a similar way the Tribal Schools were set up for inculcating Ottoman identity into the sons of Arab and Kurdish leaders. Some of the graduates were given positions in Sultan Abdulhamid's personal guard (pp. 101; 109).

The second aspect of Hamidian education policies identified by Deringil (2011) was related to the perceived threat of foreign influence coming through the channels of Western missionary schools. Those schools, for him, were undermining the legitimization efforts made by Ottoman authorities and the authorities attempted to respond to this threat by using "similar tactics". The following words of Sultan Abdulhamid II suggest that he was personally informed about the indirect relationship between Christian missionaries and the government of other empires:

["Although the English, Russian and French governments seem not to be involved in their activities, they secretly aid and abet them in sending missionaries into darkest Africa. In this way they spread their beliefs among the local population. By increasing the numbers of their followers this religious influence is then transformed into political leverage ..."] (quoted in Deringil (2011), p.114)]

In order to avoid a direct confrontation with "three powers' ambassadors", the Sultan did not favor the idea of taking "solid actions" and recognized the enlargement of the "Islamic population" and the spread of the belief in "the Holiest of Faiths" as the only way to fight back (p. 114). The promotion of 'Islamic solidarity' was done mainly through the channel of new schools, and it was hoped to be effective not only against foreign missionaries, but also emerging nationalism (Karpas, 2001, p. 232). There was an imperial order to review the curricula of the new schools and a committee consisting of twelve persons was

organized for this purpose. After assessing the curricula of schools, the committee was expected to come up with suggestions on improving the “religious feelings” of the students and their loyalty towards the caliph. An increase in the teaching hours of religious subjects was seen as the primary solution. Another interesting suggestion was about the instruction of Turkish grammar through materials on Islamic morals (Karpat, 2001, p. 232; Deringil, 2011, p. 95).

Deringil reads these developments as part of “ottoman identity building”. Karpat (2001), similarly, sees these developments as a “politicization of Islam”, which is also the title of his book. For him the Ottoman elite were worried about the indifference of Muslims to religion, compared to the Christians. If even in the outmost rural areas new churches and mosques were built, existing mosques and other ‘religious sites’ were being left to deteriorate by Muslims. Karpat’s (2001) argument is that the Ottoman authorities understood this phenomenon not only to be caused by economic limitations but also by “traditional Islam’s own aversion to ‘worldliness’ and contemporariness”. Therefore the project of fostering ‘religious feeling’ came along with a shift in “identity from religious to political Islam and a worldly, materialistic understanding of the faith” (Karpat, 2001, p. 233).

Analyzing the same period, Fortna (2002) strongly argues that Ottoman educational change was an adaptation of “Ottoman and Islamic sources of inspiration” in accordance with the new demands of the time (p.45). He does not dispute the fact that the project was something borrowed from the West. However, a conceptualization solely based on this fact is for him inadequate and fails to capture Ottoman agency. The restoration of Ottoman agency to the narrative, according to Fortna (2002), will allow us to read the emergence and expansion of new schools for the most part as “an indigenous phenomenon implemented for indigenous reasons” (p.45). Moreover, the new state school system, in his

view, was not a radical break from ‘madrasa’ tradition. The similar position that the students of both systems occupied in their wider societies could be seen as a continuity of tradition. He particularly refers to the way the common identity of the school students distinguished them from the other members of society. For him this could be seen as parallel to the special clothing and code of conducts which marked madrasa students out as distinct from others (p.148).

Fortna’s (2002) work does not only deal with the question of continuity in educational tradition. He also offers an intriguing perspective on the role of ulema in the Ottoman educational reform process. His main proposition is that Ottoman society was not strictly divided between the two poles of worldviews, namely traditional and modern. The portrayal of ulema, the representatives of the traditional worldview, as “resistant to modernization on ideological and personal grounds”, for Fortna (2002) is incorrect. In his view, the emergence of new schools did not necessarily imperil the occupation of ulema, nor did it regard their knowledge and pedagogy as outmoded or primitive. He argues that the ulema’s wide involvement in the new school systems as inspectors, instructors and preachers is in complete contradiction with the negative depiction of them, which was very popular in late Ottoman writings⁶ (p.13).

Amit Bein’s work studying ‘religious education’ directly relates to the aims of this proposed project. His “Military Conscription, and Religious Education in the Late Ottoman Empire” is an attempt to provide an explanation for the reason why the educational reforms of Sultan Abdulhamid II neglected the traditional institutions of religious learning. Bein argues that in fact reforming madrasas was on the government agenda and negligence only

⁶ An alternative reading of this phenomenon can be found in Demirpolat and Akça’s (2008) account. According to them, the involvement of ulema in the new schools was not because they were fitting to the vision of these new establishments. It was rather due to the rareness of educated individuals who were not madrasa trained scholars. After the new schools had their own graduates, the ulema were gradually pushed away (Demirpolat & Akça, 2008).

began as a result of an incident in 1892. He provides a number of examples of calls and attempts for reform which suggest that the widespread perception on madrasas among the government officials and reformist scholars was that they were inadequately regulated and lacking coordination. Therefore they stressed the need for converting madrasas to “administratively and pedagogically...useful modern educational institutions” (p. 285, 287)

There was another popular concern about madrasas, according to Bein (2006), which was related to the historical practice of exempting the ulema and their students from military conscription. Since the 1840s the Ottoman government had been in the process of forming a modern military system by conscripting Ottoman subjects universally. In order to avoid madrasa enrollment for dodging military conscription, there was a system of examination. The students from the provinces could also be examined in Istanbul according to a new system adopted in 1873. However, the government officials were of the opinion that the exams were not strict enough and could be abused with little effort. (p. 285-6)

As a response to the growing concerns about madrasas, the Sultan issued an imperial decree on expulsion of madrasa students whose age qualified for military conscription from Istanbul to their home provinces. The decree was the initial step in further government regulations on madrasas. According to the decree, the students were to be compensated by a certain amount of money as their travel expenses. Bein’s (2006) account suggests that the problems in the implementation of the decree resulted in its withdrawal after two days. Reported policy brutality, which gave the impression that the Sultan was punishing the students, and various problems with transportation mechanisms created anxiety among the people. For Bein (2006), the decree was repealed in order to

protect the Sultan's image and prevent a public backlash. Consequently, Sultan Abdulhamid II never attempted to take any firm measures for reforming the madrasas.

Chapter I:

Debating Islamic Education in a New Era: Views on Madrasas

Introduction

In an open call written in 1909, the author Tunali Hilmi (1871-1928) was directing one of the central questions of those days at the Ottoman Ulema: What was going to happen to the madrasas?

Hilmi was among the European-educated⁷ Young Turk intellectuals who were able to return to Istanbul after the 1908 revolution. His call was representative of a widely-shared concern about the place of traditional learning institutes like madrasas and sufi lodges in the new Ottoman context, which was often described as *idare-i cedide* – *new rule*, and its educational ideals.

In the call, Hilmi reminded the readers how the Janissary corps collapsed and were replaced by the new military system in the previous century. Only through this, he argued, the military class acquired some renewal. Was it now the turn of the second major traditional class of the Ottomans, the *‘Ilmiyye*, to go through the same experience? Would the madrasas also cease to exist and be replaced by new schools completely?

Hilmi urged the ulema to take action and make use of the idea of congress⁸ (قونغره) for reforming madrasas. Towards the end of his piece, he clarified that he had no “enmity” for madrasas and did not subscribe to the idea that they needed to be abolished. For him, if he had such a belief, he would have ignored madrasas all together and not written this invitation in the first place: “one would not try to repair an old building which he wishes to collapse!” (Hilmi, 1909)

⁷ Hilmi graduated from the Department of Pedagogy at the University of Geneva (Kamer, 2015).

⁸ The idea of “congress” seemed to be very central to Hilmi’s reform thought and he even wrote a book entitled “What is congress? How should it be?”

This chapter will discuss the main themes and positions in the madrasas debate in early post-1908 Ottoman Istanbul. The discussion will start with a presentation of the popular criticisms that were directed to the madrasas. I will then move to the positions taken by the *ulema* themselves on this question. I will examine the reform projects which were proposed by *ulema* in order to understand what they saw as the main shortcomings of madrasas.

I will also provide an example of the assessments by *ulema* which did not share the popular negative descriptions of madrasas and attempted to explain their situation in a more contextualizing manner. Such explanations went beyond the perspective which exceptionalized the madrasas.

In the last section, I will briefly present examples from the other parts of the Muslim world, which were discussed in the Istanbul-based journals, testifying to the awareness of the *ulema* of the larger debates occurring in other Muslim contexts.

Popular Criticisms of Madrasas

If Hilmi did not, there were others who believed that this “old building” had no more relevance to the Ottoman society and had to be closed down. Ermenekli Mustafa Saffet Efendi (1877-1965), one of the madrasa teachers who wrote in *Beyanulhak*, described this position in his following words:

“...they have reduced the capacity [of madrasas] to the degree which will not make [them] different from a museum object, for being like relicts of early and medieval ages telling only about the life [of those times] and valid within [that period]” (Saffet, 1910)

“*Softas and Madrasas*”, a booklet written by journalist Hamadanzade Ali Naci (1896-1955), was representative of this view and provided a detailed critique of madrasas. It is interesting to notice that the term “softa”, which had been historically used to refer to the

madrassa students, already earned a new connotation and was associated negatively with blind following and retardedness. The text was described as a discussion on “today’s madrassa studentship (softalik) and the decline of Islamic madrasas”. “Decline” is an important concept here as it was highly popular within the madrassa debate. This basically meant that the madrasas originally were established for very “beneficial” aims. However gradually they moved away from their purposes for various reasons.

Naci’s position was a version of that too, as he mentioned about how he respected the founding principles of madrasas, yet now he did not want to recognize them as places of learning. For him today, they were not “in conformity with the current scientific needs” and “in this 20th century, the age of intelligence and individual effort, they have gained an outlook that is not suitable for, even detrimental to, the principles of education.” He argued that, the madrasas were opened to end “ignorance” and “bigotry”, but they had become “a shelter for military escapees and a place to make a living out of for those who do not want to work” (Naci, 1913).

Naci was also very critical about the length of the study period and the curriculum in madrasas. According to him, with a very few exceptions, the country (*mamlakat*) had not gained anything and achieved no beneficial (*mufid*) results from those madrasa, where the five to ten years of study were devoted only to the juristic (*fiqhi*) and “other-worldly” sciences. In regards to the length of the study, he sarcastically stated:

“if these people spend ten years to learn how to make an ablution or to study a book of jurisprudence, how many centuries will they need in order to understand one problem of philosophy (hikma), chemistry or geometry?!”
(Naci, 1913)

The author also complained about the financial resources spent on madrasas particularly in “these days when the Ministry of Education already had a very limited budget”. He

suggested that with the money spent on madrasas more than 200 students could manage their living and study in Europe. When they returned, he argued, they could bring with themselves a “head”, “mind” and “science”, not “*sarıq*” which was the turban worn exclusively by the *ilmiye* class. It seems like these turbans were as worrying as the buildings of madrasas to Naci as he says: “for years, whoever has come out of the large wooden doors of the madrasas as a scholar or claimed to be a scholar unfortunately has not shown us any signs of ‘ilm except from their turbans.” Somewhere else he similarly stated:

“One becomes disappointed at not seeing some intelligence, some thinking, some liveliness, some mind in those heads that carry the turban, which I know as an honorary sign of religion.”

Another criticism Naci had related to the way of living and learning in the madrasas. They were not in accordance with “*hygiene and the principles of education in the contemporary age*”, he argued.

A large part of Naci’s account was dedicated to a comparison between madrasas and Christian schools. Christian schools for him symbolized a gradual progress from an erroneous beginning, whereas madrasas were a story of decline. He argued that the fall of madrasas was caused by Muslims’ desire to maintain them in the original state. Europeans on the other hand, in his view, kept changing their schools, “*accepting everyday a new law*”, “*a new methodology*”:

[“...They [Christian schools] were established upon a religious idea, on a sectarian idea. Ours on the other hand, were supposed to pursue other various purposes along with religious issues. They worked in accordance with time and progressed, rose with it, they put themselves into a shape that is suitable with the civilization. What did we do? We confined all those higher imagined objectives in a deep religious bigotry and a big circle of ignorance and inertia”]

Such criticisms were amplified by the association of madrasa students with certain ideas and events which further contributed to their stigmatization. The continuing debate on the exemption of madrasa students from the military conscription was one of the channels through which this happened. Madrasa students were often accused of national betrayal for this reason. For instance, there was a reported incident of a letter being pasted on the door of a madrasa to threaten the students. In an article authored by a student, Mustafa Asim in *Beyanulhak*, the madrasa students were asked not to pay attention to the accusations of betrayal and “backwardness” (*irtija*) stated in the letter and to carry on busying themselves with their “educational duties” (Asim, 1912).

On another similar occasion, an allegation was made about the involvement of a group of madrasa students (*talabe-i ulum*) in the stealing of a historical piece from the Sublime Port building during a fire. According to an article that appeared in *Beyanulhak* as a response to the allegations, it was argued that such false accusations contributed to the defaming of madrasa students, and some of them were even included in the new school books as “civil awareness” (*malumat-i madaniyya*) (Saffet, 1911).

Ulema and the Question of Madrasa

With all its ambiguities, Naci’s account may suggest an *ulema* profile which was content with the situation of madrasas and never attempted to change it. Considering the ulemas’ writings and activism right after the declaration of the second constitutional era, this kind of depiction of ulema and madrasa students became implausible.

The ulema were almost unanimously critical of the state of madrasas and called upon the authorities to take action, long before Naci wrote his booklet. The removal of censorship and the restoration of the constitution in fact were perceived as a new opportunity and hope by ulema to take a more active role in society and also to improve the situation of the traditional learning institutes.

In a notice published in one of the earliest issues of *Bayanulhak*, for instance, it was announced that the journal would begin to publish analyses and projects that were sent to the *Society of the Learned* about the madrasa reform. The purpose of doing so, the notice mentioned, was for the authorities to benefit from these analyses and criticisms. Many ulema took this opportunity to write their views on this subject in *Beyhanulhakk*. A parallel intellectual activism on the subject could be observed in many other journals too.

A close analysis of the writings of ulema on madrasas reveals that they were not a uniform group in regards to the question of madrasa reform and they had their own internal disagreements. What they agreed upon was the necessity for the existence of madrasas and the improvement of their current poor condition, which was explained by various accounts of “decline” and underperformance. They also all agreed that the authorities had to take action to solve the problem of the livelihood of madrasa students.

The disagreement, on the other hand, was about identifying the causes of the problem. Some were of the opinion that the situation had to do with things related to the madrasas themselves. This could be their curricula, pedagogy or, more generally, a failure to adapt themselves to the new needs, a very popular expression of the time.

There were other scholars who in contrast believed that the situation in madrasas was mainly caused by external socio-economic and political factors. Some were also of the view that the condition of madrasas was not exceptionally bad, as many other institutions in late Ottoman society also were falling short of achieving their purposes.

In what follows I will provide examples for these two positions and elaborate on them. Obviously, not all ulema argued restrictively within these two categories: some in their accounts brought together external and internal reasons for the situation of madrasas. However, I suggest that this categorization is still helpful, particularly for making sense of the *ulema* who did not invest intellectually in madras reform projects.

Ulema and Reform Projects

One of the earliest articles that were published in Beyanulhak on madrasas was sent by an anonymous author who was mentioned as “*someone from ilmiyye*”. In the article he listed a number of reasons which according to him caused the decline of madrasas and turned them into a “*shelter for the escapees from the military and the lazy*”. The reasons were mainly related to the teaching and assessment methods, curriculum and the length of study in madrasas. For instance, he argued that the teaching method was not bound to a specific “*sound rule*” (قاعده سالم) and the education depended on the mood of students, who were not examined in the subjects they completed.

Moreover, the length of the education (he mentioned it as around 18 years) was very long and the time was also wasted in studying numerous books on one subject. Related to this, the absence of an obligation to teach from standardized and abridged books embodying “the necessary themes” was seen by the author as another deficiency of the madrasas. To address this, he saw it as necessary to establish a scientific committee to decide on books.

He suggested that the students’ deprivation of knowledge of new sciences and a foreign language was also central to the poor condition of madrasas. It is noteworthy to mention that the author had specific languages in mind, since he qualified them as “those languages study of which is necessary in our times”.

He offered a list of subjects which he thought had to constitute the madrasa curriculum. The list included *sarf, nahu, logic, adab, arud, maani, beyan ve bediye, kalam, usul-u hadith, hadith, tafsir, usul fiqh, fiqh and farsi*. His curriculum also contained history, a foreign language, new philosophy, mathematical sciences and formal writing as “new subjects”.

The author also called for the categorization of madrasas according to subjects. He proposed that a student who attended *sarf* madrasa, for instance, had to go through an

exam in order to proceed to *nahu* madrasas. Those who failed two times in the exam had to be removed from the madrasa.

The article argued that students had to be provided with salaries and their study period needed to be raised from 6 months to 10 months in a year. Even the study hours per day were proposed.

Recruitment of native speakers for achieving excellence in foreign languages, establishment of higher madrasa institutes to teach the subjects that were offered in other educational institutes and employment of madrasa graduates to various religious and civil bureaucratic positions were among the other reform suggestions of the author. (Beyanulhak I, 1908, pp. 250-1)

Ömer Fevzi, who was a member of parliament from Bursa (where he worked as a mufti too), also wrote a similar reform proposal in Bayanulhak. He compared the situation of madrasas to a huge “decayed building” the foundation stones of which were firm so that it was only in need of repairing. His argument was that the renewal (*tajdid*) was what madrasas needed and it had to be done gradually in order not to destroy the existing method of teaching (*tarz tedris*). (Fevzi, 1908)

For the time being, Ömer suggested that it would suffice to teach all necessary sciences (*fen*) and to set up exams for moving from one subject to another. According to him, the students had to be accepted and registered with conditions and exams, and entitled to a certain amount of salary for their living. But those who were capable to finance their living and studies should be allowed to enter madrasas anytime. He was also concerned about the long stays in madrasas. For him, the graduation exam was a must, but students should not be allowed to stay in the madrasas after a certain time period. (Fevzi, 1908).

Another important scholar of the time who contributed to the madrasa reform debate was Musa Kazim Efendi (1858–1920). He held the office of Sheikh al- Islam for a number of terms both before and after World War I. In an article published in

Sebilurreshad, Kazim Efendi argued that the reform was an obligation. It had to be done by the inclusion of at least 5 to 6 new sciences in the madrasa curriculum and by changing most of the methods that had been followed. He gave the example of reading through commentaries and explanations of the grammar (قواعد) books, which for him prevented students from learning Arabic. He argued that all commentaries, explanations, postscripts needed to be removed. The actual texts should be read with “language and literature”:

“How strange it has become: first an explanation (شرح), then a commentary (حاشية) another commentary...then one post-script (تعليق), one more post-script too...This way we can read one book barely in 5-6 years. Then if we ask ‘what did you understand, which issue did you learn from this book’ – nothing is there...he won’t be able to understand a couplet, a line in Arabic. Because his time passed with disagreement. ‘Asam said this’, ‘Abdul Ghafur said that’. I don’t know who said ‘fafihim’. It’s all about ‘said’ ‘said’ ‘qāla’ ‘qāla’. Good! What will we read then? A critique of Arabic? Firstly we do not know the literature, we are yet to learn the grammar (قواعد). Is this the time for Asam and Abdulghafar?!.. ” (Kazim, 1909, pp. 54-55)

Kazim Efendi (1909) further mentioned that his aim was not to discredit the entire tradition of writing commentaries and criticisms. But for him this was something that grammar (qawaid) specialists should deal with and it required a mastery of language and some training of philosophy. He argued that it was “incomprehensible and strange” for “someone who has just started to learn a language to spend time with the philosophy of qawaid, and dispute between ‘Asam and Abd al Ghafar.”

He further added that this alleged methodological deficiency affected the study of other subjects like *fiqh*, exegesis, *hadith* too by leaving no time for them. In order to fix Arabic language related issues, he mentioned a “nice program” in Egypt which could be brought and applied. It is not clear what he referred to as the article did not provide any further information on that.

Kazim Efendi's argument about the Arabic language resonated with the complaints of some madrasa students, too. Salih Vecdi, a student who wrote in Sebilurreshad, mentioned that wherever they went, people were suspicious about their Arabic skills and told them *“although you study Arabic for years, you are incapable to talk in Arabic, express yourself in a written form”*. Vecdi argued that there was truth in this claim. In his view, learning a language should lead one to be able to converse in it and read books written in that language. Thirdly, it should also provide one the skills of written expression in that language. If those were absent, according to him, it would be difficult to make someone accept that madrasas students truly learnt Arabic.

Vecdi proposed adoption of a new approach to the study of Arabic which would allow students to access scientific, ethical, philosophical, historical and all other Arabic works. These books in Vecdi's opinion were not written in a “customary” (عرفي) form of language available in the grammar (kavaid) books made of continuous repetition of certain words. He said:

["For instance, from the history, lets open a part from ibn Qutayba's 'Kitba al-Imama wal Siyasa' or a page from ibn al-Athir's 'Tarikh-u Kamil' [The Complete History] or a section from Ibn Khaldun's 'Muqaddima': can you find a trace of 'customary language' that I mentioned? Not at all! On the contrary, the eloquent (رونقदार) sentences that are decorated with rich words, the meaningful phrases that are natural, simple while keeping correctness will catch our eyes, the real Arabic is that one." (Vecdi, 1913, pp. 5-6)]

Because of the “deficit” in the Arabic language education, Vecdi further claimed that (Vecdi, 1913) madrasa students were also cut off from the intellectual discussion that was happening in the journals and magazines published in the other parts of the Muslim world: (Egypt, Baghdad, Sham were the places he specified):

“In those journals, rare articles and feuilletons are written on exegesis, hadith, tawhid, history, fiqh and legal opinion, language and literature, biographies,

scientific issues. Exceptional individuals like Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, Farid Wajdi appear but most of us are not even aware of them. And the primary reason for that is our educational inadequacy in language.” (Vecdi, 1913, pp. 5-6)

In order to address this problem, Vecdi called for the inclusion of a subject into the curriculum on Arabic conversation and practice “مكالمات و تمرينات عربيه”. More comprehensively, he was urging for the adoption of method of *practice* “تمرين” which according to him was the soundest way of learning a language, and it had proved itself in the “most difficult European languages” such as English and German by teaching them in 6 – 7 months⁹. “If all ‘advanced nations’ could learn each other’s languages for political reasons in such a simple and preferable method, why don’t we, through this method, simplify Arabic language education, which is a religious requirement?” – he asked. (Vecdi, 1913)

Turning back to Sheikh ul-Islam Kazim Efendi, as many others, he also expressed the opinion that a foreign language had to be taught in madrasas. He mentioned that there was no need to be fanatical (تعصب) about it, as in Islam the only language with special status was Arabic. Thus, French was not different from Turkish in its relation to Arabic. For him, the argument suggesting that Turkish was somehow different because those who spoke in it had accepted Islam was invalid since not every Turkish speaker was Muslim.

The last reform account I will provide in this action was written by Gürünlü Hilmi (1909), a teacher in Bayazit mosque. Hilmi’s article was published in 1909 in Sebilurreshad and it contained a detailed, 60-article reform program. He was also proposing a curriculum for madrasa education that would last for 15 years. From his introduction, he seemed to be unsatisfied with the situation of madrasas to a high degree as many saw them as “a place of ignorance”, whereas they had historically been a “center for

⁹ He mentions Emillio Otto as the founder of this method and he quotes a Turkish translation of his book Method of Learning (Usûl-i Talim) by the 19th-century Turkish thinker Besir Fuad (1852 -1887).

all sorts of education”. The main reason for the decline of the madrasa was identified by him to be the absence of new sciences “funun hadira which did not leave any hope for future”. This, he argued, made the students lose their enthusiasm for madrasas and encouraged them to shift to the schools. He presented his model as following:

“Students of knowledge who study two Arabic sciences daily can additionally be taught one new science, so that by studying three subjects every day in ten years they can be considered both as ijaza-granted and maktab [school] graduates.” (Hilmi G. , 1909)

In his view, this would not be enough to train an excellent scholar, which would require an additional five years. To achieve this, he proposed that some of the “useless” soup kitchens and madrasas that were located in very prosperous places could be sold with *istibdal* “according to sharia” and instead of them new 5-year advanced madrasas could be built. If some of these madrasas:

[“...can focus on science of exegesis and hadith and related new sciences, some on the science of fiqh and the new sciences it needs, and the others on the science of kalam and its relevant new sciences, then we would be able to bring up competent people who will serve the religion, government and education.”]

He also emphasized the need for yearly exams, through which failing students could be removed from madrasas and provide tax and military resources for the government. These were his general suggestions, but in his 60-article project there is a specific section (Article 1 - 7) where he discussed in detail in which situations a student could be removed. For instance, if a student left a madrasa for a year he would not be allowed to return unless he brought an official document to prove he had an excuse or he was involved in education in a different province.

According to his program, from the 1st till the 10th year, students would need to study three subjects a day for five days of the week (excluding Tuesdays and Fridays). There were two classes in the morning and one in the afternoon. From the 11th year

onwards three divisions of madrasas, namely Dar al Nass, Dar al Fiqh and Dar al Kalam, would have their own classes. (Hilmi G. , 1909)

Arguing against madrasa exceptionalism

Despite its popularity, the idea that madrasa education faced a curricular and pedagogical crisis was by no means uncontested. One of the most outspoken ulema who challenged this view was Mustafa Sabri. Born in Tokat, a city in the Black Sea region of Turkey, he received his early education in his hometown, which included the memorization of the Qur'an and ijazah, with the traditional certificate in various Islamic sciences. Before settling in Istanbul, he spent some time studying in another Anatolian town, Kayseri, which was known for Islamic education in those days. Gradually, he started gaining prominence in Istanbul, passing the “*ruus*”¹⁰ exam, which allowed him to teach Islamic sciences in different mosques at the very early age of 21. He also joined Huzur Dersleri, annual tafsir classes held in the month of Ramadan in the presence of the Sultan with over 150 years of tradition, as the youngest scholar. He was later appointed as II Abdulhamid's librarian in Yildiz Saray's library. (Yavuz, 2006) (İpşirli, Huzur Dersleri, 1998).

Sabri also held various positions as a teacher, mufti and governmental officer and actively participated in politics following the Young Turk revolution. He was elected as the Member of Parliament from his hometown. Later, because of his critical attitude towards the CUP and his involvement in the opposition party, he had to flee the country. He lived in Romania till he was captured and returned to Istanbul during World War I. He was appointed as SheikhuIslam in 1919 and held this position for four different short time periods.

¹⁰ *Imtihan-i ruus* was the name of an exam which one was required to pass in order to attain the title of “mudarris”.

Sabri was an active contributor to the various debates of the time with his writings in Beyanulhak and Sebilerreshad. He was the editor in chief for the former. In what follows, I will present parts of his writings which mostly capture his views on the question of madrasas.

The first example I provide is from Sabri's article series entitled "Issues in Islam that have become a subject of disputation", in which he addressed various topics that were heatedly debated among the intellectuals. In the introduction to the series, he mentioned that recently some people had emerged "*who criticize and harp on the same string about the Islamic rulings on the issues like polygamy, veiling, divorce, interest, gambling, music, inheritance and almsgiving*" (Sabri M. , Din-i İslam'da Hedef-i Münakaşa Olan Mesail (article series), 1908, p. 8). In each article of the series he took one of those issues and responded to the criticisms.

The way of learning in madrasas was among those debated themes. That section is the continuation of Sabri's elaborate and technical critique of an intellectual trend that preferred "experiment" (tajruba) over "logic" (mantiq) from a kalam perspective. By developing an argument on "how fallacious that position was", he made a critique of his fellow countrymen who took that view. He seems to imply that the reason why people followed such positions was not a result of a critical assessment but rather a sort of admiration, as he called them "*admirers of science and education*". He expressed his pity for people who tried to learn even "*the most unnecessary*" issues of the sciences "*that are spread in the far West*" and valued the weakest points in those sciences, yet were remarkably indifferent towards the important sciences which were "available in front of their eyes in their own country". According to him, those were the people who:

“... assume that the acquired knowledge in madrasas consists of wearisome, fruitless disputes, [and] limited information with an extended education that continues for half a human life at least ...” (Sabri M. , 1908, p. 90)

Sabri noted that the same people also blamed madrasas for not meeting their own objectives by failing to produce students who could speak Arabic and were capable of expressing themselves without “stuttering”. In his view, those who made such claims and assumptions did not see any importance or obligation to make an intellectual effort to really understand those matters. According to him, it was not that they were unable to understand the “truth” but rather that they did not deem it to be necessary.

Sabri argued that the main misunderstanding was about the place of Arabic language in madrasa education. The sciences that were taught in madrasas, he suggested, were divided into three groups. These were Arabic, rational (عقلية) and religious (شرعية) sciences, all of which were studied through works written in Arabic. He argued that one should not draw a conclusion from this that the aim of madrasas was to teach Arabic only:

“... Arabic, along with rational sciences, perhaps is not even part of the real purpose, but is primarily in the form of foundations and means for religious sciences. Thus Arabic education in madrasas is based on a method to serve the religious sciences; not in a style that will provide skills for conversation (محاوره) and writing (محررات)”

To clarify his point further, Sabri drew a comparison between the people who were considered to be the classical masters of Arabic and madrasa teachers of his time. If figures like Imra' ul-Qais, who was known for recitation in Arabic, or Al-Asma'i, who “knew the Arabic most”, were to be alive, Sabri argued that he would not prefer to attend their classes. Instead he would opt for madrasa teachers who certainly did not know Arabic to the degree which Al-Asma'i and Imra' ul-Qais did. He provided the following explanation for his claim:

“...while with the Arabic we would learn from Imra' ul-Qais, Asma'i we cannot understand for instance sources in ilm al-kalam, usul al-fiqh, though

they are Arabic texts (عبارہ), we will understand it with our supposedly deficient Arabic language capital equal to two and half words.”

Sabri further argued that this allegedly deficient method, which for him was sufficient and met the objectives of madrasa education, had at times also produced people who excelled in Arabic. In his view, no such achievement could be ascribed to the so-called “new method”.

The student discussions that were viewed as “*wearisome and fruitless disputes*” served their own purposes, in Sabri’s opinion. These discussions were used by scholars as a pedagogical device in assisting the students to improve their understanding of Islamic rulings (qawaid din Islami). By getting involved in such disputes and discussions on an almost daily basis, students could comprehend various sciences better, and as a result of this process they could also gain other skills like understanding an argument.

He gave the example of Mustafa Munfi Pasha¹¹ (1855-1937), who was a medical doctor and attended the classes in Fatih Mosque. Munir Pasha, according to Sabri, concluded that, more than the sciences they belonged to, these discussions taught students advanced and general rules of thinking (qawanin-i fikriye).

In Sabri’s opinion, those who criticized the madrasa teachers for allowing such discussions failed to realize that they were contradicting themselves. On the one hand, they accused scholars of monasticism (رهبانیت) for being reluctant to discuss the religious rulings (ahkami shariya), and on the other they blamed madrasa teachers for holding discussions in madrasas.

¹¹ Mustafa Munif Pasha was known for being the first director of the School of Pharmacy, Dentistry, Midwives and Nurses, which was founded in 1909 in Istanbul. (Namal, 2002)

Sabri's (1908) last response was to the third element of the criticism mentioned above. This was the comment which suggested that madrasa teachers lacked fluency in their articulations and were unable to explain themselves without stammering. Similar to his other responses, Sabri here too challenged his counterparts for not being sufficiently familiar with the nature of sciences taught in madrasas:

“this would seem very normal to those who study our sciences closely enough... in these sciences there are so many abstruse points, so much detail, that a teacher who is responsible from the student's comprehension will certainly stammer, unless he has exceptional eloquence”

Sabri (1908) provided also a clarification that, as in many other professions, there were those among the madrasa teachers who had limited capabilities. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to conclude that “they do not know” based on expressional problems caused by the extra attention required by the difficulty of the subject.

According to Sabri, if the teacher continued fluently and in a well-balanced manner without any pauses and difficulties, this could indicate that he had diverged in a “*shallow and misleading way*”. He gave the examples of modal logic (منطق موجّهات) and *mukhtalatat* in which this tendency could be observed.

Sabri (1908) argued that the lack of fluency did not cause any problems from the perspective of students. As they sought after the objective, the fluency and eloquence in the speech of the teacher was overlooked. This, Sabri proposed, was because at the beginning of every subject or book the students were taught for days, sometimes even for months, about the definition of the topic and affirmation of the objectives.

All this should not be understood as if Sabri was satisfied with conditions in the madrasas. He also held to the decline narrative, but he did not view the teaching methodology or curriculum of madrasas to be the cause of this decline. On this point, he argued that those who tried to study the sciences of madrasas through other “doors of education” had failed to reach even the current level of the madrasas. His account of

decline seems to relate more towards decreasing competence in Islamic sciences among the Muslim scholars:

“Having said all these, I do not want to claim that madrasa education doesn’t need islah from the view point of its true objective; which is ulumu shariya. We have fallen behind in Islamic sciences to the extent that will make us feel shameful in front of our ancestors. If we were to be the true heirs of this treasure of sciences, new ideas and objections about Islam would disappear among the hubbub of our names ...”

The decline for him was caused by the lack of financial support for students and the insecure future of this profession, which led many madrasa students to leave. He also mentioned the marginalization of writing in madrasas, which also added to the main problems of madrasas’ “unattractiveness” (raghbetsizlik). He did not elaborate further on what exactly he meant by unattractiveness, but the second text I will draw upon will partly answer the question of what Sabri saw as the main problem for madrasas.

Sabri did not deny the necessity of madrasa students’ exposure to the new sciences. However his main condition was that the introduction of new subjects should not be done at the expense of compromising the existing curriculum of the madrasas (Sabri M. , 1909).

The second text is from Sabri’s (1911) analysis of a statement that was made in the parliament when the budget for *Ilmiyye* was being discussed. More precisely, the statement was made by the Member of Parliament from the city of Malatya during the discussion on the inadequacy of the salaries for the *Ilmiyye* members (the actual term mentioned is “مأمورين شرعيه”). In that symbolic statement, he mentioned the following: *“The True Almighty (جناب حق) has taken the knowledge from turban-wearers and given it to those with fez”*.

Sabri’s response started with his own version of this statement: *“The True Almighty has taken the knowledge from turban-wearers, but hasn’t given it to those with fez”*. To understand this, Sabri suggested, there was a need to clarify what is required from the

turban-wearers and to compare their condition with the members of other professions. According to him, the knowledge that turban-wearers had to acquire in the clearest terms was "religious sciences" (علم دين). And he confirmed that the turban-wearers lagged behind their predecessors to a significant degree in these sciences. Nonetheless he claimed that the other professions in this respect were in the same, if not a worse, situation:

“...we can observe how big the difference is between their deficiencies [ulema] in regards to the state of religious issues and the deficiencies of the members of other professions in relation to the worldly sciences compared to their contemporaries in the West.” (Sabri M. , 1911, p. 1959)

He strengthened his argument by pointing out the fact that in those days many followers of other professions were originally turban-wearers, in other words madrasa students, and their success was associated with their second profession. He rhetorically asked how those people were respected in their second occupation whereas not in the original one: “was the turban itself making the difference?”

In Sabri’s observation, the phenomenon of “leaving madrasas” was continuously increasing. If the number of former turban-wearers who then started to wear fez was countless, the opposite was very rare. This for Sabri was critical to understand an important point about the scholars. According to him, as humankind tended to move in the direction where the benefit lay, the increasing shifts to fez-wearing were an indication that the benefit was lay with them. In Sabri’s opinion this contrasted with the popularized image of self-interested ‘alim, as very few people were interested in continuing within the Ilmiye class.

This also had a serious implication for madrasas, Sabri thought. He argued that exceptionally talented people were more likely to be in the group with the larger numbers, which was not the madrasa in those days. In his estimation, if the madrasa had enough respect and incentives to attract those talents, one could see how improved the position of

the turban-wearers in society would be. To Sabri's mind, this was what happened in the past when the fame of turban-wearers was high:

“In those days the children of the most honorable and the richest used to run to the madrasas. We should not forget the role of heredity (ارث) and richness in the matter of intelligence...” (Sabri M. , 1911, p. 1960)

Sabri still believed that despite all these the problems in the madrasas were exaggerated. He mentioned that even in their current situation, able to attract “*almost only the children of the villagers and the poor*”, the madrasas had been able to bring up virtuous individuals. Sabri called for an appreciation of this which, in his opinion, given the limitations was quite an achievement.

In the remaining part of the article, Sabri provided another explanation for the situation of Ilmiyye in general and madrasas in particular. According to him, one of the factors that affected the situation of ulema was their political involvement, which was not collaborative as commonly believed. Sabri argued that during last 30 – 40 years the government had a hidden enmity towards madrasas. During these years, the government had been following “a policy of avoidance” and was suspicious towards madrasas. In Sabri's opinion, this attitude led the government to abandon all its duties towards madrasas and keep them stagnant.

Reform inspirations from the Muslim World

The discussions in the late Ottoman Istanbul-based journals were not restricted to the capital of the Caliphate nor even to the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Most journals and newspapers published articles on occurrences in different parts of the world and some had international correspondents, even outside of the Muslim world. Such articles were sometimes just informative but they were usually related directly to the local debates, like

the one on the madrasas. Especially those who called for madrasa reform were interested in practices in the other parts of the Muslim world facing similar challenges.

Istanbul-based debates were also followed by the Muslims of other geographies and there were expectations that the capital city of the Caliphate would come up with model solutions in regards to the question of madrasas. For instance, a letter written to Sebilurreshad (Sirat-i Mustakim) by a student from Bakhchysaray (Crimea) commented on the developments on madrasas happening in Istanbul. (Arif, 1919)

There were three particular places that served as a source of inspiration for reforming the madrasa in the Istanbul-based discussions, namely India, Central Asia and Egypt.

In a short article published in the *Tearüf-i Müslimin*, the author mentioned how the Muslims in Lucknow, India came together in a gathering to discuss the reform of “Darul Uloom” madrasa. It was reported that 20 thousand *lira*¹² was collected to fund the reform project. The same gathering, according to the author, had discussed the issue of spreading Islam. After a long discussion, the gathering decided to translate Qur’an into English, and a person called Sardar Ismael Muhammed Khan had volunteered to meet the expenses of the project. (Tearüf-i Müslimin, 1910, p.122)

Another more detailed article on Indian madrasas was about Aligarh madrasa. The author, Mehmed Vecihi was providing an account of his visit to the madrasa and describing the general structure of the institute, which was a kind of boarding school teaching “religious sciences (ulum) and new sciences (funun)”. As an “attention capturing” fact, he mentioned that the holidays were Sundays and Fridays (only prayer time) in Aligarh because the teachers of new sciences and the general director were English. During

¹² Name of the currency.

his visit, he was also particularly impressed by the “*fasih*” Arabic in which the German Jewish teacher of Arabic literature spoke. (Vecihi, 1911)

Such articles seemed to address the search for the model of reform for madrasas. There was another article, which addressed a more specific issue: the inclusion of sciences in the madrasa curriculum. The article contained the decision made by the union of ulema in Ufa (Bashkortostan, Russia) on which subjects to teach in madrasas. The decision not only listed the name of subjects but it also provided “sharii evidences” for them. The evidences were usually verses from the Qur’an or ahadith and in few cases were supported by an argument without reference to the scriptures. For instance, according to this decision, the madrasas had to offer a class on the Arabic language and literature and proof for that was the 2nd verse from the chapter of Yusuf: “*Truly We sent it down as an Arabic Quran, that haply you may understand*”. Similarly, for “Natural History” (تاريخ طبيعي), various verses talk about plants (from surah al-Nahl), animals (6:38), minerals (50:7) and the individual life cycle of human beings (22:5). (İslâm Dünyası XXIII, 1914)

The Russian and Persian languages were supported by non-textual evidence. The study of the Russian language in madrasas was justified because this was the language of “the *homeland* (وطن)”. Persian, on the other hand, had to be learnt because “*there were a lot exegeses and some religious books in Persian language*”.

According to the article, the union of scholars had also stated that any hadith and Qur’anic verse which praises and encourages knowledge (‘ilm) could be used as religious (sharii’) evidence for any kind of science.

The project which caused the most excitement in the madrasa debate in Istanbul was associated with Rashid Rida (1865-1935). His madrasa project “Dawa wal irshad” (دعوت و ارشاد) aiming to be an alternative to the Christian missionary schools in Egypt received serious attention from Rida’s sympathizers in Istanbul. The establishment of the

school was announced in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* in a celebratory manner with a combination of a slight frustration. “One would wish that such an initiative came out in *Dar al-Khilafa* [referring to Istanbul] first” -the author stated. It was also mentioned in the article that Rashid Rida indeed wanted the same and came to Istanbul for that purpose the previous year. But for an unmentioned reason, *Dawa wal irshad* could not be founded in the capital of the caliphate. (*Sırat-ı Müstakim*, 1911, p. 223)

The 80-article charter of *Dawa wal irshad*, along with pedagogical instructions, was translated into Turkish and published in series in *Sırat-ı Müstakim*. The translation was done by Abdüllatif Nevzad (Ayasbeyoğlu) (1888-1966), an educationist and writer who graduated from the Faculty of Literature at Dârülfünun, Istanbul. The institute, as reflected in its name, had two sections. Through these two sections, the institute (mentioned as darulfunun) would train “preachers” (داعي) who would work for calling people to Islam and teachers (مرشد) who would give sermons and educate Muslims. The duration of study in both sections was three years and one could enter the *dawa* section only by finishing the *irshad* section. There was an age restriction for admission: students had to be between 20 and 25 years old. They also needed to possess a certain knowledge of Arabic language sciences, mathematics, writing skills and some Quran memorization which would allow them to finish their memorization within the first year of the study. The medium of instruction was Arabic but the students had to learn one of the “European scientific languages”.

Conclusion

The popular “madrasa decline” narrative in Turkey suggests that despite the poor state of madrasas and their outdatedness, the Ottoman ulema had been resistant to the idea of change and reform. This supposed “conservatism” led the madrasas to become ineffective and completely irrelevant to the new Ottoman context and brought about their

eventual abolishment. This chapter has demonstrated that, regardless of being associated with reformist or conservative camp, late Ottoman ulema in general had been critical in their assessments of the situation in madrasas. As a result of those assessments, they came up with reform suggestions to varying degrees.

Some had concluded that the madrasas had serious shortcomings within, explained by the absence of regular exams and entry requirements, an undefined study period, “outdated” themes, lack of standardization of books and subjects, ineffective Arabic language teaching that did not pay enough attention to speaking and writing skills, and the need for inclusion of new sciences and European languages in the curriculum. Hence they had designed reform projects addressing those matters.

However not everyone who called for reform shared this diagnosis of madrasa. Some ulema saw the reform, particularly the introduction of the new sciences to the curriculum, as a tool to attract the students back to the madrasas.

Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that the idea of madrasas being in a pedagogical and curricular crisis was not undisputed. Those who contested this notion did it by providing more contextual explanations, relating the situation in the madrasas to external factors like absence of governmental and financial support, limited career options for the graduates in the context of new economic realities, and popularization of schools.

As discussed in the chapter, one of the most prominent late Ottoman scholars, Mustafa Sabri, challenged the idea of madrasas being exceptionally underperforming compared to the other institutions of the time. He had also responded to critics of madrasa by arguing that they failed to understand the internal logic of madrasas. Nonetheless, this should not be understood as meaning that the ulema who took such positions did not see the need for any change. Sabri, for instance, accepted the necessity of certain changes such

as paying more attention to writing skills and the adoption of new sciences, on condition that this did not compromise the existing curriculum.

Lastly, I have shown in this chapter that the madrasa debate in late Ottoman Istanbul was far from being an internal debate. The articles that appeared in various newspapers give evidence that ulema of Istanbul followed developments in the other parts of the Muslim world facing similar questions. Egypt had particularly been the source of inspiration for reforming madrasas and improving the teaching of the Arabic language.

Chapter 2

A Madrasa Reform Project: Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye

Introduction

In 1914 the 35th Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V (1844-1918) appointed Mustafa Hayri Efendi (1867-1921) as the new Sheikh al-Islam of the Empire. The Sultan's command stated that Hayri Efendi was the suitable person for this post because of his "*familiarity with religious matters*". His duty was mentioned as "*the regulation and reform of all religious courts and Islamic madrasas and service to the benefit of the society*" (İpşirli, HAYRİ EFENDİ, Mustafa, 1998).

Prior to this appointment, Hayri Efendi pursued a very long and dynamic career at various levels of the Ottoman bureaucracy. Originally from the Central Anatolian town of Ürgüp, Hayri Efendi attended both madrasa and school education. He studied in different madrasas in Istanbul and Kayseri till he was 21 and then entered the "Law School" Mekteb-i Hukuk. Upon graduation from the school, he began his career as a teacher then worked in different positions in the courts and in the Ministry of Justice.

While working in Syria and Thessaloniki, he seemed to be attracted to the Community of Union and Progress (CUP) and involved in their activities. After the declaration of the second constitutional period he was elected as a member of parliament from the CUP and became the first deputy head in the parliament. He continued climbing the career ladder and received important decorations. Prior to the post of Sheikh al-Islam, he had two important positions, namely as the Minister of Endowments and the Minister of Education, which he carried out temporarily. (İpşirli, HAYRİ EFENDİ, Mustafa, 1998)

Hayri Efendi's period as Sheik al-Islam was marked by World War I and he is mostly known for his fatwa "*jihad-i akbar*"¹³. But another significant event occurred in his first year in the office which concerns this study more. This was the establishment of the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* (Abode of the Caliphate) *Madrasas*: Hayri Efendi did not adjourn the task assigned for him on madrasa reform and prepared a new madrasa project within the first six months of his duty. In his previous position as the Minister of Endowments, Hayri Efendi had already made a name with the significant changes he brought (Bein, Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition, 2011). Similarly, his reform program for madrasas also aimed to bring major alterations and adjustments. The program was quickly passed through legislation thanks to the Unionist support he had. The Sultan Mehmed V signed the reform bill and turned it into a law to encompass all madrasas in Istanbul (Bein, Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition, 2011) (İpşirli, 1998).

In this chapter, I will be discussing the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasa project by looking at its administrative, curricular and pedagogical aspects. I will be drawing my analysis mainly from the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* charter (*nizamname*), which was published in 1914 and contained detailed instructions on those three aspects of the new madrasas. I will also engage a number of relevant articles that appeared in *Ceride-i Islamiye*, the official newspaper of the Sheikh ul-Islam's office.

Bein (2011) had already studied the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasa project as part of his work on the late Ottoman ulema. One of his main conclusions is that the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* project was the result of the process of "rightening the Sheikh al-Islam's oversight over the madrasas", which started in the 19th century. For him, the new madrasas

¹³ According to the fatwa, Hayri Efendi declared the Sultan's order for jihad compulsory for all Muslims. The fatwa also called on Muslims to unite against the coalition between the Russian Empire, United Kingdom and French Republic, and included even those who were under their rule, forbidding them to participate in any battle against Germany and Austria (İpşirli, 1998).

endowed the Sheikh al-Islam, thus the state indirectly, with complete control over all aspects of madrasas (p.60-61). My analysis does not contest this position, rather endorses it. However, I want to re-explore the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* project in relation to the specific questions which were discussed in the earlier chapters on Islamic education, such as the question of the Arabic language, exams and the integration of new sciences into the madrasa curriculum.

Administering New Madrasas: academic and bureaucratic structure

Before the establishment of the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasas, a commission was created to inspect the madrasas of Istanbul. The commission had to assess the conditions of madrasas in terms of infrastructure and availability of classrooms and the overall situation, to decide which of them could be used. The factors that were considered included the decay level of the buildings, their hygienic conditions, the student capacity and the availability of classrooms. Out of 184 assessed madrasas, 81 of them were eventually identified as useful for the project. The selected madrasas were to be integrated into the new system *Dar-al Hilafetil-Aliyye* and each of them had to serve for a specific year in the education according to its location. For instance, if the madarasas in *Uskudar* were exclusively used for the 1st grade education, those around *Sultan Ahmet* were for the 2nd grade (Kütükoğlu, 1993).

The study duration was decided as 12 years and divided into two major sections: *the secondary* (تالی قسم) and *higher sections* (عالی قسم). Students would spend the first eight years in the secondary section, which itself was split into two four-year divisions (secondary 1 and secondary 2). It was called *secondary* because those who joined new madrasas were expected to have finished six-year elementary education already (those who did not could be admitted by interview).

In the 9th year, the student would proceed to *the higher section* and spend four more years there. With this, the *Dar-al Hilafetil-Aliyye* program would be completed and the students would qualify for a certificate. For those who sought to continue their education and become expert in a certain field, *medresetul mütehassisun* (specialized madrasas) were established too. To become a *mutehassis müderris* (an expert teacher), the students had to spend extra four years in one of the five areas of specializations. In addition to concentrating on their own specializations, they had to study relevant new sciences¹⁴. (Sebilurreshad XII, 1914)

The new madrasas would be managed through a centralized bureaucratic system. Each three sections would have a general supervisor (مدیر عمومی) to oversee the system through the class and department supervisors. For instance, one of the tasks assigned to the class and department supervisors was to monitor the attendance of students. Every day class supervisors were supposed to visit the classrooms at various times for that purpose. The attendance was compulsory and those who missed a certain number of hours would not be allowed to sit in the exams. According to the charter, in case of emergency, a student could obtain permission from the class supervisors for one day of absence and from the general supervisor for longer than that.

The supervisors were also responsible for ensuring that the classes were fully following the programs and the identified timing. The organization of exams, and class schedules, compliance with the “conditions of health” (شرائت صحیه) in the classrooms and dining rooms were other responsibilities that fell under the supervisors’ duties. Apart from supervisors at different levels, the new madrasa had other kinds of administrative personnel such as clerks (کتابه), gate-keepers (بواب) and servants (خدمه).

¹⁴ Five available specialization areas were “morphology and grammar” “logic and ma’ani”, “fiqh and usul al-fiqh”, “kalam and hikma” and “exegesis and hadith”.

There was also a team of inspectors who were appointed in order to observe the administration and the method of teaching (طرز تدریسات) in *Dar-al Hilafetil-Aliyye* madrasas. The inspectors had to prepare reports on these matters to be submitted directly to the office of Sheikh al-Islam. According to the charter, the teachers were obliged to respond to the inquiries of the inspectors and had to provide explanations when required.

Student recruitment

The charter of new madrasas also defined the student capacity for each section. The secondary sections were going to accept 2,080 students (1,040 in each), whereas in the higher sections the expected number of students was 800. If the number of students turned out to be more than the identified figures, a competition would be organized in order to select “*more intelligent ones*”.

The students were to be selected based on the exam results for already registered madrasa students in Istanbul. Those who could not enter the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* would not receive salaries anymore and had to leave the madrasas. The salaries would not be given to the students in cash, instead they received their living costs and clothes in kind.

For the secondary section, students who were between 13 and 18 years would be accepted with a number of conditions. First of all, the student should not have a contagious disease, criminal charge or “*fame for ill manner*”. Secondly, he was required to have a certain amount of education. This criterion could be fulfilled by either holding a certificate from a six-year elementary school (ibtidai or rushdi) or proving through an entrance exam that he had equal knowledge which could be gained from the same level of education.

The entrance exam would include an assessment of the Qur’an recitation, religious information, Turkish language (reading, writing and grammar), mathematics (basic four operations, fractions and decimals), abridged (مختصر) geography, abridged history (both

general and Ottoman) and fine penmanship (حسن خط). Those who would like to join the upper grades of the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* would have to be examined from the content of the lower grades. To be admitted to the higher section of the madrasas, the age minimum was 18 years. The entrance exams were oral and taken by a committee.¹⁵

Clock time and Hygiene

The charter had regulations on the length of classes as well: "*The duration of the class is exactly one hour*". This was similar to what was proposed in one of the reform projects discussed in the earlier chapter. The teachers were regulated directly by clock time, too. If a teacher entered the classroom 15 minutes after the actual time and left the class before the announcement of its end, a certain amount of money would be deducted from his salary (the end of the classes would be announced by the servants). There were clear instructions on how to calculate deductions based on the number of delays and early leaves.

Hygiene, another issue that was popular in the earlier madrasa polemic, was addressed in the charter too. Administrative officers all had duties related to cleanliness, the quality of food etc. The students were also given clear instructions on this matter:

*[“Student will take ablution and pray in congregation as soon as he wakes up from sleep; and at other times too will perform his prayers in congregation; after food he will wash his hands and outside of his mouth with soap, and will clean inside of his mouth either with miswak or with brush; will wash his laundry on Fridays; and will cut his hair once a month and his nails weekly; and once in fifteen days he will take bath with hot water; morning, noon and evenings will ventilate his room by leaving the windows open; he will not put extra fuel into the stoves and unburnt coal in braziers...”]*¹⁶

¹⁵ Darü'l-Hilafeti'l-Aliyye Medresesi: nizamname- ders cedveli- suret-i tedris ve kitablar- talimatname. (1914). Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, pp. 29-30

¹⁶ Ibid., p.32

Examination and New ijazatnames

Those who finished the secondary sections would be granted diplomas (*shadatname*). The graduates of the higher section, on the other hand, would receive *icazatname*. The privileges for both entitlements would be officially clarified. The *icazatname* would include the names of the teacher and the chain of their teachers' teachers. By obtaining an *ijazatname*, the student would also acquire the title of *mudarris*, which would allow him to teach.

This could be seen as continuity with the *ijaza* tradition at first glance. However, there were several significant differences. Firstly, it was obtained through a general exam, which would lack the "person to person" methodology emphasized in the literature on *ijaza* tradition.¹⁷ And secondly, new *ijazatnames* had to be approved by a central organization, the office of Sheikh al-Islam upon the investigations of *Ders Vekaleti*.¹⁸ This would make *ijazatnames* more of an institutional certificate, although it would have the name of the teachers on it.

There is another reason why it would be misleading to recognize new *ijazatnames* as the continuation of the traditional *ijaza* system. This was related to the assessment system. According to that system, at the end of each year students had to go through a general examination which was taken by a committee. The committee was decided by the general supervisor and approved by *Ders Vekaleti* and Sheikh al-Islam's office. It was made up of four members at least: two examiners and two teachers. The committee had to assess the students' knowledge based on a 10-point scale in which scoring over 4 would mean a pass. If the examiners and teachers could not agree on the same point, an average would be calculated. If the average result was a fraction, it had to be rounded.

¹⁷ For the centrality of the teacher and the personal nature of Islamic Education, see Tibawi (1962) and Gesink (2006).

¹⁸ *Darü'l-Hilafeti'l-Aliyye Medresesi: nizamname- ders cedveli- suret-i tedris ve kitablar- talimatname.* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1914, pp. 10-11).

The charter also defined some details for the exam process itself. For instance, in a scenario when the examiners noticed that the student's wrong answer was due to his misunderstanding of the question, they were instructed to do the following:

“The examining committee...without correction can only call his attention to the fact that he has misunderstood the question. [They] are not allowed to openly explain the student's answer.”¹⁹

The students were given an exact examination time for each subject according to their registration numbers. Those who missed the given time without an excuse would be considered failed. There was also a possibility of taking makeup exams if a student failed only one subject in the higher section and two in the secondary section. Those who failed again had to remain in the same class and repeat the year-long program.

This assessment system, I suggest, had significant implications for the nature of new *ijazatnames*. Firstly, the exams were done on the subjects not on specific books. And the examining committee would not necessarily have the teacher who taught the subject to the students. This was a clear shift from the traditional *ijazah* system, which was completely under the authority of a teacher who issued an *ijazah* on a specific book. With the new certificate system, the institution or administration was replacing the central role of the teacher, and *ijazas* were becoming an institutional certificate. As pointed out earlier, the assessment of knowledge through a point system was not found in the traditional system either. The *ijazas* traditionally were not differentiated by grades or marks.

The study period in the new madrasas would start in the beginning of September and continue till the end of May. The general exams were to be held during June. The holiday months were July, August and Ramadan. The last ten days of August would be used for the entrance and makeup exams.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.33

The curriculum

The official charter of *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasas laid out very clearly how the curriculum would be. It did not only mention the names of subjects and the weekly hours dedicated to them, but also included the name of books to be used and some detailed pedagogical instructions. The teachers of each subject would also be decided by Ders Vekaleti and their names would be published in the official documents.

The teachers did not have authority to make changes for the subjects they were teaching. Any changes to the decided curriculum could be done under the administration of Ders Vekaleti through a committee of 30 people consisting of both madrasa teachers and directors.²⁰

As a general pedagogical requirement, in the section about the teachers, they were asked not to “engage in sentence analysis (عبارة تحلي)” in the teaching of religious sciences (excluding exegesis, hadith, sarf, nahu, rhetoric and Arabic literature) and to teach “*the spirit of the content*”. They had to “*avoid discussions that are not related to the topic of the class*”. If there was a need, the teachers could meet up with students to discuss their classes by informing the administration.

Each grade had more than ten different subjects which had to be studied for overall 24 hours (four hours per day). One subject could be taught four hours at most in a week. In what follows I will briefly describe the curriculum of *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasas. I will particularly pay attention to the pedagogical instructions, selected text books and study themes. Tables 1-3 show the official timetables for the new madrasas with my translation into English (see the addendum for the original timetables in Ottoman).

²⁰ Ibid., p.9

Religious sciences

There were two subjects on the *Qur'an*, namely recitation (ترتيل) and exegesis (تفسير), in the curriculum. The students had to learn and practice the rules of correct recitation for the first three years. There was an emphasis on “*practical teaching and implementation*” of the tajweed rules. The teachers were asked to teach the theoretical aspects of certain tajweed rules only in the third year. The course description mentioned the names of the verses to be memorized within this subject for each year. For instance, the students in the second grade were expected to memorize the chapters of *Naba*, *Mulk*, *Rahman*, *Fath* and *Yasin*.

From the 7th grades onward the students would start learning commentaries on the Qur'an through *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*. By the end of the secondary section in two years, they were expected to cover the part from the *Surah Fath* till the end of the book. In the higher section, there was a more intensive study of *Qur'anic exegesis* (four hours a week in each grade), which would allow the students to complete the remaining part of the commentary (from *Surah al-Baqarah* to *Surah al-Fath*).

There was an interesting remark concerning the *Hadith* subject. It seems like the committee was dissatisfied with the existing hadith literature and therefore planning to prepare a new textbook by compiling “*a collection of appropriate social and ethical ahadith*”. Al-Nawawī's (1233–1277) forty hadith collection would be used till the new collection was ready. The students of the secondary section would also be exposed to *usul al-hadith* text and complete *Shamail* by Tirmidhi along with additional “ethics and society related ahadith that are suitable (*mulayim*) to discuss”.

The hadith classes were a central component of the higher section curriculum too. In addition to the general hadith classes, the curriculum included *Usul al-Hadith* but only for the first year (9th grade) due to the “*lack of time*”. The teachers were allowed to use one hour from the time reserved for general hadith classes to teach *usul al-hadith* through al-

Nawawi's *Taqrib*. As there was a fixed time (24 hours) for weekly learning, the calculation of hours had become unavoidable to accommodate such a diverse curriculum.

Fiqh had the biggest share among the religious subjects. The students had to learn the fiqh of rituals, marriage, divorce and inheritance, transactions and punishments during the secondary section. The chosen text-books were from Hanafi school of law (*Nur al-Idah* and *Maraqī al-Falah*, both by Imam Shurunbulali (994 - 1069), Sadr Al-Shari'a's (d. 1346 AD) commentary on *Wiqaya*).

More advanced fiqh education was to be provided in *usul al-fiqh* and *khilafiyat* (disagreements) classes in the higher section of the madrasas. Ibn Rushd's (1126-1198) *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer* was classified as the main sourcebook for the latter.

Another traditional subject that was included in the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* syllabus was **Kalam**. Although *Kalam* was by no means novel in the madrasa curriculum, in the higher section it was planned to be studied through a new book that would be authored by "kalam and philosophy teachers and specialists selected by the office of Sheikh al-Islam". Several traditional books (such as al-Taftâzânî's (1322-1390) "*Sharh al-Maqasid*") and one contemporary book were mentioned for temporary use. The contemporary one was "*Al-Risalah Al-Hamidiya*", which was authored in 1888 by Lebanese scholar Hussein al-Jisr (1845-1909)²¹. In the secondary section "*Al-amali*" (I could not identify the author), "*al-Musayarah*" by Ibn al-Humam and Hayali's (1425-1475) commentary on "*Qasidah Nuniye*" were chosen as textbooks.

²¹ The book was written to refute evolutionary materialist ideas and respond to the charges made by Orientalists, such as the spread of Islam by the sword and the issue of slavery. It was dedicated to Sultan Abdulhamid, who received it with admiration and granted al-Jisr an annual salary of 55 liras as a prize (Elshakry, 2013, p. 137). The book was also an attempt to reconcile new "scientific findings" with the teachings of Islam by emphasizing reason and empirical reading of the Qur'an. For him evolutionary ideas were not necessarily incompatible with Qur'an (Elshakry, 2013, p. 141; Ziadat & Jallow, 1986 p.16). He argued that the Qur'an did not provide evidence on "whether all species, each of which exists by the grace of God, were created all at once or gradually". (Iqbal, 2007, p.157)

1 st year	URS HO	2 nd year	URS HO	3 rd year	URS HO	4 th year	URS HO
<i>Tartil Quran Karim</i>	2	<i>Tartil Quran Karim</i>	2	<i>Tartil Quran Karim</i>	1	<i>Hadith Sharif (about ethics and society)</i>	1
<i>Fiqh (Rituals)</i>	2	<i>Fiqh (Rituals)</i>	4	<i>Hadith Sharif (about ethics and society)</i>	1	<i>Fiqh (Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance)</i>	4
<i>Arabic Morphology (sarf) and language</i>	4	<i>Arabic Morphology (sarf) and language</i>	4	<i>Fiqh (Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance)</i>	4	<i>Arabic grammar (nahw)</i>	4
<i>Arabic Conversation and Practice</i>	1	<i>Arabic Conversation and Practice</i>	1	<i>Arabic grammar (nahw)</i>	4	<i>Arabic Conversation and Writing</i>	1
<i>History of Prophets and Islam</i>	2	<i>History of Prophets and Islam</i>	2	<i>Arabic Conversation and Practice</i>	1	<i>Khutba and sermons</i>	1
<i>Turkish (dictation, reading, grammar)</i>	4	<i>Turkish (dictation, reading, grammar)</i>	3	<i>Turkish (practice and writing)</i>	2	<i>Turkish (practice and writing)</i>	2
<i>Persian</i>	2	<i>Persian</i>	2	<i>Geometry</i>	1	<i>Geometry</i>	1
<i>Arithmetic (practical)</i>	2	<i>Arithmetic (practical)</i>	2	<i>Geography (general)</i>	2	<i>Arithmetic (theory)</i>	1
<i>Geography (general)</i>	2	<i>Geography (general)</i>	2	<i>Mevalid-i selase²² and agricultural information</i>	3	<i>Mevalid-i selase and agricultural information</i>	1
<i>Scientific information</i>	2	<i>Social and ethical information</i>	1	<i>Abridged general and Turkish history</i>	2	<i>Accounting (usul-I defteri)</i>	1
<i>Writing (khutut)</i>	1	<i>Writing (khutut)</i>	1	<i>Algebra</i>	2	<i>Algebra</i>	1
				<i>Hygiene</i>	1	<i>Short Ottoman history</i>	2
						<i>Abridged natural philosophy and chemistry</i>	2
						<i>Legal information</i>	2
	24		24		24		24

Table 1: Weekly timetable for the Secondary 1 section of the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasas, (Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1914)

²² *Mevalid-i selase*, literally meaning three beings, meant the study of minerals, plants and animals.

Secondary Section II							
5 th year	Hours	6 th year	Hours	7 th year	Hours	8 th year	Hours
<i>Hadith Sharif</i>	2	<i>Hadith Sharif</i>	2	<i>Tafsir Sharif</i>	3	<i>Tafsir Sharif</i>	2
<i>Fiqh (transactions)</i>	3	<i>Fiqh (transactions)</i>	3	<i>Fiqh (transactions)</i>	3	<i>Fiqh (punishments)</i>	3
<i>Arabic Syntax (Nahu)</i>	4	<i>Rhetoric</i>	3	<i>Usul Fiqh</i>	4	<i>Faraid</i>	2
<i>Rhetoric</i>	3	<i>Arabic Conversation and Writing</i>	1	<i>Science of Kalam</i>	4	<i>Usul Fiqh</i>	4
<i>Wada</i>	1	<i>Logic</i>	4	<i>Biography of the Prophet</i>	2	<i>Science of Kalam</i>	3
<i>Arabic Conversation and Writing</i>	1	<i>Literature</i>	1	<i>History of Islam and Religions</i>	1	<i>Khutba and sermons</i>	1
<i>Turkish (literature)</i>	2	<i>Turkish (literature)</i>	2	<i>Rhetoric</i>	3	<i>History of Islam and Religions</i>	1
<i>Ottoman history</i>	2	<i>Ottoman history</i>	2	<i>Arabic Conversation and Writing</i>	1	<i>Rhetoric</i>	3
<i>Arithmetic (theory)</i>	1	<i>Mechanics</i>	1	<i>Economics and finance</i>	2	<i>Arabic Conversation and Writing</i>	1
<i>Geometry</i>	1	<i>Trigonometry (Muthalathat)</i>	1	<i>Hygiene</i>	1	<i>Philosophy (short)</i>	2
<i>Natural philosophy</i>	2	<i>Natural philosophy</i>	1			<i>Sociology (ilm-u ijtimai)</i>	1
<i>Chemistry</i>	2	<i>Chemistry</i>	1			<i>Pedagogy</i>	1
		<i>Astronomy (heyet)</i>	2				
	24		24		24		24

Table 2: Weekly timetable for the Secondary 2 section of the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-'Aliyye madrasas, (Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1914)*

Higher Section							
1 st year	Hours	2 nd year	Hours	3 rd year	Hours	4 th year	Hours
<i>Tafsir Sharif</i>	4	<i>Tafsir Sharif</i>	4	<i>Tafsir Sharif</i>	4	<i>Tafsir Sharif</i>	4
<i>Hadith Sharif</i>	2	<i>Hadith Sharif</i>	3	<i>Hadith Sharif</i>	3	<i>Hadith Sharif</i>	3
<i>Usul Hadith</i>	1	<i>Ilm ul-Fiqh</i>	4	<i>Ilm ul-Fiqh</i>	4	<i>Ilm ul-Fiqh</i>	4
<i>Ilm ul-Fiqh</i>	3	<i>Usul Fiqh</i>	4	<i>Usul Fiqh</i>	3	<i>Usul Fiqh</i>	3
<i>History of the Fiqh Science</i>	1	<i>Science of Kalam</i>	2	<i>Disagreements (Khilafiyat)</i>	2	<i>Disagreements</i>	2
<i>Usul Fiqh</i>	4	<i>History of Science of Kalam</i>	1	<i>Science of Kalam</i>	3	<i>Science of Kalam</i>	3
<i>Science of Kalam</i>	2	<i>Philosophy</i>	1	<i>Philosophy</i>	1	<i>Philosophy</i>	1
<i>History of Science of Kalam</i>	1	<i>Rights and laws</i>	3	<i>Rights and laws</i>	1	<i>Rights and laws</i>	1
<i>Philosophy</i>	1	<i>Arabic literature</i>	2	<i>Arabic literature</i>	3	<i>Arabic literature</i>	3
<i>Rights and laws</i>	2						
<i>Arabic literature</i>	3						
	24		24		24		24

Table 3: Weekly timetable for the higher section of the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-'Aliyye* madrasas, (*Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1914*)

A new course book would also be prepared for the “History of ilm al-Kalam” which was an innovative religious subject: al-Shahrastani’s (d.1153) *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* was selected for temporary use. “History of fiqh”, another new subject, also suffered from the unavailability of a source material and was going to be taught through selections from various fiqh books and *tabaqat* of jurists.

Arabic language

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, a common criticism of madrasas was related to the methodology of teaching Arabic. The madrasa students were often censured for poor speaking and writing skills in Arabic. In order to address this issue, “*Arabic conversation, practice and writing*” was introduced as a separate subject to be taught throughout the secondary section for eight years. This was meant to support other usual Arabic language subjects such as “Morphology and Language”, “Syntax” and “Rhetoric”.

In the higher section, Arabic literature too would be studied as an independent subject. Madrasa students had to read two major Arabic literary works, namely *Muallaqat Saba’a*²³ and *Maqamat* by al-Hariri (1054-1122), and learn about the general history of Arabic literature.

The reform program did not eliminate the Persian language from the madrasa curriculum. Two hours a week were dedicated to it in the first and second grades. The first-year students would learn the language as much as possible and then move to the study of Persian literature. The teachers were asked to select “*philosophical (حكيمى), social (اجتماعى) and ethical (اخلاقى)*” parts from Sadi’s (1210-1291) *Gulistan* and similar books and teach them to the students. They had to have the suitable sections memorized by the students. Similar to the instructions on the hadith learning, the rationale behind the emphasis on selecting “*philosophical, social and ethical*” parts was not provided.

Foreign languages were added to the curriculum a year later. Students had to choose one of the available languages (German, French, English or Russian) and then continued studying it for eight years (Ceride-i İlmiyye, 1915, p. 89).

New sciences

²³ Selected collection of poems written by seven major pre-Islamic Arab poets (Tülücü, 2005)

Around 20 new subjects were introduced to the curriculum of *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasas. The new subjects were mainly placed in the secondary section of madrasas. Perhaps this was done in order to ensure that students who decided not to proceed to the higher section and were satisfied with a secondary *shadatname*, would have the opportunity to learn about this variety of new subjects.

Most of the new subjects were imported from the school syllabus and were not limited to the technical sciences, contrary to what one might expect. Technical subjects included a range of mathematical and natural sciences, such as arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mechanics and chemistry.

History as a theme was very central to the curriculum, including general and Ottoman history, the history of prophets and Islam and history of religions. Recently authored books like Ahmed Cevdet Pasha's (1882-1895) "*The stories of the prophets*" and Efdaleddin Tekiner's (1868-1957) "*Short history of Islam*" were selected for usage.

History was also the subject through which madrasa education was introduced to nationalism for the first time. In the instructions for the general history class, it was stated that "*a detailed explanation especially on the history of Turks*" had to be provided. For that purpose, the works of a popular historian of the time, Ahmed Refik (1881-1937), had to be used.

In the program for geography classes, the disproportionate division of hours for the study of contents was conspicuous. If the geography of Africa, Asia and Australia was wedged into the second half of the first year, the entire third year was reserved for European geography.

Each year the madrasa students were expected also to study at least one “awareness” (*malumat*²⁴) subject, described as “citizenship education” in the secondary literature. These included *scientific information* (معلومات فنيه), *ethical and social information* (معلومات اخلاقيه و اجتماعيه), *legal information* (معلومات قانونيه) and *hygiene* (حفظ الصحة). Through these classes students would be exposed to the works of a number of important Tanzimat intellectuals, mostly educated in Europe. For instance, for *Scientific Information*, a book (Material Classes – دروس اشيا) authored by Mustafâ Sâtî‘ al-Husrî’s (1880-1968), a late Ottoman intellectual who later became popular for his contributions to the debates on Arab Nationalism, was recommended. Another of his books, *Fenn-i Terbiye*, known as the first modern pedagogy book in Turkey, was instructed to be the textbook for another subject (Gündüz, 2010), *Science of Tarbiyah*, which was to be taught in the last year of secondary level.

The subject “*Rights and Laws*” was intended to provide students some general ideas and principles on rights. Students then had to learn the definitions, categories and laws that fall under different sections of rights.

The impact of the new madrasas and the reactions

It is difficult to make any well-grounded statement on how successful and effective Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasas were and also on the way the project was perceived by the different groups of ulema. This is mainly for two reasons. The first one was related to the Ottoman Empire’s involvement in the war, which led the madrasa debate to subside. The first academic year of the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasas happened to begin just a week after the declaration of jihad that functioned as the religious legitimacy for the Empire’s participation in the war. In the presence of more pressing challenges like foreign invasion

²⁴ Could be also translated as information.

of the Empire, successful implementation of madrasa reform did not take precedence in the government's agenda.

In addition to that, madrasas' resources were being used for various purposes other than education. In an article written about Istanbul madrasas this phenomenon was described in the following words:

["The madrasas of Istanbul have a strange fate: migrants come - to the madrasas, a fire takes place - to the madrasas, soldiers arrive - to the madrasas, new associations are organized - to the madrasas. As if like, everybody is in the opinion that the generous endowers have not provide funds to these madrasas for teaching sciences and arts, but almost for everything [else]" (Muftizade, 1923, p. 161)]

It seems like such practices had intensified during the war period. Furthermore, despite the Sheikh al-Islam's objection, many madrasa students were taken into the military forces. Even some teachers were recruited to serve in the military system.

There was also a difficulty for students from outside of Istanbul to come and join the new madrasas. This was radically reflected in the student numbers in madrasas. (Muftizade, 1923; Bein, 2011) According to the statistics for 1916, the overall number of students who took exams was 512, less than a fifth of the original capacity of *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasas stated in the charter. (Ceride-i Ilmiye, 1916, p. 523)

There was a second factor which also significantly affected the discussions on the new madrasas. The coalition between the ulema and the CUP had already broken up. Many ulema who supported the revolution in 1908 started distancing themselves from the party. The CUP also became intolerant towards any criticism that was directed to the party. *Bayanulhak*, for instance, was closed number of times for that reason. The newspaper was permanently shut down eventually in 1912 and many conservative ulema lost their main channel of disseminating their ideas. Some of them even had to flee the country like

Mustafa Sabri because of their involvement in the opposition parties. And those who stayed in the country did not have the intellectual freedom they enjoyed during the first four years of the second constitutional period.

Despite that there are a few materials that will give us a rough idea about the way the reform was perceived. A short article published in the *Sebilerreshad* mentioned the decision on the establishment of the new madrasas in a mixture of hopeful and skeptical language:

[*“Today from the office of Sheik al-Islam, a new and bright initiative, claimed to be thorough, is going to be presented to the public....With these initiatives on the way to reform madrasas, Sheikh al-Islam Efendi his exalted personage has given hope to despairing hearts, has turned toward the ideal that has been desired for years. It is understood that the office of Sheik al-Islam, by bringing an end to the century-old arrangement, wants to establish a more profluent foundation, instead...We leave our definite word about this initiative to the time of the announcement of the organizational personnel and the appointment of the 'arms' who will build this new building. For now we consider it to be more appropriate to wish to the office of Sheik al-Islam that this initiative which aims to mold our madrasas, the only means for the nation of Islam to rise, to a source of irfan, will become successful and beneficial”*] (*Sebilurreshad* XII, 1914, p. 439)

With the announcement of the details of the *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye* madrasas the skepticism led to real concerns about the marginalization of religious sciences in the curriculum. One of the most outspoken criticisms was made by Ahmed Shirani (1879-1942). For Shirani, the madrasas and takkas were being reformed in order to serve the Unionist interest and would be used as an effective tool by the party to demoralize society (Tozlu, 1997). He wrote a poem, “Elegy to Madrasa” (*Mersiye-i medarus*), criticizing Sheikh al-Islam and the new system. The elegy resulted in Shirani’s arrest. The following is a rough translation of a couplet from it:

*“While our aim was to go to Kaba with education,
We had taken the Turkistan route, another aim, commitment,
While The Chosen Ahmed was the head of our caravan,*

Our guide is now a dolt, and the end is blocked and insufficient” (Tozlu, 1997, pp. 57-58)

Another assessment of the new madrasas was made by Mustafa Sabri later in 1919 as part of his responses to the reformist thinker Hashim Bey. He called the project “an incautious revolution” and claimed that it failed to achieve the aims of its foundation and brought more harm.

“The new arrangement in Istanbul, was even less able to supply the demand for scholars although most of the subjects had been imported from school, and the Arabic education has failed completely ... ” (Sabri, p. 215)

But not everyone shared Sabri and Shirani’s observations. Muftizade, for instance, in his reports published on Istanbul madrasas in Sebilurreshad, provides an account of Dârü’l-Hilâfeti’l-Aliyye madrasas which recognized the project as a positive development. (Muftizade, 1923)

The Dârü’l-Hilâfeti’l-Aliyye project survived till the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Along the way, in 1917 during Musa Kazim’s period in the Sheikh al-Islam’s office, some significant changes were made. The names of the sections were replaced with traditional names that were used for madrasas such as *suleimaniya*, *sahn*, *ibtidai dahil* and *ibtidai haric*. The overwhelming number of the subjects was decreased too, mostly through eliminating the new subjects from the curriculum²⁵. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Dârü’l-Hilâfeti’l-Aliyye madrasas were transformed into *Imam-Hatip* schools, which exist up till today (Öcal, 2008).

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from my analysis of Dârü’l-Hilâfeti’l-Aliyye madrasas. As a school-inspired project, I argue that it represented a final stage of the modern national education building process which began in the 19th century, which aimed

²⁵ Darü’l-Hilafeti’l-Aliyye Medresesi Ders Programlarıyla Müderrisîn Kadrosu ve Medaris Kanunu ve Nizamnamesi. (1917). Istanbul: Evkaf-ı İslamiye Matbaası.

to indoctrinate the subjects of the empire and make them internalize the values of the state, as discussed in the literature review.

Till the establishment of Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasas the *talib ul-ilm* remained outside of this project's scope. However, with the new administrative changes and curriculum containing subjects on "citizenship education", madrasa students officially had to be taught the values of the emerging nation state. The Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasa project was perhaps the most appropriate option for the CUP government at the time, satisfying the needs of various groups in society, as the complete closure of the madrasas would be too radical a step to take. Instead, the government's interest could be fulfilled by the "new institutes" called Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasas which seemingly also addressed the concern of the others who called for maintaining madrasas with serious reforms.

Now madrasas could be controlled very tightly through the office of the Sheikh al-Islam, and the students would learn about the "history of Turks", Ottoman history and geography, be exposed to various western pedagogical and social ideas, and gain new skills like accounting that would help them to integrate under the new social conditions.

A concept discussed by a historian of education Depaepe seems to capture this notion. This is the process of "educationalization", through which a state uses education for the aims of "*a social control, disciplining and standardization of behavior*". In such a setting, the purpose of an education institute is to make certain that the "*students conducted themselves within the bounds of what was morally desirable and socially acceptable*". (Depaepe, 2012, p. 11) In the new madrasas, I suggest that the courses on teaching hygienic rules, social awareness, legal information and the emphasis on "*ethical and social*" in various course descriptions were the main channels of *educationalization*.

In addition to serving the interest of the government, the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasa project had also internalized various reformist notions about madrasas. Typical evidence for that was the continuous emphasis on the necessity of focusing on the practical aspects of things, rather than the theoretical.

The second major conclusion is related to the place of the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye madrasas in relation to the madrasa tradition. I suggest that administrative, pedagogic and curricular changes brought by this new project constituted significant departures from the madrasa tradition. The foremost one was about the role of teachers (*muderrisin*) in the new madrasas. The administrative changes were transforming madrasa teachers to government employees, who had a very limited authority on what to teach, how to teach, and even how long to teach. The teacher would be decided by the administration and monitored by the inspection committee to ensure that he was exactly following the program.

Their centrality was undermined also in the ijaza system. Now it would not be in the direct authority of a teacher to decide whom to grant the ijazatnames. Rather, an exam committee would assess the student and issue the “traditional” certificate, which was not different in its nature from school certificates.

New changes also affected the relationship between the students and their teachers. In a retrospective article published in *Sebilurreshad* years later the change was captured with the following words:

[“Before the arrangements each student chose his teacher himself and continued the classes of those who he liked.

Therefore in the eyes of a student the teacher was not a paid bureaucrat, hireling, [but] a compassionate educator (مشفق مربى), in the rank of fatherhood, true and the only teacher (معلم). The bond (رابطة) between the student and teacher was stronger than the father-child bond. Therefore it was rare to come across a student who left his teacher. A student would not go anywhere else without taking the permission (رضا) of his teacher. Even those who came to Istanbul from the provinces no matter what happens would first

take the permission of his teacher and then come. The marks of such manners (تربيته) still remain in madrasa students.” (Sebilurreshad XXIV, 1924, p. 78)]

This quote may represent a kind of romanticisation of the traditional role of teachers and their relationship with students in the madrasas. But I argue that it nonetheless represents an ideal about Islamic education which is essential to understand the nature of the learning process in madrasas, even if this ideal may not always perfectly translate into practice.

Another significant innovation was concerning the way of assessment. A grade-based assessment was introduced to the madrasa system for the first time. Although the system was being used for the new sciences at schools, the assessment of the religious subjects quantitatively was unprecedented in madrasas. In the secondary literature the introduction of such an assessment method has been discussed often as a major shift in the Islamic learning process. Commenting on the introduction of entry and final exams in al-Azhar in the second half of the 19th century, Bang (2003) reads these novelties as transformation of Islamic education into a “predictable and structured process, where the competency of the student could be measured according to a fixed standard.” (p.62)

Chapter 3: Towards the End of Madrasas

“An individual of a nation can receive only one way of schooling. Two kinds of schooling will produce two kinds of human in one nation. This is a complete breach of the aims of the unity of thinking and emotion and solidarity”

Hüseyin Vasıf (the Second Minister of Education of the Turkish Republic) (1924)

“If the meaning of unification was to teach the same sciences everywhere, the departments of Dar ul-Funun had to be abolished and left [with] only one department. The empty space that was created by [the closure of] madrasas in the field of education can be filled neither by the Faculty of Theology, nor Imam Hatip schools, nor by any other schools.”

Yayha Afif (1924)

Introduction

The hope that existed for the betterment of madrasas in the early years of the second constitutional era was replaced by the concerns about their possible extinction in the post-World War Ottoman context. Such concerns had been intensified particularly in the early 1920s. One of the common themes that were discussed in this period was the decreasing number of scholars and religiously literate individuals. A letter sent from Tokat province to Sebilurreshad with three signatures including that of the municipal head called on the authorities to take urgent action to revive the madrasas. It was argued that if the situation continued, soon not only finding a scholar to teach and nurture Muslim children would be difficult, there would be no one available to lead the congregational prayers and even “to wash the deceased”:

“In our city, you can come across only 4 people who know the religious rulings. If they moved, Muslims would not find anyone to ask about religious matters.”

(Abdul-Vahab, Tahir, & Umar, 1921, p. 76)

The authors added that this would lead to the downfall of the nation “amongst the different waves coming from right and left”.

The situation in Istanbul was not more promising. The number of students and functioning madrasas had radically decreased and the most of the buildings lacked basic

facilities and were in need of renovation. Among the officially registered 188 madrasas in Istanbul, only 17 were operating. Around 700-800 students were accommodated in those 17 madrasas. An article on Sebilurreshad argued that if the authorities did not take any measures, in 5 years only a few madrasas would survive in Istanbul and the majority of the wooden ones would disappear. (Müftizade, İstanbul Medreseleri [-I], 1923, p. 161)

This chapter will have three sections. Firstly, I will provide an example from one of the important works of the period on the question of Islam and reform. The part of this work which talks about madrasa will be closely analyzed. Then I will provide an account of the Unification of Education law which is known for bringing an end to the madrasas in the newly established Turkish Republic. I will examine the articles that appeared in Sebilurreshad on the adoption of the law and the way it was implemented. Lastly I will turn to the reactions to the closure of the madrasas and give two examples for that.

A Belated Response

“Religious Renewers” (*Dini Müceddiler*), a book authored by Mustafa Sabri, is one of the key sources for understanding how reformist thoughts were perceived by more traditional ulema in the post-World War I Ottoman context. The book was originally published in Sebilurreshad in 1919 as an article series and later compiled in a book form. It was written as a response to Haşim Nahid²⁶ (1880-1962) and his inspirational figure Musa Jarullah

²⁶ Nahid was a late Ottoman intellectual born in Erbil in today’s Iraq and received his early education. Like previous Sheikh ul-Islam Hayri Efendi, he studied in the Law School in Istanbul. He worked in several governmental positions and wrote in various newspapers. As a correspondent of *Ikdam* newspaper he travelled to France and attended classes at Sorbonne University in 1920s. He authored over 10 books, most of which written after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. He also translated a book by French author Ernest Lavissee into Ottoman Turkish, dedicating it to the ministers of Endowments and Education at the time. (Uyanık, 2009)

Bigiyev²⁷ (1875-1949), whom he attributed the popular title in those days of the “Luther of Islam”.

An element of this book which makes it uniquely useful is related to the lengthy citations that Sabri provided from Nahid’s book “Paths of Salvation and Development for Turkey” before presenting his own responses. The book was originally published in 1913, but Sabri’s response came long after that, since in those days he was in exile. His responses in Religious Renewers were not always negative representing disagreement, but the case of madrasas was one of those.

The section on madrasas starts with a long citation from Nahid’s book in which he described madrasa education and its state in following sentences:

["The madrasa residents study Arabic, morphology, grammar, logic, fiqh, badi', bayan etc. in an order. The spirit of these numerous sciences can be summarized with this sentence: by reading the religious texts in Arabic correctly, to understand the derived rulings related to the creed, punishments (uqubet) and transactions or to derive (istinbat) [new rulings]... The possibility of deriving new rulings has been taken away and a conclusion has been established about the door of ijihad being closed!... [Thus][i]n short, the spirit of religious education has been reduced to this sentence: understanding the rulings of the religion."] (Sabri, 1919, p.213)

According to the text which Sabri cited, Haşim Nahid then moved to criticize the madrasas teachers themselves for being ignorant of those sciences. Moreover he added one of the common negative depictions of madrasa teachers as “lazy” and exploitative²⁸.

“But unfortunately 99 percent of madrasa residents had remained in the first stair of the numerous sciences that I counted. Among a hundred teachers it is

²⁷ Musa Jarullah Bigiyev, a Tatar intellectual, was one of the most influential thinkers in the early 20th century in the Turkic speaking Muslim world. Born in the southern part of Russia, he had travelled various parts of the Muslim world from India to Egypt. His work entitled “Rahmet-I llahiyye” arguing that the idea of eternal punishment contradicted the concept of divine mercy, caused him to receive criticisms from the scholars. Mustafa Sabri wrote a response to this specific book (Kanlıdere, 2006). Kurzman’s (eds.) (2002) “Modernist Islam” has a chapter on Musa Jarullah.

²⁸ Such negative descriptions of madrasa teachers were not uncommon in the other parts of the Muslim world. Messick (1997), in his book on Yemen, has provided a symbolic example of it where in a skit organized by the Ministry of Education a Qur’an teacher is portrayed as someone who is exploitative, treats students unfairly and curses them and is not interested in actual teaching. (pp. 99-100)

rare to find a single one who could read a sentence in Arabic without an error according to the grammar...The teachers personally do not possess any scientific information about religious rulings, their own creed. They are lazy, idle, ignorant, bigoted. [I wish] [a]t least their bigotry were about the preservation of something that they know...but the only purpose of preserving something unknown to them is to comfortably eat and swallow the result of the efforts of the Muslim population... Without working at all, they have become habituated to obtaining the means of their livelihood, [and] to robbing the people.” (Sabri, 1919, p.213)

Nahid’s assessment on madrasas entailed two footnotes. In one of them he clarified himself by saying that his words should not be taken as disrespect to those teachers who are “truly educated”. The second one was a quote by Bigiyev in which he criticized the madrasas for the length of education²⁹. He made strong statements like “no trace of Islam is left in the religious madrasas”; the madrasa education corrupts students’ “ethics” and the Muslims who rely on madrasas and mosques become “deprived of both religion and world”. The quote continued by stating that instead of learning about “religion, manners (*adab*) and the *Quran*”, the students read “commentaries” in those madrasas.

After providing several paragraph’s from Nahid’s work, Sabri presented his own scrutiny of the ideas in those paragraphs. Before moving to his analysis it is important to pay attention to the way Sabri articulated his responses, which I suggest was as essential as the ideas themselves. A typical image that emerges in one’s mind when thinking about an intellectual exchange between a reformist intellectual and a member of the ulema class suggests that the former is more fluent, articulate, informed about the realities of the time compared to the latter, who is a more of an apologetic, or reactionary. I argue that Sabri was aware of that and in his writings he was addressing it indirectly.

In *Religious Renewers*, one of the evidences for that is the way Sabri commented on Nahid’s writings. He, for instance, criticized Turkish language errors in the construction

²⁹ According to Bigiyev, madrasa education continues up to 20 – 30 years in “Turkistan” and India, and around 10 to 15 years in Turkey and Arabistan.

of Nahid's sentences. This may seem to be insignificant at first glance. However if it is put into the late Ottoman context in which the religious scholars were often criticized for their poor writing skills in the Turkish language, the incident regains its meaning and demonstrates Sabri's conscious attempts to argue back towards such representations of the scholars

Sabri's response to Nihad began with the assessment of the claims about the madrasa teachers "robbing people". For him, the madrasa teachers were "far behind" the members of other professions. In such an accusation, Sabri argued that one should consider the simplistic and contented way of living those teachers had and also the fact that any benefit taken from the people was usually done in exchange for the provision of certain religious services. He suggested that the lack of religious literate people in the country after the World War had shown that those allegedly "ignorant scholars" had their own roles to play in the society. This was related to the complaints from various provinces about the absence of someone to lead the religious duties like communal prayers and perform duties on occasions like funerals.

Sabri did not seem to disagree with the claims about the decline of madrasas. However, similar to the position he took in his early writings (discussed in the second chapter), he tried to explain it in a more contextual manner: in relation to the external factors like lack of governmental support, declining popularity of madrasas associated with the emergence of schools. In his view the new school project was not only unsuccessful, but it contributed to the decrease in the number of students:

"We can find one of the most important reasons for this situation in the recent times in the dedication of attention, interest, care of the government, scarcely left from military and other inclinations, to the schools established just next to the madrasas. Schools, even though they could not obtain the serious benefits that were expected from them, did not fall short in serving to

diminish the madrasas which they were competing with. As far as I know, since almost a century ago, the products of madrasas are like self-growing plants. Among the official activities of the government, efforts related to them [madrasas] always done unwillingly... ”

The problem was not only related to the lack of governmental support, in Sabri’s view. The people had lost interest in madrasas and a kind of stratification had happened within society. This was the tendency among the urban and economically advantaged population not to prefer madrasas for their children. Sabri was arguing that the madrasa students came mainly from poorer Anatolian households. “talib ul-ilm” (seekers of knowledge), the term used for the madrasa students, was now replaced by “softa”, which had negative connotations of “backwardness” and “laziness”:

“[I]n the hearts of the people, particularly the people of the capital [Istanbul], an attraction to those institutions cannot be seen, the most eminent and notable would never let their children study in those places.”

In Sabri’s understanding, in a context of “a lack of currency and negligence”, one should be astonished by the rare emergence of “the men of perfection” from madrasas even in those days and should explain it through “*the miraculous blessing (فيض) sacredness of this profession*”. And even some of those “men of perfection” changed their profession and contributed further to the problem. Those who remained in the profession with their *kiswa*, the clothes worn by the ulema, “*live a life almost like a self-struggle under the unesteemed glances...forced to carry the ‘softa’ sobriquet along with the title of ‘seeker of knowledge’*”– added Sabri.

Sabri’s conclusion was that madrasa graduates had become a “*commodity without a customer*” and one should consider lack of esteem (*raghbetsizlik*) towards madrasas as one of the main reasons for the problem in madrasas instead of blaming the madrasa teachers, students or the curriculum followed. The rest of the section was Sabri’s criticism of the

recent governments for looking for sycophantic (*dalkavuk*) scholars and promoting them. This for him added to the decline of scholars in the eyes of people.

Unification of Education and madrasas

The 1924, March 3 sitting of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey is mostly known for the decision about the abolishment of Caliphate and the declaration of the Ottoman household members as *personae non gratae*. There was another decision taken by the assembly in the same sitting which had a historical significance for the fate of educational institutes within the boundaries of the newly established Turkish republic.

The decision was the passing of a five-article law known as the “Unification of Education” (*Tevhidi Tedrisat Kanunu*) which reaffirmed the Ministry of Education (Maarif Vekaleti) as the only central authority in the field of education. This meant that all educational institutes which were run by the Ministry of Sharia and Pious Endowments (*Şeria ve Evkaf Vekaleti*)³⁰ or by other private endowments would either be closed down or transferred to the Ministry of Education. The budget which was originally allocated to the Ministry of Sharia and Pious Endowments for the administration of schools and madrasas now would go the Ministry of Education, which would be also responsible for establishing new schools to train public servants such as *imams* and *khatibs* to provide religious services.

The law was proposed by Hüseyin Vasıf (Çinar) (1896-1935), the member of parliament from Saruhan³¹ province and his “57 companions”, with the following statement:

³⁰ The three-year old ministry was also closed by another decision in the same meeting and replaced by the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The Presidency was responsible for the administration of the mosques (cami) and smaller prayer halls (mescid), sufi lodges (takka) and zawiyas (the last two institutes were closed a year later). The issues related to the endowments for the time being would be left to the Office of the Prime Minister in order to be solved “according to the true benefit of the nation”.

³¹ Saruhan was the name used for today’s Manisa Province, which is located in western Turkey neighboring Izmir.

“In knowledge (irfan) and public education policy of a state in order to attain an intellectual and emotional unity of a nation, the unification of education is the most appropriate, scientific and up-to-date principle, benefits and advantages of which have been seen everywhere. ... An individual of a nation can receive only one way of schooling. Two kinds of schooling will produce two kinds of human in one nation. And this is a complete breach of aims of the unity of thinking and emotion and solidarity.

If our proposed law is passed, the Ministry of Education will become the only reference point for the public education institutes within the Turkish Republic. This way from now onwards, the Ministry of Education, responsible for the education (irfan) policies and a servant to advance our knowledge (irfaniyyet) within the frame of the unity of emotion (his) and intellect (fikir), will implement positive and unanimous education policy in all schools.”(1924, TBMM, p.25)

The statement also suggested that the unification of education had been attempted before, during the first constitutional period following the Ottoman Tanzimat in 1839. However the attempt was not successful and on the contrary it created a kind of “*duality which brought about harmful results from the point of view of disciplining (tarbiya) and education*”. (1924, TBMM)

Hüseyin Vasif himself became the Minister of Education less than a week after the passing of the law. On his third day in the office, he gave an order to close all madrasas down across the country. 497 madrasas outside Istanbul were shut as a result of this decision and their students were registered at the schools (Arı, 2002, p. 189).

Another step taken by the new minister in his first week in office was the invitation of the prominent American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859-1952) to Turkey. Dewey’s works were already known to the Turkish educators and his book “Child and Curriculum”³² had been translated into Turkish (Uygun, 2008).

After spending some time in Turkey, Dewey prepared a detailed document called “Report and Recommendation upon Turkish Education” where he shared his findings and

³² The title of the book was rendered into Turkish as “Child and School” (Çocuk ve Mektep) by the translator Mustafa Rahmi Balaban.

suggestions for various issues such as identifying the aims of education, designing the bureaucratic system and developing a curriculum. According to him, the ultimate goal of the education system was to turn Turkey into “*a vital, free, independent, and lay republic in full membership in the circle of civilized states*”. To attain this goal the schools had to:

[“...(1) *form proper political habits and ideas; (2) foster the various forms of economic and commercial skill and ability; and (3) develop the traits and dispositions of character, intellectual and moral, which fit men and women for self-government, economic self-support and industrial progress; namely, initiative and inventiveness, independence of judgment, ability to think scientifically and to cooperate socially for common purposes.*”] (Dewey, 1983, p. 276)

The report also commented on the idea of the “unity” in education which was central to the legitimization of “the unification law”. He stressed the differences between unity and uniformity and called on the decision makers to accommodate a certain kind of diversity in the schools according to the local characteristics of different regions. For him, “[u]nity is primarily an intellectual matter, rather than an administrative and clerical one”. (Dewey, 1983, p. 283) Interestingly, the report neither mentions madrasas nor comments on religious education in the schools. This is quite surprising particularly for the section on unity as madrasas functioned as a kind of pretext for the adoption of the law on the unification of education.

The Unification of Education law has remained in force up till today. Recently in 2013 a discussion was raised around it with a proposal by the Member of Parliament from Diyarbakir, Altan Tan, who called for its repeal. In the statement of reasons provided by Tan, it was stated that the law of unification was not allowing establishment of any religious or ethnic schools. According to Tan, such a “single-type” (*tektipli*) understanding of education “*in multi-cultural societies is a sign of lagging behind ‘the rest of’ the world and gradual recession*”. (Tan, 2013)

Implementing the unification

Several articles were published in Sebilureshad following the adoption of the law on the unification of education. These articles show that it was not clear to many what the implication of the new law was for madrasas. For instance, in an article entitled “Does the unification of education mean the abolishment of education?”, the author criticized the minister Hüseyin Vasif for closing madrasas down out of his own “principles” in the name of implementing the law of unification. According to the author, the law did not ask for bringing an end to madrasa education, rather it required the ministry of education to take the administrative charge.

It was also stated in the article that the previous minister had already made some consultations with the members of parliament on finding an appropriate administrative structure to run the madrasas. However the appointment of the new minister changed the scenario. The disappointment with the decision of the new minister was expressed in following words:

“The way military school and education is vital for this country, religious education too is like that... with a decision of a day the Ministry of Education is closing down a scientific institute that has disseminated wisdom for centuries and still does.”

In another article entitled “The Mystery of Dar al-Huffaz”, the Ministry of Education was called on to provide an official clarification after a number of occasions of police interference in mosque study circles and Qur’an memorization classes. In one of such incidents, an imam who had been teaching “Qur’an and religious sciences” to some “lycée” students in a mosque-room in Istanbul upon the request of their parents was stopped by police. According to the police, they received a general order to prohibit education in endowment and private schools. The imam resisted by arguing that the

decision had nothing to do with him since the place he taught was neither madrasa nor school.

Becoming angry with the imam's resistance, the educational directorate asked the police to go back and remove him from his room in the mosque and collect the keys. The imam did not agree to hand over the keys for the mosque:

“It is not you or the educational directorate who gave me the keys. It is the awqaf who gave me the keys for the sacred mosque (جامع شريف) and its room. Also there are some things entrusted to my safekeeping here. Their protection is my duty.”

The police eventually permitted the imam to keep the key but they sealed the mosque-room up. Dissatisfied with the decision, the imam went to a number of local authorities and finally got the room unsealed. But he failed to attain permission for his “Quran and religious sciences teaching”. A last attempt was made by some notable parents of the students, who approached the educational director asking him to allow the imam to continue teaching Quran to their children. The parents mentioned that the imam had been doing this for the last 20 years very successfully and helped their children to compensate the inadequate religious knowledge from their lycées and to learn and practice reading Qur'an. The educational director was not persuaded by that and suggested the parents should invite the imam individually to their houses to teach their children, “if the imam's teaching was so necessary”.

The article provided the accounts of two more similar stories. In one of them, Ahmad, the imam of the *Karakomruk* mosque, was stopped by the police while listening to the memorization of two huffaz from the neighborhood. The police proclaimed that what the imam was doing went against the law on the unification of education. An analogous case happened in Fatih, where Sheikh *Suleyman* was asked to stop teaching students in his house. The newspaper was told that there was a special policeman appointed to check the armpits of children visiting the sheikh's house to see whether they had books there.

The article was using these incidents to show that there was an ambiguity about the implication of the law on unification and the local educational directorates did not adequately understand their role. Therefore Sebilurreshad called on the Ministry of Education to step in and make an announcement through the newspapers. The announcement should clarify in “a language that everyone can understand” what the law on unification of education necessitates in regards to the Dar al-huffaz institutes, the permissibility of Qur’an memorization in mosques and private houses so that neither police officers nor educational directors will need to exercise their own “ijithad” on such practices.

Ephemeral Madrasas

It did not take much time for many to realize that the Ministry of Education had no interest in maintaining madrasas. The articles in Sebilurreshad objecting to the alleged misapplication of the law on the unification of education soon were replaced by elegies written for the madrasas.

The most eloquent one was “*The Everlasting Marks of the Ephemeral Madrasas*” (Fani Medreselerin Baki Eserleri) authored under the name Yahya Afif. According to the secondary literature (see for instance Akyüz (2015) and Bein (2011)), Yahya Afif was the pen name adopted by Ahmed Şirani. As discussed in the previous chapter, Şirani was one of the vocal participants in the madrasas debate and was imprisoned for his poem criticizing Sheikh ul-Islam at the time because of the madrasas reform he undertook.

The article denounced the decision about the abolishment of the madrasas but this time in a more resigned manner, being aware that the decision would not be reversed. Afif was challenging the negative depictions of the madrasas by pointing out their historical significance and comparing them to other educational institutes. In his view, the contribution of madrasas to society both in the past and recently were highly underrated.

By borrowing some of the widespread ideas of those days, he was employing a language that would not be objectionable to many. One of them for instance was the belief that it was science and educational institutions that transformed nations and caused their decline and rise:

[“If the establishment of a state is a product of science and knowledge, our present existence as a state is established by the science and knowledge of madrasas. Madrasas, which we abolished for the sake of progress (itila), are wali an-niam master of our existence today. Far back in the past our progress and rise was a result of progress and rise of madrasas...In our mighty and blessed past, no educational institute, except madrasas, took part in serving. Since apart from them [madrasas] no other educational institute existed anyway.”]

Afif also reminded the readers that the origin of the other educational institutions did not reach back more than a century. Those new institutes, he argued, were assigned the task of educating "modern (عصرى) and progressive (ترقيانه) servants of science and arts". To fulfill this task, in Afif's view, the Tanzimat authorities dedicated all the government support and esteem (raghba) to them by expecting to bring about development. This did not happen according to Afif and "the fastest decline of the empire" occurred during the period of the new schools, which failed to produce scholars of sciences that would make the country independent from Europe.

The madrasas on the other hand were left with the task of educating religious scholars and were excluded from the support of the government. In such a situation, madrasas continued to train religious scholars and saved the state from "importing religious scholars from Europe". Moreover, Afif argued that the scholars who could bring religious and other sciences together in themselves kept coming out from madrasas only:

[“If there were excellent scholars of sciences, certainly they were the students of European educational institutions. [And] If there was anyone who brought sciences of the religion and world together, surely they were the bountiful results of madrasas... If the educational institutions' failure to train religious scholars was natural, then the religious institutions failure to produce scholars of science needed to be assessed as natural to the same degree... ”]

The second part of the quote above refers to widespread criticism of madrasas falling short in producing scholars in other sciences. Afif argued that considering the division of

responsibilities between madrasas and newly established schools, this phenomenon should not be seen as something strange. And he reminded the readers that only recently madrasas were returned to their “old responsibilities” of teaching sciences of both religion and world.

Afif’s solution to the problem was the revival of madrasas and establishment of more schools. According to him it was important to train individuals who have knowledge in both religious and worldly sciences in order to prevent “excess and dearth” in society. Instead of working with such a solution, for him the Minister of Education had taken a wrong direction which was for him the misapplication of the idea of unified education:

“If the meaning of unification was to teach the same sciences everywhere, the departments of dar ul funun had to be abolished and left [with] only one department. The empty space that was created by [the closure of] madrasas in the field of education can be filled neither by the faculty of theology, nor Imam Hatip schools, nor other schools. But for some more time, the carriers of the sciences of religion would not allow this emptiness to be felt.”

There was another article published as a follow up on this without the author’s name. In that also, it was suggested that despite the governmental negligence till their “last breath” the madrasas continued training religious scholars, and rare individuals who could master both religious sciences and worldly sciences were mostly their products.

The article was entitled “What were madrasas, what have they become?” and argued that it would be incorrect to blame the madrasa teachers and students for the claimed crisis. According to the author, it was them who were the first to call for the betterment of madrasas following the declaration of the Second Constitutional era in 1908. They agreed whatever was suggested by the authorities for the reform of madrasas in order to follow “modern developments”, as they did in 1910 with adoption of the madrasa charter and in 1914 with the establishment of *Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye Medresesi*. The article pointed out that such an open attitude towards reform and change was supposed to prevent claims like “those in madrasas know nothing. Nothing is studied in madrasas other than *nasr* and *yansur*...we need to put these madrasas in a useful form”, which were made repeatedly. The frustration with the contrary closure of madrasas was expressed with the author’s following ironic words:

“Piteous and simple-hearted medreseliler [those from madrasa], they did not understand at all that: receiving excellent education and training according to the requirements of the time in madrasa will constitute a bigger fault for them and because of that their existence will be brought to an end.”

In Place of a Conclusion

Contextualizing the Madrasa Critique

According to the historian Berkey (2007), one of the modern ideas about educational institutions (and education in general) is the belief that they are means for “conscious change in the world at large – especially change of a social or political character”. For him, it was this idea that served as a background for the way of thinking associated with John Dewey³³, which viewed education as an instrument of social engineering.

In Berkey’s view the same vision of education was shared by the colonial administration and various reformist movements in the Middle East, including in the Ottoman Empire by Nizam-i Jadid and Tanzimat reformers. As demonstrated by Fortna (2002), for instance, it was that vision of educational institutions which allowed the late Ottoman authorities and reformists to confidently believe in the potential of the schools to transform society and help in fighting against colonial powers. (Berkey, 2007, p. 41)

Berkey (2007) argues that there are at least three reasons why traditional educational institutes like madrasas do not fit into such a vision of education. Firstly, it assumes that “educational institutes have discrete social identity and function”. In Berkey’s view this was absent in madrasas since as an institution they had a very limited impact on the way knowledge was transmitted. In most cases, the guidelines and principles that administered the activities in madrasas were personal and informal. Madrasas did not have regular exams, a set of curricula, a system of degrees, defined duration of study, and so on. This created a sort of flexibility and inclusiveness in madrasas in Berkey’s view. This also explained for him why traditionally Muslims were concerned more with “whom to study with” than “where to study”. (Berkey, 2007, p. 43)

³³ The American philosopher who was invited by the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1924 (see the previous chapter for further discussions on him).

The second reason why madrasas were incompatible with the above-mentioned vision of education was related to the relationship between power and education. In the pre-modern Muslim contexts the relation of the governing elite to the madrasas had been in the form of institutional and financial support. By and large, it was left to the ulema to decide on how to organize the transmission of knowledge. (Berkey, 2007, p. 44)

The third and last characteristic that madrasas lacked was the modern association of education with the notion of *change*. Berkey convincingly argues that if a pre-modern Muslim was asked a question on this, he or she “would have been more likely to have conceived education as a pillar of stability, rather than as a force to change”. (Berkey, 2007, p. 46)

My research has shown that these elements were present in the Ottoman madrasas during the early 20th century. Most of the criticisms that were made by intellectuals and ulema addressed these elements. Being discussed under the category of “educational institutions”, madrasas were often portrayed negatively. The influence of the new ideas on what constituted an effective educational institute did not allow many to appreciate the way which madrasas operated. Through this, the absence of textbooks, regular exams, non-standardized curriculum, unspecified study duration, lack of an administrative system were all seen as deficiencies in madrasas. Some criticisms even assumed that madrasas were failing at a point in time on the way of evolution to become like modern schools. Christian schools were often shown as a success story of this evolution.

Berkey’s perspective also helps in analyzing the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye project. Although called madrasas, those institutions were shaped by the new vision of education and constituted major ruptures from the madrasa tradition. The madrasas had become schools with a different curriculum.

As I have pointed out in the second chapter, two major significant changes were related to the role of teachers in madrasas and the way knowledge was assessed and certified. Firstly, the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye project decentralized the role of teachers and turned them into paid employees for an educational institute. In the new system, the teachers had to operate within the instructions provided by the administration deciding for them which book to use; which themes to teach; and how to teach.

Second, the Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Aliyye project transformed the traditional ijazas into institutional certificates. The new certificates were issued according to the results of the general exams. The knowledge of the students was graded with numbers. The teacher who taught the student did not necessarily play a role in issuing ijazas. The exam committee could be absolutely a different group of teachers, not the student's own. All these had significant impact on the madrasas, especially on the nature of the teacher and student relationship and the way Islamic education came to be perceived as a predictable and quantifiable process.

Ulema and Change

This research has also demonstrated that the late Ottoman ulema in general had been highly critical in their assessments of the situation in madrasas. "A reactionary anti-change" ulema profile is almost absent in the madrasa debate. Many ulema came up with reform suggestions of varying degrees regardless of being associated with reformist or traditional thought. Almost unanimously they agreed that madrasas fell behind the expectations and required various changes.

The dividing line among the ulema was related to the explanations provided for the situation in madrasas. Some of them saw the problem in the madrasas themselves,

therefore came up with a radical reform project dealing with the pedagogical, curricular and administrative issues.

The others called for a more contextualized approach to the madrasas. While agreeing to the assessment that madrasas were under-performing, they did not see it as something exceptional in the late Ottoman context. For them, madrasas were not uniquely different from the other institutes of the time. The schools for instance had not been very successful either despite the financial and institutional support they received from the government.

The ulema also argued that, in a context where the financial resources were lacking, madrasa students were vilified and the interest in religious learning was declining, especially among the urban population, the performance of the madrasas could even be seen as surprisingly successful. For them, the criticisms often were caused by inadequate understanding of the internal logic of madrasas. According to those ulema, criticizing madrasas for not producing scholars of the new sciences was equal to expecting schools to produce religious scholars.

Appendices



Appendix 1 The second page of the first issue of Bayanulhak published in 1908

درسهادئده باب عالی جوارئده
دائرة مخصوصه
عمل اداره :

مستقیم صراط

مستقیمه موافق آثار جدیده مع اللبونیه
قبول اولنور
درج اولنور
درج اولنور
درج اولنور

دین، فلسفه، علوم، حقوق، ادبیات و سیاست و باطنیات و کرامات و معجزات و امور الهیه و کونیه و غیره بر بنسبت اولنور.

آبونه بدلی	ستلکی	التی آیلنی	غروش	۴۰	۸۰
ممالک عثمانیه ایچون	۶۰	۳۰	۳۰	۳۰	۳۰
روسیه	۱۷	۹	۹	۹	۹
سائر ممالک اجنبیه	۱۷	۹	۹	۹	۹
عدد :	۶۵	۱۹ ذی القعدة ۱۳۲۷	۱۹ نیشنبه	۱۹ تشرین ثانی	۳۲۵
اوجنجهی جلد					

اخطارات
ادرس تبدیلنده آریجه بش
غروش کوندر لایدر
مکتوبلرک امضاری واضح
واوقواق اولنی و آبونه سره
نوسوسنی عتوری بولنی لازمه
ممالک اجنبیه ایچون آبونه
اولانلرک آدرسلرلرک فرانسز
جده یازلسی رجا اولنور
یاره کوندر لایدرکی زمانه به دایره
زاوایه بنک واضعاً یلدرلسی
رجا اولنور

الرشاد

۱۳۳۰

دینی، فلسفی، علمی، ادبی هفتلق مجموعه اسلامییه در

باش محرر صلح و مدبر مسئول

اشرف ارباب

اتبعون اهدکم سبیل الرشاد

والله یهدی من یشاء الی صراط مستقیم محمد عاکف

عدد :	۴۲۰-۴۱۹	۶ رمضان ۱۳۲۷	نیشنبه	۵ حزران ۱۳۳۵	جلد ۱۶
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آبونه شرائطی
مه اجلی، خارجی، مزیر ایچون
ستلکی (۲۵۰)، آلی آیلنی
(۱۳۰) غروشدر.
نسخه سی ۱۰ غروش،
ستلکی ۵۲ نسخه در
اداره خانه
باب عالی جاده سنده دار مخصوصه
اخطارات
آبونه بدلی بشیند
مسلمه موافق آثار مع المنویه
قبول اولنور. درج اولنور
یازیر اناده اولونغاز

Appendix 2 – 3 Mastheads of Sirat-i Mustakim and Sebilurreshad journals

جریدہ علمیہ

مشیت جیلہ اسلامیہ نمک جریدہ رسیہ بیدار

شعبان ۱۳۳۳

عدد: ۱۴

آیدہ بر نشر اوتور

ایکینجی سنہ

واعتصموا بحبل اللہ جمیعا ولا تفرقوا ...

مدیر مسئول: عثمان جوادی
محل ادارہ:
استانبول: مہجان
علی پاشا خان
اظطار مخصوص:
عالم اسلام و اسلامیہ
عائد مقالات و آثار
مع الممتونہ درج
اولئہ جقدر.
نسخہ سی ۴۰ بارہ

بی: احمد تاج الدین
یعقوب کمال
آرونہ بدلی
عثمانیہ ایچون
لکی ۵۰ غروش
آیلنی ۲۵ غروش
یہ ایچون سنہ لکی
آلنی آیلنی ۲ روبلہ
ممالک اجنبیہ
لکی ۱۰ آلنی آیلنی
فرانقدر.

تعریف مسلمانین

وجعلناکم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا...

دینی سیاسی تاریخی فلسفی واحوال عالم اسلام دن باحث ہفتہ لقی مجلہ در
تاریخ تاسیس ۳۲۸ مولدالنہی

عدد: ۱ ۵ ربیع الآخر ۳۲۸ جمعہ ۲ نisan ۳۲۶ جلد: ۱

Appendix 4-5 Mastheads for Ceride-I Ilmiye and Tearif ul-Muslimun journals

دارالخلافة العلية مدرسہ سی درس جدولی

تالی قسم اول					
درجہ و ساعات	برنجی صنف	ایکڑجی صنف	اوپڑجی صنف	درجہ و ساعات	درنجی صنف
۲	ترتیل قرآن کریم	۲	ترتیل قرآن کریم	۱	حدیث شریف [اخلاقیات واجتماعیہ عائد]
۲	[عبادات]	۴	حدیث شریف [اخلاقیات واجتماعیہ عائد]	۴	فقہ [نکاح، طلاق، فرائض]
۴	صرف ولت	۴	صرف ولت	۴	نحو
۱	مکالمہ و تطبیقات عربیہ	۴	مکالمہ و تطبیقات عربیہ	۱	مکالمہ و کتابت عربیہ
۲	تاریخ انبیا و اسلام	۲	تاریخ انبیا و اسلام	۱	مکالمہ و تطبیقات عربیہ
۴	[املا، قرائت، قواعد]	۳	توریکہ [املا، قرائت، قواعد]	۲	توریکہ [تطبیقات و کتابت]
۲	فارسی	۲	فارسی	۲	مختصر تاریخ عثمانی
۲	حساب [عملی]	۲	حساب [عملی]	۱	حساب [نظری]
۲	جغرافیہ [عمومی]	۲	جغرافیہ [عثمانی]	۱	جبر
۲	معلومات فنیہ	۱	معلومات اخلاقیہ واجتماعیہ	۱	اصول دفتری
۱	خطوط	۱	خطوط	۱	ہندسہ
				۳	موالیدثلثہ و معلومات زراعیہ
				۱	حفظ الصحہ
					موالیدثلثہ و معلومات زراعیہ
				۲	مختصر حکمت طبیعیہ و کیمیا
				۲	معلومات قانونیہ
۲۴		۲۴		۲۴	

Appendix 6 The timetable for the secondary 1 section of Dâr'u'l-Hilâfeti'l-Âliyye madrasas (Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1914)

دار الخليفة العلية مدرسه سي درس جدولی

تالی قسم ثانی						
ہفتہ دو ساعتان	بشنجی صنف	ہفتہ دو ساعتان	التنجی صنف	ہفتہ دو ساعتان	یدنجی صنف	ہفتہ دو ساعتان
۲	حدیث شریف	۲	حدیث شریف	۳	تفسیر شریف	۲
۳	فقہ [معاملات]	۳	فقہ [معاملات]	۳	فقہ [معاملات]	۳
۴	نحو	۳	بلاغت	۴	اصول فقہ	۲
۳	بلاغت	۱	مکالمہ و کتابت عربیہ	۴	علم کلام	۴
۱	وضع	۴	منطق	۲	سیرنجی	۳
۱	مکالمہ و کتابت عربیہ	۱	آداب	۱	تاریخ دین اسلام و ادیان	۱
۲	تورکجہ [ادبیات]	۲	تورکجہ [ادبیات]	۳	بلاغت	۱
۲	تاریخ عثمانی	۲	تاریخ عثمانی	۱	مکالمہ و کتابت عربیہ	۳
۱	حساب [نظری]	۱	میخانیک	۲	علم اقتصاد و مالی	۱
۱	ہندسہ	۱	مثلثات	۱	حفظ الصحہ	۲
۲	حکمت طبیعیہ	۱	حکمت طبیعیہ	۱	علم اجتماع	۱
۲	کیمیا	۱	کیمیا	۱	علم تربیہ	۱
		۲	ہیئت			
۲۴		۲۴		۲۴		۲۴

Appendix 7 The timetable for the secondary 2 section of Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Âliyye madrasas (Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1914)

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