

TRANSFER OF POLITICAL ECONOMY BY A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: *ILM-I TEDBIR-I MENZIL* IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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INTRODUCTION

After the population increase, incontinent colonization, Renaissance, reformation, overseas expansion, big geographic explorations and intercontinental colonization, Europe which experienced the greatest economic transformation in history, called Industrial Revolution, increased measures of output per capita dramatically and in a sustainable manner, and opened the gap with the rest of the world quickly. Both economic history and history of economic thought show us that there was an interrelation between the development of economic thought and this big economic development. Since the complexity of new economic life required the systematization of the principles, and much increasing importance of economy's itself attracted so many thinkers, a new discipline called political economy became very popular and developed rapidly. Since the industrialization has a very extensive meaning including very deep economic, cultural, structural and social transformations, the "rest of the world" had to learn "political economy".

The Ottoman administrators first became aware of the superiority of the West after the defeats in Vienna between 1683 and 1699; the Ottoman public officials thereafter increasingly accepted Western superiority in the military field and then, in political and social areas¹. Although Ottomans had undertaken to build lots of manufactures in the first half of the 18th century, their classical economic system paradigm² based on the policies of liberalizing to import, and prohibiting exporting to be able to make the goods plentiful for the citizens limited the economic success of this initiative. In the nineteenth century, the speed of this industrialization was increased by the State, but after a while, they realized that this couldn't be succeeded only with a physical transformation consisting in changing the production styles and relations, and it was impossible to get rich within the limitations of their classical economic system paradigm. It was also necessary to initiate a cultural transformation including new economic thought; and it became crucial to reform the educational system, and to start education of economics.

IMPOSITION OF MODERN ECONOMIC THOUGHT

Modern political economy came into the Ottoman land by various sources: the works and other activities of the foreigners coming from industrialized countries to the Ottoman Empire for trade, etc...; the propaganda activities of some well-known liberal economists aiming at opening the Ottoman economy into the world market; the reports of State's representatives in industrializing countries about the causes of those countries' wealth; and observations made by the Ottomans about the origin of the Western States' economic and political performance.

The newspaper was the only public education tool. The Ottoman state's weekly official newspaper, *Takvim-i Vekayi*, which had been issued irregularly since 1831, included some useful writings about economics, history, and some translations from English newspapers. Besides, there were some private newspapers generally owned by foreigners living in Ottoman country. These newspapers had the function of making propaganda of industrialized West³. Among the first Europeans bringing modern economic thought into the Empire, we can mention a Frenchman, Charles Trikon. He released some "commercial, politique" newspapers, "Le Spectateur Oriental" and later "Le Smyrneen". But after it was bought by another Frenchman, Alexander Blacque, who had been commercial representative of French tradesmen in Izmir, this newspaper became an important channel for transferring modern economic thought into the Empire. Because Mr. Blacque had gotten the confidence of Ottoman's ruling elite by defending Ottomans' interests with his political-economical articles, Sultan Mahmud the Second gave him the responsibility for releasing the French copy of the official newspaper, "Le Moniteur Ottoman". In "Le Moniteur Ottoman", there was an unofficial additional, in which economic liberalism was handled.

¹ Suraiya Faroqhi (2000), *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs*, C.H.Beck, München, pp. 84-85

² Mehmet Genc (1994), "Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics and Main Trends", in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey (1500-1950)*, ed. Donald Quataert (State University of New York Press, p. 59.

³ İlber Ortaylı (2000), *İmparatorlugun En Uzun Yuzyili*, İletisim Yay., İstanbul, p. 196.

After the death of Mr. Blacque in 1836, David Urquhart became the most important reference for the economic thought. So the first economic thought stream, i.e. liberalism, was supported with a strong English influence⁴. He, who was a former member of the diplomatic service, and later on, of foreign-affairs committees that made vigorous propaganda for an activist foreign policy⁵, was a head clerk from the beginning of 1830's to 1837 in English Embassy in Istanbul and played a great role in all preparation phases of Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention of 1838, which gave to Great Britain undisputed competitive superiority with regard to domestic manufactures⁶. He argued that there wasn't any government intervention in Ottoman land, and therefore it was a very ideal country for free trade. During the 7 years in Istanbul, he explained and disseminated his (extreme) thoughts for free trade by means of "Le Moniteur Ottoman". It can be claimed that he persuaded Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals, with whom he got in touch, for "laissez-faire"⁷. There were some other English officials who became quite influential on Ottomans⁸. Famous economist N.W.Senior, who visited Ottomans' capital city Istanbul, discussed economic matters with Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) Ahmet Vefik Pasha⁹. The persuasion of top-level administrators of a centralized state has always been much easier and functional to influence the whole country. So we can see some other activities oriented to Ottoman sultans and bureaucrats. There were some books for private usage of only these people¹⁰.

Some other foreign newspapers like Le Courier de Smyrne and journals like Journal Asiatique followed the way opened by Le Moniteur Ottoman. The economic thought in those were Laissez-faire too. Even in the first issues of Ceride-i Havadis which was the first private Turkish newspaper released by an Englishman, Churchill, we can see translations and discussions.

As for the reports of the State's representatives, they were inevitably interested in economics. Mustafa Sami Bey, clerk in Paris Embassy wrote a booklet about his impression of Europe entitled Avrupa Risalesi (Europe Booklet) in 1840. Sadik Rifat Pasha, for example, the Ambassador in Austria was the first man bringing Cameralist thought into the Ottoman land¹¹. But it didn't attract much attention because it was overshadowed by liberal doctrine.

Ottoman intellectuals like Ahmed Cevdet Pasa, Namik Kemal, Mehmed Resad, and especially Ahmed Midhat Efendi, who was the author of the first best-seller book of economics "Ekonomi Politik" (Political Economy), were quite interested in economics. A Turkish newspaper, *Tercuman-i Ahval*, allotted a column to Mehmed Serif Efendi, who published his lectures under the title of "Ilm-i Emval-i Milliye (Science of National Wealth)", as the first original compilation of economics in Turkish. We can see the economic writings of Ahmed Midhat Efendi in the same newspaper¹². Namik Kemal's economic views were expressed in newspapers such as *Ibret* and *Basiret*.

As a result of all these efforts, the liberalist economic thought became the main stream; however, there were some opposite nationalist economic books mainly affected by Friedrich List, like Akyigitoglu's "Ilm-i Servet (Science of Wealth)" in 1896 and "Ilm-i Servet Veyahut Ilm-i Iktisat (Science of Wealth or Science of Economics)" in 1897.

SCIENTIFIC ECONOMICS: THE SCHOOLS FOR EDUCATION OF ECONOMICS

Following the Tanzimat edict¹³, in 1st of March 1846, a tahrirat-i umumiye (general declaration) was issued. This declaration written by Sultan Abdulmecid should be accepted as the starting point of a

⁴ Niyazi Berkes (1972), "Ekonomik Tarih ile Teorik İlişkileri Açısından Türkiye'de Ekonomik Düşünce Evrimi", in *Türkiye'de Üniversitelerde Okutulan İktisat Üzerine*, (ed. Fikret Gorun), Middle East Technical University, p. 44

⁵ Joseph A. Schumpeter (1994), *History of Economic Analysis* (Reprint by Routledge, p. 399.

⁶ Kemal H. Karpat (Jul., 1972), The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 247.

⁷ We can find his thesis about the Ottoman Empire in his book, *Turkey and Its Resources*, published in 1833.

⁸ English Embassy clerk Henry Layard (1913) writes about his excited economic discussions with statesman Ahmet Vefik Efendi in his *Autobiography and Letters*, London, p. 48.

⁹ Ahmet Guner Sayar (2000), *Osmanlı İktisat Düşüncesinin Çağdaşlaşması*, Otuken Yay., İstanbul, p. 37.

¹⁰ İlhan Tekeli & Selim İkin (1999), *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Eğitim ve Bilgi Üretim Sisteminin Olusumu ve Donusumu*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yay., Ankara, pp. 184-185; Sayar (2000), p. 255

¹¹ Sadik Rifat Pasa (1873), *Asar-i Muntehabat*, İstanbul

¹² Sayar (2000), p. 286.

¹³ The Tanzimat, meaning *reorganization* of the Ottoman Empire, was a period of reformation that began in 1839 and ended with the First Constitutional Era in 1876. The modernization process of the Ottoman Empire was effectively associated with the Tanzimat reforms.

new phase in development of economic thought. In this imperial command, Sultan suggests that "Since a development would be possible with the elimination of ignorance in both religious and worldly affairs, I urgently recommend establishing the schools giving scientific and industrial education."

The State started a big modern education programme. The so-called modern schools, established in 1839-60, were designated to train the personnel needed for government service. But the schools established after 1860-95 were predominantly professional and technical. In the first period there were only six major professional schools. In the second period there were established at least twenty-five professional schools, in law, finance, commerce, civil engineering, customs, etc...¹⁴

Interestingly, while the sibyan (primary) schools were ignored, the second step of the education, namely, the establishment of rustiye (junior) schools was preceded. After a while, the secondary schools for girls (inas rustiyesi) were opened. In a report by Umur-u Nafia Meclisi (Useful Works Committee), it was reported that although the military, engineering, medical schools had been opened, there could not be found students for these schools who were literate at least, and that the students available were lacking in basic knowledge; this was because of the insufficiency of the elementary schools¹⁵. In addition, sanayi mektepleri (schools for industry) were envisaged, but their establishment was slower. In fact, in an empire which had an underdeveloped industry, there was no need and demand for such an education¹⁶. In addition, some occupational schools for educating technical military and civil servants, which were planned as high-level specialist schools were built, but technician schools giving short-term training were not neglected.

When some attempts had failed, new projects were developed. "Islah-i Sanayi Komisyonu" (Commission for the Improvement of the Industry) was established in 1860's to prepare and to implement an extensive program. One of the education policies this commission proposed was to build schools for industry. Although these schools were opened, their numbers did not increase that much¹⁷.

In 1864, a higher education council, called Meclis-i Kebir-i Maarif (Grand Education Assembly) within Maarif Bakanligi (Ministry of Education) was established. In addition, a Translation Commission was established. A project about the systematization of Ottoman educational institutions was offered to French Minister of Education Victor Duruy in 1867. Duruy recommended opening inter-religion and international secondary schools, building a university, and opening public libraries. So, in accordance with this project Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi (Regulation of General Education) was prepared in 1869¹⁸. The Regulation called for the establishment of an educational system beginning with elementary education and culminating in the Darulfunun (University).

This was a great project requiring great funds, but the State had huge financial problems. Hence, the costs of building a school and maintaining its education belonged to people. Only the one fourth of the teacher salaries was given by the government. The statesmen were following a quite wrong policy of giving importance to the building of higher education schools in order to get the required civil servants and technicians immediately¹⁹.

A small university including Literature, Law, and Science Faculties could be opened in 1870. The number of the applicants for studying in the faculties was very promising: 1000. 450 of them were selected as students after a preliminary exam. Most of them were madrasa (traditional religious education schools) students. But it could not survive and closed in 1872²⁰.

The first schools, in which education of economics was given, were Mekteb-i Mulkiye (School of Political Science) founded in 1859 and Hukuk Mektebi (Law School) founded in 1874. Mekteb-i Funun-u Maliye (School of Fiscal Sciences) could give education only from 1877 to 1880, but was very important for being the first school of economic sciences. Yet an individual faculty of economics was needed by Ottomans very much, but because of a quite practical reason: After the middle of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman middle class was composed of two groups; the agrarian wing consisted mainly of Muslims, while the commercial-entrepreneurial in the cities was made up mostly of

¹⁴ Karpat (Jul., 1972), p. 275.

¹⁵ Niyazi Berkes (2004), *Turkiye'de Cagdaslasma*, YKY Yay., Istanbul, pp. 181-182.

¹⁶ Ortayli (2000), p. 188

¹⁷ Ortayli (2000), p. 207.

¹⁸ Berkes (2004), pp. 236-37.

¹⁹ Ortayli (2000), p. 190.

²⁰ Berkes (2004), p. 238.

non-Muslims²¹. For national security, a Muslim tradesmen class had to be created, and foundation a faculty of economics was supposed to be the healthiest way for this. The same thought could be seen in a report prepared by Minister of Trade in 1849: he was warning that since neither Muslim nor non-Muslim subjects knew some arts, only foreign citizens were active and gainful in arts like taylor and shoemaking; so he was recommending to develop the education and production in these areas²².

After 3 unsuccessful initiations (in 1860, 1880 and 1881), Yuksek Ticaret Mektebi (the Higher School of Commerce) could be opened in 1883. But very interestingly, although it was necessary its syllabus to be non-academic and more concerned with the practice for above-mentioned practical and simple aim, since it was copied from Ecole de Hautes etudes Commerciales in France, its education was too academic and difficult. As a result of this, it lost its popularity for students, and then its quality. After a short training period, there was not any student demanding to attend the school, and it was closed (1887). It could be opened in 1894 under the protection of Sultan. But the all of the first graduates demanded for being assigned as a civil servant, they didn't want to be tradesmen, so we can say that the education never attained its main goal²³.

The education of economics was lectured also in Mekteb-i Hukuk-i Sahane (Faculty of Law) in chair level. This chair kept giving education with some interruptions during the World War until the foundation of Faculty of Economics in 1936, which was the ultimate stage for the introduction of the scientific political economy.

Very surprisingly, the education of economics was given even in secondary schools. It is not an exaggeration to say that secondary schools were important centers for economics education²⁴. There were lots of textbooks written for this level of education, which were more convenient to read and understand for the public²⁵.

This period was very unsuccessful for providing a healthy, continuous and complete education of economics: Because there were no sufficient financial resources; the schools which were built were tried to be funded by aid from people actually poor; neither the buildings nor the equipment were suitable for the education; the libraries had a few books; because there were some serious limitations and dangers in discussing the realities of modern economics, like interest, because of being an Islamic society, and in limiting the traditionally strong government's economic role for the benefit of the market, etc...; because the education policies were inconsistent and unsustainable...

After the foundation of Darulfunun (University) in 1900, education of economics was started to be given in the Ulum-i Edebiye Mektebi (Faculty of Literature). The quality of the education of economics was improved by the transfer of six foreign academicians (including one public finance professor) from Germany, Austria and Hungary during 1st World War²⁶. The fact that the German professors disappointed when they saw the Darulfunun²⁷ gives us knowledge about the quality of the education.

SCIENCE OF ECONOMY: FIRST ECONOMISTS AND THEIR WORKS

One of the missions of the academy of science "Encumen-i Danis (Council of Scientists)" which was built in 1851 was to write the necessary books for university education. The members of this sub-committee were among the biggest scientists of the time. We must mention among them the names of Joseph Hammer and James Redhouse. The members had very good foreign-language knowledge. Although the council was not long lived, the books chosen and approved by the committee could be translated into Turkish.

For the Political Economy, the book which the Committee selected was Jean Baptiste Say's *Cathecisme d'Economie Politique*. The reasons for this choice were:

²¹ Karpat (Jul. 1972), p. 260.

²² Ortayli (2000), p. 206.

²³ Osman Ergin (1977), *Turk Maarif Tarihi*, Eser Matbaasi, Istanbul, vol. 3, p. 943.

²⁴ Ziyaeddin Fahri Findikoglu (1946), *Turkiye'de İktisat Tedrisati Tarihçesi ve İktisat Fakültesi Teskilati* (Istanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi İktisat ve İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü Yayını, İstanbul, pp. 39-40.

²⁵ Findikoglu (1946), p. 38.

²⁶ Ahmet Emin (1930), *Turkey in the World War*, New Haven, p. 116.

²⁷ Mustafa Gencer (2003), *Jonturk Modernizmi ve "Alman Ruhü"*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, pp. 129-130

i. The language of the book was French, franka-lingua among the academicians, and the most popular foreign-language among Ottoman intellectuals²⁸. Besides, Ottomans selected to adopt French education system from the early 19th century by sending students to France, using French as instruction language in high schools and even building schools in France for Turkish students²⁹.

ii. Since the language and content of the book was simplified and easily understandable, it would be very suitable for the beginners³⁰. It was unfair to expect a high economic-knowledge level from the Ottomans at their very beginning. Thus, the problems due to lack of conceptualization in Ottoman language was confessed by the translator -Sahak Abru³¹. Since the question-and-answer style was not academic, he transformed it into prose form. So it was not a word by word translation. Beside this, Sahak Abru ignored the footnotes and didn't include the appendix in the translation³².

iii. Say was the first French academic teacher of Political economy in France³³, after the Napoleonic Wars he held a chair of Political Economy at the des Arts et Metiers, and again later, at the College de France³⁴, so it was a perfect choice for academic concerns.

iv. The book was liberalist, a very popular stream in the world and the Ottoman Empire³⁵. So it was a quite rational starting point.

This book translated under the title of "Ilm-i Tedbir-i Menzil" in 1852 constituted the basic for Turkish economic thought³⁶.

An orientalist, Charles Wells, published an economics book in Turkish under the title of "Ilm-i Tedbir-i Milk (Economic Science)"³⁷ in London in 1860. In 1863, the first teacher of economics in Mekteb-i Mulkiye -Mehmed Serif Efendi's "Ilm-i Emval-i Milliye (Science of National Wealth)". Among other translations and compilations³⁸, the interesting and outstanding ones were those: Ahmet Mithat Efendi's "Ekonomi Politik" (Political Economy) in 1874; Suleyman Sudi's "Defter-i Muktesit" (Book for Economist) which uses "economics" title in a Turkish book for the first time in 1891; "Mebadi-i Ilm-i Servet-i Milel" (Introduction to Wealth of Nations) (1880) of Ohannes Efendi, another teacher of economics in Mulkiye, remained as the main book in economics for a long time; Akyigitoglu's nationalist books "Ilm-i Servet (Science of Wealth)" in 1896 and "Ilm-i Servet Veyahut Ilm-i Iktisat (Science of Wealth or Science of Economics)" in 1897.

Although the number of the books (16) were quite low, when we take into account the facts that totally 100-110 books could be published yearly, only half of which was Turkish³⁹, and that the Ottoman government was controlling the books brought from abroad, making the establishment of printing houses difficult, and controlling any copy of the newspapers and journals⁴⁰, we can say that this number was relatively high.

After the termination of Encumen-i Danis, a non-governmental organization entitled Cemiyet-i Ilmiye-i Osmaniye (Ottoman Scientific Society) was established. This society started to issue the first scientific journal in 1862. There were articles about science, philosophy, economics and law⁴¹. It started to give public conferences in 1863. These conferences were about new "sciences", and the objective was to give information to the public and to encourage the interest in the development of the economy and the enlightenment of the minds.

²⁸ Ali Gunduz Akinci (1973), *Türk-Fransız Kultur İlişkileri (1071-1859): Başlangıç Donemi*, Ankara, p. 60

²⁹ Tekeli & Ilkin (1999), pp. 61-69.

³⁰ Sayar (2000), p. 271.

³¹ Sahak Abru (1852), *Ilm-i Tedbir-i Menzil*, İstanbul, p. 3.

³² M. Zuhdu (1917), "Ilm-i Tedbir-i Menzil", *Daru'l-Funun Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası*, (1335), No: 9, p. 738.

³³ Schumpeter (1994), p. 492.

³⁴ Larry J. Seehrest, *Jean Baptiste Say: Neglected Champion of Laissez-Faire*, <http://www.mises.org/JEAN-BAPTISTE.asp> (11.06.2006)

³⁵ M. Zuhdu (1917), p. 751.

³⁶ Mardin (1962), *Türkiye'de İktisadi Düşüncenin Gelişmesi (1838-1918)*, Türk İktisadi Gelişmesi Araştırma Projesi, Ankara, p. 29.

³⁷ Sayar (2000), p. 276.

³⁸ We can give a total number of 16 for the list of economics books (See Necdet Kurdakul (1997), *Tanzimat Donemi Basınında Sosyo-Ekonomik Fikir Hareketleri*, T.C.Kültür Bakanlığı Yay., Ankara, pp. 117-118).

³⁹ Necdet Sakaoglu (1991), *Osmanlı Eğitim Tarihi*, İletişim yayınları, İstanbul, p. 115.

⁴⁰ Ortaylı (2000), p. 198.

⁴¹ Berkes (2004), p. 236.

CONCLUSION

During more than a hundred years of efforts, although the Ottomans initiated a few times for giving a perfect education of economics, at the end we can not see a concrete success. Since such an education was the imposition of both industrialized Western countries and of the Ottoman bureaucracy, Turkish public opinion was not ready and eager for this. Although the first official step - translation of Jean Baptiste Say's *Cathecisme d'Economie Politique* was a quite rational and perfect choice, and the insertion of the economics into the syllabus of some schools of higher degree and the establishment of a faculty of economics were serious steps, we see lots of failures, disappointments, interruptions, and lack of sequence and coordination in this process. Some other reasons (financial insufficiencies; some disharmonies stemming from being a traditional-Islamic society) exacerbated the conditions for the education of economics in the whole era. Even the foundation of a modern university at the end of the century could not bring stability, quality and sufficiency for the economics education. It could be possible by founding a Faculty of Economics in modern sense in 1936 after the modern Turkish Republic was established.

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