

WESTERNIZATION OF MEDIEVAL EDUCATION (SOCIO-HISTORICAL STUDIES ON THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION OF THE OTTOMAN TURKISH)

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Abstract. The Ottoman Empire experienced a golden age during the reign of Sultan Sulaiman Al-Qanuni (1494-1566 AD), but after his reign weakened due to advances in European science and technology, in the 18th century the Ottoman Turks tried to restore its glory. by Westernization known as the Reorganization of Turkey. While socio-religious at that time experienced a decline, more than that, dynamism, creativity, progressivity and freedom of thought also decreased. This study aims to explore the origins of the westernization movement in the history of the development of Islamic education in terms of socio-political, socio-religious and social education. It is hoped that a precise definition of the ideal Islamic education will be obtained that is in accordance with the times and always provides the latest benefits for modern times. This study uses a socio-historical approach, which seeks to uncover and analyze the transformation process of the Islamic education system from a traditional system to a modern system. As a result, it was found that the cause of the decline of Muslims was the thinking of the Turkish people who were shackled by fatalism.

Keywords: ottoman empire; education; westernization.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education has a long history and developed along with the pace of Islamic civilization. The arrival of Islam ushered in a very meaningful transformation for Arab society, especially at that time the social conditions of Arab society were far from civilized. Islam as God's revelation which is a way of life to achieve worldly welfare and *ukhrawi* (the day Afterlife), can only be understood and practiced properly through education. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad was only sent as an educator of mankind (Aizid, 2015). Therefore, there is no doubt that Islamic teachings are very closely related to educational concepts, so Islam should be appointed and used as a paradigm of education science.

Throughout history, Islamic Education has carried out several concept Islamic education, one of which is modernization (Rissanen, 2012), the concept of Modern Islamic education, is definitely the steps in renewal in understanding, interpreting and formulating Islamic problems with a historical reconstruction in actualizing Islam in modern life. This movement rests on the ideals of the idealization of Islamic progress that was experienced by the Islamic world during the Abbasid dynasty, and this movement wants to achieve that golden age with the same methodology as that era in intellectual freedom (Hasnahwati, 2020); (Evered & Evered, 2020).

The meaning of Westernization or linguistically can be understood as "westernizing" is a group/reform figures who want to imitate civilization the West as the basis for reform. This western school

assumes that the western world at that time had reached a high civilization as evidence that the western nation had achieved success in developing science and technology (Woellert et al., 2011). They have also left old traditions, including religious traditions that are not in accordance with the times.

According to Westernism's view, it was said *if you want to progress, a nation must be oriented to the west and begin to leave the old traditions and institutions that are outdated because for them the old traditions and institutions are the cause of the decline of a nation*. This movement seeks to displace the Islamic identity of a nation with an Islamic pattern and replace it with western civilization. And also said *If you look at the current era, there are many generations of a nation who are "westernized"* (Ilyas, 2014) Worse yet, this attitude not only penetrates the socio-cultural realm but also in the scientific realm. Where in western science it is not in harmony with Islam so that it can damage the values and morals of Islamic society.

Science at this time, has been influenced by the western world which philosophically has adopted a secular epistemology which denies revelation as a science. As a result, science is antagonistic to religion. This will clearly affect the values and morals of the community. Whereas Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas asserted that Islam is a religion that has its own original worldview and is free from various influences from the western world. However, in reality, westernized science has penetrated into religious knowledge.

When rewinding the footsteps of the Ottoman Empire, we will be carried away to

the long history of the medieval Islamic empire which is worrying because this dynasty is in the midst of advancing European civilization which indirectly intimidated the Turkish Islamic community, which at that time was trapped in the orthodox tradition. which is far from advanced. Likewise, regarding the westernization of Islamic education that is happening now, is the root of the long history of the Ottoman Turks as an Islamic superpower with stagnant scientific conditions at that time and no significant progress in science and technology, unlike the previous Islamic dynasty (Abbasid dynasty). Until the early 18th century, the Ottomans tried to restore glory by carrying out major reforms to the royal system. Among them Sultan Salim III (d.1807) opened a number of Ottoman embassies in Europe. Then Mahmud II (d.1839) introduced various reform institutions that were inspired by the West, including education, military, economics and law. This period came to be known in history as the Reorganization period.

Various reform efforts were continuously carried out by this dynasty (Ottomans Turk), both from among scholars, young people, scholars and bureaucrats until the 20th century. There are many social factors that led to the reorganization of Turkey, one of which was the rise of Europeans after the Renaissance, which prompted the Turks to westernize the education system. At that time, the Turks were still using their conventional education system, such as memorizing classical books without understanding the meaning and lack of scientific passion in Turkish society, which caused Turkey to lag

far behind the Europeans.

The previous research conducted by Siswanto in his research entitled "*The Rise of Madrasah in the Islamic World (Socio-Historical Study of the Nizhamiyah School)*". This type of research is descriptive, using qualitative approach methods. The similarity of the previous research with this study is the types and methods of the research approach used both using qualitative descriptive methods and using a historical approach, Meanwhile, the difference between the previous study and this study is as follows: The subject in the previous study was the Nizamiyah school during the Abbasid Caliphate While in this study the object was the Islamic Education system during the Ottoman Turk period. therefore, this paper will lead to the discovery of new knowledge about the symptoms that caused the change in the education system during the Ottoman Turkish period. By using a socio-historical approach, this paper will explore the origins of the westernization movement in the history of the development of Islamic education in terms of socio-political, socio-religious and socio-educational. Thus, it is hoped that a proper picture of the ideal Islamic education will be obtained which is in line with the times and always provides the latest benefits for modern times. This is where a study of the social history of the development of Islamic education in the Ottoman Empire will find its significance.

METHODS

This paper uses a historical approach, which seeks to reveal and analyze the process of transforming the Islamic

education system from traditional to modern with efforts to westernize, this process consisting of four stages (Malleon, 2021) are:

At the initial stage is a heuristic or collecting the sources. As many sources as possible are collected related to the problem in the form of books and journals that talk about related matters.

The next step, is to criticize the sources, against all the sources that have been obtained earlier. By criticizing this source, it becomes a measure of the extent to which the author's objectivity in elaborating all the data or sources that have been obtained.

After criticizing sources, at this stage a synthesis is carried out using interpretation techniques, the interpretation of facts obtained from all documents or sources that have been obtained. This stage requires the prudence and integrity of the author to avoid subjective interpretations of other facts, in order to find scientific conclusions or historical images.

The final step is historiography. In this case the author tries his best to compose, string and devote all his abilities to the search for something in question, compile a summary of the facts and then explain with rational historical expressions ([Abdurrahman](#), 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ottoman Dynasty: The Origin And State Of Socio-Politics

The founder of the Ottoman Turkish Dynasty was the *Oghuz* who initially inhabited the Mongol regions in the north of the Chinese territory. Within a period of

three centuries, they moved to Turkistan, Persia and Iraq. This *kabilah* converted to Islam around the 9th century. Under the leadership of *Orthoghol*. They devoted themselves to Sultan *Alaudin* was Sultan *Saljuk* who at that time was fighting against the Byzantines. Thanks to the help of the *Oghuz*, Sultan *Alaudiin* gained victory. For the good services of this nomadic *kabilah*, *Alauddin* gifted a piece of land in Asia Minor bordering the Byzantines. Since then they have continued to build their new territory and chose the city of *Syukut* as the capital.

After the death of *Orthoghol* in 1289 AD. the relay of leadership was continued by his son, *Ottoman*. The son of *Orthoghol*, whose real name was *Ottoman Sultan bin Sauji bin Artogol bin Sulaimansyah bin Kia Alp* (1299-1324 AD), is considered the founder of the Ottoman empire. After the Ottoman Dynasty declared independence and plenipotentiary over what was previously the territory of *Alauddin* who was defeated by the attacks of the Mongols.

The Ottoman Turks experienced a golden age during the reign of sultan *Sulaiman Al-Qanuni* (1494-1566 AD) at which time the territory of this Dynasty was absolutely large, covering mainland Europe to Australia, Egypt, North Africa to Algeria and Asia to Persia. Sultan *Sulaiman Al-Qanuni* managed to unite his two sovereignties, at sea and on land and gathered his two forces, worldliness and religion ([Arar & Haj-Yehia](#), 2018)

But in the end, due to the weak rule after the time of *Sulaiman Al-Qanuni*, as well as outside factors, that European advances in the field of science and

technology, which was able to create modern machinery and equipment, Ottoman Turk began to regress and suffer several defeats of war against Europeans. The military defeat of this Dynasty, according to *Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na'im* was a consequence that had to be accepted due to the decline of religion and culture, perversion of tradition and corruption ([An-Na'im](#), 2016)

So that at the beginning of the 18th century, the Ottoman Turks tried to restore glory by carrying out very vigorous reforms. In fact, Sultan *Salim III* (1789-1807 AD) opened a number of Ottoman embassies in Europe. Then Sultan *Mahmud II* (1808-1839 AD) introduced a variety of western-inspired reforming institutions, including education, military, economics and law. This period became known in history as the period of the *Reorganization of Turkey*.

From the foregoing brief it can be understood that the leaders of the Ottoman Turks in the early days were powerful people, so this Dynasty was able to expand quickly and widely. As for the cause of the success of this Dynasty, it is because it has a brave, decisive, disciplined spirit and obeys the rules. This is a natural disposition inherited from their ancestors in Central Asia as well as the *jihadi* motivations taught by the *Quran* and *Sunnah* ([Zürcher](#), 2019)

The Renewal Movement As The Result From Sufistic Socio-Religious Conditions

The Ottoman Turkish dynasty held two powers, First, temporal power i.e. political power and government symbolized by the title of *Sultan* and Secondly, Spiritual power i.e. religious power symbolized by the title

of Caliph (*Khalifah*). Therefore, in terms of religion, the sultan as a ruler is very attached to Islamic *sharia*. Caliph have high authority in the state and society. The Chaliph headed by *Shakh al-Islam* or *Mufti* as one of the officials who have the authority to deliver official fatwas regarding the sultan's policy and religious problems.

Likewise, the influence of Sufism on this dynasty developed quite rapidly. The state of frustration that was evenly distributed in the social life of Turkish society at that time due to the destruction of the order of social life due to internal and external conflicts motivated the Ottoman Turkish people to *zuhud* (abandon worldly things) and return to God. The schools are colored with traditional sufistic nuances, there are *Zawiyah-zawiyah* and *halaqah* around mosques and school that are used as ritual sites (*riyadhah*) for Sufis under the guidance of *mursyid* authorities. Because of this, various *riyadhah* systems developed in the Ottoman Turkish society which was later called the sufistic order.

In this regard Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) described the socio-religious conditions of the Ottoman Turkish people in his article entitled *Islam and Modernity Transformation of Anthropology Intelectual Tradition* as follows: "... in most sufi centers especially in Turkey, the academic curriculum consists almost entirely of books on sufism. In Turkey at that time there were several special places of Methnevi khana, where Rumi's matsnawi was the only book taught. Furthermore, the content and work which is largely controlled by pantheism is sharply opposed to orthodox educational institutions hence the emergence of a sharp and protracted spiritual dualism between

madrasas and halaqahs. A distinctive feature of this phenomenon is the abundance of sufi questions that taubat after finding a way...".

The socio-religious conditions that developed in Ottoman Turkey at that time became one of the reasons for the decline of Islamic education. This is because the problem of setbacks also cannot be separated from the context of the social dynamics of Ottoman Turkish society. An important implication of such a situation is that the receding and loss of scientific traditions in the Islamic world is not like the development of science in earlier times (Umayyad and Abbasids). More than that, dynamism, creativity, progressivity and freedom of thought are receding. Society during the Ottoman Turkish dynasty continued to live in epistemology, starting from the surrender of elements of society to dynamism and freedom on concepts of a static and orthodox nature, it was at this time that the scientific torch dimmed in Ottoman Turkish society and was only ignited during the leadership of Sultan *Ahmed III* (1703-1730 AD) and then continued by Sultan *Mehmed II* (1808-1839 AD).

One of the renewal efforts made by Sultan Ahmad III, according to Harun Nasution (1919-1998) was known that Ahmed III as renewal before the Modern Period. But because of obstacles from the clergy and the military, in the end this renewal effort was failed. The next renewal effort was carried out in the Modern period, which was started by Sultan Mehmed II (1807-1839). Which in history, Sultan Mehmed II was the first Sultan Ottoman to overhaul the traditions of the aristocracy,

by taking a democratic stance. He is also known as the first Sultan in the Ottoman dynasty to unequivocally distinguish between religious affairs and world affairs. According to *Tewfiq Fikret* (1867-1915), one of the modernist figures of Turkey in the field of education, the main cause of the decline of Muslims at that time was due to the thinking of Turkish society which was shackled by the idea of *fatalism* (the theological tradition that placed humans as beings who did not have the ability and freedom to do an act) ([Koskeniemi](#), 2019). Another opinion of Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, according to him, the Ottoman dynasty that needs to be changed is not its system of government or its Sultans but its social system. According to him, the weakness of the Ottoman dynasty and the Muslims lies in the judiciary, laziness, an Extremely strong belief in superstition, as well as being too obedient to the "*ignorant clerics*" all of whom are considered Islamic teachings ([Eka](#), 013)

Westernization: Efforts To Renew Islamic Education

Educational institutions during the Turkish period of Ottoman were first founded by Sultan *Orkhan* (1326-1359). The teaching system developed is to memorize the content of classical Book (*matan-matan*) even though students do not understand the meaning, such as memorizing *matan Taqrib*, *matan Sultan*, *matan al-Jurumiah*, *matan Alfiah*, and others. The students learned his *sharah* (explanation or elaborating of the content book) after memorizing the *matan*. Meanwhile, Islamic science such as *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *kalam* and others have not

experienced development. Most Ottoman rulers tended to be *fanatical* and *taqlid* towards one school and even they opposed another ([Zürcher](#), 2019).

Seeing the condition of the Ottoman Turkish dynasty society at that time which was full of anxiety, this is in line with the opinion of *Hujair AH Sanaky* in his writing *Tracing the Paradigm of Islamic Education: An Effort Towards an Empowering Education*, it said: "*Along with the decline of Islam, especially after the fall of the Abbasids in Baghdad in 1258 AD, education in the Islamic world also suffered a setback and jumud-an. Thus, education is no longer capable of being a 'means of maturing' the people* ([Sanaky](#), (2016).

The same was said by Fazlur Rahman about the socio-educational state of the Ottoman Turk people in the middle ages, he revealed: "*Education becomes nothing more than a means of defending and preserving traditional values from the threat that will result in the collapse of Islamic traditions, in particular the 'standards' of Islamic morality. What is feared is that education will no longer be able to become a process of intellectualization that reconstructs the paradigm (mindset) of students through continuous interpretation with various disciplines according to the times. As a result, Islamic education carries out a process of self-isolation so that Islamic education is finally marginalized and to the development of knowledge and technology* ([Muhammad et al.](#), 2021)."

The Ottoman Turkish as a major Islamic dynasty born after the two superpower Islamic dynasties previously (Umayyad and Abbasid). Turkish experienced a time when its opponents i.e. western nations, made

progress, especially in terms of civilization and science, this was certainly not experienced by the previous two Islamic dynasties before which at that time the western nations were in a dark age, caused by the church authorities who curbed them to stay away from science and rational civilization, it can be concluded that the Ottoman Turkish was the first dynasty to hold a renewal especially in the field of education in the early 17th century. As previously explained, the reason for the renewal of Islamic education began with the defeats of the Ottoman dynasty in the war with Europeans. In particular, the defeat of the Turkish army in the battle near Vienna (1699 AD) which became the beginning of his defeat and had a major impact on the decline of the Ottoman Turks in the later years.

One of the efforts to preserve Sultan *Ahmed III* (1703-1730) in the field of education is to build and create educational institutions that teach sciences that are tailored to the needs of society, nation and state. This idea of renewal in the field of education is the result of the reflection of the Ottoman Turkish society which at that time was lagging behind in terms of knowledge and technology. This then fostered a new attitude and spirit in the Ottoman Turkish to be more prudent and wise towards the existence of Western nations. And to regard the West is no longer regarded as an enemy to be shunned. According to Sultan *Ahmed III* he ever said: "*if Muslims want to make progress, to catch up with Islam from the West, they must be able to appreciate and be willing to cooperate with Western nations*".

Renewal continued to be carried out, especially during the sultanate of Mehmed II (1808-1839), a renewal that made the West the main idea that eventually led to the massive adoption of all Western-style legal, political, economic, and educational devices to be applied in the Ottoman Turkish Dynasty. This is what eventually grew the Westernism movement in Turkey. This westernization effort arises because the Islamic state is no longer seen as having advantages coupled with the social conditions of the people who have been affected by Western Modernism so that it closes and forgets the glory of the Islamic past.

The view of the westernism of the Ottoman Turkish Dynasty was actually not only in the field of education, but encompassed the fields that influenced the Ottoman Turkish society at the time, as explained by *Tuefik Fikret* and *Abdullah Cevdet* as figures of Turkish westernism in the 18th century suggesting that the intention of the westernization movement pursued by the Ottoman Turks that is, a complete mental transformation through the process of discarding the old system (the Islamic tradition that understands fatalism) and replacing it with the Western system ([Jongerden, 2012](#)). Among these views are: *First*, the cause of Turkey's decline is seen from the socio-thought of Asian society, its institutions and traditions are weak as well as its morals and mentality. Such mental and moral weaknesses were caused by the *sharia* that restricted the lives of the Ottoman Turks ([Arslanbenzer, 2020](#)). By assuming the only solution is to hold secularization (separating the state from religious authority). *Second*, religious

renewal was to oppose the bigotry of traditional Turkish clerics and stay away from the order of *sufism* which at that time was widely embraced by the Ottoman Turkish people, this is considered by the Ottoman Turkish people who adhere to westernism as a source of decline, so there is a need for westernization efforts by adopting a western-style Modern Islamic education system by separating between religious science and Western-style modern science so that it is expected to produce Turkish scholars who have a modern view of not traditional fanatics. *Third*, economic renewal, namely applying the western economic system in the Ottoman Turkish dynasty such as capitalism, individualism and liberalism. The Turkish people of Ottoman have always been considered to have adhered to traditions that have the understanding of fatalism. Fourth, the renewal of state institutions, by separating state authority from religious authority. Thus fostering a view of secularism in the Turkish government of Ottoman. *Fifth*, the renewal of the family, where turkey's decline was due to the low status and position of women, women should be aligned with men, abolish the polygamous system and allow women to remove their veils. *Sixth*, the renewal of education is to provide the content of modern science curricula at all types and levels of education. Religious teaching must be kept away from superstition (irrational) and emphasize world hood greater than ignorance (Kia, 2017).

The efforts of this process of westernization reached its climax at the time of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at the

beginning of the 19th century, Mustafa Kemal announced to the audience of the Ottoman Turkish Society of the time that Sultan Mehmed VI (1918-1926) in Istanbul had been under allied rule, Then he established a counter-government in Anatolia and say "*the independence of the country is in a state of danger, the Turkish people must try to free the homeland from foreign powers*", Sultan Mehmed VI at that time was considered not to run the government so soon Mustafa Kemal convened a congress to dismiss Mehmed VI from the post of Sultan. Kemal's ultimate goal with reforms in the form of westernization is to bring the Turks to march together with Western civilization. Mustafa Kemal is known as the Father of the Turkish People with the nickname Ataturk, and he also got the nickname Ghazi. Mustafa Kemal's series of renewal policies are detailed in: Nationalism, Secularism and Westernism.

CONCLUSIONS

After examining the westernization of medieval education focused on the Ottoman Empire, it can be concluded as follows: *first*, the Ottoman Empire experienced a golden age during the reign of Sultan Sulaiman Al-Qanuni (1494-1566 AD) which at that time was the territory of the Sultanate of Islam. It is very broad, covering mainland Europe to Australia, Egypt, North Africa to Algeria and Asia to Persia. Sultan Sulaiman Al-Qanuni succeeded in uniting his two sovereigns, at sea and on land and gathering his two powers, worldly and religious. But in the end, because of the weak government after

Sulaiman Al-Qanuni's reign, as well as external factors, namely the progress of Europe in the fields of science and technology. *Second*, the socio-religious conditions that developed in Ottoman Turkey at that time became one of the reasons for the decline of Islamic education. This is because the problem of setbacks cannot be separated from the context of the social dynamics of the Ottoman Turks. The important implication of a situation like this is that the scientific tradition in the Islamic world is getting less and less, unlike the development of science in the previous period (Umayyad and Abbasid). More than that, the dynamism, creativity, progressiveness and freedom of thought are decreasing. The main cause of the decline of Muslims at that time was because the thoughts of the Turkish people were shackled by the notion of fatalism, namely the flow of theology that placed humans as creatures who did not have the ability and freedom to do an act. *Third*, the renewal of making the west an idea emerged in the reign of the Sultanate of Mahmud II (1808-1839) which ultimately led to the massive adoption of all Western-style legal, political, economic and educational instruments to be applied in the Ottoman Empire. This is what eventually grew the Westernism movement in Turkey. This westernization effort arose because the Islamic state was no longer seen as having advantages, coupled with the social conditions of the people who had been influenced by Western Modernism, thus closing and forgetting the past glory of Islam. And the peak of this climax of westernization was during the reign of *Mustafa Kemal* by bringing up a series of

reform policies which were detailed in: Nationalism, Secularism and Westernism.

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