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Book Reviews

Öteki Türkiye'de Din ve Modernleşme (Religion and Modernization in the 'Other' Turkey)
NECDET SUBAŞI, 2003
Ankara: Vadi Yayinlari
184 pp., ISBN 975-6768-46-0

Modernization of non-Western societies, of the 'other' societies, is supposed to take place in their unique routes. Once modernization appeared in Europe, the waves of its impact influenced the entire world. Indeed the modernization of other societies is not but the appearances of the consequences of these waves. Needless to say, the consequences of these waves appeared in different societies, or cultures, in different ways. Therefore it is almost impossible to witness the recurrence of the same experience everywhere. That is to say. modernization has followed different routes in different societies, or societies have followed different routes to/through modernity, as Göran Therborn indicated. The 'otherness' in the context of the graduation in modernity corresponded also to the mark of the place in the international hierarchy. It referred to a 'normal' route to modernity, while it settled on some routes as secondary or abnormal routes. This distinction also coincided with the real distinction in power relations; with the centrality of the 'normal moderns' and the 'abnormal ones'; with modernization as such; and with the 'modernization of the others'.

The logic of distinction, in reference to modernization process, is reproduced in a continuity of a chain, even in the 'other places'. In his book *Öteki Türkiye'de Din ve Modernleşme,* Necdet Subaşi asks about the possibility of religious modernization of 'other Turkey'. By so doing, at first, he exemplifies how this logic of distinction works even in one of the 'other places' of modernity 'as such', namely, in Turkey. By the 'other Turkey' Subaşi means the Alevis, the Kurds and the Faculty of Divinity. Turkish modernization, passing through the creation of a nation-state, through supposing the nation as a homogeneous entity of one body and one spirit, has also created its 'others', its heterodox, pathological or marginal elements. Those elements were supposed to be hindering a healthy movement in the course of modernization, while being inevitably articulated in a way to this course.

The examples, on which Subaşi focuses to illustrate the 'otherness' in Turkey, are at first sight very hard to be considered in the same category. But through the following pages one becomes inclined to think about the complexity of the reproduction of distinction in Turkish social contexts. His examples involve the Alevis (a religious sect), the Kurds (an ethnic group), and the Faculty of Divinity (a faculty within a university). Of course the first and second examples are relatively more comparable in terms of relying on concrete demographic ground, i.e. both are minorities in regard to the majority population. But when the analysis of a faculty in this location is concerned, the logic becomes somehow confusing.

In Subaşi's approach, however, nothing is confusing. First, the Faculty, because of its relative incompatibility within the Turkish system of university, is the 'other'. Although the idea of a university excludes the discrimination of any faculty of knowledge as

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secondary, in practice, of course, the faculties of knowledge are evaluated according to the preferences of the culture dominated by various values and power relations. In a country such as Turkey, where secularism is marked as the ultimate value, the universities are supposed to be the ideological apparatus (of the state) of the reproduction of this value. Then, the Faculty of Divinity and the knowledge it produces are always under the charge of serving the ideals imposed upon the university from the outside. Furthermore, it is always under suspicion of being deviated towards serving the ideals of religion more than its institutional tasks. Secondly, by the very nature of modernization, a Faculty of Divinity has always played a role in controlling the 'other' powers of modernity. Modernization, especially in its French form, as adopted by Turkey, constituted itself as a revolution against old social and power relations, which above all included the religious ones. In Turkey this has even proved to be exaggerated. The abolishment of the religious institutions in the early period of the Turkish Republic, including the closing of the Faculty of Divinity, and the devaluation of the religious profession, has constituted the religious sphere and the religious people as the 'other' of the new Turkish identity. This 'other' involved an attitude even towards Sunnism, which is not at all the 'other' religion of Turkish society, but the major religious ideal itself. Here the 'otherness' is determined according to the principles of the 'official ideology' of the nation-state. At this level all religious elements, without any distinction of the major or minor religion, represent a threat to the existing regime, a possible deviance from the direction of modernity, a potential for a counter-revolution. All these have constituted the conditions of the otherness of a Faculty of Divinity in Turkey.

As for the 'religious other', it indicates the Alevis in regard to their location within the religious context of Turkey. While the majority of Turkish society is Sunni, including the Turks and Kurds, the Alevis, also including both Turks and Kurds, are the most prominent minority, through which they are constituted as the constant 'others' in religious context. Subaşi tries to analyze the religious change within this minority as a consequence of modernization. Indeed in terms of the complexity of the reproduction of the 'otherness', the Alevis adopt a very interesting strategy to overcome their subordination within the system. During the Republican period they have attempted to ally with the political center against the religious center, Sunnism, which constituted the reserved army for a possible counter-revolution. It is in fact this historical alliance of the Alevis with the political center that played the most important role in the formation of Alevism in modern times. It is also this strategic alliance which facilitated the constitution of the prominent secular character of Alevi people. The Turkish political center, secularist and positivist by its very character, has relied on the Alevi population. However, paradoxically, it promoted the Sunni values because of its higher use value in the composition of the nation-state identity. The use value of Sunnism against Alevism has much to do with the orthodox nature of the former and the heterodox character of the latter. The political center in Turkey has employed some orthodox Islamic ideological versions in constituting the national identity, while it relied on Alevi people, at some bureaucratic levels, as relatively more loyal citizens. Therefore the 'otherness' and identity has been intertwined to each other, where all these elements are concerned in Turkish political arena.

The Kurds, on the other hand, are the biggest minority in Turkey. Their minority status, however, is not recognized by the Turkish national center. In accordance with Mustafa Kamal's famous motto 'How happy is that who says I'm Turk' (not 'who are Turk'), Turkness, in its ultimate meaning, is supposed to be a citizenship category,

rather than an ethnic-based category. But this identity is made possible at the expense of one forgetting his ethnic or cultural difference and identity. The practice of such a citizenship concept has created many advantages to the Kurdish people within Turkish society. Nobody, for example, was discriminated against because of their belonging to a non-Turkish ethnic origin. Turkey has witnessed the presidency of a Kurdish man, Turgut Özal, who had to declare to be happy for knowing himself as Turk. The struggles of the Kurds for recognition, which included some terrorist activities, however, seem to deconstruct the Turkish homogenous society. It reminded the differential of the ingredient of Turkish national structure. Turkish national society is now at the edge of recognizing its mosaic character, and to create a new national consciousness which may tolerate the differentiation within the unity of the Turkish society. This was a process which could not be passed through without some painful experiences. The paradox of all policies for recognition is that they may stimulate the popular discriminative practices which may not be the result of state policies. On the contrary, such practices mostly are carried out by people of major identities. The more the Kurdish struggle for recognition advances, therefore, the more the popular discrimination may arise.

After a general consideration of the constitution of 'otherness', in the first chapter, Subaşi tries to identify the signs of religious prestige among the Kurds, and the transformation of these signs in the modern context. Subaşi proposes a trinity for locating his analysis, *sheikh*, *sayyid* and *molla*, that corresponds to Sufi-mystical, genealogical-traditional, and religious authorities. The typology may recall Weber's own trinity concerning the types of authority. By indicating the co-existence of all these statuses within the same social context, indeed, Subaşi suggests a rejection of the possible evolutionary approach to the history of charisma, which considers it to be 'a matter of the past'. Subaşi draws our attentions to the transformation of some leadership mechanisms in the case of a Kurdish society. This transformation is not at all a result of the disappearance of any such category; on the contrary, all these signs or charismatic positions are articulated with some other newly-emerged positions. For example, the convergence of the *sheikh* and the *muhtar* identity, the convergence of a *sayyid* and a deputy, of a *sheikh* and a strong merchant within the same personality really created some modern articulations of traditional personalities, which served both the secularization of the Kurdish social world and the sanctifying, or in one sense legitimating, the everyday world. The religious life also is strongly influenced by these articulations, for, still strongly traditional, Kurdish society continues to be dominated by religious codes. The introduction of some new personal or social codes is articulated with the existing ones. By its very nature, an articulation has a character in its own right. It is not to be identified by the old one or an entirely new one excluding all elements of the old. As a matter of fact, religion in Kurdish society, as one part of the 'other Turkey', is influenced deeply by the waves coming from Western societies passing through the Turkish mainstream modernization.

The second chapter deals with the Alevis in the modernization process. As mentioned above, the Alevi modernity is conditioned by its alliance with Kemalism against the Sunni religious majority. Another historical alliance of the Alevis, however, which took place from the 1960s onwards with the leftwing movements, is no less important. In the Turkish political context, for a long time the Alevis have been identified with leftwing political movement. At the popular level, indicating one's leftism usually reflects one's Alevi origin, and vice versa. Indeed this historical convergence of Alevism, leftism and Kemalism has given some peculiar characteristics to the formation of

Turkish left as well as Turkish right. The Turkish left has been reduced to an opposition to the religious values of the majority, and to all religious values, because of the charge made by its alliance with Alevism. That is why the leftwing movement could not recruit sufficient support from its ideal social ground.

Subaşi also indicates two other important influences of modernity on the Alevis. One has resulted from the introduction of literary culture in the Alevi culture. Since Alevism is based mostly on oral culture, this has a very profound influence in transformation from an oral culture, together with all its characteristics, to literary culture. Subaşi reviews the recent Alevi publications and finds out that the rationality of a literary culture is gradually increasing among the Alevi communities, which in turn would have much more impact on the transformation of Alevi culture. Secondly, and related to the first aspect, this shift has created new leadership figures other than the old traditional Alevi leaders, namely, the *dede*s. The introduction of some journals, books and other literary tools brought about the replacement of the *dede* with the author. Subaşi calls this shifting as the transformation of *dede* into author. As a modern figure, however, the author has not to be descended by a *dede* family, for a *dede* has to be descended by his *dede* ancestors.

All these aspects together, for Subaşi, have rendered it possible for the Turkish political center to employ Alevism as 'an ideal—soft, apolitical, cultural, and humanist Islam' against the revival of political Islamism. Subaşi tries to deconstruct the discourse which has dichotomized the Alevi Islam against political Islam by analyzing the political intentions underlying such a dichotomy. Subaşi leads us to think about whether modernity would influence or deconstruct the social hierarchy within the Alevi community, which is based on the hereditary principle. Thus, only those who are born as Alevi can be Alevi, and the *dede* status is inherited only by descent, in a caste-like system. One argument that works against the promotion of Alevism as more humanitarian and egalitarian religious version against political Islam draws attention to this hierarchical aspect within the Alevi community. Indeed this is the problem of all cultural versions of all religions which, in turn, gives the political Islamist discourse more advantages. Since, political Islamist discourse, as Gellner has demonstrated in *Muslim Society*, shares many modern values such as egalitarianism, individualism, scripturalism, rationalism, it is more inclined to survive, even strengthen, within modern conditions, without loosing much of its essential characteristic. For Gellner, however, this advantage was not available for other traditional religions because they were dominated by some irrational, communal, parochial values incompatible with modern values. That is true also for Alevism. Indeed, Subaşi's work draws attention to the possibility of the existence of an Alevi identity based on oral culture in modern world. Undoubtedly, this is a very interesting occasion to test some sociological and anthropological thesis such as Gellner's.

In the third and last chapter, Subaşi focuses on Islamic theologians in Turkish Faculties of Divinity. The basic argument of this chapter revolves around the difficulty of the Faculty in balancing the demands of the state, and of the Muslim people. Theologians in Turkey have always been caught in between such oppressions: as Faculty members of a secular university they have to produce religious knowledge compatible with positivist official ideology, and to eliminate the possibility of the organization of a religious community against the secular society. On the other hand, they have to fulfill the desires of the religious people to represent them as leaders of a religious community. For, by its very nature religion always is more inclined to be embodied by a concrete community—an embodiment which has much to do with the

political sphere, with the historical demands of the Muslim community to seek revival and strength in the modern world. Thus, theological knowledge produced within the Faculties of Divinity is determined by this tense sphere between the existing political center and the religious people. The unfortunate position of the theologians mostly locates them in the 'other' place of both sides. Actually the political center seems to have decided to reduce the number of theologians among the Faculty by limiting its quota of recruiting students. The Faculties of Divinity are kept under the threat of being closed again, and this forces them to keep alive at the expense of fulfilling the desires of the political center, and so on.

Subaşi's work helps us to recognize some other issues concerning the possible transformation of Turkish national identity and the fragmentation of religious identities in Turkey. It provides a good occasion to reconsider the formation of the Turkish national identity, and to understand the nature of religious life in the diversity of Turkish national geography.

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Turkish Foreign Policy 1774–2000
WILLIAM HALE, 2000 (reprinted in 2002)
London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass
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Turkish foreign policy has been a topic which has attracted little scholarly attention, much in contrast to its significance and interest. William Hale's study aims to fill that gap by exploring the foreign policy of the late Ottoman Empire and republican Turkey, with an emphasis on the period following World War II.

Hale's fundamental assumption is that both the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey can be categorized as middle powers in international politics. He asserts, '... they have some ability to resist pressure from more powerful states ... they may possess some regional power ... but normally they cannot fight a successful war against a major power' (pp. 2–3). Therefore, external threats can only be deterred through alliances or exploitation of the balance of forces between the Great Powers.

Hale begins his study with an overview of Ottoman foreign policy from 1774 to 1918. The military and economic decline of the Empire made adroit diplomacy a fundamental tool in the effort to deter, retard or minimize the penetration of foreign powers, which made the question of the future of the Ottoman Empire and its territories, often referred to as the 'Eastern Question', one of the most persistent issues in international politics until the final demise of the Empire at the end of World War I. Ottoman statesmen had two broad options in their policy toward the Great Powers: they could remain neutral and try to benefit from the balance of powers system, preserving the status quo; or they could seek an alliance with one or more of the European powers, preferably with the one that was more suited to protect Ottoman interests. Both policies were interchangeably implemented in the late Ottoman years and, although they could do little to reverse the decline of the Ottoman power, they turned out to be quite successful in minimizing the Empire's cost until the fatal decision was made to ally with Germany in World War I.