

SUNNI POLITICAL CULTURE AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE TURKISH STATE TRADITION


SÜNNİ SİYASAL KÜLTÜR VE TÜRK DEVLET GELENEĞİNE ETKİSİ


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Abstract

The most important elements creating the political culture are; religion and belief systems. They play an important role in emerging political culture. That is why; the effect of societies and individuals on their relations with politics makes religion and belief systems an area of study. In this context, in the Islamic world, which is one of the most important and effective systems of belief in the world, especially the relation of religion and politics has been constantly debated. The role and impacts of religion in politics, governance, and state is located within these debates. When we look at Turkey, there are many important and influential studies on the relationship between religion and politics. Because Islam is adopted by a very large part of the society, the influence of religion in the relations and preferences of social groups and individuals in politics make these studies important. Especially the paradigm, which has emerged as a Sunni school, and become an attitude, behavior and choice against the political one, is important at this point. In particular, it is an important area of study considering the impact of the Turkish-Islamic empires, even today. In this study, first of all, we will try to reveal the emergence of Sunnism as political culture by examining political culture through the concepts of Sunnism and politics. Subsequently, we will try to reveal the influence of Sunni political culture on the Turkish state tradition after Islam.

Keywords: Politics, Sunnism, Political Culture, Turkish State Tradition, Islam

SÜNNİ SİYASAL KÜLTÜR VE TÜRK DEVLET GELENEĞİNE ETKİSİ

Öz

Siyasal kültürü meydana getiren önemli unsurlardan birisi de din ve inanç sistemleridir. Toplumların ve bireylerin siyasal olan ile ilişkilerine dair bırakmış olduğu tesir, din nosyonunu inceleme alanı haline getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda dünyada yaygın ve etkili inanç sistemlerinin başında gelen İslamiyet içerisinde, özellikle din-siyaset ilişkisi noktasında sürekli tartışılan ve üzerinde durulan bir alan ortaya çıkmıştır. Dinin siyaset, devlet ve yönetim üzerindeki rolü üzerindeki tartışmalar bu alanı oluşturmuştur. Türkiye’de de, din ve siyasete ilişkin birçok önemli ve etkili çalışma bu tartışmalar üzerine ortaya çıkmıştır. İslam’ın toplumun çok büyük bir kesimi tarafından benimsenmesi, bu toplum kesimlerinin ve bireylerinin siyasetle ilişkin duruşlarında din nosyonunun etkisi bu çalışmaları önemli kılmaktadır. Özellikle Sünni ekol olarak ortaya çıkan ve siyasetle ilişkin bir tavır, siyasal kültür halini alan paradigma, bu noktada önem arz etmektedir. Türk-İslam imparatorluklarına ve dahi bugüne etkisi düşünüldüğünde, Sunni siyaset ekolü önemli bir inceleme alanını teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışmamızda öncelikle Sünnilik ve siyaset kavramları üzerinden siyasal kültür incelemesi yaparak Sünniliğin siyaset kültürü olarak ortaya çıkışını ele almaya çalışacağız. Akabinde ise Sünni siyaset kültürünün İslamiyet sonrası Türk devlet geleneğine etkisini ortaya koymaya çalışacağız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyaset, Sünnilik, Siyasal Kültür, Türk Devlet Geleneği, İslam

INTRODUCTION

Political culture emerged as a theory by Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba's study *The Civic Culture* in 1963. Since then the concept of political culture has developed and has many definitions. Almond and Verba defined the concept of political culture as attitudes and orientations towards the system.¹ According to İlder Turan, political culture has two main functions in terms of political process. First; culture facilitates the functioning of the political process through standardization of certain rules of belief and conduct. Secondly, political culture is an instrument that ensures the adoption, justification and continuity of the current political system.² We can see that many definitions about political culture concept. As a general definition for political culture, Cemil Oktay states that "political culture is a nation within a state or between citizens; dominant political emotions, beliefs and values related to politics, is a kind of clusters".³ Political culture takes emotional and non-emotional attitudes, behaviors and perspectives that individuals and societies have established within politics. In this context, it tries to examine the relations of society or individuals with politics through the notion of culture⁴.

Political culture has a decisive influence on the perspectives of individuals in the societies. Participation of individuals in the political field and their political preferences and behaviors emerge in political culture. Politics, as Oktay says, is an activity that finds meaning after passing through the filter of political culture.⁵ As it is understood from Oktay's definition, there are many factors in the formation of political culture. Among these factors, beliefs - especially religious beliefs - have an important role in determining the preference of people by influencing the emotional dimension.

When we look at the history of humanity, it is seen that beliefs play an important role in the formation of people's thoughts and behaviors in shaping societies. These religious beliefs can also be influential in people's political behaviors and preferences by influencing political culture. In this context, the role of religious beliefs on political culture and its role in politics is an important area of study. In this study, we try to show how religious

¹ Gabriel Almond - Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*, (California: Sage Publications, 1989).

² İlder Turan, *Siyasal Sistem Ve Siyasal Davranış*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1977), 33.

³ Cemil Oktay, *Siyaset Bilimi İncelemeleri*, (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2003), 214.

⁴ Ronald Formisano, "The Concept of Political Culture", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31/3 (Winter 2001): 393.

⁵ Oktay, *Siyaset Bilimi İncelemeleri*, 215.

beliefs affect the thoughts, attitudes and behaviors of people about politics through political culture.

Every society or individual can be the subject of political culture. Their beliefs, values, traditions and myths can have a significant impact on political culture. In particular, the element of faith is a factor that can have a direct impact on political culture. From Christianity, the center of political life in the medieval world, to Judaism that shaped the political thought of Jews, and to Islam, one of the most common belief systems on earth, at this point we can say that religions can be more effective in the political field through political culture.

At this point, Islam is a belief that has a significant effect on the political culture of societies or individuals. With prophet Muhammad being a prophet and his dissemination of Islam; it is a religion that is spreading rapidly and has an influence all over the world starting from the Arabian Peninsula. It is quite natural that a powerful belief system like Islam has an effect on political culture.

The relationship between Islam and politics remains a controversial issue. The Qur'an sent to the earth through prophet Muhammad is main source of nutrition in these discussions. From this point of view, the debates on Islam and politics are developing within the framework of the provisions of the Qur'an. In this context, the relation between the school of Sunni⁶ thought and politics, which has emerged as defender of the concept of text-based religion, is an important area of studies. The Sunni paradigm has had significant effects on the political one. It is possible to see this effect, especially through the political events that developed after the prophet Muhammad.

Sunnism is a school that has a significant impact on state and political mechanisms. In this context, it has brought with it a political culture which has become established in the process. This political culture, which started from the post prophet Muhammad era, also influenced states. Especially in Turkish-Islamic empires, it is possible to see the effects of this political culture intensively. At this point, the main theme of our study is the influence of the Sunni paradigm, which developed as a political culture, on Turkish states and state traditions.

⁶ Sunnism; first of all, it is an identity. This identity has been formed by a religious, historical and political construction process. The Sunni identity that emerged around principles based on Qur'an and Sunnah is also manifested as political culture. See. Adem Çaylak, (Ed.), *İslam Siyasi Düşünceler Tarihi*, (Ankara: Savaş Yayinevi, 2018).

1. SUNNI POLITICAL CULTURE AND ITS FORMATION

When we look at the relations between Islam and politics, we see that many debates exist historically. In these debates, Islam's place in politics, its method and importance about state and politics relations are questioned. Especially, the events that occurred after the death of prophet Muhammed is the focal point of these discussions.

Islam is a belief system that emerged through the acts of the prophet Muhammad (the Sunnah), and the holy book (Quran). In this direction, it is necessary to look at Islam's view of politics in the Qur'an and in the actions of the prophet Mohammed. Looking at this area, it is seen that Islam's views on politics and management are related to content and functionality rather than structures and principles. In other words, Islam emphasizes its content rather than its structure. Here, the structure refers to state and political systems such as democracy and monarchy. At this point, for example; the Qur'an emphasizes that order and peace must be ensured through politics and state administration⁷. Bringing the concepts of justice and rights to the forefront of the verses in the Qur'an, emphasizes the importance given to content and functionality rather than structure and form.⁸In summary; Islam does not focus on how the state and government should be; Islam focuses what state and government should do and what should be its contents. In other words, Islam focuses the questions such as how the state should be governed, how the social and political order should be ensured, and how the state administration should be maintained. The structure and shape of the state may change over time but the content and functionality cannot change.⁹

The emergence of content and functionality in the relations between Islam and politics, the elimination of politics and state administration in this axis can be seen as an idealistic approach of Islam to politics. Because, when we look at the relations between politics and the state in Islam, this idealism appears to be very limited. Attitudes and behaviors related to politics and state administration have emerged more in applications in Islamic geography. This has led to the establishment of a political culture which is far from the idealism that Islam put forward regarding politics and state ad-

⁷ Süleyman Uludağ, *İslam-Siyaset İlişkileri*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2014), 11.

⁸ Uludağ, *İslam-Siyaset İlişkileri*, 36.

⁹ Uludağ, *İslam-Siyaset İlişkileri*, 41.

ministration. Sunni political culture also emerged as a result of the events in the historical context and found its practical use.

When the debates on Islam and politics are examined, it is seen that debates over the schools have developed. The schools of Shi'ite politics, the school of Kharijite politics and the Sunni school of politics are some of these schools. Particularly, the Sunni political school¹⁰ is an important school in terms of its influence in a wide geographical area and its expansion into state management styles. The Sunni school, which appears as a political culture, constitutes an important area of study.

Sunnism has emerged as a theological paradigm. There are many discussions about the origin and roots of Sunni paradigm. However, in general, it is acknowledged that Sunnism is a system of thought based on the Quran and *Hadith*. Sunnism, which became prominent especially after the death of prophet Muhammad, is a theological and political system which is named as the *Ahl-iSunnah*.¹¹ At this point, it is an important point of Sunnism, in particular, that it is a paradigm developed over the conveyed *hadiths*. After the death of prophet Mohammad, the *hadiths* played an important role to keep the Islamic communities together and to ensure unity. *The hadiths*, both theologically and politically, have a great role in the formation of the Sunni paradigm.¹²

Sunnism has become a political paradigm over time in addition to a theological infrastructure. In particular, during the prophet Muhammad and after him, the political struggles have accelerated the emergence of Sunni ideology in the process. In particular, after the four caliphs, Sunni thought appears to be a more established paradigm. At this point, three prominent names are important in the establishment of the tradition of the *Ahl-i Sunnah*. These names are *Al-Shafi'i*, *Al-Ash'ari* and *Al-Ghazali*. These shoolars have become influential names in their fields. *Al-Shafi'i* is influential in jurisprudence and *sharia*; *Al-Ash'ari*, in the field of creed; *Al-Ghazali* in philosophy and sufism.¹³ The theological and intellectual practices that these three names have presented played a major role in the institutionalization of Sunnism.

The debates on the theological structure of sunnism are still exist today. The theological arguments of Sunnism, which are nourished from Islamic

¹⁰ Here, the Sunni political school refers to the tradition of Sunni thought.

¹¹ Mehmet Evkuran, *Sünni Paradigmayı Anlamak*, (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2015), 107.

¹² Evkuran, *Sünni Paradigmayı Anlamak*, 103.

¹³ Evkuran, *Sünni Paradigmayı Anlamak*, 109.

sources, reveal these debates. However, we will leave aside the theological arguments about Sunnism and we will focus on the emergence of Sunnism as a political culture and its political arguments, which is the main focus of this paper.

When looking at the Sunni doctrine, it is possible to see first of all that there is a political theory based on power, and it takes place in Sunni political doctrine significantly. After the death of the prophet Muhammad, the question of how to maintain the existing order is the subject of discussion among the Companions of the Prophet and a leader was needed to maintain the existing order. However, the absence of anyone left as a sign by the prophet Mohammed has led to discussions about who would rule and who would have the power. At this point, the caliphate institution, which is one of the important elements of the Sunni political culture, emerged as an institution that these debates arose. The caliphate institution, which is positioned as the head of state, has become one of the most important arguments of the Sunni political culture in time.

After the death of the prophet Muhammad, the institution of caliphate emerged as an institution which was set up for the continuation of religious and political order. During the first four caliphs, the caliphate was not seen as the religious and political heir of the prophet Muhammad. Caliphate was developed as an institution that emerged for the organization of existing Works.¹⁴ The first four caliphs refrained from being the sole competent religious and political authority. However, from the period beginning with the Umayyads, the caliphate institution emerged as the sole competent authority about religion and politics. At this point, the Umayyads played an important role in the establishment of Sunni political practice.

The caliphate emerged as the conduct and regulation of worldly affairs. However, it has become an institution of religious and political authority especially when the Umayyads took power. The caliphate institution, which was put forward for the provision of religious and political unity, is one of the basic arguments of Sunni politics. In this context, scholars such as *Al-Ghazali* have a large share in the political practice of the caliphate, which is a political institution. For *Al-Ghazali*, the order of religion can be possible with the order of the world, and in order to achieve this, he has emphasized

¹⁴ Sönmez Kutlu, "Ehl-i Sünnet Siyaset Anlayışının Dini Temellerinin Sorgulanması", *e-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1/1 (Spring 2008): 17.

the necessity of an obedient Imam (leader).¹⁵Philosophers considered the necessity of the caliphate institution, such as *Al-Ghazali*, who were influential in the institutionalization of the Sunni political doctrine. In this context, *Al-Mawardi*, as another important scholar, defended the institution of caliphate. According to *Al-Mawardi*; the world affairs needs to be fulfilled with the rules of the line that comes with religion. This is possible with an authority which will implement these rules. Therefore, according to *Al-Mawardi*, caliphate is an institution which is necessary for the provision of justice and law.¹⁶However, *Al-Mawardi* has also contributed to the intellectual base of the caliphate institution by putting forth the qualities that the caliph will have. According to *Al-Mawardi*, a caliph needs to carry; justice, wisdom, physical and mental health, brave, determined and is to belong to the tribe of Quraysh.¹⁷However, *Al-Mawardi* advocated the election of the caliph by competent people. Although the election of the caliph was determined by many Sunni jurists and scholars, the application of the Sultanate which emerged especially during the periods of Umayyads and Abbasids was ignored by these scholars. At this point, it can be said that in the Sunni political practice, the establishment of the Sultanate was overlooked. It is seen that the application of the Sultanate was incompatible with the principles of Islam and was put forward as a wrong application, according to other opinions.¹⁸

In the Sunni political thought, besides the caliphate institution, effect of tribalism on the political field, a tradition from pre-Islamic Arab periods, is seen. The tradition of changing hands from father to son or family members; especially after the four caliphs, has become one of the elements of Sunni political practice starting with the Umayyads.¹⁹ The change of the power that was institutionalized as the sultanate began to become established by the power of Muawiyah. From this point onwards, efforts are being made to unite religion and government in the political sphere. In this context, the sultanate emerged as another important argument of the Sunni political culture. The sultans, religious and worldly authority to include the caliphate, began to be the absolute authority in Islamic states.

¹⁵ Erwin Rosenthal, *Political Thought In Medieval Islam*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 58.

¹⁶ Rosenthal, *Political Thought In Medieval Islam*,43.

¹⁷ Rosenthal, *Political Thought In Medieval Islam*,44.

¹⁸ İlyas Canikli, "Siyasi Kültürde Saltanata Dayanak Kabul Edilen Rivayet Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 6/1 (2006): 274.

¹⁹ Evkuran, *Sünni Paradigmayı Anlamak*, 52.

The Sunni political culture has always been a religious source and a religious literature in its political practices. This is the classic case of power generation in the formation of power. The use of belief systems have profound implications in societies, because of this reason it is natural that power or political movements benefit from it. This applies not only to the Sunni political culture emphasized here, but also to the political practices of many theological and secular infrastructures. Here, we have to turn to Sunni political practice. Since the emergence of Sunni political practice, it has tended to emphasize religious foundations. It puts forward legitimacy based on religious grounds for its political practices. Besides; realist policies and practices that prioritize the continuity of power have constituted the content of Sunni political culture.

Religious motivations are important in maintaining the existence of states and societies. In particular, the argument that the existence of states as being equal to the existence of religion is an important argument of the Sunni political culture. In this context, the search for the foundation of politics through religion stands out in Sunni political practice.²⁰In particular, the Quran and the *hadith* literature are recognized as central sources on the foundation of Islam. For example; in the debates on the existence and necessity of the caliphate institution, the leading names of the Sunni school of thoughts the caliphate institution with verses and *hadiths*. *Al-Mawardi*, for example, reveals a defense of the caliphate institution, acting on the verdict of Nisa, 59. “Believers, obey Allah. Obey the prophet and the commanders of you”. Moreover, it is based on the *hadiths* that reveal the need for the caliph to come from the tribe of Quraish. This and many other examples can be put forward to the idea of Sunni political thought as a tool of religious legitimacy.²¹

The use of religion as a legitimating tool has led to the shaping of the source of power in state administrations through religious themes and symbols. Naturally, the state structure tried to provide power and legitimacy through these religious motivations. At this point, in Sunni political culture, the provision of power and absolute obedience to power have been formed. Because the foundation of religion as the source of power has led to the societies becoming more manageable.

One of the important elements of the Sunni political culture is loyalty and obedience to the existing power. Obeying absolute authority holders who is

²⁰ Evkuran, *Sünni Paradigmayı Anlamak*, 233.

²¹ Rosenthal, *Political Thought In Medieval Islam*, 39.

holding power and governance is an element that maintains continuity in Sunni political culture. This element can be encountered even in the twenty first century. One of the most important reasons for this obedient culture is to try to protect the current order and to prevent the dissolution of power. In any case, obedience is a priority in all circumstances, which are considered to cause the elimination of the existing order in all conditions and circumstances. At this point, for example, *Al-Ghazali* reveals the necessity of obedience for provision of religious order, the state order to be not disturbed and to prevent the chaos.²² Like *Al-Ghazali*, *Al-Mawardi* argues that it is necessary to obey the religious and political authority in order to ensure the unity of the Islamic community and not to disturb the order. This issue, which emerged as the obedience to *Ulu'l Emr*²³ in the Islamic political thought, is an issue that has a significant influence on the Arab-Islamic and Turkish-Islamic empires. The emergence of religion as a legitimate tool through verses and *hadiths* is also effective in establishing authority-obedience. In particular, in the 59th verse of Surah an-Nisa, which is constantly underlined by Sunni political scholars, is put forward as a valid argument in the promise of obedience. “Believers, obey Allah. Obey the Prophet and the rulers of you. If you disagree on something, if you truly believe in Allah and the Hereafter, offer it to Allah and the Messenger. This is better for both prosperity and consequence.” as it is seen, the importance of obedience to the rulers in the verse axis is revealed. Furthermore, the pioneers of Sunni politics such as Ibn Taymiyyah emphasize authority in this respect.²⁴ In this context, in addition to the obedience of the public to the rulers, the rulers should also rule with justice. However, the paradigm of Sunni politics as ‘fair state rulers and the people who obey them in absolute terms’ has emerged as a reflex to obey the rulers and the state and to preserve the existing order, even when they are unfair. State authority is seen as equal with the authority of religion, and the idea that religion and state are inseparable.

Another important point that emerged in the Sunni political culture is that, with Sunni political practice, communities gain a passive identity. The will of the Muslim community has been ignored because of the sanctification of the state and the head of state. Communities were seen as masses of people, who should be obedient. It is possible to observe such political cul-

²² Rosenthal, *Political Thought In Medieval Islam*, 38.

²³ It means power owners, governors.

²⁴ Hanifi Şahin, “İbn Teymiyye'nin Siyaset Anlayışı”, *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies* 6/3 (March 2013): 621.

ture in almost all Islamic states. The fact that communities have a passive political will has been criticized by scholars such as Ibn Rushd. It was stated that the Islamic communities should be managed in a fair and free manner. The state should be seen as a tool, not a goal; it is emphasized that the state should not be oppressive and that it should be emerged as a mechanism providing justice rather than absolute authority²⁵. In this context, Nizamülmülk among the Seljuk viziers, emphasized in his own Politicsbooks; “a state may stand up because it is an atheist, but it can never stay with persecution”²⁶; is an important statement in explaining the state-society theory.

On the basis of all these, it is possible to say that the Sunni political culture has a significant impact on Islamic states and communities. Sunni political practice emphasizes that the objection and struggle emerged as disruptive, and that authority (sultan-caliph) was the only authority to provide the order. In this context, Sunni political practice has continued to exist in the historical process as a practice that is more appropriated by power rather than as opposing movements

2. TURKISH STATE TRADITION

State tradition appears as a phenomenon shaped by elements such as belief, culture and history. In the societies and geographies where these elements become established, the state and politics are affected by these elements. These elements, which influence state and country administration, play an important role in the formation of state tradition. In this context, Turks, one of the oldest tribes of the world, have influenced and built the traditions and political cultures of the Turkish states with their beliefs, culture and history. In this section we will discuss the Turkish state tradition and there is a need to take the perspective of Turks and their state traditions from two main points of reference before Islam and after accepting Islam. Because, the Turkish state tradition gained different features after Islam and these features had a significant impact on the social and political sphere.

2.1. Pre-Islamic

The Turks have been an important part of world history with the states they have established since their exit to the stage of history. Turks, who had established many states in history, had a certain state tradition in both pre-

²⁵ Kutlu, “*Ehl-i Sünnet Siyaset Anlayışının Dini Temellerinin Sorgulanması*”, 20.

²⁶ Nizamülmülk, *Siyasetname*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2013), 28.

Islamic and post-Islamic states. Looking at the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition, there is an understanding based on the customary law. This custom law has emerged as the whole of the social and political rules of the statesmen and the public. These rules, which are not written, regulate social and political life.²⁷In the historical process, these cultural and religious elements possessed this tradition. At this point; One of the most intensively applied fields of custom law is state politics and administration.

When we look at the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition, the first striking factor is the position of the heads of state that emerged as Khan. According to this, the Khans and his family is not the absolute ruler of the state authority. In the pre-Islamic Turks, Khan is not the absolute authority but the highest authority to use authority. The Khans are obliged to manage the state within the framework of the customs. The customs give Khan authority over the state. The power of ruling the country was taken from the Sky of God, the common belief in pre-Islamic Turks²⁸. According to the Turkish state tradition, Khans emerged as special and blessed authorities. In the ancient Turkish belief system, the Sky God Faith, Khan is blessed by God. The effects of the belief of the Sky God Faith on pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition has great importance. At this point, the transcendental state tradition²⁹ is seen in pre-Islamic Turks.

In the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition, there was a conception of Kut as the source of power. According to this, state administration was given by God and passed on from father to son. However, blood ties are not enough to select the Khans. For this, Khans should have some features. In the state tradition shaped by the sultanate, blood bond is one of the most important elements. On the other hand, in the pre Islamic Turkish state tradition, Khans, who was at the head of the state, had certain features that they should have. One of them is wisdom and the other is belligerence.³⁰Only the wise, warrior and brave Khans could provide continuity of the nation and the state. All these emerged as political traditions, shaped by the Turk-

²⁷ Serdar Uğurlu – Kaan Yılmaz, “Türk Devlet Yönetme Geleneğinde Töre’den Örf’e Değişim”, *Turkish Studies* 6/2 (Spring 2011): 954.

²⁸ Abdulkadir Donuk, “Türk Devletinde Hakimiyet Anlayışı”, *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 10-11 (1979-1980): 51.

²⁹ In a political system, the state comes before society and shapes society, also it is perceived as an omnipotent and almost sacred apparatus. Metin Heper discusses this concept widely in his book *Turkish State Tradition*. Metin Heper looks. See. Metin Heper, *Türkiye’de Devlet Geleneği*, (İstanbul: Doğubatı Yayınları, 2006).

³⁰ Uğurlu- Yılmaz, “Türk Devlet Yönetme Geleneğinde Töre’den Örf’e Değişim”, 957.

ish customs. As we mentioned before, traditions are the rules that regulate the political and social lives of Turks before Islam.

In the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition, Khan's election in the congresses was a long tradition. The people who have the characteristics of being Khan are selected as Khan in these congresses. However, state affairs were discussed and resolved in these assemblies. In these assemblies where all work related to the state was spoken, there were both members of the dynasty and members from outside the dynasty. Assignments and authorizations for state administration were carried out in these assemblies.³¹The harmony between the public and the managers is important at this point. Executives who did not work for the public and who could not provide the welfare and security of the people were forced to leave their posts.

In general, the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition has been shaped by the customs and Khan's. The Khans and assemblies of Khans were central to state administration. In this context, in the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition; state structure emerges from the Khan, his family, the members of the prominent families, and from the ruled people.

2.2. After Islam

One of the important turning points for the Turks is their meeting with Islam in the context of their traditions, thoughts and beliefs. Since their acquaintance with Islam, Turks have come to a different position within the Muslim communities. They left their the Sky God Faith belief and chose Islam. The state of Karahan, Ghaznavids, the State of Tulunids, and Seljuks have emerged as some of the first Turkish-Islamic states. With their acceptance of Islam, Turks moved to a suitable government and state system by carrying the traditional state and management perspective.

The idea of the country being the common property of the dynasty in the pre-Islamic Turks continued in the post-Islamic Turks. The congress, which was also included in the pre-Islamic state mechanism, continued as a *Divan* procedure and also importance was given to the consultation in the state administration. Though time, Islam settled in the center of the Turks. After converting to Islam, Turks started to look at the state and country administration with a high religious motivation. They aimed at spreading Islam through conquests, especially through the concept of jihad. This re-

³¹ İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1997), 259.

ligious motivation, which the Turks have gained, is combined with their traditional features, Turkish-Islamic states were constantly expanding and growing.

The most prominent of the Turks after Islam; especially the adoption of the state and management approach based on Islamic and Sunni doctrine. The Sunni political culture has significantly influenced the Turkish state tradition after Islam, and has determined the state and management understanding.

In general, it is seen that the Turkish state tradition after Islam has been shaped by Sunni political culture. The Sunni political culture was influential in the state and politics relations of Turks after Islam. In this context, it can be said that the Turkish state tradition after Islam is heavily influenced by Sunni political culture and the Turkish state tradition should be looked upon.

3. THE EFFECTS OF SUNNI POLITICAL CULTURE ON THE TURKISH STATE TRADITION

We have presented above a general framework for the change in the state traditions of Turks after Islam. In this section, we will focus on the change and transformation of the Turkish state tradition in the axis of Sunnism which is the main understanding of religion of Turks after Islam.

3.1. Caliphate Institution

The caliphate is the most important argument of the Sunni political culture. It began after the death of the prophet Muhammad, and later became a religious and political authority, especially in the Umayyad period. In this context, the caliphate is the most influential factor in the Turkish state tradition after accepting Islam. In fact, the caliphate is similar to the idea that Khan, who was present in the pre-Islamic Turkish state tradition, was the holy and elected state administrator.³² However, after Islam, Turks did not have this religious authority until the Ottoman state because the caliphate was in the Arab-Islamic states. When we look at all empires and states in the context of historical development, it is possible to see that the issue of giving sanctity to rulers and governments is widespread until the modern ages. For example, the belief that the Pharaohs, the Egyptian emperors, was the representative of Ra, the supreme god, or that the Kisra, who were king

³² Uğurlu- Yılmaz, "Türk Devlet Yönetme Geleneğinde Töre'den Örf'e Değişim", 958.

in the former Iranian empires, carried the blood of God and reflected God on the earth can be evaluated in this context. The belief in the holiness of the Christian faith in the empire may be another example from political history. At this point, we emphasize that there are many historical practices and periods that can be given as examples in this subject.

In the historical context, in many states and state traditions, there has been a desire to consolidate the power that is possessed with a holy power and to rivet that power. This tradition which takes a more effective form and sanctifies power through belief systems exist in many societies as well as Turks. In the pre-Islamic period, the Turkish state tradition which attributed holiness to the Kagans by means of the Sky God. After Islam, the post-Islamic state tradition revealed this through the caliphate institution, which was accepted as the shadow of God on earth.

After the death of the prophet Muhammad, the caliphate institution emerged with the caliphs chosen by the Companions in order to fill the political gap.³³ Particularly, during the first four caliphs, it was an institution that emerged mainly for the organization of state affairs, but it emerged as an absolute authority both politically and religiously with the Umayyads' period.³⁴ Together with the Umayyads, the institution of caliphate has become the institution where both political and religious powers are gathered together. Nevertheless, it has become an authority that passes from the father to the son or to the people of the same community through the connection of blood. At this point, it can be said that together with Umayyads, the institution of caliphate has become a religious and worldly authority in which it is equated with the sultanate³⁵.

In order to see the effect of the caliphate institution on the Turkish state tradition, it is necessary to look at the Turkish-Islamic empires. At this point, we can consider the influence of the caliphate institution over the Ottoman Empire, the largest Turkish-Islamic empire.

After the caliphate institution moved from the Abbasids to the Ottoman dynasty, the Turkish state tradition came to a different point. The Turks emerged as the leader and protector of Muslims for the first time after Islam. With Yavuz Sultan Selim; for the first time, the institution of the caliphate was obtained by a tribe who was not a descendant of the Quraysh. The passage of

³³ Uludağ, *İslam-Siyaset İlişkileri*, 97.

³⁴ Evkuran, *Sünni Paradigmayı Anlamak*, 124.

³⁵ Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 18.

the caliphate into the hands of a tribe outside the tribe of Quraysh brought debates. Even some *hadiths* have been shown in this point and there has been a controversy about the fact that a person who is not a descendant of Quraysh cannot be a caliph.³⁶ However, these debates were not respected because the Ottoman Empire had huge power in its region and in Islamic World.

The caliphate institution was involved in the post-Islamic Turkish state tradition as a political apparatus. The caliph is positioned as the protector and representative of the entire Islamic world. After the Caliphate was converted to the Ottoman Empire which was a Turkish Empire, the caliphate institution came to a much more effective point due to the power of the Ottoman Empire. Especially when we look at the axis of the Ottoman Empire, the Caliphate institution was used as a political apparatus in state and political affairs. It is an exemplary practice for the caliphate institution to call for jihad against all Muslims in order to recruit troops to the declared countries or regions. Mehmet Reşat's role in the Ottoman Empire and the Caliph before the First World War, as well as the call for *jihad* against Muslims living in the Ottoman lands and outside the Ottoman territories can be also exemplified. The attempt of the Caliphate to direct Muslims to act together, and the emergence of this effort in many political events is due to the fact that the sultans regarded the caliphate as a religious and political authority. The caliphate facilitated the use of the institution as a political apparatus, because of the orders of the caliph and the fatwas issued by his signature were absolute and irresistible.

The caliphate institution, which is the important argument of the Sunni political school, significantly influenced the Turkish state tradition, especially with the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, which had seized the caliphate, used the Caliphate as a religious and political argument. In contrast to the dominant Shiite thought in Iran and its region, the caliphate has emerged as a political element. The Ottoman Empire became the representative of Islam and Muslims based on its Sunni thought structure. The transition of the caliphate to the Turks led to the formation of the Turkish state tradition without the separation of religion and state. In other words, the existence of the state with the presence of religion is maintained. With the transition of the Caliphate to the Turks; The caliphate became an integral part of the Turkish state tradition.

³⁶ Ramazan Yıldırım, "Sünni Siyaset Düşüncesinin Tarih İçerisindeki Gelişimi ve Etkinliği", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 5/24 (2011): 21.

3.2. Authority and Obedience

Politics emerges from the relationship of command and obedience. The obedience to the commanding authority established over this relationship determines the relations of politics and state. In Islam, the relationship between command and obedience emerges through certain principles. Even obedience to the prophets is based on these principles. These principles are effective in the relationship between the authority that holds the power and those who obey this authority. One of these principles is that the legitimacy of the authority must be based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the prophet. In the Qur'an, the Surah Maide 92th verse explains this principle; "And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware. And if you turn away - then know that upon Our Messenger is only [the responsibility for] clear notification." It is one of these principles that the managers are obeyed as much as they adhere to the rules of Allah, otherwise they are not obeyed. However, the practices applied in the political history of Islam have revealed the understanding that the principles of the Quran and Sunnah in the context of the relationship between authority and obedience can change according to time and conditions.³⁷This has developed a problematic view of the state, authority and obedience in Islam. Especially in Islamic states, the fate of the state and the fate of religion have started to be seen the same, with the sovereignty being seen as the sole and absolute authority³⁸. This has settled in the Islamic geography, especially in the Sunni political culture, as an important understanding of the relationship between religion and politics.

The Sunni doctrine is a political theory that prioritizes the continuity of power and is a power-centered political theory.³⁹With the transition of the Caliphate to the Turks, the Ottoman sultans became both the political and the religious authority. The idea that Khan was the representative of God, which existed in pre-Islamic Turkish states, shows similarities with the caliphate. In this context, this understanding that existed in the Turkish state tradition has been revived with the passing of the caliphate to the Turks. Accordingly, the Sultan holds the religious and secular authority as God's shadow on earth.

After the capture of the caliphate, the ruler and the obedience to the

³⁷ Adem Çaylak, "İslam Düşüncesine Hakim Olan Genel ve Temel İlkeler", *Muhafazakar Düşünce Der-gisi* 43 (2015): 137.

³⁸ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 84.

³⁹ Mehmet Evkuran, "Ehl-i Sünnet ve Siyasi Düşüncesi", *İslam Siyasi Düşünceler Tarihi*, haz. Adem Çaylak (Ankara: Savaş Yayınevi, 2018), 299.

state, which were established in the Sunni political culture, became established in the Turkish state tradition. The caliph is the sole authority of the state and religion. This understanding of authority and subordination to religious motivations is an important reflection of Sunni practice. Turkish state tradition, religious symbols and concepts are shaped in the axis.

As we mentioned in the formation of Sunni political culture, obedience and loyalty to leaders are important features of Sunni political practice. This practice is reflected in the Turkish state tradition after Islam. Especially in the Ottoman Empire, absolute obedience to Sultan and state is typical of this understanding. Obeying the Sultan, which is a religious and political authority, is so essential that even if the Sultan is cruel he is still obeyed.⁴⁰ The objections that voiced problems were described as defeatism and rebellion and were suppressed. The established authority does not make any concessions to its authority. Again, many arbitrary implementations over absolute obedience to authority have emerged, and leadership practices that do not coincide with the principles of Islam have emerged. The state authority wanted to establish and maintain its power in all areas. There is also said that after established the Republic of Turkey, this authority and obedience understanding can be found in Turkey due to the Turkish political tradition inherited from the Ottoman state. The fact that the state is seen as a strong and absolute authority, and that there is a conception of constitutional statism in Turkish state tradition, is a reflection of the Sunni political culture taken from the Ottoman Empire.

In the Turkish state tradition, it can be said that obedience reflexes against the existing authority before Islam, gained more motivation and absolutism especially with Sunni political practice. In this context, it is seen that the authority and obedience culture of Sunni politics based on religion has become established in the Turkish state tradition.

3.3. As a Source of Political Legitimacy: Religion

Historically, in some periods, religion is seen as an element that legitimizes political authority in the eyes of the ruled and provides the subordination of the ruled. It is possible to come across the periods when almost all belief systems are used as a means of political legitimacy in this way. In the Christian world, a period of crusades should be supported by religious

⁴⁰ Evkuran, "Ehl-i Sünnet ve Siyasi Düşüncesi", 299.

motivations; the efforts of countries such as Israel to gain legitimacy from the Torah can be seen as simple examples. When we look at the relations between Islam and politics, it is also possible to see the periods when religion emerged as a source of legitimacy to politics.

We touched upon the formation of Sunni political culture, in particular political practice based on religious resources. In this context, especially with the Ottoman Empire, in the political ideas and practices put forward, the Turkish state tradition was seen as a source of religious legitimacy. Religion has become a means of legitimization in order to consolidate its power, to preserve or strengthen power. In particular, it is possible to observe this issue in the Turkish state tradition since the caliphate authority passed to the Turks. In this context, the role of the Ottoman scholars and scholars has played a great role, in particular, as a source of religious texts⁴¹. The religious motivation necessary for the maintenance of state affairs has been revealed by the ulama(religious scholars).

In the Turkish state tradition, especially in the Ottoman Empire, the tendency of political and social policies to be revealed based on religion is high. From the concept of “forever living state”, every way can be seen lawful for the existence of the state. At this point, the fatwas that were revealed through the SheikhuIslam office, which existed in the Ottomans, revealed the laws of the Sultan, both religious and political authority, as a means of religious justification in a context. For example, it can be seen from this point of view, the slaying of the brothers, which is a much debated issue in the Ottoman history. The *hadith* and Quran sources of Islam emphasize that killing people is one of the greatest sins. However, the ‘Fatih Kanunnameleri’ published in the period of Sultan Fatih in the Ottoman Empire to prevent the fights of the throne and the state made free to execute the brothers of the Sultan. Again, in some periods, the Ottoman Sultans saw their sons as threats to their power and considering their potential of rebellion, Sultans took the execution fatwa from the *Shaykh al-Islam*. The fatwa, which was taken for the murder of Prince Mustafa, son of Sultan Suleyman, is an example in the context of providing religious legitimacy to political decisions at this point.

These and many other applications are frequently seen in Turkish-Islamic states. It is possible to say that in these practices Sultans are trying

⁴¹ İsmail Kara, *İslamcıların Siyasi Görüşleri*, (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1994), 39.

to find a religious basis to their deeds and that religion is used as a tool of legitimacy. In spite of the fact that the state was based on religion, practices based on traditional state tradition were also included in the state administration. It is even seen that traditional practices prevailed in the religion. Religion has been seen as a source of legitimation for the order of social and political life.

3.4. Weak Opposition Culture

In general, the concept of opposition emerges as a phenomenon of different perspectives, alternative formations and suggestions against the established socio-economic system and the political regime in a country. In this context, the concept of opposition in the Islamic thought tradition has taken its place as an important debate phenomenon.⁴² The views of the concept of opposition in Islam and the views of the traditions of thought on the concept of opposition have formed these discussions.

There are some principles in Islam that reflect the necessity of opposition and importance of opposition in Islam. These principles, especially revealed in Quran and *hadiths*, emphasize the importance of telling the mistakes and disturbances in society and trying to correct these mistakes. In the 59th verse of Surah Al-i Imran; “And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.” the order in the verse is important in terms of revealing the importance of the opposition for Islam. Again, Islam has led Muslims to come to terms with different ideas and to work together on the basis of consultation, as emphasize in verse 38: Surah Ash-Shuraa ”Their work is through consultation between them.“ This principle shows the value that Islam gives to revealing different ideas and opinions. In this context, Islam attaches importance and supports the concept of opposition. It can be revealed that Islam gives importance to the concept of opposition with many verses and *hadith*.⁴³

Despite the general support of Islam to the concept of opposition. It is known that the concept of opposition in some Islamic thought traditions is seen as negative and even problematic. The perspective of Sunni thought tradition also approaches negative and problematic against concept of opposition. In the Sunni tradition of thought; the strongness of obedience and

⁴² Adem Çaylak, “Türkiye’de Siyasal Muhalefet Kültürü”, *Türkiye Günlüğü Dergisi* 89 (2007): 141.

⁴³ Abdulsasir Süt, “İslam Düşüncesinde Muhalefet”, *Milel ve Nihal Dergisi* 15/2 (2018): 66.

authority has shaped the view of the concept of opposition of Sunni paradigm. In this context, the opposition and the opposition traditions were seen negative and even problematic by the Sunni tradition of thought, and Sunni political culture.⁴⁴ At this stage, it is necessary to put forward the reasons why the Sunni political culture stay distant from opposition and oppositional traditions.

In the Sunni tradition of thought and political culture, it is seen that the concept of opposition is evaluated as disturbance and rebellion as a result of the widespread understanding of submission and obedience. In particular, this understanding has made almost impossible to question and criticize the practices and policies of the political power, leading to attribution of sanctity to governance and rulers, sanctification of authority, and the beginning of an almost identical view of religion. Again, the legitimacy of the rulers and the *hadiths* in the effort to establish a theological base of the opposition has prevented the development of culture.⁴⁵ In the 59th verse of Surah an-Nisa; “Believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority.” the importance of obeying the leader is often emphasized. This is a reflex of Sunni political culture that taking place next to the power supported by various verses. This reflex is effective in the lack of opposition culture in the regions where Sunni tradition was widespread. This is main reason of weak opposition culture in the Sunni regions.

The Turkish state tradition, which is under the influence of Sunni political culture, is a state tradition in which the opposition culture is weak due to the reasons arising from this effect. When we look at the Turkish-Islamic states, it is seen that any critical discourse against the state administration and the Sultans, which is the absolute authority, is not accepted and it is considered as rebellion and disturbing order. Here again, it is seen that the Sunni tradition of thought prevents to emerging opposition culture over verses and *hadiths* references.

When we look at the Ottoman Empire, it is seen a weak opposition culture stemming from the effects mentioned above. It is seen that the state authority is absolute, the sacredness attributed to the sultans, the verses and the *hadiths* on religion as the source of legitimacy, and the culture of opposition are weak. It is seen that there are many incidents in which the

⁴⁴ Süt, “İslam Düşüncesinde Muhalefet”, 71.

⁴⁵ Çaylak, “İslam Düşüncesine Hakim Olan Genel ve Temel İlkeler”, 145.

opposing elements are seen as rebels, defectors and they are repressed by the state. Especially until the 19th century, the existence of an effective opposition was unprecedented and the opposing elements are also suppressed resulting from social, economic and political problems. For example, the opposition Celali Rebellions, which emerged because of the high taxes collected by the state, was repressed by the state. Sheikh Bedreddin, who emerged in the early days of the Ottoman Empire and came to an effective point with his different opinions and ideas, was captured and executed for his views and opposition on the Sunni tradition of thought and the state.

In the Ottoman State tradition, it is an important policy that the least opposition to the state or any opposition that may occur is not tolerated. In the Ottoman Empire, where opposition to the law and authority was considered as a crime, almost no opposition to the reflexes of the state and the official ideology of the state (Sunni, Monarchic, and Authoritarian) was tolerated. That is why there was no apparent understanding of opposition until the modernization period in the 19th century.

The Republic of Turkey, which is a continuation of the position of the Ottoman Empire, the state's official ideology -even if secular- also approaches negative and problematic to opposition elements. Also the state tend to eradicate these opposition element as seen in Turkish political history. This approach is a reflection of the political culture inherited from the Ottoman Empire.

The Sunni thought tradition and its Sunni political culture have approached the concept of opposition as distant and problematic. For this reason, in the Turkish-Islamic states where the Sunni tradition is influential, the opposition culture has not been institutionalized and has always been seen as a problematic structure. Weak political culture has prevented the involvement of different kinds of thought and traditions within the state and this has interrupted to find the easy and effective solutions to social, political and economic problems.

CONCLUSION

Political culture plays a pivotal role in the emergence of political practices. Political culture from the bar within its religious, traditional and cultural elements; have a role in determining social, political and economic relations. The political culture of states and societies has a significant impact on the policies to be applied in the field of administration. In this context, it

is possible to say that the political cultures which are based on the values of belief, the state and the societies deeply affect.

It is seen that the Sunni political culture as a political culture shaped by faith values influences the political and social practices of Muslims in many regions of the world, especially in the Middle East. In particular, the political practices that have emerged in Islamic states are generally shaped by Sunni political culture. Great states such as the Ottoman Empire, especially the Sunni political culture and the state have formed the state traditions. However, the influence of the Sunni political culture in many Turkish-Islamic states has emerged clearly.

Sunni political culture emerges as a political culture that still continues to be influenced by the geography we live in. The balance of the Sunni Ottoman Empire, which even today can be seen the influence of the political culture of the Republic of Turkey. In addition to its secular nature, the Sunni political culture, especially shaped by Islamism, continues to exist in the political sphere in Turkey during the Republican period. The claim of being the representative of the Islamic world from the caliphate period can be exemplified as the reflection of the Sunni political culture on our day. There is a profound influence on the Sunni political culture, especially through the National Outlook movement and later on with the Justice And Development Party(AK Party) in Islamist-Conservative political practices. The desire to be the patron of the Islamic world in foreign policy, the attempt to consolidate the Orthodox Islam understanding in domestic politics, as well as the positioning of the state mechanism as absolute authority are just some of these effects. The Sunni political culture, which was shaped by the political conflicts and political practices in the process following the death of the Prophet Mohammed, left deep traces in the states and societies of Islam. The Sunni political culture, which has a resident influence, will continue its influence in the coming periods, and will manifest itself in political practices and discourses.

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