

# ATTEMPTS AT REFORM IN WORSHIP: THE EXAMPLE OF TURKEY<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

In this paper, some religious reforms in prayer (al-salah) in Turkish Republic emerged after Ottoman Empire will be presented. The Prayer has a very special place and a special format in Islam. Its form was taught by Prophet Muhammed himself to his followers and Muslims have performed according to this style throughout the history. However, in Turkey it was decided to reform in Religious sphere in the light of republican revolution, and soon after the prayer was attempted to be changed in language and even in format. For this aim, some scholars in the Faculty of Theology at Dar al-Funun University worked on a Project in which some possible changing in the language and the format of prayer and adhan, and in the design of mosques was reported. At the same time, a Imam who was working in Goztepe Mosque, the Asian-side of Istanbul, delivered a *Khutba*, sermon and performed the Friday-prayer (salah al-Juma‘) in Turkish. Meanwhile, the government headed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk started to act of reform in Religion and turkified the language of Adhan, the other form of the call for Prayer (i.e. al-salah, al-takbirat etc.) and eventually of the prayer rather than Arabic origin. As a next step, turkification of all form of the Prayer was aimed. Although Adhan and the other form of calling to Prayer were delivered in Turkish, turkification of the prayer could not be succeeded properly. All these kind of attempts were displeased by some and were supported by some. By now, debates have always in agenda in Turkey. Therefore this paper is set to introduce briefly these religious reforms in language and in format of prayers. Turkey, religion, prayer, adhan, reform.

**Keywords** : prayer, adhan, reform, Turkish Republic,

## Introduction

The forms of worship that are seen as compulsory in Islam have their own special forms. These forms of worship have been determined in the light of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and Muslims have performed their acts of worship throughout history in these ways. This is especially true for the prayer (*namaz-al-salah in Arabic*), one of the most important forms of worship. Prophet Muhammad gave it its form, he prayed it in a definite way, and required the Companions and Muslims of future generations to pray in the same way. According to the Prophet’s way, *namaz* is to be preformed 5 times a day. Muslims are informed when the time for *namaz* (a time set according to certain natural phenomenon, i.e. sunrise or sunset) arrives via the *adhan* that is called from the minarets of the mosques. *Namaz* is prayed at these pre-determined times either as a congregation or individually. The prayer starts with the worshipper standing for a set time (*qiyam*), and reciting something from the Qur’an (*qiraat*); then the worshipper bows forward, with their back straight (*ruku’*), and then kneeling, puts their forehead to the floor (*sujud*), and then sits for a time (*quud*). These are all mandatory parts of the prayer. Except in exceptional circumstances these must be performed in every prayer. While throughout history Muslims all over the world have prayed in this way, after the establishment of the Turkish republic there was a desire to change the way and method of

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praying; in other words there was an attempt to reform Islamic worship. This study examines the attempts made to change the form of Islamic prayer.

### I – Attempts to Reform Islamic Worship in Turkey

It is known in Islam that permission is granted to make slight changes in the form and manner of worship, especially for those who do not have the physical strength to perform the *namaz* as determined by Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet himself gave permission for *namaz* to be performed in different ways for the ease of those who were ill, or traveling or elderly. There are many examples of this in books of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Those scholars who study *fiqh* have debated whether passages of the Qur'an can be read in a language other than Arabic, and some have said that there is permission for those who are not capable of learning Arabic to read these passages in their native language. Thus, we can see that over time some changes in the manner and form of *namaz* have been allowed, but as can be understood from the examples given above, such changes are not to be made the norm for all people, rather they are only permissible for those who are not capable of performing *namaz* as determined by Prophet Muhammad.

An attempt to make changes in the form and manner of *namaz* was made after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Whereas some changes had been allowed before for those who were incapable of performing their prayers as they were originally intended, changes that were available to those who were incapable, after the establishment of the Turkish Republic an attempt was made to make praying in one's native language available for all. Not only was *namaz* to be performed in one's native tongue, but there were some attempts to make a series of changes in the form of the *namaz*; these attempts made in Turkey had not been seen at any time anywhere else in the world. It is for this reason that these attempts carry such importance. These changes are outlined below.

However, the attempts made after the proclamation of the Republic cannot be said to be completely original. Some attempts that contained the basis of the ideas behind these changes occurred before the proclamation of the Republic. In fact, people like Ali Suavi (d. 1878) and Jamaladdin Afgani (d. 1897), who had great effect on Turkish thought during the *Tanzimat* (Reforms) Era, were influenced by the fact that other than the western Catholics, followers of other faiths were able to worship in their native tongue. They put forward the idea that the Qur'an should be translated into Turkish and that this translation should be used by Turkish Muslims when performing their prayers.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the famous thinker Ziya Gokalp (d. 1924)<sup>4</sup>, whose thoughts greatly affected Ataturk, was insistent on the idea that the *adhan*, *namaz* and other forms of worship should be preformed in Turkish. Gokalp depicted a country where the Qur'an was read in Turkish, where the *adhan* was called in Turkish, where *namaz* was prayed in Turkish and everybody was able to understand what they heard; he made it clear that this is how he thought the Turkish land should be.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Hilmi Ziya Ulken, *Turkiye'de Cagdas Dusunce Tarihi,II*, Istanbul 1979, 76; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanli Tarihi (Islahat Fermani Devri 1861-1876)*, Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, Ankara 1983, VII/215.

<sup>4</sup> See Gotthard Jaeschke, *Yeni Turkiye'de Islamlık*, (Trans. by H.Ors), Ankara 1972, 422-423; al-Amir al-Shakib Arslan, *Hadir al-Alem al-Islami*, (written by Lothrop Stoddard; translation from English into Arabic by Hajjaj Nuvayhid, edited by Arslan), Maktabah ve Matbaah Isa Albani al-Halabi and his corporates Şurakâhu.al-Qahirah, 1353, I/211.

<sup>5</sup> Ziya Gokalp, *Yeni Hayat*, Istanbul 1976, 11. See also. Ziya Gokalp, *Turkculugun Esaslari*, Istanbul: Turk Kultur Yay., 160-161; Kerim Yavuz, "Ziya Gokalp'in Dini Tutumu ve Din Anlayisi", *Ataturk Universitesi Ilahiyat Fakultesi Dergisi*, (Ankara 1977), number 2, p. 219.

## **A – Attempts during the Republican Era**

Upon the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, an empire that was one of the most important states and which had ruled over parts of Asia, Europe and Africa for nearly 600 years, a national administration was established in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk; after great struggles the new Turkish State was successfully established. Mustafa Kemal led the state, proclaiming the Republic in 1923, thus creating a new country, the Turkish Republic. This new Republic adopted “Westernization” as one of its primary principles and made many reforms in this direction. All the educational institutions were unified (*tevhid-i tedrisat*), Arabic and Persian words were removed from the Ottoman language, being replaced by Turkish words (the turkification of the language), Latin letters took the place of Arabic letters, and many changes were made to the legal system, the dress code, commercial and economic life, as well as changes in many more arenas. The last link in this chain of reforms and revolutions was seen to be reform of the religious life. For whatever reason, religious reforms were left to the end. Some attempts can be seen to have been made during this first period. They will be examined here.

### **a. The attempts of the Imam of the Goztepe Mosque**

Of these reform attempts, one of the most important was the action taken by the imam of the Goztepe Mosque. The imam, Cemaleddin Effendi (d. 1964), read all the Qur’anic verses and prayers in Turkish on 19 March 1926, the first Friday of Ramadan that year. He then proceeded to read all the Qur’anic verses, prayers, and supplications in Turkish. He even gave the final “salaam” (wishing peace upon the congregation) in Turkish. The imam recited the Qur’anic Chapters Fatiha and Asr in Turkish in the first part of the prayer and then Fatiha and Ihlas in the second part of the prayer, again in Turkish. Upon hearing this, some of the congregation left the mosque and complained to the Uskudar Mufti’s office about the imam’s behavior. The Mufti’s office informed the Director of Religious Affairs in Ankara of the matter. A meeting was held on the order of the Director of Religious Affairs, Rifat Borekci, who had been appointed by Atatürk, and the matter was investigated. The imam was found to be at fault and was removed from his post by a decision made on 23 March 1926, decision no, 743.<sup>6</sup>

The press got wind of the news two weeks later. The newspaper *Vakit* gave the headlines “Enlightened Imam Leads the Prayer in Turkish: Allah is Great!” The paper gave the Qur’anic chapters that the Imam had read in Turkish, along with an interview with the imam. In the interview, the imam said that he had based his action on the *fatwa* of Abu Hanife, and that even if there had been no *fatwa*, that if one used one’s intelligence one would reach the conclusion that praying in one’s native language was necessary. He went on to say “Turks do not just have a religion; they have a language as well. Has Allah created one nation perfectly, while – God forbid – He has created the Turks with flaws? Unfortunately, for many centuries we have been subjected to two kinds of capitulation: religious and worldly. The Turks, thank God, have extracted themselves from worldly capitulation; it is now time to save ourselves from religious capitulation.” He said that he had chosen the way that was easier for the people and that he was striving not to create hatred among the congregation, but rather to increase the number of people in the congregation. Cemalettin went on to say that those who claimed that “Worship cannot be performed out in Turkish” were slandering Allah and Muhammad, and he went on to say “I am of the conviction that if we continue to establish our mosques in the old

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<sup>6</sup> Ducane Cundioglu, *Bir Siyasi Proje Olarak Turkiye Ibadet I*, Kitabevi, Istanbul 1999, 64-65; Halil Altuntas, *Kur'an Tercumesi ve Tercumeyle Namaz Meselesi*, Turkiye Diyanet Vakfi, Ankara 1998, 106. (Altuntas, pointed the number as 660/55).

way that their doors will close down in the future. Just as Protestantism emerged from Christianity, so too from within Islam a pure Islam is needed.”<sup>7</sup>

The news was later written up in the editorials of the *Vakit* and other newspapers. Mehmed Asim, a journalist for *Vakit*, wrote on 7 April 1926 “If those who follow the faith want to have it read to them in Turkish and if this is how they want to pray, there should be no obstacles put in their way.”<sup>8</sup> Ahmed Cevdet of the *Ikdam* newspaper put forward similar ideas on 8 April 1926; he said that those imams who did not have an official post should be allowed to lead the prayer in Turkish if this was the wish of the congregation, but that it would not be right for those with an official post to do so.<sup>9</sup> Ahmed Agaoglu (d. 1939) touched on the same matter in his article of 11 April 1926. Agaoglu defended Cemalettin and stated that he was an enlightened imam who was only trying to develop the religion;<sup>10</sup> he went on to call those who had opposed the imam “bigots” or “backwards” and called for the Qur’an to be read in Turkish during prayers. Abdullah Cevdet, in his article “The Imam Who Said God for the First Time in Turkish”, praised the imam highly and supported him.<sup>11</sup> Other journalists, such as Hasim Nahit Erbil (d. 1959), Ubeydullah Efendi<sup>12</sup> and other writers stated that worship and prayer should be carried out in Turkish. Such writers emphasized the view that an individual should be free to perform worship in their native tongue. Basing their opinion on this view that worship should be turcified, they accused those who were in opposition of “bigotry and fanaticism.”<sup>13</sup> The situation continued to develop with the publication of a report in the Egyptian newspaper *el-Ahbaru'l Misriyye*, published in Berlin on 1 April 1928 by Sekîb Arslan (d. 1946), that Cemalettin had been ordered to do as he had done by the Halk (People’s) Party, which was part of the government. According to Arslan, after this action by the Ankara government, the next step would be to remove the *sajda* and *ruku* of the prayer (the prostration and bowing parts of the prayer), and then to reduce the normal five daily prayers to one prayer, maybe even reducing it so far as to be only performed on Fridays.<sup>14</sup>

Other imams did not support Cemalettin in his approach. It was reported that when the imam of the Yerebatan Mosque, Ali Riza Sagman, read the Qur’an in Turkish the congregation left the mosque, and it was not until the imam turned to give the salaam that he realized the mosque was empty.<sup>15</sup>

On 3 May 1926 the Director of Religious Affairs, Rifat Borekci made an announcement concerning these developments, stating that the Turkish translation of the Qur’an was not the same as the Qur’an itself, and therefore any prayer that was performed in this manner was not valid.<sup>16</sup> This put an end to the matter.

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<sup>7</sup> *Vakit Gazetesi*, 6 Nisan 1926, p.2. See also, Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 65-66 (news and interview exist in this work p. 215-218); Altuntas, 87.

<sup>8</sup> See Mehmed Asim, “Namazda Turkce”, *Vakit Gazetesi*, 7 Nisan 1926. for whole documents See Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 224-226. See also Hulki Cevizoglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, Beyza yay., Istanbul 1998, 206.

<sup>9</sup> See Ahmed Cevdet, “Medeniyetin Bazi Levazimi Vardir”, *Ikdam Gazetesi*, 8 Nisan 1926. For further information See Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 227-228; Cevizoglu, 205.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmet Agaoglu, “Turkce Haram Lisan midir”, *Ikdam Gazetesi*, 8 Nisan 1926; for further information see Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 229-231; Oman Nuri Ergin, *Turk Maarif Tarihi*, Eser Matb. Istanbul: 1977, V/1932-1933. See also Altuntas, 106-107; Cevizoglu, 207.

<sup>11</sup> Abdullah Cevdet, “Tanriya İlk Defa Turkce Soyleyen Imam”, *ictihad Dergisi*, 15 Nisan 1926. for the document see Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 219-223.

<sup>12</sup> For his relevant article see Ergin, V/1965-1967; Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 43-44.

<sup>13</sup> See Ergin, V/1965-1967.

<sup>14</sup> See Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 73-75. for further information see: Ibid, 238-241.

<sup>15</sup> Mahir Iz, *Yilların Izi*, Kitbevi, Istanbul 1990, 144.

<sup>16</sup> Beyanat için See 3 Mayıs 1926 tarihli *Ikdam*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Son Saat*, *Vakit gazeteleri*; Ducane Cundioglu, *Turkce Kur'an ve Cumhuriyet Ideolojisi*, Kitabevi, Istanbul 1998, 59; Altuntas, 108; Cevizoglu, 207.

## **b – The Attempts by the Darulfunun School of Theology**

The attempt at reform made by the imam of the Goztepe Mosqu was only concerned with one of the important fundamentals of prayer; that is the recitation of the Qur'an (*qiraat*). However, shortly after these events, another institution in Istanbul, the Istanbul Darulfunun School of Theology, made an attempt at reform that was a "reform of worship" in its full meaning. As we have mentioned before, after the proclamation of the Republic the idea of the turcification of worship was a matter that was brought up for discussion from time to time. It was even suggested that the government was in favor of such a reform. Thinking that this is what the government expected, one of the members of the Dârulfunûn Theology Faculty (İsmayil Hakki Baltacıoglu) prepared a wide-ranging report on reform in religious life and presented it to the Office of the Dean. M. Fuad Koprulu, the Acting Dean of the Faculty, sent a memo to the faculty members calling them to a meeting in which this report would also be included. In accordance with this memo, on the 18 June 1928, some members of the Faculty, including professors of theology, psychology, pedagogy and philosophy, met to discuss religious reform and the problem of modernization; these matters were discussed for a long time at this meeting. But the meeting dispersed without any solution being arrived at and it was decided that the members would meet again at a later date. Despite this, *Vakit* Newspaper managed to get hold of a copy of the report and published it as a report written by the members of the faculty.<sup>17</sup> The matter having been reported thus in the press, the members of the faculty met up once more. This was seen to imply that the report reflected their joint views. But there was no announcement on this matter, due to the political climate of the times.<sup>18</sup> Cundioglu evaluated the report and statements made by people like Yusuf Ziya Yoruken in the meeting long after the meeting. Moreover, according to the information he provided, everything had all occurred without the knowledge of Ataturk or the government. In fact, Mustafa Kemal telephoned the dean of the Darulfunun when he heard what was happening and asked him for information about the matter.<sup>19</sup> Other sources say that the matter occurred with the government's knowledge, and that the members of faculty had been requested to gather. According to this, the members of the Istanbul Darulfunun Theology Faculty were meeting to discuss religious reform and Professor Mehmet Fuat Koprulu was to head a commission at the request of the Ministry of Education via the university. The commission, as seen above, finished its report<sup>20</sup> and published in on the 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1928.<sup>21</sup>

In the report it is stated that religion, like other social institutions, could no longer meet the needs of social life and needed to be reorganized according to some scientific principles. The commission's recommendations were grouped under four headings. These were "forms of worship", "language of worship", "intent of worship" and "thought of worship". Under the first heading it was requested that rows of seating be placed in mosques and that people be allowed to enter the mosques with their shoes on. Under the second heading it was stated that all the prayers and sermons should be given in the national language rather than in Arabic. It was recommended that musical instruments be brought into the mosque and that worship be

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<sup>17</sup> See *Vakit Gazetesi*, 20 Haziran 1928.

<sup>18</sup> Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 80-83.

<sup>19</sup> Cundioglu, *Turkce Ibadet*, 83-84.

<sup>20</sup> Despite that we searched in archive of University we could not found a report presented to University Rectory by Dean of Faculty.

<sup>21</sup> See Ergin, V/1935-1936; Bernard Lewis, *Modern Turkiyenin Dogusu*, Ankara 1993, 410; Gotthard Jaeschke, *Yeni Turkiye'de Islamlık*, (Transl. H.Ors), Ankara 1972, 40-42; *Sebilurresad*, XI; number 267, sayfa 258-259; Seyyid Abdullatif, *Kur'an'ın Zihni İnsasi*, (Transl. M. Kursat Atalav), Istanbul 1995, 128 (quoted from *Islam in Modern World* by John Kingsley Birge, p. 44); Cundioglu, *Turkce Kur'an*, 60-61. Cevizoglu, 208.

performed accompanied by music.<sup>22</sup> This report was a “reform in worship” in the full meaning of the phrase. If the report had been adopted and such actions had been carried out, then it would have meant a reform of the most important form of worship in Islam, the *namaz*. Fortunately, only the recommendations by the commission concerning the language of worship were accepted, with the others arousing no interest at that time.<sup>23</sup>

### c – Attempts by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

As stated above, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk made some reforms that were in keeping with the philosophy of the new state after the proclamation of the Republic. It was thought that religion should be the final link in the chain of reforms and innovations. For this reason the matter of worship in Turkish was once again brought to the fore and became the number one issue in the country. From time to time the matter of translating the Qur’an into Turkish and carrying out worship in Turkish was discussed with great heat.<sup>24</sup> The debate on this matter grew and grew. With this increase in interest, the government took the matter in hand, and Atatürk himself closely followed developments.<sup>25</sup> Particularly between 1931 and 1932 efforts made in this direction were made under his personal control.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Atatürk desired that worship be carried out in Turkish.<sup>27</sup> In a manuscript written in his own hand Atatürk addressed those who complained about worship being carried out in Turkish in the following manner: “...Moreover, Allah sent a book for worship and praying in Arabic to an Arab tribe, not in His own language. If you do not learn Arabic you will not know what to say to Allah...”<sup>28</sup> One day, after the Struggle for Independence had started, the Minister for Education, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver came to him and said “Pasha!...Some of the religious members of parliament will read prayers in Arabic to prove that our mission is based on religion. The people won’t understand anything. Would it not be better to prepare these prayers in Turkish?” Mustafa Kemal answered him “Don’t worry, Hamdullah...Read them in Arabic and they will think in Turkish...Be patient! The day will come when we will solve the problem from the root...”<sup>29</sup> And then that day came. In Ramadan of 1932 Mustafa Kemal chose some imams, whom he had dubbed as “enlightened” and called them to Dolmabahçe Palace, assigning them to different mosques. With this order, the first Turkish *adhan* was recited on 30 January 1932, on the Night of Qadr, one of the most important nights of Ramadan, from the minarets of Ayasofya Mosque. At the same time, the chosen imams read the Qur’an in Turkish out loud to their congregations; they recited the prayers in Turkish. Now Turkish was official in prayers and the period in which Atatürk himself had reorganized and made Turkish the official language of worship began, with the *adhan* being read in Turkish and *namaz* other forms of invocations being carried out in Turkish.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lewis, 410; Jaeschke, 40-42; Sebilürresad, XI; number 267, sayfa 258-259; Abdullatif, 128 (quoted from *Islam in Modern World* by John Kingsley Birge, p. 44); Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, 411; Cevizoglu, 208 (Basak Ocak Gec, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Laiklesme Surecinde Dinde Ulusal Dil Sorunu*, Dokuz Eylül Univ. Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enst. Unpublished MA thesis, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> See Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 43-49, 68-72.

<sup>25</sup> See Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 73-80.

<sup>26</sup> See Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 80-97.

<sup>27</sup> Cemal Sener, *Anadilde İbadet Türkçe İbadet*, Ant yay., İstanbul 1998, 81-87; Jaeschke, 48; Cundioglu, *Türkçe İbadet*, 47-54.

<sup>28</sup> Afet İnan, *Medeni Bilgiler ve M.Kemal Atatürk'un El Yazıları*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1982, 365. and also See Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 188-191.

<sup>29</sup> Cemal Kutay, *Anadilde İbadet 1*, İstanbul 1998, 255; Yasar Nuri Ozturk, *Anadilde İbadet Meselesi*, 4. baskı, Yeni Boyut, İstanbul 2002, 74.

<sup>30</sup> For further information See Ergin, V/1924-1958; Ali Rıza Sağman, “Atatürkle Hatıralar”, *Millet Mecmuası*, V, number 10, (Mart 1948), 3; Hasan Huseyin Ceylan, *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Din Devlet İlişkileri*, Ankara tarih yok, II/361-369; Abdurrahman Dilipak, *Bir Baska Acidan Kemalizm*, İstanbul 1988, 161-162, 206; Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 88-89.

## **d – The Reaction of the People**

While it is easy to legally reform worship, to transform it into Turkish and to get small groups to perform their prayers in this way, it is an entirely different matter for this to be implemented in large groups or for the people in general to adopt such reforms. This was the case in Turkey. Before the reforms had even begun the people showed a violent reaction and strongly came out against the reforms. Their reaction was so great that it led to revolts and protests; Mustafa Kemal had to take matters into his own hands. In fact, on 1 February 1933 some of the people of Bursa came out against the Turkish *adhan* and in order to inform the local representative of the government, the governor, of their feelings, they began to walk toward the his office. The governor, upon realizing what was happening, requested help from the local army commander... The news quickly reached Mustafa Kemal in Izmir, who then sped to Bursa to take matters into hand. Those who had rebelled in Bursa were soon caught and punished.<sup>31</sup>

From time to time there were similar regional and local revolts. Laws were passed throughout the country concerning the Qur'an, *adhan* and worship in Turkish; the implementation of these laws was made compulsory and those who did not implement them were punished;<sup>32</sup> despite all this, this reform movement was not successful. Despite all the compulsion, the people in the mosques continued to pray in Arabic. The government, upon realizing the situation, did not continue to insist on prayers being recited in Turkish. In this way, the attempts to force the *namaz* and other forms of worship to be recited in Turkish failed. But the matter of *adhan* was met with more force; brute force was at times used to ensure that the *adhan* was recited in Turkish. Thus, for many years, the *adhan* was recited in Turkish at gun point;<sup>33</sup> it was only when the Democrat Party won the elections in 1950 that the *adhan* was once again recited in Arabic.

Bernard Lewis, in his evaluation of these attempts to make prayers and *namaz* recited in Turkish and the people's reactions to this, said: "It is possible to transform the Ottoman Sultan into a prime minister, ministers and a parliament; but it is not possible to transform the mosque into a Muslim church with seats, an organ and a imam-choir."<sup>34</sup>

This movement, which began with the innocent thought that "A person should understand what they are reciting when they pray," soon became a movement to reform Islam as a religion. There were committees set up for this, as we have shown above. The intention behind those matters that were suggested by the committee from the Istanbul Dârulfunûn Theology Faculty to the parliament clearly shows this. The report prepared by the committee suggested many matters that were connected with Islam.

In 1932, after these reforms, there occasional enterprises were undertaken, but these were of little effect, so are not worth spending time on. But, among these was the attempt by a retired teacher of geography, Osman Nuri Cerman, which must be examined here.

## **e- An Attempt by Osman Nuri Cerman**

The matter of reform in worship was once more on the agenda of the Turkish Great National Assembly in 1949-50. The person responsible for bringing this matter to the

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<sup>31</sup> Mete Tuncay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması (1923-1931)*, Ankara, 1981, 229, dipnot 37; Jaeschke, 45; Abdullah Manaz, *Atatürk Reformları ve İslam*, Izmir 1995, 210; Ceylan, II/415-420; Cundioglu, *Türkçe Kur'an*, 103-107; Sener, 88-91.

<sup>32</sup> Jaeschke, 46; Manaz, 211-212. the article 526 altered by the 4055 law of TCK (Turkish Law of Punishment) in 1939: "...Or who recite Adhan and Qamat in Arabic are punished with three month and from ten to two hundreds Turkish lira fine." (*Sebilurresad*, IV, number 82/100).

<sup>33</sup> Suleyman Ates, "Sorular ve Cevaplar", *Kur'an Mesajı*, I, number 4 (February 1998), 18.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis, 410.

attention of the Parliament was one Osman Nuri Cerman. In a report prepared by Cerman, which consisted of 40 articles concerned with legal religious reform, the first and foremost reform desired was the turcification of worship.<sup>35</sup> Cerman, in his draft of the laws, left out many sections of the Qur'an, replacing them with speeches and phrases of Atatürk; he desired that the Qur'an be reprinted in this way and suggested that this new form become the basis for worship. He also suggested, as had been done in the report prepared by the Darulfunun Theology Faculty that the carpets in mosques be removed and seating be put in their place, with the suggestion that worship be carried out in these seats. According to Cerman, instead of Friday Prayer Sundays should be made the official holiday, with prayers being held at 09.00.<sup>36</sup>

This attempt by Cerman was "reform of worship" in the most complete sense of the word. However, this report found no support in the Parliament and the matters that Cerman put forward were not seen by the members of parliament as something to worry about.

After this, there some other ideas put forward on the same matter, but they were not of such significance and were not greatly respected, so there is little point in examining them here. At this point it needs to be stated that as much as there were those who supported the idea for reform in worship, there were those who violently opposed the same ideas. Ismail Hakki from Milas (d. 1938), Ahmet Mithat Efendi (d. 1912), Yahya Atif, and Mustaf Sabri Efendi, who had formerly been the Ottoman Sheik-ul-Islam and because of the opposing views of the Republic had escaped to Egypt and settled there, writers from magazines like *Sebilurresad* and others, like M. Raif Ogan, Esref Edip, Kamil Miras, A. Hamdi Akseki, Necati Erdem, Saffet Aksu all strongly criticized the attempts at reform.<sup>37</sup> However, in order to keep this study brief, we will not go into details here.

A meeting was held by the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey on 15-18 May, 2002, under the heading of Daily Religious matters in Istanbul on this matter; from this we can see that this is still a matter that continues to be discussed from time to time. Many religious scholars participated in this meeting. The meeting, which brought up the matter of the need to translate the Holy Qur'an into a variety of languages, stated that "It is a mainstay (of Islam) that reciting prayers in their original language has been clearly and fundamentally stated as *fard* (compulsory) in not only the Qur'an but also in the explanations and examples of the Prophet. If everyone were to perform the compulsory prayers in whichever language they spoke then this would lead to confusion, argument and division. Such a practice is undesirable as it would destroy unification and break up social cohesion; the true meaning of worship would no longer exist. But, it is possible for those who do not want to neglect or delay their prayers, while they are still learning, to pray on their own using the meaning of the Qur'an in place of the actual words."<sup>38</sup> In the statement it is made clear that it would only be

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<sup>35</sup> For further information See Osman Nuri Cerman, *Dinde Reform Kemalizm* adı ile 1957 yılından itibaren yayınlanan dergisinin muhtelif sayıları; ay. mü. *Mutlu Bir Vatan İçin Düşünceler*, (Istanbul) 1962, 8-20. Ayrıca See Ceylan, II/175-176; Dilipak, 124-140.

<sup>36</sup> For further information see Cerman, *Mutlu Bir Vatan İçin Düşünceler*, 8-20; Dilipak, *Kemalizm*, 124-140.

<sup>37</sup> For these see Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Besair-i Sidk-i Nubuvvet-i Muhammediyye*, Dersaadet 1312, 98-100; Milasli Ismail Hakki, *Kur'an-i Kerim Tercüme Olunabilir mi*, İstanbul 1916, 2-3; Yahya Atif, "Lisan-i Beser Lisan-i Kur'an'a Tercümen Olamaz", *Sebilurresad*, XXIV, (1342/1923), 602, 50-52; Mustafa Sabri, *Mas'alah Tarjameh al-Qur'an*, al-Qahirah 1351, 3-5, 101-133; ay. mü. *Dini Mucedditler*, İstanbul 1969, 206-215. *Sebilurresad*, II, 32-46; *Sebilurresad*, XII, sy.279/51; Hidayet Aydar, *Kur'an-i Kerim'in Tercüme Meselesi*, Kur'an Okulu Yay., İstanbul 1996, 113-115; Cundioglu, *Türkçe İbadet*, 26; Altuntas, 61-65, 132-183.

<sup>38</sup> Guncel Dini Meseleler İstisari Toplantısı –I Sonuç Bildirgesi, 18.05.2002,

<http://www.diyaset.gov.tr/turkish/karar.asp?id=66&sorgu=3> (21.11.2002). See also Ozturk, 70.



natural for prayers that are made directly to the Creator with the desire of the worshipper to be made in the worshipper's own language.<sup>39</sup>

#### **D Conclusion**

The information that we gave above about the attempts that occurred to make worship in Turkish in Turkey, particularly after the proclamation of the Republic, have been outlined here. The Nationalization Movement, which had increased in importance at this time, as well as reforms made in the Protestant religion and the new Westernization policy of Turkey all played major roles in these developments occurring at this time. Except for in Turkey there has been no other movement found to introduce prayer in the native tongue of a country. Actually, it has been reported by Cemal Kutay that Musa Bigiyef proclaimed a fatwa stating that Finnish Muslims could read the Qur'an in the Finnish translation and that they could perform their prayers in the Finnish translations.<sup>40</sup> But this has not been confirmed by any other sources. As far as we know, everywhere else in the world Muslims worship in the original Arabic. The Iranians, who had for many centuries prayed in their own language, have been praying in Arabic for hundreds of years. As far as we can see the Iranian *ulema* was recorded as not perceiving the translations of the holy sources as *caiz* (acceptable).<sup>41</sup>

Worship in Turkish has frequently been on the agenda since the 1870s, and it has always held an important place. For nearly 150 years Turkey has feverishly discussed this matter at a variety of times. Now we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and this matter is still being discussed; it is our heartfelt wish that this matter should not arise again and that the consensus reached at the meeting held by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 2002, in which religious scholars participated, and the solutions suggested there will be accepted by all.

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<sup>39</sup> Guncel Dini Meseleler Istisari Toplantısı –I Sonuc Bildirgesi, 18.05.2002, <http://www.diyaset.gov.tr/turkish/karar.asp?id=66&sorgu=3> (21.11.2002).

<sup>40</sup> See Kutay, 159. Ayrıca See Ozturk, 50-51.

<sup>41</sup> See Abu al-Qasim Najm al-Din Ja'far b. al-Hasan al-Hilli, *Serai al-Islam fi Masail al-Halal wa al-Haram*, II Baski, Bayrut, 1403/1983, I/81; ay. mü. *al-Muhtasar al-Nafi' fi Fiqh al-Imâmiyya*, Bayrut, 1405/1985, 54; al-Sayyid Muhammad b. Ali al-Musavi, *Madarik al-Ahkam fi Sarh Sarai' al-Islam*, (Edit. Muassasatu Ali al-Bayt li Ihya al-Turath), Bayrut, 1411/1990, III/341-343; Enes Ergene, *Turkce Ibadet Tercume Ibadetin Arka Planı*, Zaman cep kitapları, İstanbul 2001, 95.