



## The Tanzimat: A study of the ottoman sultanate and modern reformation between 1839 and 1876

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### Abstract

This study attempts to discuss on the Tanzimat as a modern reformation of Ottoman Sultanate between 1839 and 1876. In the end of the eighteenth century, Ottoman Empire became weak and powerless when European countries captured technologies and wealth. European revolutions and turbulence seized the Sultanate's intellectual world. Russia was also another powerful country at the time. Ottoman Empire faced political disturbances from Russia and Russia's allies. In nineteenth century, Ottoman power decentralized. So the Sultanate started to introduce various reforms institutionally and constitutionally. These reforms were known as "Tanzimat", which helped to solve sultanate's problems but the public faced various disturbances and troubles like poor situation of finance and administration increased day by day. So public searched for a new government and a new country which favoured equality and modernity. There were several attempts of reformation before nineteenth century.

The objectives of this paper are to explaining the influences of the Tanzimat and reformations of Ottoman Sultanate which lead to removing Islamic law in the Sultanate. The research is very important that the reformation of Sultanate changed Ottoman administration than before.

This study focus on (a) implementation of Tanzimat (b) transformation of Tanzimat as removing of Islamic law and order (c) banned and nullified Islamic rules and positive attempts of the Tanzimat. The methods used in this paper are descriptive and historical research methodology.

In this paper I'm finding that Tanzimat has helped the Ottoman Sultanate to modernize the social and political administration of the Sultanate. But same time Tanzimat removed the influences of Islam in the social and political administration. I have explained the finding with historical information.

**Keywords:** The Tanzimat, European revolution and sultanate, ottoman reformation, The Gulhane hat

### Introduction

In the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were attempts to revive Sultanate under Selim-III (1780-1807) before the Tanzimat era. He realized radical reforms of the Sultanate were inevitable to bring back Sultanate's power and prestige.

"*KoçibeyRisalesi*"<sup>[1]</sup> was prepared by Koçibey and was presented to Sultan Mehmet-I. These documents contained suggestions to address Sultanate's internal problems. In the eighteenth century (Tulip Era), special candidates were sent to European capital to learn about western socio-cultural reforms. As a result, a new life concept appeared in the Ottoman Empire in light of western modernisation. Europe and the Ottoman Empire attempted to learn about each other during this time. Çelebi Mehmet was appointed as a diplomatic agent to Paris. He wrote the travel document "seyyahatname". This travel document can be considered as one of the first papers to reflect the West to the Ottoman Empire.

The next reformation of the Sultanate came in the period of 1730 to 1789; from the end of the Tulip Era to ascendance of Selim III to the power. In this period, military department adopted new war techniques and started to use Western machineries. In 1789, the year of French Revolution, Selim III came to the power. He was aware of the rapid decline of

Sultanate. He communicated with some European rulers including Louis XVI of France. He evaluated teachings of West within the army, which is known as "Nizam-i-Cedid Devri" (The Era of New Order). He learned various methods from developments of the Western countries and applied them at an appropriate time in the Sultanate. He mainly concentrated on three areas of reform; social, educational and economical institutions of the Empire.

The military was also another institution where Salim focused in "Nizam-ı Cedid" order. Selim III served his people as his basic principles of life. He introduced new treasury system "İrad-i-Cedid" (New Funds) which was one of the main financial supports of "Nizam-i-Cedid". His new economical reforms helped the growth of domestic products. This financial reformation of Selim III remained logical steps to stop the Sultanate's decline. "GulhaneHatt" (The Edict of the rose chamber) is considered as the first Tanzimat which is written by Mustafa ResitPasa<sup>[2]</sup> in the time of Sultan Abdul Majeed (1839). Young Sultan was only 16 years old. "GulhaneHatt" was mostly influenced by the reflection of French revolution. Mustafa Resit Pasa developed Tanzimat in light of his ambassadorship experiences in western countries. He applied western style which caused to increase western

<sup>1</sup> Aksüt, Ali Kemal: *KoçibeyRisalesi*, İst. 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Mustafa ResitPasa (1800-1859) was the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs during the mentioned time.

influences in the sultanate. He is known as the first Tanzimat man. All products of western ideology such as Humanism, liberalism and nationalism penetrated in the Sultanate. Various policies of Tanzimat helped in balancing Sultanate's political situations.

### **The Gulhane Hat was mainly focused on Three Points**

1. Guarantee for security of life, Honor and property to all Ottoman subjects; Public trails according to regulations and abolition of confiscation (a promise of Mahmut).
2. Creation of an orderly system of fixed taxation.
3. A regular system of military conscription, with the term of service reduced from lifetime to four to five years <sup>[3]</sup>.

The three points covered economic, military and social aspects of the Sultanate's people. After this order, the Sultanate promised equal rights to all people, regardless of religion or any other classification.

The Gulhane Hat abolished various Islamic laws and principles. For example: - death penalty for apostasy was abolished in 1844. He also stopped stoning punishment for adultery. 37 years (1839-1876) brought many renovations and complete change to the Ottoman Empire and institutions. The military development was the main focus in this period. Selim III formulated the state's foreign policy and established permanent embassies in major capitals particularly after witnessing the consequence of Bonaparte's Egyptian invasion. Unfortunately, the positive policies did not become successful. The Ulema (cleric) were the main enemy of the empire. They reacted against western socio-cultural penetration. The Ottoman Ulema started a great propaganda against the Nizam-i Cedid. This propaganda influenced the people of the Empire. Mustafa Resit Paşa publicly stated: "I would rather see my son a Christian rather than as Istanbul Turk-a la France-or part of Nizam i Cedid <sup>[4]</sup>. His reforms cost Selim-III his throne.

Mehmut II was another reformist and experienced reformer of the Sultanate. His reign totally focused socio-cultural renovations and modifications. He gave equal recognition to all religious communities. So that non-Muslim communities were allowed to practice their socio-religious traditions and styles in the Empire. He published "Takvim-i Vekayi" a first official newspaper in Ottoman's history. He appointed Grand Vezir as the prime minister and distributed passport and started postal service for all the people. Mehmut II also confronted Wahabi uprising in Arab provinces. Impacts of French Revolution easily helped nationalism penetrate in the Sultanate. After the Serbian uprising in 1817 the Sultanate was in trouble.

Mehmut's administrative developments overcame the external and internal problems of the Sultanate. He founded various bodies and ministries. His initiatives and changes led to developments of the Ottoman Empire positively. But the penetration of European educational systems helped the youngsters to develop their career. Some young students went

to Paris, London, Vienna and other parts of the world for learning western education. When they returned from the Europe, their knowledge and education contributed to the emergence of the Sultanate. Mehmut II took some revolutionary steps. He abolished janissary military system and established a new military administration which was more influenced by western values. In 1834, he established a military academy and sent graduates to Europe for higher education.

Mehmut-II tried to popularize Western values in the Muslim majority Empire. So his various reforms forced opposition from Muslims and Ulema. His reforms were regarded as non-religious. Many of his people called Mehmut-II non-believer sultan because of disturbing Muslim religious practices.

### **Other Positive Attempts of Mehmut II**

1. Systematizing Military properties and revenue system.
2. Reformation of foreign affairs.
3. Re ordered Duration of military service to limited term.
4. Modified the Sultanate's Treasury system as per western principles.
5. He founded "Dar-i -Surayi Askeri" which was first assembly in sultanate. It solved military problems.
6. Founded supreme council of the government (Dar-i-Surayi Bab-i Ali)
7. Development of education system and Madrasa.
8. Establishment of translation chamber (Tercume Odalari). Ali, Namik Kemal, Fuat and SafvetPasas were main scholars in the chamber.

Mehmut's period has been criticized by various scholars. Nevertheless his reign is considered as a time of ideological development of sultanate. He opened possibilities of developments which helped change mentality of the Ottoman Sultanate in secular frames.

The Imperial Rescript (Hatt-i-Humayun) of 1856 was another order to reform the Sultanate. This edict was also another step in reforming the Sultanate in Tanzimat Era. Hatt-I Humayun was designed in light of western code. This edict didn't include any citations of the holy Quran and Islamic principles. So the edict was supported by European states and sultanate law and constitution were inspired by western style.

"The Ottoman penal code of 1858 was based on Napoleonic code of 1810, putting aside Islamic punishments. It established a French-type system of courts, with tribunals of first instance, courts of appeals and a high court of appeals. These were the first distinct hierarchy of a secular court system of the country.... This secular criminal code and court system remained in operational till 1923 <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **Nullified rules by the imperial rescript**

1. The imperial rescript outlawed non-Muslims as Dhimmi <sup>[6]</sup> group and abolished the Jiziyasystem <sup>[7]</sup>.
2. Sultanate adopted the Napoleonic trade law (1850) and the Maritime trade law (1864).

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Dr. Secil Akgun, The emergence of Tanzimat in the Ottoman Empire, The Center for Ottoman Studies Ankara University, Turkey, 1991, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> David Kushner, The Place of the Ulema in the Ottoman Empire during the age of Reform (1839-1918), Turcica, TomeXIX, p.53-55.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. IhsanYilmaz, Muslim laws, Political and society in Modern Nation States, Routledge, 2005, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> A non-Muslim subject of a Muslim state.

<sup>7</sup> Head tax paid by non-Muslim in Islamic state.

3. Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1853.
4. The death penalty of apostasy was outlawed (Sultan Abdul Hamid II did not charge 'Baha'ullah' (the founder of Bahai faith) for apostasy).
5. Rajm (stoning) punishment outlawed.

The sultanate also followed Sharia law in a particular legal area.

“Sharia courts had primary jurisdiction over urban Muslims, rural tribes followed customary rules and procedures (Urf), and Milliyya courts were regulated by and for the various sects of Christians and Jews. Hence Sharia courts were by no means the only form of law and administration. Indeed the ruler had his own body of administration law (Qanun) that did not draw authority from the Sharia<sup>[8]</sup>.

After some years the Sultanate became representative of western civilization and modernity. This situation removed the Islamic law and principles from socio-political life of Ottoman Empire. Christian- Jews conspiracy rooted in all administrative departments. They strived to introduce western model changes and development which caused to end Islamic civilization and culture from the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>8</sup> Talal Asad, *Formation of secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 210.