

# The Foundational Elements of the Turkish Conception of Religion: Hanafism and Maturidism

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## 1. Introduction

Throughout history, Turks have faced several challenges from various religions and cultures. Due to their strong religious, moral and social values, they were mostly able to come out of these confrontations successfully. Although influenced to a certain extent by the religions in their geography, Turks did not convert to another religion on a mass scale. Although some Turkish communities have converted to Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Manichaeism, and other religions, according to historical sources, conversions with a population of 100-200 thousand tents occurred only in conversions to Islam.

The Turks' conversion to Islam was in the form of individual conversions at the beginning, which later took the form of mass conversions once the similarities between their values and Islam became more apparent. Islamization of Turks lasted for six or seven centuries, and took different shapes from clan to clan, region to region, and in settled versus nomadic people.

With their resilient cultures, moral values and social structures, the Turks were able to overcome the periods of depression and bring together the values of Islam and their own moral and social values under the same umbrella. The success of Turkish societies' adaptation was due to their strong sense of freedom and experience in state building which included a rational, logical and realistic approach to events. These cultural values of the Turks were reflected in the Islamic understanding of the jurists and theologians. From a

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sociology of knowledge perspective, no thinker can be understood in isolation from the society they are embedded in and all thinkers are in a way the interpreters of the society they belong to. Therefore, in order to understand Hanafism-Maturidism and Yasawism, which are the founding elements of the rational and morality-centered understanding of Islam in Turks, it is necessary to briefly explain Turkish conception of the universe, God, state, reason and freedom.

This paper analyzes the linkages between Turkish conception of Islam on the one hand and Hanafism and Maturidism on the other, investigating how the latter became the former's founding elements. The second part puts forward Turks' pre-Islamic conception of God and the universe and highlights the importance given to human and mind. The third part deals with the linkages that the Turks established between Islam and their traditional beliefs upon their conversion, whereas the fourth part examines the effect of Hanafism and Maturidism on these linkages. The fifth part explains the principles of these two ideas that form the basis of Turks' conception of religion. The conclusion part of the study puts forward some observations about the place of these principles in today's societies, understanding of religion and life.

## 2. Conception of the Universe and Reason in Pre-Islamic Turks

Every nation has its own unique conception of the universe. Human beings are at the center of this conception. As such, every conception of the universe is primarily based on an epistemology to explain the existence of the human and the universe, and his/her relationship with a supreme being or beings. As Bıçak emphasizes, "every conception of the universe reflects the thought processes, mentality, institutions, traditions and values of the society it is related to."<sup>1</sup> Societies' conceptions of the universe play an important role in preserving or reconstructing the society's unique identity during times of radical change.

God, human, state and the world constitute the basic elements of the Turks' conception of the universe. The conception of the state is formed by the transformation of a society's desire for freedom and sense of homeland into an organized structure. In the Turkish

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: Ayhan Bıçak, "Türklerde Evren Tasavvuru ve Ölüm Anlayışı" [The Conception of the Universe and the Concept of Death in Turks]. *Kutadgubilig Felsefe-Bilim Araştırmaları* 6, (2004):149.

conception of the universe, God is a powerful, supreme, eternal and perpetual being, and stands out as the creator of earth, sky and human beings. First the sky, then the earth, and finally human was created. (Kul Tigin Inscription, E1) In the Gokturk inscriptions, creation is described as "When the blue sky above and the swarthy ground below were created, human beings were created between the two." (Kul Tigin Inscription, E1; Kul Tigin Inscription, S1) It is under God's command whether a society establishes a state, the khans come to power, and people will have happiness. In traditional Turkish belief, God is one and is the god of all people. God is in close relationship with people but shows himself to people only indirectly. If people act according to the principles of the blessing (*kut*) from God, their life will be improved and with this blessing (*kut*) they will become sultans. The mind is also a blessing given to humans by God. If the khans use their minds while managing people, the society will be good; if they do not use their minds, the society will face extinction. In the conception of the universe in Turks, man has two areas of responsibility, towards the creator God and society. He who fulfills his obligations to society also fulfills his obligations to God. Those who do not fulfill their responsibilities regarding these two are punished by both the God and the society.<sup>2</sup>

In the Turkish conception of the universe, human stands out among other beings because of the mind given by God. As it can be understood from the phrase "Then, I made him a khan because *Gok Tengri* gave wisdom"<sup>3</sup> written on the Tonyukuk Monument, the human mind is of divine origin. In order for the affairs of the state to run smoothly and for the happiness of the society, things must be arranged according to reason given as a blessing from God. On the Bilge Kagan Inscription in the Orkhon Monuments, the dominance of reason in politics and the conduct of the affairs with reason are expressed as follows: "...they were wise khans. Both their lords and their people were straight... A foolish khan ruled as a khan, and his commander was also a fool, it would be bad. ... Turk! Come to your senses! Because of your disobedience to the wise khan and your flourishing country, you yourself made this mistake."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: Bıçak, "Türklerde Evren Tasavvuru ve Ölüm Anlayışı," 149-172.

<sup>3</sup> Bilge Tonyukuk Inscription, W7.

<sup>4</sup> Bilge Khagan Inscription, E41-4 and E41-6.

In Turkish culture, there is a great trust in humans and in reason. Thus, in Turkish proverbs, like in Orkhon Monuments, reason is not belittled and criticized; on the contrary, it is praised, and people were asked to do things in line with reason. Several proverbs and idioms that are still used today point to this principle. "Mind is God-given"; "Mind is superior to [another] mind"; "The *tariq* (path) for the mind is one."; "He who has the mind has the state."; "Mind is a capital for the person."; "What can a beard do when there is no mind?"; "Out of mind, work of mindless"; "A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend."; "If everyone had the same mind, there would be no shepherds for the sheep."; "Reason is superior to reason, all the way to the Ninth Heaven.", "Listen to the one older than you, and the one younger than you!", "One plant from every field, one mind from every man."; "The mind is not in age, it is in the head."<sup>5</sup> There are also several Turkish idioms with the word "akıl" (mind, reason): "akıl danışmak" (to consult), "akıl hocası" (mentor), "akıl sır ermemek" (to be mind-boggled), "aklı başına gelmek" (to come to one's senses), "aklı başında" (sensible), "aklı başından gitmek" (to almost jump out of one's skin), "aklı çıkmak" (to be terrified), "aklı karışmak" (to get confused), "aklına gelen başına gelmek" (to experience the dreaded), "aklına gelmek" (come to mind), "aklından geçirmek" (to think of), "aklından zoru olmak" (to be insane), "aklını başından almak" (to seduce), "aklını çelmek" (to coax) ve "aklını peynir ekmekle yemek" (literally "to eat one's mind with cheese and bread", to act irrationally).<sup>6</sup> Based on the proverbs and idioms in Turkish one can argue that the reason is a guide that leads to the right and good and protects from wrong in the intralinguistic worldview of the Turks.

The value attributed to reason and knowledge in Turkish culture continued to be present in literary works in the Islamic period as well. *Kutadgu Bilig*, written by Yusuf Has Hajib during the Karakhanids with the purpose of bringing together the information that will bring happiness and joy both in this world and the hereafter, contains many words expressing the conception of mind and the value given to science in Turks. Yusuf Has Hajib likens the mind to a trammel

<sup>5</sup> Sevim Yörük and Yaşar Yörük, *Açıklamalı Atasözleri Sözlüğü* [Annotated Dictionary of Proverbs] (İstanbul: Serhat, 1996), 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> Hakkı Çebi and Hamza Çarhoğlu, *Deyimlerimiz ve Açıklamaları* [Our Idioms and Their Explanations]. (Ankara: Dörtel, 1998), 15-16.

tied to the feet of a horse. Just as the trammel prevents the horse from going astray and enables it to act according to the rules, the mind also enables people to turn to goodness; it prevents them from deviating from the truth and encountering undesirable situations. In this work, Yusuf Has Hajib deals with the attainment of happiness through dialogues between four people. Of these four, Kun-toğdı (Gundoğdu) is the ruler, representing the righteous law. Ay-toldi (Aydoldu) is the prime minister/vizier, representing the state and happiness. Ugdulmiş (Uğdulu) is the son of the prime minister, who represents the mind. Odgurmis (Odgurmus), on the other hand, is an ascetic relative of Ogdulmus who has devoted himself to the afterlife and represents destiny and faith. Odgurmus, in Uighur language, means to find the truth by thinking and reasoning.<sup>7</sup>

In short, the rationality of the Turks was reflected in the Orkhon monuments, epics, literary-religious works and proverbs. Thanks to the mind, which is a "blessing (*kut*) from Allah", the rulers (*beys*) acted justly and held power. In Turkish written literature and oral culture, reason was not criticized, but praised. In *Kutadgu Bilig*, reason is the measure of thought and action, and it is the mind that makes people honorable.

### 3. Conversion of Turks to Islam

Turks tried to protect their own values even after they converted to Islam. During the first encounter with the Muslim Arab armies, which started with Omar and lasted until Omar B. Abdul-Aziz, there were no voluntary mass conversions to Islam by Turks, only individual conversions. For example, the Magus merchant Ezrekiani of Bukhara, while he was doing business, went to Basra by sea, and from there to Kufa, and probably became a Muslim through Ali.<sup>8</sup> Nizek Tarhan came to Medina individually and became a Muslim at the grave of the Prophet. Conversions took place when Kutayba B. Muslim forced the people in Bukhara and Samarkand to accept Islam, or when captive Turks chose Islam after they were resettled in cities such as Basra, Mecca, Medina and Kufa. Those who were taken prisoners in their Turkish homelands and their descendants (young people) later joined the armies of Islam and fought wars

<sup>7</sup> Yusuf Has Hacip, *Kutadgu Bilig*, ed. Yaşar Çağbayır (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> As-Sam'ānī, *Al-Ansāb*, ed. Abdullah Omer el-Bārūdī. (Beirut: Dāru'l-Cinān, 1988), 123.

against their kinsmen. Their children were given Islamic education either in Muslim or newly conquered cities.

The conversion of Turks to Islam *en masse* and of their own accord generally took place in the second stage. The conquests until the reign of Omar B. Abdul-Aziz caused the oppressive administrations that held power in the region to lose their power. As a result, the religions that spread in the Turkish lands lost their political support. In addition, the collapse of the Sassanid Empire, opened the way for the Turks who turned to the West, created an environment in favor of the Turks in the Turkish-Iranian conflict and enabled them to perceive Arabs with more sympathy.

During the collapse of the Second Gokturk State, the Turks, together with the Iranians, got involved in the intellectual-political movements that destroyed the Umayyad State and directly supported the establishment of the Abbasid State, which followed a more just and egalitarian policy. Later on, they began to take a close interest in Islam. The Chinese invasion, advancing from the East to Central Asia, posed a significant danger to the Turks. Therefore, the Turks took the side of the Abbasids in the Battle of Talas in 134/751. Thus, they changed not only the outcome of the war, but also the course of their own history.<sup>9</sup>

With the rise of Abbasid power, the spread of Islam among the Turks gained a new dimension because with the establishment of the state after the revolution, the Abbasids relied on military power from Khorasan and Transoxiana (Persian and Turkish). Especially during the period of Jafar Mansoor and the Mahdi, the Turks received great attention and achieved important posts. The Abbasid Caliph Mahdi sent envoys to the people of the region and to the chiefs of Kabul, Sogd, (Samarkand) Toharistan, Bamiyan, Fergana, Ustrusana, Sijistan, Tashkent, and even to the great Turkish ruler Tarhan and the Tokuzoguz ruler Hakan, inviting them to Islam. In the invitation letter, he wrote: "If you accept the unity of Allah and His Messenger, you will gain great benefits from this and also receive help from me."<sup>10</sup> The rulers responded positively to the Caliph Mahdi, showed

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see: Osman Turan, "Türkler ve İslamiyet" [Turks and Islam]. *Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 4, (1946): 466.

<sup>10</sup> Zekeriyâ Kitapçı, "Türklerin Müslüman Oluşu" ["Turks' Conversion to Islam"] in *Türkler*, ed. Hasan Celâl Guzel, Kemal Çiçek, Salim Koca, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 266.

allegiance, and became Muslims. One of these local Turkish chiefs, the viceroy (*yabgu*) of Toharistan of Karluk origin, became a Muslim as a result of Mahdi's personal interest.<sup>11</sup>

The policy of converting the people to Islam through peace in the Turkish homelands continued to be carried out by the Murjii-Hanafis during the establishment years of the Abbasids, just as it was at the end of the Umayyads. To receive education, the Muslim families in the region often sent their children to Kufa, to Abu Hanifa, claimed to be originally Turkish or Persian, who was the pioneer of the Supporters of Reason (*Rey*). Scholars from Turkistan such as Abu Mukatil from Samarkand and Abu Mutī from Belh who received education from him, tried to spread Islam in the region through works that professed his ideas. After the Abbasids appointed Abu Yusuf as the chief judge, Hanafism began to experience its first golden age in the region. This relationship between Murjie and the first Hanafis made Abu Hanifa an undisputed authority in the region. So much so that in the cities of the region, Abu Hanifa's students or students of his students could be appointed as judges (*qadi*). Abu Yusuf's view that no *jizya* and tribute should be taken from ended discussions between the people and the rulers in the region caused the people to breathe a sigh of relief. There were many reasons why Turks took special interest in Abu Hanifa. However, the most important of these were that he was not Arab, and that he resisted the Umayyads and supported Haris B. Surayj and his followers in the struggle between Umayyads and the Turks as well as his rational religious interpretation and civilization project.

Islam's frontiers had reached the Turks beyond Sir Derya to the East as far as Balasagun, only with the efforts of the Samanids (892-1005) in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Samanids started a new era of jihad and a holy war (*gaza*) against the infidel Turks. Thus, their resistance to Islam was broken and enabled the proselytizing activities of Muslim merchants and Sufis in the region. They even established cities such as Jand, Huvvara and Yenikent, whose citizens were Muslims, but the administration was in the hands of the Oghuzs, who were not yet Muslims. During the Samanid period, Islam advanced towards Tibet, India and China from the Toharistan

<sup>11</sup> Al-Ya'kubī, Ahmed b. Ebī Ya'kūb b. Jafar b. Wahb. *Tarih* [History]. (Beirut: Dāru Sādir-Dāru Beyrut, 1960), 436; Kitapçı, "Turks' Conversion to Islam," 265-266.

side, passed through Fergana and Ustrusana in Transoxiana on the middle road, and reached the Balasagun and Kashgar lines, but from the northern side reached only as far as the Bulgarian Turks along the Itil River. In the same period, Itil Bulgarian Khanate, which established commercial relations with the Arabs through the Khwarezmians and directly over the Caucasus, accepted Islam and received the title of the first Muslim Turkish state. Meanwhile, the Oghuzs were in their old homeland and had not yet reached Bukhara and Jand.<sup>12</sup>

With Satuk Bugra Khan's conversion to Islam, the Islamization process among the Turks gained great momentum. After that, his son Musa Tonga Ilig<sup>13</sup> succeeded to the throne of Karakhanids, but his rule was short-lived. After the death of Musa, Baytas Aslan Khan (Suleiman) took the throne. He was not yet a Muslim and thus fought against the Turks. He enabled Turkish tribes such as Yagma, Karluk, Cigil and Tuhsi under the rule of the Karakhanid State to convert to Islam of their own will. Historical sources record that in 960, 200.000 tents of Turks accepted Islam *en masse*.<sup>14</sup>

Scientific and commercial activities centered in Transoxiana had an important place in the spread of Islam among the nomadic Turks (Oghuz) in the steppes of Central Asia. The commercial and civilized relations between this region and the great nomadic masses not only showed the superiority of Islamic civilization to this world, but also aroused an interest in Islam, the religion of merchants known for their morality and honesty. In addition, the scholars and dervishes who were educated in the madrasahs in Bukhara,

<sup>12</sup> Kitapçı, "Turks' Conversion to Islam", 267; Vasiliy Vladimirovich Barthold, *Orta Asya Türk Tarihi Hakkında Dersler. [Lessons on the Central Asian Turkish History]*, Ragıp Hulusi Özdem (trans), Kâzım Yaşar Kopruman and İsmail Aka (eds), (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006), 79.

<sup>13</sup> Reşat Genç, "Karahanlılar", [Karakhanids] in *Türkler*, ed. Hasan Celâl Guzel, Kemal Çiçek, Salim Koca, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 809; Cemal Karşı, *Mulhakātu's-Sure* quoted in Vasilij Viladimirovič Barthold, *Turkestan v' epokhu mongol'skogo našestvija. [Turkestan in the age of the Mongol invasion]*. (St. Petersburg: 1898-1900), 132

<sup>14</sup> İbn Miskeveyh, Ebû Ali Ahmed b. Muhammed, *Kitābu Tecāribi'l-Umem* (Egypt: Matbaatu Sheriketi Temeddun, 1915), 181; İbnu'l-Esîr Ebû Hasan Ali b. Muhammed Abdulkerim, *al-Kāmil Fi't-Tārīh*, (Beirut: Dāru Sadır; Dāru Beirut, 1965), 532; İbn İmād el-Hanbelî, *Shazarāt*, ed. Mahmūd el-Arnaūti (Beirut: Dāru Ibn Kesir, 1989), 256; İbnu'l-Javzî Ebû'l-Faraj Abdurrahman b. Ali, *El-Muntazam Fi Tārīhi'l-Mulûk ve'l-Umem* (Hyderabad, 1357), 395; Ahmed Cevdet. *Kisas-i Enbiyâ wa tevârih-i hulefâ. [The Tales of Prophets and the History of Caliphs]* (Dersaadet : Kanaat Kitaphanesi, 1331 [1913]), 510. İbnu'l-Verdî Zeynuddin Omar b. Muzaffer, *Tārīhu İbni'l-Verdî* (Najaf, 1969), 399.



Samarkand and Fergana were involved in these trade caravans and taught the nomads the principles of Islam with tolerance and sweet language. Turkish dervishes, whom the Turks called ancestors and fathers, showed great effort in the Islamization of nomadic Turkish communities. In this way, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, nomadic Turks began to warm up to Islam and convert *en masse*.<sup>15</sup> Islam succeeded in gathering the nomadic Turkish masses as well as the urban settled elements from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards unlike religions such as Buddhism, Manichean and Christianity, which could not reach large nomadic Turkish communities.<sup>16</sup>

After the Oghuz and Karakhanids converted to Islam, Islam stabilized in Kashgar and Balasagun, and then penetrated East Turkestan. After the Samanids, the Karakhanids and Ghaznavids took on the task of spreading Islam among the Turks. They prepared the ground for the two great Muslim Turkish tribes known as Seljuks and Ottomans to become Muslims and establish great states.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4. The Effect of Hanafism and Maturidism on Turks, Conversion to Islam**

Among the reasons that facilitate Turks' conversion to Islam, two points are quite remarkable. Firstly, even before Islam, Turks already had a "monotheistic" belief in God who was the one and supreme, omnipotent, provider of sustenance; secondly, they were open to Abu Hanifa's rational interpretation of Islam. The first reason reduced the Turks' interest in trinity-based Christianity or polytheistic pagan religions, causing them to choose Islam. Indeed, the Syriac historian Mikhail, who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, recorded that "The Turkish nation believed in one God. The belief of the Arabs in also one God caused the Turks to accept Islam."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Turan, "Turkler ve İslamiyet" [Turks and Islam], 467.

<sup>16</sup> Ünver Günay and Harun Güngör, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türklerin Dini Tarihi* [Religious History of Turks from the Beginning to the Present] (Ankara: Rağbet, 2007), 155; Osman Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkuresi* [The Turkish Ideal of World Domination] (İstanbul: Turan Neşriyat Yurdu, 1969), 129.

<sup>17</sup> Kitapçı, "Türklerin Müslüman Oluşu" [Turks' Conversion to Islam], 267-79.

<sup>18</sup> Abdülkerim Özeydin, "Türklerin İslâmiyeti Kabulü" ["Turks' Acceptance of Islam"] in *Türkler*, ed. Hasan Celâl Guzel, Kemal Çiçek, Salim Koca, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 258; Suryani Mikhail, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, trans. Jean Baptiste Chabot. (Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1910),156.

As for the second reason, Abu Hanifa's rational understanding of religion has been a facilitating factor for the Turks to accept Islam because they found it more akin to their own religious and cultural values.

Turkish communities that converted to Islam in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries adopted the Hanafi sect, as they learned the interpretations of Islam's beliefs and practices from Hanafi circles known as the Supporters of Reason in Transoxiana. Their adoption of a rational method in producing religious knowledge played an important role in solving the Islam-related problems of the people of the region, which was undergoing a great transformation. Therefore, the administrators in the Turkish states established here, taking into account the tendency of the majority of the people, based their policies against other political and legal movements on Hanafi jurists and scholars. This understanding of religion, which was initially perceived as a commitment to Islam through the views of Abu Hanifa, but later named as Sunnism, became the religious lifestyle of the majority of Turkish communities, especially since the Karakhanids. Turks became so strongly attached to Hanafism that some historians referred to their conversion to Islam as "entering the Hanafi religion."<sup>19</sup> Despite the fact that Turkish states attach special importance to Hanafism and prefer it to other sects, "There has never been an incident such as the state's Sunnization of the people by force and oppression, in any place or period, including Anatolia."<sup>20</sup>

Hanafism is the name of a *fiqh* (Islamic law) sect formed around the ideas of Abu Hanifa. It was named after Abu Hanifa (150/767), who determined the principles of the sect. Abu Hanifa and his students were named as the Supporters of Reason (Rey Supporters) because they gave importance to reason and reasoning methods in solving theological and legal problems.

Hanafism made important inroads among the Transoxiana Turks with Samanid's seizure of power. The Samanids supported the

<sup>19</sup> Huseynî, *Ahbârü'd-Devleti's-Selçukiyye*, trans. Necati Lugal, (Ankara, 1943), 2; Seyfullah Kara, *Büyük Selçuklular ve Mezhep Kavgaaları [Great Seljuks and Sectarian Wars]* (İstanbul: İz, 2007), 168.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Anadolu- Anadolu'nun Türkleşmesi ve İslamlaşması", [Anatolia-Turkification and Islamization of Anatolia], *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*. (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2016), 112.

Hanafi ulama and brought them to important posts. One of the main aims was to prevent the Shiite-Ismaili and Mutazili propaganda that started to gain power in the region. Samarkand and Bukhara became the leading education centers of Hanafism during the Samanid period and especially during the Karakhanid period. In these two cities, centers which taught Hanafism were opened. Especially Samarkand played an important role after Belh in teaching the Hanafi tradition to the younger generations. *Dāru'l-Juzjāniyye*, where the sciences of *fiqh*, *kalam*, *hadith* and *tafsir* were taught, served as the science academy of the Hanafis for three to four hundred years.<sup>21</sup> During the Karakhanid period, Hanafi *madrasahs* were opened in Khwarazm and Gorgan. So much so that these *madrasahs* developed a different tradition from the *madrasahs* in Iraq and Western Iran. In fact, it would not be wrong to call this *fiqh* tradition "Turkish-Hanafi Fiqh Tradition". Some Western researchers call this tradition the "Eastern Hanafi Tradition" and explain it as follows:<sup>22</sup>

"The shining of the star of Central Asian Hanafism was closely related to the spread of the Seljuk Turks in the western direction towards the first important centers of Islam. Eastern Oghuz Turks, the tribe from which the Seljuks came, embraced Islam in the 4<sup>th</sup> HA/10<sup>th</sup> AD century and became sincere members of the Transoxiana Hanafi sectarian tradition. The Seljuk Turks preferred to define Sunnism with this sectarian tradition and showed great respect to the scholars who represented it. Wherever they went, they took with them and appointed Eastern Hanafi scholars to important positions as *qadis*, preachers, and teachers. The Seljuk Sultans preferred Eastern Hanafi scholars as advisers and in important diplomatic services such as embassies. Wherever a Hanafi madrasah was established, the positions of professorship there were given to the Eastern Hanafis. In fact, often such madrasahs were built and bestowed upon a distinguished Hanafi scholar, especially of Central Asian descent, to attract and support him."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Abû Hafs Omar An-Nasafî, *Al-Qand fi Zikri Ulemâi Semerkant* (Riyadh: Mektebetu'l-Kevser, 1991), 143, 273, 340.

<sup>22</sup> Wilferd Madelung, "11.-13. Asırlarda Hanefî Âlimlerin Orta Asya'dan Batıya Göçü", ["The Westward Migration of Hanafi Scholars from Central Asia in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries"] in *İmam Mâturîdî ve Mâturîdîlik*, ed. Sönmez Kutlu, (Ankara: Kitâbiyât, 2003), 369.

<sup>23</sup> Madelung, "Hanefî Âlimlerin Orta Asya'dan Batıya Göçü," 370.

With the beginning of the Abbasid rule, important Hanafi cultural basins were formed in Khorasan and Transoxiana. Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> HA/9<sup>th</sup> AD century, Iraq ceased to be the center of the Hanafi school, and these two regions began to take its place. Hanafism, which settled in Samarkand and Bukhara during the Samanid period, developed so much during the Karakhanid period that schools such as “Belh Meshayih” (jurists), “Bukhara Meshayih”, “Samarkand Meshayih” and “Fergana Meshayih” emerged within the sect itself. Among the *Belh Mashayih*, who stood out with their sufi tendencies among the Hanafis in the 10<sup>th</sup> century were Abu Bakr al-Iskaf (b.333 HA/944 AD), Abu Qasim Ahmed B. Isme es-Saffār (b.326 HA/938 AD), Abu Jafar al-Hinduvani (b.326 HA/938 AD) and his student Abu'l-Lays es-Samarkandi (b.373 HA/983 AD).<sup>24</sup> Ebū'l-Lays, originally from Samarkand, was a Turkish jurist whose most important work was *Kitābu'n-Nawāzil*, in which he collects the views of Belh Meshayih. Similarly, there was the “Samarkand Ulama” in Samarkand, represented by Turkish scholars such as Abu Mansūr al-Maturidi, Abu Nasr al-Iyāzī, and Hakim es-Samarkandi, and later followed by Pazdawi, Ebu'l-Muīn an-Nasafi and other scholars. These scholars made important contributions to the development of the sect with the works they wrote. Their views were recorded in *fiqh* sources as “Samarkand Ulema” or “Samarkand Meshayih.”

Hanafi jurisprudence (*fiqh*) recorded the greatest development during the Karakhanids, who established the first Muslim Turkish State in Central Asia in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. A Western scholar explains this great success of Hanafism in the Turkish geography as follows: “The (Hanafi) sect spread to the east and achieved its greatest development in Khorasan and Transoxiana. Many famous Hanafi jurists were born and raised in these lands.”<sup>25</sup> In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, Hanafism became the dominant sect to a large extent. The period of the Karakhanids and Seljuks was a period in which institutions such as mosques, complexes and *madrassahs* taught the views of the sect, inter-sectarian scientific debates were organized, manuscripts continued to be written, leading to establishment of the sectarian tradition and the expansion of its culture.

<sup>24</sup> Eyup Said Kaya, “Mezheplerin Teşekkülünden Sonra Fikhî İstidlāl” [“Jurisprudential Reasoning after the Formation of Sects”] (PhD Dissertation. İstanbul: Marmara University Institute of Social Sciences, 2001), fn. 205.

<sup>25</sup> Clement Huart, “Hanefiler” [The “Hanafis”], *MEB İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: MEB, 1950), 212.

In the works presented to the Karakhanid rulers, it is seen that Hanafi-Sunni concepts are handled together with elements of the old Turkish tradition and Iranian influences. For example, it is interesting that in his book *Dīvānu Lugāti't-Turk*, Kashgarli Mahmud attributes claims such as the Turks were "the army of the Prophet" or the "sword of Allah" to Abu Hanafi. The saying "Your sect will not fail as long as the sword is in the hands of the Turks."<sup>26</sup> ascribed to Abu Hanifah, combines the pre-Islamic beliefs of Turks with those in the Islamization period. In other words, it can be seen as an Islamized reflection of the pre-Islamic belief that "God protects the Turkish nation and makes it distinguished." During the Karakhanid period, the cult of Abu Hanifa was reflected in literary works and was transformed into a national personality. *Atabatu'l-Haqāyik* written in Karakhanid Turkish is an important example in this regard. Edib Ahmed Yukneki and al-Imām al-A'zam were made contemporaries in a *manqibah* (religious epic). Ali Shir Navāyī's (906/1501) *Nasāyim ul-Muhabbat*, a translation of *Nafahat* by Nūr ad-Dīn 'Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmī, includes some epic stories about Edib Ahmed, who was originally Turkish. As it is understood from these, Edib Ahmed was an ascetic who received a *madrasah* education and followed lessons by al-Imām al-A'zam in Baghdad.<sup>27</sup>

Hanafi jurisprudence achieved its greatest development in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries during the reign of the Karakhanids and Seljuks. Karakhanid khans, who founded the first Muslim Turkish State, gave great support to the scientific life and the development of the science of *fiqh* and *kalam*. For example, the Western Karakhanid

<sup>26</sup> The story (*manqibah*) in Er-Rawandi is as follows: While making his farewell pilgrimage and praying to Allah in Mecca, al-Imām al-A'zam said, "O God, help me if my ijthad is correct and my sect is right, because I have approved the law of Muhammad (pbuh) for you"; a voice coming from the distance gives him the answer, "You have told the truth, there is no harm in your sect as long as the sword is in the hands of the Turks." After recording the deed of this, Ravendi continues: "Praise be to God, the back of Islam is strong, the members of the Hanafi sect are happy; in the Arab, Persian, Greek and Russian land, the sword is in the hands of the Turks. The Seljuk sultans protected the Hanafi scholars so much that their love is eternal in the hearts of the old and the young." Ar-Rāvendī, Ebū Bekir Najmaddin Muhammed b. Ali b. Suleiman. *Rāhatu's-Sudūr*, ed. M. Ikbal. Tehran: Muessese-i İntişārāt-ı Emir Kebir, 1985), 17-18. See also Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye Tarihi* [History of Turkey in the Time of the Seljuks] (İstanbul: Nakış, 1984), XX; Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkuresi* [The Turkish Ideal of World Domination], 180-181.

<sup>27</sup> Edib Ahmet Yukneki, *Atabetu'l-Hakāyik*, trans. Reşit Rahmeti Arat, (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1951), 7, 78.

khans were known to be respectful to the jurists and respect their views. Sultan Ebu'l-Muzaffer Tarkaj Khan Ibrahim b. Nasr (d.460/1068) was a pious and just person; he would not impose new taxes unless the jurists (*fuqaha*) gave a *fatwa*. He left the khanate after the jurist Abu Shuja' al-Alawi said, "You are not suitable for the ruling". However, "he reversed his decision after the fierce insistence of the people of Samarkand, who confirmed that he was appointed for this job (ruling) and that no one else could be suitable for it."<sup>28</sup> Especially in the period of Karakhanids and Seljuks, social, economic, political and religious life in Central Asia was operating according to Hanafi *fiqh*, the official sect of these two states.

Hanafism gained a new dimension with the formation of Maturidism. So much so that Maturidism and Hanafism became inseparable. As a result, these two sects almost became the national sect of Turkish tribes, one in *fiqh* and the other in creed. We clearly see the relationship between Hanafism and Maturidism in the *ijazah* sequences of Hanafi sect scholars. All of those who came after Imam al-Maturidi in the chain of Hanafis were Turkish jurists who were trained in the Karakhanids period. Abu Hafs Omar b. Muhammed an-Nasafi, who wrote about a hundred books, was one of the most distinguished scholars in the Karakhanid period. On his way to pilgrimage in 507 HA/1113 AD, he stopped by Baghdad and taught at al-Tutushiyya *madrasah*. He was perhaps the first teacher to teach in this *madrasah* in line with the Central Asian Hanafi-Maturidi tradition. The scholar, who made himself accepted here in a short time with his lectures, speeches and writings, became famous for his open-mindedness. Again, one of the first Turkish and Hanafi scholars who went to Damascus and Baghdad and taught there in the last years of the Karakhanids was Rashiduddin Omer b. Muhammad Abu Hafs al-Fargani. Abu Hafs al-Fargani, who was an expert in *fiqh*, *kalam*, philosophy and Arabic language, taught here until 632 HA/1234 AD. Another famous teacher who was trained during the Karakhanids was Muhammed b. Abdullah al-Balasaguni (d.506/1112). Abu Ali el-Hussein b. Ali el-Lâmishî from Samarkand (b.552 HA/1157 AD) was one of the other Hanafi scholars who grew

<sup>28</sup> İbnu'l-Esîr, *Al-Kâmil Fî't-Târîh*, 118; Ali b. Salih el-Muheyimîd, "Karahanlılar ve İslam'ın Yayılmasındaki Katkıları" [Karakhanids and Their Contribution to the Spread of Islam], trans. Ali Aksu, *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 5, no. 1 (2001): 292.

up in the Karakhanids period. He was sent by Karakhanid ruler Muhammed b. Suleiman Hakan as an ambassador to the caliph al-Mustershid in 515 HA/1121 AD, and died in Samarkand.<sup>29</sup>

Maturidism constitutes the creed dimension of the Turks' understanding of religion. Imam al-Maturidi was born in a town in Samarkand. He was educated in *Daru'l-Juzjaniyyah*, one of the educational institutions of Hanafism in Samarkand, and later became a teacher there. His contribution to Hanafism was immense. He laid the foundation for Hanafism to become the official *fiqh* sect of the Karakhanids. Imam al-Maturidi brought a theological system to the Hanafi belief. The system formed around his views was later called Maturidism. Imam al-Maturidi, who succeeded in creating a structure suitable for the needs and conditions of the society in which he was born, did not imitate previous sects. On the contrary, he was an interpreter of the society in which he was born. He reinterpreted the Islamic creed by with the religious and cultural values of Turkish communities and provided it with a resonant substance. Just as the Hanafi Turkish jurists before him did in *fiqh*, he prioritized reason in creed. Imam al-Maturidi's rationalism was based on the Qur'an, Abu Hanifa's rationalism and the rational culture of Turkish societies. For this reason, in the field of jurisprudence and the practical affairs, Hanafism; and in the realm of faith, Maturidism were the founding elements of the Turkish society's understanding of Islam. Yusuf Ziya Örükan defined the relationship between Maturidism and Turkish culture as follows: "Maturidism is the official sect based on Islamic culture filtered through Turkish reasoning and the conception of religion formed by the Turkish processing of the Islamic principles."<sup>30</sup>

The moral dimension in the Islamic understanding of Turkish societies was systematized by Ahmet Yasawi. His moral understanding has been formed by reconciling the moral understanding of the Qur'an and the moral values of the society in which he lived.

<sup>29</sup> For more information, see: Huseyin Ali Dakûkî, "Karahanlılar Döneminde Düşünce Akımları" ["Currents of Thought in Karahanid Era,"] in *Tarih Boyunca Türklerde İnsani Değerler ve İnsan Hakları, Başlangıçtan Osmanlı Dönemine Kadar* [Human Values and Human Rights in Turks throughout History, from the Beginning until the Ottoman Empire Era]. (Istanbul: Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı, 1992), 349-49, 350, 358-359.

<sup>30</sup> Yusuf Ziya Yörükan, *Müslümanlıktan Evvel Türk Dinleri, Şamanizm* [Turkish Religions before Islam, Shamanism], ed. Turhan Yörükan, (Ankara: Yol, 2005), 125.

## 5. The Founding Elements of Turks' Understanding of Islam

We would like to explain some of the views that we can call the principles of Hanafism, Maturidism and Yasawism, which are the foundations of the Turks' understanding of Islam.

### 5.1. *The Reason as the Source of Knowledge and Witness in Religion*

Reason is a gift by Allah to people for them to distinguish good from bad, beneficial from harmful, and the beautiful from ugly. Reason is the source of people's responsibilities because it is one of the two most reliable sources to reach religious knowledge, the other being transmission (revelation).<sup>31</sup> The third way is the senses. Reason is the source of not only religious knowledge but also moral knowledge. Humans distinguish morally good from bad through reason. Reason is the criterion that ensures and tests the accuracy of the information obtained through revelation, the senses and hearsay. Reason is necessary when acquiring information both through senses and hearsay. Reasoning is essential in cases where the senses are insufficient, and in distinguishing true knowledge from falsehood and the true prophet from the false prophet.<sup>32</sup> Revelation and reason never contradict. What the mind sees as absolutely true and necessary, revelation sees as true. What it sees impossible, revelation sees impossible. Therefore, there is nothing in the Qur'an that contradicts the reason. Qur'an is a rational miracle of Muhammad's prophethood. Revelation guides in matters where the mind can offer more than one choice. Since its power and domain of knowledge is limited, the mind cannot know things and events in all their aspects and in detail. However, this does not unqualify the mind as a source to reach reliable and accurate information. Anyone who refuses to reason has fallen into contradiction.

Information and hearsay from sources other than the Qur'an "must be rejected when they are contrary to rational evidence and the Qur'an."<sup>33</sup> The information obtained through the reason is

<sup>31</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Kitābu't-Tawhīd*, trans. Bekir Topaloğlu, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2002), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Kitābu't-Tawhīd*, ed. Fethullah Huleyf, (İstanbul, 1979), 8, 27, 136.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Te'vilātu'l-Ahl-i Sunnah*, ed. Fatma Yusuf Hyemi, (Beirut: Muessesetu'r-Risāle, 2004), 566.



called "Akliyyat." The organs in humans have their forms of own gratitude and worship. The worship of the mind is contemplation and generation of ideas. The truth of the revelation and the trustworthiness of the one who brought it, is known by reason. Knowing the existence of Allah by reason is necessary. There are no excuses for not being able to reach the unity of Allah, to be moral, servile and grateful. A rational person is obliged to believe in Allah, to be moral and to be grateful. The human mind can make judgements on what is necessary (*wajib*) and forbidden (*haram*) in these matters. For example, it is the mind which decrees that the existence (of the creator is necessary (*wajibu'l-wujūd*). The mind has established the *haram* of *shirk* (deification or worship of anyone or anything besides Allah) and ignorance. Mind does not need to be disciplined, it is the ego/self (*nafs*) that needs discipline. Revelation was sent to discipline the self (*nafs*), not the mind. The reason cannot be wrong in universals although it can be wrong in partials, which can be corrected by either itself or someone else or revelation. The existence of the afterlife is also a logical necessity. The mind is a proof of God. Using the mind to reach the truth and find the right path is an order by Allah. It is only reason which verifies correctness of opinions and beliefs.

### 5.2. *Inspiration not being a Source of Knowledge*

In the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, inspiration and intuition are not considered as solid and reliable sources of knowledge. Imam al-Maturidi criticized those who acted according to their inspiration and intuition in their commentaries (*tafsir*) and lives. The reason was to prevent adoption of indiscriminate knowledge as religious knowledge. Imam al-Maturidi criticized the Sufis and the mystical understanding of his time and kept his distance from Sufism, and in return was dismissed by these circles. Although Ahmed Yasawi was a Sufi, he received education in Hanafi-Maturidi *madrasahs* so Yasawism did not have an esoteric-Sufi foundation. In other words, Yasawism is not a deeply penetrative Sufism that challenges and alters the meaning of the divine decrees (*nass*). In his *Divan-e Hikmah*, Yasawi brought together what he understood from the Quranic verses and hadiths, that is, his rational interpretations, under the name of "wisdoms."

### 5.3. *Love and Respect for Human Beings*

Humans are created from the same substance.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, there is equality between men and women in terms of creation, not difference. No human being has any superiority over another in terms of creation and lineage because humans are created in the most beautiful way. Men and women, created from the same soul, are brothers and sisters. People are siblings in terms of both Islam and humanity. First, all human beings are siblings to each other in being human. However, Muslims are religious brothers of each other because they belong to Islam.

The superiority among people is only through leaning toward goodness, doing good deeds and behaving morally on one's own volition. Since Allah created all humans from the same substance, no human being is superior to the other in terms of substance. Superiority is achieved only by doing good deeds.<sup>35</sup> Human is superior to other beings because it has been created as a rational being in the most beautiful shape and appearance.<sup>36</sup> However, people have different desires and natures because humans were not created as having a single desire and nature. If people's desires and expectations were the same and in one form, development (*manafi'*) and culture (*maarif*) would disappear.<sup>37</sup>

Humans are sinless at birth. They are not born as believers or disbelievers. They acquire these qualities later. Every person has the freedom to believe or not to believe. In other words, belief and disbelief are a right for human beings. This is a requirement of freedom of thought and respect for human beings. Hence, disbelievers cannot be killed because of their unbelief. Because human beings are not fit to punish for the sins (disbelief) committed against Allah. Allah will question the disbeliever in the afterlife and punish him/her.<sup>38</sup>

### 5.4. *Evidence of the Customs and Known*

Hanafi-Maturidi scholars were able to bring together the political, moral and cultural values of Turkish culture with the values of

<sup>34</sup> Qur'an, Al-A'raf 7:189.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Maturidi, Ebü Mansür, *Ta'wilātu'l-Qur'ân*, ed. Ahmed Vanlıoğlu, (İstanbul: Mizan, 2005-2010), 249 and 172.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Maturidi, *Ta'wilātu'l-Qur'ân*, 263-264.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Maturidi, *Ta'wilātu'l-Qur'ân*, 236.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Maturidi, *Ta'wilātu'l-Qur'ân*, 330-331.

Islam. Hanafi jurists regarded the known (*maruf*), that is, national customs, whatever the society considered graceful, as a source of legal regulations. According to Hanafi-Maturidis, custom is evidence. If the provisions of the Shari'ah, built on the basis of Arab customs and culture, have become unable to achieve their purpose, they can be abrogated by a new custom or *ijtihad* that is well-known and provides benefits, and new provisions can be issued in their place.

It is quite significant that Imam Maturidi, in addition to the possibility of abrogation with opinion (*naskh* by *ijtihad*), adopts a second form of *naskh*, which we can call "customary *naskh*" or "social *naskh*." Although he did not explicitly put forward this conceptualization, it is possible to discern his reasoning in his interpretation of verse 10 of Surah *al-Mumtahanah*<sup>39</sup>, where he explains the change of a decree in this way as such:

"In this verse, there is a sign that the decree of the book will be abrogated when people abandon acting along with it.<sup>40</sup> For, the provisions in the clauses "... repay them whatever they had paid..." and "... demand repayment of whatever you had paid from them, and let them demand repayment of whatever they had paid..." are derelict, although there is no information in the book and sunnah about their abandonment. However, they were abandoned because people agreed on their abandonment. This and the "muellafe-i kulub"<sup>41</sup> issue mentioned in the verse are among the provisions determined by customary rule and they are fixed in particular due to a certain reason. Then the issue on which they were based disappeared. However, it is necessary to act with the book in matters that cannot be grasped with the mind. These cannot be abandoned by people's leaving them. It is not permissible for people to agree on the abandonment of such

<sup>39</sup> "O believers! When the believing women come to you as emigrants, test their intentions-their faith is best known to Allah-and if you find them to be believers, then do not send them back to the disbelievers. These 'women' are not lawful 'wives' for the disbelievers, nor are the disbelievers lawful 'husbands' for them. 'But' repay the disbelievers whatever 'dowries' they had paid. And there is no blame on you if you marry these 'women' as long as you pay them their dowries. And do not hold on to marriage with polytheistic women. 'But' demand 'repayment of' whatever 'dowries' you had paid, and let the disbelievers do the same. That is the judgment of Allah-He judges between you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise." (Qur'an, Al-Mumtahanah, 60:10).

<sup>40</sup> "*fihī delīlun alā enne'l-kitābe yajūzu en yunseha hukmuhu bi-terki'n-nāsi el-amele bihi*".

<sup>41</sup> Qur'an, At-Tawbah, 9:60. 9. At-Tawbah, 60.

a decree, and such a consensus cannot take place. Some of the followers of our sect claimed that this provision was abrogated by the verse "... Do not consume one another's wealth illegally."<sup>42</sup> and some others by the hadith "A Muslim's property is not halal without his consent."<sup>43, 44</sup>

The Ottoman administration, which adopted the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition, established a customary law in addition to the sharia law, as a solution based on the principle of this sect stating "the custom/manners representing the well-known in the society is evidence."

### 5.5. Religion-Politics Distinction

Hanafi-Maturidi scholars have put forward ideas in line with the values that stand out in the Turkish political tradition regarding the relationship between religion and politics. In Turkish culture, a divine characterization cannot be made for the head of state. The head of state has to abide by tradition and reason. Imam al-Maturidi considered calling heads of state "Zillullah fi'l-Arz" (the shadow of Allah on earth) as a threat to faith. Because the concepts of "Shah", "Shainshah", "Zillullah fi'l-Arz" can be used for Allah but cannot be used for heads of state. Al-Maturidi criticizes those imams who use some names and labels that can only be used for Allah as follows: "The title of Shahinshah can only be used for Allah. It is never used for anyone else. It is definitely not correct to label a man like this. The word "Protector/Malik of Ummahs" is also a lie. Because the word "ummahs" is a word that includes humans, jinn, angels and other living things. This definition can only be made for Allah. As for the "Sultan of the Earth" and similar definitions, this is also a lie."<sup>45</sup>

Imam al-Maturidi opposed the idea that "Imams should be from Quraysh" and argued that this was religiously wrong: Religion and politics are separate things. The allocation of the caliphate to the Quraysh is politically correct, not religiously. From a religious

<sup>42</sup> Qur'an, An-Nisā 4:29.

<sup>43</sup> Ahmed b. Hanbel, *Musned*, (İstanbul: Çağrı, 1992), 72.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlātü'l-Qur'ān*, 125. (See also Kaşif Hamdi Okur, "Māturīdī'ye Nispet Edilen "İçtihadî nesh" Kavramına Hanefî Geleneği Perspektifinden Bir Bakış" [A View through the Perspective of the Hanafi Tradition on the Concept of "abrogation with opinion" Attributed to al-Maturidi], ed. Ahmet Kartal, *Proceedings of the Symposium on "Uluğ Bir Çımar İmām Māturīdī"* (İstanbul, 2014), 543.

<sup>45</sup> Abū Ishāq As-Saffār, *Risālah fī mesāil suile anhā ash-shayh*. Bibliotheque Nationale de France Arabe No: 4808. 70b-71a.

point of view, it should be considered that the person who will be the imam should be the one who fears Allah the most, the most prudent in solving the problems of people and knows best what is beneficial for them, and whoever meets these conditions must be brought to the imamate because this is what is requested in the book of Allah: "... Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you...." (49. Al-Hujurat, 13) In addition, the verdict that the quality of *taqwa* (piety) must be sought in the people to whom property and chastity will be entrusted is also a justification for this because they can only fulfill this duty if they have *taqwa*. In this respect, the thing that should be prioritized in terms of religion is *taqwa*.<sup>46</sup> This means that the idea of imams being from Quraysh, whether it was the word of the Prophet or whether the Companions wanted it, is a political and sociological choice rather than a religious one. According to al-Maturidi, such a choice is based on two important reasons. Firstly, although it has a religious aspect, the imamate is more of an administrative and political position. Therefore, the person who will become an imam, besides *taqwa*, needs to be a member of a lineage that is not humiliated and hated; this is why people prefers a lineage that is known as powerful and respectable. The fact that the Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of Quraysh should also be taken into account in this regard. Since it is already known that prophecy continues in one lineage and the kingship continues in another, the following two issues should be taken into consideration regarding the religion and politics. The political authority is in the hands of the kings, and the religious authority is in the hands of the prophets. It is already stated in the Qur'an that these two do not unite in a single nation: "Have you not seen those chiefs of the Children of Israel after Moses? They said to their prophet, "Appoint a king for us, 'and' we will fight in the cause of Allah..." (2. Al-Baqarah, 246) When this is the case, the Religion / Prophethood is given to the person who can carry out that responsibility; administration and politics are given to the elite tribe/clan that stands out among others due to its reputation. On the other hand, it is a fact that ancestry and lineage is one of the things that lead people to good and beautiful behaviors

<sup>46</sup> Ebû'l-Muîn Meymûn b. Muhammed An-Nesefî, *Tabsîratu'l-Edille fî Usûli'd-Dîn*, ed. Claude Selame, (Damascus, 1992), 829.

and keep them away from bad and ill behaviors. Such people can better uphold the trust.<sup>47</sup>

Imam Maturidi carried the ulama-politician relationship to an ethical ground and explained it as follows:

“Similarly, the scholars who appeared before the leaders and sultans and were in their assemblies have to give them advice, relay the orders that was given to them, and forbid them from the objectionable and unlawful things, lead them to do good deeds and act in obedience to Allah, as the people of Moses (pbuh) did to the Qarun. Otherwise, they must be present in their assemblies and not obey them. If they do so, they become their partners.”<sup>48</sup>

### 5.6. Freedom of Will

Freedom is of vital importance in Turkish societies. In the Hanafi-Maturidi interpretation of Islam, fulfilling the Islamic duties depends on the freedom of the people. Being free was seen as a condition for the fulfillment of many worships. For example, when there was no freedom and some part of the country was occupied, Friday and Eid prayers were not performed. In this case, general mobilization is declared and everyone, men and women, takes up arms to defend their freedom. Women do not need to get permission from their parents or husbands to join the war. Imam al-Maturidi stipulated human will and choice in all worships. Without free will and choice, faith and disbelief are invalid, worship and obedience are useless. Human being's responsibility is the result of his/her partial will. Human beings are free to choose good or evil. To believe and not to believe is a freedom of human beings. Humans choose one of the good and bad options based on their uncreated partial will and perform that action with the power given by Allah. Humans are owners of their actions. God is the creator of the acts.

### 5.7. Objective Morality and The Problem of Good versus Evil

Hanafi-Maturidi scholars advocated a rational and moral piety. Humans can distinguish good from evil through their reason. Allah has made something *halal* because it is good and *haram* because it is bad. For this reason, Allah's making something *halal* and *haram* is based on wisdom. It is the duty of humans to find and reveal

<sup>47</sup> An-Nasafî, *Tabsiratu'l-Edille*, 829-831.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Mâturîdî, *Ta'wilâtu'l-Qur'ân*, 102.

these maladies and wisdoms. Al-Maturidi also considered faith as the confirmation of a true knowledge based on rational proofs and defined it as rational faith. There can be no question of doubt for such a faith. Also, there is no room for imitation. For this reason, his understanding of Islam is determined by a rational and moral piety based on true knowledge.

Moral feelings are inherent in human beings, and human beings are moral beings by nature. Since the beauty of some things and the ugliness of others are absolutely certain in the mind, the mind necessarily perceives, commands or prohibits them. Examples are the righteousness of gratitude for blessings and the beauty of justice, the ugliness of ingratitude, cruelty and lies.<sup>49</sup> However, the mind does not have the authority to decide on *haram* which is punished and *halal*, which is rewarded in the afterlife: that authority belongs to Allah. Therefore, the knowledge of the mind cannot determine the amount of punishment and reward in the afterlife. Religion, on the other hand, has promised rewards to those who do what is commanded, and threatened with punishment those who do what is forbidden. Another point that should be mentioned about al-Maturidi's moral understanding is that he prioritizes ideas, beliefs and true knowledge over action and bases action on sound knowledge rather than imitation.

In religion, people are never held responsible for things they are incapable of. The primary condition of being held responsible for anything is that what is ordered or prohibited is something that a person can do. According to this, punishing people with acts of worship and obedience that they cannot do or demanding more of those things they cannot do is against the logic of responsibility of religion. Whatever Allah has commanded people through reason or revelation, He has made a way for them to be understood. Those who cannot understand the command, cannot be the target of the divine command. The ways of knowing all these commandments are different, yet they can be known by reason and inference.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Kitābu't-Tawhīd*, 178, 181, 223, 224. (For the analysis of al-Māturīdī's views on this subject, see. Ali Bardakoğlu, "Husn ve Kubh konusunda Aklın Rolü ve İmām Māturīdī" [The Role of Reason on Husn and Kubh and al-Imam al-Maturidi"] in *Proceedings of the Congress on Abu Mansour Semerkandi Maturidi*, ed. Ahmet Hulusi Köker (Kayseri: Erciyes University Gevher Nesibe Institute of Medical History, 1986), 33-49.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Kitābu't-Tawhīd*, 137.

### 5.8. Faith-Deed Distinction

The distinction between deeds and faith forms the backbone of the Hanafi-Maturidi understanding of Islam. They regard believing as one thing, and not performing them even though they know that they are *fard* (required) as another thing. One who does not believe it is *fard* becomes an infidel (*kafir*), and one who believes it is *fard* but does not perform it becomes a sinful believer. According to them, prayer, fasting, *zakat*, pilgrimage are not faith themselves, but *fards* outside of faith or principles of faith and Islam (*sharāʾi*). The separation of believers and those who do righteous deeds in many places in the Qurʾan by the letter of reference “*wav*” and the fact that they are not used interchangeably under the same name is proof that deeds and faith are separate issues. If the deeds and faith were the same, no one’s faith would be perfect since even the Prophets could not complete all the good deeds (*taʾat*). Similarly, the faith of one who committed a single sin would not be complete. No one will be able to say that he is a true believer if the faith is defined as fulfilling all the obligations and abandoning all the forbidden. The condition of entering Islam is not the deeds but the affirmation of Allah. People do not lose the status of a believer by abandoning deeds, but they lose the faith by losing affirmation of Allah. The fact that the name of the believer’s faith comes before the deeds shows that the deeds and belief are separate. Fulfilling *fards* is due to having faith, not vice versa. That is, their faith is not born from the fact that they have fulfilled the obligatory practices. People are equal to each other in affirmation, but different from each other in deeds. Also, the poor do not have to give *zakat*, but must believe in the virtue of *zakat*.<sup>51</sup> According to the Maturidis, faith is the cause of deeds. Deeds are not the reason for the formation of faith.

<sup>51</sup> For more information See Ebū Seleme Muhammed b. Muhammed el-Buhārī As-Semerkandī, “*Jumelu Usulīʾ-d-Dīn*,” in *Ebū Seleme es-Semerkandī ve Akāid Risālesi*, trans. Ahmed Saim Kılavuz, (İstanbul: Emek, 1989), 71-82. Ebūʾl-Yusr Muhammed el-Pezdevī. *Kitābu Usulīʾ-t-Tawhīd*, ed. by Hans Peter Linss (Cairo: el-Mektebetüʾl-Ezheriyye liʾt-Turas, 1963); Ebūʾl-Yusr Muhammed el-Pezdevī. *Ehl-i Sunnet Akaidi [Aqidah of Ahle-sunnah]*, trans. Şerafeddin Gölcük, (İstanbul: Kayihan, 1988), 209-225; An-Nasafī, *Tabsiratüʾl-edille fi usulīʾ-d-dīn*, 797-823; Abū Ishāq A-Saffār, *Talkhīs al-Adilla li-Qawāʾid al-Tawhīd*, ed. Angelika Brodersen, (Beirut: German Institute for Oriental Research, 2011), 699-725; As-Sābūnī, Nureddīn. *Kitābuʾl-Bidāye fi Usulīʾ-d-Dīn*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu. (Damascus: Matbaatu Muhammed Hāshim el-Katbī, 1979); As-Sābūnī, Nureddīn. *Māturīdiye Akāidi [Maturidi Aqid]*, trans. Bekir Topaloğlu, (Ankara: Directorate of Religious Affairs Publications, 1980), 166-177.



### 5.9. Religion-Sharia Distinction

Hanafi-Maturidis make a distinction between religion and *sharia*. In fact, Abu Hanifa defended and Imam al-Maturidi has extended this idea. The reason why Hanafi-Maturidis make such a distinction is the idea of defining faith as religion and creed. In this way, such a relationship is established between reason and religion, and between *sharia* and revelation. For example, according to Imam Maturidi, "Faith is religion, and religions are composed of beliefs. The heart is the place where the beliefs reside and sustain their existence... The nature of the affirmation that cannot be kept under pressure and coercion is the side that resides in the heart, because the domination of any creature cannot penetrate this point of the faith."<sup>52</sup> All the prophets sent in the past were on a single religion, that is, they were sent on the absolute and unchanging religion of Islam in the sight of Allah. Absolute religion includes oneness of religion, principles of belief, worshipping only Allah, the obligation of showing gratitude towards Allah and moral principles. Because of the obligation to be known with the reason, they are also called *Akliyyāt*. In other words, *Akliyyāt* is the knowledge of *tawhid* (oneness), the Prophet and other knowledge, obtained through research and examination. No abrogation is possible in this part of religion because these are unchanging truths that can be put forward and proved with reason. *Sharia*, on the other hand, consists of forms of worship and *shar'i* decrees that vary from prophet to prophet. The *shariah* and judgements of each prophet are different from each other. This part expresses the changing social dimension of the religion, which is formed according to the circumstances and the social conditions of the time when the Prophet came.<sup>53</sup>

### 6. Conclusion

The founding element of the religious understanding of the Turks is Hanafism-Maturidism and Yasawism, and their founding element is reason and freedom.

Abu Hanifa's advocacy of reason and the idea of equality in faith made Turks' conversion to Islam easier. It also contributed to a

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<sup>52</sup> Al-Māturidī, *Kitābu't-Tawhīd*, 377.

<sup>53</sup> Hanifi Özcan, *Māturidī'de Dini Çoğulculuk [Religious Pluralism in al-Maturidi]* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı, 1995), 55.

certain extent in the elimination of discrimination among Muslims. Abu Hanifa's *fiqh* views have guided the Turks in arranging their daily lives and worships.

Imam Maturidi, by building the theological front of the Turks conception of Islam on solid foundations, has prepared the intellectual and philosophical ground for them to establish strong states that will last for centuries.

Under the guidance of these two understandings, Ahmet Yasawi also explained the moral understanding of Islam among the nomadic and settled Turkish societies in their own language and made it the character of this nation.

Hanafism, Maturidism and Yasawism, have been integral parts of each other in the historical process. Accordingly, Turkish communities have mostly adopted Hanafism in *fiqh*, Maturidism in creed and Yasawism in moral understanding.

However, today, neither Hanafism, Maturidism, nor Yasawism are influential in the Islamic understanding and life of Turkish society. All three retain only a symbolic value. Turkish society, is challenged by various foreign views. To overcome these threats, Turks have to revitalize the rational interpretation method of Abu Hanifa and Imam al-Maturidi and the moral understanding of Ahmet Yasawi in the light of contemporary social sciences.

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