

Saving the Minds and Loyalties of Subjects: Ottoman Education Policy Against The Spread of Shiism in Iraq During The Time of Abdülhamid II

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ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Ottoman authorities realized that the Sunni orthopraxy and *ipso facto* state sovereignty in Iraq was in danger. They believed that the great numbers of Sunni masses converting to Shiism could pose a serious political risk in the near future. To guarantee the political loyalties of the subjects living in Iraq, the Ottoman authorities formulated a policy of education to protect and correct beliefs. This article explains how the Ottoman government during the time of Abdülhamid II applied counter-measures against the perceived spread of Shiism in Iraq. These included appointing single Sunni professors to madrasas, sending itinerant preachers among the tribesmen to teach them the basic tenets of Sunnism, opening modern schools, and taking Iraqi Shiite boys at an early age to Istanbul to change their beliefs. The article further addresses issues that emerged during the implementation of this policy, such as the questions of whether to select local or non-local ulama and how to overcome financial chal-

lenges. Overall, the Ottoman policy of education aimed at disseminating an identity of Ottomanness (*Osmanlılık*) that included the correction of the beliefs of non-Sunni Muslim groups. This also meant re-defining Ottomanness in closer association with the Sunni interpretation of Islam.

Keywords: Ottoman, Iraq, Nineteenth Century, State, Authority, Education, Madrasa, Ulama, School, Sunni, Shiite, Policy of Sectarianism.

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Ottoman authorities realized that the Sunni orthodoxy and *ipso facto* state sovereignty in Iraq was in danger. They believed that the great numbers of Sunni masses were converting to Shiism and the spread had some intrinsic value, posing a grave political risk in the near future.¹ Perhaps the most visible sign of the Shiite threat to the Ottomans was the call to prayer according to Shiite rites in places like Karbala, Najaf, and Samarra, something known to and even accustomed to by local authorities.² However, Ottoman officials thought that the threat went beyond such symbolic instances and gave percentages, despite being mostly vague and inaccurate, about conversions to Shiism,³ underlining the tribal populations, the primary target of the Shiite propagation. The inhabitants of Baghdad, to their view, regarded Shiism and Persian-ness as identical, and thus conversions to Shiism were seen not merely as a moral blow but also a political risk since changing sectarian affiliation potentially meant a shift in political loyalties.⁴ For the Ottomans, preventing the spread had thus become an “obvious matter” (*emr-i bedîhî*).⁵

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- 1 Selim Deringil, “The Struggle Against Shi’ism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter Propaganda,” *Die Welt des Islams, New Series* 30 (1990): 45-62; Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908* (London: Routledge, 2006), 99-127. Çetinsaya’s book is the revised version of his doctoral dissertation that he defended in 1994 at Manchester University. Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi’is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Faruk Yashlıçimen, “Sunnism versus Shiism? Rise of the Shiite Politics and of the Ottoman Apprehension in Late Nineteenth Century Iraq” (Master Thesis, Bilkent University, 2008).
 - 2 BOA, ŞD. 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885. Prior to the direct Ottoman rule, which was established in Karbala and Najaf in 1843 and ended the semi-autonomous rule in these two districts, *hutbes* were not read in the name of the Ottoman Sultan. Meir Litvak, *Shi’i Scholars of nineteenth century Iraq: The ‘ulama’ of Najaf and Karbala’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 150.
 - 3 Faruk Yashlıçimen, “Osmanlı Devleti’nin İran Eksenli Irak Siyaseti ve 19. Yüzyılda Bürokratik Bilgi Üretimi,” *Gelenek ve Modern Arasında Bilgi ve Toplum*, ed. M. Hüseyin Mercan (İstanbul: Yedirenk Yayınları, 2013): 321-330.
 - 4 BOA, MF.MKT 1050/7, 24 Rebiyyülevvel 1326 / 25 April 1908.
 - 5 BOA, Y.MTV. 54/82, 22 Safer 1309 / 26 October 1891.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Ottomans had been interested more in ensuring state sovereignty in Iraq. The signs of establishing authority were simply the application of Sunni practices in the public space like the call to prayer, legal procedures, and reading *hutbes* (sermons) in the name of the Ottoman Sultan. Ottoman administrators did not prohibit the Muharram commemoration ceremonies widely practiced by the Shiite communities, as a rule, but banned public cursing of the first three caliphs of Islam.⁶ However, especially after 1885, the Ottoman government began to receive reports from local administrators of Iraq about how to undertake counter-measures against the spread of Shiism, and launched an educational policy for responding to this challenge.⁷

The policy of disseminating the Sunni interpretation of Islam and thwarting the spread of Shiism in Iraq dates, at least, back to the time of Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876). An order issued by the Supreme Council (*Meclis-i Vâlâ*) in 1862 instructed the Vali of Baghdad to appoint local ulama as *naibs* with proper salaries to correct the beliefs of those who were following the deviant Shiite sect and also to teach them the basic tenets of Islam in accordance to Sunni practices. The chief motive, however, was to reinstate state authority through the application of the Sharia law by the hands of state officials, like the *kaymakams* or *naibs*, within the broader context of “disciplining people” (*terbiyet-i ‘âmm*).⁸ However, it was under

6 Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth century Iraq*, 151.

7 Some argued to entrust the appointment of eligible and officially recognizable men of learning with the task of public sermons. BOA, Y.MTV 45/24, 10 Muharrem 1308 / 25 August 1890. Divisional General (Ferik) İsmet Paşa, inspector in Baghdad, advised that a sufficient number of primary schools (*mekâtib-i ibtidâiyye*) should be opened and children should read the Qur'an and learn the Sunni *akâid* (the basic tenets of Sunni faith) BOA, Y.MTV 43/114, 23 Rebiyyülahir 1307 / 16 December 1889. Ömer bin Mahmud İhsan, director of a high school, in his petition to the Sultan, offered to increase the number of primary schools. BOA, Y.PRK.MF 2/36, 13 Zilkade 1309 / 8 June 1892.

8 BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22 Ramazan 1278 / 22 March 1862; BOA, İ.MVL. 477 /21587, 9 November 1862 Vali of Baghdad noted that in most of the districts, there were neither *kaymakams*, nor *müdir*s or *naibs*. There, the state authority was *de facto* in the hands of Arab sheikhs and the Shiite ulama. Among the precautions was the appointment of *naibs* chosen from the province to local districts and among their duties was judging the issues pertaining to law and state authority according to sharia, like homicide; preaching people, telling them the rules and duties of religion; teaching (religious) sciences; praying in congregation; and teaching Hanafi-Sunnism whoever was willing.

the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II that the policy was to be pioneered, its scope extended, and established into a systematic state project.

The Ottoman authorities profoundly believed in the transformative power of education, which attributed a ‘magical capacity’ to improve the society at large. In fact, as a global phenomenon, state involvement in public education had increased towards the end of the nineteenth century. This was true for France as well as the Russian, Japanese, and Ottoman empires. In Russia, for instance, promoting modern education was among the chief priorities of the empire along with building railroads. In France, political leaders, both conservatives and republicans, regarded modern education as a panacea to create a modern state and society. Promoting modern education had very much to do with the quest of maintaining territorial integrity and administrative durability of the states. The massive educational activity in Europe was linked to the ruthless international competition and rivalry for survival. The Ottomans were living in the same historical context and shared the same astonishing optimism for the new style of education. They perceived it as a “universal beacon of hope” that even overshadowed urgent and substantial infrastructural difficulties.⁹

The Hamidian government placed great emphasis on “the commissioning, controlling, inspection, and occasionally the banning of a variety of texts that appeared in the schools” and the government itself commissioned many textbooks.¹⁰ A book titled *akâid kitabı* (Book of Creed), outlining the religious doctrines and emphasizing the diverging points of superstitious beliefs from the true faith, was believed to attract all the Muslim populations of Iraq. The book was organized with separate chapters for each community,

9 Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27-40. Fortna gives the striking example of the Franco-German War of 1870 in which the German victory was largely linked to the superiority of Prussian education. See, Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 34. The same was true in many other contexts that Hoda Yousef notes for Egypt, “Almost every faction calling for change- bureaucrats, modernists, reformists, colonialists, Islamists, traditionalists, and so forth- looked to education as a means of transformation, reform, or evolution.” Hoda A. Yousef, “Reassessing Egypt’s Dual System of Education Under Isma‘il: Growing ‘ilm and Shifting Ground in Egypt’s First Educational Journal, Rawdat al-Madaris, 1870-77,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008): 109.

10 Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 220.

refuting the basic tenets of their beliefs by depending on reason and the Sharia. It was expected to challenge erroneous practices of Wahhabism and Shiism with its various branches. The book was also intended to challenge people who deviated from the true path of Islam due to the influence of European philosophy.¹¹ The Ottoman Grand Vizier Avlonyalı Ferid Pasha (1903-1908) stated that superstitious beliefs persisted in the region due to people's ignorance and the spreading of science and education through the opening of schools and appointing ulama to the non-Sunni inhabited villages would be helpful, in addition to the compilation of a book of catechism (*ilmihal*) written both in Arabic and Turkish and penned in a simple manner, understandable for everyone.¹² In 1908, Nazım Pasha, the Vali of Baghdad, continued to offer the same solution, that of publishing an *akâid* book outlining the basic precepts of the Sunni doctrine and teaching it at primary, secondary and high schools.¹³

Ottoman authorities were likewise concerned with the manipulative power of ideas and paid due attention to the circulation of newspapers, pamphlets or books that propagated a certain ideology. For instance, a book called *Kavânîn-i İslâmiyye* (Canons of Islam) written in French, worried the state officials as it was sold publicly and explained the precepts and rituals in Shiism. The publication of this book led to a series of bureaucratic correspondences between the ministries of Interior, Education and the Office of Şeyhülislam.¹⁴ Similarly, in Basra, unofficial publications and distribution of a book called *Şems el-Hidâye* (Sun of Guidance), penned by a Shiite cleric to refute a book on the Sunni creed, was prohibited by the government which ordered it be burnt and de-

11 BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130, 28 Şevval 1309 / 25 May 1892. See for the opinions of some other Ottoman officials on the publication of this *akâid kitabı* Deringil, "The Struggle against Shi'ism in Hamidian Iraq," 64.

12 BOA, Y.A.HUS 462/44, 8 Ramazan 1321 / 28 November 1903. About the pamphlets written to correct the beliefs of Anatolian Kızılbaş, see BOA, Y.MTV 53/108, 27 Muharrem 1309 / 2 September 1891. Similarly, the guidance of a catechism (*ilmihal*) prepared for Yazidi Kurds, see Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimacy of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 81-82.

13 BOA, MF.MKT 1050/7, 24 Rebiyyülevvel 1326 / 25 April 1908.

14 BOA, A.MKT.MHM 463/82, 18 Recep 1290 / 11 September 1873.

stroyed wherever it was found.¹⁵ Recalling the same practice, it seems to be an old convention by the government to prohibit the marketing of the Iranian-printed copies of the Quran in the empire.¹⁶ The government was equally worried about inconvenient publications aimed at instigating the Shiite population against the state.¹⁷ This hesitation was related to a late nineteenth century phenomenon that the Quranic translation and publishing became widespread in the Muslim world that Quran prints could then easily be reproduced and owned.¹⁸

The Ottoman government generated and presented a myriad of policy options about how to stop the spread of Shiism in Iraq, some were implemented while some others remained on paper. A brief sketch of these policy options would include a) opening schools and madrasas that taught according to the Sunni curriculum, b) appointing Sunni ulama to teach people the Sunni interpretation of Islam, c) preventing Shiite akhunds (Islamic cleric in Persian) of either Ottoman or Iranian origin to penetrate the tribes, d) maintaining the ban on Shiite-Sunni marriages,¹⁹ e) closely monitoring unauthorized publications circulating in the Empire, f) hindering the mixing of Shiites and Sunnis during the Muharram commem-

15 BOA, MF.MKT 310/43, 1313 Şevval 28 / 11 April 1896. Before censoring *Şems el-Hidâye*, the Ministry of Education asked for a copy to investigate the book that in return decided that the book was a demagogy to and quarrelling with the said book by Şeyh Hüseyin, a Sunni scholar. The central administration allegedly underlined the scholarly incapacity of the refutation as much as its problematic content.

16 BOA, A.MKT.UM 50/36, 2 Safer 1269 / 15 November 1852; BOA, A.MKT.UM 113/99, 6 Safer 1269 / 19 November 1852.

17 BOA, DH.MKT 1087/13, 12 Rebiyyülahir 1324 / 7 August 1898. The Ottoman government was informed in 1898 that a book called *Ziyâdet-ül Beyân fî Mezâlîm-i Al-i Osmân* was illegally brought to the Ottoman lands and planned to be distributed among the Shiite populations of Syria with the purpose of instigating them against the Ottoman government.

18 M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4-21. Wilson notes that it was especially translations of the Qur'an that "began to appear threatening in the Ottoman Empire, causing Muslim scholars to reopen the classical debates on translation and acceptable genres of interpretation." I am thankful to Yakoob Ahmed for letting me know about this publication.

19 Karen Kern, *Imperial Citizen: Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces of Iraq* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

oration ceremonies, g) taking Shiite boys to Istanbul to inculcate them with Sunnism,²⁰ h) restricting the Iranian Shiite ulama from travel to Mecca and Medina,²¹ i) assigning a time limitation to the Iranian pilgrims visiting the Atabat (sacred shrines) and also restricting their freedom of movement to the environs of the holy shrines, j) forbidding the Iranian arrivals with an unspecified visiting purpose from going into the Iraqi villages, sub-districts, and tribes; k) raising difficulties for Iranian students who would come to Iraq for educational purposes and demand residence permission, and thus, filling the madrasas at the Atabat with Ottoman subjects.²² If the overall perspective of local Ottoman authorities was considered, they favored Shiites of Ottoman origin when compared to the Iranians or British Indians; as these students could well have been Ottoman Shiite subjects.

Among these options, the education policy was the most favorable to the Ottoman authorities. It was linked to an empire-wide citizen-making program and regarded as the best method for responding to the challenges posed by the spread of Shiism in Iraq and missionary schools. In the frontier regions like Iraq, the policy reflected something of a “siege mentality”²³ which pervaded the thinking of government officials that maintained a high level of vigilance in their quest to keep Shiism at bay. Along with optimism shown for education, there were conjectural political necessities too, leading state officials to espouse more lenient means. Tribal conflicts had always been a point of contention in the local politics of Iraq that required constant government involvement, while the military weakness of the imperial troops and gendarmerie caused grave difficulties in establishing state authority there.²⁴

20 Literature on this subject and archival research of the present author show that this practice was limited to 13 Shiite children only and applied for once.

21 Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire (1839-1908): Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001), 228.

22 Last three policy options were offered by Muhammed Arif Bey, Ottoman Consul at Tehran in 1894, who drew attention to the Iranian aspect of the issue. BOA, Y.EE 10/69, 11 Safer 1312 / 14 August 1894.

23 Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 100.

24 Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 72-99; Ebubekir Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the nineteenth-Century Middle East* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 132-152; Christoph Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und*

State authorities perceived the Shiite threat as having a potential danger to pose political risks in the future and accordingly decided to take pre-emptory measures. In the view of state officials, the spread of Shiism was a nascent process, ignorance being the chief reason behind its growing acceptance, whereas broad exposure to Sunni education could peacefully dissuade furthering of the Shi-ite movement and perhaps could even reverse it. The practice of sending ulama and preachers to correct the beliefs of subjects who converted to Shiism was also accepted as a “just and preferable way” of dealing with the issue.²⁵ State officials were also respectful to the rule, which postulated, “By principle, enforcement for the correction of faith is not allowed.”²⁶

The government’s educational initiative incorporated both proactive and reactive elements. A *Meclis-i Vâlâ* (the Supreme Council) decree dated to 1885 stated the chief purpose of the government with regards to the “Shiite Question” was both to thwart the spread of Shiism and to correct the beliefs of the recent converts to the Shiite sect.²⁷ Other examples confirm that the government followed a defensive strategy, aiming at protecting the minds and loyalties of the remaining Iraqi Sunni city dwellers and tribesmen not yet converted to Shiism.²⁸ The officials anticipated that if the Sunni ulama were sent amongst the tribesmen, it would then be possible to secure the subjects from “Shiite seductions”²⁹ when they were shown “the righteous way”.³⁰ However, it is not clear what the officials meant by the recentness of these conversions. Did they happen a couple of years ago, or decades ago?³¹ Archival documents do

Modernisierung im Irak: Die Provinz Baghdad, 1817-1917 (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2012), 223-280.

25 BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22 Ramazan 1278 / 22 March 1862.

26 BOA, İ. DH. 96880, 14 Zilhice 1308 / 20 June 1891. “...cebren tashih-i i'tikâd kâidetên mümkün olmadıği...”

27 BOA, MV. 1/26, 22 Rebiyyülahir 1302 / 7 February 1885. Seven years later, Menemenlizade Mehmed Rifat, the provincial treasurer of Baghdad, argued the same. BOA, İ.MMS. 129/5537, 24 Şaban 1309 / 24 March 1892.

28 BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19 Recep 1309 / 17 February 1892; BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 29 December 1892.

29 BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19 Recep 1309 / 17 February 1892.

30 BOA, BEO 413/30919, 2 June 1894. “...kendülerine irâe-i hak ve sevâb eylemek...”

31 For a detailed account on the conversion of Iraqi tribes to Shiism, see Yitzhak Nakash, “The Conversion of Iraq’s Tribes to Shiism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26/3 (August, 1994); Yashçimen, “Sunnism versus Shiism?,” 40-60.

not present much regarding the details. Shiite converts, however, were portrayed as being less likely to send their children to Sunni schools once they converted to Shiism.

During the Hamidian era, government authorities gave the utmost importance to teaching the basic tenets of the Sunni faith (*akâid*) in mosques, madrasas, and at all modern state schools. Students receiving education at state schools were expected to pray five times a day and in congregation according to the Sunni practices. Unsystematically functioning educational institutions such as infant schools (*mekteb-i sibyan*), which financially depended on the weekly payments of parents, were planned to be taken under state control, including institutions that were deemed unable to train and reproduce satisfactory scholars capable of providing education in both the “religiously and politically” important sciences, which were Quran exegesis (*tefsir*), hadith of the Prophet, and the tenets of faith (*akâid*).³² Thus, the improvement of the madrasas and opening of schools in Iraq appeared to be fundamental to the state officials to retain the subservience of the subjects and to establish political authority in the region.

Ottoman Government, Sunni Ulema and Their Counterparts

The practice of appointing ulama or religious deputies was indeed used as a way of reinstating state authority. The government officials used the method in June 1885, for instance, while trying to reinstate state authority in Kuwait, where the Sabah family was dominant and Abdullah al-Sabah Pasha together with his brothers was trying to erode the government’s supremacy. One response by the Ottomans was to win the Kuwaiti people over to the government, which decided to appoint Taha Efendi as the *naiib* of Kuwait to achieve this end. Taha Efendi, who knew the colloquial language well and was accustomed to the characteristics of the locality, was expected to achieve this political goal.³³

The Ottoman central government was advised by both Iraqi local and central bureaucrats to appoint a number of ulama, who knew Quran exegesis, the hadith of the Prophet, and the tenets of

32 BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27 Şevval 1306 / 26 July 1889.

33 BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

the true faith (*akâid*) to fight against the spread of Shiism. Furthermore, the ulama should be chosen from amongst those who were sound-minded and well experienced, in addition to having the special talent of eloquence in preaching. The appointed ulama were advised to be careful about how to penetrate places where Shiites constituted the majority. As a caution, they were warned never to introduce themselves as government appointees. They were instructed rather to behave as if they moved to Iraq by choice, being independent Sunni scholars demonstrating their purpose with the intention of spreading knowledge among the ignorant people. They were to call people to pray as a congregation in mosques, teach them to read the Quran in the proper manner, and dispense the basic religious knowledge for daily life. The ulama were to reside in densely inhabited cities and towns. The Sunni ulama were to acquaint themselves with the science of refutation to dispute the Shiite akhunds. They were warned to behave in a moderate fashion when arguing with those akhunds and never to use aggressive, agitating, or emotional language, but rather behave as a good host treating their guests well. They were to reveal enough evidence to support the argument at hand.³⁴

The ulama or preachers to be appointed should have been selected from among pious persons, having perfect command of Arabic, and who were well-informed about sectarian issues to work under the responsibility of local governments.³⁵ The ulama were expected to know Arabic, Persian, or Kurdish that would attest to their ability to translate certain texts into other languages such as Turkish, Persian, Kurdish, Arabic, or French.³⁶ The appointed Sunni ulama should have knowledge of religious sciences and of Islamic jurisprudence.³⁷ The ulama sent to Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra, were expected to be equipped with special qualities such as “having a high degree of morality, being closely familiar with Islamic law and methodology, being suitable for education, and being informed of

34 BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27 Şevval 1306 / 26 June 1889. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 110; Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 62.

35 BOA, Y.MTV 43/117, 27 Muharrem 1307 / 17 September 1889.

36 BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130 28 Şevval 1309 / 5 June 1891. Officials thought that the ability to translate could create the opportunity to prevent not only the spread of Shiism but also of Protestantism.

37 BOA, Y.EE. 8/9.

politics.”³⁸ Similarly, they needed a working knowledge of foreign affairs.³⁹ Muhammed Arif Bey, the Ottoman Consul at Tehran in 1894, advised appointing and dispatching Sunni *hāces* to the necessary localities with the purpose of inculcating and educating obedience to the Caliphate.⁴⁰

Ottoman authorities principally paid due attention to selecting the Sunni ulama, who were to have a certain ‘merit and virtue besides a complete insight into political subtleties’.⁴¹ Officials principally preferred those who had proficiency in scholarly discussions and ‘religiously and politically important and necessary’ knowledge of religious sciences such as the Quran exegesis, the hadith of the Prophet, and Islamic theology (*kelâm*). The ulama were to educate Sunni students who would preach the tenets of Sunnism (*akâid-i ehl-i sünnet*) during summers by going into tribes and to localities of Baghdad and the provinces of Basra. The ulama, in their activities, were to present convincing arguments to refute opinions of the Shiite scholars and to choose a modest manner to adjust their beliefs. The ulama, when confronted with their Shiite counterparts, were to treat them well and make scholarly discussions using euphemism and polite language. They were to be careful never to increase the tension and never to turn the scholarly discussions into mannerless polemics, even if they felt that the people they preached to were unlikely to accept their arguments. They were to confine themselves to explain and present their views. Amongst their duties, the ulama were advised to secretly inform the provincial government of the Shiite ulama posing a threat to religion.⁴²

Alusizade Ahmed Şakir, from a well-known Iraqi scholar family of Alusi’s, wrote a comprehensive memorandum that included various aspects of Ottoman educational counter-measures against the spread of Shiism and listed some methods to address the problem.

38 BOA, Y.MTV 43/114 23 Rebiyyülahir 1307 / 16 December 1889. “*Necef ve Kerbelâ ve Samarra kasabalarında mücerrib-ül ahlâk ilm-i fikhâ ve usûle âşinâ ve takrîre muvâfık ve oldukça siyâsete âgâh müderrislerin ta’yîn...*”

39 BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 17/81, 11 Muharrem 1308 / 26 August 1890.

40 BOA, Y.EE 10/69, 11 Safer 1312 / 14 August 1894.

41 BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 29 December 1892. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 72. For the suggestions of a former Şeyhülislam, Mehmet Cemaledin Efendi on the special qualities of a scholar, also see, Deringil, “The Struggle Against Shi’ism in Hamidian Iraq,” 66.

42 BOA, Y.EE 9/14.

To select the ulama, Ahmed Şakir offered setting up a commission, comprised of an accountant of the Ewqaf and a certain *müderriş* teaching at the Five Madrasas of Iraq (*Medâris-i Hamse*).⁴³ The commission would choose the most eligible ulama from among the locals by examining the candidates and then send them to the tribes with an instructions handbook. The itinerant scholars (*seyyar müderrişler*) were expected to report their experiences and observations to the local officials.⁴⁴ Reforming the existing madrasas was another necessity according to Ahmed Şakir. The said commission would again choose local students who had completed elementary education and proved their quality; prescribe them a three-year long intensive education; divide them into three branches and assign ranging amounts of monthly stipends for each. During the summer period, these students were to be sent into the tribes by giving them travel allowances. With regards to the tribes, Alusizade offered the itinerant ulama live together with the Sunni tribes like the Anizah, Dulaim, and Shammar and teach their children primary education (*tedrîsât-ı ibtidâiyye*) while also preaching to the tribesmen on Fridays. Alusizade also offered itinerant secondary schools (*seyyâr rüşdî mektepleri*) for the tribesmen that perfectly fitted their nomadic life-styles. Graduates of these schools would then be taken into the state service.⁴⁵

These policy suggestions demonstrate the main characteristics of the Ottoman educational initiative, which was pre-emptive. This and other advice were centered upon the education policy of instilling the Sunni creed, which would both protect the unguarded faiths of people and ensure their obedience to the Sultan. Setting up commissions for selecting the ulama and preachers, best fitting the government's criteria, would in theory be a good method. However, this plan did not function properly. Although commissions to choose the ulama were locally established, it was revealed later that a majority of the members and the president of the commission had their own business and could barely spare time for the

43 With *Medâris-i Hamse*, Alusizade referred to the madrasas of Imam-ı Azam, Abdülkadir Geylani, Sayyid Sultan Ali er-Rufai, Şeyh Sandal, and Münevver Hatun.

44 BOA, Y.EE. 8/9. For the use of the same document, also see, Deringil, "The Struggle Against Shi'ism in Hamidian Iraq," 63; Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 228-229.

45 BOA, Y.EE. 8/9.

commission, added to that they could hardly avoid favoritism, thus making the commission inefficient.⁴⁶

During the Tanzimat era, Shiite notables of Iranian and Indian origin would ask the Ottoman government for permission to build madrasas to educate Shiite students in Baghdad, particularly in Najaf and Karbala. The government tended to decline these requests increasingly in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ The Ottomans rightly thought that the Shiite ulama were effective in propagating Shiism in Iraq.⁴⁸ As a precaution, the Ottoman government appointed a Sunni notable of Baghdad as the *nakīb-ül eşrâf* in Karbala and Najaf, instead of a local Shiite sayyid.⁴⁹ The Ottoman authorities were well aware that many of the appointed Sunni ulama lacked the required capacity, and that they were ignorant of disputation methods,⁵⁰ whereas the Shiite ulama were very skilful and talented in scholarly discussions, scientific judgments, reasoning, and comparisons. Shiite akhunds, who were particularly charged with the duty of propagation, were more skilful than their Sunni counterparts in the sciences of *kelâm* and methodology.⁵¹

The Iraqi Shiite ulama's ability to play a role in the international political arena between the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran gave them a prospect to exert influence and protect their interests.⁵² The Shiite madrasas in Najaf had intellectually stimulating environments, filled with well-disciplined students who were not in

46 BOA, ŞD. 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885. Ahmed Esad Efendi, former *naib* at the provincial center of Baghdad, and the *naib* in Damascus, suggested the appointment of able persons with higher salaries to run these commissions.

47 Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 213.

48 BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1900). Meir Litvak stated with a touch of irony that "Shiite ulama often engaged their Sunni counterparts and Ottoman officials and even Jewish rabbis with polemical disputations in order to prove the superiority of their sect. Not surprisingly, according to Shiite sources, they always had the upper hand, leading to the conversion of their rivals to Shiism." Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth-century Iraq*, 132.

49 Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth-century Iraq*, 167.

50 BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130 28 Şevval 1309 / 5 June 1891.

51 BOA, MF.MKT. 1050/7, April 1908. Some other bureaucrats, however, believed that Sunni scholars were competent enough to dispute with Shiite scholars, but, the lack of money and difficulty in earning their livelihood deprived them of fulfilling the duty. BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

52 Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth-century Iraq*, 177.

expectation of material reward like that of a government position or a degree. Their intentions were simply to become a prominent scholar or a mujtahid. Private donations and religious taxes were among the sources of the strength of the Shiite madrasas to secure their independence from any government interference, where mujtahids acted as great patrons administering their own madrasas and also managing other social facilities that in return increased their reputation in society.⁵³

In corroboration of their trust in education, state officials explained the major strength behind the spread of Shiism with the concerted educational activity of the Shiite mujtahids, mu'mins, and akhunds, while also highlighting the strong financial backing of the Shiite ulama and the large sums of donations endowed by rich Iranian and Indian merchants; all contributing to the success of Shiite education.⁵⁴ Ottoman officials noted more than 500 Shiite students only in Samarra owing to the presence of the great mujtahid Mirza Hasan Shirazi.⁵⁵ Ahmed Esad Efendi, former *naib* at the provincial center of Baghdad, estimated there were approximately 1,000 Shiite students only in Karbala, Najaf, Samarra, Hilla and Kazimiyya. At least, one hundred of them served as itinerant preachers disseminating Shiism among the tribes.⁵⁶ According to a rough calculation by the Ottoman officials, the number of the Shiite religious notables in Iraq, including upper and lower echelons of the hierarchy, was about 10,000.⁵⁷ According to Shiite sources, the number of Shiite students only in Najaf was estimated 10 to 15 thousand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while a British report dated to 1918 and referenced by Yitzhak Nakash puts this number at 6,000. When the degradation of the Shiite education in the early twentieth century is considered, then the numbers should be higher than the British estimation, constituting a quarter of the permanent Najafi population.⁵⁸

Hasan Refik Pasha, Vali of Baghdad, was convinced that the Shiites followed a certain strategy and employed akhunds in the localities where no Sunni ulama existed and that they proselytized

53 Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 243-244.

54 BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19 Recep 1309 / 17 February 1892.

55 BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 28 December 1892.

56 BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

57 BOA, Y.MTV 45/13, 7 Muharrem 1308 / 23 August 1890.

58 Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 241-242.

among large tribal groups such as Shammar and Anizah, which had long remained loyal to Sunnism.⁵⁹ Ottoman officials linked the sustainability of the Shiite missionary activity to the charitable money coming from India and Iran and to the *khums* (*zakat*, obligatory annual payment under the Shiite Islamic law, literally means one-fifth). Hasan Pasha asserted that Shiites were able to spend large sums of money to open schools and pointed to the insufficiency of the state education in Baghdad that the bad condition of Sunni schools as well as the attractiveness of Shiite ones was pushing Sunni families to send their children to the Shiite schools. If the Pasha did not exaggerate the situation for attracting the central government's attention, then, one can surmise that synergy of Shiite education must have been attractive for some Sunni families in Baghdad too.⁶⁰

There was no rule banning Sunni boys from attending the Shiite schools. Thus, the educational counter-measures sometimes drew state officials into contradictory positions. For instance, the Ottoman authorities permitted non-Muslim foreigners to open schools, and since Muslim students were not permitted to enroll into these schools, in theory, the Ottoman government was not concerned. However, when the same authorization was given to the Iranian Shiites, Muslims could not be restricted from enrolling their children at those schools, hence raising the prospect of Sunni children being allured by Shiite ideas. They were Muslims, but Shiites; and this contradicted the state's counter-measures against the spread of Shiism, leaving the officials seriously baffled.⁶¹

59 Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyülahir 1310 / 29 December 1892. Likewise, Hidayet Pasha, Vali of Basra in 1891, noted a Shiite tactic that Shiite akhunds legitimized stealing state property and certain temptations congenial to men's nature. "...*ekl-i emvâl-i mîriyyeyi tahlîl ve arzuy-u nefsânîye mülâyim gelecek hallere cevâz...*" BOA, Y.PRK.SRN, 3/22, 28 Cemaziyülevvel 1309 / 29 December 1891.

60 BOA, Y.MTV. 90/76, 13 Şaban 1311 / 17 February 1894.

61 BOA, Y.PRK.A 11/58, 4 Muharrem 1315 / 4 June 1897. At that time period, apparently there was no official initiative by the Iranians and legally there was no restriction to prevent them from doing so. In case that there were such schools opened due to the local government's unauthorized benevolence, the Prime Ministry (*Sadaret*) was advised to restrain them with appropriate and lenient means "...*bir sûret-i leyinine ve münâsibe ile sedd idilmesi...*"

Shiite Children in Istanbul

One episode of the Ottoman education policy to curtail the spread of Shiism can be seen in the story of thirteen Shiite children, brought to Istanbul in order to convert them to the Sunni interpretation of Islam.⁶² Kamil Pasha, the Grand Vizier, advised in 1891 to take some Shiite boys at a young age and send them to al-Azhar University in Cairo, providing them with the necessary funding. These students were anticipated to turn into true believers since heresy had not yet been deeply ingrained into their minds. The students were also expected to go back to their homelands within eight or ten years and then begin to work in the state service and teach their fellow men the principles of Sunnism. In this context, Kamil Pasha suggested to use the successful example of the methods of American missionaries who converted many of the Armenian lower classes to Protestantism through indoctrination and turning them into preachers and teachers of this religion. It was thought that this method would yield better results than taking harsh measures.⁶³ The Sultan accepted the policy proposal, but the Shiite children were not taken to Cairo but instead to Istanbul.⁶⁴

Thus, thirteen Shiite and, to accompany them, two Sunni students from Baghdad and Basra were brought to Istanbul in 1891.⁶⁵ During the first days of their visit to Istanbul, the students stayed at the accommodation of *Bâb-ı Vâlây-ı Meşihatpenâhî* (Office of the Şeyhülislam). Later, they began their education at a madrasa near the Fatih Mosque and this was the place where they were accommodated. According to the Office of Şeyhülislam (*Dâire-i Meşihât-ı İslâmiyye*), they were well taken care of and had no need of new

62 The literature on the subject tells the story of these Shiite boys. Here, we attempted to present a revised version of their story. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 107-112; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 99-100; Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 227-228.

63 BOA, İ. DH. 96880, 14 Zilhicce 1308 / 20 July 1891; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 107; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 99-100.

64 BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 22/62, 15 Zilhicce 1308 / 22 July 1891.

65 Family backgrounds of these students are not totally clear in the literature. Somel argues that these boys belonged to notable families of Baghdad. Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 227-228; while Deringil claims that the families who volunteered to send their children were poor. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 99.

clothing, when they ran out of money, 100 *kuruş* was given to each as pocket money and 300 *kuruş* was assigned as a monthly stipend. It was ordered that they should be educated in a manner that would prompt them to forsake the Shiite creed and adopt Sunnism.⁶⁶

In February 1893, Şeyhülislam Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi noted that some of these students wrote a petition and asked to enroll at the Imperial School for Tribes (*Aşiret Mektebi*). In their petition, they claimed that they were put to education not at the school as promised by the Vali but at *Vâlîde Madrasa* near Çarşamba in the Fatih district of Istanbul. They also confessed, probably paying lip service that they left Shiism and became Sunnis voluntarily. They asked to enroll at the Imperial School for Tribes. If not accepted, they said that they would prefer to go back to their homeland.⁶⁷ Twelve of the students could not be convinced to pursue their education at the madrasa and eventually the government decided in May 1893 to send them back to their homelands and assigned them travel allowances from the budget of the Ministry of Interior.⁶⁸ Only one Shiite and two Sunni students wanted to continue their education in Istanbul.⁶⁹ It would be interesting to retrospectively speculate what would happen if these children's demands were met and they were transferred to the Imperial School for Tribes.

The Employment of Local and Non-Local Ulama

The Ottoman administration hesitated between selecting the ulama from among the local Iraqis and from other parts of the em-

66 BOA, Y.MTV. 54/82, 22 Safer 1309 / 27 September 1891; BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 24/66, 21 Cemaziyülevvel 1309 / 22 December 1891.

67 BOA, Y.MTV 74/133, 29 Recep 1310 / 16 February 1893.

68 There is another account of what happened to these students that tells "some of these (Shiite) students deserted due to their ill-health, and some other persisted in their false belief; and it is obvious that even though two or three of them were converted, no benefit will be gained from this." *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Han: Devlet ve Memleket Görüşlerim*, eds. A. Alaaddin Çetin and Ramazan Yıldız (Istanbul: Çığır Yayıncılık, 1976). The source, namely the diary of Abdülhamid II, however is a fabricated one.

69 BOA, Y.MTV 78/158, 20 Zilkade 1310 / 5 June 1893. Çetinsaya, referring to a source by Cezmi Eraslan, notes that in March 1907, remaining three students, namely Mahmud, Şevket, and Abdulhadi Efendis were appointed as preachers and scholars in Baghdad upon the Sultan's order. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 107-112.

pire. Assigning local ulama had some advantages, that of being familiar with the colloquial language and the local customs. However, not all the ulama residing in Baghdad were natives. Many were immigrants either from Ottoman-Iranian borderlands or other environs and they were seen as less than adequate. This was not due to their immigrant background, but probably to other unspecified concerns. The local government was in favor of appointing ulama from Istanbul, Aleppo, and Diyarbekir to Iraq.⁷⁰ Four years later in 1889, the central administration received a similar suggestion, which solicited the appointment of a number of ulama of Syrian, Aleppo and those of origin from Tripoli.⁷¹ Henceforth, cohorts of non-local ulama were chosen from other provinces. The Ottoman administration paid attention to selecting ulama of Syrian, Aleppo or Hameyn origin. They should have principally been Arabs or, if they were chosen from amongst the Sunni scholars of Baghdad, their prominence and qualities were to be carefully contested.⁷² After almost fourteen years, the Vali of Baghdad called for employing, this time, local ulama and dismissing the centrally appointed ones, the example showing how uncertain the Ottoman administration was about the selection.⁷³

Examples show that the government continued to appoint both local and non-local ulama in Iraq. Having complained regarding the permissiveness of the Sunni ulama in Iraq, Sırrı Pasha, Vali of Baghdad (January 1890-August 1891) suggested the appointment of Mustafa Nuri Efendi, the mufti of Hilla, with a monthly salary of, at least, 1,000 kuruş.⁷⁴ His successor, Refik Hasan Pasha, the Vali of Baghdad (August 1891-Juni 1896), suggested opening a madrasa and appointing Şeyh Muhammed Said Efendi as the chief *müderris* with a monthly salary of 1,100 kuruş. Said Efendi was a scholar of Baghdad, taught at the *Muhammed el-Fazl* mosque complex in Samarra and belonged to the Nakşibendi order. He played a role in the Ottoman educational counter-propaganda in Samarra, where Mirza Hasan Shirazi, an influential Iranian Shiite mujtahid

70 BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

71 BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27 Şevval 1306 / 26 June 1889; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 110; Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 62.

72 BOA, Y.EE 9/14.

73 BOA, MF.MKT 1050/7, 24 Rebiyyülevvel 1324 / 25 April 1908.

74 BOA, Y.MTV 45/24, 10 Muharrem 1308 / 25 August 1890.

had been teaching.⁷⁵ Mirza Hasan Shirazi's activities in Samarra alarmed Sunni scholars, some of whom urged the governor of Baghdad to prohibit Shirazi's residence and set back the substantial influence he exercised in Samarra, which though rarely, could cause disturbances.⁷⁶

An imperial decree issued in May 1894 ordered the appointment of some local ulama with varying salaries to carry out the educational counter-activity against the spread of Shiism. Those who were appointed with the monthly salaries of 200 kuruş were Sayyid Mustafa, Sayyid Maruf, Sayyid Hasan, Sayyid Ömer and Sayyid Isa, all of who were the brothers of Şeyh Muhammed Said Efendi. In addition to them, Sayyid Muhammed Efendi, son of Şeyh Said Efendi, and Sayyid Maruf Efendi, cousin of Şeyh Said Efendi, and a certain Ahmed Efendi of Süleymaniye were employed. The government appointed thirteen other *müderrişes*, teaching at Süleymaniye Madrasa, with the monthly salaries of 100 kuruş. In addition, a monthly salary of 300 kuruş was given to Ayşe Hanım, an elderly relative of Şeyh Said Efendi.⁷⁷ The names and their family relationship show that the central authority carried out this policy in certain cases through using a network of local ulama under the supervision of Şeyh Muhammed Said Efendi.

75 BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 28 December 1892. To counterbalance the growing Shiite influence in Samarra, cultivation of educated Sunni students and the repair of an old and deteriorated mosque with its adjoining madrasa in Samarra were recommended. Sunni students, having completed the elementary religious education would be sent into the tribes, just like their Shiite counterparts, to teach them the basic tenets of the true faith and the basic necessities of religion (*zarûruiyât-ı dîniyelerini öğretmek*). Total amount of allocated stipends for almost a hundred students was estimated to 6,000 kuruş. BOA, Y.PRK.MŞ. 6/18, 20 Şaban 1313 / 4 February 1896. The request of the local government was accepted, and the Ottoman central administration allocated 1,200 kuruş for repair of the mosque, madrasa, and a *dergâh* (a dervish convent) in Samarra in addition to the monthly payment of 5,000 kuruş as stipends. The central government suggested the enrollment of at least 100 students. BOA, İ.HUS 4, 5 Rebiyyülevvel 1313 / 24 August 1895; BOA, İ.ML 6, 6 Rebiyyülevvel 1313 / 26 August 1895; BOA, BEO 678/50846, 17 Rebiyyülevvel 1313 / 7 September 1895; BOA, DH.MKT 427/53, 24 Rebiyyülevvel 1313 / 14 September 1895; BOA, Y.PRK.MŞ. 6/18, 20 Şaban 1313 / 4 February 1896.

76 Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth century Iraq*, 166-169.

77 BOA, BEO 413/30919, 28 Zilkade 1311 / 2 June 1894; BOA, İ.ML. 10, 25 Zilhicce 1311 / 29 June 1894.

Three years later, in November 1897, more Sunni scholars were chosen by the Office of Şeyhülislam and appointed with the monthly salaries of 2,000 kuruş. This time, the appointed ulama were non-locals, whose names read Harputlu Abdurrahman Efendi, Mehmed Lütfi Efendi, Mülatiyeli Ömer Hulusi Efendi, Kırşehirli Mehmed Tahir Efendi, and Urfalı Abbas Efendi.⁷⁸ The amounts assigned to these scholars were exceptionally high. Internal correspondence shows that the government was disposed to pay their salaries from the budget of the Ministry of Interior, following a practice of the ministry which had funded the special commission (*heyet-i mahsûsa*) established to “remove ignorance” (*izâle-i ce-hâlet*) of the Yazidis earlier. The central government finally decided to finance the salaries from the budget of the *İlmiye* due to bureaucratic procedures.⁷⁹ However, only months later, Vahhab, the provincial treasurer of Baghdad in 1898, emphasized that the services of the five ulama recently appointed by the Office of Şeyhülislam were unsatisfactory.⁸⁰ In December 1901, a commission organized by the province of Basra examined and selected ten local scholars from nearby localities and appointed them to different quarters of Basra with a monthly salary of 500 kuruş, which was to be covered from the central budget of the Ministry of Finance. Their duty was to break the influence of Shiism in Basra.⁸¹

Opening Schools and Madrasas

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the expansion of government education to the provinces was a top priority of

78 BOA, İ.HUS 17, 6 Recep 1315 / 30 November 1897; İ.HUS 59, 6 Recep 1315 / 30 November 1897; BOA, BEO 1048/78596. These ulama were given a total travel allowance of 19,500 kuruş in January 1898. BOA, BEO 1084/81245.

79 BOA, İ.ML 21, 26 Ramazan 1315 / 17 February 1898.

80 BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK, 57/16, 20 Rebiyyülevvel 1316 / 7 August 1898.

81 BOA, MF.MKT 542/7, 27 Şaban 1318 / 19 December 1900. However, the *müderreses* were not paid almost a year. Scarcity of the locally raised educational contribution-tax and shortage of the Ministry's budget caused a disagreement on how and from which source to pay the salaries. For a while, salaries were paid from the locally raised educational contribution-tax income. Later, the central administration concluded that the allowance to be covered from the budget of the Ministry of Finance.

the state's agenda, being a decisive answer to innumerable problems.⁸² The schooling in Iraq had boosted in number during the term of Midhat Pasha (March 1869 – May 1872), who shared the optimism that education was a decisive tool for modernization.⁸³ During the Hamidian era, primary schools were given particular attention. Out of 144 primary schools constructed between 1877 and 1893 and financed by the Sultan's Privy Purse, 14 were built in Iraq.⁸⁴ Again in the same period, the total number of secondary schools in Baghdad and Basra, reached nine, but the two provinces still ranked low among the provinces, having the lowest number of secondary schools.⁸⁵

Educational structures in Iraq had deteriorated to the point that intellectual and knowledgeable scholars could hardly be trained at the madrasas of Baghdad and Basra. Although the Ottoman government wanted to instrumentalize the Sunni madrasas and mosques to stop the spread of Shiism, whose influence reportedly went beyond Baghdad and even reached as far as Mosul and Hakkari, the government's intention, however, remained simply on paper.⁸⁶ In 1903, when compared to Mosul, where 118 madrasas gave education to almost 1,000 students, there were only 29 madrasas in Baghdad educating 255 students, while the situation in Basra was worse where the earlier yearbooks registered no madrasas at all.⁸⁷ There was a demand by *müdürrises* (scholars) teaching at madrasas to reform this age-old institution and they occasionally complained of the decreasing sufficiency and quality of education.⁸⁸ Sunni madrasas, however, did not attempt to undergo a

82 Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 83-135.

83 Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 206; Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 114. Ceylan notes that in 1871 there were at least four secondary schools in Iraq and these were in Baghdad, Süleymaniye, Mosul and Kirkuk.

84 Kodaman, *Abdülhamid Devri Eğitim Sistemi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 87. Half of these schools were in Baghdad and the half in Mosul. Christoph Herzog gives a detailed account of number of old-type and new type of schools in Iraq according to the yearbooks. Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, 549-554.

85 Bayram Kodaman, *Abdülhamid Devri Eğitim Sistemi*, 94-95. Eight of these schools were established in Baghdad and one in Basra.

86 BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 72/80, 18 Cemaziyülevvel 1309 / 19 December 1891.

87 Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, 555-556.

88 Zeki Salih Zengin, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Örgün Eğitim Kurumlarında Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi* (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2009), 128-129.

reform program until 1910.⁸⁹ Was this linked to the main emphasis of the Hamidian government on the expansion of state schooling, rather than reviving the madrasas?⁹⁰ Literature on the subject gives credit to this argument and it is debated that the Tanzimat and the establishment of a new education system broke down the already weakening influence of traditional Sunni education in Iraq, while the reforms did not encroach upon the Shiite education system that remained independent from government influence.⁹¹ The Tanzimat's centralization policies had already cut the *waqf* revenues vital for up-keeping the Sunni madrasas.⁹²

The bureaucratic memory of the Ottoman Empire did not recall the bygone experience of the Nizamiyya madrasas in Iraq either. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these madrasas in Baghdad had become a scene of Sunni–Shiite rivalry. Although a large number of Shiite scholars predominated these institutions, the madrasas were regarded by Sunni Muslims as an efficient instrument for strengthening the prominence of Sunni fiqh. The Nizamiyya madrasas were established to weaken the position of Shiism in Baghdad and had been successful in this endeavor.⁹³ There are no references in the Ottoman official documentation, however, indicating whether the government wanted to repeat this success against the Shiite predominance in Baghdad. Perhaps this was due to the overwhelming fascination with modern education.

However, this does not mean that the government did not position madrasas vis-à-vis the schools. It is true that the central government showed an effort not to merge these two institutions, as both served the education policy: opening schools and appointing single religious deputies such as ulama and müderrises. An imperial order issued in the early 1890s decreed that all the instructors appointed to the state schools must be graduates of either *Dâr'ul-*

89 Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, 557-558. Reforming the 'Azamiyya madrasa in Iraq in 1910, however, was achieved but brought about a wave of reactions by conservative circles.

90 Ceylan argues that one reason behind the Ottoman government's decline of requests to open Shiite madrasas in Iraq was linked to the overall modernization attempt project that deliberately favored modern schools instead of reforming traditional madrasas. Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq*, 213.

91 Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth century Iraq*, 164.

92 Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 101.

93 Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 238-239.

Muallimîn, Mekteb-i Mülkiye, or Mekteb-i Sultânî. Appointment of the local ulama and *müderrises* to state schools were possible, in theory, only with the condition of having diplomas of the said schools at hand. But, still, the government had to provide the ulama with a sufficient amount of funding.⁹⁴ However, in practice, the situation was different. School teachers were to be trained by qualified graduates of madrasas.⁹⁵

Viewing the problem from a political-cum-religious standpoint, Ottoman authorities associated the survival of the empire with the preservation of the Islamic faith. Therefore, religion became the focal point of the school curricula. The central government principally implied “the correcting of beliefs” (*tashîh-i akâid*) of students being the first duty of instructors at every school.⁹⁶ Menemenlizade Mehmed Rifat, the provincial treasurer of Baghdad, asserted in 1892 that true obedience must be shown to the legitimate government, not to Shiite mujtahids or akhunds, who were, in his view, sectarian zealots disseminating ignorance among people. Mehmed Rifat regarded the primary schools as a religious necessity in the counter-struggle against the spread of Shiism (*muktezeyât-î dîniyyeden bulunan mekâtib-i ibtidâiyye*) while, at the same time, bemoaning their desperate situation.⁹⁷

In fact, envisaging a separation between the madrasas and schools is illusory and recent literature has firmly established that despite differences in their forms, schools and madrasas shared a common worldview, particularly during the Hamidian era. While madrasas were losing the government’s attention institutionally, the school curricula showed the amplification of the religious content of state education. With its increasing religious content, education during the Hamidian period moved away from a secular-oriented Tanzimat concept and instead towards a more Islamic-centered one.⁹⁸

94 BOA, BEO 137/10219, 21 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 10 January 1893.

95 Nazan Çiçek, “The Role of Mass Education in Nation-Building in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1870-1930,” *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c. 1870-1903*, eds. Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon (London, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 229.

96 Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 95-97. The Ottoman government sometimes used the adjective of “Islamic” for the primary schools *Mekâtib-i İbtidâiyye-i İslâmiyye* denoting to the religious character of the education. BOA.MF.MKT. 848/62, 18 Safer 1323 / 24 April 1905.

97 BOA, İ.MMS. 129/5537, 24 Şaban 1309 / 24 March 1892.

98 Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 216.

A variety of books on morality were published to teach at schools.⁹⁹ The transitivity between the two institutions were customary and new schools extensively hired ulama as instructors and benefited from their scholarly background, which fitted the government's vision.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, in 1891, the Ministry of Education stated that imams be charged with the duty of teaching at primary schools in the villages, where no teacher was yet assigned. Surprisingly, the ulama formed the overwhelming majority of the staff of schools in 1892 where 17,000 personal out of 20,000 at Muslim elementary schools across the empire were of ulama origin.¹⁰¹

Although the old practice of appointing single religious deputies was criticized from time to time, the government did not end the practice. Towards the end of the Hamidian era, Nazım Pasha, Vali of Baghdad, repeated the decade-old repertoire in 1908 about the hitherto appointed Sunni ulama, preachers, and *müderrişes* being incompetent and fanatical, yielding nothing but the hatred and animosity of Shiite subjects. Unfamiliarity with the colloquial language and local customs was among the major shortcomings. The Pasha underlined that opening a few primary schools could not have solved the problem, but more general remedies should have been formulated. To him, extension and reformation of the whole education system in Iraq was a must, thus, he offered that the money allocated to the ulama and *müderrişes* should be used, from then on, as a resource of a new policy. However, Nazım Pasha was not totally against the practice of appointing ulama or sending the schoolboys among the tribesmen during summer vacations with the purpose of spreading Sunni education. In other words, his reluctance was related to the appointed preachers and *müderrişes*, not entirely the practice itself. Because of that Nazım Pasha offered the replacement of former *müderrişes* with 10 local ulama who were to be chosen by a special committee through examination and then be appointed with monthly stipends.¹⁰²

99 Zengin, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Örgün Eğitim Kurumlarında Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi*, 87, 95, 101.

100 Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 10-14, 73, 137.

101 Yahya Akyüz, *Türkiye'de Öğretmenlerin Toplumsal Değişimdeki Etkileri, 1848-1940* (Ankara: Doğan Basımevi, 1978), 39, cited in Çiçek, "The Role of Mass Education," 229.

102 Nazım Pasha emphasized that the total number of primary schools (*mekâtib-i ibtidâiyye*) were 23 and its local financial resources were insufficient. BOA, MF.MKT 1050/7, 24 Rebiyyülevvel 1326 / 25 April 1908.

Official documents between 1884 and 1908 illustrate a multiplicity of opinions discussed by the central and local administrators. Officials complained of the insufficiency of the ulama appointed and solicited the selection of ones who were compatible since the beginning of the education policy. Although the condition of madrasas and competency of *müdürrises* were a constant matter of complaint, the critique was not directed at the practice itself. Gökan Çetinsaya argues that the Ottoman authorities gave up on the policy of sending itinerant preachers and *hodjas* to the Shiite dominant regions of Iraq around 1906 and, according to a decision summed up in a report prepared by the Interior Ministry, instead proposed the spread of sciences and education within institutionalized forms.¹⁰³ It is true that after 1908, a clear mistrust emerged against the practice of appointing single religious deputies, however, even during the CUP era, the break was not decisive and the practice though, rarely continued.¹⁰⁴ Both methods went hand in hand, being two policies of the same strategy and did not rival one another, unless a financial deficit pressed the decision-makers to make a choice.

Financial Constraints Behind the education Policy

In conformity with the 1869 Education Regulation, the Ottoman Empire intensified its efforts to expand state education.¹⁰⁵ The regulation envisaged a truly Ottoman elementary education that offered a sense of belonging with imperial identity.¹⁰⁶ However, these efforts faced many constraints. It primarily suffered from a

¹⁰³Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 123.

¹⁰⁴There are cases in which the district governorate (*kaymakamlık*) of Ortaköy in Edirne demanded the appointment of able preachers to correct the beliefs of Kızılbaş while the Directorate of Education (*Maarif Müdüriyeti*) pointed to the necessity of opening a primary school there. The Ministry of Interior agreed to the second option and ordered the opening of a school. This example shows the inclination of the central government for which method they stood for in thwarting the conversions to non-Sunni interpretations of Islam. However, the preference does not represent a decisive shift in the government policy. BOA, DH.MKT 2317/55, 10 Zilkade 1317 / 11 March 1900.

¹⁰⁵Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 91.

¹⁰⁶Çiçek, "The Role of Mass Education," 226.

lack of capital, which was sparse, and the memory of bankruptcy in 1875 was still fresh in the minds of state officials. The financial deficiency had been the chief obstacle, preventing the implementation of many reforms in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra and the reforms in the field of education were no exception.¹⁰⁷ In 1884, the government introduced the Education Fund, which was to serve as a stable income for building schools in the provinces and paying salaries of the instructors.¹⁰⁸ However, the fund also failed to achieve the desired objectives.

State officials did not systematically separate financial sources allocated for modern schools and the Sunni ulama, both were regarded as tools of the Ottoman educational initiative and counter-initiative against the spread of Shiism. Financial constraints existed both for schools and other educational activities like that of financing madrasas and appointing ulama, *müderrises*, and itinerant preachers to responding to the perceived Shiite challenge in Iraq.¹⁰⁹ In the early years of implementation of the education policy in Iraq, the local Ottoman authorities were advised to raise funds locally for the improvement of Sunni education.¹¹⁰ Burial taxes (*defîniyye rüsûmu*), which were collected from the burials of corpses to the cemeteries around the Shiite holy shrines,¹¹¹ were

107 Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 148. Three provinces of Iraq were producing 6.5 percent of the total of agricultural taxes, which amounted to 47.3 million kuruş and 8.1 percent of the livestock taxes amounted to 16.5 million kuruş, collected in the Empire between 1909 and 1910. However, what was tragic for the educational activity in Iraq was that “approximately two-thirds of the revenues of the Iraqi provinces were derived from agricultural and livestock taxes, and that about two-thirds of expenditure went to the army and the gendarmerie.” Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 17.

108 Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 118-123; Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 145-146. Somel terms *Maarif Hisse-i İanesi* as the educational contribution-tax.

109 BOA.MF.MKT. 848/62, 18 Safer 1323 / 24 April 1905. For example, in Zor district of Aleppo, where a certain Şeyh Hüseyin Efendi was unable to continue his activities in the lack of sufficient subsidies although construction of the mosque and the madrasa, he was serving, could have previously been finished. BOA, Y.MTV 245/87, 11 Rebiyyülevvel 1321 / 7 June 1903.

110 BOA, MV. 1/26, 22 Rebiyyühahir 1302 / 7 April 1885.

111 The Ottoman government levied taxes on burials to cemeteries at the Atabat that these holy burial sites were acknowledged by Shiites a chance to gain the favor of nearby lying Imams in the day of resurrection. So that, every year thousands of corpses were brought to the cemeteries of the Ata-

seen as a favorable source of income.¹¹² These revenues were directed to the waqfs. The Sultan's Privy Purse was another option to finance the education policy.¹¹³ There were occasionally contradictions regarding how to raise the funds. Once the local revenues were centralized, local administrators lost the flexibility of addressing unexpectedly emerging needs. There were numerous cases in which local governments or notables asked the central administration to leave a share of the locally raised revenues to meet the needs of the locals and thus make sure that the educational contribution taxes be spent to cover the locality's expenses.¹¹⁴ In accordance with that attitude, around the year 1,900, locally raised educational contribution-tax (*hisse-i maârif*) in Basra was entirely assigned to the expenditures of primary and secondary schools in the province.¹¹⁵

A chief purpose of the government was to open infant and primary schools, which was traditionally financed by local resources. When local resources proved insufficient, then, the central state budget came to help.¹¹⁶ In 1892, the provincial administration of Baghdad asked Istanbul to appoint ulama with the purpose of in-

bat both from within Iraq and from remote places like Iran and India. Yitzhak Nakash explains the socio-economic function of the corpse traffic to Atabat in detail. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 184-205.

112BOA, Y.MTV 45/24, 10 Muharrem 1308 / 26 August 1890; BOA, İ.MMS. 129/5537, 24 Şaban 1309 / 24 March 1892; BOA, İ.ML 21, 26 Ramazan 1315 / 17 February 1898.

113BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27 Şevval 1306 / 26 June 1889. BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 110; Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 62.

114Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 147-149. In Mosul, for instance, the local government asked the central administration to leave the revenues raised in Mosul to cover the educational expenses like restoration of schools, opening new ones, providing the students of Sheikh Âdi madrasa with a better education, and setting up a local committee for education. BOA, Y.MTV 72/43, 22 Cemaziyyülevvel 1310 / 12 December 1892.

115BOA, MF.MKT 542/7, 27 Şaban 1318 / 19 December 1900. This decision also had something to do with the state project of correcting the beliefs that in Latakia too, all the revenue coming from educational contribution tax (*maârifhissesî*) was assigned for construction and maintenance expanses of local primary schools to correct the beliefs of Nusayris that the initiative made some progress. Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 222-223.

116Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 153-156.

tensifying the Sunni educational effort and also requested to finance their salaries directly from the budget of the Ministry of Public Education.¹¹⁷ Covering the expenses by existing resources was not always adequate. Therefore, the state officials looked for alternative sources of income like levying a tax on real estate, which had not been applied in Baghdad before. The plan was to impose a 0.5 percent tax on real estate and to spend it for the schooling initiative.¹¹⁸ Other financial resources in this vein included extraordinary taxes (*avâriz akçesi*), money donated for good deeds, and one tenth of the tithe (*öşr-ül öşr*) collected from farmers who cultivated on the *mîrî* lands.¹¹⁹ To finance the provincial schools, one tenth of the tithe had been applied and abandoned between 1872 and 1875. But it was levied again during the Hamidian era, but spent for other purposes.¹²⁰ In 1905, in Baghdad the Directorate of Education asked to use this revenue to finance education.¹²¹

In the early 1880s, the Ottoman government had to “economize” the salaries of the teachers due to the desperate financial situation during this period, whereas provincial administrations had real difficulties in paying salaries of the teachers. During the 1880s and 1890s, there was a continuous decline in the amount of salaries paid to schoolteachers. In general, salaries of school instructors “belonged among the lower class of Ottoman government officials” where their salaries ranged between 80 to 500 kuruş, to be paid by locally raised incomes.¹²² In 1890, teachers at a primary school in Yemen complained of their unpaid salaries. In the same year, sufficient money could not be raised from charitable persons to support education in a local secondary school in Baghdad. Nine years later, in Kastamonu in Anatolia, funds were barely collected

117Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 228.

118BOA, İ.MMS. 129/5537, 24 Şaban 1309 / 24 March 1892.

119BOA, MF.MKT 829/9, 24 Zilkade 1322 / 29 January 1905.

120Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 142-143.

121BOA, MF.MKT 829/9, 24 Zilkade 1322 / 29 January 1905.

122Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 62-63, 144. Somel tells that “the currency of kuruş (piaster) was based on silver standard and preserved its value until the end of the empire. Therefore the data concerning teacher’s salaries from different dates are comparable with each other.”

by the parents of pupils who were to raise money to finance their children's education.¹²³

Likewise, the ulama and *müderrişes*, charged with the duty of disseminating Sunni education, were not paid well enough. Insufficient salaries, as well as the irregularity in payments were the reasons behind their low performance.¹²⁴ It was stated in 1889 that each *âlim* was to be paid at least 2,000 kuruş per year, which was the least amount that could help them to maintain their livelihood.¹²⁵ *Müderrişes* teaching at the İraqî madrasas in 1885 received salaries of up to 200 kuruş monthly.¹²⁶ Refik Hasan Pasha, the Vali of Baghdad, suggested the central government appoint eight ulama with the allocation of a monthly stipend of 800 kuruş for each *âlim* which was above the average.¹²⁷ In 1892 in Baghdad, Sunni students at Karbala and Najaf were given 30 kuruş, whereas imams received 125 kuruş monthly, amounts with which to earn one's keep was difficult so that it became a reason behind the desolation of madrasas and mosques in Baghdad.¹²⁸ When the educational initiative failed in certain places, the provincial administration cut the salaries of the instructors or changed their places of duty.¹²⁹

One local observer, an Ottoman *naib* at the provincial center of Baghdad, noted in 1885 that the majority of the madrasas in Iraq lost their waqf revenues and the *müderrişes* currently teaching at madrasas were working for such low salaries that could hardly ensure the livelihoods of even the low-ranking *müderrişes*, thus com-

123 Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 107.

124 Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 230; Zengin, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Örgün Eğitim Kurumlarında Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi*, 154.

125 BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27 Şevval 1306 / 26 June 1889; Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 110; Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 62.

126 BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

127 BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19 Recep 1309 / 17 February 1892. The ulama were to be appointed to districts such as Samarra, Kazimiyya, Mandali, Kut al-Amara, Dailam. Somel notes that the Ottoman government appointed five Muslim scholars in 1899 to correct the beliefs of Alevis, living in Mihalıçcık in Ankara, with a monthly salary of 1.000 kuruş and this amount was clearly above the average. Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 221.

128 BOA, İ.MMS. 129/5537, 24 Şaban 1309 / 24 March 1892.

129 BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 29 December 1892; BOA, MF. MKT 200/32, 6 Şevval 1311 / 11 April 1894.

elling them to take their chances in trade or in state offices, this excluded the chaotic situation of students who lacked basic necessities like food and bread.¹³⁰ The government could not establish authority over the Sunni ulama who worked privately for their livelihoods rather than engaging in scholarly activities. Thus, some ulama decided to work as public prosecutors (*müddeî-i umûmî*) or tried to embed themselves into the branches of local judiciaries.¹³¹

Some Sunni preachers employed in Baghdad were not only ignorant of a basic knowledge of Arabic, they also did not fulfill their general duties. The government appointed a local *müderriş* of Baghdad to Ramadi with a salary of 750 kuruş. However, there were complaints about him reporting that he was residing in Baghdad instead of teaching in Ramadi. Thereafter, the *müderriş* was suspended from duty and assigned to Bitlis with a reduced monthly salary of 200 kuruş. Moreover, the administration underlined that *müderrişes* to be assigned to Iraq have to be more competent.¹³² The preacher Ömer Hulusi Efendi from the district of Hilla was another example of such malpractice. Instead of engaging in educational activities, though he was paid for this, he was occupied in the cereal trade and was busy with the up-keeping of his gardens in Hilla and Karbala. Thereupon, the Office of Şeyhülislam advised the local kadi to admonish Hulusi Efendi to change his conduct.¹³³

In an imperial decree forwarded in 1901, it was decided to allocate 500 kuruş for each scholar serving at the madrasas of Basra. For the allowances, the local government was advised to spare some money from the funerary taxes of Karbala. If that sum was not enough, then funds were to be taken from the Treasury of Finance, and if not enough again, then taken from the Sultan's Privy Purse. However, the province of Basra annually received 254,882 kuruş for its educational activities. 128,080 kuruş of that total was spent for the repairs of old or the constructions of new primary and secondary schools whereas the rest of the total budget, 126,802 kuruş, was spent for the standard expenditures of selected schools in Basra. The new funding source for the ulama's salary could be extracted neither from the funerary taxes nor from Imperial Educational Donations (*Maârif-i Hâssa İânesi*) and could hardly be ex-

130BOA, ŞD. 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

131BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 78/20, 18 Cemaziyülevvel 1309 / 19 December 1891.

132BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885.

133BOA, DH.MKT 1143/13, 9 Zilhicce 1324 / 23 January 1907.

tracted from the education allowances of the Department of Imperial Finance (*Hazîne-i Celîle-i Mâliyye*).¹³⁴

An imperial order was issued in the early 1890s to improve the conditions of *Iraq-ı Arab* (meaning the Baghdad and Basra provinces), stating that the issue demanded opening masjids and schools in villages which had between 20 and 40 houses. The central government asked local administrators to investigate their localities and to provide answers to the following questions: (1) how many masjids and schools are needed, that fitted the requirement; (2) how much the construction expenses would cost; (3) and what share would the local inhabitants contribute. Interestingly, some local administrators never replied, while the replies presented no course of action to carry out the policy. They informed the central government that some local inhabitants accepted joining regarding the expenses; some could only partially join, while some others showed reluctance to the initiative itself. Consequently, this meant that the central state treasury must have covered most of the expenses for the initiative.¹³⁵

One reason behind the weakening of Sunni religious education was the loss of waqf revenues supporting the Sunni madrasas due to the Tanzimat's centralization policies.¹³⁶ Consequently, to restore Sunni education, the government needed all the waqf in the Iraqi region to be located, their conditions be improved, and be reclaimed for the state. In March 1885, the central government asked the local administration in Baghdad to investigate the overall condition of madrasas and demanded more specifically 1) what the numbers of madrasas in and around Baghdad were that lost their waqf property, 2) at whose disposal the property was, 3) how many *müdürrises* were there, teaching religious sciences, 4) and finally how many new appointments were needed.¹³⁷

The officials realized that waqfs had been changing hands for decades through inheritance or purchase, which was contrary to the Islamic judicial regulations. On the other hand, this might have functioned as a pretext too for the state appropriation of foundations. Ömer Behçet Efendi, the replacement for Takîyüddin

134BOA, I.M 1, 4 Zilkade 1318 / 22 February 1901.

135BOA, BEO 137/10219, 21 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 10 January 1893.

136Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 101.

137BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885; BOA, MV. 12/53, 20 Zilhicce 1303 / 19 September 1886.

Pasha in central Baghdad, argued that the waqf of the madrasas and mosques, controlled by powerful persons, should be retaken and reorganized by the state for the improvement of education.¹³⁸ Documents illustrate that, in the following years, the Ottoman government continued its efforts to benefit from the waqf revenues to finance the state education and tried to reorganize the waqf in a conformable manner through establishing a commission composed of the chief accountant of the waqf of Baghdad province and the Directory of Education (*Bağdad Evkâfı Muhsebecisi ve Maârif Müdüriyeti*).¹³⁹

The Ottoman government had difficulty in raising funds to appoint *müderres* and preachers. Income was limited and already reserved for the officials in charge of office, who were salaried either directly by the state treasury or by the allocation of not yet centralized resources. One striking example is the financing of Alusizade Numan Efendi, who asked the central government in February 1885 if he could inherit his father Mahmud Efendi's post of teaching religion vis-à-vis Shiism (*mezheb-i Şiiyyete mukâbil ta'lîm-i dîn itmek*).¹⁴⁰ Numan Efendi claimed the post formerly belonged to his father and now was occupied by Mehmet Feyzi Efendi, the mufti of Baghdad. The Office of Şeyhülislam expressed its opinion during the discussions at the Supreme Council (*Meclis-i Vâlâ*) that Alusizade Numan Efendi be given the post with an imperial decree, and also highlighted that some ulama currently teaching in Iraq were incompetent while the competent ones weren't carrying out their duty.¹⁴¹

In May 1885, with an imperial order, the waqf revenue belonging to the Mercaniye Mosque in Baghdad was assigned to Alusizade Numan Efendi. The allowance formerly received by Mehmet Feyzi Efendi was suddenly cut. Sayyid Ömer Efendi, the *naib* at the provincial center of Baghdad, and a certain Sayyid Muhammad Takiyüddin were pleased with the appointment of Numan Efendi, but,

138BOA, MV.12/53, 20 Zilhicce 1303 / 18 September 1886.

139BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27 Şevval 1306 / 26 June 1889; BOA, BEO 137/10219, 21 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 10 January 1893.

140There are many examples showing that such kinds of duties were inherited by sons of the former appointees. A man named el-'Adl el-Dai' Şeyh Said Sabir asked to continue to receive his father's allowance from the Ottoman government, BOA, HR.SYS 5/22, undated official document.

141BOA, MV. 1/26, 22 Rebiyyülahir 1302 / 7 February 1885.

also praised the good services of Mehmet Feyzi and delivered a brief laudatory eulogy of him. They underlined that the revenue of the Mercaniye Mosque waqf was customarily reserved for the muftis of Baghdad. To their claim, this revenue amounted to 40,000 kuruş and after all the expenditures; the money left was barely sufficient for the livelihood of the muftis. At the end, they solicited the central administration to assign Mehmet Feyzi, at least, the same amount of money assigned to Alusizade Numan Efendi.

State officials found the document in their archives that was issued in 1852 during the time of Sultan Abdülmecid and illustrated the background of the imperial grant. Accordingly, the grant was bestowed to Sayyid Mahmud Efendi on the occasion of submitting his Quran exegesis (*tefsîr*) to the Sultan. Thereafter, Mahmud Efendi was granted half of the Mercaniye Mosque's waqf revenues, and the mufti then in-charge to separately receive the other half. This grant corresponded to about 25,000 kuruş per year and 2,083 kuruş 40 akçe per month. Mahmud Efendi, the former mufti, and Muhammed Emin, the mufti-in-charge at the time, were both granted with an imperial ferman. The document, however, did not specify whether this grant to Sayyid Mahmud Efendi was limited to his lifetime or something inheritable that could be passed over to his son Numan Efendi. Numan Efendi apparently wanted to benefit from this ambiguity and after more than three decades asked to inherit the subsidy granted to his father. By this, he also re-emphasized his father's fame as a great scholar who gained the Sultan's favor. Then, he hinted at the incompetency of his rival Mehmet Feyzi Efendi, who was in charge more than three decades but could not avoid the spread of Shiism.¹⁴² This example shows the internal competition between the local ulama to spearhead the campaign against Shiite expansionism by promoting themselves.

In one respect, the official documents illustrate that the government took the local demand into consideration while reinforcing the Sunni education in Iraq as opposed to the better organized, financially stronger, intellectually well-equipped and socially more powerful Shiite one. Bottom-up demand is not meant to obscure where the actual agency of the educational initiative in Iraq lays. It was a

142BOA, ŞD 2488/28, 9 Zilkade 1302 / 18 August 1885. Upon the demand of the central government, Baghdad accountant for waqfs notified the total income of the Mercaniye Mosque waqf that was approximately 50.000 kuruş per year.

clearly top-down policy but to find a local audience soon. The example of Alusizade Numan Efendi and Mehmed Feyzi Efendi shows that there were local scholars who looking for financial support and capitalized on the opportunity since the issue was prone to attract the government's attention, especially at a time when the state was reckoning with several challenges including the risk of colonization and disintegration of remote territories despite the decade-long efforts to tighten their connection with the central authority.

An early confession had already come in 1895, roughly after a decade when the state's systematic counter educational initiative began, that the practice of sending ulama and itinerant preachers to disseminate the Sunni education achieved nothing except troubling the state treasury.¹⁴³ The Sunni scholars of Baghdad were not fulfilling their duties adequately. They were incompetent (*nâ-ehl*) and did not carry out their responsibilities.¹⁴⁴ Neither educational counter-measures nor other strategies could break the hegemony of the Shiite clerics.¹⁴⁵ Muhammed Arif Bey, Ottoman Consul at Tehran, reported that both the methods and policy to prevent the spread of Shiism could not achieve the required outcomes.¹⁴⁶

In July 1894, the province of Basra was notified that allowances of the Sunni ulama employed with the duty of spreading Sunni education at the expense of Shiism were cut. Moreover, the central administration stated, so far, initiatives of the Directorate of Education have yielded no satisfactory results and suggested the local ulama, şeyhs and muftis be employed voluntarily to respond to the Shiite challenge.¹⁴⁷ This unprecedented suggestion was not put into effect. Another report in 1908 states that some previously appointed scholars to Iraq could not fulfil their duties since they were familiar neither with the colloquial language nor with the dispositions of locals. Thus, their duties were suspended and the local government was ordered to appoint others,¹⁴⁸ an order indicating that these positions were firm enough to endure.

143BOA, Y.EE. 8/9, 11 Safer 1312 / 15 August 1894. Instead, Alusizade offered an extensive program by enumerating religious, administrative, and educational aspect of the issue.

144BOA, MV. 1/26, 22 Rebiyyülahir 1302 / 7 April 1885.

145BOA, İ.ML 6, 6 Rebiyyülevvel 1313 / 24 October 1895.

146BOA, Y.EE 10/69.

147BOA, MF.MKT 192/97, 7 Recep 1311 / 13 January 1894.

148BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 79/71, 4 Zilkade 1326 / 27 December 1908.

In the later period, despite difficulties, the government was determined to expand the education in Iraq. In January 1905, the Directorate of Education of Baghdad was still of the opinion to open as many infant (*sibyân*) and primary (*ibtidâî*) schools as possible, and even suggested the construction of contemporary huts (*kulübes*) in towns and cities having no schools at all.¹⁴⁹ The government actually had to convert existing structures into schools, when it could not afford to build new ones for economic reasons.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the condition of the primary school in Hanikin in 1905 illustrates the desperate situation where the students had to gather at a ruined house, which was rented from a local. Because of the desperate situation, many of the students were taught under the arbour at the courtyard. At times, when the monthly rent was not paid on time, the owner expelled the students together with the instructor out of the house which was deemed dishonorable for the Ottomans.¹⁵¹

Why Did The Education policy Fail

The Ottoman government employed a two-pronged strategy to implement the education policy against the spread of Shiism in Iraq. On the one hand, it endeavored to promote new-style education through opening modern schools, and, on the other, continued the old-customary policy of appointing Sunni preachers, *müderises*, and ulama. However, the education policy failed, even in the initial stages of its implementation. Due to financial shortages and the lack of educated Sunni scholars, reports, complaining about the existing situation, caused frustration. On the one hand, the appointment processes of Sunni ulama and *müderises* as well as the appointees were either improperly selected or poorly managed; while, on the other, the Sunni ulama were either living on very modest standards or barely survived, resulting in them looking for a second job. Administratively, there were communication problems too, between the central and local authorities. The demand for accurate and precise information was not properly met. The information at hand was not sufficient to address the needs

149BOA, MF.MKT 829/9, 24 Zilkade 1322 / 29 January 1905.

150Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 142. Fortna tells much about the places of construction and the architecture of the schools, pp. 139-145.

151BOA, MF.MKT 829/9 24 Zilkade 1322 / 29 January 1905.

of the localities that it rendered it difficult generating and implementing the correct policy option. For instance, income and expenditure accounts of the local governments were not always accurate, consequently making it impossible for state authorities to make a cost estimation for implementing a policy, be it constructing schools or appointing ulama.

The ultimate goal of the Ottoman government was not to achieve mass conversion of the Iraqi Shiites to Sunnism and, thus, to accomplish a full-fledged homogenization on the route to creating a modern Ottoman nation. Their sole purpose was to guarantee loyalty from their subjects and to ensure state sovereignty in Iraq. Meir Litvak argues that in general, “the Ottomans were more tolerant towards the Shi’is than the Shi’i ‘ulama’ themselves had been toward religious minorities under their control.”¹⁵² There had been a multiplicity of relations between the Ottoman government and Shiite ulama that included competition, cooperation and negotiation processes, and each case having its own particular modes of configuration.

Selçuk Akşin Somel argues that prior to the Second Constitutional Period Shiite children were not admitted to the Ottoman public schools in Baghdad and Basra. He claims further that the state officials were concerned with their penetration into the civil and military services by graduating from public schools.¹⁵³ It is true that some state officials raised their voices about the extension of public education particularly to the military schools in Iraq, whose Shiite graduates might predominate the army, and thus, pose a future threat. The solution offered was the opening of a military school in Süleymaniye, a city long and well-known for its Sunni character and religious fervor. Graduates of this school could then be transferred to Baghdad to increase the number of Sunni soldiers in the army.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, one of the major reasons of why

152Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth century Iraq*, 177.

153Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 230.

154BOA, Y.MTV 65/92, 21 Muharrem 1310 / 15 August 1892. The Ottoman government was concerned about the great numbers of Shiite soldiers in the Sixth Army stationed in Iraq and sought ways to handle with this issue. For a detailed analysis see, Faruk Yaslçimen, “The Ottoman Empire and its Shiite Subjects: State-Society Relations in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” (PhD Dissertation, LMU München, 2016), 66-77; Çe-tinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 99-127

the educational policy failed in Iraq was paradoxically the government's inability to attract non-Sunni students to the state schools. Instructors appointed to the state-run schools in the Şeyhan district of Mosul, for instance, had to resign since Yazidi families did not permit their children to enroll at these schools. Eventually, the schools were closed by the Mosul provincial administration.¹⁵⁵ In Baghdad and Lazkia, the government faced the same problem where neither Shiite nor Nusayri families were willing to send their children to the state primary schools.¹⁵⁶ Because of this the state education in Baghdad and Basra was mainly limited to the Sunni subjects of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

For the Ottomans, education was an instrument to survive in a cruel world of ruthless rivalry, a remedy to cure wide-ranging problems. It was the means of a reactionary struggle for responding to missionary activities, the spread of Shiism, and to ethno-nationalist separatism. Ottoman efforts to spread the Sunni interpretation of Islam by no means accidentally coincided with the rise of anti-Christian feelings in Japan and China against Christian missionary encroachment.¹⁵⁸ The common theme in the state educational initiative was to tighten loyalties of the subjects with a strong tie to religion. Given the ethnic separatist movements and missionary activities challenged the state's legitimacy, the best way to secure loyalty from the Muslim population was perceived as removing sectarian differences.¹⁵⁹ Constructing masjids, mosques, madra-

155BOA, MF.MKT 200/32, 6 Şevval 1311 / 11 April 1894.

156BOA, MF.MKT 246/56, 1 Şaban 1312 / 28 January 1895; BOA, BEO 137/10219, 21 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 10 January 1893.

157Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire*, 230. For a discussion on the Shiite schools in Iraq during the CUP period see, Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak*, 564-566; Yaslıçimen, "The Ottoman Empire and its Shiite Subjects," 116-119.

158Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 112-116. However, despite the efforts of the state to compete with the missionary schools, the complaints, confessing the insufficiency of the state primary schools when compared to missionary schools, were customary like that of clothing, feeding and paying for the students.

159BOA, Y.MTV 131/109, 23 Cemaziyyülevvel 1313 / 11 November 1895; BOA, MF. MKT 150/45, 24 Safer 1310 / 17 September 1892. This is a rare kind of

sas, and schools went hand in hand to achieve this end.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the Ottoman policy of education aimed at disseminating an identity of Ottomanness (*Osmanlılık*) by taking necessary measures to accomplish “religious and political improvement” of the Ottoman Muslim community that also incorporated the correction of beliefs of non-compliant religious groups.¹⁶¹ This also meant to re-define Ottomanness in closer association with the Sunni interpretation of Islam.

The state’s education policy incorporated reactive and pro-active elements together. The Ottoman government was reactive in the sense that it wanted to pre-empt a future threat of losing the loyalties of subjects either to ethno-nationalist, separatist movements or to rivaling states via missionary activities. Thus, sectarian differences were seen as repositories, having the potential to be used against one another in an environment of competing political ideologies. The Ottoman government did occasionally take pro-active positions and tried to turn non-compliant ethnic and religious groups into loyal subjects through combining them with the state’s ideology. Given the incompetency of the administration and finance, the reach of state authority was limited. This fact evokes the question if the Ottoman government truly desired to gain the loyalties of subjects in Iraq or primarily aimed at establishing their allegiance and pledge to a political attachment to the state.

document which gives both the number and the names of Kızılbaş families in Sivas, whose beliefs were corrected and thus changed to Hanafi-Sunni interpretation of Islam. There is another document stating that the Nusayri population living in Cebele district of Beirut, and in Sahyun district and the coastal areas of Lazkia changed their beliefs to Sunnism, and to reinforce it, opening schools and masjids were demanded by the Supreme Council (*Meclis-i Vâlâ*) BOA, MV 55/15, 10 October 1889. Likewise, Vali of Mosul notified the government in 1892 that there were no Shiite population in Mosul who adhered either Hanafi or Shafi interpretation of Sunnism, except a few Şebek and Yazidi, who recently converted to Sunnism due to the government’s efforts. BOA, Y.MTV 72/43, 22 Cemaziyülevvel 1310 / 12 December 1892.

160In 1891, Supreme Council authorized the construction of 15 masjids and 23 schools in Lazkia. The decision was made in accordance with the policy of correcting the beliefs of Nusayri subjects (*tashih-i dîn ve itikad*). BOA, MV 54/37, (29 May 1891).

161BOA, BEO 137/10219, 21 Cemaziyühahir 1310 / 10 January 1893 “...İslâm teb’asının dînî ve siyâsî islâh ve tashih-i efkâr ve akâidine delâlet idecek tedâbir-i esâsiyyenin ittihâzı...”

The policy aimed at thwarting Shiite expansionism did also cover other non-Sunni communities like the Alevi, Kızılbaş, Yazidis, Nusayris and even some Sunni tribes. Recent historiography shows that the schooling initiative was extended to various Sunni and non-Sunni communities living in the empire. Correcting the beliefs of the Kızılbaş villages of Sivas, Ankara and the Hüdavendigar provinces, for example, was intensified in this period. Certain Kızılbaş villages were subjected to the policy of correcting beliefs, where opening primary schools formed the initial step.¹⁶² The Ottoman government tried to educate the Sunni tribes living in the Hejaz by teaching them their religion along with modern education. Similar to the government's attempt and methods to restrict the spread of Shiism, the Ottoman government endeavored to educate the Sunni tribesmen by way of appointing enthusiastic teachers and itinerant inspectors. This project was stopped for almost identical reasons as mentioned earlier, such as financial shortages of the provincial treasury and tribesmen's reluctance to send their children to state schools.¹⁶³ Another example on this line

162BOA, DH.TMIK.S. 32/18, 6 Recep 1318 / 29 October 1900. Here lies an interesting question if various sorts of non-Sunni communities living in the Ottoman Empire turned into missionary movements in *fin de siècle*. Around 1900, Ottoman Ministry of Interior was reported that subjects living in twelve villages of Ortaköy district of Edirne went into astray by converting their beliefs to Kızılbaş. BOA, DH.MKT 2317/55, 10 Zilkade 1317 / 11 March 1900. Likewise, the government learned in 1903 that again certain Kızılbaş people and Bektaşî *çelebis* were disseminating their heretic beliefs. Thereupon, Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Pasha explained the central government that the rumors were true and there were people like Cemaleddin Efendi, a *Bektaşî Çelebi* in Kırşehir, disseminating his false belief. Y.A.HUS 462/44, 8 Ramazan 1321 / 28 November 1903. But Ferid Pasha did not write about the subject extensively, perhaps alluding to the singularity of such cases. See also BOA, Y.MTV 53/108, 27 Muharrem 1309 / 2 September 1891. However, in 1905, Minister of Internal Affairs was going to argue again that Kızılbaş population was growing in number. The minister also mentioned that the Jesuit and Protestant missionaries were posing a threat to the *din-ü devlet*. BOA.MF.MKT. 848/62, 18 Safer 1323 / 24 April 1905. However, to what extent Anatolian Kızılbaş or Bektaşîs, characteristically closed communities, were aggressive or keen on spreading their beliefs, and again to what extent it is comparable to the evident Shiite and Christian missionary expansionism is debatable. Sectarian zealotry visible in the Iraqi Shiism did apparently not exist among Kızılbaş, Nusayri, Bektaşî, or Lebanese Shiite communities, apart from a few exceptions. BOA, Y.A. RES 70/33, 6 Zilkade 1311 / 11 May 1894.

163M. Talha Çiçek, "Negotiating Power and Authority in the desert: the Arab Beduin and the limits of the Ottoman state in Hijaz, 1840-1908," *Middle*

shows that a certain Taha Efendi was appointed as a *müderris* with the purpose of “removing the ignorance” of the al-Hazal tribe, part of the Anizah tribal confederation, settled in the Razaza town of Karbala.¹⁶⁴

There were cases, in which Shiism was deemed not only as a false belief but also the opposite of progress, thus Shiism was associated with ignorance and degradation and therefore the enlightenment of Shiites could and should be achieved through educating and teaching them the Sunni interpretation of Islam at the madrasas and schools.¹⁶⁵ There were state officials like Osman Nuri Pasha, who was influenced by Enlightenment thinking and served many years as the governor of Yemen and Hejaz provinces, leaving many memoranda behind.¹⁶⁶ Or, take Selim Sami, Director of the Baghdad High School (*Bağdad Mekteb-i İdâdî-i Mülkî*) who wrote a short, single memorandum on the subject in November 1898. He believed that material progress is closely tied with moral development and asserted that endurance of Shiism in Iraq was an impediment for its progress as much as a cause behind its backwardness. In his view, Shiism had nothing to do with reason and wisdom, yet spread among people due to ignorance. He presumed there was an Iranian hand in it too. Selim Sami surmised what made Shiism attractive to ‘ignorant and lazy’ converts was the paucity of religious obligations, believing that the practice of appointing *müdürris* had so far yielded no results. Instead, he offered reinforcement of the elementary education of sciences and arts. Very atypical for his time and contrary to the usual practice of the Hamidian government, Selim Sami suggested reducing the number of religious courses taught at the state schools in Iraq and increasing the number of courses on math, geography and moral sciences (*‘ûlûm-u*

Eastern Studies, 52/2 (2016): 268-269. Çiçek also demonstrates that this policy was not a total failure and it achieved limited success. He gives the example of Ottoman primary school at Yanbu that consisted of Bedouin children at the end of the nineteenth century.

164BOA, MF.MKT. 57/115, 29 Cemaziyülevvel 1295 / 1 July 1878. I am thankful to Dr. M. Talha Çiçek for sharing this document with me.

165BOA, Y.MTV 72/43 22 Cemaziyülevvel 1310 / 12 December 1892. Vali of Mosul argued in this line that Mosul was lucky as its population adhered to either Hanafi or Shafi interpretations of Sunnism that preventing the spread of Sunnism was a crucial task that could be achieved through opening schools there. BOA, BEO 137/10219, 21 Cemaziyülahir 1310 / 10 January 1893.

166Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 98.

ahlâkiyye) in an attempt to make the state schools attractive for Shiite families, thus concealing the real agenda of the government.¹⁶⁷ Selim Sami stands as an exceptional character in the Ottoman educational initiative against Shiite expansionism during the Hamidian era with his hardline approach, suggesting a pro-active policy for a systematic mass conversion of Shiites through education with a secret agenda.¹⁶⁸ However, his proposal was going to find followers only years later during the period of the Committee of Union and Progress.

167BOA, MF.MKT 422/33, 25 Cemaziyyülahir 1316 / 9 November 1898.

168Y.MTV 73/71, 9 Cemaziyyülahir 1310 / 29 December 1892.

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Y.EE (Yıldız Esas Evrâkı) 8/9; 9/14; 10/69.

Y.MTV. (Yıldız Mütenevvî Marûzât Evrâkı) 43/114; 43/117; 45/13; 45/24; 53/108; 54/82; 59/41; 65/92; 72/43; 73/71; 74/133; 78/158; 90/76; 131/109; 245/87.

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II. ABDÜLHAMİT DÖNEMİNDE İRAK'TA ŞİİLİĞE KARŞI OSMANLI EĞİTİM POLİTİKASI

ÖZ

On dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarına doğru, Osmanlı yetkilileri Irak'taki Sünni ortopraksisi ve dolayısıyla devlet egemenliğinin tehlikede olduğunu fark etti. Irak'ta Sünni kitlelerin Şiileştigiğine ve bunun da ciddi bir siyasi risk oluşturabileceğine kanaat getirildi. Osmanlı makamları, Irak'ta yaşayan tebaanın siyasi sadakatini garanti altına almak adına bir eğitim politikası hazırladılar. Bu politikanın asli amaçlarından biri de "tashîh-i akâid" yani inançların düzeltilmesi idi. Bu makalede, II. Abdülhamid döneminde, hükümetin algıladığı şekliyle, Irak'ta Şii mezhebinin yayılmasına karşı alınan önlemler konu edilmektedir. Bu önlemler arasında medreselere Sünni müderris ve ulama tayini, aşiretler arasında gezgin vaizler gönderilmesi, modern okullar açılması ve erken yaşlarda Irak'taki Şii erkek çocukların Sünnileştirilmek amacıyla İstanbul'a götürülmeleri gibi uygulamalar bulunmaktadır. Bu makalede ayrıca, Şiiliğin yayılmasına karşı geliştirilen eğitim politikasının uygulanması esnasında ortaya çıkan güçlükler de ele alınmaktadır. Bunlar arasında, Şiiliğin yayılmasına karşı mücadele etmek üzere seçilecek ulemanın yerelden mi yoksa yerel olmayan ulamadan mı seçileceği ve mali zorlukların nasıl aşılacağı gibi konular gösterilebilir. Genel olarak, Osmanlı eğitim politikası, Sünni olmayan Müslüman grupların inançlarının düzeltilmesini de içeren bir Osmanlılık kimliğinin yaygınlaştırılmasını amaçlıyordu. Bu ise yeniden tanımlanarak anlam katmanları genişletilen bu kimliğin İslam'ın Sünni yorumunu siyaseten daha merkeze almasını beraberinde getiriyordu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı, Irak, XIX. Yüzyıl, Devlet, Otorite, Eğitim, Medrese, Okul, Ulema, Sünni, Şii, Mezhep Siyaseti.