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Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

History of Society: Global History and International Relations

By the Grace of *Allah*?

Reasoning of Liberal Reform in Nineteenth Century Middle East



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Submission date: 28.07.2016

Cover Image: Ottoman liberals at a demonstration, probably in 1908

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Acknowledgements

With these acknowledgements I would like to thank the people who played a pivotal role in the writing process of this research.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Dick Douwes for the useful comments and remarks given as well as for his engagement and patience during the process of writing. With his expert knowledge, some difficult issues – notably regarding Islamic concepts and terminology - could be clarified, especially since I was ‘new’ to the research-subject of Islam.

Secondly, I would like to express gratitude to Dr. Karin Willemse. Not only did she introduce me to the peculiarities of context-related analysis - which I recall was not an easy process back then - but as a second reader of this paper she supported me in fine-tuning the main analysis of this research and in strengthening the structural composition of this paper. Without her help, I believe, the arguments presented in this paper, would have suffered a loss of force and effect.

Besides, these scholarly acknowledgements, I am also very thankful for the personal support throughout writing this thesis. My parents, Ulla and Ulli always encouraged me to continue with his research, particularly in times when I lacked motivation (I believe every researcher is familiar with this). Especially my father, approaching the subject matter from a laymen perspective, was never tiered to pose reasonable questions and criticize my work, which made it a lot better. As a researcher, engaging a subject matter for a certain period of time, it is rather easy to miss the forest for the trees once in a while.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and classmates, who were always willing to engage in discussions with me about this multi-faceted and polarizing topic.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The research mission – focus and containment

Lately, the debate whether Islamic and Western culture, their notions and values, are compatible has rekindled. This debate, often enhancing the view that both cultures are incompatible, has a centuries-old tradition. As the clash of different - and alleged disparate - religions and societies is an exigent issue in contemporary times, this paper focuses on the historical movement of Islamic Modernism. The representatives of this intellectual stream advanced the view, that Islam is able to absorb and inherit liberal ideas by religious re-interpretation, and thus find its place within the modern world.¹ Therefore they opposed the notion of an incompatibility of Islam and values of the West. When I noticed the sharp tone on Islam in recent media accounts as well as the public opinion, which shifted to perceive Islam as an inherently fundamental and violent religion due to recent developments in the Middle East, I decided to put the focus of my master research on liberal Islam. I believe that the Western perception of Islam and its role in violent conflicts is by no means nuanced, but to a certain extent fairly biased. Rule of thumb judgements are posed without taking into account important factors or circumstances, which may lay behind the surface. I hope with this paper I can contribute to a repositioning of Islam in Western public discourse, so that we can perceive Islam again as a religion depended on interpretation and detect liberal potential in it – same as we do with Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Islamic Modernism is generally regarded as an intellectual response to Western domination and colonial influences in the Islamic world in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Among contemporary Islamic politicians and intellectuals it was a widely held assumption that Islamic powers and societies had lost their position in the world and fell behind, thus Islamic modernists pleaded for a liberal re-interpretation of Islam and an integration of Western achievements in an Islamic framework. As the movement of Islamic Modernism was quite extensive in space and time (the movement was to be found in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire, in Eastern Europe and in South and East Asia; it persists until today) some restrictions have to be made. The research concentrates on the Middle East in the second half of the nineteenth century. This region

¹ <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t253/e9> 21.12.2015

and period was chosen as it represents the peak of Islamic modernism. In this period Islamic modernism was an influential movement, which had a major impact on the establishment of modern Islamic nation states in the early twentieth century (1906: Iran; 1922: Egypt; 1923: Turkey).

The representatives of the Islamic modernist movement targeted several and diverse realms of reforms (social, cultural, educational, scientific matters) in order to 'catch up' with the West. This paper, however, focuses on the ideas and notions of political reforms within Islamic modernism. Islamic modernists sought to integrate Islamic states and societies into the modern world by religiously reforming Islam and thereby intellectually enlightening their societies. Thus they needed to convince their people and the decision-making elite of their countries to reform the states on the basis of modern values and concepts. From this the main research question of this paper derives: Which arguments were employed by Islamic modernists in order to justify the implementation of modern notions and values? This includes an examination which concepts were central in the writings of representatives of the movement. In order to answer the main analytical research question appropriately, the two following sub-questions need to be answered prior to any such attempts: In what way and to which extent did Islamic modernists establish expertise, credibility and goodwill on parts of the audience? Which means and devices are employed by Islamic modernists in order to convince their readers that reforms are necessary? Generally, it will be of great interest which references and evidences the representatives of the movement employed in order to constitute their claims: Were they referring to religious sources, such as *Qur'an* or *hadith*? Were they also employing Western/secular sources and evidences? The main research question and sub-questions are analytically examining which arguments were brought forward in order to convince their audience of the rightfulness of the implementation of modern ideas and notions; the following subject matters have to find consideration for an accurate respective analysis: (1) the political, social and religious circumstances, that the authors were confronted with (2) the relevant prevailing political, social and religious discourses at that time and (3) the professional and intellectual background of the authors.

The main protagonists of the research are Modernist intellectuals who were not only active in the contemporary debate about disposing their countries of Western domination and enforcing modern notions, but who were also prominent representatives of the

movements at that time. One author from the context of the Ottoman Empire was chosen, namely Namık Kemal (1840 - 1888) as well as one author from an Iranian² context, namely Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi (1813 – 1895; Iran). Both of them have published books and articles, which were influential on the trajectories of their respective countries. In accordance, selected texts of their writings constitute the major primary sources of this research; Kemal published the reformist article ‘And seek their counsel in the matter’ in 1868 and Tabrizi wrote 1888 a letter to the Crown Prince of Iran Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Shah (1853 - 1907), explaining his reformatory ambitions as well as his claims and demands for specific liberal notions. In order to establish a cross section of Islamic modernist argumentation, the sources are fundamentally different, despite the congruence in content: the selected sources of Tabriz and Kemal differ regarding the context of the authors (Iran versus Ottoman Empire) as well as regarding their nature (personal letter versus published article) and their audience (a member of the royal family versus liberal-minded reformers). Thus this paper aims at extracting the common core, the fundamental principle of argumentation in Islamic modernist writing, which is irrespective of the nature of the sources and the audience as well as the context of the authors.

The primary sources of this research will be analyzed and the respective findings will be compared. Therefore this research is designed as a comparative-historical analysis, investigating the subject matter of argumentation within the writings of the chosen authors, in recognition of substantial differences: Are there differences or contradictions in the arguments and the way they are employed, which derive from the variation of the nature and audience of the sources as well as the contexts of the authors? Comparative-historical analysis is a method of great value when examining social phenomena over a period of time and/or space.³ The strength of this analysis is that it enables the researcher to draw inferences from ideographic (particular) explanations to nomothetic (general) explanations and vice versa; or to put it differently: it balances the particular with the general.⁴ This is of great interest for this research: Although this paper is an examination of writings of Islamic Modernists in a certain time and space, it might be possible to make predictions about the issue of argumentation, liberal Islam in general, the importance of denomination within

² In the following, the term Iran will be used instead of Persia. This refers to the self-designation of the Iranian people in the second half of the nineteenth century.

³ Lange, Matthew. 2012;. *Comparative-Historical Methods*. GB: Sage Publications Ltd. 1

⁴ Ibid. 2

religious interpretation and the correlations of Islam and politics. The central work of orientation here will be Matthew Lange's *Comparative-Historical Methods* as it is one of the most relevant works on methodology of comparative-historical analysis so far.⁵

Comparing Ottoman to Iranian authors is interesting in manifold ways. As the Ottoman Empire was a Sunni country and Iran a Shiite country, an examination of variation in argumentation related to religious denomination, will be conducted in this paper. As stated by many scholars, religion in the Middle East '(...) is a major dynamic force in history, and the way it is practiced at any time or in any place has political repercussions.'⁶ Is it possible to draw inferences from the religious orientation to the political agenda and vice versa? In this respect it will be also interesting to see how the authors deal with the subject matter of religious freedom, diversity and tolerance: Iran, as well as the Ottoman Empire were multi-ethnic states, with significant Christian populations in their territories (The Ottoman territory included parts of the Balkans, while the parts of the Caucasus belonged to the territory of Iran). Thereby the political trajectories of both states were significantly influenced by separatist uprisings in these provinces and respective European interventions in the nineteenth century. Will these events and processes echo in the writings of the authors? Both countries differ in the political culture and conduct of their state of affairs: The Ottoman Empire was a sultanate governed by the sultan and his grand vizier, while Iran was ruled by the shah and Shiite savants. Both countries have in common that their form of state is a hybrid between kingship and a *shari'a* state- that is a country, earthly ruled by a monarch (shah or sultan), where the *shari'a* is the fundamental principle, regulating private and public life.⁷ The sultan, as well as the shah promoted, or at least brooked, attempts to reform matters of state (like the military, the tax system, et cetera.) – with different degrees of success though. However, while the reforms in the Ottoman Empire were quite extensive, official Iranian reformist attempts remained fairly reluctant, consequently leading to different results and thus to different experiences of the authors: Kemal criticized the Tanzimat reforms, but experienced that his state is able to reform – albeit not necessarily how he had envisioned -, while Tabrizi was confronted with unwillingness, lethargy and immovability of his shah and government. Both countries have similar external

⁵ Lange, Matthew. 2012;. *Comparative-Historical Methods*. GB: Sage Publications Ltd.

⁶ Finkel, Caroline. 2005; 2007;. *Osman's dream: The story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923*. London: Murray. 13

⁷ Hourani, Albert 1915-1993. 1970. *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798-1939*. Vol. 197. London [etc.]: Oxford University Press. 25

preconditions, as both countries were politico-economical dependent on and exploited by the West.

Namık Kemal is one of the most prominent and influential men in Islamic intellectual history. There are many biographies as well as treatise of his political and social thinking and working. The interpretation of his argumentations and ways of thinking has already caused the one or other scholarly debate. He has a part in several book series or collections about Muslim reformers and/or thinkers in the nineteenth century such as Charles Kurzman's *Modernist Islam: 1840 – 1940: a sourcebook*. His impact on the establishment of a Turkish national identity is widely acknowledged, similar to his literary works, most famously his poems and plays. He was a 'Young Ottoman' from nearly the beginning and his person is widely recognized as one of their greatest thinkers and writers. The movement was quite influential on the fortunes of the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially on the Constitutional Revolution (1876) and thus Kemal, his fellow campaigners and their writings are recognized as resembling an integral part of Ottoman, but especially Turkish, history. This is also to be found in the domestic, yet also in international historiography.

The situation is rather different with Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi. Although his person and his works are widely acknowledged in his homeland, Iran and Azerbaijan, he has not received respective recognition in the West. He and his contribution to the development of an Iranian theory of liberal government are missing in all major Western book series and collections about Islamic thinkers. There is also no entry to his person in renowned *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, an encyclopedia which covers a great variety of determinants of Islamic history – regardless if persons, events, concepts or processes. The same goes for *Encyclopedia Iranica*, a website dedicated to the study of the Iranian civilization in the Middle East. Biographical references however are manifested in contemporary literature as well as in his own work *Yak Kaleme* (One Word), so that there is sufficient material to determine Tabrizi's religious and intellectual background. His major work *Yak Kaleme* has experienced a renaissance since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 – especially on the parts of Iranian exiles. In this respect several - though comparably little⁸ - discussions of the ideational content of his work have been published since, such as the

⁸ Compared to the impact of his work on the Constitutional Revolution 1906 – 1911, as well as compared to the attention received by other Muslim thinkers, Tabrizi is inadequately represented in Western historiography.

analytical review of his work by historian Prof. Vanessa Martin.⁹ His letter to Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Shah, the primary source of this research, has not been subject to any analysis or discussion so far. In recognition of the 'preference' of Kemal in Islamic modernist historiography, the following analyses will reverse this and examine Iran and Tabrizi prior to the Ottoman Empire and Kemal.

*1.2. Modern concepts and movements in Islamic countries – A scholarly debate
(Historiography)*

A republic¹⁰ is 'the form of government least suited'¹¹ to the people of the Middle East, who 'lack of real comprehension of the spirit of the Constitution'¹². This attitude, expressed by the French diplomat Eduardo Valmont serving in Persia at the wake of the twentieth century, can be considered stereotypical for the Western perspective on liberal Islam at that time. Although derived from a colonial-orientalist ideology, the discussion of liberal Islam even today has not reached a consentaneous conclusion. There is a quite rich and extensive, multidisciplinary (history, political science, philosophy, sociology, religious science) but discordant historiography on the field of liberal Islam; or to put it differently: there is a scientific debate about whether Islam is compatible with liberal concepts and notions. Charles Kurzman, who published *Modernist Islam 1840 - 1940. A Sourcebook* in 2002 can be considered a scholarly advocate of liberal Islam. In a brief book presentation (of his sourcebook) headed 'Liberal Islam. Not a Contradiction in Terms' Kurzman lays out the complexity of problems regarding liberal Islam.¹³ According to Kurzman, liberal Islam is heavily pressured from two sides. On the one hand liberal Islam is massively attacked by conservative Muslims, who state that liberal Islam is an implication of Western influence in the Middle East and that it turns away from fundamental Islamic values and traditions. On the other hand Westerners argue, that liberal positions based on an Islamic fundament - respectively the *shari'a* - are an aberration and therefore neither properly liberal nor internal

⁹ Martin, V. 2008. "A. A. Seyed-Gohrab and S. McGlinn: The Essence of Modernity: Mirza Yusof Khan Mustashar Ad-Dowla Tabrizi's Treatise on Codified Law (Yak Kaleme)." *Bulletin- School of Oriental and African Studies. University of London*, 71: 368.

¹⁰ In contemporary political (especially French) discourse the term 'republic' is used to describe a modern form of state which is a counter model to monarchy and autocracy.

¹¹ Ibid. 159

¹² Lorey, Eustache de, and Douglas Brooke Wheelton Sladen. 1910. *The Moon of the Fourteenth Night: Being the Private Life of an Unmarried Diplomat in Persia during the Revolution, Made into a Book by Eustache De Lorey and Douglas Sladen*. London: Hurst & Blackett. 156

¹³ https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/17147_05.01.2016

coherent. All in all: Liberal Islam is regarded either as not properly Islamic or as not properly liberal.¹⁴ However, Kurzman argues that a liberal Islam is within the realms of possibility and can be based on sufficient support by religious texts. Therefore he distinguishes meta-narratives, which were used by Islamic Modernists in order to justify liberal positions, such as the implementation of constitutionalism.¹⁵ Devotees of the *liberal shari'a* argue that the *shari'a* commands respectively requires liberal notions whereas the *silent shari'a* simply allows them.¹ Adherents of the *interpreted shari'a* state that the text of the *shari'a* is divine, the interpretation of its content is open for interpretation and dependent on context though.

Anver M. Emon, a professor of Law, published an article in the book *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?* in 2008 about the challenges and constraints of constitutionalism in the Islamic world, namely 'The limits of constitutionalism in the Muslim world: History and identity in Islamic law'.¹⁶ According to Emon one of the significant concerns of constitutions is to protect human rights and religious freedom.¹⁷ He argues that the dilemma with Islamic constitutionalism is that they include the *shari'a* in their constitutions by stating that no law can violate *shari'a* principles.¹⁸ As a consequence there is a tension between religious freedom guaranteed in the constitution and the omission, even denial of legal rights for heretics in the *shari'a* – therefore he concludes that constitutionalism is limited in the Islamic world.¹⁹ There are two issues that are problematic with his findings: The definition of constitution as well as the definition of *shari'a*. The definition of constitution includes among other things the rights and duties of the citizens – the rights are not narrowly defined though, so that religious freedom is not an inevitable criterion for a constitution. It is a Western perception that links constitution to religious freedom, as all Western constitutions include respective paragraphs. The definition of *shari'a* made by Emon is also problematic as he '(...) defines shari'a to include the historical tradition that discriminated on religious grounds (...)'²⁰. As pointed out earlier (with the help of Kurzman), there are various ways to perceive the *shari'a*, among them are liberal

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/17147_05.01.2016

¹⁶ Emon, Anver M. 2008. "The Limits of Constitutionalism in the Muslim World : History and Identity in Islamic Law." *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies : Integration or Accommodation?*, 258-286.

¹⁷ Ibid. 258

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

approaches. Many representatives of liberal Islam espoused human equality and religious freedom: Mustafa Fazil Pasha wrote in 1866, pleading for the implementation of a constitution that "there are no Christian politics or Moslem politics," he argued "for there is only one justice, and politics is justice incarnate".²¹ Furthermore there were Islamic modernists, who favored a constitution independent of the *shari'a*; the Ottoman constitution of 1876 as well as the one of 1909 were not based on the *shari'a*.

Raja Bahlul, a specialist in Islamic philosophy, tackled a similar issue in his article 'Is Constitutionalism compatible with Islam?', published in the series *Law and Philosophy Library* in 2007.²² Bahlul states that in Western conceptions the terms *constitutionalism* and *rule of law* have a much more extensive semantic meaning than its equivalents in Arabic.²³ Bahlul states:

'But this need not mean that Arab-Islamic political thought does not know what constitutionalism means, or that it is conceptually unequipped to deal with the issues that constitutionalism addresses. On the contrary, a concern with ruling in accordance with the law, the people's right to oppose unjust rule, liberties which rulers are not permitted to infringe, have existed in Arab-Islamic political thought since the earliest times.'²⁴

In his conclusion Bahlul depicts the interrelation between the important modern concepts constitutionalism, democracy and secularism as perceived in a Western sense: 'Thus, if constitutionalism presupposes democracy and democracy presupposes secularism, constitutionalism, too, presupposes secularism.'²⁵ Due to Islam's ascribed reluctance to secularism (see next but one paragraph), many scholars conclude that Islam is not compatible with the concepts of constitutionalism and democracy.²⁶ Bahlul argues that the problem could be resolved by disconnecting the two notions from secularism by means of definition and discourse.²⁷ Democracy as a political concept contains political equality,

²¹ Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 20

²² Bahlul, R. 2007. "Is Constitutionalism Compatible with Islam?" *LAW and PHILOSOPHY LIBRARY* 80: 515-542.

²³ *Ibid.* 515

²⁴ *Ibid.* 515

²⁵ *Ibid.* 537

²⁶ *Ibid.* 537

²⁷ E.g. Islamic democrats see in democracy a method to manage, share and dispense political power that is as a doctrine of procedure. Bahlul, R. 2007. "Is Constitutionalism Compatible with Islam?" 537

majority rule, popular sovereignty and representative government, none of these principles are inextricably connected to the notion of secularism.²⁸

Aside the debate outlined above, there seems to be discordance about the common claims of Islamic Modernists: Whereas some scholars, such as Bahlul, put Islamic Modernists on the same level with Islamic democrats, Kurzman states that while in nineteenth century Europe - as well as worldwide in the twentieth century - constitutionalism was associated with democracy, this was not *necessarily* true for nineteenth century Middle Eastern Islamic modernists.²⁹ Mostly for practical³⁰ or opportunistic³¹ reasons, some Islamic Modernists rejected democracy (similar to some modern political movements in Europe), but still believed in the implementation of a constitution.³²

Next to the scholarly debates about constitutionalism and democracy, it is a wide held assumption that Islam and secularism are not compatible with one another. There are two major arguments in favor of the incompatibility of Islam and secularism that a major part of the scientific world consents on: Firstly, Islam is not able to make the distinction between religion and politics and secondly, Islam is not only a religion, but a culture (which cannot be eliminated from public life).³³ Roy Oliver, an academic expert of Islam, brings forward important thoughts regarding this matter in his book *Secularism confronts Islam* from 2007.³⁴ He argues that there is a tendency in scholarship to treat Islam as being only one single, immutable religion, namely the fundamental one.³⁵ Thereby Islam has many biases, schools, different denominations and manifold and diverse ways how it is interpreted by its adherents.³⁶ In contrast to that, Christianity is often seen as secularizing social and

²⁸ Bahlul, R. 2007. "Is Constitutionalism Compatible with Islam?" 537

²⁹ Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 20

³⁰ Ali Suavi (1838 – 1878, Turkey) "argued that 'democracy is the highest form of egalitarian government and the most in accord with the holy law,' but was 'not possible when people lack morals, or unity, or in large countries' such as the Ottoman Empire, which needed a sultanate to remain 'in conformity with its geographical location, circumstances, and population.'" Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 20/21

³¹ Mahmud Tarzi (1865 – 1933, Afghanistan) was – after the constitutional movement of Afghanistan was oppressed by the king in 1909 – opportunistic and hoped to encourage the king to enforce reforms. He wrote, that a nation or fatherland 'without Government, and Government without a King, would resemble inorganic substance or a car without an engine.' Ibid. 21

³² Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 20/21

³³ Anzalone, Christopher. 2008. "Secularism Confronts Islam - by Olivier Roy." *Religious Studies Review* 34 (4): 314-315.

³⁴ Roy, Olivier. 2007. *Secularism Confronts Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁵ Gordon, Philip H. 2007. "Secularism Confronts Islam." *Foreign Affairs* 86 (5).

³⁶ Martin, Richard C. 2013. "Review of Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*. Translated by George Holloch." *Contemporary Islam* 7 (3): 425-427. 425

political force, even though the Catholic Church rejected secular tendencies until the early twentieth century.³⁷ So, why is the caliph's claim to absolute authority an obstacle to secularism, but not the one of the pope?

The debate has been revitalized due to many recent developments, such as attempts in Egypt or Turkey to re-base the constitution on the *shari'a* or the strengthening of a fundamentalist organization, naming themselves 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' in parts of the Middle East. With increased attention in the news and repercussions in Western societies (anti-Islamic movements for instance), the debate about a compatibility of Islam and secularism (still considered as being indispensable for modern societies) was carried from a mere scientific to a public debate. Akbar Ganji, a dissident Iranian journalist, wrote an article in 2015 for the *Huffington Post Online*, which was headed: 'Why Secularism is Compatible with Quran and Sunnah – And an 'Islamic State' is not'.³⁸ In the article Ganji outlines the issue for a laymen-audience, including definitions of state, secularism and Islam, but he also makes some inferences that are of great scientific value. Ganji argues that, in times when *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* came into existence, there was no such thing as a state (and therefore no government) in the Arabian Peninsula as people used to live in tribal organizations.³⁹ Thus *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* cannot contain instructions or incentives on how an Islamic state has to be organized; there is no model for an Islamic state contained in these texts - it is a matter of interpretation. Therefore a government independent from religion is not contradicting Islam (preconditioned that Islam is defined as consisting of *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*).⁴⁰ Some scholars see in the Islamic Revolution that took place in Iran in 1979 an evidence for an incompatibility of Islam and secularism, as a secular state was replaced by a theocracy.⁴¹ Other scholars evaluate the revolution in a more differentiated way, stating that various external and internal factors have to be taken into account in order to understand the complex causal correlations leading to the revolution.⁴²

Generally one can state that the debate about the feasibility of liberal Islam is Western biased. Islam may not be compatible with the Western notions of secularism,

³⁷ Ibid. 425 f.

³⁸ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/akbar-ganji/secularism-islam-islamic-state_b_6426300.html 06.01.2016

³⁹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/akbar-ganji/secularism-islam-islamic-state_b_6426300.html 06.01.2016

⁴⁰ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/akbar-ganji/secularism-islam-islamic-state_b_6426300.html 07.01.2016

⁴¹ http://www.academia.edu/4049976/Secularization_and_the_Iranian_Revolution 06.01.2015

⁴² Kian-Thiébaud, Azadeh. 1998. *Secularization of Iran: A Doomed Failure? : The New Middle Class and the Making of Modern Iran.*

popular sovereignty and constitutionalism, yet this might not be the claim of liberal Islam. Liberal Islam tries to incorporate liberal ideas and values *within* an Islamic framework. Therefore Islamic modernists were inspired by the West, but the semantic meanings of these concepts were modified in order to suit the Islamic needs (therefore the issue of translation is of central importance). Fariba Zarinebaf, a historian specialized on Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies puts it in her article 'From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran', published in the journal *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* in 2008 as follows: Islamic modernists '(...) paid lip service to Islam and couched their Western-oriented philosophy of law and progress in universal humanitarian ideas not alien to religion. They based their ideas on the tradition of reform, Islamic modernism, advice literature, and just government.'⁴³. Depending on the definition of the notions, as well as on the evaluation of their either voluntary or mandatory interdependence, Islam might or might not be compatible with liberal claims: Regarding the liberal triangle of popular sovereignty, constitutionalism and secularism, scholarship cannot consent on whether they are forcefully and irremediably entangled with one another, or whether there is room for mediation and negotiation. The scholarly debate is very likely to continue. Taking into account the various aspects of the debate outlined above, this paper contributes to the scholarly controversy by emphasizing the liberal potential within Islam. By examining how Muslims themselves created space for modern ideas and values within their religion and how they advocated them, this research participates in the debate to what extent liberal notions and concepts are compatible with Islam by adding an 'internal' perspective.

This research contributes further to the field of study on Islamic modernism in multiple ways. Notably, narrow comparative research has been quite neglected in this field of study: there has been no discussion of substantive differences in argumentation between Iranian and Ottoman reformists so far. In this respect, this paper examines whether and to what extent argumentation is depended on context, nature of source and audience. Thereby the common core of the movement – so what is advocated and what is criticized – will be extracted. Consequently this paper aims at exposing whether argumentation of political reforms as well as its contents was similar across the Middle East or whether there were

⁴³ Zarinebaf, Fariba. 2008. "From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran." 163

differences depending on the political and cultural context as well as on religious denomination. In nowadays times when religious and cultural differences cause constant local, regional and international conflicts, a comparative research as outlined above is more than reasonable.

1.3. Source criticism and methodology

As stated earlier the sources of this research – Tabrizi’s letter and Kemals article - are fundamentally different in nature, besides the congruence in content, since both authors try to convince their audience to implement liberal concepts into their Islamic frameworks. This also reflects the intention of both authors when producing the sources. In addition, both authors react to contemporary social and political conditions; Tabrizi as well as Kemal decry the flaws and the weakened international position of their countries (see 2.1.). Nonetheless, there are substantial differences in audience and form of publication.

The letter of Tabrizi, written in 1888 when Tabrizi was part of the Ministry of Justice in Teheran, must be considered a semi-private document. Tabrizi addressed exclusively the Crown Prince himself and as he was well-established in the royal family (he had received a ‘robe of honors’ by the shah and had several audiences with him – only later he would fall out of favor) he could have been in the position to write personally to the Crown Prince. However, he must have taken into account that the contents of his letter might not only be read by ad-Dīn Shah, but that it could go through the hands of royal consultants, and that the letter could even – in the worst case – be subject to an investigation, claiming his letter would contain subversive contents. He could have considered a subsequent publication, as he was a well know reformist at that time, due to the success of his reformist book *Yak Kaleme* – this however remains speculative. The letter was only published in 1918 - so after Tabrizi’s death in 1895 - in ‘the most detailed and reliable chronicle of the Constitutional Revolution *Tārīkh-i bīdārī-yi Irāniyān* [The History of the Awakening of the Iranians]’⁴⁴, written by Nāẓim al-Islām Kirmānī (1863 – 1918). This inclusion of the letter in the chronicle indicates that the letter probably circulated among Iranian reformists and people, as Kirmānī deemed it to be worth publishing in order to tell the story about the striving and struggle for a constitution.

⁴⁴ Gustafson, James M. 2016. *Kirman and the Qajar Empire : Local Dimensions of Modernity in Iran, 1794-1914*. Iranian studies, 26; Iranian studies (London, England), 26. Miltork, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 61

The case is rather distinct for the article 'And Seek Their Counsel in the Matter' by Kemal. The article was published in July 1868 in Kemal's reformist newspaper *Hürriyet*, so that it must be assumed that it was written for a liberal-minded audience with a high educational standard: at the end of the nineteenth century the rate of literacy in the Ottoman Empire was around fifteen percent of the population.⁴⁵ This included mostly the urban, intellectual male elite as well as the religious scholars, the latter being taught how to read and write in order to study the Islamic scriptures. At the time of writing the article, Kemal was in exile in Paris, from where he continued his reformist activities by publishing articles and pamphlets which would be smuggled to the Ottoman Empire.

As the sources, and therefore the research, are chiefly dealing with Islamic argumentations regarding liberal-inspired ideas and values, this paper engages the realms of the study of political philosophy (also referred to as the study of political thought). Political philosophy relates to the conceptions and arguments involved in opinions and attitudes on politics, that is anything referring to subject matters of government and governance.⁴⁶ Political philosophy – like all forms of human awareness and experience – is framed by its context. This context involves the political, social and cultural environment of the writer. In order to study political philosophy properly, one needs to reconstruct '(...) historically strict cognitive contexts against which past ideas can be placed to fix the focus of their meaning.'⁴⁷ Cognitive context is in contrast to the so-called objective context (set of features of the world, e.g. time, space, writer) defined as a set of assumptions on the world, which can be found for example in rules or axioms.⁴⁸ Various scholars of political philosophy advocate different 'keys' in order to extract this cognitive context: the biography of the writer, political language paradigms or intentionality and convention.⁴⁹ Thus the meaning of a text is determined by extra information (context) lying outside the text.⁵⁰ By extracting the

⁴⁵ Around 1900 the Ottoman Empire had around 24 million inhabitants. Taking into account the literacy rate of around fifteen percent, it can be stated, that between round about 3 million people could read. It was mostly men that were able to read, as most women were denied this education. For the variables, please consult: Karpat, Kemal. 2002. *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History : Selected Articles and Essays*. Social, economic and political studies of the Middle East and Asia, vol. 81. Leiden etc.: Brill. 266

⁴⁶ <http://www.britannica.com/topic/political-philosophy> 13.04.2016

⁴⁷ Tarlton, Charles D. 1973. "Historicity, Meaning, and Revisionism in the Study of Political Thought." *History and Theory* 12 (3): 308.

⁴⁸ <http://www.dif.unige.it/epi/hp/penco/pub/contr.htm> 13.04.2016

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

cognitive context, political philosophers seek to restrict the range of alternative interpretations of concepts and notions of the authors in question.

In accordance with the approach of political philosophy, the primary sources of this research will be analyzed on the basis of a context related narrative analysis. Context related narrative analysis pursues a strategy that the researcher perceives the narration as a 'text in context'.⁵¹ This means that the narration is seen and studied as a product of the particular temporal and spatial circumstances of the narration.⁵² Although the primary sources of this research must be considered political treatise or manifests, they tell a story: a story about decline and progress, about religious, political and social ills and respective remedies. In order to analyze and interpret the primary sources of this research as 'texts in context', one needs to take a closer look at the political and social conditions in Iran and the Ottoman Empire, the relevant dominant discourses prevailing at that time and the biographies of the authors including their intellectual backgrounds and positioning within the reformist movement. Only after establishing this context, the argumentation of Kemal's and Tabrizi's works can be analyzed and interpreted appropriately. Generally, argumentation is an interesting process within a narration. To give an opinion is always an act of arguing for or against something.⁵³ Therefore it is important to understand what is argued for or against as only then proper interpretation is possible (see 1.2. and 2.2.). Argumentation draws upon common sense, which is a form of ideology derived from history and society.⁵⁴ Therefore argumentation too depends on the temporal and spatial context the narrator is situated in and thus on the dominant discourses which are prevailing at that time (see 2.2.).⁵⁵

The chosen text-pieces were originally published in Persian and Ottoman-Turkish. Consequently, the sources were written in Modern Standard Arabic. As I am neither capable of reading Modern Standard Arabic nor proficient in Persian and Ottoman-Turkish, this paper relies on translations. Relying on translations is always a difficult issue within scientific research as translation always involves a minimum of interpretation. Words can have more than one meaning, or a word can have not a respective meaning in another language. This

⁵¹ Willemse, Karin. 2014. "'Everything I Told You Was True': The Biographic Narrative As a Method of Critical Feminist Knowledge Production." *Women's Studies International Forum* 43 (1): 38-49.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ C.f. Billig, Michael. 1991. *Ideology and Opinions : Studies in Rhetorical Psychology*. Loughborough studies in communication and discourse; London: Sage Publications.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Willemse, Karin. 2014. "'Everything I Told You Was True' *Women's Studies International Forum* 43 (1): 38-49.

can possibly lead to a deformation of the results. Within the Islamic modernist movement in nineteenth century Middle East, the case is special since liberal terminology was only then introduced in the respective languages respectively existing terms were modified in order to correlate with special European notions. In this respect, scholarship has extensively investigated how political terminology transformed during that era. Translations of the respective terms could thus in mostly all cases be validated by secondary literature.

Regarding the two text pieces analyzed in this paper, I will rely on translations which were produced and published at renowned institutions which maintain major centers for the study of Islamic thought and culture. The letter of Mīrzā Yūsof Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi to the Crown Prince of Iran was translated by Dr. A. A. Seyed Gohrab - a specialist on Persian language and literature - with the help of Sen McGlinn. The letter was translated and published in the extensive project 'Iranian Study Series' of the Centre of the Study of Islam and society at the University of Leiden, Netherlands. The project is dedicated to the translation of significant Persian literature. The article 'And Seek Their Council in The Matter' by Namik Kemal was translated under survey of Prof. Charles Kurzman, a specialist of liberal Islam. He published a source book which contains (the first) English translations of many influential writers of the Islamic modernist movement. Charles Kurzman with a group of section editors, each specialized in a different region of the Islamic world, have assembled, translated, and annotated the writings of Islamic modernists. The book was published by the Oxford University Press in New York.

A background-check on the origins of a translation is certainly a good mean in order to review the quality of a translation. However, it cannot shed light on the validity or accuracy of the actual translation. Thus – after reading the translated version of the sources – I investigated whether the claims of the authors within the writings are in accordance with other works of them, contemporary comments and references and secondary literature. No variations could be asserted.

1.4. Structure of the papers argument

The subsequent chapter 'Historical Contextualization' deals with several issues that are relevant in order to analyze and interpret the arguments given by Tabrizi and Kemal. The chapter will provide an analysis of the political and social conditions in nineteenth century Iran and Ottoman Empire. Since this research is chiefly concerned with the second half of

the nineteenth century, mainly the respective timeframe will find consideration. In order to understand main features of state however, some information on earlier periods will be given as well. Following this endeavor, an examination of the relevant prevailing discourses will be conducted by discussing the main concepts of this research political Islam, modernity and reformism. A blend of all three, form the integral discourse drawn upon by Islamic modernists. As a third part of the historical contextualization, the personal, professional and intellectual background of the authors will be provided. Thus, the following sub-questions of the research will be answered in this chapter:

- (1) What were the political, social and religious circumstances that the authors were confronted with?
- (2) What were the relevant prevailing political, social and religious discourses at that time?
- (3) What was the professional and intellectual background of the authors?

A conclusion of the findings will be given, which additionally contains some inferences which did not suit any other chapter, but are relevant in order to gain insight in the world of Islamic modernists. The third chapter 'Islamic Modernist Argumentation' will then provide an analysis of the primary sources of the research. Thereby, firstly the establishment of credibility and goodwill will be analyzed. Following this analysis, it will be examined how Tabrizi and Kemal justified their reformatory claims, in order to subsequently answer the main research question, analyzing the arguments given by both authors in order to advocate the implementation of liberal concepts and values. Again: firstly Tabrizi's letter will be examined and after that Kemal's article. In the last subchapter of the main analysis, the findings of the three preceding analyses will be interpreted and concluded. Therefore the chapter will provide answers to the following research (sub)questions:

- (4) In what way and to which extent did Islamic modernists establish expertise, creditability and goodwill on parts of the audience?
- (5) Which means and devices are employed by Islamic modernists to convince the audience that reforms are necessary?
- (6) Which arguments are given by Islamic modernists in order to justify the implementation of modern notions and values?

(7) Are there differences or contradictions in the argumentation, which derive from the variation of the nature and audience of the sources as well as the contexts of the authors?

At the closure of the research, a conclusion will be given in order to sum-up the main findings and to provide an interpretation pointing to the most relevant inferences. In order to explain my very personal motivation for this research, an epilogue will be attached to this paper. All relevant and used literature will be listed in a bibliography in the appendix of this paper.

2. Historical Contextualization

This chapter provides a historical overview over nineteenth century Ottoman Empire and Iran in order to shed light on the political and social environment the authors Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi (Iran) and Namık Kemal (Persia) were situated in. In addition the prevailing political and religious discourses will be elucidated. Biographical references as well as the ideational foundation of reformers in nineteenth century Middle East will also be facilitated.

2.1. Nineteenth century Iran and Ottoman Empire

2.1.1. Iran - Frontier frictions and reluctant reforms

Persia, which used to be one of the magnificent empires in antiquity, was geographically and politically fragmented throughout the middle ages. Since the Sasanian dynasty fell in the course of the Islamic conquest in the seventh century (651), there was no stable and enduring dynasty uniting the region. Only in 1501 a dynasty, namely the Safavids⁵⁶, succeeded in establishing a significant, powerful and enduring empire. After the Safavids came into power, they made the Twelver Shi'a Islam the official religion of state.⁵⁷ As Iran was surrounded by Sunni countries⁵⁸, the imposition of Shi'a faith isolated the country and Shi'a was also soon identified with the political entity of the state (a stance that is so significant for nowadays Iran).⁵⁹ After several changeovers of power, the Qajar⁶⁰ dynasty took over power at the close of the eighteenth century with the coronation of Qajar tribal chieftain Agha Mohamed (reign 1789 - 1797).⁶¹ Other than the Safavids⁶², the Qajar dynasty

⁵⁶ The Safavids originated in the Azerbaijan region as descendants from a head of the *Sufi* order in the fourteenth century. They implemented the Twelver Shi'a faith in Iran, which precepts implies that there were twelve imams succeeding the prophet Mohammed (570/573 - 632), whereas the last of them did not die but was taken to God in order to eventually return and fulfill Mohammed's mission ('Hidden Imam'). Therefore the last imam remains the only legitimate sovereign for all Muslims – which was in contrast to the caliphs' position in Sunni faith.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 51

⁵⁸ The Ottomans to the West and the Uzbeks to the north. Nashat, Guity. 1982. *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870-80*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 5

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ The Qajar were of a tribe of Turkmenian origin and claimed descendants of a Mongul ruler of the thirteenth century.

⁶¹ Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 1999. *Frontier Fictions : Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*. London: I.B. Tauris. 'Chronology of Major Events' and <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aga-mohammad-khan> 15.03.2016

⁶² The Safavid shahs legitimized themselves as divinely inspired representatives of the Hidden Imam. Cleveland, 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 110

did not seek religious legitimization, leaving the *ulama* with the privilege to provide interpretations on issues of Islamic law and practices.⁶³ The *ulama* did not hesitate to shape political acts by religious interpretations of the Quran throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Furthermore the *ulama* remained the relevant instance in education and justice. Similar to the Ottoman Empire, Islamic law based on the *shari'a* was supplemented by secular law in Iran.⁶⁵ In accordance, jurisdiction was carried out by religious and secular courts, each court with own cognizance and officials (all however determined by the shah), but the legal significance of the secular courts remained comparably low.⁶⁶ As a consequence there were no significant secular challenges of the dominant role of religious authorities and the *shari'a* in society and state – contrary to the secularizing tendencies of the *Tanzimat* era in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁷

Agha Mohamed established an absolute monarchy and ruled autocratic over his multi-ethnic empire, yet he as well as his successors failed to establish a uniform and stable administration and bureaucracy.⁶⁸ Thus, the local communities retained their administrative and bureaucratic autonomy and the structure of the empire remained decentralized.⁶⁹ Although chief governorships were introduced, these were left mostly ineffective due to flourishing and wide-spread corruption.⁷⁰ Although Iran had lost parts of its territory during the past centuries, it still shared frontiers with Russia and the Ottoman Empire, a circumstance which would significantly shape the history of nineteenth century Iran. In 1804 the Russo-Persian War, mainly triggered by territorial frictions over the territories in the Caucasus, broke out.⁷¹ After an Iranian defeat and a second Russo-Persian War in 1826, the treaty of Turkmanchay, signed in 1828 allocated most of the Iranian territory in the Caucasus to the Russian Empire (aside a part of Azerbaijan). Furthermore Iran had to accept massive interference in its political and economic sovereignty. Both wars did not only reduce the Iranian territory to a considerable range, but they restored Russia as a dominant power in the Caucasus and demonstrated Russian military superiority, which was a consequence of a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 113

⁶⁵ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judicial-and-legal-systems-iv-judicial-system-from-the-advent-of-islam-through-the-19th-century#sec3> 21.06.2016

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 113

⁶⁸ Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 1999. *Frontier Fictions : Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*. 55

⁶⁹ Cleveland. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 109 f.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 112

⁷¹ Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 1999. *Frontier Fictions : Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*. 15

Western-style reconstruction of the Russian army and navy by Peter the Great (reign 1682 - 1725).

Due to the decentralized structure and the self-ruling *khanates* and powerful chieftains, the shahs of nineteenth century Iran sometimes had little influence beyond the gates of Tehran (nowadays Teheran), the capital of the empire.⁷² In fact, when Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (reign 1848 - 1896) came into power, he was 'having no military security, no administrative stability and little ideological legitimacy.'⁷³ While the shah made reluctant reform attempts ('defensive modernization'), which remained ineffective, the *ulama* gained popularity and influence among the population.⁷⁴ Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh reformed the military, the administration and the educational system, but as he failed to intersperse them insistently and to discard old habits of nepotism and selling-off government posts and tax-farming privileges, the fundamental structure of the state remained the same.⁷⁵ On the one hand, this resulted in a massive exploitation of the peasantry as they lay in the tax-farmers focus; on the other hand it prevented a professionalization of administration and bureaucracy as positions were given to the highest bidder instead of to the most qualified.⁷⁶ This caused an unpopularity of the shah among the population. Popular discontent increased when the shah started to sell concessions to European countries, companies or individuals, thereby opening Iran to foreign economic exploitation.⁷⁷ This infuriated local merchants as it threatened their basis of existence.⁷⁸

Despite the economic relevance of Iran to European countries - in particular Britain - and Russia, as their financial capital was in a constant quest for new investments as well as their goods needed ever new sales markets, Iran sank into international political insignificance. Due to its strategic position, functioning as a buffer zone between the Russian Empire and the overseas possessions of the British Empire, the country became a chess piece in imperial power politics.⁷⁹ However, both empires sought influence in the Iranian governments as there were worthwhile concessions to be awarded, such as for building

⁷² Cleveland, 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 111

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 112

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Zarinebaf, Fariba. 2008. "From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28 (1): 154-169. 159

⁷⁹ Cleveland, 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 114

telegraph and railway lines.⁸⁰ In 1890 the shah awarded a British company with the exclusive right to sell, produce and export the entire Iranian tobacco harvest. As tobacco was one of the most important products to the Iranian economy as well as widely consumed throughout society, this concession united all layers of discontent and resulted in massive protest.⁸¹ The protest, later transforming into a boycott of tobacco, was supported and organized by the Iranian *ulama*, who used their independent power status to decry the distress of the Islamic people and the principles in contemplation of growing foreign influences.⁸² In 1892, the shah retracted the tobacco concession as the protest did not cease, which led the *ulama* to conclude 'that the Iranian people were receptive to calls for political activity based on Islamic frames of references.'⁸³ The last years under Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāhs rule remained as unproductive for Iran as the rest of his reign (he was assassinated in 1896).⁸⁴ Although he turned his back to European countries, he took loans from Russia, which made Iran a debtor state of foreign powers (similar to the Ottoman Empire).⁸⁵ He left the Iranian people – among them Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi – with an instable empire marked by unfruitful reforms, minimal international significance, Western economical, territorial and political penetration and the wish to fundamentally reform the state. In Iran, similar to the Ottoman Empire, an urban intellectual elite (often also educated in the West) had developed, who felt the urge to engage more actively in matters of state and to bring change to Iran in order to rise as a modern state and society.

2.1.2. The Ottoman Empire

2.1.2.1.. Internal instability and external pressure

The Ottoman Empire was an empire of size and duration that has not met its equals in the Islamic world yet. From its founding in 1299 to its dissolution in 1922 the sultan and his grand vizier steered the fortune of the empire. The sultans' authority was linked with religious legitimization (as 'caliph' or 'shadow of God on earth') and therefore he held the absolute power as a secular ruler as well as absolute religious authority.⁸⁶ Being the

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. 115

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 116

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Douwes, Dick. 2000. *The Ottomans in Syria : A History of Justice and Oppression*. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers. 3

fundament of the Ottoman concept of state (*dawla*), the *shari'a* was implemented throughout all territories under Ottoman rule, thereby being the only instance that confines the sultan's power.⁸⁷ Next to the religious legal system based on the *shari'a*, a secular 'sultanic' codification of law (*qanun*) was introduced in the thirteenth century.⁸⁸ In this way, coexisting religious and secular law paired with royal authority, were the main determinants of the Ottoman state order. The administration of the empire changed over the centuries - it must be regarded as highly pragmatic and flexible –, yet it was always based on bureaucracy, on recognition of (regional) diversity and on ruling elites.⁸⁹ With increasing expansion, Ottoman sultans recognized the necessity to establish an institution in order to coordinate the complex affairs of government, namely the *divan* ('the imperial council'). The members of *divan* – which was chaired by the grand vizier - were high ranking officials, who had acquitted themselves well, as their responsibility laid in advising the sultan regarding military, administrative and juridical concerns.⁹⁰ Notwithstanding these attempts to consolidate the empire on a long term basis, the eighteenth century marks the beginning of political and economic disintegration, which led to declining central authority as well as to intensive external pressures.

While the Ottoman 'barbarians' used to be a threat to European powers (most famously the Siege of Vienna in 1529) in earlier times, modern developments in military and technology enabled empires such as France, Britain or Russia to increasingly put pressure on the Ottoman Empire politically and economically from the early eighteenth century onwards.⁹¹ Ottoman provinces such as Serbia (1830) gained autonomy (supported by European powers and by Russia) in the course of the nineteenth century. The local autonomy movements were often evoked by nationalistic tendencies, thus leading to instability in the multi-ethnic empire.⁹² After a defeat in the Russo-Turkish War in 1878 and negotiations during the Congress of Berlin (1878), the Ottoman Empire lost nearly one third of its territory, most of it located in the Balkan regions.⁹³ Russia, France and Britain from now

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ The Ottoman ruling elite ('*askeris*') included the military, as well as high-ranking civilian officials and members of the *ulema* (religious authorities).⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 45

⁹¹ Burbank, Jane, and Frederick Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 341

⁹² Ibid. 336

⁹³ Ibid. 358

on functioned as protecting powers for former Ottoman provinces.⁹⁴ With these territorial losses, the percentage of Muslims in the Ottoman population increased as most of the Christian population was to be found in the Balkan regions.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the Ottoman Empire remained a multi-ethnic state, including Muslims, Jews, Christians of all denominations as well as non-religious people.⁹⁶

2.1.2.2. Reforms of the *Tanzimat* era

In 1839 Mahmud II's successor Abdulmecid I (reign 1839 - 1861) came into power. His first act of state was to issue the royal edict (*Hatt-ı Sharif*) of Gülhane, which proclaimed security for subjects' lives, honor and property.⁹⁷ He guaranteed all subjects equal legal rights, irrespective of their religion.⁹⁸ The idea of the *Tanzimat* reform project was to modernize the military, the administration of the empire. The reforms were motivated and developed by so called 'French knowers', an Ottoman bureaucratic elite, which was shaped by the cosmopolitan atmosphere, created by the institutions which were implemented by Mahmud II.⁹⁹ During that time Western-style education became *en vogue*, so that the offspring of the Ottoman elite were familiar with European languages - French in particular – and European literature as well as with European ideas and values.¹⁰⁰ Many of them had made educational sojourns to the West, where they had come into contact with liberal notions which circulated in Europe in the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ Later on, the movement of the 'Young Ottomans' originated from this group. The 'Young Ottomans' opposed the *Tanzimat* reforms as bureaucratic absolutism and demanded a revitalization of the empire by retaining the Islamic foundations of state and society, yet by incorporating selected European concepts and notions.¹⁰² Thereby they stressed the need for advanced reforms, taking France and Great Britain as a role model for further inspiration.

Inspired by European methods and strategies, the administration, education and political organization of the Ottoman Empire was reformed during the *Tanzimat* era, which

⁹⁴ Ibid. 342 f.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 358

⁹⁶ Ates, Sabri. 2013. *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands. Making a Boundary, 1843 – 1914*. New York, Oxford University Press. 11

⁹⁷ Burbank, Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. 343

⁹⁸ Burbank, Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. 343

⁹⁹ Cleveland, A *History of the Modern Middle East*. 79 - 82

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 84 f.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid. 85

'brought about a continued expansion of the role of the state (...). Although the Islamic foundations of society were not openly questioned by the new generation of Western-trained officials, their policies tended to reduce the institutional significance of the religious establishment (...).'¹⁰³ However, there were also attempts to strengthen Islam as more and more Christian missionaries were sent to the empire.¹⁰⁴ In order to finance the reforms (which went alongside expensive new programs) and the military upgrading while state revenues remained constant, the Ottoman Empire began to take out loans from European countries and investors.¹⁰⁵ When the empire eventually was unable to pay back the loans, European powers banned state monopolies and tariffs on external trade, which unbalanced the Ottoman budgetary planning.¹⁰⁶ From now on the Ottoman Empire was caught in a vicious circle of dependency on European financial support and European interventions in the empire's economy (which prevented an increase of state revenues).

In 1856 a second royal edict (*Hatt-ı Hümayan*) was issued, which reassured the principles of the edict of 1839, in particular the guarantee of equality to all Ottoman subjects. As a consequence, Ottoman subjects - whether Muslims or non-Muslims - had equal opportunities in terms of state education and employment as well as equal obligations concerning the military service.¹⁰⁷ The idea behind the edicts was to create the notion of a common Ottoman citizenship in order to counteract the religious and cultural autonomy of the provinces.¹⁰⁸ The notion of an imperial citizenship was thought to replace the religious structuring of society (in which Muslims were dominant) by creating a secular identity and in that way to regain the loyalty of Christian subjects in the autonomous Balkan provinces.¹⁰⁹ However, notwithstanding this common citizenship, which was meant to unite the multifarious empire, ethnical and religious discrimination remained rooted in society.

Further implications of the *Tanzimat* era was the promulgation of new legal codes in 1876.¹¹⁰ Inspired by the French civil code, these new codes included a system of secular courts (*nizame*) for cases between Muslims and non-Muslims as well as new penal and

¹⁰³ Ibid. 81

¹⁰⁴ Burbank, Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. 345

¹⁰⁵ Cleveland, 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 86

¹⁰⁶ Burbank, Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. 344

¹⁰⁷ Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East. 83

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ In 1869 a Nationality Law was proclaimed, which reinforced the notion that all subjects living in the Ottoman Empire shared a common imperial citizenship, which was irrespective from religion. Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East. 83

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 84

commercial guidelines.¹¹¹ Furthermore a new civil code, the *Mejelle*, combining novelties and customs of Ottoman legal codes, was promulgated:

‘On the one hand, it was based on the *shari’ah* and ensured that (...) the inhabitants of the empire would remain within an Islamic framework. On the other hand, (...) the *Mejelle* was inspired by European legal codes and its administration was placed under the jurisdiction of a newly created Ministry of Justice.’¹¹²

The same year, the first Ottoman constitution was proclaimed. Many Ottoman reformists had come to the conclusion that modernization included more than technical, military and administrative upgrading.¹¹³ They sought to tackle a political reconstruction of the empire and demanded the implementation of a constitution. More than a few of them recognized the opportunity for political participation and thus a chance to restrict the sultan’s autocracy. De facto, the constitution of 1876 limited the sultan’s power only marginally: he maintained the right to proclaim war and peace, to appoint, convene and dismiss ministers and members of the newly established parliament and to approve legislation.¹¹⁴ The parliament – consisting of two chambers, namely an elected chamber of deputies (consisting of 77 Muslims, 44 Christians and four Jews) and an appointed senate – was the first attempt to establish something akin to a representative democracy in the empire.¹¹⁵ It was dissolved by the sultan in 1878 after war with Russia had been declared (Russo-Turkish War). The constitution confirmed once again common imperial citizenship as well as equal rights. Therefore it is considered to be more than a political document, ‘(...) it was a proclamation of Ottomanism and Ottoman patriotism; it was an assertion that the empire was capable of resolving its problems and that it had the right to remain intact as it then existed.’¹¹⁶ All the reforms conducted in the *Tanzimat* era prove that Ottoman leaders recognized the exigence to reform the state in order to preserve it. And reforms were indeed needed: nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was politically isolated, internally unstable due to national uprisings in the provinces and economically and financially depended on the West (in 1874 60 percent of the state’s total expenditure was devoted to debt redemption).¹¹⁷ It was in this

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid. 86

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Burbank, Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. 344 and Cleveland, 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 86

¹¹⁶ Cleveland, 2004. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 86

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

climate of state reformation and transformation, of Europeanization and of secularizing tendencies - yet also the feeling of being exposed to Western domination - that the author Namık Kemal was situated in.

2.2. *Islamic modernist discourse*

The following three subchapters provide a historical analysis of the three concepts most relevant to this research, in order to indicate the dominant discourses and the ideological foundation of Islamic Modernism.

2.2.1. *Political Islam*

Political Islam (also referred to as Islamic political thought) refers to the conception that all aspects of life are framed by the religious belief in Islam.¹¹⁸ Therefore also politics are inextricably connected with and shaped by Islamic faith. This idea is expressed in the holistic maxim 'Islam is religion and state' (*Islam din wa dawla*) and suggests that Islam is a religion with a political mission at its core.¹¹⁹ Political Islam however does not refer to one stream, not to one unified movement, but it has many variations. The maxim 'Islam is religion and state' includes two divergent elements, namely 'religion' and 'state'. This indicates that the two notions are actually separate (both conceptual and in practice), and that their ultimate relationship to each other is subject to interpretation and therefore variation.¹²⁰ Scholarship has differentiated two major tendencies within Islamic political thought. On the one hand, there is the ideology of intransigence, which strives for the ideal Islamic state '(...) insofar as it faithfully responds to the precepts of Islam and finds itself in perfect concordance with the spirit and letter of these precepts.'¹²¹ This way of ideological thinking orients its image of an ideal society on the Prophetic community, which was established by Muhammad in the seventh century.¹²² All layers of society - the moral, social and political dimensions - are then

¹¹⁸ Butterworth, Charles E., and I. William. Zartman. 1992. *Political Islam*. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, v. 524, November 1992; Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, v. 524. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications. 8

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Butterworth, Charles E., and I. William. Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. Woodrow Wilson Center series. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press. 90

¹²² Butterworth, Zartman. 1992. *Political Islam*. 14

marked by an omnipresence of Islamic faith.¹²³ Therefore there is no differentiation between religion and state and thus no distinction between religious and secular authority.¹²⁴

On the other hand, there is the ideology of acceptance (also referred to as ideology of justification). This tendency of ideological thinking is linked to the prevailing social and political circumstances, thereby far more attracted by the here and now and less oriented on the transcendental, compared to the ideology of intransigence.¹²⁵ In accordance with this, the ideology of acceptance orients itself on the (later) imperial Islamic society, which succeeded the Prophetic community on the basis of the Arab Muslim conquest.¹²⁶ Although Islam was still considered '(...) a total way of life defining political as well as social and family matters, most Muslim societies did not conform to this ideal. They were in fact built around separate institutions of state and religion.'¹²⁷ The regime of the imperial Islamic society was framed by the laws of political survival, rather than by religious norms, thus developing an increasingly secularized political identity.¹²⁸ Both, the prophetic community as well as the imperial Islamic society are considered historical paradigms, each of which carries its own conceptual parameters for political institutions and theory.¹²⁹ The two ways of Islamic political thinking – one idealistic, the other realistic – participate in the contestation over the role and place of Islam in the world, nowadays as well as historically.

Historically, Islamic faith has always been linked to political rule in the Middle East in form of legitimization of authority and as ideological orientation.¹³⁰ However, the nineteenth century introduced new political, social and cultural conditions to the Middle East, which led to the emergence of '(...) an Islamic political thought itself novel in form as well as in content.'¹³¹ The very new characteristic of nineteenth century's political Islamic thought was that it was largely defined, and largely defined itself, in relation to the West.¹³² The nineteenth century was marked by an increased contact with Western states and empires - mostly resulting in economic penetration and exploitation. Furthermore, several wars - as

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 90

¹²⁶ Butterworth, Zartman. 1992. *Political Islam*. 15

¹²⁷ Ibid. 16

¹²⁸ Ibid. 15

¹²⁹ Ibid. 14

¹³⁰ Ibid. 29

¹³¹ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 91

¹³² Black, Anthony. 2011. *The History of Islamic Political Thought, Second Edition: The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. 281

well as interferences into Muslim countries sovereignties, such as the support of nationalistic uprisings - reaffirmed Western superiority in weapon technology and warfare (e.g. Anglo-Persian War 1856 – 1857 or Russo-Turkish War 1877 - 78). All this brought about an Islamic recognition of Western progress in scientific, technical, social and political concerns, while Islamic intellectuals identified stagnation - even backwardness - regarding those issues in their own countries.¹³³ Islamic modernists took account of Western achievements and sought to improve upon them by religious re-interpretation. In fact, they developed the idea that Islam was in perfect accordance with modern ideas and values, which '(...) Europe had borrowed from Islam.'¹³⁴ By implementing concepts such as constitutionalism or popular sovereignty in an Islamic framework, liberal intellectuals tried to incorporate Islamic societies into the alleged modern world.

2.2.2. *Modernity*

In a general sense modernity is associated with scrutinizing and challenging traditions as well as prevailing social and political circumstances and conditions.¹³⁵ Modernity in the setting of this research must be defined in a sociopolitical sense, although it also brought about significant technological and scientific changes. The origins of modern ideas, values and concepts are commonly identified in the West, more correctly in central and western Europe. Modernity in a sociopolitical common sense is associated with the basic idea to give rights to the people.¹³⁶ In this respect most prominent representative events of modernity are the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Revolution (1789), both of which asserted freedom, equality and political participation to the people (the conceptual and ideational development of these ideas has started a lot earlier though). Fundamental to these events and the 'modernizing' process were ideas on rationality and progress - developed during the era of enlightenment - leading to liberal conceptions of state and government.

In the course of the nineteenth century Western societies spread their liberal notions via trade and imperialism to the whole world. Thereby their institutional and conceptual ideas challenged non-Western societies and pressured them to response to these new

¹³³ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 2

¹³⁴ Black. 2011. *The History of Islamic Political Thought*. 281

¹³⁵ Hunt, Lynn. 2008. *Measuring Time, Making History*. The Natalie Zemon Davis annual lecture series; Budapest: Central European University Press. 47 f.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

notions.¹³⁷ By creating a blend between modern notions and traditional/regional/cultural characteristics, non-Western societies reacted to 'the spread of modernity', thereby creating a heterogeneous landscape of modern societies.¹³⁸ The Western program on modernity often served as reference point for respective societies, however all turned out to develop divergent to the 'original' Western model: They were '(...) distinctively modern, though greatly influenced by specific cultural premises, traditions, and historical experiences.'¹³⁹ Following the recognition that modern societies could develop differently at different times and places, the conception of 'multiple modernities' was developed. Modernity was - for a long time - perceived as being unique to Western societies, other societies only striving to achieve the same or a similar level of civilization.¹⁴⁰ The conditions for a modern society were in fact only identified in European and North American societies. Only recently (1987) the alternative conception of 'multiple modernities' was introduced by sociologist Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. In his considerations, which found great resonance in the scientific world, modernity is defined in a more flexible sense as '(...) story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs.'¹⁴¹ Thus there is not *one* modernity, which spreads from the West to the whole globe. Western modernity is then not considered to be the only authentic one, but there are 'unique expressions of modernity' in each society. In this respect, Eisenstadt --as a lot of other scholars in social science - raised the question of '(...) what constitutes the common core of modernity'¹⁴²? The answer to this question is too complex to be adequately discussed in this paper. However, in the following the relevant political dimensions of modernity shall be briefly discussed.

Modernity is inextricably connected with liberalism. Liberalism (again: in a sociopolitical sense) is a political ideology, which originated in England in the seventeenth century. Ideational it emanated from a movement opposing absolutism of the coeval English political system (absolute monarchy).¹⁴³ The core principles of liberalism are egalitarianism, the right of self-determination, the confinement of political power as well as personal freedom towards the state.¹⁴⁴ From these principles various political concepts developed,

¹³⁷ Eisenstadt, S. N. 2000. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129 (1): 1-29. 2

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 1

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 2

¹⁴² Ibid. 3

¹⁴³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberalism> 12.07.2016

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/politiklexikon/17794/liberalismus> 08.06.2016

which developed to be fundamental pillars of many present-day states in the world: Constitutionalism, popular sovereignty, citizenship, codified law, separation of powers and secularism.

2.2.3. Reformism

As reformism is a widely used historical and political concept with a century long tradition, this chapter will primarily analyze the character of nineteenth century Middle Eastern reformism. Although there were several reform movements active in nineteenth century Middle East (e.g. Islamic Revivalists or Nationalists), this section primarily examines Islamic Modernism. Thus the term 'reformist' is used synonymously to 'Islamic modernist'.

The systems of state of the Ottoman Empire, as well as of Iran were distinctive, both of them were however build upon dynastic rule in combination with Islamic law.¹⁴⁵ Their system of state was putatively derived from the Islamic scriptures and traditions, and fundamentally intertwined with religious authorities and structures. As a consequence, any attempt to reform fundamental matters of state – let alone the established religious system – was condemned as heretical or 'anti-Islamic' by the ruling elite and the established religious and civil authorities.¹⁴⁶ Exempted were reforms regarding the military or administration (matters of *dawla*), as those sectors were not identified as laying at the core of an Islamic state or society (in contrast to education or monarchic absolutism, which lay in the sector of *dīn*). However, when calls for political reforms (e.g. constitutionalism) arose in nineteenth century Middle East, those were often charged as being contrary to the Islamic fundamentals. Thus many Islamic reformers were forced into political - and in parts also social and religious - opposition, which resulted in a conceptual correlation between 'reforming' and 'opposition' in the religiopolitical landscape of the Middle East.¹⁴⁷ Logically, prior to any calls for the implementation of specific concepts, reformers had to prove their right to make such an argument at all.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Douwes, 2000. *The Ottomans in Syria: A History of Justice and Oppression*. 3 and <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judicial-and-legal-systems-iv-judicial-system-from-the-advent-of-islam-through-the-19th-century#sec3> 21.06.2016

¹⁴⁶ Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 10 f.

¹⁴⁷ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 92

¹⁴⁸ Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 9

In order to defend their claims, Islamic reformers identified the basic idea of reforming in the *Qur'an*.¹⁴⁹ Various translations of the *Qur'an* to European languages identified '*işlāh*' to resemble something akin to the European concept of 'reform', it was seen as improvement of the current conditions of state and society.¹⁵⁰ Although it is used in multiple senses in the *Qur'an* - whether as 'peaceful action (*şulh*)'¹⁵¹, 'public interest (*maslahah*)'¹⁵² or as 'pious deed (*'amal ṣaliḥ*)'¹⁵³ -, all indicate a tactical reconstruction of the prevailing conditions. It came in this way that Muslims calling for *işlāh*, perceived reforming as a righteous action, which was in perfect accordance with the spirits of Islam (an important feature of Islamic political thought, see 1.2.)¹⁵⁴.¹⁵⁵ When Muslim thinkers – especially Islamic modernists - came increasingly into contact with Western ideas and values in the course of the nineteenth century, also their notion of *işlāh* was modified: it now became to be '(...) an appeal to progress, a breath of renovation, and the promise of a better future.'¹⁵⁶ Although this meaning cannot be derived from *Qur'an* or *Sunnah*, Islamic modernists advocated this adjustment as '(...) the '*ulama*' in every era wrote books in accordance with the needs of the day. (...) We must also reform the theological books with the needs of our era.'¹⁵⁷ Notwithstanding this conceptual approval of reformatory actions through *Qur'anic işlāh*, reformers in the Middle East had to challenge the established Islamic scholarly authority in order to justify their claims.¹⁵⁸

As Islamic reformers sought to find support for their ideas in *hadith* or *Qur'an*, they had to engage the realms of religious interpretation. Thus they were challenging the Islamic legal schools (*madhhabs*), which held a monopoly on religious education and interpretation.¹⁵⁹ There were several *madhhabs* acknowledged in the Islamic world (Sunnis and Shias each having different schools), providing guidelines for Islamic law by interpreting the Islamic scriptures. Their monopoly was built upon the practice of *taqlid*, which stipulated

¹⁴⁹ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 91

¹⁵⁰ Butterworth and Zartman confirm: 'Other derivatives from the verb *aşlahā* confirm the accuracy of such a choice.' Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1459> 21.06.2016

¹⁵³ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 91

¹⁵⁴ However, it is important to mention that there were also Muslim reformers, who were tackling social and political issues without engaging in religious spheres. Ibid. 101

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 92

¹⁵⁶ Aziz, Ahmad, "*işlāh*", in: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed, vol. 4, 141 – 171, 150

¹⁵⁷ The issue was discussed by Musa Kazım (1858 - 1920), a Turkish Islamic modernist. Kurzman, Charles. 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 10

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 9

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

that Muslims should follow established scholars, that is one of the *madhhabs*.¹⁶⁰ Many Islamic modernists followed the *Salafi* movement, a religious-puritan stream in Sunni faith founded by the religious scholars Dschamal ad-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838 - 1897) and Muhammad `Abduh (1849 - 1905). Adherents of the Salafi movement argued that the 'blind acceptance of traditional doctrines and customs'¹⁶¹ led Muslims to misconceive the Islamic scriptures and thus veered away from the true spirits of Islam. This displacement of Muslim societies from the original religion of Islam was seen as one of the causes of the decline of Islamic powers in the world. In accordance, they proposed the remedy for this problem: a return to the commendable moral conduct of their Islamic predecessors (*as-salaf as-salih*), namely Mohammad and his early followers.¹⁶² Islamic reformers condemned *taqlid* as religious incapacitation for encouraging Muslims to blindly and irrationally imitate the precepts of Islamic tradition.¹⁶³ *Taqlid* was seen as '(...) instrument of institutional authority designed to suppress challenging views'¹⁶⁴ and thus it supported political tyranny in Islamic states. In order to conceptualize and legitimize their claims for reforms, Islamic modernists lifted the *Qur'anic* notion *ijtihad* (effort, struggle) from a rather specific meaning to a more general one.¹⁶⁵ The term was originally used to describe the scholarly strains of trained Islamic authorities to develop legal guidelines for issues which were not covered by Islamic sources. Islamic modernists broadened the scope of the meaning, now being used to refer to the more general endeavor to achieve an independent religious judgement, and three further implications were developed.¹⁶⁶ Firstly, the term includes the permission to reach across different *madhhabs* in order to conceive a differentiated perspective. Secondly, *ijtihad* contains the right to pretermite the *madhhabs* and to call on the Islamic sources directly.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Muhammad-Abduh> 11.07.2016

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Muhammad Husayn Na'ini (1860 – 1936, Iran) wrote: '*Taqlid* of religious leaders who pretend to present true religion is no different from obedience to political tyrants. Either one is a form of idolatry.' Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 10

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 9

¹⁶⁶ Islamic modernists advocated the right for active reinterpretation of Islamic sources, but only for Muslims '(...) who have the capacity and opportunity to understand the proofs of God and His law.' By this Islamic modernists mostly referred to themselves and their fellow campaigners. Islamic modernists always expressed great confidence into their own competences, whether legitimized by seminary training, personal experience or modern education. As a consequence, also Islamic modernists required certain qualifications in order to be eligible for proper interpretation of Islamic sources, thus too neglecting widespread popular religious interpretation. Ibid.

Thirdly, it comprised the dedication to reconcile the Islamic sources with human reason and rationality, both notions that entail modern values and concepts.¹⁶⁷

Notwithstanding these attempts to legitimize reformatory claims on the grounds of the Islamic sources, being a reformist in nineteenth century Middle East remained fairly dangerous.¹⁶⁸ Due to the nature of their systems of state, they were forced into political and religious opposition. As Islamic modernists advocated concepts restricting the monarchs' absolute power and questioning the authority of the established Islamic jurisdiction, conservative forces tried to restrict it. Means of silencing this - in the eyes of the civil and religious elite seditious - movement were censorship, exile and imprisonment. In the Ottoman Empire and Iran, there was a '(...) total and absolute censorship (...)'¹⁶⁹. The boards of censorship in both countries demanded to have a voice in any kind of publication, whether in newspapers, journals, pamphlets, tractates or books. As the contents of modernist writings were usually considered oppositional, the chances of getting officially published were marginal. As response, Islamic modernist managed to publish their works either secretly¹⁷⁰ or abroad and the so called night letters (*šab-nāma*) - papers containing political oppositional content and distributed secretly at night - gained popularity.¹⁷¹ In this way modernist ideas and notions increasingly gained prominence and approval among the population.

Whether publicly or secretly active, it remained a dangerous endeavor to call for reforms: Mīrzā Yūsof Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi was reportedly battered and imprisoned only for being suspected of being the author of an article, published in an oppositional journal.¹⁷² In both, Iran and the Ottoman Empire, draconic sentences for involvement with the fabrication or distribution of oppositional contents were introduced. In Iran for example, the *Ketābčā-ye qānūn-e Kont*¹⁷³ ('the Conte code') assessed sentences up to fifteen years imprisonment for the distribution of subversive contents or the support of

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Butterworth, Zartman. 2001. *Between the State and Islam*. 92

¹⁶⁹ Reid, James J. 2000. *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire : Prelude to Collapse, 1839-1878*. Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, Bd. 57; Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, Bd. 57. Stuttgart: F. Steiner. 19

¹⁷⁰ With increasingly strict censorship, underground printing offices came into being in many parts of the Middle East. These printed forbidden works and secretly published them. Ibid.

¹⁷¹ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/censorship-sansur-in-persia> 21.06.2016

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ *Ketābčā-ye qānūn-e Kont* was a new legal code established with the help of Conte de Monte Forte, a Italian police officer, who was hired in order to modernize the Iranian police forces. Ibid.

oppositional movements.¹⁷⁴ All these means impeded the movement, but it did not incapacitated it, Islamic Modernism continued to gain ground in nineteenth century Middle East. Although it was increasingly influential and popular among the Iranian and Ottoman populations, it remained an intellectual movement (uniting intellectuals from diverse backgrounds and origins)¹⁷⁵. Only with the weakened position of the monarchic authority, external pressures and the pairing with other movements and streams, Islamic Modernism could evolve its force and effect, which made it one of the driving forces in the revolutions in the early twentieth century.

2.3. Biographical references

The following subchapters provide an historical analysis of the personal background, professional career and the intellectual foundation of the protagonists of this research Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi and Namık Kemal.

2.3.1. Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi

2.3.1.1. From civil service to civil disobedience

Mīrzā Yūsuf Khan Mostašār Tabrizi was born in 1813 as son of an Azeri merchant in the city of Tabriz, Iran.¹⁷⁶ He followed a traditional education by studying Persian and Arabic literature and approaching matters of Islamic law and religious sciences.¹⁷⁷ For the rest of his life, Tabrizi would be a ‘sincerely religious man’, although he never pursued a religious profession.¹⁷⁸ After finishing his education, he started his career as a civil servant with an employment as secretary in the English consulate.¹⁷⁹ In this position he developed an interest in politics and in European notions of government and governance, which was enhanced when he was appointed a position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1853 and later as consul of the town Hajji Tarakhan (Azerbaijan).¹⁸⁰ As he had proved a reliable and respected civil servant, Tabrizi was appointed *Chargé d’ Affairs* in St. Petersburg (1862 - 1863), Tiflis (1863 - 1866) and Paris (1866 - 1870). During his time in Paris – where he made a

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. i

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Inferences about Tabrizis religious stance can be derived form a letter of him to prince Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Shah (1853 - 1907), where he appears pious and devotional. Ibid. xv

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. ii

variety of sojourns to other European metropolises such as London – he wrote his major work *Yak Kaleme*.¹⁸¹ In 1867 Tabrizi had visited the world exposition in Paris, where he had gained impressions about the scientific, technical and cultural progress made in the world, especially in Western countries.¹⁸² Already in 1869 Tabrizi was summoned back to Iran where he officiated several civil positions, including a cabinet post, the Governorship of a large Persian province (Khurāsān), a position at the royal court and a senior post in the foreign ministry in Azerbaijan.

In 1881 the Iranian Ministry of Justice became headed by the reform-minded Mīrzā Yaḥyā Khān Mushīr ad-Dowla Qazwīnī (1822 - 1892), who recruited Tabrizi as a deputy as both of them advocated a modern system of justice inspired by European models.¹⁸³ Here Tabrizi also obtained the title *Mostašār-al-Dawla*, meaning ‘Counsellor of the State’. In this position he increasingly met with hostility for his moderate and modernist position by reactionary forces, which convinced Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh – who had always appreciated Tabrizi’s person and civil service¹⁸⁴ – of Tabrizi’s alleged subversive intentions.¹⁸⁵ In 1888 Tabrizi wrote a letter to Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Shah (in the following referred to as ‘ad-Dīn Shah’), the Crown Prince of Iran, where he tried to convince him of the necessity to conduct liberal reforms. Due to increasing accusations of Tabrizi’s disloyalty to the Iranian state and monarchs, the period before Tabrizi’s death in 1895 was marked by imprisonment, house-arrest, public denunciation and physical castigation¹⁸⁶. However, the (public and reformist) support for Tabrizi never ceased, and his work *Yak Kaleme* as well as his ideas of equality, justice and freedom will remain remembered.

2.3.1.2. *Tabrizi’s Yak Kaleme and Mīrzā Malkum Khān*

Tabrizi’s *Yak Kaleme* is in parts constructed as a dialogue between Tabrizi and a friend or fellow campaigner, exchanging ideas and notions about the reasons, circumstances and developments of Western progress and Islamic decline (a fairly popular literary tool of

¹⁸¹ During the course of his life, Tabrizi wrote several books including *A treatise on the railway*, *The Joseph Mystery*, *The Education of Children* or *The Book of Reckoning*. Furthermore he published other papers and essays in Persian newspapers. Ibid. x

¹⁸² The main exhibitors were the USA, Canada, France, Great Britain and Ireland. Major eye-catchers were the hydraulic elevator and the hydrochronometer, two inventions which affirmed Tabrizi’s impressions of Western technological and scientific superiority.

¹⁸³ Ibid. v

¹⁸⁴ Tabrizi had several audiences with Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh and he was offered a robe of honor by him. Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. vi

¹⁸⁶ When the shah read Tabrizi’s *Yak Kaleme*, he commanded his guards to beat Tabrizi with his book on face and head. Ibid. vi

Islamic modernists at that time). Some contemporary scholars¹⁸⁷ identified Mīrzā Malkum Khān (1833 - 1908) as Tabrizi's conversational partner in *Yak Kaleme*. Malkum Khān was a prominent Iranian reformer of Armenian origin, who had great influence on the ideational foundation of the modernist-reformist movement in the Middle East.¹⁸⁸

In 1858/59 Malkum Khān published his *Kitābcha-yi ghaybī* (Booklet inspired by the unseen) - alternatively *Daftar-i tanzīmāt* (The book of reform) -, a book, which popularized several significant modernist key terms such as *huqūq-i millat* (right of the people), *majlis-i showrā* (consultative council) or *islāhāt* (reforms).¹⁸⁹ Many reformers – among them Tabrizi - employed his terminology in order to advocate legal reforms that would contain liberal concepts. Malkum Khān's main concern – as the one of all Islamic reformers during that era - -was the decline of Islamic countries, and his treatise *Kitābcha-yi ghaybī* elaborates on means to surpass the backwardness of the Iranian state and society.¹⁹⁰ Thereby his most important presupposition is that Western progress is not based on technological or scientific evolution, but on the 'customs of their civilization'¹⁹¹, or more precisely Western developments in forms of government. He stated that while some advances have been made in the adoption of Western material aspects of civilization, definite progress (guiding Iran into the modern world) can only evolve by absorbing the principles of European forms of government.¹⁹²

Malkum Khān saw the essentials of Western forms of government in the establishment of a legal system that restrained the arbitrary and absolute power of ruling elites – whether those of clerical, tribal, urban or royal rulers.¹⁹³ Consequently his main demands are a codification of law as well as the separation of powers – both ideas which were a novelty in absolutistic Iran. As the European conception of '(codified) law' was

¹⁸⁷ Among them Nāẓim al-Islām Kirmānī, the author of the chronicle *Tārīkh-i bīdārī-yi Irānīyān*. Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. ii

¹⁸⁸ . Recent scholarship however has put out that Tabrizi and Malkum Khān have never met each other and that there is no evidence to support any respective claims. There is though the possibility that the two reformists exchanged letters and thus the dialogue could be a summary of this correspondence – this however remains speculative. Either way - whether the conversational partner of Tabrizi was indeed Malkum Khān, another reformist or just a fictional character as a matter of literary device – Malkum Khān's ideas had an influence on Tabrizi's writings. This is especially visible in the terminology used in *Yak Kaleme*, but also the basic ideas and demands of both authors are (in parts) superimposable. Algar, Hamid. 1973. *Mīrzā Malkum Khān: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism*. Berkeley: University of California Press

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Algar, Hamid. 1973. *Mīrzā Malkum Khān: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism*. 27

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 28

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid. 27

notional not available in the Persian language, Malkum Khān employed the term *qānūn*. *Qānūn* originally signified 'regulation' or 'principle', but Malkum Khān amplified the meaning as follows: 'any ordinance issued by the government, tending to the general welfare of the community and equally incumbent upon all its members, is called law.'¹⁹⁴ This sense of *qānūn* won recognition and thus Malkum Khān is justly credited with having introduced the European concept of 'law' to the Persian language.¹⁹⁵

With his *Yak Kaleme* - which was written more than one decade after *Kitābcha-yi ghaybī* was published – Tabrizi follows Malkum Khān in two significant notions. Firstly, Tabrizi also advocates the adoption of Western conceptions of government rather than concentrating on technological achievements in order to guide Iran into the modern world. He writes: 'Some of you think that they [the administrative system and progress of Europe] are based on sciences and industries such as the telegraph, steam-powered boats and carriages, and military equipment. These are the results and not the prerequisites.'¹⁹⁶ Secondly, Tabrizi – in accordance with Malkum Khān - sees the remedy for Iran's decline in the establishment of a codified legal system leading to a separation of power in the state. Both of them argue that a codified law must exist next to the *shari'a*, yet independently; furthermore it has to be democratically configured and valid for all men and women irrespective of their religion.

2.3.2. Namık Kemal

2.3.2.1. Political poet and powerfully eloquent reformer

Namık Kemal was born 1840 into a family of bureaucrats in the village of Tekfurdaghi, located in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹⁷ Already as a child Kemal got in contact with civil service, accompanying this grandfather – a high ranking official who held offices in several provinces of the Ottoman Empire, including the one in Istanbul – during his business journeys across the country.¹⁹⁸ He received a profound education, including the study of Persian, Arabic and French, followed by an employment in the Ottoman translation

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 29

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. iv

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Namik-Kemal> 18.07.2016

¹⁹⁸ http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kemal-mehmed-namik-COM_0479 18.07.2016

bureaus in 1857.¹⁹⁹ The Ottoman translation bureaus were only established in 1821 as minor office for the translation of European sources regarding politics and economics, but till the 1850s it had developed to be one of the major sites of political prestige and ‘modern’ diplomatic service in the Ottoman Empire.²⁰⁰ During this time, Kemal met prominent and influential poets of that period, which motivated him to try poetry for himself. First, he was dedicated to the classical Ottoman style, but later he was inspired by İbrahim Şinasi Efendi (1826 - 1871), writer and editor of the newspaper *Tasfir-i Efkâr* (Description of ideas), who espoused Western political and social ideas and literary styles (he had spent quite some time in Europe).²⁰¹ As a consequence, Kemal joined literary circles such as *Endjümen-i Shu‘arâ*, a circle also engaged with reformist concepts and ideas.²⁰² Next to his activities as poet, Kemal continued to work in the civil service, including assistant posts of the Governor of Erzurum as well as of the Chief Secretary of Customs in Tripoli.²⁰³

When his mentor Efendi had to flee to France due to political activities in 1865, Kemal took over editorship of *Tasfir-i Efkâr* and together with other reforming writers he formed the group of the ‘Young Ottomans’.²⁰⁴ Due to conflicts with the Ottoman government about the increasingly political tendency of the publications, Kemal – alongside other ‘Young Ottomans’ – had to flee the county in 1867.²⁰⁵ The ‘Young Ottomans’ appeared to be one of the most passionate and vociferous critics of the *Tanzimat* reforms.²⁰⁶ Kemal spend his time in exile in London, Paris and Vienna, where he dedicated himself to translate the works of French thinkers (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Victor Hugo and Charles-Louis Montesquieu) into Turkish.²⁰⁷ In Europe he also started to publish the journal *Hürriyet* (Liberty, or: Freedom).²⁰⁸ The primary source of this paper, the article ‘And Seek Their Counsel in the Matter’ was published in *Hürriyet* in 1868. In 1871 Kemal was allowed to

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Quataert, Donald. 2000. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*. New approaches to European history, 17; Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press. 81

²⁰¹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Namik-Kemal> 18.07.2016

²⁰² http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kemal-mehmed-namik-COM_0479 18.07.2016

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Namik-Kemal> 18.07.2016

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Rahme, Joseph G. 1999. "Namik Kemal's Constitutional Ottomanism and Non-Muslims." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10 (1): 23-39.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kemal-mehmed-namik-COM_0479 21.07.2016

return to the empire, where he settled in Constantinople and continued his reformist activities as editor of the revolutionary newspaper *İbret* (Warning).²⁰⁹ Simultaneously Kemal wrote a play, which would prove his biggest literary success: *Vatan yahut Silistre* (Fatherland, or: Silistria). *Vatan yahut Silistre* was a drama in the setting of the Siege of Silistria²¹⁰ in 1854 and propagated notions of liberalism as well as of patriotism, the latter being an absolute novelty to the Ottoman people.²¹¹ The plot was built around a soldier who courageously defended the city of Silistria, Bulgaria against Russian invaders on account of the loyalty to his nation, rather than on accounts of religion or monarchic devotion. The play was situated in the context of the Crimean War, a war which had its left marks on the Ottoman collective memory (as well as it shaped the public opinion on Western powers). Due to the alleged diffusion of subversive ideas and notions, Kemal was arrested directly after the premier of *Vatan yahut Silistre* in 1873 (Constantinople). Kemal was imprisoned from 1873 to 1876 in Cyprus and after his release – due to an amnesty as a result of a changeover in power (Murad V. succeeded Abdülaziz as sultan) – he returned back to Constantinople.

After another succession in power ('Abd al-Ḥamīd II replaced Murad V.), Kemal was appointed a member of the Council of State in 1876 and shortly afterwards a member of the General Assembly, which was as result of the Tanzimat reforms working on designing a constitution. The constitution was issued the same year, Kemal however opposed several articles (e.g. the right of the sultan to expel persons from the empire on the basis of suspicion) and was unsatisfied with the merely marginal limitation of the sultan's power.²¹² Shortly after the promulgation of the constitution, Kemal was arrested in 1877, allegedly for having disturbed the public order, and later that year he left for Midilli, Greece, where he was obliged to reside.²¹³ Although – or maybe precisely because - the sultan adjourned *sine die* the newly established parliament in 1878 (concluding that it was easier not to share any power), Kemal continued to advocate a constitutional government in his exile, giving instructions and advises to friends or fellow campaigners in the Ottoman Empire.²¹⁴ In 1879, Kemal was appointed a high civil position in Midilli - later in Rhodes (1884) and Chios (1887) -

²⁰⁹ Rahme, 1999. 'Namik Kemal's Constitutional Ottomanism and Non-Muslims.' 23

²¹⁰ The Siege of Silistria was a conflict during the Crimea War. Although the Russian forces initially conquered the fortress of Silistria, it was reconquered by the Ottomans after a short period of time.

²¹¹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Namik-Kemal> 18.07.2016

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

where he tried to embark ineffective administration and smuggle.²¹⁵ In addition to that he was involved in attempts to strengthen the Muslim minority on these majorly Christian islands.²¹⁶ Due to several illnesses such as bronchitis and other diseases, Kemal died in 1888 aged 44 years in Chios.²¹⁷ He bequeathed several poetry works, novels, historical treatise and plays as well as manifold articles and criticisms. He is generally regarded as a writer of *Tanzimat* literature, which tried to introduce and propagate new political and social ideas and new literary styles.²¹⁸

2.3.2.2. Namik Kemals legacy, Ottomanism and the 'Young Ottoman's ideology

Namik Kemal was a 'Young Ottoman' of the first hour and he is regarded as one of the 'most lucid and accurate thinkers'²¹⁹ of this reform movement. Ideologically the 'Young Ottoman' movement was built on various (partly contradictory) pillars, for example the reconcilability of the Islamic precepts with European ideas and thought, the collective identity of all Muslims and European-style nationalism. In accordance with these principles, they demanded a nation-state, built on the fundament of constitutional government.²²⁰ The 'Young Ottomans' were thus opposing major parts of the *Tanzimat* reforms, although they were among the main beneficiaries of them.²²¹ Due to their mostly 'European-style' education, many 'Young Ottomans' held posts in the Ottoman translation bureaus, where they could ex upon their knowledge about the French language and learn more about European politics and ideas.²²² 'Young Ottomans' continued to criticize the reforms and blamed the *Tanzimat* statesmen of having failed to prevent a further decline of the empire. Namik Kemal turned out to be one of the sharpest critics of *Tanzimat*, regardless of economic, social or cultural matters; yet his foremost concerns lay in the political implications of the reforms.

Prior to the *Tanzimat* reforms, the political and social concept of Ottomanism had developed in the empire. The idea of Ottomanism was inspired by French thinkers such as

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Rahme, 1999. 'Namik Kemal's Constitutional Ottomanism and Non-Muslims.' 23

²²⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Young-Ottomans> 19.07.2016

²²¹ Rahme, 1999. 'Namik Kemal's Constitutional Ottomanism and Non-Muslims.' 25

²²² Ibid.

Montesquieu and Rousseau as well as by the concept of *Égalité*, established during the French Revolution 1789. The idea was to relieve social tension by granting the *millet*s (religious communities in the Ottoman Empire) equal rights. With the edict of Gülhane of 1839, granting all subjects security for their life, honor and property, parts of this ambitious project were realized.²²³ Kemal however was critical towards the edict, as he believed it to be 'meant to show the European powers that the empire was earnestly concerned with the protection of its Christian subjects.'²²⁴ Thus he regarded the edict to be an accommodation, a response to European foreign politics. He furthermore criticized that the reforms initiated by the Gülhane-edict (*Tanzimat*) were of secularist nature, thus excluding any restrictions of the *shari'a* and consequently undermining the Ottoman system of state.²²⁵ He applied the same to the second royal edict, issued in 1856 and reaffirming the principles of 1839, which he classified as a response to the Ottoman defeat in the Crimea War (1853 - 1856) leading to an expanded role of France and Britain in the empire.²²⁶ In this respect he continued to criticize the implementation of a non-Islamic legal code as well as European-inspired institutions, which were uncritically adopted from European countries without having a real understanding of them and without consulting the *shari'a*; therefore he concluded that the *Tanzimat* reforms created a dual legal system, but neither in a genuine essence of European thinking nor a correlation with the legal traditions of Islam.²²⁷

Kemal further condemned the *Tanzimat* statesmen, who he accused of establishing oppressive bureaucracy and of misuse of the power as well as the multiple character of the role of the *ulama* (e.g. education, jurisdiction), both of which led to the dissolution of the separation of powers, which had been prevalent in earlier centuries.²²⁸ 'Young Ottomans' believed this fusion between jurisdiction, legislation and executive to be the elementary cause of the eventual definite decline of the Ottoman Empire.²²⁹ Kemal asserted that (taking the political reality in the empire into account) it seemed as if the state had several sovereigns ('At present they are called ministers.'²³⁰) while only the sultan should be in power. Kemal wrote: 'Up to the present the sultan has never refused to do anything which

²²³ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Tanzimat> 19.07.2016

²²⁴ Rahme, 1999. 'Namik Kemal's Constitutional Ottomanism and Non-Muslims.' 27

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid. 26

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

has been required of him which would be of profit for the people.'²³¹ Accordingly Kemal remained loyal to the sultan as he did not perceive him as an obstacle to any reforms. He did however criticize the praxis of issuing *qanun*, the sultan's prerogatives about legal concerns, which he regarded as 'Mongolian' practice with no support in the Islamic scriptures.²³²

As a social and political reformer, Kemal's legacy is built upon the notions of nationalism and freedom, he himself had introduced the term *vatan* (fatherland) and *hürriyet* (liberty, freedom) to the Turkish language.²³³ The term 'fatherland' was implemented by him as a response to the continuous loss of territory of the Ottoman Empire in the course of the nineteenth century.²³⁴ He was one of the pivotal figures of promoting Turkish national identity, which would only evolve its force and effect in the early twentieth century.²³⁵ As Kemal identified non-Muslims living the empire as a legitimization of European powers to intervene in the Ottoman affairs and as hindrance to an imperial communality of interests, he regarded them as a vulnerable point of the empire.²³⁶ In this respect he neglected absolute Ottomanism (in form of the single imperial citizenship established in the constitution of 1876) as a state-sponsored instrument that would facilitate assimilation, rather than recognizing cultural and religious diversity and integrating non-Muslim individuals and groups into the Ottoman society²³⁷ For Kemal the only fundament of the Ottoman state could be the *shari'a*, which had espoused egalitarianism in the first place and was prevalent in Islamic history.²³⁸ Thus Kemal shaped the idea of constitutional Ottomanism: a constitution based on the *shari'a*, securing all subjects of the empire equal rights and equal treatment. In recognition of their constitutional rights, non-Muslims would show allegiance to the state, which would be subordinated to any other (religious or cultural) loyalty and thus eliminate any justification of European powers to intervene into affairs of the Ottoman Empire.²³⁹ Furthermore he asserted that Islamic jurisdiction would serve non-Muslim subjects better than 'those laws stolen hastily from the French codes.'²⁴⁰

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Namik-Kemal> 19.07.2016

²³⁴ Herb, Guntram H. 2008. *Nations and Nationalism : A Global Historical Overview; 1; 1770 to 1880*. Santa Barbara, Calif. 763

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Rahme, 1999. 'Namik Kemal's Constitutional Ottomanism and Non-Muslims.' 34

²³⁷ Ibid. 26

²³⁸ Ibid. 32

²³⁹ Ibid. 34

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 33

Although Kemal was critical towards blindly accepting European political rules and traditions, he advocated European concepts, which he believed to originate – or at least to be compatible with – the Islamic traditions, precepts and scriptures. Many of his works are thus dedicated to transforming the political jargon of European liberal theory into an Islamic one.²⁴¹ His legacy as a sponsor of Turkish nationalism, liberal reformer and poet has not yet ceased. Muştafâ Kemâl Paşa (1881 -1938), later additionally Atatürk, the founder of the modern republic of Turkey (1924) and a representative of the Young Turk movement, referred to Kemal and his ideals. In this respect it is however important to point out that the Young Turks and the Young Ottomans –although often lumped together – were different movements with divergent goals and notions: The Young Turks were much more exclusive in their idea of a modern nation-state and of highly secularist nature, while Young Ottomans retained ideationally Islam, not a national identity, as binding element of state, thus including all Muslims in a possibly modern Ottoman state.

2.4. Conclusion and further references

The history of nineteenth century Ottoman Empire and Iran is marked by a penetration of European capital and commerce, by military inferiority as well as by territorial losses. This was fostered by a social, political, cultural, economic (both states remained pre-industrial) and scientific-technological stagnation in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century Middle East.²⁴² Due to these circumstances, the Ottoman Empire and Iran suffered international political relevance that transformed them into a plaything in imperial power politics. This generated the feeling of falling behind modern societies among (mostly urban) intellectuals and scholars and thus they created the idea to implement modern concepts and notions into their societies and systems of state. The latter was accommodated by the economic opening of both countries in the previous century as via trade and information exchange liberal European ideas and values arrived in the Islamic world. In both countries, the adoption of Western achievements (regarding education, political organization or technology) gained popularity among intellectual elites. Therefore in Iran as well as in the Ottoman Empire ‘Europeanized’ and reform-minded movements arose. The necessity to reform was recognized by the ruling elites, yet while the *Tanzimat* reforms established an oppressive bureaucracy (in a sense that central governance and tax collection was massively increased)

²⁴¹ Ibid. 33

²⁴² Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 10

and undermined the substance of the Ottoman state, the reforms in Iran remained reluctant and therefore unfruitful. For this research it is crucial that the Ottoman state experimented with imperial citizenship (1839/1856) as well as codified law (1876), both of which were concepts to be introduced to Persia only in the twentieth century.

When indicating the relevant predominant discourses circulating at that time, it must be found, that Islamic modernists constructed an alternative discourse by blending modern and Islamic discourse, which required that modern notions and values had to be in accordance with the Islamic precepts. There was also a modification of traditional Islamic discourse through notions of reformism which allowed Islamic modernists to break through static Islamic traditions and facilitate new, mostly liberal interpretations of the Islamic scriptures. In this respect, new notions were introduced and existing ones to a certain extent modified. This led to the emergence of a new political-Islamic-modernists discourse which perceived modern values to be internally facilitated by Islam.

Islamic modernists were actively involved in the 'Iranian Constitutional Revolution' (1905 - 1911) and the 'Young Turk Revolution' (1908). While the constitutional movement in the Ottoman Empire was motivated by nationalistic tendencies, the reforms in Iran were driven by anti-imperialistic and anti-monarchic notions.²⁴³ Islamic modernists, mostly members of the urban intellectual elite, federated in their reform attempts with groups within their countries, whose existence was threatened by the respective regimes. In the Ottoman Empire, Islamic modernists closed ranks with the lower ranking *ulama* as the secularizing forces of the *Tanzimat* era undermined their status and relevance in society. The high-ranking *ulama* however mostly opposed Islamic modernism as they were closely tied to the apparatus of state.²⁴⁴ In Iran, modernists allied with local merchants who feared for their basis of existence as the shah did not protect them from, and even facilitated, Western economical domination. Furthermore, members of the *ulama*, in the case of Iran a highly politicized group of religious authorities, supported the movement. Comparing Kemal and Tabrizi is interesting insofar as both had worked in the civil service, had visited Europe and were not directly in opposition to the sultan or to the shah respectively. They both believed that Islam was compatible with liberal ideas and concepts, and propagated this notion in several works and writings. However, generally both evolved from different streams of

²⁴³ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/constitutional-revolution-i> 15.03.2016

²⁴⁴ Zarinebaf, 2008. "From Istanbul to Tabriz: Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran." 155

Islamic modernism and – being the substance of this research – were placed in different social and political contexts.

The modernist movements of the Ottoman Empire and the one of Iran cannot be seen isolated from each other. This is for two reasons: On the one hand, many intellectuals and reformists from both countries were either educated in Europe, or at least gained inspiration regarding liberal philosophy during their educational sojourns in Western Europe.²⁴⁵ On the other hand, there was a vigorous interaction between Iranian and Ottoman reformists. The basis for this interaction was active trade, but later on, the notion of pan-Islamism, exile acquaintances, common literary joint-ventures and secret intellectual circles promoted an active exchange of ideas and experiences among reformist of both countries.²⁴⁶ Especially when the religious hostility between the Sunni Ottomans and the Shi'a Iranians was relieved in the course of the nineteenth century, interaction increased.²⁴⁷ Three developments further promoted this intellectual exchange. Firstly, the implementation of the printing press at the beginning of the century led to a facilitation in exchanging and distributing liberal ideas and concepts, as well as to manifold literacy joint-ventures. Secondly, in 1836 steamships were introduced to the Middle East. This led to an increase of travel and tourism, yet also of Ottoman-Iranian interaction as it was shorter and safer to reach distant regions.²⁴⁸ Thirdly, the technical achievement of the telegraph arrived in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in Iran in the second half of the nineteenth century. This improved the opportunities for communication and brought transboundary interaction to a new level.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 156

²⁴⁶ Ibid. 155

²⁴⁷ Ibid. 157

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

3. Islamic Modernist Argumentation in the writings of Tabrizi and Kemal

Mīrzā Yūsof Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi and Namık Kemal wrote texts raising suggestions to reform fundamental matters of state. Thereby the authors pursue rather different strategies in order to achieve such: Kemal tries to convince the shah, while Kemal wants to persuade the liberal intellectual elite to follow his calls. This leads to differences in style and explicitness, yet the goal remains the same: implementing modern values into their Islamic states. Therefore – both being Islamic modernists – the two authors draw upon liberal-Western discourse, as well as on Islamic discourse in order to construct their argument and thus to convince their readers. Prior to any other inquests, it is important to analyze how Kemal and Tabrizi created credibility, expertise and appreciation in their writings. Thus the following sub-chapter (3.1.) provides an analysis of the means and strategies employed by Tabrizi and Kemal in order to depict themselves as reliable and truthful men. In the subsequent subchapters it will be analyzed in what way Tabrizi and Kemal legitimized or reasoned their reformatory claims (3.2.) as well as how and to what extent they justified the implementation of certain values (3.3.). The following analyses shall not only elucidate what Tabrizi and Kemal say, but also how they say it in order to allow an in-depth analysis to be conducted in this paper.

3.1. Creation of expertise, credibility and goodwill in Tabrizi's and Kemal's writings

The topics addressed by Tabrizi in his letter to ad-Dīn Shah were politically rather sensitive, so goodwill and credibility were essential in order to convince (or at least interest) the royal of suchlike ideas – or at least not get punished for any respective proposals. Taking into consideration that the reforms suggested to ad-Dīn Shah would substantially restrict his power, carefulness was required. However, Tabrizi was also aware of the influential position in the Iranian society, which the royals held next to the *ulama*. Thus he pursues several strategies in order to achieve leniency and to convey credibility.

Firstly – and maybe most essentially – Tabrizi asserts his allegiance and altruistic commitment to Iran and the monarchy. He assures ad-Dīn Shah that he is a ‘well-wisher of your government’²⁴⁹ and a ‘faithful servant of your house’²⁵⁰, writing to him in ‘friendship,

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

truth and righteousness'²⁵¹. He further states that his intentions are honorable, solely being concerned with the progress of the Iranian people and the persistence of the Iranian monarchy, in order 'to prevent the dignity and grandeur of Islam and the Muslims being trampled'²⁵². In recognition of the latter, Tabrizi strives to praise – even adulates - ad-Dīn Shah, thereby creating (vast) humbleness.²⁵³ Flattery and humbleness were assuredly common praxis when talking or writing to any member of the royal family, Tabrizi however uses his praise in order to open up a discussion about his observations of nuisances of the Iranian state and society and the respective remedies:

'His Majesty the most glorious, may our lives be sacrificed to him, has been selected and elevated by God almighty to a high station and excellence, but at the same time God has summoned him to a very important responsibility as the one worthy of hearing some true but painful reflection.'²⁵⁴

Following this citation, Tabrizi elaborates on the decline of Iran, which he does not attach to the autocratic system of state or the indolence of the royal family, but which he blames on courtiers, ministers, government officials and the *ulama*.²⁵⁵ They are accused by Tabrizi of 'lying'²⁵⁶, 'plundering the poor Persian people'²⁵⁷ and disguising the real condition of the Iranian state to the shah and selling out the country to foreigners, all to unhamperedly continue to strive for their personal interests (wealth and might).²⁵⁸ To render other social and political actors in Iran guilty of Iran's unfortunate position – omitting any involvement of the shah or the royal family – is assuredly a clever device in order to win ad-Dīn Shah's appreciation. Although Tabrizi might have taken into account, that the letter could be read by the culprits, it remained his most valuable chance to convince the shah of reforms.²⁵⁹

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid. xxii f.

²⁵³ E.g. '(...) I feel that it is my inescapable duty to offer the final thoughts of this dying soul to the holy dust under your feet.' Ibid. xv

²⁵⁴ Ibid. xv Another examples would be: 'I swear an oath with all my heart, before God, the Lord of power and might, and inform the sacred thoughts of the most holy servants of the blessed and most excellent [Shah], may our souls be sacrificed for him, concerning the matters of the world as follows: (...)' then elaborating on constitutional governments. Ibid. xix

²⁵⁵ Ibid. xvi

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. xvi

²⁵⁹ Blaming the shah himself would certainly not have been a good idea, but blaming it all exclusively on e.g. Western powers would have degraded Iran's dignity to a minor level as well as it would have asserted major power to Western states.

Tabrizi extends upon this notion and accredits the shah with the idea to conduct reforms.²⁶⁰ It reads like a story of a great country - ruined by civil and religious officials - whose only chance of progress is the noble shah conducting righteous reforms. In this way he tries to convince the shah that the reforms proposed are honorable, reasonable and necessary.

Next to loyal, truthful and humble, Tabrizi presents himself as a strictly religious person, which was an important feature in nineteenth century Middle East. It was essential to be recognized as someone who follows the Islamic precepts, especially when advocating notions which were condemned as anti-Islamic by government officials and the traditional clergy. He calls on God ('I swear by the pure essence of One God'), praises him ('by God almighty'²⁶¹) and describes himself as 'martyr in the path of God'²⁶². This is certainly not only to make a name for himself as a pious man, but also to show expertise for his claims are often supplemented by religious evidence. This is perfectly shown by the following example:

'This aged servant may be said to have learned what he can of the commandments of the glorious Quran and the example set by the Prophet in the Traditions, and I have found that the sanctified religious law of Islam is in no way opposed to law codes that are just.'²⁶³

In this quotation, it is perfectly shown, how Islamic modernists negotiated Islamic and liberal discourse, by not depicting them as ambivalent, but as in accordance with each other. In this respect, Tabrizi discusses the matter of liberal concepts (in this case codified law) allegedly being an imposition of European powers – an idea which was prevalent in reactionary Islamic thought.²⁶⁴ Tabrizi advocates the codified law – even if being an imposition - nonetheless as

'a new kind of imposition, an imposition that is continually capable of producing protection and victory, (...) which is today the cause of power and grandeur of the governments of Europe, and the source of their progress'²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ E.g. 'It is generally said that the government of Persia is thinking of reorganizing government bodies.' Ibid.

xvii

²⁶¹ Ibid. xv

²⁶² Ibid. xxii

²⁶³ Ibid. xviii

²⁶⁴ E.g. 'The political thinkers and the wise of the age are raising clamour because the peoples of Persia, high and low, consider a code of law as an imitation of the Europeans.' Ibid. xvii. Furthermore: 'They say "It [codified law] is an imposition," but (...)' Ibid. xxii

²⁶⁵ Ibid. xxii

Advocates of liberal concepts were generally endangered to be accused of being an indoctrinated agent of European powers (again: a prevalent and popular idea about Islamic modernists in the conservative press)²⁶⁶. Thus Tabrizi criticizes European powers and their imperialistic ambitions and reaffirms his loyalty to the Persian people and monarchy.²⁶⁷ In this way also his asserted religiosity can be seen as a mean in order to contrast himself with Western peoples (who at that time were globally known for their ideas on secularism). Taking the finding above into recognition, it can be stated that Tabrizi uses several devices in order to create credibility and goodwill on parts of ad-Dīn Shah. Notably, he reacts to the prejudice about Islamic modernism and liberal reformers prevalent in that time: he counteracts accusations about his intentions, his allegiance and his religiosity.

Expertise is created by Tabrizi in a way of reaffirming his knowledge about the Islamic scriptures and precepts. Further evidence of his expertise is not explicitly discussed by him in the letter, possibly because the royals themselves had appointed him for civil service in Iran as well as in Europe so they knew his career and his skills. Several times he refers to ‘political thinkers and the wise of the age’²⁶⁸ or ‘the wise and politicians of all civilized countries’²⁶⁹ though, probably in order to indicate that his proposals are shared by many – prudent, capable and experienced – men.

Namık Kemal establishes expertise and creditability as well as good-will on parts of the readers with rather different means in contrast to Tabrizi. This could be due to the nature of the text: it is an article published in a reformist journal and is thus putatively written as rational observer. Kemal’s article reads like a scientific treaty, he establishes in succession constructive arguments and draws upon religious (*umma, hadith, shari’a, qadi etc.*) as well as liberal (freedom of the individual, legislative authority, council, constitutional government etc.) terminology. This can already be considered a mean of proving expertise: being a rational, neutral analyst, who is familiar with the customs of European and domestic politics as well as religious matters. In this way, also Kemal negotiates between liberal and Islamic discourse, a blend which is so significant for Islamic modernists. In this respect, there

²⁶⁶ E.g. Muhammad Abduh, popular and famous liberal reformer, was ridiculed in a caricature which depicted him preaching reforms while philandering with a British women at a tea-party. <http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/islam-lexikon/21320/abduh-muhammad>

²⁶⁷ ‘(...) if we are strictly fair, we will see that methods of the contemporary Europeans are no different to those of African savages, because the former savagery of the Africans has decreased – in fact is no more – whereas extreme savagery has become widespread among the Europeans. Ibid. xx

²⁶⁸ Ibid. xvii

²⁶⁹ Ibid. xv

are no praises of the Sultan and no invocation of God (as Tabrizi does), as if to reaffirm his objectivity, the latter however does not mean that Kemal does not employ religious reasoning as well. In recognition of his many references to European powers, it is interesting how Kemal establishes the image of being an absolute 'European-connoisseur', not only by drawing upon Western terminology but by recounting their alleged opinions about the Ottoman Empire. This is perfectly resembled in the following citation:

'And since Europeans are accustomed to freedom, they say, (...) "Can a man be free without being able to criticize members of the government verbally or through publication?" Another misfortune is that (...) Europeans conclude that the Muslims are ignorant of the pleasure of freedom and readily submit to the noose of oppression.'²⁷⁰

As the article was written during Kemals exile in Europe (1867 - 1871) where he grappled with the works of prominent liberal thinkers, this image probably bears close scrutiny (see 2.3.1.). Furthermore Kemal positions the contemporary political and economic situation of the Ottoman Empire in the broader – nearly global – international context. Thereby he proves well-grounded knowledge about European strategies, interests, means and goals:

'It is true that Western Powers have defended us up to now, for the sake of protecting their commercial interests and safeguarding the European balance [of power] against the aggression of the northern savages [Russia] (...). Yet (...) the Western powers cannot refrain from putting pressure on us, or at least standing as the protector of rebels, because they do not want to leave Russia alone in its intervention.'²⁷¹

By showing his understanding for the conduct of European powers, the reader shall be persuaded that Kemal is also conversant with European political values and concepts, and how to implement them. Significantly: Besides his knowledge about European affairs, he proves good knowledge about the Islamic scriptures; he is building his argument with the support of quotations of *hadith* and *Qur'an*.²⁷²

As a last device, Kemal demonstrates his precise knowledge about the state of affairs of the Ottoman Empire: He recounts the exact expenditures to put down the Cretan

²⁷⁰ Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 146

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² See for example: The religion of Muhammad rejects the absolutist claim to outright ownership [of the state] in the incontrovertible verse: "Whose is the kingdom today? God's, the One, the Omnipotent." [Qur'an, Sura 40, Verse 16]' Ibid. 147

Revolt²⁷³ (1866 – 1869, still holding on when Kemal wrote this article), namely ‘three or four million purses [1.5 or 2 billion Ottoman piasters]’²⁷⁴. Furthermore he elaborates on the financial situation of the empire; according to Kemal for example ‘the internal debt of 22 million liras have been raised to 40 million’²⁷⁵. This reaffirms to the readers not only how serious the state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire was, but even more that Kemal is facing up these dilemmas and tries to find solutions for it. All in all Kemal's expertise is built on knowledge and rationality. This is conveyed to the reader in a rather subtle way, therefore most readers will be convinced that Kemal knows what he is talking about after reading his article. Goodwill on the parts of the readers is not strived for by Kemal as the persons reading his article were mostly ‘Ottoman liberals’²⁷⁶ who put themselves into greatest danger by possessing this alleged ‘subversive materials’. Thus, they were already in favor of his approach and his ideas, and it was assuredly more important to convince them of his creditability and expertise.

3.2. Reasoning of reformatory claims in Tabrizi's and Kemal's writings

As elaborated earlier (see 1.2.3.), Islamic modernists ran into many headwinds on parts of the traditional clergy and conservative state officials, when they proposed reforms which would affect fundamental matters of state. Due to the conditions, conducts and customs of Iran as well as the Ottoman Empire, the concept of reformism – especially reforms which would reach far beyond matters of military and administration – was rather unknown and unwanted (by the powerful) in these states. Thus, prior to any claims for the implementation of specific concepts, Islamic modernist had to defend their claims to make such proposals at all.

In his letter to ad-Dīn Shah, Tabrizi uses several devices in order to legitimize his claim for reforms, respectively to present the intended reforms as righteous and necessary in order to overcome the decline of Iran. Thus – as a fundamental first step – Tabrizi had to convince the Crown Prince that Iran is indeed in a bad condition and that therefore reforms are necessary. One would assume that the royals would be aware of any such bad

²⁷³ The Russians supported the Cretans, which wanted to gain independency from the Ottoman rule. An independent Cretan state would only be established in 1898. C.f. Şenişik, Pınar. 2013. "Cretan Muslim Immigrants, Imperial Governance and the ‘Production of Locality’ in the Late Ottoman Empire." *Middle Eastern Studies* 49 (1): 92-106.

²⁷⁴ Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 146

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 147

²⁷⁶ This is how Kemal refers to his readers. Ibid. 148

conditions, but the Shahs of nineteenth century Persia – usually prone to extravagancy and luxury – lived in their palaces mostly isolated from the daily reality of the Iranian people.²⁷⁷ They were informed about the condition of state by their courtiers and ministers, who usually preferred nescient shahs in order to retain their power and prosperity, acquired by oppression and corruption. Often, the Shahs even facilitated the decline of their state, by granting important concessions to European companies in order to finance their lifestyle and thus surrendering Iran to economic exploitation (see 2.1.1.).

After an introduction, praising the shah and assuring loyalty (see 3.1.) Tabrizi starts his elaborations by asserting that Iran ‘is in a state of jeopardy’²⁷⁸ and facing ‘difficulties and dangers’²⁷⁹. He does not specify in which respect or to what extent Iran is endangered – possibly he does not want to displease ad-Dīn Shah by enumerating all problems of the state – but he refers to ‘the wise and politicians of all civilized countries’²⁸⁰ in order to validate this statement. Next to European powers, which Tabrizi blames for ‘building up their military power, hostility and dominance’²⁸¹, he continues to attribute the difficult situation of Iran to the courtiers and ministers in order to then introduce his first argument:

‘But truly because of the mistakes of ministers and government officials it is certainly beyond the range of possibility and beyond human capacity to continue to preserve and guard the splendour and power of the ancient kingdom of Persia by relying on what our forefathers did within Persia and abroad.’

He later adds: ‘They [political thinkers and the wise of the age] do not believe that the continuity of the Persian monarchy can be [achieved] only by being proud of the ancestors.’²⁸² This idea that Iran has to produce its own legacy in these times as it is no longer sufficient to rest on the laurels of their ancestors, is an argument used by Tabrizi several times. He thus proposes reforms as a way of preserving the great condition of the Iranian state. In this way, he also stimulates the Crown Princes’ desire for honor and equality with his ancestors. Who would want to be the last Shah of Iran? Who would want to be the culprit, whose reluctance led to the definite decline of an empire, which persisted ‘over several thousand

²⁷⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mozaffar-od-Din-Shah> 22.07.2016

²⁷⁸ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xv

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid. xx

²⁸² Ibid. xviii

years'²⁸³? The basic dogma behind this statement is *In order to preserve the Iranian state and monarchy, reforms have to be conducted*. Thus he broadens the general argument of Islamic modernists that reforms are required in order to achieve progress by stating that reforms are also required in order to prevent a definite decline of the country. In this respect Tabrizi further argues:

‘In this way [conducting reforms] we can gain credibility and the respect that the ancient government and people of Persia once had in the eyes of foreign people, civilized nations and neighbouring countries may be renewed (...) The ways and means that will ensure the good fortune of the kingdom may perhaps be acquired in this way.’²⁸⁴

Hereby, Tabrizi praises the great reputation that Persia could (re)gain by conducting righteous reforms. As for monarchies, the international recognition of their strength and power was essential in their self-conception (especially in times of increased ‘globalization’), this argument had supposedly some effect on the Crown Prince. Taking into account that Persia used to be one of the most advanced and formidable empires in antiquity – on which the Iranian self-perception was built – the loss of this image was probably a painful insight, for the monarchy as well as for the Persian people. Tabrizi might also speak from his own experience here: being an Iranian in a European country (France), he was confronted with all kinds of prejudices and pitifulness, since Europeans believed the nature of Islamic people to be unsuitable for understanding modern concepts such as constitutionalism or codified law, and thus being inherently condemned to remain backward.²⁸⁵ He adds: ‘If, [after Persian reforms,] the neighbouring governments were to model their procedures on the guidelines of the (...) Persian government, what favours the Persian government could [then] ask of them.’²⁸⁶ Accordingly, Tabrizi promises not only great international reputation, but also other advantages and the role of a pioneer in the region.

In addition, on several occasions Tabrizi refers to European countries in order to give proof of the results achieved by reforms and how Persia could achieve similar results by

²⁸³ Ibid. xv

²⁸⁴ Ibid. xv - xvi

²⁸⁵ This is perfectly shown by the memoirs of a French diplomat, serving in Teheran in the beginning of the twentieth century. C.f. Lorey, Eustache de, and Douglas Brooke Wheelton Sladen. 1910. *The Moon of the Fourteenth Night: Being the Private Life of an Unmarried Diplomat in Persia during the Revolution, Made into a Book by Eustache De Lorey and Douglas Sladen*. London: Hurst & Blackett.

²⁸⁶ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xvii

conducting righteous reforms and consequently return into the ranks of great powers. Thereby he counteracts a popular explanation for Europe's progress; many state officials held the view that Europe's progress was built on scientific and technical achievements. Tabrizi states that even if Persia was as wealthy as England, was as industrialized as France and had a similar amount of high-tech ships as the United States, 'still, it would only succeed if it is with the agreement of political thinkers and officials in accordance with the requirements of the times'²⁸⁷ (hinting at the implementation of a national assembly.). He wanted to convey the message: *The path to modernity is paved with political reforms, not with technical and scientific achievements*. As a last device, Tabrizi presents reforms as 'self-evident'²⁸⁸ and 'inevitable'²⁸⁹, the latter being reasoned by indicating that if the Shah does not conduct reforms, they will be forced upon them by European powers, or forcefully implemented by the Iranian people.²⁹⁰ In this way, Tabrizi depicts reforming the Iranian state as an unavoidable process in the future, but simultaneously he offers the Shah the possibility to gain the laurels.

Contrasted to Tabrizi, Kemal uses only few devices in order to support his reformatory claims, presumably because the readers of his article (published in a *reformist* newspaper) were mostly already in support of reforms. However, he does give some arguments, as if to reaffirm that his claims bear close scrutiny. As pointed out earlier, Kemal writes his article in a highly neutral and rational style, in a way that he depicts reforms as logical consequence of the liberal dogmas and the prevailing political and social circumstances. Thus most of his arguments in favor of reforms are also to a great extent based on rationality and pragmatism. He advocates a fundamental change of the system of state of the Ottoman Empire and asks: 'On what basis can we assume that the future actions of the government will not conform to its past habits, so long as our administration maintains its present character? Is it not a matter of experience that trying what has already been tried can only lead to regret?'²⁹¹ This is a rather simple argument, but it is corresponding to reason and rationality. Prior to this statement, Kemal elaborates on the distrust of the population towards their government and administration. The suspicion and distrust of the Ottoman common people is illustrated by Kemal on the basis of a small story,

²⁸⁷ Ibid. xviii

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. xix

²⁹⁰ Ibid. xix

²⁹¹ Ibid. 147

implemented in his observations about the 'deep hatred and mistrust'²⁹² of the people towards the Ottoman state: 'In fact, even when the government distributed cotton seeds free of charge (...), some farmers refused to accept it. When asked for the reason (...) they responded: "Nothing good can come from the state."' ²⁹³

The flaws of the Ottoman state are Kemal's major argument in order to advocate reforms. The mistrust of the population is caused by the corruption in the state, which Kemal decries several times.²⁹⁴ A further problem lies within the favoritism of the Christian population by granting them certain rights in order to accommodate European powers, a circumstance, which does not only contradict the principle of equality, but also snubs the Ottoman core population, namely Muslims.²⁹⁵ In addition, Kemal recounts the massive debts of the Empire, which is caused not only by corruption, but furthermore by the fundamental Ottoman system of state.²⁹⁶ Moreover, Kemal explains the weakened international position of the empire, which is dependent on the West in order to defend itself from Russia. He writes: 'Let us first consider the truth of this Eastern Question, which is so much talked about: As it is known, Russia wants to annihilate the Sublime State [Ottoman Empire], while the Western states prevent her from carrying this out.'²⁹⁷

Interventions of European powers were massively criticized in the Ottoman society, nevertheless Kemal writes 'However, in fact, it is our state that compels the Europeans to do so.'²⁹⁸ And later: 'In spite of this, every intelligent person realizes that as long as this tyrannical administration prevails in the state, foreign interventions cannot be stopped.'²⁹⁹ This is an interesting aspect: While most of politically active Ottomans blamed European interventions for the decline of Iran, Kemal depicts the decline of Iran as reason for European interventions. In recognition of all these aspects, it must be stated that Kemal's argument is not explicitly built on any aspects supporting his claims for reforms, his argument is rather as follows: *How would a state - chronically broke and in debt, strained by*

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ 'This is because the fundamentals of the of the administration are corrupt, the officials are not accountable, there is no consultation and there is no oversight on the parts of the *umma*. Ibid. 146

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. 146 and 147

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 146

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

corruption, mistrusted by its population and depended on protection from other powers – not need any reforms?

3.3. Arguments given for the implementation of the advocated liberal concepts in Tabrizi's and Kemal's writings

When reading the letter of Tabrizi to ad-Dīn Shah, it becomes clear that his prior concern, the concept he wants to see implemented at all costs, is a codified law. Codified law plays a major role within modernist political thinking. Generally, codified law is defined as a stipulated system of laws, which main objective is to grant justice to the state's citizens.³⁰⁰ This means that similar legal cases are treated alike, and that differing legal cases are treated according to the same principles.³⁰¹ It is important to note that in Middle Eastern countries (prior to the twentieth century) a different jurisdiction for Muslims and non-Muslims was common practice; often there were courts for religious and secular cases (see 2.1. and 2.2.). Envisioning his codified law, Tabrizi states: 'In this way, legal equality can be given to all people and all subjects, of whatever walk of life and community.'³⁰² As we can see here, equality is of central importance, Tabrizi envisions 'a single law code, covering great and poor, and also by implication Muslims and non-Muslims, men and women, equally and consistently'³⁰³. Tabrizi advocates a codified law based on the European example – he seems to be most attracted by the French model (meaning a 'book of procedures' which is constantly modified according to the requirements of the time) and propagated to all subjects 'even to villagers, farmers and labourers'³⁰⁴ through the newspapers, thus representing a public documents.

Tabrizi states that the implementation of a codified law is the remedy for all problems Iran is facing.³⁰⁵ In order to legitimize his call for the codification of laws, Tabrizi presents several devices. In the beginning of his explanations he states: 'In the eyes of perceptive observers and right-thinking people, this proposition is so self-evident that there

³⁰⁰ http://www.jura.uni-freiburg.de/institute/asien/Lebenslauf%20Haase?set_language=en 14.07.2016

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid. xvi

³⁰³ Martin, "A. A. Seyed-Gohrab and S. McGlinn: The Essence of Modernity: Mirza Yusof Khan Mustashar Ad-Dowla Tabrizi's Treatise on Codified Law (Yak Kaleme)." 368

³⁰⁴ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xvii

³⁰⁵ 'However, the opinion of the wise and politicians of all civilized countries is all follows: The difficulties and dangers Persia is facing can be obviated with just two words, namely to turn our backs on the ways of the past and to begin with the establishment of codified law.' Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xv

is no need for arguments or proof³⁰⁶ as if a codified law was the natural and rational consequence, when one takes a look at the condition of Iran. In defiance of this statement, Tabrizi gives quite some arguments in order to support his claim.

Since Tabrizi advocates a codified law, applicable to *all* subjects of Iran, he believes this code to restrict, even eliminate, corruption and the arbitrary power of ministers, the *ulama*, and courtiers, whom he has identified to be the cause of Iran's decline.³⁰⁷ In this respect he continues to argue: 'Until there is a government under the rule of law, they will not turn their eyes from their own interests.'³⁰⁸ Tabrizi presents codified law also as a cure against the centrifugal dissociation of Iran due to nationalistic uprisings. When equality is granted to all subjects, 'these extensive lands and [their] native peoples and subject peoples will be united under the flag of patriotism.'³⁰⁹ In this way codified law will also contribute to a peaceful living in the empire, without foreign intervention.³¹⁰ Similar to his arguments when supporting his reformatory claims in general (see 3.2.), Tabrizi points at the international advantages for Iran when finally introducing a codified law.³¹¹

As he has pointed out why the implementation of a codified law is necessary, and what kind of advantages there are to gain, Tabrizi turns to religious legitimization for his claims: '(...) and I have found that the sanctified religious law of Islam is in no way opposed to law codes that are just.' He extends upon this argument by stating:

'I swear by the pure essence of One God that the establishment of a code of law is not in any way contrary to the true doctrine of Islam and will not do any harm to Islam or the Muslims. On the contrary, by implementing a code of law, Islam and the Muslims will attain benefits beyond their expectations.'

Here it is clearly stated, how Islam and Western notions are intertwined and rendered superimposable. The interesting phrase in this citation is 'the true doctrine of Islam'. It was stated earlier (2.2.3.) that Islamic modernists were critical towards *taqlid* and advocated active reinterpretation of the Islamic sources in order to return to the original essence of Islamic faith. In recognition of this, Tabrizi gives also two evidences from the *Qur'an*, which in his opinion indicate a codification of law: *Qur'an, Sura of Women (4:58)*: 'When you judge

³⁰⁶ Ibid. xvi

³⁰⁷ Ibid. xvi - xvii

³⁰⁸ Ibid. xviii

³⁰⁹ Ibid. xix

³¹⁰ Ibid. xx

³¹¹ Ibid. xviii

between the people, than you judge with justice³¹² and in the *Sure of the Bee (16:90)*: ‘Surely God bids to justice and good-doing and giving to Kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonour and insolence’³¹³ Thus he sees the implementation of a codified law in perfect accordance with the Islamic scriptures.

Tabrizi connects the concept of codified law to constitutional government. A constitution in its most basic sense defines the relationship of a state, respectively a government to its citizens, thereby constituting a body of doctrines, practices and laws.³¹⁴ Being the central legal document of a modern state, a constitution establishes mechanisms which define who can rule, how and for which purpose.³¹⁵ Thus a government’s authority is based on a constitution as well as it is limited by it.³¹⁶ In this way, a constitution protects those who are subject to it from arbitrary government – at least in theory. Although codified law and constitutionalism are conceptually separated, in reality they are interconnected as most constitutional governments have a codified law and vice versa. This is also the case with Tabrizi, he sees constitutional government as a natural inference of codified law. When Tabrizi considers the ‘exceptional progress of Europe and the present condition of the people of Persia’³¹⁷, he wishes Iran to ‘join the ranks of constitutional governments in the near future’³¹⁸.

For the conduct of the state of affairs, Tabrizi is proposing a council, which is constituted of ‘political thinkers and officials’³¹⁹; he additionally writes: ‘For one day of every week, they should consult together to settle the affairs of the government and people on the basis of the truth’³²⁰. He does not specify however how the council should be composited, whether appointed by the Shah or elected by the population, but he sees a council to be required by Islam as it is written in the *Qur’an, Sura (3:159)* ‘Their consultation is in the affair.’³²¹ For Tabrizi, the convocation of a council is an accompaniment of codified law, while it is the major claim of Kemal’s article. His article being entitled ‘And Seek Their Counsel in

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/constitutionalism> 13.07.2016

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/constitutionalism/> 13.07.2016

³¹⁷ Ibid. xix

³¹⁸ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xix

³¹⁹ Ibid. xviii

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

the Matter' - *Qur'an, Sura (42:38)* – it is already emphasized that Kemal's prior concern is the convocation of a council. He starts his article with a treatise-like introduction, starting with the statement: 'Being created free by God, man is naturally obliged to benefit from this divine gift.'³²² In this way he expresses the most central assumption of liberalism ('All men are created free and equal'³²³) with a religious element: he modifies the liberal dogma to be given by God. Therefore, already from the beginning on Kemal blends Islamic with Western discourse. From this he develops his central argument: God created men free, consequently a society is obliged to protect the freedom of every single individual, which is solely possible with the 'creation of a preponderant force, absolutely indispensable for the protection of freedom, upon which the continued existence of humanity is dependent.'³²⁴ He continues:

'Thus the constitutive element of sovereignty (...) is that force that comes into being from the conjunction of individual forces. Therefore, just as all individuals have the natural right to exercise their own power, so too conjoint powers naturally belong to all individuals as a whole, and consequently in every society the right to sovereignty belongs to the public.'³²⁵

In this way of reasoning (clearly influenced by the great French thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau) Kemal establishes a rational argument in favor of an institutionalization of an imperial council, or assembly, appointed on the basis of something akin to popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty refers to the idea that a government's authority is based on the consent of the people by means of elected representatives. This he finds in perfect accordance with a legal rule of the *shari'a*³²⁶ as well as with the traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*) as it is written: 'the leader of the tribe is its servant'³²⁷. Kemal finds his religious precepts in accordance with 'natural law'³²⁸ as well as with the 'rights of man'³²⁹, both containing central notions of enlightenment.

³²² Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 146

³²³ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Declaration-of-Independence> 24.07.2016

³²⁴ Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 146

³²⁵ Ibid. 144

³²⁶ He writes: '(...) if the people of a town gathered and pledged allegiance to someone for the sultanate or caliphate, this person would [indeed] become sultan or caliph, while the previous sultan or caliph would retain no authority whatever, because the imamate is a right of the *umma*.' Ibid. 145

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Natural law is defined as a system of right or justice held to be common to all humans and derived from nature rather than from the rules of society. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/natural-law> 24.07.2016

³²⁹ This is a reference to the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens, issued in France in 1789. The first article of the Declaration states: 'Men are born and remain free and equal in rights'. Generally the Declaration

Kemal also advocates a separation of power by defining the state as a ‘moral personality’³³⁰, who is simultaneously in charge of juridical and executive power. This however means – according to Kemal – that who are subject to the government’s absolute and arbitrary will, which reaffirms the necessity of a council in order to guarantee individual freedom. Generally, Kemal regards a council as a tool to restrict autocratic rule. He argues that monarchic rule must be based on the consent of the people since the title of the monarch means “one charged with kingship” [*sahib al-mulk*], not “owner of kingship” [*malik al mulk*, a title reserved for God in the Qur’an, Sura 3, Verse 26].³³¹ He adds that an absolutist claim of state-ownership is generally in contradiction to Islam as it is written in *Quran, Sura (40:16)*: ‘Whose is the kingdom today? God’s, the One, the Omnipotent’³³². Kemal leaves out that this citation actually refers to the Day of Judgement and is thus taken out of context.³³³ However, Tabrizi too develops the notion that the contemporary state-systems are not in accordance with the true essence of Islam, and thus he sees the implementation of a council and popular sovereignty as a way to conform the true and pure Islamic faith.

Between his negotiation of rationalist reasoning and Islamic-religious legitimization of the convocation of a council, Kemal also employs arguments based on real-Politik in order to support his claims. Regarding the subject matter of foreign intervention by European powers, he states that no other instrument other than institutionalizing a council can prevent a further decline of the empire. Kemal argues that only a council (build on the consent of the people) can guarantee freedom, which will accommodate *all* subjects of the empire – leading to a redundancy of (almost) all further external threats.³³⁴ In this respect, Kemal envisions a council composed of members of all regions of the empire including all denominations.³³⁵ He argues that conservative forces deploy the ‘religious and cultural

is regarded as one of the central documents of Enlightenment and modernity
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-Man-and-of-the-Citizen> 23.07.2016

³³⁰ Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 145

³³¹ Ibid. 147

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ He writes: ‘No means other than the method of consultation can be found to dispel these troubles. Then it will be known that everyone is free. Then Europe will treat us a civilized nation, instead of regarding us as a scarecrow planted against Russia. (...) Therefore, almost all external threats towards the state will be eliminated’
 Ibid. 147

³³⁵ Ibid. 148

heterogeneity of the Ottoman lands³³⁶ (including linguistic diversity of ‘seventy two different tongues’³³⁷) as well as the alleged ignorance of the Ottoman subjects, as a mean to depict a council impossible (the diverse religious and ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire lived mostly isolated from each other, thus it was a wide held assumption that they would not ‘get along’ with each other).³³⁸ Kemal however, points to the provincial councils, which also include members of diverse ethnicities and denominations, but which manage their affairs in the Turkish (official) language.³³⁹ When it works on a provincial basis, why should it be impossible on an imperial level? Kemal even sees a multi-ethnic, religiously diverse council as a mean to prevent certain regions from separation, since ‘who desire to separate themselves from the integral nation?’³⁴⁰

Regarding the domestic problems of the Ottoman state (most dominantly the massive debts, corruption and the mistrust of the people), Kemal asks his readers whether after an implementation of an imperial council the following scenarios would have been possible: ‘Would the [tax] regulations for salt, tobacco and road construction, whose thousands harms caused the destruction of so many regions, have been put in effect?’³⁴¹ or ‘Would [the government] have had the audacity to declare that the value of the consolidated long-term debt was 29 million liras, when it was calculated as less than 26 million [liras]?’³⁴² In this way he reaffirms that the autocratic rule prevalent in the Ottoman Empire led the state in a poor condition and thus the remedy must be the institutionalization of a council, based on the principle of popular sovereignty. As a last device (in order to convince his readers) Kemal refers to the Christian Balkan territories which - as a result of interventions of European powers - already appointed regional councils. Kemal draws upon cultural self-perception and pride: ‘Are we even at a lower level of culture than even the savages of Montenegro?’³⁴³ Kemal ends his article with an appeal to his readers: Continue to strive for change, ‘so that we can move forward without delay.’³⁴⁴

³³⁶ Ibid. 147

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid. 148

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid. 147

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid. 148

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

3. Concluding comparison

Both Tabrizi and Kemal, use several devices in order to establish credibility and expertise, yet in a rather implicit way. Both refer to their knowledge of European political customs, conducts and concepts, in order to win the trust of their readers. But while Tabrizi is rather critical about European imperial politics ('savages'³⁴⁵), Kemal shows understanding for their interventions in recognition of the international system (so-called balance of power). In this respect it is interesting that when Tabrizi refers to European powers, he includes next to Britain and France (which he mentions explicitly) also Russia, while Kemal always makes the distinction between European powers and Russia. It is likely that Kemal's distinction is of a political nature, as all major European powers besides Russia already had introduced liberal concepts, for example constitutions: Great Britain (1689), France (1791), Germany (1806), Spain (1812), Austria-Hungary (1867); Russia would only implement a constitution in 1906. This however remains speculative.

Kemal and Tabrizi show well-grounded knowledge about the Islamic precepts and scriptures. They quote the *Qur'an* and show self-assurance with the terminology and arguments build on a religious fundament. Thus, both writers had (or at least created the impression of) fundamental knowledge of European ideas and notions on liberal concepts as well as about the precepts of Islamic faith. In recognition that the proposed reforms had to be compatible with Islamic faith, they established the prerequisites for their argumentation regarding the implementation of liberal concepts in an Islamic framework.

Due to the different natures of the texts – letter and article – the audiences were also rather different: the Iranian Crown Prince (and possibly his ministers and courtiers) versus liberal-minded Ottoman reformers. Thus it is not surprising that Tabrizi is praising the Shah and God as he needs to establish the image of a loyal and pious man, while Kemal is rather reserved in this respect as he needs to establish the image of a neutral and rational man. While for Tabrizi it is important to transmit the image of a severe religious man, it is crucial for Kemal to have a good knowledge about the Islamic scriptures (as he claims liberal values to be in accordance with the Islamic scriptures) – a significant difference. In this way it is noticeable that Tabrizi counteracts the typical accusations and prejudice against Islamic modernists, since he is writing 'officially' to a member of the royal family. Kemal's' article

³⁴⁵ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xv xx

however is published secretly in the Middle East, thus written to a liberal-minded audience, so that he does not necessarily need to react to stereotypes of Islamic modernists. All in all, due to the different nature of the texts there are derivations in minor aspects of the establishment of goodwill and expertise. However, both writers establish the necessary framework – namely good knowledge about Europe as well as of the Islamic scriptures – in order to be taken seriously and credible for their reform proposals. Thereby it is remarkable, that ‘already’ with this creation of credibility and goodwill, both authors react to the dichotomy between Islam and Western modern concepts and ideas, a notion only dissolved by the negotiation of both concepts (political Islam, modernity) as conformable.

Within this framework both authors supported their general calls for reforms in a rather implicit way; Tabrizi however is more definite in conveying his message. This must be traced back to the recipient of his letter, who was no advocate of reforms, seeking to restrict the power of his family. Ad-Dīn Shah is often credited with having precipitated the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905 -1911), a process which was triggered by his incompetence and extravagance, rather than by his liberal attitude. Evidently Tabrizi (writing to a royal who lived remote from the political reality of the people) had to be more explicit than Kemal, who was writing to a critical, yet appreciative audience. Both writers employ the current (poor) conditions of their state in order to support their claims: both identify corruption and the treatment of the peoples as crucial domestic problems. Implemented in an international context, both identify a decline of their states, yet while Kemal is concerned with insufficient (military and political) power in order to defend the Ottoman Empire without foreign intervention (the Ottoman Empire remains in his assertions a significant power), Tabrizi points to the lost international significance and recognition of Iran.

Regarding the issue of Europe, there is again a significant difference in their writings. Tabrizi blames the European powers for their imperial politics, while Kemal depicts it as necessary reaction towards his government’s conduct of foreign and domestic policy. This could also be a consequence of the different views regarding the cultural and political affiliation of Russia to Europe. Russia was the predominant power that pressured the Ottoman Empire and Iran, territorially, politically and economically (next to Great Britain). By excluding Russia, Kemal can attribute France and Great Britain (the major Western powers being interventionist in the Middle East) to be faced with a Hobson’s choice in recognition of the balance of power. This must be seen in the context of the Crimea War, when Russia was

defeated by a coalition of the Ottoman Empire, France and Great Britain. Tabrizi however, who makes no such distinction, must – especially in view of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 – perceive European interventionist politics as unjust, imperialistic and a threat to the persistence of his country. It is notably, that no religious sources or evidences were employed by the authors in order to support their claims. This could be due to the completed religious conceptualization and discussion of the righteousness of *işlāḥ*, which had been conducted prior to the publication of the writings of Tabrizi and Kemal (see 2.2.3.).

Regarding the values advocated, it must be concluded that similar values were espoused, however codified law and the convocation of a council were in the center of both writings. There were variations in other concepts explicitly addressed (Tabrizi: e.g. Constitutionalism; Kemal: e.g. separation of powers), however all concepts were built around the ideas of justice, equality and freedom. The main features of their ideals were the restriction of arbitrary government and the implementation of dynamic administration. Both authors perceived the liberal notions discussed as fundamentally interdependent, but the focus as well as the order³⁴⁶ were clearly different. Within the outlining of the concepts, both - Tabrizi's codified law and Kemal's council - were based on all subjects being equal in the state. Thus cultural diversity and religious tolerance were important themes. This however may at first sight seem contradictory to Kemal's criticism on Ottomanism and the Edict of Gülhane 1839/1868 (see 2.4.2.), but his main criticism was built on the superficial creation of an imperial identity (without equality in practice) as an accommodation of European foreign interests and politics. He might also have perceived the council as transient means to an end, in order to emancipate the empire from foreign influences. When it came to legitimizing or reasoning the implementation of the respective concepts the arguments varied in the contextual 'details', but they followed the same structure: Both authors drew in their argumentation on Western-liberal, religious arguments as well as arguments based on real-Politik.

Western-liberal reasoning was mostly employed to establish the ideational foundation of the argument Tabrizi and Kemal tried to transmit. Thereby both drew upon idealistic liberal conceptions and presented them as a desirable objective. With phrases such as 'In this way, legal equality can be given to all of the people and subjects, of whatever walk

³⁴⁶ Tabrizi advocated the implementation of codified law as a first measure, from which all other concepts could be derived. Kemal however pleaded for the institutionalization of a council as a prior mean in order to establish all other notions advocated.

of life and community'³⁴⁷ (Tabrizi) or 'General freedom is protected within society because society (...) safeguards the individual from the fear of aggression on the part of another individual'³⁴⁸ both authors accept liberal ideology and conceptions as worthwhile for all humans as individuals. In this way it is remarkable however, that Kemal writes in a much more rationalistic style, while Kemal articulates his concerns in a rather emotional manner. This must be seen as a consequence of the variation in nature of sources and audience.

Within religious legitimization, both authors found their claims to be in perfect accordance with Islamic faith. Both authors propagated the notion that the implementation of their advocated concepts would support Islamic societies in returning back to the true and pure essence of Islam. Both employ citations from the Islamic scriptures rather than referring to the Islamic customs and traditions. Reaching back to the Islamic scriptures directly is a fundamental feature of Islamic modernism, integrated in the ideology of the *Salafi* movement, which in the nineteenth century was a progressive tendency in Islamic re-interpretation - rather than the reactionary, bigoted movement which is referred to as *Salafism* today. There is no evidence of a fundamental difference regarding the denomination, on the contrary both espouse religious tolerance and Shia Tabrizi even calls for fraternization with the majorly Sunni states Afghanistan and the Ottoman Empire.

The conditions of the Ottoman Empire as well as Iran perceived in the view of real-Politik play a major role in the endorsement of liberal notions. Thereby both authors specify domestic problems (corruption, discontented population, debts, injustice), regional matters (lost reputation, Balkans) and international issues (the role of Europe, decline of their states). All three domains lead to a decline of each states, thus the poor condition of both states is a central theme in advocating modern concepts as a mean to achieve progress. In fact, both authors convey the message that implementing liberal notions such as a codified law or council does not only stimulate progress, but that they are essential in order to prevent the definite decline of Iran or the Ottoman Empire. The concepts are presented as a universal remedy in order to eliminate (nearly) all internal and external threats. Europe is again the major issue: The liberal state-systems as well as the astonishing progress (in the view of Kemal and Tabrizi) are used as points of reference, orientation and evidence. Thus the following pattern can be established for both authors: the liberal ideology was the

³⁴⁷ Seyed-Gohrab, McGlinn. 2010. *One Word - Yak Kaleme: 19th Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*. xvi

³⁴⁸ Kurzman, 2002. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A sourcebook*. 144

orientation, the real-political conditions in the Ottoman Empire and Iran were the justification, Western progress the validation and the reinterpreted Islamic scriptures the legitimization for both Islamic modernists in order to convince their readers of implementing liberal concepts of state and thus to finally overcome the decline of their countries.

4. Conclusion

After examining and analyzing the writings of Namik Kemal and Mīrzā Yūsof Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla Tabrizi, it can be stated that the argumentation given by the authors are superficially different, but fundamentally similar. The sources chosen were essentially different in nature and meant for different audiences thus there appear variations in the style of presenting. The two authors approached their concern from different angles, but were heading in the same direction: Tabrizi's appeal to the Crown Prince appears emotional, devoted and pious, while Kemal, addressing liberal intellectuals, is writing in a rational, yet passionate manner. Notably, the difference can be traced back to the nature of source and audience. Their common goal is to gain back the power of a superior nation that the states formerly were. In this way their common ideal core evolves around the restriction of power and the empowerment of the people. Both agree: reforms are needed. Significantly, both authors employ very similar strategies in order to advocate the intended concepts; they refer to: liberal ideology (orientation), decline of the own states (justification), Western progress (evidence) and Islamic faith (legitimization). Strikingly, although Kemal and Tabrizi operate in different political and cultural contexts, the essence of their argument is significantly similar. There are differences in the context-related filling in of the arguments; naturally, both refer to the contemporary circumstance of their own countries. Firstly this leads to a different conception of which role Europe is playing in the Middle East, a striking difference between the authors. Secondly, Kemal could refer to – and criticize – the 'reform-history' of his country by elaborating on Edict of Gülhane, whereas Tabrizi could not make any such claims. However, Iran and the Ottoman Empire were facing similar problems during this time (corruption, subsided political significance etc.) so that these remain the major substantial differences.

Generally, both authors give an example of how to carefully introduce progress within a totalitarian regime. As they interconnect liberal notions with *Qur'anic* references, both authors establish a framework which allows the major part of society (including the *ulama* and high ranking officials) to accept, even facilitate, change without neglecting the original foundations of the state. This reaffirms that Islamic modernists indeed considered their faith to be in accordance with liberal concepts and notions. Tabrizi and Kemal were

themselves temporarily part of the political system and both had credibility for the audiences they were addressing. Although credibility was established in a slightly different way by rather different strategies, both authors fundamentally react to what is expected by the audiences in order to be taken seriously. It comes in this way, that both establish the necessary framework to express their concerns, namely a confident handling of the Islamic scriptures and precepts as well as well-grounded knowledge of European affairs and modern concepts. Thus the reference to the reform-movement as *Islamic Modernism* is a perfect fit. Therefore, the research reaffirms that Islamic modernists draw upon Western-liberal and political-Islamic discourse. By blending the two ideologies, they create an alternative discourse, which implies that true Islam requires liberal concepts. Remarkably, Islamic references were employed as legitimization, yet not as orientation, which was Western-liberal ideology.

All in all, it must be concluded, that within the Islamic modernist movement argumentation was similar, yet not identical when it came to advocating liberal notions. The nature of the source as well as the audience addressed, have an impact on the arguments given, as well as on the manner they are presented in. The content and the fundamental assumption underlying the arguments itself remain strikingly similar. This can be found as a consequence of the prevailing notions and ideas, of the common discourses, that were circulating among the reformist movement in nineteenth century Middle East. No difference regarding denomination could be detected. Both authors advocated religious and cultural diversity and tolerance, or at least came to terms with it, considering the political circumstances.

Reading 'against the grain' proved a useful tool in order to approach the writings of Kemal and Tabrizi. At first sight, the writings appeared very different, but by contextualization of the political, cultural, social and religious conditions, it could be pointed out that both authors draw upon the same arguments when supporting their claims. By working out the underlying structure of the presented arguments, differences were marginalized while similarities were emphasized. Thereby the cross-section of Islamic modernist writing was helpful in order to make the findings independent of any external factors such as the audience addressed. In this way it can be found that a context-related analysis, concentrating on a cross-section of the writings by analyzing sources of different

nature, is an interesting tool when examining the common core of a movement, such as Islamic Modernism.

Concluding it must be found that a research in this design has its strength, yet also its limits. It would certainly have been interesting to extend the research with a third writer (possibly from another context, e.g. Afghanistan), with whom the results of the analysis could have been validated or contrasted. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the analytic framework, the methodology could be specified by including more specific tools of context-related narrative analysis. An example here would be to introduce the concepts of focalization (the perspective taken in a narration), which enables the researcher to extract dominant discourses (by analyzing shifts in focalization). In addition, the issue of investigating a subject matter, which is not situated in the language context of the researcher certainly limits the choice of sources. Only a fragment of the writings of Islamic modernists has been translated to Western languages and those translated have mostly been thoroughly studied. Regarding this research, this led to an adjustment of the protagonists to the availability of respective sources. It is certainly an advantage to be proficient in one of the corresponding languages of your research.

However, it is important – especially for historiography and public discourse – to encounter the subject matter of liberal Islam as a Western researcher. In this way, this research participates in the scholarly debate outlined in the introduction of this paper. Although it does not engage the discussion about whether Islam is compatible with Western notions and values, it does examine the justification and legitimization of those Middle Eastern natives who did. In the end, it should not be of major importance whether Western people believe Islam to be compatible with modern ideas and concepts, but whether Muslims themselves identify liberal potential in Islam. I hope that many other scholars will dedicate themselves to this important topic. Further researchers should be aware of the difficulties regarding the availability of sources, or work together with someone who is proficient in the respective language(s). The issue of the accuracy of translation arises in both cases. Furthermore, in order to make the research more universal, three or more authors should be chosen. A research in a broader scope, embracing more authors from different contexts could enhance the validity and significance of an investigation, encountering this difficult, but important issue.

(Word-count: 27 370)

Epilogue

With this paper I aim to take part in a revision of the discourse about Islam, in particular about liberal Islam. Lately Islam has received extensive media coverage due to sociopolitical events and developments in world affairs. For the Western hemisphere in particular, this resulted in a notion of an inherently fundamentalist and radical Islam, leading to various anti-Islamic sentiments, movements and parties in the West; nowadays anti-Islamic slogans seem to be the flute of the Pied Piper for political popularity and point-scoring. Many people believe that Islam does not allow flexible and liberal interpretation, does not support religious freedom and tolerance, but always - inherently and universally - fosters the ideas and notions expressed by Islamic extremists. That this does not bear close scrutiny is proven by the previous examination.

When I noticed that contemporary protagonists in the Islamic world, for example a militant group naming themselves 'Islamic State of Syria and Iraq' (ISIS) were considered to be representatives of Islamic religion - while no one would perceive the racist group 'Ku Klux Klan' (which operated most prominently in the United States of America in the nineteenth and twentieth century) as agents of Christian religion - I realized that many people indeed agree that some religions are inherently more fundamentalist and violent than others. Islam is thereby seen as the most violent of all five world religions, the recent developments in the Middle East being the obvious evidence for such claims. Me being a history student, I can name manifold events, even periods, where war, torture and other cruelties were conducted in the name of Christian faith, the crusades, the forced Christianization of Latin-American cultures, the Thirty Years of War and the burning of witches only being a few examples. Christianity however, is not considered to be an obstacle to peace, equality and a tranquil and tolerant living together of the peoples. The same is true for all other religions; but while American Christian evangelists propagate white supremacy and race prejudices, Israeli orthodox Jews demand territorial expansions legitimized by the Thora (leading to violent conflicts in their regions), the Indian Hindu caste system discriminates people on religious grounds and Buddhists monks continue to slaughter Muslims in Myanmar (all are just examples!!!), Islamic faith is the only religion which is currently considered by many people to consist only of its fundamental and extremists streams.

All this motivated me to focus the research of my master studies on liberal Islam. I think every research has an inherently political nature; every researcher has a motivation for

the chosen research - otherwise research would be barely carried out (properly). However there remains the researchers' obligation to neutrality and objectivity – to the greatest possible extent. In the end, we are all framed by our own cultural, political and social context, which is impossible to eliminate, but important to be aware of.

As if to confirm my self-chosen assignment, I found myself to be the only student out of three to write about liberal instead about fundamentalist Islam. I believe that religion is a matter of interpretation, a religion can be liberal or radical, exegesis can be strict or flexible, it is all dependent on how it is interpreted and lived by its adherents. In my opinion it is an absurdity to blame a community of 1.6 billion Muslims for the extremist behavior of only a minor fraction (Keyword 'Not In My Name'). We do not apply the same to Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism or Hinduism. I furthermore think we are making a big mistake by inflicting collective punishment on Muslims, rather than also for instance taking into account our own Western role in the Middle East, which might have been a factor in the uprising of such extremist groups like ISIS or Al-Qaida (a terrorist coalition operating world-wide). Certainly it is more easy to blame a religion, which is not our own, rather than to grapple with what had happened in the past and to admit the misdemeanor and arrogance of Western powers intervening in the Middle East.

I hope (with this paper) some more attention will be drawn to liberal tendencies within Islam - within religions in general - which should be facilitated rather than blaming them for their ill-bred cousins. In the end, we all want to live in peace and prosperity, whether Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Atheists or Agnostics - this however will only be possible when we stop generalizing and assigning blame, but start looking behind the surface and make an effort for cultural and religious understanding and tolerance.

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