

James J. Reid

Was There A Tanzimat Social Reform?

1. Introduction: Reform and Related Concepts

To ask the question “Was there a Tanzimat Social Reform?” might seem like heresy to a devoted pro-Turkish or Turkish nationalist scholar. That social change occurred, one cannot doubt. But most of the changes occurred less as the result of any specific reform party, and simply through the processes of time. The exertions of groups or individuals limited to their own spheres of activity also had an effect upon social changes within the Ottoman Empire. Social reform has historically evolved either through the efforts of a reform party in a democratic or republican society —the abolitionists of the United States in the early to mid-19th-century, for example— or the mandate of an autocratic or totalitarian regime —national-Socialist and Communist social engineering in Germany and the Soviet Union respectively in the 20th century. Intention to reform is simply not enough to say that a reform occurred. Evidence for the Ottoman Empire suggests that even in the Tanzimat, liberal reformers who hoped to make substantive social changes often went into compulsory exile. Reformers who remained in place in the Ottoman state sought to implement a regime of social stasis without any effort to understand the very real changes gripping society at every level. What else could one expect in an era of Restoration?

Scholars have generally associated the 19th-century Ottoman reforms collectively known as the Tanzimat in Ottoman and Turkish sources with an Enlightenment approach to society. A close examination of the sources at numerous levels indicates that the influence of the Enlightenment was almost nonexistent. Ottoman reforms from 1839-1876 belonged rather to a social philosophy consistent with Restoration and Second Empire Europe. If one seeks to find European influence, one must begin here. Ottoman and Turkish Republican historians have con-

sistently made the claim that Enlightenment ideals in the sultan or his ministers and in the intelligentsia at large sparked an interest in reform and created optimism for the development of a more egalitarian society. Such a view functions purely and simply as a rigid convention imposed upon 19th-century Ottoman history. The evidence shows to the contrary that the elite Ottoman reformers maintained a distinct interest in defending their position in an extended social hierarchy based more upon traditional and unreasoned values than upon enlightened egalitarianism. What passed as reform in the Tanzimat actually belonged to a category of *vitalistic renewal* as described by Gerhard Ladner. The strong presence of archaizing elements in Tanzimat culture, and the influence of renewal ideologies from Europe, combined to make Ottoman ideals of change into a revival dressed with occasional reform elements.

According to Gerhard Ladner, the idea of reform belonged to a more general notion of renewal, which itself formed a more specific category of the larger concepts of alteration, change, and becoming. Renewal ideas, he continued, contain some idea concerning the interrelationship between the old and new as placed in the "irreversible process of time which is presupposed in all renewal ideas ..."¹. His analysis of reform and renewal, while belonging to a different culture and historical era, nonetheless has significance for the question studied here. The definition will help attain a clearer perspective on the nature of the Tanzimat "reform".

Ladner identified renewal ideas of the types he named as cosmological, vitalistic, millenarian, and other perfectionist perceptions [I. revolution, II. progress]. Ancient and medieval ideas of cosmological renewal envisioned historical cycles for the universe and humanity in which a period of restoration followed upon an epoch of destruction. Human events, in this ideal of universal existence, paralleled and followed events that occurred in the macrocosm. Cyclical renewal ideals existed in European and Islamic cultures according to Ladner². Renewal in this case meant that older forms would reconstitute in a new but restored version of their archetypes and predecessors. Perceptions of renaissance [rebirth]

1. Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action In the Age of the Fathers*, New York 1967 (revised edition), p. 9 [IRII]. The introductory essay to Ladner's book gives an excellent general insight into the philosophical orientations implicit in various ideas associated with reform.

2. IR II, pp. 10-16.

and evolution belonged to the category of vitalistic renewal ideas. Concepts of vitalistic renewal returned to very ancient ideas, notably as an effort to regenerate idealized spiritual values. Cosmological determinism did not figure as a significant factor in vitalistic renewal, but states and societies continued to pass through cyclical ages. Each age had its own perfectible virtue or ideal that evolved into a higher stage of virtue in the next age³. While vitalistic renewal ideas and reform differ in reality, many have confused the two ideas together. Ideally, reform implies conscious pursuit of ends, while vitalistic renewal arrives at change through an impersonal and irreversible process greater than an individual or human group. Millenarian ideas of renewal, often combined with cosmological or vitalistic ideals, added the notion that human history would come to an end with one thousand years of bliss⁴. Ladner discussed other renewal ideas along this philosophical pattern of insight. In addition to utopia, he mentioned two other perfectionist forms of renewal thought.

The concept of revolution was an eminently modern idea with deep roots in the past. "The term revolution is of astronomical origin, derived from the revolution of the heavens, and therefore not without connection with the idea of cosmic cycles and with cataclysms (fires or deluges) which were thought to accompany the transition from one world year to the next"⁵. Revolution did not adopt a social or historical connotation until the later Middle Ages or Renaissance. Ladner thought that to posit revolution as the dominant idea in the development of European history was to confuse the ideas of revolution and reform. The former idea is distinguished from the latter by the inherent belief in the possibility of violent, total, and definitive improvement of human destiny"⁶. Within the framework developed by Ladner, revolution originally played a more restricted role, that became more expanded in certain modern concepts of history and human development.

Ladner thought that one could find the idea of progress in many different world-views. "There can be progress alternating with decline, in a cyclical and deterministic conception of history. But freedom, spiritual ascent, and the return of creatures to God can also be conceived as pro-

3. IRII, pp. 16-26.

4. IRII, p. 27.

5. IRII, p. 30.

6. IRII, p. 30.

gressive steps”⁷. Ladner considered that the idea of reform belonged to an idea of Progress, and the two concepts had a definitive connection with one another. The Enlightenment and especially Darwinist evolution gave progress the connotations of “continuity, irresistibility, and all-inclusiveness which are lacking in the concept of reform [in earlier periods]”⁸. Progress differed from cosmological, vitalistic, and millenal renewal ideas in that progress did not always possess a predetermined end.

Ladner defined reform “as the idea of free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world”⁹. Reform draws upon the idea of progress, and exists as a continuum in time through which an individual or group seeks to create a new and perfected condition for the group or for humanity. Persons and institutions often proposed the notion of making reforms. Given the existence of an idea of reform, it does not follow that the idea corresponds exactly to the reality¹⁰. “That it often does not is no serious problem, but whether it ever does is a question whereby the terms contained in the definition are transposed from the history of ideology to that of preterideological existence”¹¹. Thoroughgoing study of any given reform movement using this scheme can demonstrate whether a genuine reform occurred. Often, according to Ladner, reform might simply have existed as a delusion fostered by an ideological impetus or the conscious impulses of a group seeking to renovate its image and conscious self-perception. Before the question of Ottoman reform can become clear, one must examine certain features of Ottoman society and state in the 19th century, including the influence of Enlightenment thought that might alter renewal ideals into true reforms.

7. IRII, pp. 30-31.

8. IRII, p. 31.

9. IRII, p. 35.

10. Those who equate the announcement of the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire with an immutable historical reality would do well to consider this qualification to the definition of reform. Reform can only be as complete and all-encompassing as the realities of social, economic, and cultural circumstances permit.

11. IRII, p. 35.

II. Restoration, Reform, and Revolution

Tanzimat-era literature contained a concept of society conceived in archaic social thought, altered only slightly by Enlightenment philosophy. Publications dealing with Enlightenment topics illustrate the point. Only a handful of Ottoman works actually appeared in print during the first three-quarters of the 19th century¹². The lack of a genuine Ottoman Enlightenment, comparable to Enlightenment movements in Greece or Serbia, hampered any efforts to adapt new scientific and literary ideas of the 19th century, especially those that relied upon the background of the Enlightenment [scientific developments such as Darwinian evolution, or literary trends such as Realism and Naturalism]. The Tanzimat emerged in the spirit of the European Restoration, and paralleled the cultural focus of the Restoration era. For this reason, this paper will seek to address the “European” influence upon Ottoman society and culture as well as indigenous Ottoman ideals that emerged independently, but paralleled Restoration and Second Empire trends.

If reformism flourished in the 19th century, so did restoration. A full spectrum of orientations arose during the course of the 19th century. The chief prototypes existing in the renewal-reform spectrum included revolutionism [1789, 1830, 1848, 1863, 1870-1871], monarchist restoration, authoritarian dictatorship [Bonapartism], nationalism, and democratic reformism. In addition to the major reform movements, one could also find reforms of special governmental departments, classes of officials, the army, special groups in society, or distinct sectors of the economy. The author will define these elements briefly, and then compare them to the Ottoman reform movements of the 19th century.

Monarchist restoration followed upon the defeats of Napoléon Bonaparte in 1814 and 1815. The intention of this reform was to re-establish society as a vertical hierarchy arranged in irrationally-aligned

12. Fénélon, *Terjüme-i Telemak*, Yûsuf Kâmil Pasha (tr.), Istanbul: np, 1279/1863; Fîrânklîn, *Trevîzhût az hikmat-i Rikârdûs*, Istanbul: Muhandesoghlu Ovhânes Matbaası, 1286/1869-1870; Ibrahim Shinâsî [1824-1871], *Terjüme-i Manzûma Ferânsîz Lisanından Türkcheye Nizamin Terjüme ildigim ba'z ish'ardan* [*Extraits de poésie et de prose, traduits en vers du français en turc*], [Istanbul]: Tasvîr-i Efkar Matbaası, 1287/1870-1871, 2nd ed.; Beshîr Fû'âd, *Vûltar* (Voltaire), Istanbul: Shirkat-i Mertebîye Matbaası, 1304/1886-1887. Articles also appeared in various Ottoman journals.

compartments determined to exist by decrees of the monarch or his ministers and by tradition¹³. Each social compartment or community existed as a corporate entity possessing certain privileges attributed singularly to each particular group. Social classes did not exist in reality because various groupings took their places, so that each level that might be considered a class by economic determinants, became dissolved into an association of particular entities defined by their corporate order and boundaries. Loyalty existed primarily to one's particular corporate entity rather than to one's social class or nation. Ideally, order depended upon the monarch's maintenance of clearly-defined hierarchical delineations and control over the privileges allotted to each community. Monarchical restoration meant a return to the vertical striations of social hierarchy determined by kings in which privileges accorded separately to each social compartment replaced ideas of liberty and freedom and rights accorded to all individuals as citizens of a state. Monarchist reform attempted to return to the older political forms as determined by centuries of law and political practice.

Authoritarian reform sought a goal similar to that of monarchism, in that it attempted to avoid a condition of egalitarian citizenship in which all persons had rights. Obedience to the mandates of the autocrat or his officers displaced to some degree the privileges accorded many groups under the old monarchical system, especially those that might threaten the autocrat's absolute power. Bonapartism was thus an example of authoritarian reform that attempted to deprive certain individuals in society of the power that they held, and sought to monitor or control other groups that had already lost power before Louis Napoléon became president of the Second Republic. Bonapartist reform aimed at establishing order in society determined by the autocrat's mandates, without fashioning a concept of citizenship, or adhering to the corporate hierarchy as defined in the monarchist perception of society. Napoléon III established a parliament, but such an assembly merely gave his regime the appearance of democratic forms when, in truth, all power to act rested in the hands of the emperor and the council of state¹⁴. The Bonapartist authori-

13. William L. Langer, *Political and Social Upheaval: 1832-1852*, New York 1969, pp. 1-24.

14. Frederick B. Artz, "Bonapartism and Dictatorship", in Brison D. Gooch (ed.), *Napoleon III - Man of Destiny: Enlightened Statesman or Proto-Fascist?*, Huntington, New

tarianism of Louis Napoléon mixed severity with moderation, as the following anecdote illustrates¹⁵.

“Marshal Bugeaud, the conqueror of Algeria, on his return to Paris after his victories, was summoned by King Louis Philippe. ‘I wish to have a talk with you’, he said, ‘since you are the man who knows Algeria better than anyone else’. The king then proceeded to talk himself without stopping for nearly two hours; after which he shook Bugeaud’s hand and said, ‘Thank you, I am delighted with the conversation we have had’. Some time later Louis Napoléon, as President of the Republic, summoned Bugeaud likewise. He greeted him with words very similar to Louis Philippe’s. He then listened to Bugeaud for two hours without interrupting him and without saying a word. After which he shook his hand and said, as Louis Philippe had done, ‘Thank you, I am delighted with the conversation we have had’ ”.

One could point to the fact that the army, symbolized by Bugeaud, had remained staunchly Bonapartist during much of the Restoration despite the monarchy’s efforts to purge Bonapartist officers¹⁶. Bugeaud himself had served in the army of Napoléon I. Louis Philippe, pleased with the Algerian victories, nonetheless wished to communicate his superiority over Bugeaud and the army by speaking to Bugeaud in this manner. Louis Napoléon, who had every reason to find the army as sympathetic

York 1963, p. 64; Alain Plessis, *The Rise and Fall of the Second Empire, 1852-1871*, Jonathan Mandelbaum (tr.), *The Cambridge History of Modern France*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Editions de la maison des sciences de l’homme, 1979, pp. 15-21 also acknowledged a growing liberalization of the Napoleonic regime. This familiar scenario also existed in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat.

15. Theodore Zeldin, *The Political System of Napoleon III*, New York 1958, p. 1.

16. Maréchal Bugeaud recalled his role in a victory of 1815 over Piedmontese troops in a statement that implied that he took pride in the military heritage of the First Empire. Maréchal Bugeaud, “Réflexions et souvenirs militaires”, in Weil (ed.), *Oeuvres militaires du Maréchal Bugeaud*, Paris 1883, pp. 351-352; Douglas Porch, *Army and Revolution, 1815-1848*, London 1974, pp. 17-33. William Serman, *Les origines des officiers français, 1848-1870*, Paris 1979, pp. 199-225 states that the decline in nobles’ participation as officers began as early as 1825, and he implies this decline paralleled an increase in those who favored Bonapartist approaches.

to his Bonapartist cause, could afford to show his respect for the general's thoughts on various matters. Louis Napoléon's moderation with the army enabled him to express severity with segments of society from the *coup d'état* of 1852 onward until moderating reforms mitigated the severity¹⁷.

Napoléon III's reforms relied less upon a panoply of popular reformers or movements, but sought to mandate change from above. Louis-Napoléon claimed to act in favor of the people, and for their benefit, but most commentators have seen him as an oppressive dictator wearing a democratic mask. Louis Napoléon could rely on the heritage and legacy left by his uncle to find support among the people and the army for his ideas. One strain of thought in him showed a genuine concern for the welfare of humanity in his pamphlet proposing the extinction of poverty and pauperism through social and economic reforms. This text exhibited Saint-Simonian tendencies, while the obvious interest in changing social conditions suggested the temperament of the reformer¹⁸. Some of the Napoleonic ideas he espoused included a concept of *liberté* strongly affiliated with Roman Catholic church, and a revolutionary egalitarianism. For him, his uncle Napoléon I had assumed the identity of an egalitarian revolutionary. "*Napoléon, en arrivant sur la scène du monde, vit que son rôle était d'être l'exécuteur testamentaire de la révolution. Le feu destructeur des partis était éteint, et lorsque la révolution mourante mais non vaincue légua à Napoléon l'accomplis-*

17. Napoléon III maintained a highly efficient and ruthless secret police: Marc Caussidière, *Mémoires de Caussidière, ex préfet de police et représentant du peuple*, Paris 1849. The opposition had limited means for expressing itself under the Bonapartist regime. Matthew Truesdale, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849-1870*, Oxford 1997, pp. 173ff. Nonetheless, from the very beginning, however, Napoléon III found it necessary to make overtures to numerous interest groups and tolerate moderate criticism of his regime. Zeldin, *The Political System of Napoleon III*, p. 10: "The politics of his period had two levels: that of the masses and that of the politicians. The people could provide a solid basis for his government but they could not govern themselves and they could only delegate their rights to him. Napoléon therefore needed men to help him: he had to form a new ruling class". As a result, his authoritarian regime reacted moderately to certain levels of criticism.

18. Frederick B. Artz, "Bonapartism and Dictatorship", reprinted in Brison D. Gooch (ed.), *Napoléon III - Man of Destiny. Enlightened Statesman or Proto-Fascist?*, European Problem Studies, Huntington, New York 1976, p. 63.

sement de ses dernières volontés ..."¹⁹. ["Napoléon, in arriving on the scene of the world, saw his role as executor of the revolutionary testament. The destructive fire of the factions is extinct, and at the time when the revolution was dying but not vanquished, it bequeathed to Napoléon the accomplishments of its last will ..."]. Such a striking statement suggests that Louis Napoléon's view of egalitarianism was an enforced one in which he would not tolerate partisan politics, and expected conformity to a common ideal.

Even though this perspective has a proto-Fascistic orientation, and Napoléon III did rule as an oppressive dictator for some time after 1852, he did eventually temper his authoritarian tendencies with the introduction of democratic forms. At first, the democratic pose served primarily as a mask hiding the secret police and military dictatorship. The pose likewise proved that one could claim to make democratic reforms for political purposes, while underneath the prince and his minions made every effort to establish order as a principle of control²⁰. When Napoléon employed the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity —slogans from the Revolution— he gave them a totalitarian twist. French culture never bowed totally to this totalitarian egalitarianism, and its great richness and variety in music, literature, science, history, folklore, and philosophy complemented a long-standing tradition of giving asylum to political refugees from all over Europe and western Asia.

The *Islahat Fermanı* of 1856 marked a significant departure from the *Hatt-i Sherîf* of Gülhâne [1839]. The Rescript of 1839 contained numerous and significant elements within itself that demonstrated an attachment to the traditional Ottoman hierarchy, while the decree of 1856 showed the influence of Bonapartist and other doctrines. The rudimentary and nascent idea of abolishing the *millet* orders, and the particularist social hierarchies that emanated from them recalled the Bonapartist understanding of democracy. As an influence on the reforms of the Ottoman Empire, the French model could only reinforce the authoritarian

19. Napoléon-Louis Bonaparte, *Des Idées Napoléoniennes*, Berlin 1860, p. 8.

20. Gooch (ed.), *Napoléon III - Man of Destiny*, pp. 21-24, especially: "In practice, however, the relative importance of the two modes of expression left for universal suffrage was reversed. As the head of the state turned to the people only when he so wished, nothing compelled him to make frequent use of plebiscites; indeed, elementary prudence made it inadvisable".

tendency of the Ottoman ruling elite. Commentators on the Tanzimat exploited the confusion caused by the use of platitudes such as liberty, equality, democracy, and so on to suggest that the reforms promoted republican constitutionalism, when, in truth, the opposite was true.

The defeat of Ahmed Midhat Pasha's constitution [*meshrûtiyet*], and the emergence of 'Abdülhâmid II's autocracy [*istibdâd*] clearly proves that Ottoman institutions could not easily coexist with a republican constitution and that an authoritarian tendency ran through the reforms of the Tanzimat. Under such circumstances, any liberalizing reforms introduced by autocratic rulers had the same effect as the social and political institutions introduced by Napoléon III in France at the same time. The difference rested in the cultural environments. Istanbul could not compete with the cultural achievements of Paris, and French subjects could more successfully insist upon certain privileges such as greater freedom in publication. Napoléon III even allowed a certain degree of political satire for example²¹. Honoré Daumier would not have survived in Istanbul. The unwieldy and lugubrious nature of Ottoman imperial institutions more closely approximated the Austro-Hungarian and Russian multi-ethnic empires, whereas France possessed greater cultural unity. Despite these differences, however, the victory of France and Britain over Russia in the Crimean War gave France a paramount position in the Ottoman Empire that enabled Bonapartist "ideas" to find prominence in the *Islahat Fermani* of 1856, and in subsequent reform initiatives.

Ottoman sultanic authority became a hybrid political form in which principles comparable to monarchism became associated with elements similar to Bonapartist authoritarianism and military dictatorship. How moderate was the Ottoman state, however, by comparison to the Bonapartist regime in France? A man who had ambition to make changes, and actively attempted to do so, suffered the unpleasant consequences of his actions²². Tanzimat government expressed greater authoritarian

21. Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France*, Kent, Ohio 1989, pp. 1-10, 33-35. In France, members of the government feared caricature, and despite restrictions, caricaturists such as Honoré Daumier continued to work.

22. The premise of Frederick Millingen's memoirs about his service in the Ottoman army during the reign of 'Abdülazîz points directly to the notion that the Ottoman state could not accept ambitious reformers who worked ahead of the state and its established

severity than did Bonapartist authoritarianism.

Nationalist reform did not necessarily translate into democratic change. In societies based upon numerous sub-cultures, one or another nationalist movement might constitute the tyranny of one group or a coalition of groups over other communities. Nationalist reform attempted to create a common national culture among all groups, or certain groups in a society with the intention of including certain people and excluding others. The attempt to make a nation through cultural reform did not necessarily include a notion of democratization. Nationalism did not translate into egalitarianism, since a cultural elite could, as an oligarchy, define the national cultural goals for the remainder of the society. Early forms of nationalist republicanism or “democracy” assumed an oligarchical form, in which a cultural and/or economic elite dominated the government and acted as spokesmen for the rest of society.

Many have proclaimed democratization as the aim of reformists or revolutionaries, but almost no 19th-century society achieved an absolutely verifiable democratic system. The only exceptions were societies where government was almost nonexistent, and the common person needed to join with his peers in managing local community affairs. Movements seeking justice for one or another group at the lower levels of society [disenfranchised artisans, industrial working class] usually did not intend to establish democracies, but aimed at placing their class or community in a primary social position. Reforms based upon these narrowly-defined notions of social justice occurred rarely in the 19th century, and where one could find them, as in the Paris Commune of 1870, they failed after a short and usually violent experiment, or they gradually became managed first by an oligarchy and then a dictator. Examples of this last phenomenon include the 1789 French revolution that passed through various phases of oligarchy until Napoléon Bonaparte became the all-powerful first consul and then emperor. One must also look to the Russian Revolution as a similar phenomenon, though moving more rapidly into the dictatorial phase. In both these instances, revolution rather than reform suggests that reform as described by Ladner was not

feasible, and thus that revolution occurred first, followed by reform.

If the French Revolution of 1789 exerted a powerful control over the imagination of the 19th century, more directly influential revolutions had direct repercussions inside the Ottoman Empire. The Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849 [against Austria] and insurrection inside Romania in 1848 [against Ottoman and foreign domination]²³ had important results for the Ottoman Empire. The defeated Hungarian Honvéd army took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, and a number of its officers [General Kollmann, György Kmety, Richard Guyon, and many others] took service in the Ottoman army²⁴. While Poland did not give way to the revolutionary fever of 1848, a highly devout cadre of Polish revolutionaries inside Poland and especially in exile in France, the Ottoman Empire, and elsewhere became especially active in Ottoman military, political, and diplomatic life after the revolution of 1830-

23. A Romanian insurrection of 1821, overthrew the Phanariots, and ultimately the Ottoman sultan appointed Romanian hospodars to govern. Russian influence became ever more prominent in the era and the Russian consul became an important political institution in Romania. French, Austrian, and British consuls had influence as well. See the discussion of Radu R. Florescu, *The Struggle against Russia in the Romanian Principalities, 1821-1854*, Romania 1997; the 1848 revolutions also aimed to overthrow "conservative" boyars such as Prince Mihail Sturza, who ruled in Moldova since 1834. G. Georgescu-Buzau, *The 1848 Revolution in the Rumanian Lands*, Bucharest 1965, p. 34. For the role of Ömer Pasha's army in Wallachia, see: Dr. K[loetschet], *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des Serdar Ekrem Omer Pascha (Michael Lattas)*, Sarajevo 1885, p. 17; Ahmed Jevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir*, 1-12. Cavid Baysun (ed.), Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1953, p. 12; César Lecat, baron de Bazancourt, *L'expédition de Crimée jusqu'à la prise de Sébastopol, Chronique de la guerre d'Orient*, Paris 1856, I, pp. 25-29 and note 2.

24. Arthur Görgei, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, New York 1852, pp. 82-83 [Kollman]; Charles Duncan, *A Campaign with the Turks in Asia*, London 1855, I, pp. 158-159, 163, 169-170, 265-267, 275-276 [Kmety, alias Ismâ'il Pasha] and 158-159 [Kollman, alias Feyzi Bey or Pasha]; Zarif Mustafa Pasha, "Zarif Pasha'nın Hatıratı, 1816-1862", [(The Reminiscences of Z. M. P., 1816-1862)], Enver Ziya Karal (ed.), *Belleten* 4 (1940) 443-494 [refers to the same Ismâ'il Pasha on a number of occasions, as well as to Hürşit Pasha]; Captain Sayer, *Despatches and Papers Relative to the Campaign in Turkey, Asia Minor, and the Crimea*, London 1857, no 139, p. 339 [Kmety]. C. B. Norman, *Armenia in the Campaign of 1877*, London nd ca. 1878, pp. 82, 162-172, 334, 392-400 [Kollman continued to serve in the Ottoman army even in 1877]. Guyon, or Gahan, was originally Irish, married into the Hungarian nobility, served as a Honvéd general in 1848-1849, and in 1849 accepted asylum in the Ottoman Empire. He became an Ottoman general in 1853. See: Görgei, pp. 82-85, 108, 116; Duncan, I, pp. 110, 141, 163-167, 192-199.

1832²⁵. These revolutions of 1830 and 1848 did not have the furious desire to sweep away the oppressive ruling elite that had existed in the French revolution of 1789. Rather, they hoped for a long overdue national renewal and revival. Consequently, any reforms coming from these revolutions intended primarily to strengthen the national culture of the revolutionary populace, and sometimes attempted to reinforce or expand the powers of a native aristocracy, as in Poland and Hungary. The influence of these later revolutions is the least understood aspect of the Tanzimat period²⁶.

Revolutionism aside, wherever liberal republican systems did emerge in Europe, and these regimes proved few before 1870, parliaments, councils, and local elective bodies had property requirements. Indeed, in most such systems, universal suffrage did not exist. Laws required commoners to own a certain amount of property before they could vote in elections, much less participate in government. The revolutions of 1830 to 1848 thus did more than attempt to reestablish nationalist elites in power, displacing imperial or monarchic masters, but aimed at the organization of these elites into the above-mentioned councils in which property requirements limited political involvement to a minority²⁷.

25. See, for example, Michał Czapkowski (Mehmed Sadyk Pasza), *Moje Wspomnienia o Wojnie 1854 Roku* [My Reminiscences of the War of 1854], Warszawa 1962; Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918*, Seattle, pp. 105-189.

26. One example of an 1848 revolutionary will suffice to show that a vast cultural gap existed between "European" and Ottoman social change in the period. The jurist Gustav von Struve, a German "forty-eighter", had the "liberal" tendencies of many revolutionaries in the 1848 revolutions. He was an absolutely faithful follower of Rousseau [never mentioned even by the Young Ottomans], a believer in phrenology, a life reformer, a German Catholic, a vegetarian, and finally, a revolutionary. Irmtraud Götz von Olenbusen, "Gustav Struve - Amalie Struve: Wohlstand, Bildung und Freiheit für alle", in Sabine Freitag (ed.), *Die Achtundvierziger: Lebensbilder aus der deutschen Revolution, 1848/49*, München 1998, p. 66. Turkish authors and Turcologists have not addressed the issue of differing cultural orientations and change in this period, with the result that descriptions of reform using European models not only seem simplistic, but have arrived at absurd conclusions.

27. Langer, *Political and Social Upheaval*, p. 481 [for Prussia and Germany]. Langer noted that in more liberal France, where universal male suffrage existed in 1848, new electoral laws in 1849 took measures to restrict the participation of working class men in elections [a residence requirement, for example, worked against itinerant workers, and listing in the tax rolls worked against young workers]. Elections and voting did not exist in the Ottoman Empire in any case, so that the Ottoman's understanding of "liberalism" could have been only very limited.

Within this context, one must ask the question —how did the Ottoman reform fit into this scale? If truly democratic reforms were not possible elsewhere, could the Ottoman Empire undertake democratic reforms successfully as a unique example? The answer to this question is that democracy in the Ottoman Empire depended upon the abolition of the vertical social hierarchy surviving from the past, and the destruction of cultural plurality. Yet, one must ultimately ask the question: how can a society be truly democratic if it must destroy a portion of itself in order to attain democracy? In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the answer will result in a denial that democratic reforms could be anything but an intention voiced by certain individuals who either did not understand what they designed, or did not have the power or authority to achieve democratization. Their intentions merely caused confusion, and exacerbated an already seriously-confused crisis situation.

Nationalist reform did not normally occur in the Ottoman Empire, but followed the pattern of revolution as described by Ladner, after which the newly-formed fragment could embark on nationalizing reforms. No national group could proclaim reforms for itself, and exclusive unto itself without dissolving bonds to the greater imperial society. Consequently, the notion of nationalism in the Ottoman state constituted an idea of social change other than reform, a concept true even for Turkism, that could institute sweeping change only after the fall of the empire, and the divestment of most non-Turkish populations through genocide or deportation. Even a Turkish nationalist history of the late Ottoman Empire must admit that Turkism had only limited success at the very end of the Ottoman Empire²⁸.

Autocratic reform could have developed under any circumstance, notably in situations of crisis when a portion of the public was willing to appoint or support a leader who would impose draconian measures to prevent a catastrophe from occurring. Individuals or oligarchies with such powers could have occurred in any political system, and, one could indeed find them in formerly democratic societies as often as in any other sociopolitical form. A primary factor in the emergence of auto-

28. Stanford J. Shaw, Exel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, Cambridge 1977, pp. 255-259.

cratic government and reform was the autocrat's perception that government, military, or socioeconomic institutions were not functioning, and that only he and his close associates could save the empire, state, or nation from disaster. Periods of actual crisis as well as fabricated crises served to open the way for the autocrat's seizure of power in unconstitutional ways, and his imposition of draconian reform measures. The classic example of such a seizure of power was the *coup d'état* of 18th Brumaire, 1852, in which Louis-Napoléon overthrew the Second Republic over which he had presided as president, and established himself as emperor by means of the secret police and the military. Despite over forty years of purges, Bonapartist officers remained in the French army, and gave Louis Napoléon significant support in his Bonapartist agenda. One aspect of a genuine Ottoman reform was the creation of a new elite that had never existed under the traditional forms of Ottoman government. Ultimately, the events surrounding Balkan insurrections, Russian war, and abolition of the Ottoman parliament between 1875 and 1878 provided the severe series of crises that produced the self-proclaimed autocracy of the Ottoman sultan 'Abdülhâmid II. Also accompanying the crises were assassination attempts by the early terrorists, and an abortive plot to depose the sultan [the Skalieri Komitesi]²⁹. Such political instability played into the hands of the sultan, who could impose drastic reform measures to restore order to society, government and army. In any case, the autocrat has abandoned or intends to destroy the old constitutional forms of society or government, and must make self-determined principles of rule.

Democratic reformers and reform movements operated on principles of democratic action. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of American democracy, in which various principles such as inheritance laws caused the family to dissolve. Equal inheritance of a family's property by all descendants caused a fractionalisation of the land and a loss of family feeling. Primogeniture, on the other hand, contributed to aristocracy in that the feeling of family power adopted a physical symbol in the land. The former method of inheritance existed in America with the consequence that equality emerged as a social principle. In such a circumstance, the

29. James J. Reid, "Terrorism in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece", *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 12-13 (1996-1997) 57-93.

individual did not feel compelled to obey society, unless a union with his fellow citizens proved useful to him. Tocqueville saw that individuals in a democracy remained masters of themselves when dealing with matters concerning themselves, but became subordinate to a union when concerned with their interrelations with others. Any political action, including a reform, involved the community leaders in formal discussions with their constituents, as in New England town meetings, or in other forums where political leaders discussed issues with the public³⁰. In the first half of the 19th century, American reformers tended to idealize the actions of the individual, and often originated their reform effort from a revivalist religious orientation. The reformer needed to take political action through numerous exertions and manipulations that the diffuse and individualistic nature of egalitarian society imposed upon those who wished to make change. Reformers could not achieve goals through mandate, but only by political activism or deception. Ronald Walters summarized American reform movements as follows³¹:

“Much of twentieth-century reform has aimed at doing things for the victims of urban and industrial life, whether through settlement houses, consumer-protection legislation, welfare, or some other means. There was little sentiment for anything like that in antebellum America. Most commonly, reformers either wanted to stop a sinful practice, like slaveholding or drinking, or else help themselves without ‘charity’ or ‘interference’ from the government. There was a bright confidence that individuals could accomplish almost anything on their own if they really wanted to, including overcoming alcoholism, ill health, and (with phrenology) the deficiencies of one’s

30. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, George Lawrence (tr.), Garden City, New York 1969, pp. 52-53, 65-66; André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography*, Lydia Davis (tr.), Baltimore 1988, p. 152. De Tocqueville visited America in 1831 and early 1832. His book first appeared in print in January, 1835, and received numerous reprintings, especially in the year of revolution, 1848.

31. Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, New York 1978, p. 173 summarizes well the general discussion of reform in democratic America up to 1860. Deception and manipulation in a mass society became possible. As Tocqueville noted, the primary weakness of American egalitarianism was a deficiency in education. See also John L. Thomas, “Romantic Reform In America, 1815-1865” *American Quarterly* 17 (1965) 656-681 for more insight into American reformers.

own brain. If a person could do all that, surely he or she could conquer poverty. The notion was naive and, in any event, it was not universal. Some antebellum reformers did assist unfortunate and suffering Americans: still others tried to improve the lot of working people”.

The primary contrast between autocratic and democratic reform rested in the nature of the class of people seeking to make reform. The autocrat was often a dictator who seized power with military support, and made reforms through a military-bureaucratic faction that supported him. The leader mandated reforms, and he not only discouraged, but often punished grassroots individualism. Democratic reformers, who could also acquire a tyrannizing impulse of their own, functioned nonetheless as individuals with personal motives —an orientation acceptable in a democratic society that permitted individualism of all types from extreme activism to extreme apathy to flourish.

In Ottoman studies, there has existed a great deal of confusion about the role of democracy in Ottoman reforms. Usually, 20th-century historians have written this notion of democratization back into Ottoman history. High degrees of individualism did not exist in Ottoman popular culture. If religious leaders might preach a moralizing *jihād* of one type or another, few individuals could embark on personal propagandizing and reform efforts without receiving punishment by the state. Such a democratizing circumstance certainly did not predominate in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat. Individuals wishing for social change as individuals or members of communities, either went into exile due to some political infraction, or took arms in revolt against the state. Very little existed in the way of self-motivated reformers embarking on personal crusades to reform this or that abuse, since authorities viewed such initiatives as undesirable rebellion. An authoritarian style of reform predominated that had distinct roots in the Ottoman past, but came under British and French influence most directly from 1854 to 1876. Authoritarian attitudes only increased from 1870 under a strong Prussian orientation encouraged by German victories in the Franco-Prussian War.

If one speaks of Ottoman efforts to adapt European ideas to Ottoman state and society, the following discussion dispels the notion that a genuine reform could have occurred within the context of the time. Eu-

rope itself did not have a far-reaching reform mentality after 1815. Consideration of the European governments and societies existing between 1815 and 1870 shows that officials and generals, many political theorists, and many individuals who considered the nature of society intended to restore society in their homelands as much as possible to their pre-revolutionary forms. Society should avoid the destabilizing influences of extremist egalitarianism, and reinstate social hierarchies that emphasized concepts of privilege before those of inalienable right³².

It is illogical to assume, therefore, that Ottoman elitist reformers, with some vested interest in preserving hierarchical government and society, could in the end opt for an egalitarian political ideal as the philosophy of reform. The Young Ottoman opposition, comprised of such figures as Namîk Kemâl, İbrâhîm Şînâsî, Mustafâ Fâzîl Pasha, and others, as well as opponents like ‘Alî Sûavî, discussed parliamentarism in their writings, and strongly supported the idea of constitutionalism. Some Turcologists assume that they “believed that participating in a parliamentary system of government would nourish in non-Muslim as well as Muslim subjects a feeling of belonging to the same fatherland (*vatan*), weakening parochial interests and ending their desire to form separate national states”³³. Even greater naïveté appears in the notion that “Some Ottoman liberals went further than this, saying that true Ottomanism could be achieved only by abolishing the millets altogether as legal entities, ending all the distinctions among them and their members, and providing in their place a single Ottoman nationality where all the sultan’s subjects would have the same rights and obligations regardless of differences in race, religion, and language”³⁴. To assume that the Young Ottomans fully grasped the ideas of egalitarianism would

32. Charles Rearick, *Beyond the Enlightenment: Historians and Folklore in Nineteenth Century France*, Bloomington 1974, pp. 5-21, folklore replaced history; pp. 42-82 the myths of peoples and nations large and small each had a particular validity, while egalitarianism that eradicated social and cultural differences had ceased to exert an influence of the highest degree. The colorful folklore of distinctive peasant and other communities also reinforced an idea of privilege and uniqueness over the communizing influences of egalitarianism. H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, Oxford 1979, pp. 3-45, 187-194.

33. Stanford J. Shaw, Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, volume II, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic, The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, Cambridge 1977, p. 132. [HOE, II].

34. HOE, II, p. 132.

require that they had a solid understanding of the Enlightenment tradition, and that they associated primarily with Anarchists while in exile in Paris and London. Any attempt to accept these statements as valid also would have to ignore the trends of Romanticism in the circles among which the Young Ottomans and others moved in Europe.

The fact that Namık Kemâl preferred Montesquieu over Locke and Rousseau certainly supports the observation that even liberals preferred political ideals other than democratic ones³⁵. Kemâl argued for constitutionalism and representative government and opposed autocratic rule. He formulated his very general beliefs in an ambiguous and ill-defined philosophy. Nonetheless, he argued for some form of constitutional order based on a combination between Islamic doctrines of government and law with the writings of the *philosophe*, Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu. Montesquieu's philosophy of types as described in *L'esprit des lois* owed a great debt to Aristotelian metaphysics with its idea of natural kinds³⁶. Mardin did not state so at this point, but was aware to some extent that this doctrine of kinds in the case of Namık Kemâl owed much to the Islamic, Persian, and Turkish concepts of the cosmological origins of society. To reiterate, therefore, in his effort to revive the Ottoman state —a vitalistic renewal concept— Namık Kemâl attempted to graft the Enlightenment ideals of the aristocratic *philosophe* Montesquieu onto Ottoman and Islamic ideas of state and society.

As noted before, however, the intention to reform did not mean that reform actually occurred. The short-lived Ottoman parliamentary reforms of the 1860s and 1870s amounted to the vesting of authority in provincial oligarchies for the most part. These oligarchies had always held power informally through their prime economic and social positions. The effort to involve them in government did not equate with democratization. The Ottoman elite had reason to resist the parliamentary ideal, since government became more complicated, and in a crisis the numerous groups made decisive action difficult, if not impossible. Parliamentary forms in the Ottoman state genuinely comprised "re-orderings" [the literal meaning of *tanzimât*], but such reorderings com-

35. Namık Kemâl, *Osmanlı Târîhî, Külliyyât-ı Kemâl*, İkinci Tertip, İstanbul: Mahmûd Bey Matbaası, 1326/1910-1911, I, Part I, p. 8.

36. Sherif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study of the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, Princeton 1962, p. 308. [GYOT].

prised of much renewal of older elites, combined with slight restructuring and a few new concepts of political action. The council [*mejlis*] did not act independently in most things, but, in a manner similar to parliamentary forms of the French Second Empire, usually served as consultative bodies for the sultan or his appointed officials in the provinces. Republicanism in this case did not function as a reform, but as a revival and slight reconstitution of older elites' powers with the intention to use them as a disguise for the state's continuing authoritarianism. The state did not create a new senatorial aristocracy or a new social and economic elite from which to draw personnel for provincial assemblies. Merchants, descendents of *derebey* or *sipâhî* families, and numerous other notable families took positions in councils, assemblies and later the first Ottoman parliament.

III. Archaism and Conventionalism: the Ottoman Ideal of Social Justice

How can any reform-minded group or society institute a reform when dominated by archaic and conventional thought patterns? A society frozen in a self-perception and focused upon past forms of perfection inevitably seeks a renewal as identified by Gerhard Ladner. One could see in Islamic *tajdîd* [lit. "renewal"] movements of the 19th century a clear attempt to focus upon vitalistic ideals of renewal in one form or another. The dominance of the older literature, and the retention of archaic ideals of social justice, for example, indicate that Ottoman society paralleled Islamic renewal movements by seeking to establish a renewed Ottoman state, army, and society. The ideas of "progress" that appeared in the Tanzimat and later in the Young Turk movement incorporated a concept borrowed from Islamic mysticism. Progress in Sufi mysticism, or *terâqqî*³⁷, saw perfectibility as an idea of vitalistic renewal in which the individual sought to reawaken in himself virtues identified by the Qurân and by Sufi masters. Renewal did not mean, in this instance, the cyclical repetition of what had existed before, but an effort to reformulate the vital essence of the previous manifestation in new forms. Secularistic use of *terâqqî* to identify progress in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire referred to a renewal of the best elements in Ottoman society.

37. Modern Turkish *terakki*.

The review of the texts shows that many individuals returned to older Ottoman writings and their values as sources of a vitalistic renewal in Ottoman values. Many, one may assume, also sought a restoration of an Ottoman state more in the sense of the cosmological renewal ideology, as defined by Ladner. Archaism and conventionalism thus demonstrate the intellectual survival of a cosmological renewal idea, recast, however in the forms of vitalistic renewal or even reform ideology. The following discussion will demonstrate this point.

A large number of Ottoman Turkish publications from the years 1839 to 1876 belong to the category of chronicles, poetry, and *edeb* literature³⁸ from the 15th to the 18th centuries. A smaller number of Persian-language texts of the same type also come from this era. These texts possessed a certain world view, and reinforced archaic ideals of what the educated man should be, and constituted the hard core of an archaic Ottoman mentality that continued to persist in this period. Such texts possessed a cosmological universalism that aimed to explain everything from the ontological belief that the source of all creation originated in God, his universal creation, and in the conflict between God and Satan. The social order of the carnal world had its source in the celestial hierarchy of the universe created by God. Cosmological sociology and psychology thus became the method for explaining social order, and describing human motives. These cosmological beliefs about humanity and society persisted well into the 19th century³⁹.

38. Only history and poetry are cited here, but other forms of pre-19th century literature could also be found, including these few samples: Ferîdûn Bey, *Münshe'ât üs-Selâtin*: np., 1264/1848, 2 vols. [1st ed.]; 1274-1275/1858, 2 vols. [2nd ed.] - a collection of sultanic and other Ottoman documents in the *inshâ'* style for scribes; 'Alî Chelebî Kinâlîzâde (1510-1571), *Ahlâk-i 'Alâ'î*, Bûlâk (Cairo): Matbaa-i Bulak, 1248/1833 (ethics, *akhlâq*); Bursalî Mehmed Lamîi Chelebî (1472-1532), *Kitab-i İbretnuma*, [Istanbul]: 1272/1856 (ethics); İbrâhîm Kemâl al-Dîn Minkârîzâde, *Terjüme-i Sîyâsetnâme*, Mehmed 'Arîf (Meshrebzâde Hafîdî) (tr.), Istanbul: np, 1275/1859, 66 pp. (an abridged translation of Nizâm al-Mulk's 11th century Persian book of advice to sultans).

39. Interest in cosmological beliefs and associated phenomena remained strong in the middle of the 19th century. The first year of the Crimean War saw the publication of a *fâlnâme*, or book for reading portents and omens [P. *fâl*]. See: Cafer Sadîk, *Falname-i Cafer Sadîk*, [Istanbul]: lithograph edition, 1270/1853-1854, İstanbul Üniversitesi Merkez Kütüphanesi Müzesi, no. 84292; republished in 1271/1854-1855 [İstanbul Üniversitesi Merkez Kütüphanesi Müzesi no 84406. See also: Sennur Sezer, *Osmanlı'da Fal ve Falnameler*, İstanbul: AD Kitapçılık, 1998.

Pre-19th century literature possessed a distinctive understanding of social order in which archetypal social philosophy played an important role. One must classify the chief philosophical and visionary expectation of this old Ottoman literature as pessimism. Fate doomed human society—even the good society—to extinction in the end. God created the world and humans as pawns in the war with Satan. The sultan rested at the zenith of all human society just as God was the center of the Great Chain of Being. Both God and His surrogate on earth, the sultan, acted as prime movers in the struggle against satanic tyranny and corruption. When Satan fell irretrievably into defeat, spiritual archetypes would re-absorb their dependent carnal spirits into themselves, and in their turn the celestial archetypes would return into God's spiritual existence. Writers of the *edeb* tradition normally defined four levels of social order⁴⁰:

ehl-i shemshîr ["people of the sword"]

ehl-i kalem ["people of the pen"]

tujjâr merchants

ri'âyâ peasants

These four orders never matched the reality of any given society, but authors superimposed them on society to conform with cosmic archetypes, in this case, the four zones of universal existence each symbolized by one of the four elements: fire [the highest equated with God], air, water, and earth [the lowest equated with carnal existence]. Society was molded into rigid compartments with little or no interrelationship from one to the other. Each level and sublevel of this Chain of Being had its own unalterable character that a person born into any given level would always carry with him or her. Ottoman social theory and its Perso-Islamic antecedents relied almost solely upon this universalist idea of human hierarchy⁴¹.

40. Lewis V. Thomas, *A Study of Naima*, Norman Itzkowitz (ed.), New York 1972, pp. 73-76. In a commentary on Kâtip Çelebî's *Düstûrî'l-'âmel*, Naima [1665-1716] equated the condition of state and society [in its four levels of order] with the four humors of the body, and examined how they could exist in a state of equilibrium or disequilibrium.

41. Ann K. S. Lambton, "Islamic Society in Persia", in Louise E. Sweet (ed.), *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, volume 1: *Depth and Diversity*, Garden City, New York 1970, pp. 74-75: 1) men of the pen, 2), men of the sword, 3) men of affairs [merchants,

Ottoman imperial tradition formulated a unique variant of this view when, in developing the *devshirme* or *paidomázoma* ["child tribute"], the sultan abducted children born into the *ri'aya* and non-Muslim subject level of society, and transformed them into a Muslim military and bureaucratic elite. The theory behind this unique social institution returned nonetheless to premodern ideas of magical transformation. Just as it was believed the alchemist could transform dung into gold, so could the sultan—shadow of God on earth—alter the humble clay of poor Balkan peasant stock into the quality of fire necessary for existence in the military order. The basic pessimistic vision of human existence continued to dominate. In all cultural matters, many viewed expressions of individualism or any form of humanism as corruption, and even as tyranny [*zülüm*] if they proved revolutionary or rebellious enough.

The philosophy of social dynamics originating in this mentality possessed its own unique perspective which the majority of 20th-century commentators have failed to understand. This social philosophy defined tyranny as anything that emanated from Satan aimed at disrupting the universal order created by God. Some of the more rigid applications of this philosophy understood the carnal existence of the lower reaches of the social order as a form of corruption [*fesâd*] tantamount to rebellion against God. Most authors denoted the *ri'âyâ* as the most corruptible element in society, and the promoters of Satan's tyranny. Consequently, traditional Ottoman social and political ideals only labeled a ruler as a tyrant if he in some way or other was associated with Satan or

artisans, tax-collectors, and craftsmen], and 4) artisans, does show that a 17th century Persian work reversed the position of the first two orders. Ottoman chroniclers often portray this notion of divinely-mandated rulership and a dependent societal order. For example: Sa'deddin Hoja Efendi, *Tâj üt-Tevârikh*, Istanbul: [Imperial State Publishing House]: 1280/1863, p. 221 [the *Selîm-nâme*] places Sultân Selîm I's accession within God's divine plan, and indicates that the new sultan was executing God's decree. Naima Mustafa Efendi [1066/1655-1129/1716], *Tarihi*, Zuhuri Danishman (ed.), Istanbul: Zuhuri Danishman Yayînevi, 1967, I, pp. 106-107 obituary of Sultan Murad III [d. 1003/1595] contains verses showing that God ordained his fate, and implies that all society functioned according to the fate of rulers. Listings of the vezirs and shaikhs followed his obituary, outlining the top levels of the Ottoman social order as dependent upon the sultan and the divine order of the world. Peçevi İbrahim Efendi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, Fahri Erin, Vahit Çabuk (eds.), Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980, I, p. 3 shows Sultân Süleyman I relating [revealing] both the external and internal decree [*zâhirda ve bâtında anun hükmî revândır*] through his own mandates. The initial *hükm*, or "decree" was that given by God.

has become corrupted by satanic forces. Chronicles of the Ottoman household thus functioned on the belief that each sultan from generation to generation established the divinely-ordained goal of social development. Common belief held that any of his subjects who rebelled against him acted as disseminators of Satan's evil and tyranny. Chronicles contain their full share of this view of things⁴².

An example of a 16th-century text that used the concept is the *Tâj ül-Tevârîkh*. The rebel Shâh Qulî Takallû, a follower of the 'alevî Safavids, received the new name Shaytân Qulî ["slave of Satan"], demonstrating plainly the phenomenon of macrocosmic influences upon the carnal world in 16th-century belief systems⁴³. While such beliefs diminished in the 19th-century, they remained a potent force in the daily lives of ruler and ruled alike.

In about 1244/1828, the sultan Mahmûd II posed the question to İzzet Molla "which government should be seen as tyrannical and oppressive [*zulûm ve taadî*]?" İzzet Molla answered with reference to the archetypal concept of tyranny. He said that tyranny belonged to the *Mora cumhuru* [Greek government] because, as an insurrectionary body, it usurped the rightful duty of the Ottoman government to rule over the *Rum millet*⁴⁴. Ottoman revival proceeded from the wish to prevent further usurpations of Ottoman authority, and the abolition of what the Ot-

42. F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, London 1892, p. 217: "Injustice; unjust, iniquitous"; Gilbert Lazard, *Dictionnaire persan-français*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990, p. 67: "injustice, oppression, tyrannie, violence"; *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük*, İstanbul 1968, p. 172: "P. İmd. injustice, oppression, cruelty" [hereinafter, RYTIS]. Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Osmanlıca Türkçe Sözlük*, İstanbul: İnkılâp ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1979, 6th ed. [hereinafter, OTS], p. 927 [meaning: "*daletsiz, zalim; zulûm*"]. Mîr 'Alî Shîr-i Navâ'î, *Muhâkamat al-Lughatayn*, Robert Devereux (ed.), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966, p. 10 [Turkish text] presents an interesting discussion of tyranny [*zulm*] in a Central Asian [Chaghatay] text. See: idem., *Muhâkemetü'l-Lughateyn*, Veled Chelebi [Izbudak] (tr.), İstanbul: np, 1315/1897. On the influence of Navâ'î upon Ottoman poets and writers, see: E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, Edward G. Browne (ed.), London 1902 [reprinted 1965], II, pp. 10-11. On the concept of tyranny in an Ottoman book of advice, see Andreas Tietze (ed.), *Mustafâ 'âli's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, Wien 1979, I, Pl. II-XXV, pp. 89-125 transliteration, 16-40 translation. Evil vezirs [*vüzerânüñ shûrûrindan*] caused evil innovations [*bid'atlar*, "heresies"]. [f. H21r, pp. 119, 37].

43. Mahmûd Sa'd al-Dîn Efendî, *Tâj ül-Tevârîkh*, İstanbul: Tab'-khâna-i 'âmera, 1279/1862-1863, II, p. 163. [TT].

44. İhsan Sungu (ed.), "Mahmud II. nin İzzet Molla ve Asâkir-i Mansûre hakk'ında bir hattî", *Tarih Vesikalari*, I, nos. 1-6 (1941-1942) 166.

toman elite considered as the tyranny of any subjects or former subjects. The founder of Ottoman “reform” —Mahmûd II— continued to rely upon archaistic ideas in the establishment of his authoritarian social justice. The elements of this idea that portrayed the good ruler as victimized by tyrannical subjects found ample expression in the many Ottoman texts of previous periods published during the Tanzimat era and noted above. The Tanzimat itself contained the archaic ideals of justice firmly imbedded within itself.

IV. Ottoman Reform, 1839-1876

A. Introduction

1. Definition

In 1839, the Tanzimat reforms outlined attempts to introduce positive changes into Ottoman society —the abolition of abuses in taxation, military service, and the attempt to create a greater security of life and property for the subject populations of the Empire. In 1856, the paramount influence of France and Britain added emphasis upon the need to create better conditions for non-Muslim subjects —Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and others⁴⁵.

2. Assessment

a. Turkish Republican historians have made the Tanzimat into a conventionalized canon of history, imposing upon it some fixed ideas that mostly have little or no validity in the historical developments of the period⁴⁶.

45. The reform decrees have been published in a variety of sources, including: the text of the *Hatt-ı Hümayûn* of 1839 in Yavuz Abadan, “Tanzimat Fermani’nin Tahlili”, *Tanzimat*, I, Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940, facing p. 48, columns 1 and 2, from which the above references and terminology are taken. A French translation also made at this time by Ottoman officials appears following the Ottoman text. An English translation may be found in *Pictorial History of the Russian War, 1854-1856*, Edinburgh 1856, pp. 562-563. See the translation in J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics*, volume I, *European Expansion, 1535-1914*, New Haven 1975, pp. 269-271. The text cited here is C. Belin (ed.), “Charte des Turcs”, *Journal Asiatique* ser. 3, vol. 9 (1840) 5-29 [“CT”]. The text of the *Islahat Fermanı* of 1856 may be found in Yavuz Abadan, “Tanzimat Fermani’nin Tahlili”, *Tanzimat*, I, Istanbul 1940, facing p. 56. See the translation in J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics*, volume I, *European Expansion, 1535-1914*, New Haven 1975, pp. 315-318.

46. See, for example, the collection of essays: Hakkı Dursun Yıldız (ed.), *150. Yılında*

b. *Canonical Periodization*. The fixation upon the Tanzimat as the symbol of an entire era in Turkish republican historians is a legacy of the Ottoman chronicle tradition, that assigned an identity to an age based upon the ruler's regnal period [the reigns of the ten great sultans], or the programs of ministers [the reforms of the Köprülü grand vezirs]. Such conventions of history assign a single identity to an age, but ignore all or most of the unusual occurrences, undercurrents, and personalities of the age. It is extremely difficult in Turkey to study the period 1839 to 1878 outside the limitations of this single great identity imposed upon the middle of the 19th century.

The work of Stanford J. Shaw, for example, spoke of the Men of the Tanzimat, discussed their plans, and enumerated some of the changes they made. Despite the emphasis on the leaders' progressive attitudes and westernism, Shaw's account is not convincing, primarily because he cannot or does not discuss (a) the European prototypes of the reformers, (b) the meaning of reform to the reformers, or (c) the dimensions of the reform party. Was the reform party simply a few men in the elite, or did a popular basis for reform exist in Ottoman society? Shaw implies the reform was a popular movement, but he never shows more than the activities of a few individuals, and follows almost verbatim the insistence

Tanzimat, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1992. Many of the articles contained in this volume still maintained the canonical view of the Tanzimat, though some either dealt with its failures, or looked at new aspects. Toledano's discussion of slavery in the period departed somewhat from the canon. None of the articles considers the problem of brigandage, the numerous local revolts against Tanzimat reforms by Muslims, or the unacceptable socioeconomic forms of pastoralism, gypsy life, the caravan trade, or provincialism as a restraint to reform among other topics. A similar comment could be made about Ishin Duruöz, Gönül Büyüklimanlı (eds.), *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu (Bildiriler)*, 25-27 Aralık 1989, Milli Kütüphane - Ankara, Ankara 1991, which focused on such issues as modernism and emulation of Europe [All Engin Oba, "Türkiye'nin Modernleşme Tarihinde Tanzimat'ın İlanı ve Avrupa Topluluklarına Katılma Başvurusu", pp. 167-169] to the more extreme distortion found in the article by Stanford J. Shaw ["Sultan Abdulhamit II. Last Man of the Tanzimat", pp. 179-197]. One of the more useful articles in this second collection is by Mustafa Kara, "Tanzimat Dönemi ve Tasavvufî Hayat", pp. 299-319 which discusses the survival of mysticism in this period. None of these articles discuss various figures such as Ömer Pasha, Zârif Mustafa Pasha, or William Fenwick Williams or the influence and legacy of the Crimean War, for example, or the various revolts and social problems of the era. Yusuf Hamza's article about Slavs [pp. 287-298] gives only a very superficial treatment of the Slavic communities of Macedonia, though has taken a step in advance of the usual modernist analysis.

of Turkish historians upon a deterministic force propelling changes in an age of reform⁴⁷.

c. *Tanzimat = Democratization and Egalitarianism*. Enver Ziya Karal depicted the Tanzimat reform in very optimistic terms. He divided 19th-century Europe and western Asia into liberal states and states where divine right emperors ruled [*liberal devletler, tanrı hakları sisteminde*]. The absolute division between liberal and autocratic is obviously too sharp and conventionalized to stand under close scrutiny. Neither France nor Britain maintained liberal institutions to the full degree assumed by Karal, as noted above. The autocratic regimes of eastern Europe also had liberal movements [often in exile], but also allowed for some social and cultural diversity. Karal's simplistic distinction placed the Ottoman Empire with the *tanrı hakları sistemleri* but he observed that the Tanzimat reform intended to align the Empire with the liberal states of western Europe⁴⁸. He further suggested that the social reforms proposed by the Tanzimat approximated a "social contract" between the emperor and the people in its character [*sosyal bir kontra karakteri ...*]. This not-too subtle reference to the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau implies that the framers of the *Hatt-ı Şerif* held democratic and egalitarian notions quite similar to the ideal of Rousseau's *le contrat social*⁴⁹. Close scrutiny of the *Hatt-ı Şerif* shows exactly the opposite, however, that the reformers intended to restore the orderliness of the old hierarchical structure, with many changes of course, but nonetheless a continuation of the Ottoman hierarchical ideal of government and society⁵⁰.

d. *Westernization*. No commentators upon the Tanzimat who make the claim for the reforms as introducers of western ideals —notably

47. Stanford J. Shaw, Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic, The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, Cambridge 1977, pp. 58-69 discusses Mustafa Reshid Pasha, 'Ali Pasha, Fuad Pasha, and Ahmed Jevdet [Cevdet] Pasha leaving the impression that these men, as important as they were, functioned almost virtually in isolation.

48. Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, V. Cilt, 4. Baskı, *Nizam-ı Cedid ve Tanzimat Devirleri (1789-1856)*, Ankara 1983, pp. 170-171. [OT].

49. OT, p. 193.

50. A notable exception to this trend is to be found in Halil İnalcık, "Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 5 (1973) 97-127 who gives a sophisticated discussion of the social imbalances and economic problems created by the proclamation of tax reform.

those of the Enlightenment— have understood the nature of western societies at the time of the Tanzimat. The two powers that exerted the most influence upon the Ottoman reform decree of 1856 —Britain and France— had a powerful military and political presence in the Ottoman Empire from 1854-1856. France, ruled by Napoléon III, was not a democratic state as described above and the system of Napoléon III's autocratic and militaristic government served as a significant model for Ottoman governmental and military change⁵¹. Britain, a constitutional monarchy, was more influential as a model in her imperialist practices [a notable example of which was the British ambassador to the Porte, Stratford de Redcliffe], and in her military organization and operational skills [the British Military Commission of General W. F. Williams, 1855]⁵². Beyond this sphere of influence, only Ottoman Greeks, Jews, and a few Armenians had any direct contact with western Europe on a broad scale in this period.

B. Social Concepts in the Hatt-i Sherîf of Gülhâne, 1839

1. *General.* The social concepts of the *Hatt-i Sherîf* appear quite vague in many places owing to the characteristic lack of precision in many of the Arabic terms. Near the beginning of the decree, for example, exists a reference to the *halk* [Ar. *khalq*], which seems an almost incomprehensible concept at this time. On the one hand, the decree understood the Ottoman world to be partitioned into myriads of lesser peoples, each with its own homeland. For many of these peoples, no greater understanding of a nation or a greater “people” existed. This very early reference to *khalq* thus seems almost enigmatic, since even the Ottoman

51. Direct French influence on the Ottoman army may be seen in Jacques Achille Leroy Saint-Arnaud, *Lettres du Maréchal de Saint-Arnaud*, Paris 1855, II, pp. 411-505. St.-Arnaud was the first French commander during the Crimean War.

52. Great Britain, *Papers Relative to Military Affairs in Asiatic Turkey and the Defence and Capitulation of Kars*, London 1856 presents an impressive array of documents proving without a doubt that both Stratford de Redcliffe and Williams exerted direct influence on Ottoman political and military affairs during the Crimean War. See also: Lake, *KOCR*, which reproduces letters by Williams, Lake himself, Major Teesdale, and Captain Henry Thompson showing the dynamics of the British officers' influence at all levels of the Ottoman army, from military engineering to drilling and equipment. Williams and his officers organized a military commission that managed the Ottoman army of Anatolia in operations against the Russian army at Kars.

elite was hesitant to arrive at a designation of a greater people for any part or all of the Ottoman Empire. The 1839 decree declared that the Ottoman Empire and the prosperity and well-being of its subjects could easily be restored once the geographical position of the Empire and its provinces, the fertility of its land, and the intelligence and ability of the “common people” —the *khalq*— were taken into consideration⁵³. The introduction of a proto-nationalistic concept of “the people” adopted a few nationalistic traits as the terms of the decree show. The sultan attributed an “ability” or “aptitude” [*kâbilîyet*] to the common people. Such a “genius” of the people would promote rapid reform and Ottoman political recovery. The apparent reference to a nation or a mobilized people might at first glance appear to refer to the positive image of a popular mobilization in support of the state as occurred in France after the French Revolution. In reality, however, the word *khalq* probably carried a negative connotation. The Ottoman state with the sultan at its head became the authoritarian, or even autocratic, leader of its subjects. *Khalq* then meant “common people” of the inferior social orders who were forced to obey the decrees of their superiors, and treat them with deference and obedience⁵⁴.

One also senses here a parallel to European Romanticism —a social ideal derived from the Ottoman universalist tradition— that every social group, community, and profession possessed its own distinct and unique characteristics. Perhaps influenced by the Romantics, the Ottoman reformers envisioned the creation of a broader notion of “folk” since this term *khalq* or *halk* later became associated with “folk” type endeavors such as “folk tales” [*halk hikayesi*]. If this was true, then aside from the central concern about reconnecting with the Ottoman past in its grandeur and power, the Ottoman reformers did not look to the egalitar-

53. “CT”, 12.

54. Samy-Bey Frascbery, *Qâmûs-i Faransavî, Türkcheden Feransizjaya Lughât, Dictionnaire Turc-Français*, Istanbul: Mihrân Matbaası, 1302/1885, p. 469: “Création; Créatures, humaines; Public; multitude; populace;” Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Büyük Osmanlıca Türkçe Sözlük*, Istanbul 1979⁶, p. 284: “...*İnsanlar*...;” RYTIS, p. 440 “1. the common people, folk; people, nation; population; crowd”. Mahmud Celâleddin Pasha, *Mir’at-i Hakikat*, İsmet Miroglu (ed.), Istanbul 1983, p. 130 [MH Originally published in ca. 1908] Mahmûd Celâleddin Pasha used *halk* in the sense of “crowd” when he described the commotion caused by Cherkas Hasan’s attempted assassination of Ottoman ministers, which attracted a large crowd.

ianism of the Enlightenment as the resource for the new reforms, but to a more highly-stratified sense of an Ottoman polity constructed from an intricate web of intertwined “folk” cultures dependent upon and inferior to the Ottoman cultural elite. Such a reform intention belonged more to the realm of Europe in the age of the Romantics in which newly-reinstated monarchs and aristocracies attempted to rebuild the particularistic and non-egalitarian societies that had existed prior to the French Revolution. Ottoman reform did not intend to build an egalitarian society with equal justice for all, only a society in which the reformers restored the old social stratifications with perfect balance in a hierarchical order where inequalities prevailed, but security of life [*emniyeti jân*] became renewed. Far from being the panacea to cure all of society’s ills, the *Hatt-i Sherîf* intended primarily to return to some previous Ottoman golden age where social peace reigned, but authoritarian rule had ensured the existence of that peace.

2. Tyranny [*zülûm*]

The *Hatt-i Sherîf* aimed at abolishing the “tyranny” [*zülûm*] of local officials [*mültezims* or tax farmers, and *derebeys*, or chiefs of brigand families and operations who became local notables], who were blamed for the oppression of the peasants in particular. These persons came of lower social origins, it was argued, and were unsuited to government by their own nature. This approach to reform came directly from the Ottoman version of the Perso-Islamic mirror for princes literature. The idea of tyranny, as emanating from the inappropriate clamoring of base individuals for power and wealth that only persons of higher status knew how to handle properly, had roots deep in the Perso-Islamic tradition. The essence of this social philosophy follows. Individuals having the character [*cins*] of one social order could not operate outside the sphere into which they were born, and problems arose especially when a man of low origins intended to move up the social ladder to enhance his status. Upward social mobility usually stripped the individual of his honor and reputation, without which, in Ottoman social theory, a functionary could not hold office⁵⁵. This precise attitude appeared in numerous chronicles

55. A full discussion of the Ottoman concept of tyranny appears in James J. Reid, “Rozhîkî Revolt in Kurdistan, 1065/1655”, *Journal of Kurdish Studies*, volume 3, forthcoming.

and books of advice on statecraft, and showed itself again in the 1839 *Hatt-i Sherif*.

The intentions and social values of the Ottoman reformers in 1839 were not based upon new western values, much less an Enlightenment social ideal, but rather limited their understanding of social processes to ideas that had long existed in Ottoman political and social theory. Whatever claims scholars have made for the westernizing approach, of the Tanzimat reformers, close scrutiny of the reform documents themselves shows that the reformers had a clear understanding of traditional Ottoman values and applied these ideals frequently throughout the documents.

Conservatives continued to hold to traditional concepts of tyranny, and other social ideals derived from Ottoman historical views of society. Mahmûd Jelâleddîn Pasha, for example, had recourse to the Ottoman perception of tyranny on more than one occasion. The following example will illustrate his usage of this idea⁵⁶.

“Adil Pasha dogruca Filibe’ye ve oradan isyân hareketinin üssii olan Pazarcık’a gitti. Hafız Pasha da Pazarcık’dan besh saat uzaklıkta bulunan ayvalî köyüne asker gönderdi. Böylece bir kaç günden beri isyâncıların zulüm pençelerine düşmüş olan müslümanlara emniyet geldi”.

“Adil Pasha came directly to Pazarjık as the insurrection [isyân] moved its base of operations from thence to Filibe. Hafız Pasha, who was to be found five hours distance from Pazarjık at the village of Ayvalî, sent the army. Thus, it having been a few days since [Pazarjık] had fallen from the tyrannous claws of the rebels, it [the army] went to the Muslims for their security and freedom from fear”.

The efforts of reform and westernizing education did not uproot or annihilate a number of such conservative ideals in Mahmûd Jelâleddin, as in other writers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

3. Vigilantism

The issue of vigilantism has lurked in forgotten corners of Ottoman,

56. MH, p. 86.

Balkan, and Middle Eastern history. One of the primary reasons for the imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire was the growth of vigilantism, that the author has discussed at length in other publications. The feud had existed as a form of local conflict for a very long time in the Ottoman Empire. Local conflicts did not explode into major wars by the management of such conflicts at the local level. The vendetta involved two families or factions in a murder for a murder arrangement, but local notables and provincial authorities usually restricted the violence through negotiation, mediation, and a concerted effort to restrain the belligerent parties. By the 18th and 19th centuries, this situation had changed. A more extreme form of poorly-restrained violence prevented resolutions of conflicts. The phenomenon of vigilantism emerged, and sent the Ottoman Empire careening uncontrollably toward a war of all against all. The old-fashioned feud came to seem quaint under the circumstances⁵⁷.

“The vigilante carried the act of vengeance to an extreme. Instead of killing in response to a murder, large numbers of the enemy were killed, entire villages slaughtered or looted, or depredations far in excess of the original crime were perpetrated. The vigilante could not rely on custom or the law to save him, so he took more extreme measures to protect himself. Even though he may have justified his actions by age-old custom observed toward an enemy lineage or group, his act abandoned the limitations imposed by traditional social relations”.

Vigilante action became the most serious problem facing the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, since vigilante wars tore the fabric of society asunder to an irreparable degree.

Did the Tanzîmât reformers address this issue of vigilantism, and, more importantly, did they attempt to do anything about the problem? The *Hatt-ı Sherîf* of 1839 initiated the era of reforms in the Ottoman Empire. The Sultân ‘Abdülmejid and his grand vezîr Mustafâ Reshîd

57. James J. Reid, “Social and Psychological Factors in the Collapse of the Ottoman Empire ca. 1780-1918”, *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 10 (1993) 119. See also: James J. Reid, “Irregular Military Bands and Colonies in the Balkans, 1789-1878”, *Études Balkaniques* 3 (1996) 141-142.

Pasha envisioned a plan of reform that would place the Ottoman state and Ottoman society back into a position of strength within five or ten years, that is, by 1849 at the latest. The reform decree idealized three primary personal and social values, as seen in the following sentence from the imperial rescript⁵⁸:

شویله که دنیا ده جاندن و
عرض و ناموسدن اعز بر شی اولمیغندن

“In that manner, nothing in the world [*dünyâ*] is more glorious or precious than life [*jân*], honor [*îrz*], or good reputation [*nâmûs*].”

Such a value system belonged to the traditions and customs of peoples living under Ottoman rule, and as such had no parallel in the various social doctrines and revolutionary movements produced by the Enlightenment. The *Hatt-i Sherîf* did not seek to establish “*liberté, égalité, et fraternité*”, but rather intended to preserve “security of life, honor, and good reputation”. Such ideals belonged to a highly compartmentalized and hierarchical society divided to the ultimate degree into small domains each having boundaries and privileges in constant need of defense and protection against rivals. In such an unwieldy society, the man seeking to defend his honor could feel so threatened as to take extreme measures in the defense of that honor. Sultan ‘Abdülmejdîd and his advisors understood this problem, and attempted to define it in the 1839 decree as formulated in the following statement⁵⁹:

بیلله محافظه جان و ناموسیچون البته بعضی صورتلره تشبیه ایده چکی
و بو داخی دولت و مملکتده مضر اوله کلدیکی مسلم اولدیغی

“Even though one would take firm hold of the defense of one’s life and honor [good reputation] in some cases everyone admits that harm would befall the state and government”.

The connotation of vigilantism lurks especially in the word *teshebbüs*, by which the framers of the decree meant “the taking firm hold” of the defense of one’s own life, honor, and reputation. Such resolve to

58. For the Turkish text, see: “CT”, 14.

59. For the Turkish text, see: “CT”, 14.

maintain one's own personal sphere and defend it in spite of the government and the law could prove dangerous to the existence of the state and to the stability of the society, according to the framers. From this statement, therefore, it is quite clear that the founders of Ottoman reform had a well-defined sense of vigilantism and its costs to the Ottoman Empire. Having the idea did not, however, mean that the Ottoman state or its functionaries had the ability or the knowledge to overcome the problem of vigilantism, much less to define a new society that would overcome the problems of the past. Reformers could not fashion new societies from the social ideas and conditions that produced the problem of vigilantism in the beginning.

C. Social Concepts in the Islahât Fermânî, 1856

This decree, issued by the same sultan responsible for the 1839 decree, reflected the demands of the Ottoman Empire's allies in the Crimean War [1853-1856]. The stronger emphasis upon the constitutional status of the non-Muslim subjects did not reflect a genuine interest in the sufferings of those non-Muslims under Ottoman government, but rather the imperial powers' concerns over Russian interference in and domination over Ottoman affairs as protector over both Greek Orthodox and Armenian subject communities. The very different tone of the *Islahât Fermânî* illustrates the paralysing effect of foreign domination over the internal administration of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the familiarly dense Ottoman prose, yet afflicted with the problems of vague Arabic vocabulary, adopted a glossary of terms to express new ideas. The sultan perceived himself as *müdîr-i umûr ul-Jumhûr*, which meant "director of the nation's affairs"⁶⁰. This formulation attempted to make the authoritarian ruler appear as one of the people, or the chief among equals. The decree intended to dupe the British and French governments with this deceptive phraseology.

The language of the document showed continued adherence to Ottoman cultural traditions, while some of the new lexical features demonstrated a superficial concern with modernism. In the end, however, this

60. Yavuz Abadan, "Tanzimat fermani'nin tahlili", in *Tanzimat*, Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940, has a copy of the *Islahat fermânî* in Ottoman script between pp. 56-57, and this formulation appears on line 1.

double life created a confusion about society and social reform that ultimately led to the tragedies of 1860 [massacre of Christian community in Damascus, Syria] to 1923 [Asia Minor Catastrophe]. A significant example of the self-contradictory nature of the *Islahât fermanî* may be found in the changes that the state would grant to the non-Muslim subjects. On the one hand, the decree hoped to renew the institutions established by the decree of 1839 [essentially maintaining a traditional hierarchical perception of Ottoman society, that compartmentalized each group and ranked it by its own implicitly understood character, and maintaining its own special privileges]. On the other hand, the 1856 decree states explicitly that Sultan ‘Abdülmejid considered all of his subjects equal, and did not resolve this confusion of maintaining reformed versions of the old hierarchies and considering all subjects equal at the same time, despite a full program of well-defined reform proposals. Confusion of social ideals rested at the heart of the Tanzimat’s failure to develop a definitive social reform program, and represented the lack of clarity that resulted from only a superficial adherence to and poor understanding of Enlightenment ideals.

V. Conclusion

Since archaic ideas of Ottoman society and social justice survived in Tanzimat documents, and in writings of Tanzimat authors, one must conclude that archaic values continued to influence Tanzimat reformers, and to a lesser degree, many of the liberals as well. To attempt to explain why archaic and modern ideas could coexist in Ottoman society is as difficult as any attempt to understand why racism directed against African Americans could coexist in the attitudes of American abolitionists⁶¹. Ottoman reform did not begin as the vision of persons who fully understood the contradictions within themselves. The complex joining of archaic values with new attitudes did not always assume an easily identifiable manifestation. Most reformers possess such contradictions, regardless of their cultural or social origins, because by their own admission they usually come from some level of the society needing reform. Using the scale developed by Gerhard Ladner, one can see more precisely how

61. See, for example: Charles H. Brewster, “When Will This Cruel War Be Over”, David W. Blight (ed.), whose Civil War letters show precisely such an enigmatic social attitude.

to define social or any other reforms. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the elite still possessed a perception of society steeped in the universalist cosmological vision as late as the early 19th century. Ideas of change more aptly belonged to the category of cosmological or vitalistic renewal as defined by Ladner.

Progressive reform rooted in Enlightenment concepts of progress did not strike the imagination of most Ottomans even during the Tanzimat. A few writers had vague and poorly-defined ideas of Enlightenment philosophy. Most of those in a position to implement reforms had, at best, a well-formulated understanding of vitalistic renewal processes. No Ottoman leaders had a competent understanding of revolutionism⁶². Vitalistic renewal, understood in purely practical terms, meant the mere change of personnel, perceived as part and parcel of the historical cycles through which humanity passed. Vitalistic renewal had as its prototype the efforts of the Köprülü grand vezirs to purge corrupt officials and officers at the end of the 17th century. Selim III and the “men of the Tanzimat” placed greater emphasis upon vitalistic renewal mixed with elements of reform that made them distinct from the Köprülü vezirs. Lacking any substantial inner reevaluation of their own attitudes, however, the late 18th and 19th-century “reformers” failed to grasp the underlying issues in the reforms that they proposed and mostly failed to implement. At best, then, the Tanzimat era did witness many social changes, but most of these alterations occurred outside the realms of change prescribed by the would-be reformers. While the Young Turks and Atatürk did establish true reforms, neither one fully extinguished the vitalistic renewal mentality that remains yet in many aspects of Turkish culture.

62. Ottoman documents, even in the early 20th century, persistently denigrated genuine revolutionaries by calling them brigands [*chete*]. Such belittling demonstrated openly an inability to understand the various degrees of rebels and criminals. For a state faced by revolutionary movements on all sides, such an unwillingness to understand these distinctions may have acted as a factor in the empire’s imminent collapse.