

**A Revolutionary Young Ottoman: Ali Suavi (1839-1878)**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the life and work of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Turkish journalist and activist Ali Suavi, best known for his failed attempt to overthrow Sultan Abdülhamit II in 1878. It includes a study not only of Suavi's Turkish newspaper work, but also of his oft-neglected European publications. It also includes a thorough overview of how our image of Suavi has been distorted in various ways over the years, and in particular by Turkish nationalist historiography. Far from being a Turkish nationalist or protonationalist, as many scholars have claimed, Ali Suavi was in fact an Ottoman patriot with pan-Islamic leanings. Ali Suavi, as well as the popular Ottoman Muslim resistance to Russian occupation in the Rhodope mountains in what is now Bulgaria in the 1870s, can best be understood as precursors not of Turkish nationalism but rather of the Ottoman Muslim nationalism that guided Young Turk policy during World War I and subsequently motivated the postwar Anatolian resistance, and which was only replaced by Turkish nationalism following the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

## RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire est une étude de la vie et de l'œuvre du journaliste et activiste politique turc ottoman du dix-neuvième siècle, Ali Suavi, devenu célèbre pour la tentative de coup d'état qu'il a dirigé contre le Sultan Abdülhamit II en 1878. Il s'agit non seulement d'une étude de ses écrits dans les journaux turcs, mais aussi de ses ouvrages européennes, qui ont trop souvent été négligées. Ce mémoire comprend également un aperçu global des diverses façons par lesquelles notre image de Suavi a été déformée au cours des années, en particulier par l'historiographie nationaliste turque. Loin d'être un nationaliste ou protonationaliste turc, comme de nombreux chercheurs l'affirment, Ali Suavi était en effet un patriote ottoman avec des tendances panislamiques. On ne devrait pas comprendre Ali Suavi et la résistance populaire des ottomans musulmans contre l'occupation russe dans les montagnes Rhodopes (dans ce qui est maintenant la Bulgarie) pendant les années 1870 comme des précurseurs du nationalisme turc, mais plutôt comme des précurseurs du nationalisme ottoman musulman qui a guidé la politique des Jeunes-Turcs pendant la Première Guerre mondiale et a ensuite motivé la résistance anatolienne d'après-guerre, et qui n'a été remplacé par le nationalisme turc qu'après la fondation de la République turque en 1923.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Why Study Ali Suavi?

Whether the products of Ali Suavi's mind are worth analyzing in detail is a question which anyone willing to follow his adventurous life has to consider seriously.<sup>1</sup>

Thus begins Turkish sociologist Şerif Mardin's chapter on Ali Suavi from his classic work on the Young Ottomans, an Ottoman Turkish opposition group that formed in the 1860s and of which Ali Suavi was a prominent member. Pronouncements such as the above are in fact part of the reason why Ali Suavi is such a fascinating research subject. Not only did Suavi have an adventurous life and a dramatic death, but the products of his mind – that is, his writings – are in fact much worthier of analysis than Mardin's comments would have us believe. What is more, the literature that has sprung up related to Suavi, including Mardin's book, is dominated by judgments both positive and negative to such an extent that this secondary literature is itself worthy of analysis.

Ali Suavi is one of the most significant nineteenth-century Ottoman Turkish intellectuals. He is an influential figure, controversial and misrepresented in various ways, yet relatively neglected as a subject of serious study. He was an Ottoman patriot and also an Islamic revivalist and a strong advocate of Islamic unity, yet his writings on the Turks of

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<sup>1</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), 360.

Central Asia were placed among the histories of Turkish nationalism, and even led to his being labeled a Turkist. He has been referred to as a religious zealot, an egomaniac, and a turbaned revolutionary, among other things. A man of modest origins, Suavi came into conflict with the more elitist Young Ottomans, including Namık Kemal, who would subsequently portray Suavi as mentally unbalanced. He died in 1878 in an attempt to depose Sultan Abdülhamit II and restore Murat V to the throne, following which the Ottoman establishment did everything it could to sully his memory.

Since his death, Ali Suavi has been for the most part either vilified or eulogized in the literature. Works that deal with Ali Suavi in a more balanced manner are either somewhat lacking in analysis or else consist of a few pages devoted to him in works dealing with broader issues. Much of the attention he has received is more popular than scholarly, and even the more scholarly work on Suavi has been strongly influenced by politics. It is for this reason that the work that has been done on Suavi is itself worth studying.

The body of work on Ali Suavi is a particularly strong example of how our understanding of history and of important historical figures is shaped by the political needs of the day, of how history can be used and manipulated to serve certain purposes. In the case of Ali Suavi, it is primarily Turkish nationalist historiography that has complicated our understanding of this important figure.



## **Literature Review**

As mentioned above, much of the work that has been produced on Ali Suavi is not scholarly, but is clearly meant to either vilify or eulogize him. This includes not only the plays and fictionalized accounts but also many of the books and articles written by serious academics. The two books that are based on doctoral dissertations, one by İsmail Doğan and the other by Hüseyin Çelik, are the two secondary works on Suavi that I have considered generally reliable, and my account of Suavi's life is based primarily on the work of these two scholars.

This literature review, then, includes only the books that have been written about Ali Suavi. This is because I include a long and exhaustive discussion of all of the secondary works on Suavi in the body of Chapter V, which is devoted to the various portrayals of Suavi. The lesser works on Suavi will thus be introduced in the appropriate sections of Chapter V.

Almost everything that has been written about Ali Suavi is in Turkish. What is more, most of the small amount of material that has been written about Suavi in English is the work of Turkish scholars based in the United States, and has consisted of at most a chapter in a larger work. In general I have attempted to provide some small amount of background information on the more important Turkish authors whose work is discussed in this thesis. Many of their names will be familiar to anyone with a cursory knowledge of works on recent Ottoman and Turkish history, and some of them were not only academics but were active in government as well. In many other cases, however, the authors whose

work is discussed here are obscure figures about whom no information is readily available, but who happened to publish a brief article about Ali Suavi in some now-defunct periodical.

The first books and pamphlets published on Ali Suavi date to the 1940s and 1950s. In *Ali Suâvi'nin Türkçülüğü* (Ali Suavi's Turkism), historian İsmail Hami Danişmend emphasizes Suavi's work on the Turks of Central Asia in order to argue that he was a Turkist.<sup>2</sup> Nationalist poet and biographer Midhat Cemal Kuntay's *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi* (Ali Suavi, Turbaned Revolutionary) is largely biographical and consists mostly of lengthy excerpts from Suavi's writings.<sup>3</sup> It is a much more scholarly work than the other books from this period. In *Başveren İnkılâpçı* (Self-Sacrificing Revolutionary), journalist and politician Falih Rıfkı Atay emphasizes Ali Suavi's importance for the Turkish revolution and concludes that he died heroically.<sup>4</sup> Atay for the most part reiterates Danişmend's view of Suavi. However, he also briefly discusses some of the reasons behind the more negative portrayals of Ali Suavi.

Mehmet Erdül's recent *Başveren İnkılâpçı: Ali Suavi* (Self-Sacrificing Revolutionary: Ali Suavi) is written in the first person from Ali Suavi's point of view and glorifies his violent death.<sup>5</sup> Journalist Nazile Abbaslı's *Ali Suâvi'nin Düşünce Yapısı* (The Structure of Ali Suavi's Thought), which is based on her 1994 M.A. thesis, consists mostly of summaries of Ali Suavi's thought on various topics, with long passages quoted directly

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<sup>2</sup> İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Ali Suâvi'nin Türkçülüğü* (Istanbul: Vakıf Matbaası, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi* (Istanbul: Ahmet Halit Kitabevi, 1946).

<sup>4</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Başveren İnkılâpçı* (Istanbul: Dünya Yayınları, 1951).

<sup>5</sup> Mehmet Erdül, *Başveren İnkılâpçı: Ali Suavi* (Istanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 2002).

and very little analysis.<sup>6</sup> Politician and journalist Süleyman Kâni İrtem's *Sultan Murad ve Ali Suavi Olayı: Sarıklı İhtilâlcinin Çırağan Baskını* (Sultan Murat and the Ali Suavi Incident: The Turbaned Revolutionary's Çırağan Raid) focuses mostly on Murat, though the author concludes that Suavi's attempted coup might well have been successful if not for the swift intervention of the police.<sup>7</sup>

The above-mentioned chapter devoted to Ali Suavi in Şerif Mardin's book *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* is very informative, though the author's view of Suavi can be seen in the chapter title: "Ali Suavi: The Zealot."<sup>8</sup> Mardin's work on the Young Ottomans was originally published in 1962 and is strongly marked by the modernization theory that was popular at the time. Mardin also seems to embrace many of the negative views of Suavi expressed by earlier writers. Mardin's translations of Suavi's writings leave much to be desired, and the passages he selects seem specifically chosen to portray Suavi in a negative light.

Besides Mardin's work, the only other English source that I am aware of that goes into any detail on Ali Suavi is Kemal Karpat's 2001 book *The Politicization of Islam*.<sup>9</sup> While Karpat perpetuates some of the factual errors that plague the secondary literature – for example, the claim that Suavi was a *medrese* graduate – his broader discussion of Suavi is based not on such questionable earlier scholarship but rather on his own nuanced

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<sup>6</sup> Nazile Abbaslı, *Ali Suavi'nin Düşünce Yapısı* (Istanbul: Bilge Karınca Yayınları, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Süleyman Kâni İrtem, *Sultan Murad ve Ali Suavi Olayı: Sarıklı İhtilâlcinin Çırağan Baskını* (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 360.

<sup>9</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 129-31.

understanding of the events of the 1870s. Karpaz thus reaches a more accurate understanding of Suavi and of his motivations because he understands the historical context so well. Karpaz's discussion of the 1870s, and of the Rhodope Rebellion in particular, has strongly influenced the present work.

In the early 1990s the only two doctoral dissertations on Ali Suavi were published in book form. The first of these is İsmail Dođan's 1989 doctoral thesis for the Ankara University Department of Education, published in 1991 as *Tanzimatın İki Ucu: Mnif Pařa ve Ali Suavi (Sosyo-pedagojik bir Karřılařtırma)* (The Two Extremes of the Tanzimat: Mnif Pařa and Ali Suavi (A Socio-Pedagogic Comparison)). In his book Dođan finds that while Ali Suavi and Mnif Pařa were both encyclopedists who believed strongly in progress through education, they differed in cultural outlook. Mnif Pařa enthusiastically embraced Western cultural products while Ali Suavi was more suspicious of the West and often looked instead to the Islamic classics.<sup>10</sup> Dođan has also written several articles about Suavi that explore his contributions as an educator and encyclopedist.<sup>11</sup> He argues that Suavi's contributions to Turkish education and cultural history are as important as his place in Turkish political history.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> İsmail Dođan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu: Mnif Pařa ve Ali Suavi (Sosyo-pedagojik bir Karřılařtırma)* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> İsmail Dođan, "Eđitimci Ali Suavi (1839-1878) ve Galatasaray Lisesindeki Uygulamaları," in *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yldnm Uluslararası Sempozyumu: Ankara: 31 Ekim - 3 Kasım 1989* (Ankara: Trk Tarih Kurumu, 1994), 535.

<sup>12</sup> İsmail Dođan, "Bir Eđitimci Olarak Ali Suavi (1839-1878) ve Trk Eđitimine Katkıları," *Milli Eđitim* 92 (December 1989): 12.

The most important scholarly work on Ali Suavi to date is Turkish scholar and politician Hüseyin Çelik's 1994 book *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi* (Ali Suavi and His Era), which is based on his 1991 Istanbul University Institute of Social Sciences doctoral thesis "Ali Suavi Hayatı ve Eserleri" (Ali Suavi, His Life and Works).<sup>13</sup> This book stands apart from most of the other work on Suavi due to the author's careful scholarship and also due to its sheer length. Çelik devotes almost 450 pages of this nearly 800 page volume to Ali Suavi's life story, along the way correcting a multitude of factual errors, baseless claims and unjustified interpretations from earlier works. Çelik's account of Suavi's life is unlikely to be surpassed.

Çelik also devotes 80 pages to a description of Ali Suavi's various works, which is then followed by almost 150 pages covering Ali Suavi's thought. This latter section explores Suavi's thought one topic at a time, with topics ranging from "Monarchy-Despotism and Administrative Control Mechanisms" to "His Views on Turkish Literature." However for the most part Çelik sticks to description and summaries of Suavi's thought rather than analysis and interpretation. Finally, Çelik's conclusion consists of a mere eight pages primarily devoted to setting the record straight on a number of matters, including claims that Suavi was a British or Russian agent. Indeed, that Çelik does not go much beyond sorting documented facts from baseless claims says much about the low academic standards of many of the earlier works on Suavi. While Çelik's work is a major contribution, there is much that he did not explore in his book.

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<sup>13</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994).

One of Çelik's most significant contributions is that he unearths information on Suavi's life in London and Paris and the important friendships he made there, something that earlier researchers had failed to do. Çelik traces Suavi's friendships with the Orientalist Charles Wells and the Turcophile diplomat David Urquhart, among others, and discusses their influence on his writing. Doğan discusses some of Suavi's French works, but Çelik is the only researcher to have done extensive research in European libraries and archives. Çelik then is the only source for the years 1871-1876 when Suavi was the only Young Ottoman remaining in Europe.

Hüseyin Çelik also published a shorter work in 1993, entitled simply *Ali Suavî*, that consists of a greatly condensed and simplified version of his thesis accompanied by over 100 pages of extracts from Suavi's various writings.<sup>14</sup> This work is clearly meant to be accessible to a wider non-academic audience, and towards this end Çelik provides the modern Turkish equivalents of difficult Ottoman Turkish words and phrases in parentheses.

### **Approach**

My primary concern in this thesis has been to produce an account of Ali Suavi's life and work that not only breaks with Orientalist and Turkish nationalist historiography, but that actually examines the specific ways in which our understanding of this significant figure has been distorted by these types of historiography. At the same time, I have made every effort to avoid regarding Suavi from a narrow area studies perspective, to this end

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<sup>14</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993).

drawing on examples outside of Turkish studies in order to illustrate relevant larger trends in nineteenth-century world history. Also, the fact that Hüseyin Çelik has provided us with a reliable account of Ali Suavi's life enables us to proceed directly to more interesting avenues of inquiry.

Chapter I provides historical background, beginning with a brief discussion of significant nineteenth-century phenomena including European imperialism and the rise of nation-states and nationalism. It includes an overview of the Ottoman reform movement and of the Young Ottoman movement with which Suavi was involved.

Chapter II is devoted to Ali Suavi's life, based largely on the more reliable secondary sources but also utilizing passages from the small amount of autobiographical material included in Suavi's publications.

Chapter III is a survey of Suavi's writing from the period 1864-1870, most of which consists of Turkish newspaper articles. Suavi's work is discussed here in roughly chronological order to illustrate how his concerns and ideas evolved over time, whereas most other works on Suavi discuss his thought by topic. Many of the passages quoted here were not previously available in English translation.

Chapter IV deals with Suavi's writings from the period 1871-1878. During this period Suavi published a multitude of books and pamphlets, many of them in French or English. Most of these works have been either neglected or misrepresented in the literature on

Suavi, a situation this chapter is meant to rectify. Also covered in this chapter is Suavi's Turkish newspaper work from 1876-1878. As in the previous chapter, the works are discussed in roughly chronological order rather than by topic, allowing us to see how Suavi's concerns followed political developments during these tumultuous years.

Chapter V is a study of how Suavi has been studied over the years, of how his image and his legacy have been used and distorted. From his earliest detractors to his latest admirers, Suavi has rarely been the object of impartial attention. This chapter traces the various approaches to the study of Ali Suavi over the years, in the process examining the reasons behind these approaches. Of particular interest is the Turkish nationalist approach, which attempted to claim Suavi as an early Turkist and advocate of secularizing reform.

Chapter VI represents an attempt to move beyond the misrepresentations inherent in the earlier approaches to Suavi that were discussed in the previous chapter. It first addresses Suavi's image and style of writing, both of which have been the object of critical attention, before moving on to a discussion of Suavi's motives in carrying out the coup attempt that would cost him his life. It includes further discussion of Turkish nationalist historiography as it relates to Suavi and the Young Ottomans. It then concludes by situating Suavi as an Ottoman Muslim patriot and as an active participant in trends during the 1870s that presaged the later emergence of what Erik Zürcher explicitly refers to as Ottoman Muslim nationalism during the Young Turk era and the various resistance movements that followed World War I.



Our understanding of Ali Suavi has long been distorted by Turkish nationalist historiography, while both Turkish and Arab nationalist historiography have hindered our understanding of events ranging from the Young Ottoman movement of the 1860s and the Rhodope Rebellion of the 1870s to the post-World War I Ottoman resistance in Anatolia and northern Syria and even the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927. Attempting to situate Suavi in his historical Ottoman context thus entails a far-reaching reevaluation of events that happened long after his death in 1878. All of these events make much more sense when viewed as part of a larger Ottoman Muslim solidarity movement that assumed a decidedly nationalist character during the Young Turk era, and in the case of the Turkish Republic was only undermined by the active imposition of secular Turkish nationalism by the Kemalist government beginning in 1923-1924.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **The World in the Nineteenth Century**

In order to better understand what was happening to the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, it is helpful to look at some of the major trends and developments that characterized the nineteenth century world as a whole or the broader Islamic world. I include here a brief discussion of imperialism, the advance of the nation-state and nationalism, and the Islamic modernist movement in order to provide some more general background on the emergence of an activist intellectual like Ali Suavi and on the historical events that influenced his actions and activism. Imperialism and nationalism were of particular global importance in the late nineteenth century, from around the time Suavi became an adult. His early death of course ended his involvement in politics and activism, but his efforts during his life can be considered part of larger trends that continued after his death. It is for this reason that a discussion of the historical background for Ali Suavi's life does not necessarily end in 1878 when Suavi's life ended.

An important feature of the nineteenth century is imperialism, and in particular British and French imperialism. While large parts of the world came under the direct control of the imperial great powers in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was confronted

with becoming part of a more “informal empire,” namely the “empire of free trade.”<sup>15</sup> C. A. Bayly explains that “once the British and French had forced the Ottomans to reduce their tariffs in 1838, the attempts of the sultans and the rulers of Egypt to build up small industries to compete with the West were doomed to failure.”<sup>16</sup> The Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention of 1838 opened the empire to free trade and lifted all the government monopolies, and other countries soon secured the same privileges as Britain.<sup>17</sup> It is this type of interference, backed up by military might, that would give rise to calls for independence even in nominally independent states. At the same time, it is true that “the Ottoman state did not always use its influence in the market very wisely.”<sup>18</sup> These two problems, external interference and internal mismanagement, figure prominently in Ali Suavi’s writings.

In *A History of the Modern World*, R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton write that

only a dozen years, from 1859 to 1871, were enough to see the formation of a new German empire, a unified kingdom of Italy, a Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, drastic internal changes in tsarist Russia, the triumph of central authority in the United States, the creation of a united Dominion of Canada, and the modernizing or “Europeanization” of the empire of Japan. All these disparate events reflected profound changes brought in by the railroad, steamship, and telegraph, which made the communication of ideas, exchange of goods, and movement of people over wide areas more frequent and easier than ever before. Politically, all represented the advancing principle of the nation-state.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2004), 137.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 47.

<sup>18</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 179.

<sup>19</sup> R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 510.

In the case of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, the state was basically attempting to define the nation that it represented, at the same time as it was trying to prevent the breaking away of smaller nation-states from the Ottoman domains. Regarding the relationship between nationalism and imperialism, Bayly writes that “the experience of imperial expansion sharpened patriotic identities, amongst both the conquerors and the conquered.”<sup>20</sup> In the Ottoman case, the upsurge in Ottoman patriotism beginning in the 1860s would be in the context of resistance to interference by the imperial powers and would receive impetus from the loss of territories particularly in the Balkans. In the 1870s the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, with refugees pouring into Istanbul from the Balkans and the Russian armies practically at the gates of the city, would create an environment particularly conducive to patriotic organization and in fact is an important part of the context for Suavi’s attempted coup.

Bayly and Leila Fawaz write that

nationalism was globalized after the 1850s along the lines of the telegraph and the steamship. It was precisely nationalism as a newly international phenomenon that forced the imperial powers to the publicity and propaganda offensive that we now call Orientalism, or the new imperialism.<sup>21</sup>

The Orientalism that Edward Said discusses in his book by that title is the particular variety of Orientalism that was directed against the Arabs.<sup>22</sup> The Orientalist claims regarding the Ottoman Empire included the assertion that the empire was in terminal

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<sup>20</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 228.

<sup>21</sup> C. A. Bayly and Leila Fawaz, “Introduction: The Connected World of Empires,” in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 10.

<sup>22</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

decline – in other words, that all of its problems were due to internal decay rather than external interference.<sup>23</sup> Another important building block of the Orientalist view of the Ottoman Empire is the “Eastern Question,” which really is nothing more than the question of how the powers would divide up the Ottoman territories.<sup>24</sup> Much of Ali Suavi’s writings would be focused on countering this type of propaganda.

Other parts of the world were also subject to this type of propaganda offensive. While the Ottoman Empire was portrayed as the “sick man of Europe,” China was the “sick man of Asia.”<sup>25</sup> In the case of China, it was also claimed that the “Confucian mind” was somehow resistant to modernity.<sup>26</sup>

Closely related to all of these developments is the emergence of Islamic modernism, a movement whose origins can be traced to the first half of the nineteenth century but which came to prominence in the 1860s with the Young Ottomans in Istanbul and similar thinkers in places like Cairo and Tunis.<sup>27</sup> The Islamic modernists “sought to reconcile Islamic faith and modern values such as constitutionalism, as well as cultural revival, nationalism, freedom of religious interpretation, scientific investigation, modern-style education, women’s rights, and a bundle of other themes.”<sup>28</sup> Charles Kurzman explains that

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<sup>23</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, “What Ottoman History and Ottomanist Historiography Are – Or, Rather, Are Not,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (July 2002): 199.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sick\\_man\\_of\\_Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sick_man_of_Asia), accessed May 19, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 179.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 67-9.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Kurzman, “Introduction: The Modernist Islamic Movement,” in *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Kurzman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

the authors and activists engaged in this movement saw the tension between Islamic faith and modern values as a historical accident, not an inherent feature of Islam. The modern period both required and permitted this accident to be repaired: the threat of European domination made repair necessary, and the modern values associated with European domination made repair possible.<sup>29</sup>

Islamic modernism is – as its name suggests – defined both by its being Islamic and modernist. Thus it can be described as “not simply ‘modern’ (a feature of modernity) but also ‘modernist’ (a proponent of modernity).”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore it was self-consciously Islamic, and “activists were not simply Muslims but also wished to preserve and improve Islamic faith in the modern world.”<sup>31</sup> The fact that it was a modernist movement serves to distinguish it from earlier Islamic reform movements as well as from traditionalists. Islamic modernism gave way in the middle of the twentieth century to secularist ideologies on the one hand and religious revivalism on the other.<sup>32</sup>

Islamic modernists by no means constituted a monolithic group, and in fact they espoused widely divergent views and positions on a whole range of topics. As Charles Kurzman explains, “modern values included both state-building and limits on state power; elitism and egalitarianism; discipline and liberty; Europhilism and anti-imperialism.”<sup>33</sup> In the case of Ali Suavi, his falling out with some of his fellow Young Ottoman Islamic modernists can be traced at least in part to important differences of opinion regarding the sultanate and constitutionalism.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.

## The Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, military weakness in the face of European might, increasing European interference in Ottoman internal affairs, and the rise of nationalist sentiment among the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire led to a series of reforms meant to address these problems. The era of the *Tanzimat*, or “Reorderings,” has been described as “a period of sustained legislation and reform that modernized Ottoman state and society, contributed to the further centralization of administration, and brought increased state participation in Ottoman society between 1839 and 1876.”<sup>34</sup> The Ottoman reforms of the nineteenth century were “undertaken to revitalize the empire and so to preserve it in a world increasingly ordered by European power and civilization.”<sup>35</sup> While earlier reform efforts had “looked back to the golden age of the empire for their model,” the reformers of the nineteenth century increasingly looked to the West for inspiration.<sup>36</sup> And while reform efforts in the eighteenth century had primarily involved the military, the *Tanzimat* reforms brought about changes in a wide range of areas.

In order to counter the rise of nationalism, the Ottomans began to search for a basis of identity that would instill loyalty among the various subject peoples of the empire. Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*), or loyalty to the Ottoman state based on an Ottoman identity

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<sup>34</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 55. The *Tanzimat* officially began in 1839. However, different historians give different dates for the end of the *Tanzimat*. For some, the *Tanzimat* ended in 1871 as the last of its original architects died and Sultan Abdülaziz grew increasingly despotic. For others, it ended in 1876 with the proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution, or else with the beginning of Abdülhamit’s reign earlier that same year.

<sup>35</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876* (New York: Gordian Press, 1973), 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

that transcended religious and ethnic divisions, was a central element of the *Tanzimat* and would remain the official state policy until the end of the empire. The Ottoman Citizenship Law of 1869 “substituted modern political definitions of nationality and naturalization for the old criterion of conversion to Islam.”<sup>37</sup> Everyone living in Ottoman territory would now be considered an Ottoman subject barring proof to the contrary, and Ottoman subjects were henceforth required to obtain official permission before becoming a citizen of another state. This was aimed at curbing the practice where Ottoman Christians gained special privileges by adopting foreign nationality.<sup>38</sup> However, none of this stopped the nationalist movements, and under Abdülhamit II there was an increased emphasis on Islam as a unifying factor. Some Ottoman Turkish intellectuals later began emphasizing Turkish identity, and this culminated in the secular Turkish nationalism of the Turkish Republic. These developments are important for understanding the late Ottoman Empire, as they represent an effort to find an ideological basis on which to base the modernizing and centralizing Ottoman state.

The Ottoman reforms were carried out for a number of reasons. While in many cases a particular reform can be attributed to some specific and readily identifiable cause, at the same time the reform movement as a whole was a complex affair that took on a life of its own and thus does not always lend itself to such simple cause and effect explanations. The origin of the reform movement is generally considered to be the Ottomans’ realization of their own military weakness in the face of European and Russian might,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 262-3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 263.



with the direct threat coming mainly from Russia.<sup>39</sup> The early reform efforts of the late eighteenth century were thus meant to address this weakness, focusing on the military and on military education. Then in the early nineteenth century, the Ottomans increasingly found themselves under direct pressure from the Europeans as well as from the Greek nationalist movement within the empire. In the following decades some reforms were actually carried out under direct European pressure. As an example,

In February 1867 the French government, supported by England and Austria, presented a note to the Porte urging a more active policy of reform, and setting forth detailed suggestions. The Sultan was violently opposed to the idea, but gave way to the pressure of events. For the next three years Âli and Fuad Paşas ran the state and a stream of new laws and institutions followed.”<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, many of the reforms were intended to promote Ottomanism in an effort to counter nationalist sentiment, this being a major theme of the *Tanzimat*. And while Ottoman reforms were often dismissed in the West as mere diplomatic maneuvers, as efforts to avoid further European pressure by carrying out superficial reforms, the reform movement as a whole proved not to be superficial in the least.

Looking at the reform movement as a whole, it might be suggested that the Ottoman Empire was modernizing in any case, as a natural and indigenous process, and that many of the reasons discussed above served merely to shape the particulars of the modernization process. However, the fact that Europe was militarily powerful and

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<sup>39</sup> Kemal Karpat explains that “during the second half of the eighteenth century Russia emerged as the most formidable enemy of the Ottoman state and became the principal cause of its disintegration.” Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 71. Russian expansion often came at Ottoman expense. Russian expansion in Central Asia, the significance of the Bosphorus for Russian trade, and Russian support for the various insurrections in the Balkans are issues that Suavi discusses in works that are included here in Chapter IV.

<sup>40</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 121.

technologically advanced was probably enough to convince many of the superiority of European culture and Western civilization. As Bernard Lewis explains,

The general feeling of Europe was that the ancient institutions and structure of the Empire were barbarous and irretrievably bad, and that only the adoption, as rapidly as possible, of a European form of government and way of life would admit Turkey to the rank and privileges of a civilized state. This view was urged on Turkish statesmen with considerable vigour by the governments and embassies of the European powers, and eventually came to be accepted, at least tacitly, by a larger and larger proportion of a Turkish ruling class, which was deeply aware of the power, wealth, and progress of Europe as compared with their own backwardness, poverty, and weakness.<sup>41</sup>

### **The *Tanzimat* Reforms**

It was during the reign of Mahmut II (1808-1839) that the idea of an Ottoman state began to emerge, “composed of peoples of diverse nationalities and religions, based on secular principles of sovereignty as contrasted with the medieval concept of an Islamic empire.”<sup>42</sup>

It was also during his reign that the twin problems of foreign intervention and nationalism among the *millet*s really came to the fore.<sup>43</sup> The doctrine of Ottomanism which began to develop during this period stressed the equality of all Ottoman subjects in an attempt to undermine the various national movements that threatened the empire.<sup>44</sup>

The Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century carried out unprecedented reorganization, centralization and expansion of central government institutions. As Justin McCarthy

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>42</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 90.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 96. At this point the word *millet* referred to a non-Muslim community in the Ottoman Empire, for example, the Greek Orthodox community. Later the word took on its modern meaning of “nation.”

<sup>44</sup> Roderic Davison, “Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman Response,” in *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 39-40.

explains,

the organized decentralization of the Ottoman provinces had allowed them to govern a wide area for hundreds of years. Now it meant that everything from collecting sufficient taxes to policing borders was more difficult in the Ottoman Empire than it was in the states of its more centralized enemies.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of competition with its more centralized enemies, the Ottoman state “had now acquired its own *raison d’être* and ended up being far less tolerant and accommodative of the rival groups and institutions.”<sup>46</sup> According to Stanford Shaw, over the course of the nineteenth century “the scope of government was gradually broadened to include all areas of life. The whole assumption of the *Tanzimat* was that reform meant codification, systematization, and control, even in those areas where actual reforms were not needed.”<sup>47</sup>

The year 1826 witnessed the elimination or weakening of two important rival institutions that could have potentially hindered the reform effort if left intact. The destruction of the more autonomous janissaries, known in Ottoman history as the “Auspicious Event,” and their replacement with modern infantry units under what would eventually become a Ministry of War, assured centralized political control of the military.<sup>48</sup>

The other major development that helped set the stage for the *Tanzimat* reforms involved

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<sup>45</sup> Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire* (London: Arnold, 2001), 9.

<sup>46</sup> Murat Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World From the Seventh Century to the Present* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000), 75.

<sup>47</sup> Stanford Jay Shaw, “Some Aspects of the Aims and Achievements of the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Reformers,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 33.

<sup>48</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 40.

the administration of *vakif*. In 1826, Mahmut II created a Directorate of Pious Foundations to centralize *vakif* administration. This allowed the sultan to “centralize the collection and expenditure of *Evkaf* revenues in his own hands, receiving them from the collectors and administrators and paying out what was necessary for the upkeep of religious buildings, the salaries of religious personnel, and other pious purposes.”<sup>49</sup> This was a development of monumental importance. Under the following sultans it became “standard practice” for the state to divert *vakif* revenues for other purposes, and this “gravely weakened the power of the ulema” to oppose the sultan.<sup>50</sup> This then helped facilitate the reforms that followed.

The *Tanzimat* officially began on November 3, 1839 with the promulgation of the *Tanzimat* Charter, the *Hatt-ı Şerif* of Gülhane. This document granted equality under the law to all persons regardless of religion in an effort to promote Ottomanism. It was hoped that such guarantees “would strengthen the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire by increasing the loyalty of its subjects, Christian as well as Muslim, and by diminishing separatist tendencies.”<sup>51</sup>

This trend was continued with the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of February 18, 1856, which reaffirmed the *Tanzimat* Charter and went even further in granting equality regardless of religion. The provisions of this decree “were mostly directed to the non-Muslim *millet*s

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<sup>49</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>51</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 40-1.

and aimed at ending their desire for autonomy or independence.”<sup>52</sup> The *Hatt-ı Hümayun* was issued due to pressure from the British and the French, who following the Crimean War “used their status as allies of the Ottoman Empire to urge the Turks toward further westernization and more effective application of the doctrine of equality.”<sup>53</sup> But while the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* promised legal equality based on common Ottoman citizenship, at the same time it left the *millet* system in place with its inherent inequalities.<sup>54</sup> As Niyazi Berkes explains, during this period

the economic interests of the European powers pressed for secularization while the political-cum-religious interests of the same powers demanded the perpetuation of communal differentiations ranging from the legal and political to the educational field. The two interests were so contradictory and impelling that the application of the Tanzimat ideas became a matter, not simply of governmental administration or of politics, but of a religious-cultural nature transcending the political, administrative, and even economic problems.<sup>55</sup>

An important development in the intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire was the establishment of the *Tercüme Odası* (Translation Bureau) by Mahmut II. The Translation Bureau was founded to translate government correspondence, but it gradually evolved into “a college of foreign languages... [where] future Turkish intellectuals got their start.”<sup>56</sup> Westerners were also employed, including the English Orientalist Redhouse, and the young Ottoman bureaucrats who worked there were exposed not only to Western languages (primarily French), but also to Western ideas.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Şerif Mardin

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<sup>52</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 125.

<sup>53</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 52.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 147.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>57</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 29.

notes that “with the increased number of foreign experts employed by the Porte in the 1840’s and 1850’s, Western popular as well as serious literature became more widely available in the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>58</sup>

Early reforms in education played a major role in perpetuating the reform movement, as many of the products of the new *Tanzimat* schools went on to become reformers themselves. In 1838 it was decided to open new eight-year *rüşdiye* (adolescence) schools, and the first of these schools was opened in 1840.<sup>59</sup> The *rüşdiye* schools provided a modern secular secondary education to young men who chose not to pursue a career as a traditional religious scholar.<sup>60</sup> Ali Suavi himself was educated in a *rüşdiye* school, though it is often erroneously asserted that he had received a *medrese* education. Also in 1838, a school (the *Mekteb-i Maarif-i Adliye*, or School for Secular Learning) was founded with the specific purpose of training bureaucrats for government employment.<sup>61</sup> Its curriculum included instruction in French, Arabic, geography, political science, history, and mathematics.<sup>62</sup> Another school (the *Mekteb-i Ulum-u Edebiye*, or School of Literary Sciences) was opened around the same time to train government translators.<sup>63</sup> In 1845 a commission was set up to examine the issue of education, and in its 1846 report it “recommended not the total reform or abolition of the Muslim schools, but the creation of a parallel educational system from primary schools, through secondary, to a university.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 194-5.

<sup>59</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 106.

<sup>60</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 47.

<sup>61</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 33.

<sup>62</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 48.

<sup>63</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 106.

<sup>64</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 45.

One of the major problems the new schools faced was a shortage of qualified teachers, and this was the reason for the opening in 1846 of a teacher-training school (*Dar ul-Muallimin*).<sup>65</sup> 1868 then saw the opening of a new French-style *lycée* (the Galatasaray *lycée*) where the language of instruction was French.<sup>66</sup> Ali Suavi would briefly serve as director of this prestigious institution.

The *Tanzimat* educational system led to the creation of a new elite which “adopted European tastes in dress and in social intercourse, in literature and in thought,” developed a sense of group identity, became “the bearers of public opinion,” and “proceeded to form political associations to give expression to such opinions.”<sup>67</sup> There was a great deal of interdependence between political and literary life, where the major writers were also at the forefront in the “movement of ideas.”<sup>68</sup> The *Tanzimat* schools were responsible for the creation of this new class of bureaucrats and intellectuals, while the traditional *medreses* “became the refuge of the impoverished peasantry.”<sup>69</sup> The ulema on the government councils “began to be replaced by a new type of educated man – the product of the secular schools of higher learning.”<sup>70</sup>

### **Turkish Book and Newspaper Publishing**

Books were printed in the Ottoman Empire as early as the 1490s, when Jews who had

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<sup>65</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 107.

<sup>66</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 163.

<sup>67</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, “The Modernization of Turkey in Historical and Comparative Perspective,” in *Social Change and Politics in Turkey: A Structural-Historical Analysis*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 100.

<sup>68</sup> Alessio Bombaci, *Storia della Letteratura Turca* (Milan: Nuova Accademia Editrice, 1956), 422.

<sup>69</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 142.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

fled Spain set up presses in Istanbul and Salonika. An Armenian press was set up in 1567 with equipment brought from Italy, and in 1627 Nicomedus Metaxas purchased a press from London and began printing books in Greek. However, there were no Turkish books printed until İbrahim Müteferrika (1670?-1745) set up his press in 1729.<sup>71</sup> A total of approximately 180 Turkish books were published in the period from 1729 to 1830. Ottoman printed books then began appearing regularly in the 1830s.<sup>72</sup>

The *Takvimhane-i Âmire*, a printing house founded in 1831 to publish the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi*, also printed books, and beginning in 1840 anyone could pay to have a book printed there. More publishing houses were opened in the 1830s, 40s and 50s, many of which printed textbooks for use in the growing number of schools.<sup>73</sup> Along with the rise in literacy brought about by the expansion of public education during the *Tanzimat*, these new publishing houses produced “almost 3000 books during the next half-century.”<sup>74</sup> Improvements to the copyright laws in 1857 also led to an increase in the number of publishers and publications,<sup>75</sup> and publishing activity continued to grow as the century went by, with an estimated 3,200 books published in the much shorter period from 1876 to 1890.<sup>76</sup> By 1883 there were 54 publishing houses in Istanbul alone.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Selim Nüzhet Gerçek, *Türk Matbaacılığı*, vol. 1, *Müteferrika Matbaası* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1939), 26-30, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Jale Baysal, “Turkish Publishing Activities before and after the New Alphabet,” *Anatolica* 8 (1981): 117, 122. *Divan* refers to a collection of poetry, specifically of classical Ottoman poetry.

<sup>73</sup> Server R. İskit, *Türkiyede Neşriyat Hareketleri Tarihine Bir Bakış* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1939), 29-30, 34, 38.

<sup>74</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 128.

<sup>75</sup> Server R. İskit, *Türkiyede Neşriyat Hareketleri*, 50-4.

<sup>76</sup> Jale Baysal, “Turkish Publishing Activities before and after the New Alphabet,” 118.

<sup>77</sup> Server R. İskit, *Türkiyede Neşriyat Hareketleri*, 97.



The first newspaper to appear in the Ottoman Empire was published by the French Embassy in Istanbul from 1796 to 1798, and other French newspapers were published in Izmir in the 1820s. The “first indigenous newspaper published in the Middle East” appeared in Egypt in 1828 in Turkish and Arabic, and Sultan Mahmut II followed up in 1831 with the *Moniteur ottoman*.<sup>78</sup> A Turkish version appeared later the same year under the title *Takvim-i Vekayi* (Calendar of Events), its target audience being made up primarily of government officials.<sup>79</sup>

The first non-official newspaper to appear in Turkish was the *Ceride-i Havadis* (Journal of News) in 1840. Started by the English journalist William Churchill and passed to his son on his death in 1864, the *Ceride-i Havadis* “enjoyed a virtual monopoly of journalism in the Turkish language” until İbrahim Şinasi and Çapanzade Agah Efendi founded the *Tercüman-i Ahval* (Interpreter of Conditions) in 1860.<sup>80</sup> As its circulation grew,

the editors of the *Ceride-i Havadis* began to simplify the language in which the journal was written, gradually abandoning the cumbersome chancery style which they had previously shared with the official gazette, and adopting a simpler and more direct form of language. Turkish journalese was born in their columns.<sup>81</sup>

Journalists such as Mustafa Sami, Hafız Müşfik and Ali Âli would later be remembered by the Young Ottomans as the writers responsible for the creation of a new journalistic style and language.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 94-5.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 146-7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>82</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 257-8.

The *Tercüman-i Ahval* was the first non-official Turkish newspaper to be published by Ottoman Turks, and “the first newspaper of opinion in the real sense.”<sup>83</sup> It also has the distinction of being the first newspaper to be suspended for displeasing the Ottoman government.<sup>84</sup> After the government shut down the paper for two weeks in 1862, Şinasi left and founded his own newspaper, *Tasvir-i Efkâr* (Illustration of Opinion).<sup>85</sup> *Tasvir-i Efkâr* played a very important role in Ottoman intellectual life during this period.<sup>86</sup> The most prominent future member of the Young Ottomans, Namık Kemal, came under Şinasi’s influence and began working with him, first as a translator and later as an essayist. Kemal became the editor in 1865 when Şinasi fled to France. The paper grew more overtly political under his editorship, while Ali Suavi’s *Muhbir*, started in 1867, was even “more radical in tone and content.”<sup>87</sup> Many of the writers for these papers fled to Europe after coming under increasing pressure from the government, continuing to write and publish from abroad. Namık Kemal, the poet Ziya Bey, and Suavi all fled to France in 1867 when their writings created problems with the authorities.<sup>88</sup> This group of intellectuals active in the 1860s and 1870s, though they were far from being a homogeneous group, became known collectively as the *Yeni Osmanlılar*, or in English as the Young Ottomans. Şerif Mardin describes them as the “earliest modern Turkish intelligentsia.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 197.

<sup>84</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 259.

<sup>85</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 147-8.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>89</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 9.

## **The Young Ottomans and the Constitution**

As we have seen, in the 1860s the Young Ottomans began to criticize the Ottoman government using the relatively new medium of the newspaper. Among other things, they criticized the secularism of the Tanzimat reforms, uncritical borrowing from the West, and European interference in Ottoman affairs. The Young Ottomans were staunch advocates of Islamic unity in the face of European imperialism, and expressed their discontent with Westernizing reforms that seemed to benefit the Christian Ottomans at the expense of the Muslims. While the Young Ottomans were among the very first pan-Islamists, Sultan Abdülhamit II would later use pan-Islamism to promote loyalty to himself as the caliph and to intimidate European leaders with the prospect of Muslim uprisings in the colonies. Since Ali Suavi himself will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapters, this section will deal more with Kemal and Ziya.

The Young Ottoman newspaper *Hürriyet* (Liberty) first appeared in London in 1868, and both Kemal and Ziya were closely involved in its publication. The first issue began with the two major themes of the Young Ottomans, Ottoman patriotism and a demand for representative government.<sup>90</sup> The Young Ottomans believed that a constitution was needed to protect the individual from the tyranny of the government. In addition, they thought that participation in an Ottoman parliament would promote Ottoman patriotism among the different groups in the empire and at the same time “provide a harmless outlet for national feelings” by giving these groups a voice in government.<sup>91</sup> The constitutional

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<sup>90</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 154-5.

<sup>91</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 132.

movement hoped to see their plans carried out when Murat, the heir-apparent, became sultan.<sup>92</sup> They had problems with the increasingly autocratic Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876), and wished to see him replaced by a new sultan who would be more amenable to their plans.

While the Young Ottomans did not break with the Ottomanism of the *Tanzimat*, they were critical of its secularism. In their view the *Tanzimat* reforms represented a concession to the Western powers, and they were also critical of the fact that the reforms were not limited by the *şeriat*.<sup>93</sup> Namık Kemal criticized the *Tanzimat* for its separation of state and religion, which in his view “not only damaged the religious foundation of the state but also cleared the way for European interference” on behalf of the non-Muslim *millets*.<sup>94</sup> Şerif Mardin writes that “the Young Ottomans ‘invented’ Pan-Islamism.”<sup>95</sup> While “an amorphous proto-Pan-Islamism had for some time been implicit in the Young Ottoman position,” it was after their return from exile that the idea of Islamic union became more explicit in their discussions, for example in Namık Kemal’s 1872 writings in the newspaper *İbret* (Admonition).<sup>96</sup>

Namık Kemal believed that it was possible to borrow technology from the West while keeping out unwanted cultural influences. Rather than importing Western legal codes, Kemal advocated the derivation of modern legal codes from the *fiqh*, which he regarded

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<sup>92</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 300.

<sup>93</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 163-4.

<sup>94</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 217.

<sup>95</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 60.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

as the “greatest monument of the Islamic civilization.”<sup>97</sup> Kemal argued for the creation of a constitution based on a natural law which he claimed was rooted in the *şeriat*, but which in the West had been discovered by philosophical deduction since the West lacked a *şeriat*.<sup>98</sup>

While the anti-*Tanzimat* movement exemplified by the Young Ottomans can be described as “an amalgam of constitutionalism and religious nationalism,” at the same time it represented a sort of revolt of the Turkish element of the Ottoman Empire “against its economic and political nonentity.”<sup>99</sup> While the non-Muslim Ottomans had their *millet* organizations and nationalist sentiment was taking hold among the various non-Turkish groups, the Ottoman Turks lacked any such community organization or group sentiment and “continued to place themselves directly under the state which was no longer an Islamic state.”<sup>100</sup>

The constitution that the Young Ottomans had long agitated for finally became a reality in 1876. Sultan Abdülaziz was deposed on May 30, 1876 and Prince Murat became Sultan Murat V. On June 4, Abdülaziz was found dead in his apartment, and while it was apparently a suicide there were rumors that he had been assassinated to prevent his return to the throne. Murat was already of fragile mental health, and now his condition grew even worse. He was deposed on September 1, and Abdülhamit II (1876-1909) became the

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<sup>97</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 216.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

new sultan.<sup>101</sup> The Ottoman Constitution, which was drafted the same year, was promulgated on December 23, 1876. This was just a few days after Midhat Paşa, the driving force behind the implementation of the Constitution, was reappointed Grand Vizier by Abdülhamit.<sup>102</sup>

Sultan Abdülhamit ultimately prorogued the Ottoman Parliament and suspended the Constitution on February 14, 1878. This was facilitated by the Russian war of 1877-1878.<sup>103</sup> Concerning the fallout from the entire constitutional experience, Şerif Mardin writes that

the most important result of [the Young Ottoman] propagandistic efforts was not so much the proclamation of the Ottoman constitution as the establishment of the belief that Sultan Abdülhamid had perpetrated a crime in suspending it. It is this belief, which would not have been widely held before the appearance of the Young Ottomans, which fed the underground opposition to the sultan between 1878 and 1908.<sup>104</sup>

Sultan Abdülhamit's rule grew increasingly autocratic, lasting for over thirty years. The Ottoman Constitution would not be reinstated until the revolution of 1908.

Under Abdülhamit, Islamism became the “most widespread ideological force in the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>105</sup> It was used as “an ideological weapon... to counter the imperialism of the Western powers as well as the minority nationalist movements.”<sup>106</sup> This emphasis on Islamism and on the Caliphate had actually begun under Abdülaziz, but it was more

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<sup>101</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 163-7.

<sup>102</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 164.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>104</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 403.

<sup>105</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 259.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

fully realized under Abdülhamit and is often closely associated with his long reign.<sup>107</sup> Pan-Islamism at this point developed in response to Pan-Slavism and European imperialism, and on an international scale Roderic Davison characterizes it as “a futile search for military aid and a sentimental attachment to the concept of the caliphate.”<sup>108</sup> However, within the Ottoman Empire it contributed to “a sort of Islamic patriotism” coupled with rising anti-European sentiment, and Ottoman diplomacy grew “more unyielding than it had previously been.”<sup>109</sup> Abdülhamit took advantage of the Pan-Islamic sentiment that already existed among his Muslim subjects, using it to “strengthen his hand against enemies both at home and abroad.”<sup>110</sup> Starting with the idea that the Ottoman state was now predominantly Muslim and that the dominant culture was Islamic, he “began to identify himself with the religious sentiments and political aspirations of Muslims throughout the world by making wide use of his title as Caliph.”<sup>111</sup>

The Young Ottomans were by no means the only ones to take advantage of the possibilities of printing and become public intellectuals. Another notable example is the Iranian reformer and Pan-Islamist Sayyid Jamal al-Din, much of whose journalistic activity was carried out in Egypt. Juan Cole explains that “in the period 1880-1908, pan-Islamism was among the major urban ideologies spread along printing networks in the greater Mediterranean and its Afro-Asian hinterland, with the great capital-port of

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<sup>107</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 123-4.

<sup>108</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 275-7.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>110</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 259.

<sup>111</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, from Millets to Nations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Center of International Studies, 1973), 107.

Istanbul as its center.”<sup>112</sup> At the same time, Cole goes on to point out that while “printing may have contributed to the possibility of envisaging pan-Islam, ... it at the same time helped undermine it by encouraging language-specific communities of discourse.”<sup>113</sup>

The first glimmerings of Turkish nationalism are generally traced to the patriotic poetry of Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) (1869-1944). The publication, immediately following the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, of his *Türkçe Şiirler* (Turkish Poems) has been referred to as an early example of “literary Turkism.”<sup>114</sup> Bernard Lewis explains that:

Abandoning the formal language and quantitative prosody of the Ottoman court poets, [Emin] wrote in simple popular Turkish and in the syllabic metre used in folk poetry. Still more remarkable, he adopted a word which, in Turkish usage, had connoted a boorish, ignorant peasant or nomad, and proudly proclaimed himself a Turk.<sup>115</sup>

While Emin considered himself a Muslim first, he helped to introduce this “new concept of identity... into the collective self-awareness of the Turkish-speaking Ottoman Muslims.”<sup>116</sup> His poetry “was inspired by an ardent patriotism showing clearly the characteristics of nationalism,” and it “aroused sympathy in favor of national literature among the Turkish intellectuals.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Juan R. I. Cole, “Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890-1920,” in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 355.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>114</sup> Ercümen Kuran, “The Impact of Nationalism on the Turkish Elite in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 115.

<sup>115</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 343.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Ercümen Kuran, “The Impact of Nationalism on the Turkish Elite in the Nineteenth Century,” 115.



Also beginning around the turn of the century, Turkish immigrants from Russia played a part in spreading Turkism among the Ottoman Turks. In 1904, the young Yusuf Akçura (then known as Akçuraoğlu Yusuf, 1879-1935) submitted an essay entitled *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Kinds of Policy) to *Türk*, a journal published by Turkish political exiles in Cairo. In this article, which in 1912 was reprinted as a pamphlet, Akçura examines Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Turkism as bases for loyalty and national identity. He concludes that, since the Ottomans are not a nation, Ottomanism is doomed to fail. As for Pan-Islamism, Akçura predicts that it will meet with too much resistance from the Christian powers. He then suggests Turkism as the basis for Ottoman loyalty, a policy that would “rally the loyalties of the dominant Turkish race within the Ottoman Empire, and reinforce it with that of the many millions of Turks, in Russia and elsewhere, beyond the Ottoman frontiers.”<sup>118</sup> Thus in *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*, Akçura promoted Pan-Turkism as a way to preserve the Ottoman state and, at the same time, as a way to transform it.<sup>119</sup> This marked the beginning of the political phase in the development of Turkism, a “political Turkism”<sup>120</sup> which would grow increasingly active during the second constitutional period.

In practice Ottomanism, Islamism, and the early manifestations of Turkism co-existed, even intermingling in the same individual, until the end of empire. The secular Turkish nationalism of the Turkish Republic represented a decisive break with Ottomanism and Islamism, which were considered reactionary in the new nation-state. Most of the interest

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<sup>118</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 327.

<sup>119</sup> François Georgeon, *Aux origines du nationalisme turc: Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935)* (Paris: Éditions ADPF, 1980), 25.

<sup>120</sup> Ercümen Kuran, “The Impact of Nationalism on the Turkish Elite in the Nineteenth Century,” 116.

in Ali Suavi among Turkish scholars to date stems either from his alleged influence on Turkism or from his dramatic death, rather than from his being an important nineteenth-century Ottoman patriot and pan-Islamic activist and journalist.

## CHAPTER II

### ALİ SUAĞI'S LIFE

#### The Early Years, 1839-1866

Ali Suavi was born in Ramadan 1255 (November or December 1839) in the Cerrahpaşa quarter of Istanbul. His father Hüseyin Ağa, a paper merchant, was originally from a village in the Çankırı region of Anatolia. His mother, a native of Istanbul, taught his illiterate father to read and write. Of his father Suavi writes that

he had great respect for people of learning, he knew how to run his household very well, by temperament he loved sincerity and cleanliness. Whenever he saw or heard injustice he would lose his patience, he would blow his top; I hear he even hit some of his friends who had acted unjustly and split some of their heads open.<sup>121</sup>

After attending primary school Ali Suavi continued his education at the Davutpaşa Rüşdiyesi, one of the new modern high schools that were introduced during the Tanzimat era to prepare young men for service in the government. He graduated when he was thirteen or fourteen years old, after which he held a clerical post at the Ministry of War

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<sup>121</sup> Ali Suavi, "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," *Ulum Gazetesi* 15 (1870): 893. Suavi included a small amount of autobiographical material in his brief history of the Young Ottomans, and further information about his life can be gleaned from references scattered throughout his various works. The best, and by far the longest and most detailed, account of Suavi's life is Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 41-465. Much of Çelik's account is devoted to sorting out and correcting the mistakes and misinformation that are liberally sprinkled throughout the literature on Suavi. This misinformation will be discussed in a later chapter.

for two or three years. Suavi writes that this experience “filled my mind with military matters.”<sup>122</sup>

At the age of seventeen or eighteen Suavi left his post at the Ministry of War to perform the hajj. The hajj afforded Suavi the opportunity to see different parts of the Ottoman Empire first-hand as well as to interact with scholars from all over the Islamic world. He writes of himself that “ayant voyagé dans toute l’étendue de l’Empire ottoman, dans l’Asie Mineure, dans l’Irak, en Syrie, en Arabie, en Afrique et en Europe, j’ai étudié sur place les sciences, les religions, les hommes et les choses, connaissances qui ont fait de moi un Khodja.”<sup>123</sup>

During his travels Suavi developed a strong interest in hadith, memorizing a large number along the way. İsmail Doğan points out that Suavi developed an interest in hadith, the texts of which are in Arabic, at the same time as he was travelling through the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The fact that he memorized a large number of hadiths at this time likely shows that he was making great efforts to improve his Arabic.<sup>124</sup> Regarding his interest in hadith, Suavi writes that he was particularly effected by hadiths involving injustice or oppression (*zulüm*) and the struggle against it:

These hadiths filled me with such opposition to injustice that I felt as if every hair on my body was a hero fighting the oppressor, to the extent that I would have been content to struggle against the oppressor with one little bit of my body and to be killed by him in the event of my defeat.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 895.

<sup>123</sup> Ali Suavi, *A Propos de l’Herzegovine* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1875), iii.

<sup>124</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 219-20.

<sup>125</sup> Ali Suavi, “Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi,” 896-7.

Suavi passed through Egypt, and on his return trip he made stops in Izmir, Bursa and Simav.<sup>126</sup> In Simav Suavi briefly lived and taught at the Koşulu Medresesi. He was deeply affected by certain events he witnessed while in Simav. A student at the *medrese* who had been robbed of a large sum of money was later able to identify the ringleader of the robbers and have him arrested. However, the ringleader bribed the governor of the township and made his escape. Suavi complained to the district authorities and the township governor was eventually dismissed, but the student was unable to get his money back.<sup>127</sup> This and another similar story that he recounts illustrate Suavi's strong concern for injustice and the abuse of power, as well as his efforts to help the victims of such oppression. Of course these stories also portray Suavi himself in a positive light.

When Ali Suavi was about twenty years old an examination was held by the Ministry of Education in an effort to recruit competent teachers for the new *rüşdiye* schools. Suavi performed exceptionally well on this examination and as a result was recruited to be the head teacher at the Bursa Rüşdiyesi in January 1860.<sup>128</sup> Suavi held this position for about one year, after which he returned to Istanbul at the invitation of the Grand Vizier Âli Paşa.<sup>129</sup> In Istanbul he had the opportunity to meet important statesmen and to frequent their mansions. Of especial note is his friendship with Abdurrahman Sami Paşa, who had been Minister of Education at the time of Suavi's appointment to the Bursa Rüşdiyesi.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 897-9.

<sup>128</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 49-51.

<sup>129</sup> Ali Suavi, "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 905.

<sup>130</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 60.

Sami Paşa reportedly set aside a room for Suavi in his mansion, and Suavi may have learned French from Sami Paşa's children's teachers.<sup>131</sup>

Around 1864 Ali Suavi served briefly as head of the commercial court in Sophia, after which he likely taught at a *medrese* in Plovdiv before serving as secretary general for that region. In 1866 he returned to Istanbul after a falling out with the governor of Plovdiv, with whom he had previously been on friendly terms.<sup>132</sup> The governor, Atâ Bey, "had accused Suavi of inciting the people to revolt during his weekly sermons."<sup>133</sup> Of his various administrative experiences, Suavi writes that "in these official posts I came to understand the reality of governing and the circumstances under which it is carried out."<sup>134</sup>

Upon his return to Istanbul in 1866, Suavi began preaching in the Şehzade mosque. He wore a turban until he left for Europe, which indicated his role as a mosque preacher and also, as Doğan points out, represented the side of his personality that was "close to the people."<sup>135</sup> Suavi's sermons became quite popular at this time and won him praise from Namık Kemal. Suavi himself reports that the statesman Fuat Paşa attended his sermons. As Hüseyin Çelik points out, it is only natural that the political authorities would take an interest in Suavi as his popularity and influence continued to grow.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 222-3.

<sup>132</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 61-2, 64.

<sup>133</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 361.

<sup>134</sup> Ali Suavi, "Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi," 895.

<sup>135</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 225.

<sup>136</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 65-6.

It is around this time that he adopted the name “Suavi,” and he would sign his articles with this name beginning with the first issue of *Muhbir*. His parents had simply named him Ali, and up to this point he had also been known as “Küçük Hoca” or “Little Teacher.”<sup>137</sup> “Suavi” is an Arabic word meaning “who patiently undergoes vigils or fatigues; active and industrious.”<sup>138</sup>

### **The Istanbul *Muhbir* and Flight to Europe, 1867**

The first issue of *Muhbir* was published on January 1, 1867. Suavi describes the beginning of his involvement with this newspaper as follows:

One day an Armenian man by the name of Filip came to me using somebody I knew as an intermediary. He declared that he was going to found a newspaper called *Muhbir* and requested that I write for it.<sup>139</sup>

Suavi accepted Filip’s request, writing the entire first issue of *Muhbir* himself and contributing articles to subsequent issues. Suavi later declared that

my original intention in getting mixed up in this business was to destroy the worn out constructions and the meaningless praise for old customs of our country’s newspapers. I both destroyed the language and brought freedom of speech to our country.<sup>140</sup>

Indeed it was not long before *Muhbir* ran into trouble for its criticism of the government.

In its twentieth issue *Muhbir* published a translation of a letter that Mustafa Fazıl Paşa had written to the Belgian newspaper *Nord*. Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, the brother of the Khedive Ismail of Egypt, had gone into exile in Paris in 1866 after holding various

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<sup>137</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 221, 224-5.

<sup>138</sup> *Redhouse Turkish/Ottoman-English Dictionary*.

<sup>139</sup> Ali Suavi, “Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi,” 908-9.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 909.

positions in the government in Istanbul. He had since been vocal in his criticism of the Ottoman government, suggesting reforms that it should carry out.<sup>141</sup> While Suavi was not personally involved in the translation or publication of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa's letter, in a case of guilt by association he was now deemed to be a supporter of the paşa.<sup>142</sup>

The front page of the 31<sup>st</sup> issue of *Muhbir* praised Mustafa Fazıl Paşa for donating money to help the Muslims of Crete, which must have further angered the authorities. Later in the same issue Ali Suavi harshly criticized the government for handing over the Belgrade fortress to Serbia. Following this *Muhbir* was temporarily shut down by the government and Ali Suavi was arrested and exiled to Kastamonu, a town in northern Anatolia near the Black Sea.<sup>143</sup>

Suavi spent two months in exile in Kastamonu. During this time he was contacted by Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, who invited him to Paris. After some initial hesitation, Suavi fled to Istanbul with the help of one of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa's men, a Greek Ottoman by the name of Yorgi Stenfalıs. He then left Istanbul for Paris on May 22, 1867. Suavi reports that he was also assisted by the Austrian socialist Simon Deutsch, who was in Istanbul at the time. Suavi met up with Namık Kemal and Ziya Bey in Messina, and the three arrived in Paris on May 30, 1867. Once in Paris they met with Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, who promised to support their journalistic efforts with his great wealth.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 9-10.

<sup>142</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 191-2.

<sup>143</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 9-10.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-2.



In anticipation of Sultan Abdülaziz's visit the French police asked the Young Ottomans to temporarily leave Paris, so in July 1867 Suavi, Kemal and Ziya all relocated to London. Mustafa Fazıl Paşa on the other hand accompanied the sultan on his European travels, ultimately obtaining the sultan's pardon and permission to return to Istanbul. After the sultan had returned home, a meeting was held at Baden-Baden near Frankfurt that marked the official founding of the Young Ottoman Society. In addition to Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, Kemal and Ziya, Simon Deutsch and the Polish revolutionary Wladyslaw Plater were in attendance at this meeting. Meanwhile, Ali Suavi was in London preparing the first issue of the new *Muhbir*.<sup>145</sup>

#### **London and *Le Mukhbir*, 1867-1868**

*Muhbir* resumed publication in London on August 31, 1867 with the title also given in French as *Le Mukhbir*, later changed to *The Mukhbir*. On the front page of the first issue Ali Suavi announces that “*Muhbir* finds a country where it is not illegal to speak the truth and appears again.”<sup>146</sup> He goes on to explain that the newspaper was published by an “Islamic Society” whose two principal goals were the advancement of education and civilization in the Ottoman Empire and the countering of European prejudice against Easterners. No mention was made of opposition to the Ottoman government. This immediately put Suavi at odds with Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, who was not paying Suavi to write about education.<sup>147</sup> The Ottoman authorities were also displeased and *Le Mukhbir* was soon banned in the Ottoman Empire, with smuggled copies fetching a premium price.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 13-5.

<sup>146</sup> Ali Suavi, “[untitled article],” *Le Mukhbir* 1 (31 August 1867): 1.

<sup>147</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 99-100.

Pictures of Ali Suavi were also reportedly in demand in Istanbul at this time.<sup>148</sup> Suavi was apparently successful in stirring up public opinion in Istanbul with his criticism of the government in the pages of *Le Mukhbir*. It seems that the contents of the newspaper were familiar to the general public, though Çelik suggests that the interest in Suavi was strongest among opponents of the government.<sup>149</sup>

This second incarnation of the *Muhbir* would last for about a year. Meanwhile, Mustafa Fazıl Paşa returned to Istanbul in September 1867, something which Ali Suavi would later portray as an act of betrayal. While Suavi grew increasingly critical of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, Namık Kemal and some of the other Young Ottomans remained close to him.<sup>150</sup>

Contributing to the rift between Suavi and Mustafa Fazıl Paşa was Suavi's friendship with David Urquhart. David Urquhart (1805-1877) was a Scottish diplomat, member of parliament, and writer who was highly critical of European interference in Ottoman affairs.<sup>151</sup> Hüseyin Çelik summarizes Urquhart's views as follows:

According to Urquhart the Ottomans had no need for reform. The problem was not with the laws but with the statesmen who applied them. He believed that if the Westerners refrained from interfering in Ottoman internal affairs and the Ottoman administration came to its senses and gave up imitating the West the Ottoman State would have no further problem... At the same time, until the end of his life Urquhart argued against the claim that the Ottoman Christians were oppressed, publishing countless articles and letters on the subject.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 166-7.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 202.

<sup>151</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 16-7.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 18-9.

David Urquhart was not on friendly terms with Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, having publicly criticized him and his proposals for reform. Suavi refers to Urquhart several times in *Le Mukhbir*, though for the most part he refrains from mentioning him by name while publishing with the Paşa's money.<sup>153</sup> Çelik points out that on most subjects Suavi and Urquhart held essentially the same views, the one exception being Suavi's early support for constitutional government.<sup>154</sup>

While he was in London in 1867 Ali Suavi married an English woman about whom little is known besides her name, Marie.<sup>155</sup> He also forged lasting friendships with the Conservative politician and writer H. A. Munro-Butler-Johnstone and the Orientalist Charles Wells, both of whom were also friends of Urquhart and held similar views on the Ottoman Empire.<sup>156</sup> Charles Wells wrote several articles for *Le Mukhbir*, including one piece that, according to Çelik, "takes the Muslim and Turkish side to such an extent that it is hard to believe it was written by a Christian."<sup>157</sup>

The early friendship between Ali Suavi and Namık Kemal came to an end at some point during the period of Young Ottoman exile in Europe, and Kemal would later write of Suavi in the most bitter of terms. It is not known with any certainty what originally caused this falling out, but Çelik has suggested that the conflict may have partly originated in a disagreement the two had concerning a piece that Kemal wrote for the 11<sup>th</sup> issue of *Le*

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>154</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 124.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>156</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 20-2.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 22.

*Mukhbir*. The criticisms that Kemal raised in this article were directed not at the government ministers but rather at the sultan himself. While Suavi never hesitated to criticize the government, he refrained from attacking the sultan directly and in fact used increasingly respectful language when referring to the sultan after meeting Urquhart.<sup>158</sup> At the end of Kemal's article Suavi appended a "warning" in which he shifted blame back to the government ministers, explained that the current administration had a habit of blaming their mistakes on external factors, and concluded that "even our correspondent has been deceived."<sup>159</sup> Çelik points out that it is likely no accident that soon afterward Kemal's close friend Kanipaşazade Rıfat Bey stopped providing French summaries for *Le Mukhbir*, and from this time on there was increasing evidence of discord among the Young Ottomans.<sup>160</sup>

In May of 1868 Kemal and Ziya wrote to Suavi asking him to stop using the seal of the Young Ottoman Society in the pages of *Le Mukhbir*, but despite their request Suavi continued to place the seal next to his own signature.<sup>161</sup> İsmail Doğan points out that Suavi's use of the seal gave the impression that *Le Mukhbir* was the official organ of the Young Ottoman Society, while Kemal and Ziya did not want to be associated in this manner with Suavi's criticism of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa.<sup>162</sup> In June of 1868 the type which Suavi had been using for *Le Mukhbir*, which had originally been brought from Istanbul, was taken – it is not clear by whom – to be used for the new Young Ottoman newspaper

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<sup>158</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 148-9.

<sup>159</sup> Ali Suavi, "İhtar," *Le Mukhbir* 11 (7 November 1867): 4.

<sup>160</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 151.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-7.

<sup>162</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 202-3.

*Hürriyet* which Kemal and Ziya began publishing in London. Suavi was thus forced to switch to a less attractive typeface that was available locally in London.<sup>163</sup> Also with the 38<sup>th</sup> issue the title was changed from *Le Mukhbir* to *The Mukhbir* and Suavi evidently began publishing completely on his own at this point, though he was still being paid by Mustafa Fazıl Paşa. *The Mukhbir* ran for either 47 or 50 issues – the 47<sup>th</sup> issue is extant and is dated 31 August 1868, while there are unconfirmed reports of the existence of a 50<sup>th</sup> issue dated 3 November.<sup>164</sup>

At some point in late 1868 or early 1869 Suavi moved from London to Paris. As of April 1869 Ali Suavi and Ziya Bey were no longer receiving money from Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, but instead were being supported by his brother the Khedive Ismail of Egypt. On Mustafa Fazıl Paşa's orders Namık Kemal ceased working on the *Hürriyet* newspaper that he had been publishing in London with Ziya, leaving it entirely under Ziya's control as of the 64<sup>th</sup> issue.<sup>165</sup> Mustafa Fazıl Paşa's efforts to silence the Young Ottomans as he made peace with the Ottoman government brought Ziya and Suavi closer together, and they began to more actively assist each other in their publishing efforts.<sup>166</sup>

### **Paris and *Ulum Gazetesi*, 1869-1870**

Suavi began publishing *Ulum Gazetesi* in Paris in July 1869, and like its predecessor in London this publication would also last a little over one year with the final issue appearing in September 1870. *Ulum* was more a journal than a newspaper, not just

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<sup>163</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 158.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>165</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 24.

<sup>166</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 188.

because of the smaller format and higher page count but also because of the content. While *Le Mukhbir* had been highly political in content, *Ulum* was devoted to more lengthy discussions of scholarly topics. The first twenty issues of *Ulum* were handwritten and lithographed, while the final five issues were printed and included as a supplement the beginnings of a never-completed encyclopedia entitled *Kamusü'l-Ulum ve'l-Maarif*.

A flyer advertising *Ulum* had been inserted in the 70<sup>th</sup> issue of *Hürriyet*, and Ziya Bey continued to express his support for Suavi's efforts. Çelik writes that "just as he had been the only 'Young Ottoman' to congratulate *Le Mukhbir*, Ziya Bey also openly supported *Ulum*."<sup>167</sup> Ziya Bey would later include Suavi's address in a list of correspondence addresses for *Hürriyet*, showing that this ongoing support was mutual.<sup>168</sup>

In December 1869 an article appeared in the 78<sup>th</sup> issue of *Hürriyet* in which Suavi blamed the Ottoman Empire's financial difficulties on the statesman Âli Paşa. Accusing him of being a tyrant and an infidel, Suavi concluded in a fiery tone that it was obligatory to kill him. Âli Paşa filed a complaint through the Ottoman embassy in London and Ziya and his assistant were arrested. The Egyptian government paid his bail and Ziya fled London and moved to Geneva. Suavi himself was already living in Paris at the time. Despite all this Ziya and Suavi continued to have close relations while Ziya was living in Geneva.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>169</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi*, 27.

Between September 1869 and January 1870 several pamphlets were published by the Young Ottomans Reşad Bey and Kanipaşazade Rıfat Bey. Reşad was a close friend of Namık Kemal and was still being supported by Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, and Rıfat Bey was also close to Kemal.<sup>170</sup> Reşad Bey's pamphlets attacked Suavi alone, while Kanipaşazade Rıfat Bey attacked both Suavi and Ziya in his pamphlet. Reşad's second pamphlet reportedly includes a scandalous photo of Suavi without his turban and wearing a necktie. Suavi responded to these attacks both in the pages of *Ulum* and in a stand-alone letter that he published as a pamphlet. According to Suavi, Reşad and his friends were attacking him in order to win favor with the Ottoman government, and in particular with Âli Paşa, so that they could be pardoned and return to Istanbul.<sup>171</sup>

Suavi continued to criticize Mustafa Fazıl Paşa in his writings in *Ulum* which, as Çelik points out, not only allowed him to take revenge on the Paşa but also likely pleased Suavi's Egyptian patrons.<sup>172</sup> He repeatedly stressed that Mustafa Fazıl Paşa was no longer the leader of the Young Ottoman Society and in fact was no longer a member of the group.<sup>173</sup>

Suavi also published older pieces that Namık Kemal and his friends had written attacking the Ottoman government or Âli Paşa in an effort to complicate their attempts at

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<sup>170</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 210, 218.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 212, 215.

<sup>172</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 25-6.

<sup>173</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 238.

reconciliation with the government. Despite these efforts, in August 1870 Namık Kemal was granted permission to return to Istanbul and he did so in November of that year.<sup>174</sup>

### **The Franco-Prussian War and *Muvakkaten*, 1870-1871**

With the outbreak of the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War, Suavi was forced to leave Paris. In the last few months of 1870 he continued publishing *Ulum* in Lyons and then in Marseilles under the title *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* (Temporarily to the Customers of Ulum Gazetesi). The content of *Muvakkaten* was more political than that of *Ulum*, but upon his return to Paris in early 1871 Suavi would stop publishing periodicals of this sort and turn his attention instead to the publication of books and pamphlets.

According to Çelik, Suavi most likely was forced to cease publication of *Ulum* because the Egyptian government was no longer willing to support a periodical with political content.<sup>175</sup> From Ziya Bey's letters and actions it is clear that the khedive "was paying [Ziya] not to write but to keep quiet."<sup>176</sup> Since it was known that Ziya was supported by Egypt, anything he wrote against the Ottoman government could be held against the khedive, thus working in favor of Mustafa Fazıl Paşa. The fact that Suavi was also "Egypt's man" remained a secret for some time but eventually was brought to the attention of the Ottoman government. While Suavi criticized the khedive in *Le Mukhbir* and did not often mention Egypt in the early issues of *Ulum*, from the 11<sup>th</sup> issue onwards there appeared a steady stream of light pieces on Egypt. At the same time, Suavi

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 241, 247.

<sup>175</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 27.

<sup>176</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 258.



continued to attack the Ottoman government in the pages of *Ulum* and *Muvakkaten* despite his having been warned by his Egyptian contact. It is likely this unwillingness to take orders on Suavi's part that brought about the end of *Ulum*.<sup>177</sup>

### **Pamphleteering in Paris, 1871-1876**

In earlier accounts of the Young Ottoman movement, Suavi is portrayed as having severed all ties with the Young Ottoman group and set out on his own with the publication of *Ulum*. Suavi's activities in the years 1871-1876 then were virtually unknown territory until they were explored by Hüseyin Çelik, and to a much lesser extent İsmail Doğan, in their doctoral dissertations. Çelik's work in particular has shed new light on Suavi's activities during this period, leading him to conclude that by late 1870 Ali Suavi was in fact the only Young Ottoman to remain active, the only member of the group to remain faithful to the Young Ottoman cause.<sup>178</sup>

The Grand Vizier Âli Paşa died on 6 September 1871, and shortly thereafter a general amnesty was announced for Ottoman exiles. While the other Young Ottomans who had not already returned were now given permission to return to Istanbul, Suavi was informed that although he would be allowed to return to some other part of the empire, he would not be allowed to return to the capital itself. Suavi was to live in Paris until the fall of 1876 when he would finally be granted permission to return to Istanbul.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 262-4.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>179</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 28.

As noted above, *Muvakkaten* ceased publication in late 1870. Suavi then spent the years 1871-1876 in Paris working on a variety of projects in Turkish, French and English. These included longer books along with pamphlets and letters to various journals. One of his earlier projects, a *salname* (yearbook or almanac) for Egypt published in 1871, shows that he still had ties to the Egyptian government. Shortly after Âli Paşa's death Suavi published the harshly critical *Defter-i Âmâl-i Âli Paşa* (Register of the Deeds of Âli Paşa), after which he mostly refrained from writing on Ottoman politics or criticizing the Ottoman government until his 1876 return to Istanbul. As noted above, Çelik suggests that it was the threat of withdrawal of Egyptian financial support that caused him to abandon newspaper publishing and also to change his focus. Rather than internal Ottoman politics, Suavi would now focus on external threats to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>180</sup>

In this period the most immediate threat to the Ottoman Empire came from Russia, and in 1873 Suavi attempted to draw attention to this threat in a book published simultaneously in Turkish and French editions. *Le Khiva en Mars 1873/Hive fi Muharrem 1290* warns of Russian expansionism in Central Asia, as independent Muslim khanates were absorbed one by one.<sup>181</sup>

Suavi remained in close contact with David Urquhart and was often a guest at his home in Montreux, Switzerland. Suavi wrote several of his English and French books in Montreux with the help of Urquhart and Urquhart's wife.<sup>182</sup> While in Paris Suavi also became

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<sup>180</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 267.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>182</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 28.

friends with the conservative French sociologist Frédéric Le Play, whom he likely met through Urquhart. Suavi would later contribute a chapter to the second volume of Le Play's work *Les ouvriers européens*. Le Play was a counter-revolutionary thinker who was concerned with the defense of traditional values in order to promote "social peace," towards which end he founded a group called "l'Union de la paix sociale."<sup>183</sup> Çelik attributes Suavi's abandonment of revolutionary ideas and embrace of political conservatism during this period to the influence of Urquhart and Le Play.<sup>184</sup>

The years 1873-1878 were years of crisis for the Ottoman Empire, with increased taxation to solve the empire's economic difficulties leading to unrest and eventually rebellion in the Balkan provinces, first in Bosnia and Herzegovina and then in Bulgaria as well. Public opinion in Europe, and the Liberal opposition in England led by Gladstone, was outraged by the killing of many thousands of Bulgarians by Ottoman troops while at the same time ignoring large-scale massacres of Muslims by Christians.<sup>185</sup> While Gladstone's Liberal Party stoked anti-Turkish sentiment to gain political advantage, Disraeli and his Conservative Party believed that the Bulgarian uprising was due to Russian intrigue and that the Ottoman Empire needed to be maintained in order to act as a buffer to prevent Russian expansion in Europe.<sup>186</sup>

Suavi, along with Urquhart and the Foreign Affairs Committees that Urquhart had founded, became involved in what was basically a public relations campaign to counter

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<sup>183</sup> [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Guillaume\\_Frédéric\\_Le\\_Play](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Guillaume_Frédéric_Le_Play), accessed February 9, 2011.

<sup>184</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 29.

<sup>185</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 72.

<sup>186</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 272-3.

the growing tide of anti-Turkish sentiment in Europe.<sup>187</sup> Most of the books, pamphlets and articles that Suavi published in Europe in 1875-1876 are written in French or English and deal with the uprisings in the Balkans. They represent an attempt to counter Gladstone's anti-Turkish propaganda and to defend the legitimacy of Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

Suavi's activities on behalf of the Ottoman Empire did not go unnoticed by the new sultan, Abdülhamit, who granted him permission to return to Istanbul in the fall of 1876. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry wired the embassy in Paris with instructions to pay for expenses Suavi incurred during a trip to London to engage in propaganda activities to counter Gladstone's pro-Bulgarian campaign, and also to pay for Suavi's travel back to Istanbul.<sup>188</sup>

### **Return to Istanbul**

Ali Suavi returned to Istanbul on November 3, 1876, and the sultan immediately appointed him tutor to his children and head librarian for the palace. The sultan had also wished to form a society of translators (*Cemiyet-i Mütercimîn*) to carry out propaganda activities with Suavi as a member. However this idea was abandoned when other members of the society, which included Namık Kemal, complained that they could not work with Suavi.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 30.

<sup>188</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 290.

<sup>189</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 30-1.

Several months before his return to Istanbul Suavi had begun to publish articles in the newspaper *Vakit*, and once in Istanbul he continued writing not only for *Vakit* but also for other newspapers including *Basiret*, *Sadakat*, and *Müsavat*. Much of what he wrote in this period deals with politics, and he was particularly concerned with drawing attention to European and Russian policy towards the Ottoman Empire.

When Suavi returned to Istanbul Midhat Paşa and his circle, which included Ziya Paşa and Namık Kemal, were working to set up a constitutional system with a mostly symbolic role for the sultan. However Suavi was by this time convinced, just as Urquhart was convinced, that a strong sultan was necessary to resist foreign interference in internal Ottoman affairs.<sup>190</sup> Suavi would devote considerable space in his writings to criticism of Midhat Paşa after the latter was exiled to Arabia by Abdülhamit.<sup>191</sup>

### **Galatasaray**

On February 1, 1877 Sultan Abdülhamit appointed Ali Suavi director of the Galatasaray Sultanisi, a *lycée* on the French model which had been founded the previous decade. Suavi was selected for this post in part because of his good knowledge of French and his familiarity with European-style educational institutions. As soon as he was appointed it was reported in the newspapers that he would be carrying out a fundamental reform of the institution.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 296-7.

<sup>191</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 31.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-2.

In a report that Suavi submitted to the sultan in August 1877 he describes an institution dominated by non-Muslim students and teachers, among whom there were Bulgarians and Russians who had been active in the struggle against Ottoman rule in Bulgaria. He found that many of the teachers were not qualified but had nevertheless been appointed for various reasons. After being repeatedly ignored by the Ministry of Education, Suavi had decided to act on his own and report directly to the sultan. He had proceeded to expel or fire the “Muscovite” students and teachers, and to get rid of any other unqualified teachers.<sup>193</sup> By the time he left Galatasaray there were as many Muslim as non-Muslim teachers. Suavi also made changes to the curriculum, removing courses dealing with Roman and Byzantine history and adding more Turkish, Arabic, and Persian language courses.<sup>194</sup>

Suavi had long been enemies with the Minister of Education Münif Paşa, so it is no wonder that the Ministry of Education was not supportive of Suavi’s reforms. Münif Paşa was a liberal westernizing reformer whom Suavi had earlier referred to as an “apostate” in the pages of *Ulum*, and according to a report from the English ambassador Suavi now was responsible for posting placards denouncing him as an atheist and a Russian agent.<sup>195</sup> Suavi also made new enemies in the process of reforming Galatasaray. He fired French teachers from an institution in which the French ambassador took a special interest. In

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>195</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 350-2.

addition, some of the “Muscovites” he fired were close to the Russian ambassador and had been placed at the school due to the efforts of the Russian embassy.<sup>196</sup>

While Suavi was director of the Galatasaray school he also remained active in other ways. Besides his journalistic activities he continued to deliver sermons in the mosques, he organized a scholarly conference at Galatasaray, and he was active in promoting Hungarian-Ottoman friendship.<sup>197</sup> He also worked with people like H. A. Munro-Butler-Johnstone, G. B. Saint Clair, and a multitude of like-minded Ottomans to support the Ottoman war effort in the Balkans both materially and morally.<sup>198</sup>

As refugees continued to pour into Istanbul from the war with Russia, Suavi worked to gather assistance for them. In a newspaper announcement on 5 October 1877 Suavi wrote that he would be delivering a sermon at Ayasofya Mosque “on assistance and generosity as narrated in the hadith,” after which donations would be collected for the refugees.<sup>199</sup>

Suavi’s writings that appeared in the newspapers in 1877 mostly dealt with the reforms he was carrying out at Galatasaray, with the Russo-Turkish War, and with European policy towards the Ottoman Empire. In September 1877 Suavi published an article in *Vakit* in which he went farther than usual in criticizing England, at the same time delivering sermons in the mosques in which he violently attacked English policy towards the Ottoman Empire. The article came to the attention of the English ambassador Henry

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 322, 330.

<sup>197</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 34.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>199</sup> Ali Suavi, “Masrafsız Cem-i İane,” *Ceride-i Havadis* 3517 (27 Ramazan 1294/5 October 1877): 3.

Layard, in addition to being reported on in the European press.<sup>200</sup> Layard subsequently pressured the Ottoman government to relieve Suavi of his duties at Galatasaray.<sup>201</sup> While the Grand Vizier promised Layard that Suavi would be removed immediately, Çelik points out that it took the sultan over a month to order his removal, indicating hesitation on the sultan's part. When the Grand Vizier asked Layard if he thought Suavi would make a suitable Consul in Bombay, Layard objected violently to the idea.<sup>202</sup>

Shortly before he was removed from his post at Galatasaray it was announced in the *Basiret* newspaper that Suavi had been nominated as a candidate for the Ottoman parliament. However nothing further came of this.<sup>203</sup>

### **The Çırağan Palace Incident**

The Russo-Turkish War, known in Turkish as the Ottoman-Russian War, continued into late 1877 and early 1878 with the Ottoman Empire suffering major defeats in Plevna (now Pleven in Bulgaria) and in the Caucasus. The Russians continued to advance on Istanbul despite having accepted a truce requested by the Ottomans on January 31, 1878. The Russians were later prevented from entering the city only by pressure from the British, and on March 3, 1878 the Treaty of San Stefano was signed. The Ottomans were

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<sup>200</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 341.

<sup>201</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 35.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-8.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.



forced by this treaty to recognize the independence or autonomy of much of their Balkan possessions.<sup>204</sup>

According to a report from the English ambassador Henry Layard, Suavi and H. A. Munro-Butler-Johnstone, who was often a guest at Suavi's house, tried to convince the sultan to call on the Muslims of the world to rise up and fight Russia. Meanwhile, refugees continued to pour into Istanbul from the war in the Balkans. What's more, even after the ceasefire small bands of Muslims continued the struggle in Bulgaria. Suavi's friend G. B. Saint Clair played a leading role in this struggle, while Suavi and Munro-Butler-Johnstone worked to support the effort from the capital.<sup>205</sup>

Suavi moved to Üsküdar on the Asian side of Istanbul, and there with his supporters he formed the "Üsküdar Cemiyeti," a society devoted to supporting the struggle in Bulgaria. The society's plan of action included freeing the deposed Sultan Murat V from his captivity in the Çırağan Palace and placing him at the head of the resistance.<sup>206</sup>

Suavi was reportedly prevented by the government from writing for the newspapers after his dismissal from Galatasaray, and after December 1877 his only publications are a

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<sup>204</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Turkish\\_War\\_\(1877-1878\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Turkish_War_(1877-1878)), accessed February 11, 2011. The war had been preceded by Christian uprisings in the Balkans backed by Russia, and Ottoman efforts to put down these uprisings outraged European public opinion. As we shall see in Chapter IV, Suavi's writings in 1875-1876 mostly focused on the uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria in an attempt to present the Ottoman point of view to a European audience. Following the peace conference held in Berlin in June 1878, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire, while Austria occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina and Britain occupied Cyprus. See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 71-5.

<sup>205</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 39-40.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

handful of pieces in *Basiret*.<sup>207</sup> Then on May 19, 1878 a short message from Ali Suavi appeared in *Basiret*:

Everybody and all the newspapers are talking about the danger of the current situation. Based on the people's trust in me, I have no doubt that everyone will listen to what I am going to say.

The current difficulties are great, but the solution is quite easy.

In tomorrow's paper with everyone's permission I will briefly announce and explain this solution. This letter today is to draw the public's attention to tomorrow's publication.

Ali Suavi<sup>208</sup>

While Suavi's readers expected an "important political article" the following day, what they heard instead was the sound of gunfire coming from the Çırağan Palace.<sup>209</sup>

On May 20, 1878 Ali Suavi stormed the Çırağan Palace along with several hundred Balkan immigrants. After disabling the guards they proceeded to Murat's quarters, where the former sultan was dressed and waiting for them. With cries of "long live Sultan Murat" they attempted to exit the premises but were intercepted by soldiers under the command of Beşiktaş chief of police Hasan Paşa. The soldiers opened fire, killing 23 and wounding 15, while Ali Suavi himself was killed by a blow to the head from Hasan Paşa's cudgel.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ali Suavi, "[untitled article]," *Basiret* 2444 (7 May 1294/19 May 1878): 2.

<sup>209</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 215.

<sup>210</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi*, 41.

## Aftermath

At Abdülhamit's order a commission was formed to investigate the "Çırağan Incident." Despite numerous accusations brought by the sultan's informers, after thirteen days of investigation and interrogation the commission concluded that no high officials had been involved in the incident in any way. One of Suavi's close associates, Hafız Nuri Efendi, was sentenced to death, while other members of the Üsküdar Cemiyeti were given prison sentences ranging from several years to life.<sup>211</sup>

Ali Suavi himself was vilified in official circles and in the press, and newspapers with which he had been associated were particularly anxious to distance themselves from him by slandering his name.<sup>212</sup> Some of their wilder claims can even be found in recent history books, and Chapter V touches on this as part of a discussion of Suavi's representation in the secondary literature. The newspaper that had published Suavi's final announcement, *Basiret*, was shut down by the government and its owner, Ali Efendi, was exiled to Jerusalem.<sup>213</sup>

According to an English diplomatic report, after learning of his death Suavi's wife Marie burned his papers.<sup>214</sup> When news of Suavi's death reached England, his worried in-laws enlisted the help of the Foreign Ministry to learn if their daughter was alive and well. She

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<sup>211</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 384-8.

<sup>212</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 42-3.

<sup>213</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 389.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

reported that she had been treated well during the interrogations and had no complaints. Marie eventually boarded a ship for England in July of 1878.<sup>215</sup>

Sultan Abdülhamit was evidently quite shaken by the Çırağan Incident. He complained to the English ambassador Henry Layard that he had not been able to sleep for days following the incident and had consequently suffered from severe headaches. Fearing a larger conspiracy against him, he requested an English warship be anchored off Ortaköy to evacuate him if necessary.<sup>216</sup> Ambassador Layard was able to take advantage of the sultan's fragile state of mind, convincing him to cede Cyprus to the English in return for promises of English support. When this support later failed to materialize the sultan regretted his hasty decision, but by then it was too late to do anything about it.<sup>217</sup> The Queen awarded Henry Layard the Grand Cross of the Bath for thus winning Cyprus for the crown.<sup>218</sup>

Following the Çırağan Incident Sultan Abdülhamit shuffled his cabinet a number of times. Even those high officials closest to the sultan were subject to being relieved of their duties, and it seems that for a period of time the sultan really was not able to trust anyone.<sup>219</sup> Friends of Suavi's who had not been involved in the plot were appointed to posts that would keep them far from Istanbul.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 420-2.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 410-3.

<sup>217</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî*, 44.

<sup>218</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 429. Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire for three centuries before the British occupied the island in 1878.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 428.

The Çırağan Incident was actually not the first attempt to free Murat from his captivity in the Çırağan Palace. Shortly after Abdülhamit ascended the throne two Turks, a Polish Freemason, and a Greek Ottoman disguised themselves in women's clothing, entered Çırağan Palace, and were apprehended as they tried to spirit the former sultan away.<sup>221</sup> Then a month and a half after Suavi's attempt the efforts of the Scaliéri-Aziz Bey committee came to light. Cleanty Scaliéri was a Greek Ottoman and a Freemason, and Murat had been initiated as a Freemason when he was a prince. Scaliéri wanted to rescue Murat from captivity and place him back on the throne. He was in contact with Murat's mother, and other Freemasons were also interested in seeing Murat restored to power. Scaliéri discussed his intentions in a meeting with Henry Layard that had been arranged by the Iranian reformer Mirza Malkom Khan, also a Freemason. There is no evidence that these other plots were in any way related to Suavi's attempt.<sup>222</sup> They seem to have been motivated in part by the desire to restore a fellow Freemason to the throne, and many of the actors involved were liberal westernizing reformers. Given Suavi's strong political convictions, it is highly unlikely that he would have conspired with liberal westernizing reformers and Freemasons.

From our overview of Suavi's life we have seen that he was a man of strong beliefs, particularly when it came to the matter of injustice or oppression. His unwillingness to stay silent or to take orders led to many difficulties during the course of his relatively

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 440-1.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 441-6.

brief career as a public figure. The extremes of loyal friendship and fierce enmity that he inspired among his personal associates carry over into most of what has been written about him, with very little between the extremes. In quieter times he likely would have enjoyed a longer career as an educator and perhaps would have pursued more academic interests in his writings. As we shall see in Chapters III and IV, Suavi abandoned his more scholarly work as current events increasingly occupied his attention. However, his lack of political finesse and unwillingness to compromise on principles he held dear, while they may have enhanced his popularity with the public, would likely have led to some sort of conflict in any case.

The historical significance of the Çırağan Incident will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI, while Chapter V will include a discussion of how it has been represented (and often misrepresented) in the literature. In order to reach a better understanding of the Çırağan Incident and of Suavi's motivations in carrying out such an attempt, we turn first to an overview of his extant written work in the next two chapters.

### CHAPTER III

#### ALİ SUAVİ'S WORK AND THOUGHT, THE EARLY YEARS

This and the following chapter provide an overview of Ali Suavi's written work and the ideas presented therein. This chapter basically covers Suavi's early career as a journalist, while the following chapter deals primarily with his later books and pamphlets. The division of Suavi's life into distinct phases is facilitated not only by the fact that between 1870 and 1871 he switched from newspaper to book publication, but also by the fact that he moved around a lot and with each move began working on new projects.

Suavi's earliest works were written before he established himself as a preacher in Istanbul in 1866. In Istanbul in 1867 he worked on the original *Muhbir*. In London in late 1867 and 1868 he worked primarily on *Le Mukhbir* and on reprints and translations of material from *Le Mukhbir*. In Paris in 1869 and 1870 he worked primarily on *Ulum*. These publications from the years 1864-1870 are discussed in this chapter.

In 1871 Suavi ceased publishing periodicals and focused exclusively on producing books and pamphlets, some of them in French and English and intended for a European audience, until 1876. He began writing for Istanbul newspapers again in 1876, shortly before his return to that city. After returning to Istanbul Suavi's only writings are brief

newspaper articles. These publications from the years 1871-1878 will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **Early Works, 1864-1867**

Few of Suavi's early works are extant. By his own account, as of 1866 he had authored 127 works which must have consisted mostly or entirely of short essays and treatises that circulated only in manuscript form among his students.<sup>223</sup> Of the four such works that survive, three were published as newspaper serials between 1865 and 1867 while one was only published in book form long after Suavi's death. Since works of this sort were often published anonymously in the newspapers, it is possible that other Suavi works from this period exist but have simply not been identified as such.

One of Suavi's earliest surviving works is preserved in manuscript form at the National Library of Turkey, and was also published as a newspaper serial in 1867 and again in 1911.<sup>224</sup> This is a Turkish translation of the *Pinax* or *Tablet of Cebes*, alleged to be the work of Socrates' disciple Cebes but now widely believed to be the work of a later anonymous author.<sup>225</sup> The message conveyed by this work is that "only the proper development of our mind and the possession of real virtues can make us truly happy."<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 467.

<sup>224</sup> Ali Suavi, trans., *Terceme-i Risâle-i Kiyotyos* (Istanbul, 1864); "Giyotyos Risalesi Tercümesi," *Rûznâme-i Ceride-i Havadis* 583-91 (29 January-13 February 1867); "Hükema-yi Yunaniyeden 'Giyotyos' Nam Hakimin Risalesinin Merhum Elhac Ali Suavi Efendi Tarafından Tercümesi," *Hikmet* 64-74 (23 June-1 September 1327/6 July-14 September 1911).

<sup>225</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cebes>, accessed June 3, 2011.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*



“Ehemmiyet-i Hıfz-ı Mal” (The Importance of Managing Wealth) appeared as a serial in the newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkâr* in 1865. This unsigned work discusses how wealth is not a good thing in its own right but can be used to do things that are good in and of themselves. It emphasizes the importance of not squandering wealth or spending it wastefully.<sup>227</sup> The language Suavi employed in this early work is very different from the simple style he would later adopt beginning with his work in *Muhbir*. As Çelik points out, it is the “classical style of the period” with long sentences and difficult vocabulary.<sup>228</sup>

One of Suavi’s works from this period, *Hukuku’ş-Şevari* (The Laws of the Roads), was not published in any form until 1908 when it was published as a sixteen-page booklet.<sup>229</sup> This is largely a translation from al-Ghazālī on things that one is not allowed to do in public roads in order not to inconvenience other people. For example, one is not allowed to plant trees in the middle of a public road in front of one’s house.<sup>230</sup> The style of language employed in this work is also much more complex than Suavi’s later style.

“Santorin Risalesi” (Treatise on Santorini) provides information on the Greek island of Santorini, which owes its current form to a large volcanic explosion. This treatise, which was serialized in the newspaper *Rûznâme-i Ceride-i Havadis* in 1866, includes a general discussion of volcanoes and of the formation of islands as the result of volcanic activity. Suavi’s signature appears at the end of the final installment of the serial.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ali Suavi, “Ehemmiyet-i Hıfz-ı Mal,” *Tasvir-i Efkâr* 333-8 (26 September-14 October 1865).

<sup>228</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 474.

<sup>229</sup> Ali Suavi, *Hukuku’ş-Şevari* (Istanbul: Uhuvvet Matbaası, 1324/1908).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>231</sup> Ali Suavi, “Santorin Risalesi,” *Rûznâme-i Ceride-i Havadis* 417-20 (4-7 June 1866).

Suavi's extant early works give little hint of the political direction his work would soon take, although they do show that his interests were very broad and that he was desirous of sharing these interests with the reading public. His extensive writings on education and his later efforts at producing an encyclopedia – not to mention his tenure as director of Galatasaray – thus represent a continuation of some of the tendencies already evident in his earliest surviving works.

### **The Istanbul *Muhbir*, 1867**

The original Istanbul *Muhbir* was published by Filip Efendi and ran for 55 issues between January and May 1867. Each issue of this periodical is four pages long. While the first issue of *Muhbir* was written entirely by Suavi, he was not the only contributor to subsequent issues, with Ziya Bey providing some articles. Suavi wrote a long series of articles for *Muhbir* under the title “Maarif” (Education). Suavi's contributions were temporarily interrupted by his exile to Kastamonu. *Muhbir* was shut down for one month by the government in March and April 1867, and it was shut down permanently in May of that year. Ali Suavi's writings in *Muhbir* were the impetus for tighter censorship laws introduced by the Ottoman government in March 1867.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> İhsan Sungu, “Muhbir Gazetesi,” *Aylık Ansiklopedi* 2, no. 13 (May 1945): 401-4. Roderic Davison explains that “in disregard of the procedures laid down in the 1865 press law, Âli issued an administrative edict under which immediate action could be taken against a portion of the local press described as the inflammatory organ of extremist groups, subversive of public order and of the foundations of the empire itself.” Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 208-9.

In his introduction to the first issue, Suavi discusses the increased means of communication of the modern era.

Praise be to God the times when nobody had any news about anyone else are past, the time has come when one people can learn in a very short period of time about the knowledge and industry that another people has produced through the experience of so many years. Because the discoveries of the expeditions that are being carried out on land and on the sea have informed us of the places we did not know, and have introduced us to peoples we had not met. In particular steamships and telegraphs have made the whole world like a single neighborhood. Because of this there has been an increase in interactions with different types of people, and it is increasing daily.<sup>233</sup>

He goes on to emphasize the importance of the newspaper, and to introduce the *Muhbir* and describe its aims.

It will discuss education and domestic news and politics. It will also help to spread education by printing as serials works on manners and morals and education that will be useful to the public. In order for it to be as clearly understood as possible everything will be written in the everyday language of the capital, that is in a style that everyone will be able to understand.<sup>234</sup>

In the fourth issue of *Muhbir* Suavi discusses education and the problems surrounding a traditional *medrese* education.

We encourage the public to study, but if they ask ‘what should we study, how should we study,’ we are unable to give a sufficient or satisfactory answer. Because if we tell them to get a *medrese* education, completing such a course of study takes at least fifteen years, and of course this period of time seems excessive to everybody... This means that the foremost reason that we are deprived of knowledge is the deficiency that exists in the style of instruction and learning. That is my humble opinion.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Ali Suavi, “Mukaddeme,” *Muhbir* 1 (1 January 1867): 1

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>235</sup> Ali Suavi, “Maarif,” *Muhbir* 4 (8 January 1867): 1.

*Muhbir* 25 contains the Turkish translation of a long article by Suavi that originally appeared in *al-Jawā'ib (El-Cevâib)*, an Arabic newspaper that was published in Istanbul.

In this article Suavi explains that:

Just as the body's nourishment is food, the heart's nourishment is knowledge [*ilim*] and the life of the heart is through knowledge. For this reason the fellow who has no knowledge has a sick heart, and his destruction is certain. However he is not aware of this himself. Because just as he forgets the pain of a wound when menaced, he cannot understand his illness because ignorance too has nullified his senses. This is the truth.<sup>236</sup>

Suavi goes on to assert that “what makes a human being human is nothing other than knowledge. Perhaps he was even created purely for the sake of knowledge.”<sup>237</sup>

Suavi and *Muhbir* dedicated a lot of space to coverage of the revolt in Crete, and in particular to Russian and European support for the Christian rebels. This type of news coverage took Suavi's writings in a more political direction. He was also actively involved in collecting money to help the Muslim victims of the rebellion.<sup>238</sup>

On newspapers, Suavi writes in issue 28 that

The revival of a state and nation is brought about with newspapers. Because by everyone writing and printing their views and knowledge that will not harm others in the newspapers, everyone becomes informed of the knowledge of the scholars and the new inventions of some people. And by drawing attention to the plight of the needy and the oppressed, everyone's

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<sup>236</sup> Ali Suavi, “Maarif,” *Muhbir* 25 (28 February 1867): 2.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi*, 26-8. The Cretan rebellion began in 1866, with the Christian rebels seeking union with Greece. At this time there was still a very significant Muslim minority on the island. Public opinion was aroused in Greece and in the Ottoman Empire and nearly resulted in war in 1867. The rebellion ended in 1868 with amnesty for the rebels and concessions to the Christians, but the European powers did not heed Russian calls for direct intervention. Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 55; Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 151-2.

public spirit and zeal and assistance are obtained. Because of this reason, in countries that have lots of newspapers nothing can be kept hidden. Knowledge cannot be withheld from anyone and the needy are not kept in such a state of want.<sup>239</sup>

Suavi goes on to call on other newspaper writers to follow his lead and use a simpler style in their writings: “Let’s write the newspapers in Turkish, which is the language of the common people in Istanbul.”<sup>240</sup>

In an article entitled “Freedom” that also appeared in issue 28, Suavi explains that freedom means that everyone is subject to the law.

But all of the European nations have tried various methods to obtain it and in none of these have they been able to find the middle way. Europeans desire that this justice come from the bottom up. This is why debates take place in assemblies and finally trickle down to the rabble and cause the troubles that we all see. Too bad!

On the contrary, justice must come from the top down. Because ‘justice’ is like a huge rock that can fall from above with the touch of a single person. Throwing it up from the bottom requires very many forces. Even Homer, who lived nearly three thousand years ago, has been translated by Şehristânî as saying ‘there is no good in an abundance of leaders’. In simple Turkish this means ‘wherever there is multiplicity there is shittiness’ [nerede çokluk, orada bokluk]. Justice comes from the top down when a competent official is in charge. Because when an official is competent he also places himself under and protects the law. It is with this protection that equality and freedom – that is, justice – are made permanent.<sup>241</sup>

*Muhbir* 31 contains a piece by Suavi concerning the handing over of the Belgrade fortress to Serbia. In this piece, Suavi asks:

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<sup>239</sup> Ali Suavi, “Gazete,” *Muhbir* 28 (4 March 1867): 1.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>241</sup> Ali Suavi, “Serbestlik,” *Muhbir* 28 (4 March 1867): 2. Parts of the translation of this passage are from Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 380. Mardin translates the Turkish version of the proverb as “too many cooks spoil the sauce.”

If the fortress is to be completely handed over, is it to be so cheap as to make it a gift? Such a strong fortress could not be built today for 90,000 purses [of gold]... what was given to the Ottoman state in exchange for those 90,000 purses? We hope you will also explain this.<sup>242</sup>

The critical and even confrontational tone that Suavi takes towards the government provoked a strong reaction. Ali Suavi was soon exiled to Kastamonu, and the government imposed harsher restrictions on the press.

In *Muhbir* 32 Suavi contributes a very long piece that practically fills the entire issue, entitled “Some Views Regarding the Current Situation of the Various Ottoman Peoples.”<sup>243</sup> He begins with a long story about five oxen who are able to fend off a hungry wolf when they stand together, but who are ultimately tricked by the wolf into turning against each other and are subsequently devoured one by one. He explains that:

Perhaps this parable is a little long, but it perfectly illustrates the current situation of the Ottoman peoples. Therefore let us, along with Poland and the Crimea and Georgia and Dagestan and the Nogai, take the oxen as an example of something to be avoided.<sup>244</sup>

Turning to the tricks and traps that have been set for the Ottomans by the wolfish powers, Suavi lists:

The expansion of Greece... and the formation of a separate administration in Crete and the Egyptian administration’s independentist ideas and the Christians’ acquisition of complete equality and the introduction of a national assembly.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Ali Suavi, “Şehir Postasıyla Bir Varakadır,” *Muhbir* 31 (9 March 1867): 4.

<sup>243</sup> Ali Suavi, “Milel-i Muhtelif-i Osmaniye’nin Ahval-ı Hazırasına Mütcellik Bazı Levayihdir,” *Muhbir* 32 (10 March 1867): 1-4. This article, or parts of it, may in fact have been written by Ziya. Many of these articles are unsigned, and many of the ideas they contain are very similar regardless of who actually wrote them. Suavi scholars are not in complete agreement on which articles can be attributed to Suavi himself with any certainty.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

The Ottoman Christians in particular provided a pretext for countries like Russia and France to interfere in Ottoman internal affairs. On this subject, Suavi goes on to ask,

If the Russian state out of religious zeal wishes a state of prosperity for the Eastern Christians, why are the Christians of Poland and Georgia deprived of this compassion?... While the Poles are all Catholic, the Russian is using various tortures and cruelties to [force them to] enter the Muscovite religion, and in order to destroy their nationalism in the schools no books are taught besides those in the Muscovite language, and even their letters and other writings are required to be written in the Muscovite language. Are these people not Christian? And while the French state is the spiritual protector of the Catholic faith, why does it remain silent on this matter?<sup>246</sup>

Referring to the lesson imparted by the earlier parable, he concludes that “Russia’s compassion for the Eastern Christians is the language the wolf used with the oxen when he was pretending to be a woman” and expresses the hope that the Ottoman peoples will not fall for such tricks again.<sup>247</sup>

Suavi concludes this long article by touching on the topic of a national assembly, writing that:

Indeed rather than having the life and death of a state’s thirty or forty million subjects in the hands of three or four people, it is more suitable and more in line with reason to have them in the hands of a committee composed of a hundred people and whose members are selected from among the notables of every class of people. For while the various prejudices of three or four people and their mismanagement and the various resultant harms to the state and the nation are natural matters, it is clear that a few hundred people will not fall into this error all at once.<sup>248</sup>

These selections from the Istanbul *Muhbir* show Suavi’s growing interest in politics, and in particular with the problem of foreign interference in Ottoman affairs and the weakness

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 4.

shown by the Ottoman governments in the face of such interference. At the same time, his charitable activities to benefit the victims of the Cretan rebellion show that his concern was not limited to the level of policy, but extended to the lowliest victims of the rebellion.

Suavi's strong interest in education can be seen in many of his articles, and in his writings about newspapers and other modern means of communication his interest in spreading knowledge intersects with his interest in curbing the tyranny of high officials through heightened public awareness of political matters. At the same time, while Suavi comes out in favor of constitutional government in this early period, he clearly is concerned about the messier aspects of representative government and states quite clearly that "justice must come from the top down."

Suavi was not afraid to raise his voice and speak out on issues that concerned him. This can be seen in his criticism of the Ottoman government for handing over the Belgrade fortress, and also in his criticism of Russian and European hypocrisy in posing as the protectors of the Ottoman Christians. In sum, even at the beginning of his journalistic career Suavi demonstrated the traits that would later provoke such extreme reactions, both positive and negative.

### ***Le Mukhbir* and the London Years, 1867-1869**

Ali Suavi began to publish a new newspaper under the name *Mukhbir* in London beginning in August 1867. As with its predecessor, each issue was a mere four pages. The title is



written on the front page in French as *Le Mukhbir*, later changed to *The Mukhbir*. To avoid confusion I have referred to this periodical as *Le Mukhbir* throughout.

From what I can gather, *Le Mukhbir* was not available at any Turkish library until 1957, meaning that it was not available to many of the earlier scholars who worked on Suavi at least through the early 1950s. A nearly complete collection of *Le Mukhbir* is held at the British Library, and this was duplicated and made available in Turkey on microfilm and more recently in digital form. The microfilm in the National Library in Ankara is dated 1957. This collection is missing several issues, and the last issue it contains is issue 47, dated 31 August 1868. However, there are reports of the existence of issues 49 and 50, the latter allegedly dating to November 1868.<sup>249</sup> Included in the British Library collection are the French summaries for issues 5, 7 & 8, 9, 10, and 12, and the English summaries of issues 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, and 47.

In *Le Mukhbir* 2, Suavi addresses the issue of equality between the Muslim and Christian Ottomans.

Coming to the topic of equality under the law and in transactions, in this respect the Christians have not achieved equality with the Muslims but have greatly surpassed them. Because the Christians have their rich religious community [*millet*] merchants and their community representatives and their community assemblies under the Patriarch and their protectors in Europe. For example if a Christian is oppressed by a local official [*kaymakam*], in the first hour he runs to the community merchant, the Patriarchate is immediately informed of the matter, and the Patriarch leans on the Ottoman government. Meanwhile the foreign

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<sup>249</sup> Cavit Orhan Tütengil, “*Yeni Osmanlılar’dan Bu Yana İngiltere’de Türk Gazeteciliği, 1867-1967* (Istanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1969), 32. The missing issues then are 8, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 39, 42, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50. However, for issue 8 the French summary is extant.

consulates also get involved, and they finally get the local official dismissed.

Is there any place Muslims can have recourse to?<sup>250</sup>

The issue of Muslim discontent with the advantages enjoyed by Christians is a common theme in Young Ottoman writings.<sup>251</sup>

In the French summary of *Le Mukhbir* 5, Suavi writes that “lorsqu’un peuple, pour obtenir les reformes qu’il réclame, a recours a l’intervention étrangère, la perte de son indépendance et de ses droits en est quelquefois la conséquence.”<sup>252</sup> He calls on all Ottomans to join together to enact reform, stating that:

La reforme que les Ottomans demandent, c’est une Constitution qui soit la garantie de leurs intérêts et de la prospérité de leur patrie, seul moyen de conserver chez eux le produit de leur travail, au lieu de l’envoyer remplir les caisses des banquiers européens. C’est alors que la Russie comprendra qu’il faut qu’elle renonce a ses projets de conquête et qu’elle doit se contenter de ses possessions actuelles, qui embrassent la moitié du monde.<sup>253</sup>

Suavi goes on to mention efforts by the Ottoman government to keep *Le Mukhbir* from entering the country, and predicts:

Un jour viendra ou ceux qui voient avec effroi le triomphe du progrès et de la civilisation disparaîtront de la scène politique: des hommes jeunes et patriotiques surgiront; ils prendront les destinées de la nation dans leurs mains viriles, et alors nous pourrons penser et agir librement.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Ali Suavi, “Müsavat,” *Le Mukhbir* 2 (7 September 1867): 3.

<sup>251</sup> As Erik Zürcher explains it, many Ottoman Muslims “saw the great pashas of the *Tanzimat* as subservient to the European powers and to the interests of the Christian communities whose wealth and power was rising visibly.” Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 67.

<sup>252</sup> Ali Suavi, “Résumé des Questions Développées dans le ‘Mukhbir’ du 28 Septembre 1867,” *Le Mukhbir* 5 (28 September 1867): 5. This unnumbered page follows page 4 of the newspaper in the digital copy, but it may well have been published separately. Some later summaries are actually separate full-length French editions of the newspaper, while other summaries consist only of highlights printed within the four pages of the newspaper itself. I have added accents to the French which were omitted in the original.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

In *Le Mukhbir* 7, Suavi discusses the Ottoman foreign debt.

A few people borrow money. It is referred to as the national debt [*millet borcu*]. Well, if it is the nation's debt, why has the nation not been in charge of spending this money even just once? If the nation has incurred so many debts, then where is the nation's capital in return for this? In short, loans like this are one of the harmful things that have put [the Ministry of] Finance in its current situation.<sup>255</sup>

Suavi's worries regarding foreign loans and the national debt were well-founded, as the Ottoman Empire would later default on its debts. In October of 1875 the Ottoman government announced that it would be cutting interest payments in half, and the problem continued with missed payments in 1876. This eventually resulted in the formation of the Ottoman Public Debt administration, announced in December 1881, which placed a large portion of Ottoman state revenue under the direct control of the foreign creditors.<sup>256</sup>

In the French summary of *Le Mukhbir* 7 and 8, Suavi discusses Abu Bakr's message to the Muslims on the occasion of his being selected as the first caliph following the death of the prophet Muhammad. Suavi singles out the admonition "si je fais mal, corrigez-moi," to introduce his argument,

Si la religion musulmane donne au peuple le droit de reprendre ses chefs lorsqu'ils gouvernent mal, le Mukhbir, qui est un véritable croyant, doit conseiller à ceux qui ont, pour le moment, les destinées de la Turquie entre leurs mains, d'opérer les réformes réclamées si justement par le peuple...<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Ali Suavi, "6 Numaralı *Muhbir*'de Islah-ı Maliyenin Tevakkuf Ettiği Esbab-ı Seb'a'nın Mabadı," *Le Mukhbir* 7 (12 October 1867): 1.

<sup>256</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 308-10; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 453.

<sup>257</sup> Ali Suavi, "Résumé des Numéros 7 & 8," *Le Mukhbir* 8 (19 October 1867): 2.

The specific abuse of power that Suavi proceeds to single out is the banning of *Le Mukhbir* in the Ottoman Empire. Suavi thus turns a specific grievance concerning freedom of the press into a more general formulation of the right of the people to correct government abuses.

In the French summary of issue 9, Suavi concludes a long discussion of abuses by government officials with a discussion of patriotism. He ends on a patriotic and personal note, writing that:

Ce n'est donc pas à moi d'abandonner ma chère patrie parce que l'administration actuelle est mauvaise; mais si son sol venait jamais à être foulé par les Grecs ou par les Russes, je commencerais par tuer ma famille de ma propre main, plutôt que de la leur livrer, puis je me ferais tuer sur le seuil de ma porte.<sup>258</sup>

Besides highlighting Suavi's patriotic sentiments, this passage illustrates the potential tension between two of Suavi's main concerns, namely criticism of the current Ottoman government and defense of the legitimacy of Ottoman rule in general.

In *Le Mukhbir* 13 Suavi compares the situation of the Ottoman Christians to the situation of European Christians who belong to a different denomination than that supported by the state in which they live. "London is considered to be first in the world in the matter of *liberté*. There only the Protestant denomination is protected. While the Catholics are [also] Christian, they cannot even ring a bell."<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ali Suavi, "Résumé du Numéro 9," *Le Mukhbir* 9 (26 October 1867): 4.

<sup>259</sup> Ali Suavi, "[?]," *Le Mukhbir* 13 (21 November 1867): 3.

In *Le Mukhbir* 14 Suavi criticizes the Ottoman administration's passive and accommodating stance in its relations with the European powers. "And at the point where it is necessary to show the sword to the foreigners who are harming the rights of the people [*millet*], soft words and a pleasant manner are shown [instead]... ." <sup>260</sup> Suavi develops his ideas on civil disobedience and the resistance of oppression in the same article.

O those of you who desire justice, if you want to go about hiding your heads like snails, tyrants will never allow you to raise your voice. You are slaves.

If [on the other hand]... you take to the sword and show your presence in the field of honor, you will stand up against tyrants. You are human beings, you are free. <sup>261</sup>

Suavi further develops his ideas on resistance to tyranny in *Le Mukhbir* 17. "This is truly so. This matter of resistance to oppression which our religion enjoins is a fundamental political principle which Europeans have only recently discovered after several thousand years of experience." <sup>262</sup> He continues,

All right, some man appeared, tried to carry out his duty, and was oppressed. This means that while we were saying 'let us hinder the tyrant' tyranny has recurred and increased. In this case, everyone is obliged to work together in general to protect and rescue that oppressed person. In short, for a people [*millet*] to only await the good and evil command of its leader and remain silent is a great sin and cause of annihilation. It is always obliged to fight unjust commands and actions. This means that

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<sup>260</sup> Ali Suavi, "İstanbul'dan fi 17 Teşrin-i Sani," *Le Mukhbir* 14 (28 November 1867): 2.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 3. Here I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 378, with some modifications.

<sup>262</sup> Ali Suavi, "Paris'ten Bir Müslüman Mektubu fi 15 Şaban," *Le Mukhbir* 17 (25 December 1867): 3. Here also I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 378, with some changes.

every people, in order to obtain rights and justice, must be unanimous and gathered together in firm belief.<sup>263</sup>

He then goes on to encourage his fellow Ottomans to rouse themselves and be politically active.

What is this ignominiousness that has befallen us, what is this inability to stir ourselves, what is this sleepiness, what is this effeminateness? Why should it be that the French [*Frenkler*] and English, who are not congenitally smarter than we, should hold their government to account for state expenditures while we contribute our dues and then do nothing but stupidly stare?<sup>264</sup>

In *Le Mukhbir* 20, Suavi voices his continued advocacy of representative government.

In short, Islamic government is based on the council. A state that consults the people [*millet*] progresses.

What a nice government that, rather than placing its revenues and expenditures in the hands of a few people, places them under the supervision of five or six hundred people who have been chosen by the public, that is by the people [*millet*], and [thus] eliminates wasteful spending.<sup>265</sup>

Also in issue 20, Suavi discusses “*taklit*,” which in this context refers to imitation or mimicry of the West. Suavi points to imitation as one of the causes of Ottoman weakness, and describes how imitation of Europe has changed Ottoman morals and customs.<sup>266</sup> He explains:

Every people [*millet*] has certain characteristics rooted in its religion and its world that distinguish that people from others. If it abandons those traits

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<sup>263</sup> Ali Suavi, “Paris’ten Bir Müslüman Mektubu fi 15 Şaban,” 3.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 4. I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 370, with some modifications. Mardin does not provide issue numbers for his citations, and he incorrectly states that this passage is in the issue for 5 December 1867.

<sup>265</sup> Ali Suavi, “Terk-i Meşveret,” *Le Mukhbir* 20 (18 January 1868): 2.

<sup>266</sup> Ali Suavi, “Taklit,” *Le Mukhbir* 20 (18 January 1868): 3.

it can be judged to have abandoned its national character [*milliyet*], or if it assumes and imitates the characteristics of another people [*kavim*]...<sup>267</sup>

Turning specifically to the issue of legal reform and the adoption of European legal codes, Suavi writes:

How deplorable! The Ottomans have taken imitation to such lengths as to have translated four words from the French legal code and told the people here you go, act according to this law. As if this huge state and people [*millet*] had been without a holy law or legal statutes these past six hundred years, [so now] the ministers pretend to make a law for them!<sup>268</sup>

Suavi concludes this article by observing that:

The thing called civilization [*medeniyet*] entered our Ottoman domains backwards. For example in London, which is considered most civilized, it is considered a great sin not to go to church or to open a shop or go shopping or sew on Sunday, and the most free Englishmen don't do [these things]. However for us disdain for religious rules and ancient customs is deemed [a sign of] civilization. Such a backwards understanding!

To sum up, it is incumbent on us to put an end to this sickness for imitation before it puts an end to us. There has already been enough of this aggression that these people have carried out against our religion, our custom, our national character [*milliyet*]. Enough!<sup>269</sup>

Later writers often focus on determining whether or not Suavi would have been in favor of one or another reform that was eventually carried out in the Turkish Republic. Suavi clearly articulates his views on imitation in general in the article cited above.

Suavi's patriotism can be seen in *Le Mukhbir* 21, where he asks:

Are there no men left in our nation [*millet*] who love their fatherland, their religion, their family? Who care for the defense of their own interests? Will the Turkish people who once made the world tremble happily become

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

the slaves of the Russians? By no means! Our nation is not dead. Perhaps it is still sleeping, but it is not time to sleep, it must open its eyes.<sup>270</sup>

Also in issue 21, Suavi writes that “the tyrant must be driven out in accordance with the holy law.”<sup>271</sup>

In *Le Mukhbir* 22 Suavi writes of the need for representative government.

It is common knowledge that the word *adalet* [justice] is of Arabic origin. It means ‘change in balance.’ For example it means that if we place one hundred dirhams in one side of the scales an equilibrium is established by placing one hundred dirhams in the other. A state must necessarily have subjects. Well, the state and subjects are like the two sides of a balance. Thus if only the state benefits of protection and subjects do not, there is no justice in the balance of government. In short, subjects will disappear and the state itself come to an end.

Consequently in European states there is an assembly appointed by the state to protect the rights of the state and to stop those who would trespass on these rights. There also is a representative assembly elected by the people to discuss policies, to control the revenue and expenditures of the state and to protect the population from oppression with regard to taxation and other matters. With one assembly protecting the rights of the state and the other, the rights of the people, the balance of government is naturally a just balance.<sup>272</sup>

Suavi defended the Islamic holy law (*şeriat*) against claims that it was an obstacle to progress or that it was not equipped to meet the needs of changing circumstances. In *Le Mukhbir* 25, he describes how,

In conversation with certain distinguished persons we have heard the claim that ‘if the holy law interferes in worldly matters there is no progress for the state.’ This statement is quite correct if applied to the Christian holy

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<sup>270</sup> Ali Suavi, “[?],” *Le Mukhbir* 21 (27 January 1868): 3. Here I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 370, with some changes.

<sup>271</sup> Ali Suavi, “İstanbul’dan Tahrirat-i Mahsuse fi 15 Ramazan,” *Le Mukhbir* 21 (27 January 1868): 3.

<sup>272</sup> Ali Suavi, “Meşveret Meclisi Olmadıkça Devlet Yaşamaz,” *Le Mukhbir* 22 (6 February 1868): 3. Here I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 377, with some modifications.



law and state, for even today in the Old and New Testaments which are found in Europe there are no regulations regarding transactions, but what is the purpose of saying this about the Islamic holy law?<sup>273</sup>

In *Le Mukhbir* 27, Suavi writes on the sultanate and the caliphate in an article that was later reprinted in *Hürriyet*.

Muslims don't believe the sultan [*padişah*] to be a king, they believe him to be much greater than a king, such that he occupies the post of the prophet. They say he is the representative of the prophet, the caliph, the imam, the commander of the faithful. They call him the protector of religion. The sultan is of such a rank in the view of Muslims that they believe the sultan protects Islam [*Müslümanlık*]. So if now our sultan comes to the mosques, ascends the pulpits, calls the Muslims to war and proclaims this call, not only his subjects but [all the Muslims] in the whole world, in Arabia and Turkistan and India and China, in short the estimated two hundred million Muslims in the East and in the West, will arm themselves and rally around the sultan. Because they believe themselves to be a congregation and the sultan their imam. When the sultan came to London an Indian Muslim cried from joy, saying 'I have seen the grace of the Commander of the Faithful!'<sup>274</sup>

Suavi clearly appreciated the potential value of the caliphate in rallying the Muslims of the world, though in his later writings he takes a somewhat different position. Perhaps it is significant here that he is merely reporting what "they say" about the sultan.

Many of the issues that were important to Suavi appear together in an article in *Le Mukhbir* 28.

Strange. If a poor man steals, or if he commits any other well-known infraction of the law, the fellow's failures are spelled out in large characters on a piece of paper, hung on his neck, and the fellow made to stand in a busy avenue and exhibit it to all passers-by... .

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<sup>273</sup> Ali Suavi, "En-Nazar fi'l-Mezalim," *Le Mukhbir* 25 (29 February 1868): 2

<sup>274</sup> Ali Suavi, "Müslümanların Padişah Hakkında Zannı," *Le Mukhbir* 27 (14 March 1868): 4. Reprinted as Ali Suavi, "Müslümanların Padişah Hakkında Zannı," *Hürriyet* 42 (12 April 1869): 5-6.

All right. But if there are no objections to exhibiting the poor in such a fashion for their infractions, why should it be considered excessive to exhibit the harms that high officials cause to the entire fatherland and the nation [*millet*] in *Muhbir* written in small fine characters? Is this penalty of being publicly exhibited only for the poor? ...

Now see here! Let us put aside personal rights and consider the rights of the nation. This nation of forty million has a sultan. Very well, the holy law and reason tell us that ‘there is no good in an abundance of leaders.’ There must be one sultan. But is it the personality and will of the sultan that guarantee the rights of the nation? Or is it the holy law which places limits on everyone, and the Tanzimat which is the instrument of the holy law? There is no doubt, the rights of the nation are guaranteed by the holy law and the Tanzimat. Well, who guarantees this holy law and this Tanzimat if not the assemblies? It follows, then, that the assemblies are indirectly the guarantors of the rights of the community. Why then should so many of our assemblies, which are the guarantors of the holy law and the Tanzimat, be made the instruments of the whims of one or two men? ... When the rights of millions of people are given in trust to such assemblies how can one not expect the security of the people to be frittered away? How can one not expect part of the population to place themselves under foreign protection? How can one not expect the Muslims, who are denied protection from any side, to decrease in number? How can one expect those who have been trampled not to trample those who trampled them, however dangerous the consequences of this may be? Do all members of the government believe themselves to be free of responsibility for this state of affairs? If there are any of them who harbor such beliefs they are mistaken. To provide justice is the greatest, the first duty of government, for it is the very reason of its establishment and of its continuation. If the state does not remember this duty, then naturally the people are obliged to remind it.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Ali Suavi, “Şahsiyat,” *Le Mukhbir* 28 (23 March 1868): 1. Here I have used the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 365-6, though with many significant modifications. This passage is on page 1, not on page 2 as Mardin states. Mardin chooses this long passage to illustrate Suavi’s “unmistakable, rather primitive, and crude style” and the “confused but fervent world of his ideas.” In other words, Mardin chooses this passage not because it is particularly significant in his view but because it illustrates Suavi’s negative traits. I do not share Mardin’s views on Suavi’s style or on his ideas. This passage reads as if it were meant to be read aloud to a congregation. That is to say, Suavi used the style of his sermons in many of his written articles. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI. It should also be noted that Mardin’s ellipses make Suavi’s argument less coherent. I have revised, and in some places corrected, Mardin’s translation and also added material that he skipped over.

In the English summary of *Le Mukhbir* 37, Suavi discusses three ideas that have been put forth as ways to save the empire. The first is a constitutional assembly, while the second is “a Dictator, who could clear away at one sweep, all internal and external obstacles” and thus put an end to foreign interference in Ottoman affairs.<sup>276</sup> Moving on to the third idea, Suavi writes that

3<sup>rd</sup> party says: ‘The spread of education will give birth to liberty, and liberty will give birth to a Constitution, and that will give life to the empire – EDUCATE.’

Of all three parties, the last seems to me to be the most ideal.

Can the present state of things last so as to give us time to educate the people, make them free, and give them a good Constitution? We are in the days of telegraphs, railways, and steamers – events move fast.<sup>277</sup>

Suavi concludes by appealing to his “countrymen” to pull together and work to save the empire in this manner.

In an important untitled article in *Le Mukhbir* 38, Suavi writes:

It is important to know that in one matter there is a great difference between East and West. That is to say, in Europe there is the cause of racism [*cinslik* (type-ism)]. For example, a Frenchman cannot now be a minister in the English government. Likewise, an Algerian Arab cannot obtain the privileges of a Frenchman.

This cause of racism does not exist in the East.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Ali Suavi, “Summary of No. 37, of the ‘Mukhbir’,” *Le Mukhbir* 37 (3 June 1868): 4.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ali Suavi, “[untitled article],” *Le Mukhbir* 38 (12 June 1868), 2. An Ottoman dictionary defines *cins* (race, type) in this context as a synonym of *kavim* (people, nation) or *kabile* (tribe), giving as examples the Albanian and Circassian races. See Şemseddin Sami, *Kamus-i Türki* (Istanbul: İkdam Matbaası, 1901). The term *cinslik*, which I have translated as “racism,” could also be translated as “tribalism” or even “nationalism.” For Suavi, and for an Ottoman Muslim audience, this *cinslik* would have been viewed as a threat to Ottoman and Muslim unity. For an Ottoman religious affiliation was the most important marker of identity, rather than race, tribe, or “nation” as the word is used here.

Suavi proceeds to give several examples of famous Ottoman statesmen who were not Turks.

The Turkish state appeared, but rather than heeding the cause of racism it took into its service the competent people it found of every race [*cins* (type)].

Yes, in the East instead of the cause of racism there is the cause of unity [*tevhid*]. That is, racial origin [*köklük* (origin-ism)] is not sovereign, Muslim-ness [*Müslümanlık* (Muslim identity, Islam)] is sovereign. However in Europe religion is not sovereign, racism is sovereign. This is the difference between East and West. European books and newspapers should stop trying in vain to argue such things as that there are no Turks left and so on, for in the East there is no claim of Turkism [*Şark'ta Türklük iddiası yok*].<sup>279</sup> It remains to be seen which will prove more lasting, the West's cause of racism or the East's cause of Muslim-ness.

When it comes to judging this matter, of course the East's situation is better. Since for example the French with their cause of Frenchness [*Fransızlık davası*] are only thirty million. However the Turks with their cause of Muslim-ness are two hundred million. Race [*cins*] can be destroyed, Muslim-ness cannot. Based on this, the Turks will never be destroyed.<sup>280</sup>

Suavi then moves on to a discussion of the French or English word “nation,” which he translates as “*ümme*,” a word more often used to designate a religious community.

[Webster] says that ‘this means a group of people gathered together through residence in the [same] country or through being united under the rule of their own leader or government. Even if composed of various races, it is a nation.’ So politically the inhabitants of the given lands are referred to as the Ottoman nation. Otherwise the Saturday Review's claim that it is not correct to say ‘Ottoman nation’ does not follow accepted political terminology.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> İsmail Doğan quotes this passage but significantly omits this sentence. Doğan wishes to emphasize Suavi's Turkish dimension alongside his Muslim dimension. See İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 309-10. Hüseyin Çelik quotes the passage in its entirety and argues correctly that Suavi was not a Turkist. See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 624.

<sup>280</sup> Ali Suavi, “[untitled article],” *Le Mukhbir* 38 (12 June 1868), 2.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid. Noah Webster “dedicated his *Speller* and *Dictionary* to providing an intellectual foundation for American nationalism,” so it is no surprise that his definition of “nation” would be broad enough to apply to a large country with a diverse population. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah\\_Webster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah_Webster), accessed June 23, 2011. The definition of “nation” in the 1857 edition of Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English*

The English summary of this article reads a little differently.

Indeed there are some good usages amongst the Turks which we do not find amongst Europeans. For example, there is no prejudice as regards race in choosing those who govern, and the highest offices are conferred regardless of race. Amongst the English a Frenchman is never appointed Prime Vizier. But amongst the Turks see how many non-Turkish statesmen there have been...<sup>282</sup>

There is no mention of the plight of the Algerian Arab as there is in the original Turkish.

Suavi goes on to provide a long list of non-Turkish Ottoman statesmen, from which he concludes that:

It is quite certain that there is no national prejudice amongst the Turks.

It is true that in the East there is a preference for the believers in the unity of God; but this religious question does not interfere with the political question; for a wise policy does not lean towards race or religion, but it guards the rights of the nation, and a nation might be composed of different races or religions living under one government; for if we refer to history, we find there have always been Christian Ministers in Turkey as well as there are at the present day...<sup>283</sup>

In this translation Suavi leaves out some of the details that are present in the Turkish original, but the most significant omission is the final paragraph from the original which predicts that Muslim religious unity will be more enduring than racial unity such as “Frenchness.” This passage is clearly meant to encourage his Turkish-reading audience, but may have been considered too confrontational for inclusion in an English summary intended for a European audience. Also, this article clearly shows that Suavi was not a Turkist.

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*Language* is “a body of people inhabiting the same country, or united under the same sovereign or government.” The elaboration that “even if composed of various races, it is a nation” seems to be Suavi’s, unless it is from a different edition of Webster. Still, Webster’s definition does not mention race, religion, language, ethnicity, or any other possible characteristic of a nation besides shared territory and government.

<sup>282</sup> Ali Suavi, “Summary of No. 38, of the ‘Mukhbir’,” *Le Mukhbir* 38 (12 June 1868): 4.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

In *Le Mukhbir* 40 and 41 appeared a two-part article that was later published as a pamphlet with the title given in English as *The Principles of Jurisprudence*.<sup>284</sup> As Suavi explains in the English summary of issue 40, he wrote this article:

In order that it may be seen that in this age our religion is no obstacle to good institutions and the execution of justice; but that the conduct of some foreigners, and of some ignorant officials of ours who disgust the people, is an impediment.<sup>285</sup>

The article emphasizes the importance of respecting current custom in reaching legal decisions, and concludes that

Mahommedan law does not consider it proper for men to follow decisions based on obsolete customs; and prescribes that decisions should be framed in accordance with usages which are prevalent in the age people live in.<sup>286</sup>

*Le Mukhbir* 47 contains an article by Suavi on the reform of the modified version of the Arabic script used to write Ottoman Turkish. Suavi briefly discusses various proposals that have been put forth for script reform before stating his preference for the least extreme option, which would consist of using diacritical marks with the existing script to help new learners. He states clearly that “people who grow accustomed to that new script must not be deprived of [the ability to] read the books of ours that have been written or printed over the centuries.”<sup>287</sup> He points out that other languages use similar systems, and that in fact English suffers from the same problem as Ottoman Turkish since “o” has four or five possible pronunciations just like Turkish “o.”<sup>288</sup> Suavi was clearly not in favor of

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<sup>284</sup> Ali Suavi, *Arabî İbare (Usûl-i Fıkh) Nam Risalenin Tercümesi/The Principles of Jurisprudence*. (London: Muhbir Matbaası, 1868). The only copy of this publication that I have been able to locate is held by the Atatürk University library in Erzurum, Turkey.

<sup>285</sup> Ali Suavi, “Summary of No. 40, of the ‘Mukhbir’,” *Le Mukhbir* 40 (25 June 1868): 3.

<sup>286</sup> Ali Suavi, “Summary of No. 41, of the ‘Mukhbir’,” *Le Mukhbir* 41 (2 July 1868): 4.

<sup>287</sup> Ali Suavi, “Hattımızın Islahı,” *Le Mukhbir* 47 (31 August 1868): 1.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

adopting the Latin alphabet as some have claimed. While that is very clear from this specific article he wrote on the subject, it must be pointed out that advocating such a thing would have been completely out of character for Suavi, who consistently advocated reform based on indigenous traditions and criticized superficial imitation of the West.

This issue concludes with two letters written by Suavi's friend Charles Wells to *The Times*, in which he presents the Turkish point of view on the insurrection in Crete. Wells states that "Europe generally has been entirely misled with respect to Crete" since it is only the Greek side of the story that is presented in the European press.<sup>289</sup> He goes on to assert that "the loss of life and property among the unoffending Mussulman population has been enormous, yet no one in Europe raises his voice for them, and we are generally misled into the belief that the Christians have been the only sufferers."<sup>290</sup> Wells makes many of the same points that Suavi himself makes in his writings on Crete from this period.

In the first half of 1868 some articles that had originally appeared in *Le Mukhbir* were translated into French or English and appeared in other publications. This is especially important considering that some of the issues of *Le Mukhbir* published during these months appear to be no longer extant. The most significant of these publications, entitled *Echo d'Orient*, was actually the work of Suavi himself, and as far as I can tell it has never

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<sup>289</sup> Charles Wells, "The Cretan Insurrection," *Le Mukhbir* 47 (31 August 1868): 4.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

been studied before.<sup>291</sup> *Echo d'Orient* contains several articles from *Le Mukhbir* and from other sources. At 64 pages in length, it is significantly longer than any of Suavi's other publications up to this point, and this allows the inclusion of a larger number of articles.

In "Le Mukhbir et le but de la Jeune Turquie," originally from *Le Mukhbir* 26, Suavi begins by stating that

La ligne de conduite suivie par le 'Mukhbir,' depuis qu'il paraît en Occident, est basée sur les trois points suivants:

1. Mettre en évidence, sans passion aucune, les dangers et les périls qui menacent l'empire ottoman et qui ne résultent que de la forme actuelle de son gouvernement.
2. Redresser, par l'exposé de la situation et la défense des droits du peuple ottoman, qui commence à se réveiller, les erreurs d'opinion que se sont formées les Européens sur le compte des musulmans en particulier.
3. Travailler à l'adoption dans notre gouvernement du système parlementaire... qui seul peut sauver notre patrie de ses maux actuels et replacer l'empire ottoman sur une base solide.<sup>292</sup>

He then focuses on the issue of parliamentary government and, responding to claims that a parliament would divide the Ottoman peoples, he writes:

Non, non, ceux qui, chez nous, ne veulent pas d'une chambre parlementaire, forment une faible minorité. Ce sont ceux-là qui, assis dans leurs fauteuils à la Sublime-Porte, veulent gouverner plus de trente millions de sujets comme un troupeau de moutons, tout en traitant et trompant le Sultan comme un enfant; car, s'ils réfléchissaient un peu, ils trouveraient beaucoup d'Etats composés de différentes nations qui sont

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<sup>291</sup> This publication is not mentioned in any of the works on Suavi, or anywhere else as far as I can tell. It was published in London, though some of the content is in French and some in English. A single issue from May 1868 is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and it is not clear if any further issues were published. For the discovery of this publication, I owe thanks to a note in the record in the BNF's online catalogue stating that it was published by the editor of the *Mukhbir*. Suavi's name appears nowhere in the catalogue record and may not even appear anywhere in the publication itself.

<sup>292</sup> Ali Suavi, "Le Mukhbir et le but de la Jeune Turquie," *Echo d'Orient* 1 (May 1868): 2-3.



admirablement gouvernés par une constitution, et qui progressent de jour en jour.<sup>293</sup>

In the untitled article that follows, also from *Le Mukhbir* 26, Suavi reiterates the Young Ottoman claim that parliamentary government is rooted in Islam.

Nous sommes musulmans et nous savons bien que le régime parlementaire nous est commandé par le Koran, le Sunnet (paroles du Prophète) et tous les législateurs musulmans. La nécessité de ce régime, la raison aussi nous le prouve.<sup>294</sup>

In an article entitled “Mohammedanism not Opposed to Civilization” from the apparently non-extant *Le Mukhbir* 30, Suavi begins with a discussion of Muslim contributions to science and civilization. He then asks,

While the Mussulmans were thus the conquerors of the world, and the teachers of mankind, and were dazzling the eyes of Asia and Africa with their learning, what condition were the present Europeans in? History tells us that at that time the Europeans were plunged in darkness and ignorance. ... Now, see, these once ignorant Franks have waked.<sup>295</sup>

Suavi traces the root cause of prosperity to “the people protecting their own legal rights,” and he concludes with the exhortation “come, then, zealous men of our religion, let us not fail in our duty, let us protect the rights of the people, so that we may obtain good administration, and be able thereby to obtain a subsistence and exist in the world.”<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>294</sup> Ali Suavi, “[untitled article],” *Echo d’Orient* 1 (May 1868): 14.

<sup>295</sup> Ali Suavi, “Mohammedanism not Opposed to Civilization,” *Echo d’Orient* 1 (May 1868): 35. This article was reprinted in another periodical as [Ali Suavi], “Mohammedanism not Opposed to Civilization,” *Littell’s Living Age* 1251 (23 May 1868): 504-5, and also appeared in *Public Opinion*.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 36.

Also in *Echo d'Orient*, Suavi announces his intention to publish an Arabic version of *Le Mukhbir*, though it is unclear if any issues were actually published. On this project, Suavi writes

I have spent my life for the good of all the Moslems, and not for that of one nation or branch of them.

The object and plan of my publication may be thus explained: the language will be simple such as to be understood by all, and the policy of the paper to advocate the idea and induce the Government to take counsel with the nation.<sup>297</sup>

This passage is interesting in part because Suavi first uses the word “nation” to refer to a branch of Muslims such as the Turks or the Arabs, and then he uses the word to refer to all Ottomans, meaning everyone living under the Ottoman government. Also, that Suavi would consider creating such a publication targeted at the Arabs is further evidence of the sincerity of his Ottomanist and pan-Islamist convictions.

*Echo d'Orient* concludes with a lengthy excerpt from Hayrettin Paşa's *Réformes Nécessaires aux Etats Musulmans*.<sup>298</sup> In his brief introduction, Suavi mentions that the inclusion of this work is intended to refute the false attribution of works critical of parliamentary government to Hayrettin Paşa. According to Suavi, Hayrettin “a montré que si une Chambre élue par le peuple n'est pas introduite, la perte de la nation musulmane est inévitable.”<sup>299</sup> Here Suavi uses the word “nation” to refer to the Muslims in general, and we have seen above that he also used the word in the same publication to

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<sup>297</sup> Ali Suavi, “The Mukhbir in Arabic,” *Echo d'Orient* 1 (May 1868): 46.

<sup>298</sup> Hayrettin (Khayr al-Dīn) Paşa of Tunisia (1822-1890) was a prominent reformer and the force behind the Tunisian constitution and parliament of 1860. He later briefly served as Ottoman grand vizier under Abdülhamit in 1878-9. See Charles Kurzman, ed., *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 40.

<sup>299</sup> Ali Suavi, “Reformes nécessaires aux Etats musulmans,” *Echo d'Orient* 1 (May 1868): 48.

refer to the Turks and to the Ottomans. It seems that Suavi had not settled on a precise definition of this word in his writings, but used it as we might use the word “people” in English. Thus he could use the word “nation” to refer to “the Turkish people,” “the Ottoman people,” or “the Muslim people” without any implication that political organization should be based on this people-ness. Suavi articulates his views on the political organization of Ottomans and Muslims elsewhere, and he states very clearly that he is opposed to political organization based on race.

In May 1869 the Young Ottoman Mehmet Bey published a newspaper entitled *İttihad* (Unity) in Paris. On the front page of the first – and perhaps only – issue is an article by Suavi entitled “Progress.”<sup>300</sup> In this article, Suavi traces the history of Ottoman reform from the late 1600s to the recent opening of the Council of State. He concludes that “the Ottoman state is a limited and restricted government. And the sultan’s speech delivered at the inauguration of the Council of State is a document like the Magna Charta of the English in the matter of protecting our liberty.”<sup>301</sup> Suavi argues that this progress is not the result only of recent efforts, but of the 182 years of efforts he had just summarized. He concludes the article by stating that “the Ottoman nation of today does not wish to advance either by the virtue of one head as in the old days, or through the influence of

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<sup>300</sup> Ali Suavi, “Terakki,” *İttihad* 1 (15 May 1869): 1. M. Kaya Bilgegil reports that he found this periodical in the Versailles section of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. He reproduces the entire text in transliteration, and in the back of his book there is a reproduction of the upper part of the front page. See M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Yakın Çağ Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatı Üzerinde Araştırmalar I: Yeni Osmanlılar* (Ankara: Baylan Matbaası, 1976), 106-37. However, the Bibliothèque Nationale does not have a work meeting this description listed in its catalogue, and a request using the information provided by Bilgegil failed to turn anything up. İsmail Doğan and Hüseyin Çelik both quote this article from Bilgegil, who seems to be the only person to have ever seen the original.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, as cited by M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Yakın Çağ Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatı Üzerinde Araştırmalar*, 127.

Europe, rather it wishes to make progress internally through its own strength as a whole.”<sup>302</sup>

In *Le Mukhbir* and in his other writings from this period, we see a continued emphasis on topics that Suavi had earlier addressed in the pages of the Istanbul *Muhbir*, including in particular the importance of education and the abuses of Ottoman government officials. At the same time, much of Suavi’s writing during this period is clearly written in response to things he had read or heard in Europe, so that at the same time as he is criticizing the Ottoman government for specific abuses he is also increasingly engaged in a public relations campaign on behalf of the Ottoman Empire and Islamic civilization in general. Suavi is concerned in particular with positing an Islamic basis for constitutional and parliamentary government, and in general with countering claims that the Islamic legal system was incapable of changing with the times. The inclusion of French and later English supplements in *Le Mukhbir*, and the stand-alone publication of *Echo d’Orient*, show that Suavi was increasingly concerned with reaching out to a European audience in his writings. His use of the French or English word “nation” (or its various possible equivalents in Ottoman Turkish) to refer alternately to the Ottomans, the Muslims, the Turks, and the Arabs, shows that Suavi had not settled on the terminology to be used when discussing such matters. However, it is clear from his writings that his loyalties were with the Ottoman state and with the Muslims of the world. Suavi specifically rejected political organization based on what he viewed as racism. Also evident in his

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., as cited by M. Kaya Bilgegil, *Yakın Çağ Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatı Üzerinde Araştırmalar*, 128.

writings from this period is Suavi's growing political activism, based on the idea that the people must hold the government accountable.

### ***Ulum Gazetesi* and the Final Years of Journalism in France, 1869-1870**

*Ulum Gazetesi* was published by Ali Suavi in Paris from July 1869 to September 1870. This periodical, which really resembles a journal more than a newspaper, ran for 25 issues. The first twenty issues were handwritten by Suavi and lithographed while the final five issues were printed using movable type. The page numbering is continuous throughout the 25 issues, making for a grand total of 1416 pages that were collected and bound into four volumes. The lithographed issues do not contain a very large amount of text per page, and Suavi's handwriting is very neat and legible. While the first *Muhbir* had belonged to Filip Efendi and *Le Mukhbir* had been the organ of the Young Ottoman Society, *Ulum Gazetesi* was entirely Suavi's creation and was entirely under his editorial control.

The first issue of *Ulum* begins with an article that has received considerable attention in the secondary literature. This article, entitled simply "Turk," was written to address certain misconceptions regarding Turks that were common in Europe at the time. In particular, Suavi points out that the Turk was generally viewed as being a "coarse hero" unfit for intellectual pursuits.<sup>303</sup> He goes on to provide examples of contributions that Turks have made in various fields.<sup>304</sup> This article understandably receives considerable

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<sup>303</sup> Ali Suavi, "Türk," *Ulum* 1 (July 1869): 1.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-15.

attention from writers who wish to portray Suavi as a Turkist, but it is abundantly clear from Suavi's other writings that he was opposed to any sort of Turkism that was not subsumed in a broader Ottoman-Islamic framework. Correcting misconceptions regarding the race that he himself belonged to is not the same as advocating political organization based on the racism he abhorred.

Also in the first issue of *Ulum*, Suavi explains his views on popular sovereignty in one of his more frequently-cited articles, entitled "God is the Sovereign."

There exists a term which has gained considerable notoriety nowadays, 'popular sovereignty,' as the expression goes. This term is a translation from the French. Its original reads 'souveraineté du peuple.' Now let us inquire into the meaning of these French words. What does 'souveraineté' mean? This word is originally from the Latin 'soprenos' which means 'does what he desires,' 'sole master of his self,' 'absolute authority,' 'free in his actions.' Well, what is it that rules by itself and has absolute power over things? Something which cannot be qualified with any attribute other than that of Divinity. Thus, in this sense, there does not exist a single human being who possesses 'souveraineté.'<sup>305</sup>

In *Ulum* 3 Suavi discusses the issue of language among the Muslims. He writes:

Let me say again that that language is not the language of the Arabs, it is the language of Islam. Those sciences are not the sciences of the Arabs, they are the sciences of Islam. Brother, arguments like 'that is Arabic, this is Turkish, and this is Ottoman,' have been brought up by those who wish to cause Islam to fall into nationalism and racism. And we have accepted this, supposing that this is politics. But our fathers and grandfathers of old did not regard Arabic as a foreign language.<sup>306</sup>

Suavi emphasizes the importance of Arabic as a unifying factor for the Muslims of the world.

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<sup>305</sup> Ali Suavi, "El-Hakimu Hüvallah," *Ulum* 1 (July 1869): 18. I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 367, with some changes.

<sup>306</sup> Ali Suavi, "Lisan ve Hatt-ı Türkî," *Ulum* 3 (30 August 1869): 126.

Now to those who ask us of manners or letters or science, we will present our works in the language of Islam and science. For it is we who wrote them. But they will probably suppose we are Arab. If they suppose us to be Muslim they will not be mistaken.<sup>307</sup>

In *Ulum* 12, Suavi reiterates and elaborates on his views on sovereignty in an extract from a publication he was planning, but which apparently was never published, entitled *God Damn the Tyrants* [*Lanetullahi ala 'z-Zalimin*].

The only sovereign is God almighty. No human individual is sovereign, no human individual is sultan. That is, nobody has the right to subjugate or dominate or usurp the power of another person. No human individual is owner of the reins of the people. That is, nobody is the slave of the ruler [*padişah*]. Yes there is a ruler, but the ruler is the leader, he is a wage-earner, he is a caretaker. He is not the owner of the reins of the people. He is not the sultan, he is not the sovereign. He is responsible, not powerful. He is obligated, not gracious.

Yes, there is a vizier, there is a marshal, but there is no absolute representation. There is no absolute vizier, there is no higher rule.

This is what we want now and in the future. We want a royal proclamation to this effect.<sup>308</sup>

*Ulum* 15 includes an article entitled “History of the Young Ottomans” which begins with Suavi’s account of his own life. It is not terribly long or detailed, but it is one of the only sources that give us any information about Suavi’s early years, and it is referred to in Chapter II. Unfortunately, Suavi’s account ends with the arrival of the Young Ottomans

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>308</sup> Ali Suavi, “[?],” *Ulum* 12 (1 February 1870): 722-3.

in Europe, and though he likely meant to continue the story it seems he never found the time.<sup>309</sup>

In *Ulum* 16 appeared an important article in which Suavi discusses his views on the caliphate. He writes that “actually since I am a Muslim I grew up hearing the Muslims also refer to the sultan [*padişah*] as the ‘caliph’ [*halife*]. However I did not understand this name as signifying religious veneration or clerical government like the foreigners.”<sup>310</sup>

Suavi’s main argument here is that:

‘Caliph,’ ‘imam,’ ‘sultan,’ in short whatever name or title is used, none of them is the prophet’s representative or proxy. The saying ‘the sultan occupies the prophet’s post’ is an ignorant statement. It is not based on anything in the holy law.<sup>311</sup>

Suavi’s statements on this subject would later be interpreted as meaning that he was opposed to the institution of the caliphate, and therefore would have supported the eventual abolition of the sultanate and the caliphate in the founding years of the Turkish Republic. However Suavi’s argument here is simply that the caliph is not the prophet’s successor in any religious sense, or in other words that he is not a Muslim pope. We have seen elsewhere that Suavi accepted and even promoted the idea of the sultan-caliph as leader of the world’s Muslims. Suavi was not opposed to the institution of the caliphate, he simply wished to define it as a temporal political institution.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Ali Suavi, “Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi,” *Ulum* 15 (3 April 1870): 892-932. This was later reprinted as Ali Suavi, “Ali Suavi Merhumun Tercüme-i Hal ve Sergüzeşti,” *Şura-yı Ümmet* 131-40 (31 January - 9 February 1324).

<sup>310</sup> Ali Suavi, “Kudret-i Siyasiye Der Düvel-i İslamiye,” *Ulum* 16 (18 April 1870): 983.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 989.

<sup>312</sup> See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 602.



In *Ulum* 17 appeared an article entitled “Materialist,” in which Suavi criticizes the materialistic trend in nineteenth century European thought and its effects on Muslims studying in Europe. He writes:

Anyone who says that European science refutes spirituality is certainly a liar and an ignoramus. Engineering has nothing to do with the subject of God, that a refutation or a proof should come out of it.

Let the Turks, Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Greeks, Jews and so on who come to Europe for education study accounting, but let them be accountants, let them study engineering, but let them be engineers, let them study medicine, but let them be doctors, and so on in like manner... Otherwise it is quite absurd [for them] to get mixed up in, for example, the subject of theology with [an education in] experimental sciences, the subject of which consists of [physical] products, and to return with a bunch of imaginings and nonsense that are opposed to the existing spiritual belief in their country.<sup>313</sup>

Also in *Ulum* 17, Suavi writes:

The Qur’ān commands us for example to carry out justice, equity, and right in the state. That’s all. But it does not tell us to divide the country in such a manner into [administrative units such as] *vilayets*, *sancaks* and *kazas*, [or] to make such and such administrative regulations of 228 paragraphs and a security law of so many paragraphs, and likewise it does not give details conforming to the time and circumstance and geography of the country. Nevertheless, is there not a need for regulations and laws to administer and maintain order in a state?

In short, the matters concerning worship in the canonical jurisprudence should be separated from worldly transactions, and matters related to the world should be codified separately and independently. The foundation of this independently compiled knowledge is not Arabic literature and grammar, [rather] every science must be built on its correct foundation.

For example, reason and experience show that the science of law and government [*ilm-i siyaset*] has three sources. (1) geography, (2) economics, (3) morality. When the questions of these three sciences are brought together it becomes clear that the result is the political order of civilized congregations. This is what they mean by the science of law and

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<sup>313</sup> Ali Suavi, “Materyalist: Ehl-i Madde, Ehl-i His, Müşebbehe,” *Ulum* 17 (1870): 1020.

government. It comes from these things, but not from some grammatical particle in a passage from Ebu Yusuf. That's how it is.<sup>314</sup>

One of Suavi's more significant articles from *Ulum*, which originally appeared in issue 18, has recently been translated into English as "Democracy: Government by the People, Equality."<sup>315</sup> In this article Suavi argues that "during the early days of Islam, the form of government was democracy. That is to say, there was no sultanate, sultan, or king, but rather equality."<sup>316</sup> For Suavi this type of government, in which the leader is not privileged over the rest of the people, is only possible where there is morality. Unfortunately, "morality in our big cities is worse than in those of the Europeans. We have reached such a position that a man who spends two hours in the company of a woman and controls his desire will be pointed out and reckoned to have miraculous powers."<sup>317</sup> Suavi goes on to ask:

Is the only reason for the inapplicability of democracy in the Ottoman country bad morals? We have spoken about morals as an example. The fact that the country is divided between various continents, that it is inhabited by many peoples differing in language, custom, and religion, and its size are all obstacles in the way of democracy and equality.

However many republics may have come into being in the world up to now, they provide no examples to show that equality can be put into practice in a place like the Ottoman country; indeed they may rather indicate the contrary.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Ali Suavi, "Edebiye Üzere Bina Kılınan Ahkamı Reddedelim," *Ulum* 17 (1870): 1047-8.

<sup>315</sup> Ali Suavi, "Democracy: Government by the People, Equality," in *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Kurzman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138-43. This article originally appeared as Ali Suavi, "Demokrasi: Hükümet-i Halk, Müsavat," *Ulum Gazetesi* 18 (17 May 1870): 1083-1107.

<sup>316</sup> Ali Suavi, "Democracy: Government by the People, Equality," 138.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

Suavi concludes that the Ottoman state “has to be a sultanate” due to its particular circumstances.<sup>319</sup> He then observes that,

Strangely enough, while the republicans in England and France speak about democracy, equality, and freedom, they have no wish to relinquish their hold over Canada, India, or Algeria. Just look how those Frenchmen talk pretentiously about freedom and equality, all the while seeking world domination like Caesar.

If there is going to be freedom and equality, let them ask the Algerian Arabs, who have absolutely no ethnic, religious, cultural, or geographical affinity with them [the French], whether or not they prefer their own rulers, however tyrannical they may be, to the French republic?<sup>320</sup>

While Suavi argues that democracy will not work for the Ottomans, that does not mean he is opposed to government “based upon the principle of consultation.”<sup>321</sup> Specifically, he proposes that “our High Council... should be enlarged, a chamber of deputies elected by the people should be opened, and the ministers should be held accountable.”<sup>322</sup>

Finally, Suavi concludes this article by advocating the creation of a large Muslim state in Africa to serve as an ally to the Ottoman state.

If Tunisia, Tripoli in Barbary, and Egypt can come to their senses and unite, they will establish the best and the most enduring Muslim state in the world. If not, then the overwhelming power of Europe will conquer Africa.

In that event, Istanbul could only lodge a protest as strong as the one it made regarding Algeria. That’s it.

For those who share our views, this is inevitable. That is to say, there is no remedy for it. But if Istanbul adopts a policy of attempting to create a unified African state, and henceforth favors the birth of such a state, then it will have found itself a great ally in the cause of its own survival. And

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

until the Day of Judgment the Ottoman dynasty will be given honorable mention for this in the history books.

God knows best what is right.<sup>323</sup>

In *Ulum* 21, Suavi discusses his views on representational art, which he argues is not forbidden in Islam. The article, which appears in the first issue of *Ulum* to be printed with movable type, is accompanied by pictures of Islamic coins which feature images of the human figure.

Let us look in particular at the works of our predecessors. In every century, on every continent, so many of the caliphs and kings and viziers and artists who have had pictures and images made have been Muslims. How many famous painters there have been! Mukrizi wrote an entire book on the biographies of the most famous painters. Remembering the painters who lived in the third century of Islam, it is suitable if they cause us to be proud. İbn-i Aziz-i Basri and Kasir-i Iraki and Ebubekir Muhammad bin Hasan and Ahmed bin Yusuf and Muhammad bin Muhammad were the most eminent of them. On which continent did Islam not create pictures and images? Abdülmelik, of the Umayyad caliphs in Syria, had his own portrait put on his coin. He decorated the doors of the mosque he built in Jerusalem with the image of the prophet. Yakut wrote that the door of the mosque of Homs had a picture that was half people and half scorpions. In Damascus fabrics with pictures were embroidered on the looms of so many Muslims.<sup>324</sup>

Suavi argues that in the early years of Islam the threat posed by idolatry was the motivation behind banning representational art, but that since there was no longer any danger of a return to such idolatry there was no longer any reason to ban representational art.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>324</sup> Ali Suavi, "İslam'da Resim ve Tasvir ve Timsal," *Ulum* 21 (1 July 1870): 1284-5.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 1284.

In December 1869 an article by Suavi that appeared in *Hürriyet* led to the arrest of Ziya and his assistant and ultimately to Ziya's flight from London to Geneva.<sup>326</sup> In this article, Suavi goes into great detail regarding the deplorable state of Ottoman finances. He places blame for the situation squarely on the shoulders of Âli Paşa. Âli Paşa is the same high official whom Suavi had earlier criticized over the Belgrade fortress and who had instituted the press censorship law that had shut down the first *Muhbir* and led to Suavi's exile to Kastamonu and eventual flight to Europe. In this case, Suavi goes farther than usual in his attacks when he writes:

They have issued fatwas for the killing of a tyrant and those who assist a tyrant and those who follow a tyrant [ordering] that the killer be rewarded... . And by God the Generous, the vile infidel whose killing is obligatory is none other than this reprehensible tyrant Âli Paşa.<sup>327</sup>

Suavi does not blame Sultan Abdülaziz for this state of affairs, and as in Suavi's other writings the sultan needs to be warned of the abuses committed by high officials like Âli Paşa.<sup>328</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter II, in late 1869 and early 1870 several pamphlets by the Young Ottomans Reşad Bey and Kanipaşazade Rıfat Bey were published in which the authors attacked Suavi. Suavi published a brief response to Rıfat Bey's pamphlet in the form of an eight-page lithographed pamphlet.<sup>329</sup> In his response, Suavi does not blame Rıfat himself for the attacks but directs attention to the government officials whose favor Rıfat

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<sup>326</sup> Ali Suavi, "Suavi Efendi Tarafından Gelen Mektup Sureti," *Hürriyet* 78 (20 December 1869): 1-3.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ali Suavi, *Fransa'da Paris Şehrinde Misâfireten Mukim Elhac Ali Suavi Efendi Tarafından Yine Paris'te Kânipaşazâde Ahmet Rıfat Bey'e Yazılan Mektubun Sureti* (Paris, 1870). A copy of this work reportedly exists at the Milli Kütüphane in Ankara, though it does not appear in their online catalogue. The entire text appears in transliterated form in Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 221-9, while part of the first page is reproduced in the back of İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*.

is trying to win, notably Âli Paşa. Of these officials, he writes “they say that Suavi is penniless in a foreign country, if we can cut him off from the customers of his newspaper he will die of hunger and we will be free of him.”<sup>330</sup> Suavi announces that he is in no danger of dying of hunger, as he can get by just fine even in a foreign country, and that therefore “the tyrants have no chance of being rescued from this sharp common tongue.”<sup>331</sup>

Regarding some of the specific attacks on his character in Rıfat Bey’s pamphlet, Suavi writes

1 – You say Suavi got married in England. This is permitted by the holy law. I am not committing adultery, I am married.

2 – You say ‘he took his turban off,’ I say ‘I took it off.’ Now I go out wearing a fez.

3 – You say ‘Suavi is ignorant.’ This does not even require a response.<sup>332</sup>

Suavi proceeds to point out the abrupt change in Rıfat Bey’s positions regarding not only Suavi himself but also the high Ottoman officials that he had previously described as traitors but now approached respectfully.<sup>333</sup> Rıfat Bey’s pamphlet is still widely available in various libraries and is cited by many of the secondary works on Suavi, whereas Suavi’s response seems to have survived in only a single copy which has been consulted only by the more recent Suavi scholars. The effect this has had in shaping our image of Suavi is discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

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<sup>330</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 226.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1870 Suavi began work on a sort of encyclopedia, the first five installments of which were published in the last five issues of *Ulum. Kamusü'l-Ulum ve'l-Maarif* (Lexicon of Sciences and Education) appeared on pages 1257-72, 1289-1304, 1321-36, 1353-68, and 1385-1400 of *Ulum*, thus occupying the first half of each issue, with the pages of this special feature also numbered separately from 1 to 80. The five completed installments of *Kamus* were later collected into a separately bound volume, hence its consideration as a separate publication. On his reasons for publishing such a work, Suavi writes that

All good things are born of knowledge and information. We want good things for the Islamic countries. That means we want knowledge and information, which are the source of good things.

So how can knowledge and information be spread in the Islamic countries?  
There is no doubt, by means of printed books.<sup>334</sup>

Suavi then discusses the history of the encyclopedia, making it clear that he considers his own work part of the effort to spread knowledge and bring good things to the Islamic countries.

When the publication of *Ulum* in Paris was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War, Suavi moved his operation to Lyons and then to Marseilles, where he published eleven issues of a handwritten lithographed periodical entitled *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* (Temporarily to the Customers of Ulum) between September and December 1870. The eleven issues of this publication total 160 pages. Much of the content of this periodical is devoted to the Franco-Prussian War, though Suavi's commentary on the situation in France often has relevance for the Ottomans.

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<sup>334</sup> Ali Suavi, "İlan," *Ulum* 21 (1 July 1870): 1273.

In the first issue of *Muvakkaten*, Suavi discusses the problem of the luxurious boots worn by the French soldiers and asks “are they able to stand up to the German wearing regular galoshes?”<sup>335</sup> He goes on to argue that this sort of luxury is a threat to the Ottomans as well, and in fact is even more of a threat “because extravagance entered France but under the name of extravagance, while extravagance has entered Istanbul under the name of civilization.”<sup>336</sup> He concludes with the warning that:

If Istanbul does not know that the harlot they call extravagance has entered Istanbul in the robes of civilization, if Istanbul does not drive out this harlot with the name of civilization, then know for certain that ten Cossacks of Russia will suffice to frighten Istanbul with its population of one million.<sup>337</sup>

In *Muvakkaten* 2, Suavi writes that “where the opinions of the people are taken into consideration, in that place there exists a true republic. This means that whoever is at the head of such a mass of people, whatever his title may be, is the president of the republic.”<sup>338</sup> Defining the republic in such a manner would even allow the sultan to be the president of the republic.

In *Muvakkaten* 8, Suavi elaborates on his view of nationalism.

Our semi-official gazette, *La Turquie*, states ‘now the time has come for it; the Porte should follow the example of Italy and Prussia, adopt the cause of nationalism [*kavmiyet*] and assemble all Muslims. First it should make of Egypt and Tunisia provinces like that of Edirne.’

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<sup>335</sup> Ali Suavi, “Kemalin Zevalli,” *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 1 (30 September 1870): 6.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-6.

<sup>338</sup> Ali Suavi, “Fransa’da Cumhuriyetin Sabit Olamayacağı,” *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 2 (6 October 1870): 24.



Do our ministers realize that the question of nationalities is one special to Europeans and that we do not have a nationalities problem? Nationality questions would cause our ruin. To gather Muslims together could at most be a religious question but not a question of national origin.<sup>339</sup>

In *Ulum* and *Muvakkaten*, Suavi further develops his ideas on government. While the general principles to be followed can be found in the Qur'ān, the details must be worked out using science. God is the only sovereign. The sultan is not sovereign, he is responsible to the people. The caliphate is merely a temporal institution, though that does not keep the sultan-caliph from being the leader of the world's Muslims. Suavi believes that democracy will not work for the Ottomans, but he calls for consultation with the people and accountability for high officials, even going so far as to call for the death of Âli Paşa, an official whom he found particularly tyrannical. Suavi criticizes extravagance and wasteful spending, as well as the influence of European materialism on the new generation of Ottoman students. He continues to emphasize Islamic unity, and argues that Arabic is the language not only of the Arabs but of Islam. He does not hesitate to address European misconceptions regarding the Turks, but he does not advocate political organization based on race.

In Suavi's writings from the period 1864-1870, alongside his continued interest in education and in academic knowledge on a wide variety of topics, we see a growing political awareness and a gradual formulation and refinement of very specific ideas on

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<sup>339</sup> Ali Suavi, "Karadeniz Meselesi," *Muvakkaten Ulum Gazetesi Müşterilerine* 8 (15 December 1870): 126. Here I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 372, with some modification. Parts of the text are missing in my copy of *Muvakkaten*, so I have not been able to check all of Mardin's translation against the original.

government. The government's reaction to Suavi's criticism regarding the Belgrade fortress and Suavi's exile to Kastamonu led to Suavi's flight to Europe and shaped his views on the arbitrary rule of high government officials. This then provided the impetus for numerous articles critical of the Ottoman government. Once in Europe, Suavi became increasingly aware of the prevalence amongst Europeans of negative views of the Ottomans, of Islam, and of the Turks. This then led him to write articles – and, as we shall see in the following chapter, books – addressing and attempting to correct these misperceptions. On the issue of parliamentary government, Suavi modified his views on this issue to a certain extent, gradually reaching the conclusion that democracy was not suitable for the Ottoman context. He called instead for increased consultation and accountability. Suavi's main concerns then are precisely as he laid them out in “Le Mukhbir et le but de la Jeune Turquie,” quoted above, if we simply add to the list his strong interest in and advocacy of development based on education and the spread of knowledge through book publishing.

## CHAPTER IV

### ALİ SUAVİ'S WORK AND THOUGHT, THE LATER YEARS

#### **A New Direction: Book Publishing in Paris, 1871-1876**

Almost all of Ali Suavi's books and pamphlets were published in Paris between 1871 and 1876. The only articles Suavi published during this period appeared in European periodicals, until in 1876 his work began once again to appear in several Istanbul newspapers. Suavi's books are mostly quite short, with only a couple of them exceeding one hundred pages and many being very short pamphlets composed of only a few pages.

Some of the books discussed here have never been studied before, and many of them have not been studied adequately. Many of these books simply were not available to the earlier scholars who studied Suavi, located as they were in libraries outside Turkey. The fact that some of them are written in French or English instead of Turkish may also help to explain this neglect to a certain extent.<sup>340</sup> However Şerif Mardin, who wrote his book on the Young Ottomans in English at Princeton University, also ignores Suavi's books. Mardin quotes the one passage from Suavi's book *Hive* that contains the word "Turk," but the rest

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<sup>340</sup> At the same time, one could reasonably argue that the greater emphasis I have placed on these works is also due to the fact that they are written in French or English instead of Ottoman Turkish. However, my emphasis on Suavi's European-language works is not accompanied by a corresponding neglect of his Turkish works.

of his discussion of Suavi is based on his Turkish newspaper writings.<sup>341</sup> Based on this I would conclude that the neglect of Suavi's books is also partly due to the fact that they contain very little material that earlier scholars found interesting. More specifically, they contain almost nothing that could be used to portray Suavi as a Turkish nationalist or as a secularist, and much that would serve to contradict this view.

Hüseyin Çelik is the only scholar to date who has made the effort to track down most of Suavi's works, including the books, and to discuss them in his book. In his section on Suavi's works, Çelik provides brief summaries of all of the books he was able to locate, although not of the articles. However, in his discussion of Suavi's ideas he then relies overwhelmingly on Suavi's Turkish newspaper work, with only a handful of references to his books. Suavi's books from this period are far more significant than Çelik's treatment of them would seem to suggest, and in the following pages I attempt to give them the attention they deserve.

One of Suavi's first publications after he switched from journalism to book publishing is *Defter-i Âmâl-i Âli Paşa* (Register of the Deeds of Âli Paşa), a harshly critical work published shortly after the death of its subject. Following the publication of this book, Suavi would for the most part turn his attention from criticism of Ottoman officials and policies to defense of Ottoman interests against the European and Russian propaganda offensive known as the Eastern Question.

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<sup>341</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 371.

*Defter-i Âmâl-i Âli Paşa* is more than just an attack on a single high official, as in many ways it sums up the Young Ottoman critique of the Tanzimat. After rising to prominence in the 1840s, Âli Paşa “played a dominating role in the reform movement” from the early 1850s until his death in 1871.<sup>342</sup> He is thus the official most directly responsible for many of the reforms that Suavi was most critical of, and Suavi’s book is as much a critique of these reforms as it is an attack on Âli Paşa himself.

Suavi begins by enumerating three principles that had guided the Ottoman government “from days of old.”<sup>343</sup> First, ministers were held accountable for their actions. Second, important decisions were discussed in a council meeting before a royal edict was requested. And third, decisions were made not as a result of foreign pressure but rather were based on the holy law.<sup>344</sup> Âli Paşa violated all three of these principles, as Suavi shows in the remainder of the book.

In the book Suavi often refers to Âli Paşa using his patronymic Kapıcızade, meaning “porter’s son,” thus highlighting his humble origins. He writes that until 1856 and Kapıcızade’s arrival the Ottoman Ministry of Finance had a balanced budget, but that “the fellow left a deficit of one million purses in the annual balance and departed. The state’s combined revenues are only three million.”<sup>345</sup> Suavi found much to criticize in Âli Paşa’s

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<sup>342</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 117.

<sup>343</sup> Ali Suavi, *Defter-i Âmâl-i Âli Paşa* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1288/1871), 3. This short book was reprinted as Ali Suavi, “Bir Nüsha-yı Nadire: Âli Paşa’ya Dair,” *Mecmua-yı Kemal* 1, no. 1 (1 June 1901): 102-23; and again as Ali Suavi, *Âli Paşa’nın Siyaseti* (Istanbul: Kitaphane-i Askeri, 1325/1907-8).

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 6. This reference to Âli Paşa as “the fellow” (*herif* in the original Turkish) is quite rude.

handling of the Ottoman economy in general, and he was particularly concerned with the problem of the mounting Ottoman foreign debt.<sup>346</sup>

On the subject of concessions made to foreign governments – often referred to collectively as “the capitulations” – Suavi writes that “Âli Paşa extended these concessions to such an extent that when the foreigners kill someone in our country they are not even arrested.”<sup>347</sup> Suavi also criticizes Âli Paşa for giving in to Russian demands regarding the Black Sea, another example of Ottoman weakness in the face of foreign pressure that typified Âli Paşa’s time in power.<sup>348</sup>

Suavi is particularly critical of the 1856 *Islahat Fermanı* (Reform Edict), writing that “what they call the Reform Edict is actually the Concessions to Christian Subjects Edict.”<sup>349</sup> He points out that “Kapıcızade did nothing but translate” the edict from what was provided him by the English, French, and Austrian ambassadors.<sup>350</sup> What is more, he writes that “you will not be able to understand the strength of this edict from the Turkish [version] which is in the [Turkish] law books, [but] look at the French [version] which was given to the foreign states and you will understand what concessions are.”<sup>351</sup> Suavi then points out a discrepancy between the Turkish and French versions of the law allowing foreigners to purchase property in the Ottoman Empire. While the Turkish version does not allow foreigners to purchase property in the Hejaz where the holy cities

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 23-6.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

of Mecca and Medina are located, the French version allows foreigners to purchase property “dans toute l’étendue de l’Empire.”<sup>352</sup> Suavi concludes his discussion of Âli Paşa’s deeds by assuring his readers that Âli Paşa will most certainly be held accountable and punished for his actions in the hereafter.<sup>353</sup>

In the early 1870s Suavi published several *salnames* (yearbooks or almanacs), two devoted to “Turkey” and one to Egypt. Though these works are in Ottoman Turkish, Suavi follows European usage in referring to the Ottoman Empire as *Türkiye*. These books collect a wealth of information on the Ottoman Empire and on Egypt, including geography, trade, communications, climate, and coinage.

As we saw in Chapter II, at this time Suavi was being supported by the Egyptian government of the Khedive İsmail, and the fact that he produced a yearbook on Egypt at all is likely due to this fact. In the first section, entitled “Government,” Suavi begins by stating that “the government of Egypt is limited to the line of Mehmet Ali by means of succession. This succession is directly to the sons of the current khedive of Egypt, His Excellency İsmail Paşa.”<sup>354</sup> Suavi thus begins this work by explicitly taking İsmail’s side in the controversy over the succession, which traditionally would have passed to the eldest male of the line, this being Suavi’s previous patron Mustafa Fazıl Paşa. This

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>354</sup> Ali Suavi, *Mısır fi Sene 1288* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1871), 2.

positive tone is sustained throughout the yearbook, with Suavi later stating that “among all the Islamic regions, Egypt’s financial credit is in order.”<sup>355</sup>

In Suavi’s first yearbook for Turkey – he sometimes refers to it as the “Ottoman State” in the text – he notes that the population is made up of 14 “races,” including Turks, Arabs, Tatars, Druze, Kurds, Armenians, and Jews. Here Suavi simply uses the French word “race” in transliterated form.<sup>356</sup> In the section on “Industry,” Suavi explains that “the causes of the decline of industry in Turkey are the same things as have caused the decline of agriculture. The first reason is the guarding of old practices. The second reason is the high cost of labor. The third reason is the tax on exports.”<sup>357</sup> On trade, he complains that “foreign trade is almost completely in the hands of the foreigners.”<sup>358</sup>

In Suavi’s second yearbook for Turkey he reiterates his explanation for the decline of industry and agriculture in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>359</sup> He writes that “the wealth and prosperity of the nation [*ümmet*] find life through the legal regulation [*nizam*] of the country. When the administration of the government is based on arrangements that give wealth, industry and likewise trade advance.”<sup>360</sup> Suavi notes that while the country is very productive in agriculture, in the area of trade there is much to find fault with, including the domination of foreign trade by foreigners as mentioned above.<sup>361</sup> Suavi thus used the

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>356</sup> Ali Suavi, *Türkiye fi Sene 1288* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1871), 3.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>359</sup> Ali Suavi, *Türkiye 1290* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1873), 37.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 74.



yearbook format to bring up issues that he regarded as important, and to reiterate some of the major points from his earlier newspaper articles.

In 1872, Suavi published a translation of the report of the Ottoman ambassador Mehmet Efendi, who was sent to the French court in 1720 to ask King Louis XV to mediate a truce with the Order of Malta. Though this mission was ultimately unsuccessful, Suavi emphasizes the importance of the specialized knowledge the ambassador brought back in enabling the Grand Vizier İbrahim Paşa to establish a printing press in Istanbul.<sup>362</sup> Suavi also includes a great deal of information on the Order of Malta. He explains that Freemasonry and the Order of Malta have many common beliefs and symbols, including reverence for the Trinity and the rank of “master.”<sup>363</sup> He then goes on to explain that the Order of Malta was “formed with a strong belief in jihad against Islam.”<sup>364</sup> We have already seen that Ottoman Freemasonry was associated with liberal Westernizing reform, and that Suavi’s outlook was in many ways diametrically opposed to this. Here we have further evidence that claims that Suavi was a Freemason are without merit. Suavi does not make any explicit claims about Freemasonry here, but the fact that he points out its similarities with a group that advocated “jihad against Islam” is a likely indication that Suavi was not at all sympathetic to Freemasonry, much less actively associated with it.

As mentioned in Chapter III, one of Suavi’s earliest surviving works is a Turkish translation of the *Pinax* or *Tablet of Cebes*. In 1873 he published in Paris an annotated

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<sup>362</sup> Ali Suavi, ed., *Tacryr, ou relation de Mohammed Efféendi (Ambassadeur par la S. Porte en France. 1720.) à Ibrahim Pacha* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1872), 1-2.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

Arabic edition of this same work, based on an Arabic translation he had found in manuscript form in a library in Spain.<sup>365</sup> While most of Suavi's works from this period have a strong political message, it seems he still found some time to pursue more personal scholarly interests.

In 1873 Suavi also published a book entitled *Nasir-ed-Din: Chah d'Iran* to mark the occasion of the Persian monarch's impending visit to Paris. He writes that, as the Ottoman sultan and the Egyptian khedive had already visited Paris, "voici qu'aujourd'hui un troisième souverain turc vient à Paris."<sup>366</sup> Suavi further points out that these three Turkish rulers were all born in 1830.<sup>367</sup>

From the very first page this book is full of nothing but praise for the Persian shah.

Nasir-ed-Din est un habile administrateur, un profond politique, un homme de science et de lettres.

Quiconque a étudié la situation désastreuse et anarchique de la Perse, à l'époque de l'avènement au trône de Nasir-ed-Din, ne pourra faire autrement que d'admirer l'habileté, l'énergie que ce prince de dix-huit ans déploya pour vaincre toutes les difficultés qui se dressaient sur son passage.<sup>368</sup>

Suavi then goes on to write "quant à la conduite des ministres du Chah, dans la question actuelle du Khiva, et celle de la frontière avec la Turquie, espérons qu'elle se changera en une bonne politique."<sup>369</sup> Suavi thus blames the ministers and not the monarch for any

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<sup>365</sup> Ali Suavi, ed., *Luğz Qābis Şāhib Aflāṭun/Le Tableau de Sèbès, ou l'Image de la Vie Humaine, Traduit en Arabe par Ibnī Muskwēih au Quatrième Siècle d'Hégire* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1873).

<sup>366</sup> Ali Suavi, *Nasir-ed-Din: Chah d'Iran* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1873), 2. The only copy of this work that I was able to locate is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 4.

policy he does not approve of, just as he does in his writings on Ottoman politics. Not holding the monarch directly and personally accountable in this manner is more than merely a display of deference, as it leaves the monarch more leeway to change policy. In any case major changes of policy would often be accompanied by changes in ministerial appointments, or cabinet shuffling. In this manner Suavi also manages to defend Ottoman interests in the border dispute he mentions without criticizing the shah.

Suavi discusses some of the reforms carried out by the Persian monarch, and then goes on to write:

Voilà donc Nasir-ed-Din réformateur est sortie de sa capitale pour visiter l'Europe. Sans doute, il va faire une étude approfondie, non pas sur les choses de pompe et de luxe, mais sur les institutions modernes qui méritent d'être reproduites dans son pays.<sup>370</sup>

Suavi then devotes several pages to a history of the Qajar dynasty before concluding of the shah:

Ami des lettres, protecteur des sciences, passionnément curieux pour tout ce qui est étranger à son pays, il fixera, nous en sommes convaincu, une ère nouvelle dans les destinées de la Perse qui, naguère, accueillit avec joie et espoir la jeune royauté de Nasir-ed-Din et, aujourd'hui, se repose entièrement sur sa raison virile, sa haute sagesse et ses capacités sociales et politiques.<sup>371</sup>

In one of the only negative observations in the book, Suavi writes of the Persian military that “les officiers sont ignorants et incapables ; tandis que les soldats sont dépeints comme obéissants, sobres, intelligents et infatigables.”<sup>372</sup> Portraying the officers in this manner absolves both the shah and the regular soldiers of any blame for military

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 14.

weakness, similar to how blaming the ministers for all policies absolves the shah of direct responsibility. At the same time, Suavi concludes the book by noting that there are “pour le Chah Nasir-ed-Din, beaucoup de choses à améliorer dans son pays.”<sup>373</sup>

Suavi’s portrayal of the Persian monarch is so positive that one might easily conclude that this work was commissioned by the Persian government.<sup>374</sup> At the same time, the few negative observations in the book are not aimed at the shah himself but at his ministers and officers, which not only absolves him of any responsibility for Persia’s problems by placing the blame elsewhere, but also serves to highlight the difficulties faced by this monarch. Çelik sees a contradiction between Suavi’s treatment of the Qajar shah in this work and his harsh criticism of the Safavids for dividing the Islamic world with their adoption of Shī‘ism in his book *Hive fi Muharrem 1290*.<sup>375</sup> I simply see no contradiction here, since however much Suavi may have wished that the Safavids had not adopted Shī‘ism, he must have realized that it would be fruitless to let that wish guide his actions in the nineteenth century. Doing so would serve only to heighten the division of which he was so critical. And while this unusually positive work may well have been commissioned by the Persian government, it contains nothing that would be truly out of character for Suavi.

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>374</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 494.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

Ali Suavi's best-known and in many ways one of his most significant works, *Hive fi Muharrem 1290*, was published in Paris in 1873.<sup>376</sup> A French edition was published later that same year, and the Turkish edition was reprinted in 1909 and later in a modern Turkish edition in 1977.<sup>377</sup> The French edition is 89 pages long, making this one of Suavi's longer books. The book is composed of two parts, "Les agrandissements de la Russie dans l'Asie centrale" and "Le Khiva." Khiva is a city in what is now Uzbekistan, but until it fell to the Russians in May of 1873 it was the capital of the independent Khanate of Khiva.<sup>378</sup>

In the first part, Suavi gives an overview of the history of Russian expansion in Central Asia and remarks that the intersection of Russian and British policy in the region<sup>379</sup> posed the greatest threat to the unity of the world's Muslims since the days when the Safavid dynasty, "en innovant en Perse la secte des Chyis, suscita une séparation territoriale entre 200,000,000 de Musulmans."<sup>380</sup> In the second part, Suavi describes the Khanate of Khiva, its geography and population, as well as the history of the region. This includes an overview of Ottoman-Uzbek relations dating back to the sixteenth century.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Ali Suavi, *Hive fi Muharrem 1290* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1290/1873).

<sup>377</sup> Ali Suavi, *Le Khiva en Mars 1873* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1873); *Hive fi Muharrem 1290* (Istanbul: Artin Asaduryan Matbaası, 1327/1909); *Hive Hanlığı ve Türkistan'da Rus Yayılması* (Istanbul: Orkun Yayınevi, 1977).

<sup>378</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khiva>, accessed June 1, 2011.

<sup>379</sup> Suavi here refers to what would become known as "the Great Game." The most intensive phase of this competition between Russia and Britain for supremacy in Central Asia lasted from 1813 to 1907. British policy centered on protecting India from a potential Russian invasion, particularly following Russian conquest of the Central Asian khanates in the 1860s and 1870s. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Great\\_Game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Game), accessed December 8, 2011.

<sup>380</sup> Ali Suavi, *Le Khiva en Mars 1873*, 18-9.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-2.

In his concluding remarks Suavi describes the imminent threat to the independence of the Khanate of Khiva. Reminding his readers of recent examples where the French and British had gone to great lengths in order to help their coreligionists, he asserts that “les Musulmans d’autrefois faisaient de même.”<sup>382</sup>

Aujourd’hui, il ne restait dans l’Asie centrale qu’un seul Khan indépendant: celui de Khiva... Voici que la Russie veut le soumettre et envoie une armée contre lui.

Et les Euzbeks de Khiva qui sont de notre religion, de notre race, de notre famille ottomane, dans quel état de souffrance les voit-on?...

Personne ne s’en occupe.<sup>383</sup>

In this passage Suavi is clearly calling for Muslim solidarity in the face of Russian expansion. However, this brief passage has been seized upon by later Turkish nationalists as proof that Ali Suavi was a Turkish nationalist. In the Turkish version the relevant sentence reads “oh in what a bad situation are [these] Turkish Muslims who are of our religion and our people and our family” (Bizim dinimizden ve kavmimizden ve familyamızdan olan Türk Müslümanlar acaba ne haldeler...)<sup>384</sup> This is the only sentence in the entire book that could possibly be interpreted in anything approaching a Turkish nationalist manner. When discussing “Turkish Muslims” it is clear from the context that for Suavi their being Muslims is much more important than their being Turks. However, a twentieth-century Turkish nationalist hearing the same phrase would likely understand just the opposite, and this despite the abundant contextual evidence to the contrary.

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>384</sup> Ali Suavi, *Hive fi Muharrem 1290*, 129.

In an 1873 letter to the Société de Géographie, Suavi responds to claims made by a French scholar that the Aral Sea was “de *création récente* et que dans l’antiquité il n’en aurait jamais été question.”<sup>385</sup> Suavi points out that:

Il y a douze siècles, les Arabes qui conquièrent le Khorzem *connaissaient* le lac d’Aral. Parmi tous les géographes arabes, turcs, persans qui reconnaissent ce lac, nous choisissons Khorzémi, natif de Khorzem. Il y a dix siècles, ce savant ne décrivait pas seulement l’Aral, mais encore observait que le 43<sup>e</sup> degré de latitude passe au centre du lac, et il lui donnait une étendue d’environ cent lieues de tour.<sup>386</sup>

Suavi thus seizes the opportunity to rebuke French scholars for ignoring relevant Arabic or Islamic sources while drawing sweeping conclusions based only on Western sources. Going beyond that, Suavi chooses examples that show that not only were the Muslims aware of the Aral Sea, but they had in fact studied it scientifically.

In 1874 Suavi published the first part of seventeenth-century Ottoman scholar Katip Çelebi’s *Takvimü’t-Tevarih* (Calendar of Dates), a work which consists of a chronological list of important historical events.<sup>387</sup> It seems that Suavi was unable to complete this work, and as we shall see below this is likely due to the fact that in 1875 and 1876 his attention was focused on a series of crises involving the Ottoman Empire.

### **Crisis and Response, 1875-1876**

The 1870s were turbulent years for the Ottoman Empire, and Suavi’s work from 1875 and 1876 is almost exclusively concerned with three crises from these years. He published an

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<sup>385</sup> Ali Suavi, “A Propos de la Mer d’Aral,” *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* 6, no. 6 (November 1873): 528.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ali Suavi, ed., *Takvimü’t-Tevarih* (Paris, 1291/1874). I have not been able to consult this book myself, but have instead relied on Çelik’s description. See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 508-9.

important series of books on the insurrection in Herzegovina; several pamphlets on the subject of the Ottoman foreign debt; and a series of articles on the insurrection in Bulgaria. In several of these works Suavi goes far beyond simply addressing the crisis at hand, and the historical background he provides, along with the analysis and the connections he draws, provide us with a well-rounded picture of how Suavi viewed his world, a world increasingly dominated by the Eastern Question.

In 1875 and 1876 Suavi published a series of three books addressing the insurrection in Herzegovina, although these books in fact deal more with issues related to the insurrection than with the insurrection itself. The books are in French and were clearly meant for a European audience. The first of these, *A Propos de l'Herzegovine*, should be considered one of Suavi's most significant books. At 96 pages it is one of his longest, and judging by the high production values – it is larger than his other books and printed on higher quality paper, with wide margins around the text block and two maps in color – it is evident that Suavi himself considered it of more importance than many of his other works.

The book opens with a picture of Suavi wearing a fez. In contrast with the photos of Suavi in the robes and turban of a religious scholar and mosque preacher, here he presents an image of himself as a distinguished Ottoman official. In a brief note to the reader, Suavi describes himself – and his intentions in writing this book – as follows.

Né à Islamboul, osmanly-musulman, ayant voyagé dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire ottoman, dans l'Asie Mineure, dans l'Irac, en Syrie, en Arabie, en Afrique et en Europe, j'ai étudié sur place les sciences, les religions, les



hommes et les choses, connaissances qui ont fait de moi un Khodja ; opposant, à diverses reprises, à la mauvaise politique de quelques Vézirs, opposition acharnée qui a fait de moi un martyr politique, j'ai cru aujourd'hui, à propos de l'Herzégovine, pouvoir donner mon coup de pioche au monument imaginaire de la « Question d'Orient. »<sup>388</sup>

Suavi thus uses the insurrection in Herzegovina as the starting point for a dissection of the Eastern Question in general and a defense of the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. It is also significant that Suavi identifies himself as an Ottoman Muslim, since one of his main arguments in the book is that the Ottomans are a nation, regardless of the race or religion of its individual members. At the same time the importance of Islam for Suavi and for the Ottoman Empire is never in doubt, and Suavi's reference to the city of his birth as "Islamboul" instead of Istanbul or Constantinople is an affirmation of this.

In the first chapter Suavi briefly brings up the insurrection in Herzegovina, noting that:

Notre intention n'est pas de montrer ici combien il est étrange de voir des hommes d'Etats, ne recherchant que la paix, et ces mêmes chefs du Congrès de la paix universelle, encourager les insurgés en les aidant *moralement* et *matériellement*, au nom de la tranquillité. On connaît en effet les souscriptions ouvertes en Angleterre, en Russie et, par neuf comités, en Autriche.<sup>389</sup>

From there he swiftly jumps into a discussion of the Eastern Question in general. He points out that four governments in Europe – England, France, Holland, and the Ottoman Empire – have significant numbers of subjects in the Orient, and he designates these four governments "*Européens-Orientaux*."<sup>390</sup> He goes on to argue that:

Si l'Empire Ottoman est dans la même situation politique que l'Angleterre, la France et la Hollande, la logique force bien à reconnaître que cet Empire est matériellement et politiquement Européen, qu'il N'EST PAS, lui, la

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<sup>388</sup> Ali Suavi, *A Propos de l'Herzegovine* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1875), ii.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

« *Question d'Orient*, » mais qu'il A, comme les autres, *ses questions orientales*.<sup>391</sup>

Regarding the Eastern Question, following an overview of its use in politics Suavi concludes that “« *La Question d'Orient* » n'existe pas, sinon comme un déguisement du mot *Croisade* ou comme une vaine expression diplomatique dont on se sert à l'occasion pour nouer quelque intrigue.”<sup>392</sup> He argues that the Eastern Question does not even exist from a Russian point of view,

Attendu que les Moscovites ne sont pas des *Slaves*;

Attendu que toutes les populations composant aujourd'hui l'empire ottoman ne forment qu'une nationalité: l'*Osmanly*;

Attendu que le panslavisme inventé par les Moscovites *les met en dehors de l'Europe*;

Attendu enfin que Constantinople est *imprenable*.<sup>393</sup>

The remaining chapters of the book then consist of Suavi's arguments on these major points.

The second chapter is devoted to the question of nationality. Suavi argues that the Bulgarians, Albanians, Slavs, Greeks and Muslims that make up the Ottoman Empire “sont si liés que, si vous étudiez leurs intérêts communs, vous les trouverez constituant une « nationalité » que nous nommons en Turquie : « *Osmanly*. »”<sup>394</sup> It is interesting to note that while Suavi does not list Turks as one of the groups making up the Ottoman Empire, referring instead to all Muslims as a single group, he sometimes refers to the

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 21.

country as “Turquie” (Turkey) as was commonly done in Europe during this period. While at first this might seem to run counter to his argument that the Ottomans constituted a nation, it must be remembered that Turkish nationalism simply did not exist in any form until years after Suavi’s death, and that his references to “Turkey” would have had no political significance whatsoever.

The third chapter is a discussion of Pan-Slavism. Suavi argues that:

Le cabinet russe a créé une nationalité à sa convenance: la nationalité slave (panslavisme).

D’après quelques diplomates de nos jours, la Russie peut sans crainte soutenir cette nationalité car elle embrasse la Pologne et la Turquie jusqu’au rivage de l’Adriatique, en un mot tout ce qui en Europe est Russe ou peut le devenir.

La proclamation de cette nationalité est récente. ...<sup>395</sup>

The remainder of this chapter consists of Suavi’s arguments that Pan-Slavism is based on erroneous principles and that Russian occupation of Slavic lands came about not due to any principle but rather “par l’intrigue et la duplicité jointes à la force brutale.”<sup>396</sup>

Chapter four of Suavi’s book is entitled “Les Ottomans: Religion. – Nationalité.” He begins by noting that “les Ottomans appartiennent à la religion musulmane.”<sup>397</sup> On the subject of Muslim unity, he writes that among the Muslims “il n’existe chez eux ni question d’origine ni de division, et ce serait gravement insulter un musulman que de

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 29.

l'appeler: Turc, Bulgare ou Albanien.”<sup>398</sup> Regarding the Turkish origins of the Ottomans,

Suavi writes:

Nous ne prétendons pas nier la source de leur origine turque, mais nous voulons expliquer pourquoi l'histoire ottomane, écrite par les osmanly, dans leur langue, ne renferme que du mépris pour ceux qu'ils désignent sous le nom de *Turks*, nom qu'ils ne s'appliquent pas à eux-mêmes.

Dans la suite, cette désignation d' « osmanly » a été étendue et appliquée par eux à *tout sujet de l'Empire ottoman*, quelle que soit la religion à laquelle il appartienne.

On voit donc péremptoirement que dans cette contrée, que les Européens nomment la Turquie, il existe une *nationalité*, et qu'il n'en existe qu'UNE : l'*osmanly* !<sup>399</sup>

Suavi then concludes the chapter with a quote from a M. Vaillant to the effect that:

Il n'y a plus de Turks barbares, comme il n'y a plus de Francs ou de Teutons, mais il y a une Turquie qui se police et chez laquelle l'application du tanzimat ne fera bientôt plus qu'un peuple de 21,000,000 de musulmans et de 14,000,000 de chrétiens qui forment la population de ce vaste Empire !<sup>400</sup>

Chapter five is entitled “Ce que doivent l'Europe et l'humanité à l'établissement des Ottomans à Constantinople.” Here Suavi argues that:

On peut dire du Muhammed, descendant d'Othman, qu'il a été choisi par la Providence pour améliorer la face d'une partie de l'Europe, car c'est lui qui, en établissant l'Empire ottoman à Constantinople, a préparé également l'établissement de la paix et de la tranquillité en Europe en réunissant en un même corps de nation des races diverses et de religions différentes.<sup>401</sup>

Suavi describes a medieval Europe and a Byzantine Empire gripped by ignorance and fanaticism.

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 34-5.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 37.

C'est au milieu de tous ces vices que Muhammed-le-Conquérant vint montrer à l'Europe que l'avenir n'était pas à la féodalité ; oui, il a bien prouvé que l'avenir n'appartient pas aux subdivisions territoriales, aux nationalités infinitésimales, mais aux agglomérations qui facilitent l'essor de la civilisation.<sup>402</sup>

Suavi then proceeds to discuss the Crusades.

Un jour a lui ou l'Europe tout entière s'était soulevée pour exterminer les Musulmans : que de ruines, que de dévastations le fanatisme ignorant du moyen âge n'a-t-il pas causées ! que de flots de sang n'a-t-il pas fait répandre !

Eh bien ! n'est-ce pas un immense service que l'Empire ottoman a rendu au monde chrétien en effaçant jusqu'au souvenir même de ces haines et de ces atrocités ?<sup>403</sup>

Suavi claims that Ottomans who are familiar with the history of the Crusades gained their knowledge from European books, and that efforts to translate such books into Turkish have been actively discouraged, including by the Ottoman government.<sup>404</sup> Suavi laments “combien n'est-il pas regrettable que les Européens ne se lassent jamais de ressusciter ces sanglants souvenirs !”<sup>405</sup> He argues that just as the Ottomans have suppressed the memory of the Crusades, Europe must suppress the “Eastern Question” since it is merely another word for “Crusade.”<sup>406</sup>

In the following chapter, entitled “Constantinople et le Russie,” Suavi discusses Russian policy towards the Ottoman Empire and Russian claims that the Ottoman Christians were oppressed. Suavi points out the double standard involved in such claims, summing up the Russian position thus: “la domination d'une minorité sur une majorité est légitime si ce

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 42-4.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 44.

sont des chrétiens qui l'exercent, elle ne l'est pas si ce sont des musulmans !...<sup>407</sup> Suavi writes that the uprisings in the Balkans are the results of Russian intrigue, and not the work of the local populations: "il existe une insurrection dans l'Herzégovine, mais il n'existe pas d'insurrection *herzégovinienne* !"<sup>408</sup>

Suavi then turns to "La population de la Turquie d'Europe." Following a discussion of the composition of this population with estimated statistics for each community, Suavi reminds his readers that "pour nous, osmanly, il n'existe politiquement dans l'Empire ottoman qu'une seule nationalité : l'Osmanly !"<sup>409</sup> He then goes on to argue that:

Ces 10,000,000 d'habitants, moitié musulmans et moitié de différents cultes, sont si liés, si amalgamés, leurs intérêts sont si solidaires qu'un démembrement de la Turquie par l'établissement d'une *royauté des Slaves du midi*, ou d'une *fédération de la Turquie d'Europe* est géographiquement et matériellement impossible.<sup>410</sup>

In the following chapter Suavi then argues that "la Turquie peut à elle seule soutenir le choc de la puissance russe," despite the widely-held view that Russia was militarily stronger than the Ottoman Empire.<sup>411</sup>

Chapter nine, entitled "La Question d'Orient est à Alexandrie !," discusses the view that possession of Egypt is the key to world conquest and the fact that the Russians had repeatedly suggested that England take Egypt.<sup>412</sup> He proceeds to paint a glowing picture

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 72-3.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 85-7.

of a modernizing Egypt under the khedive,<sup>413</sup> before concluding with a call for Ottoman-Egyptian solidarity:

Malgré *le Times*, qui depuis quelque temps cherche à créer un refroidissement entre Missr et Constantinople, afin d'arriver sans doute à une séparation, nous espérons que Constantinople en songeant aux intérêts de la *majorité qui soutient son gouvernement*, verra avec un œil tout satisfait l'agrandissement et la richesse de Missr, cette contrée que les Européens désignent sous le nom d'Egypte.<sup>414</sup>

Suavi then concludes the book with "Un mot à la Sublime-Porte à propos des insurrections." Here he recommends that the Ottoman government stop granting amnesty to insurgents after suppressing a revolt, a policy that Suavi claims leads only to more revolts.<sup>415</sup> Finally, he concludes:

Si l'Empire ottoman veut devenir grand, riche et fort, il faut qu'il comprenne ses propres forces, résultant de sa situation géographique et du patriotisme de son peuple ; qu'il ne compte que sur sa propre puissance et qu'il cesse enfin de demeurer sous le protectorat déguisé des gouvernements européens.

Si tout le monde se met d'accord pour dire à la Sublime-Porte qu'elle est malade, si jusqu'à maintenant elle se l'est laissé persuader, il est temps qu'elle sente sa vitalité et donne congé à ses médecins.<sup>416</sup>

*A Propos de l'Herzégovine* is clearly a work of propaganda, a multi-faceted defense of the Ottoman Empire and critique of the Eastern Question written for a European audience. However, it is impossible at this point to judge if this work had any influence whatsoever in European diplomatic circles, or if it found its only audience among

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 87-9.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 93-4.

members of the Urquhart group which was in any case already sympathetic to the Ottoman Empire. Çelik informs us that Suavi in fact wrote this series of books with the assistance of Urquhart and his wife, and that Urquhart made many of the same points in his own works.<sup>417</sup> At the same time, Suavi's arguments in this book do not represent a break with his earlier ideas, and despite its propaganda value I see no reason to question his sincerity on most counts. However, it is likely that he refrains from criticizing England and France since he was trying to influence official or public opinion in these two countries.

Despite the significance of its contents, this book – along with Suavi's other works in French and English – has been for the most part ignored or neglected in previous works on Suavi. Even Çelik, though he devotes seven pages to a summary of *A Propos de l'Herzégovine*, does not follow up with any real discussion of the significance of the work and of the ideas it contains. Çelik's summary is of course in Turkish, and besides a couple of direct quotes he mostly paraphrases Suavi. When Çelik writes that “according to [Suavi] in the Ottoman state there are 21 million Muslims and 10 million non-Muslims, but all of them... are Ottomans,”<sup>418</sup> this does not really convey the sense of the original where Suavi states “que dans cette contrée, que les Européens nomment la Turquie, il existe une *nationalité*, et qu'il n'en existe qu'UNE : l'*osmanly* !”<sup>419</sup> Çelik thus glosses over this claim to Ottoman nationhood, a claim which will be discussed below in Chapter VI.

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<sup>417</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 496.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

<sup>419</sup> Ali Suavi, *A Propos de l'Herzegovine*, 34.



On 15 January 1876 Suavi followed up with a book entitled *II<sup>me</sup> A Propos de l'Herzégovine*, “tiré à un petit nombre d'exemplaires pour les amis.”<sup>420</sup> This work is much shorter and could almost be considered an appendix to the first *A Propos de l'Herzégovine*, as it consists mostly of texts – including a memorandum written by Âli Paşa – that support or elaborate on Suavi’s arguments in the first book. At the same time, the texts contained in this book are linked by another theme, this being the problem of guarantees of reform or of minority rights extracted from the Ottoman government by the European powers. Suavi writes that such guarantees, even when expressed in polite terms, are “une infraction de l’indépendance parfaite de la Turquie,”<sup>421</sup> and points out that the word for a state that is placed under the tutelage of other states is “*Protectorat*.”<sup>422</sup>

Suavi then proceeds to argue, in a letter to the English Foreign Secretary Lord Derby, that in the Ottoman Empire there is a certain procedure that must be followed in enacting a law, and that laws that are enacted under foreign pressure without regard for this procedure are in effect unconstitutional.

Les fermans et les décrets, comme le khatt de 1856, en effet, malgré toute la bonne volonté de S. M. le Sultan, ne seront pas exécutés ; ils seront pas exécutés, non par suite du mauvais vouloir des fonctionnaires ou de l’esprit rétrograde du peuple, mais parce qu’ils ne peuvent pas être exécutés. Ils ne peuvent pas être exécutés parce qu’ils n’ont pas valeur de loi ; ils n’ont pas valeur de loi parce qu’ils sont inconstitutionnels d’après le principe de la Charte ottomane qui est gravé dans la tête de tous les sujets.

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<sup>420</sup> Ali Suavi, *II<sup>me</sup> A Propos de l'Herzégovine* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1876), 2. The only copy of this book I have been able to locate is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

Jamais, depuis 5 ou 6 siècles, le gouvernement ottoman ne peut faire ni déclaration de guerre, ni traité avec l'étranger, ni rendre un ferman concernant les affaires publiques, sans qu'il en soit discuté, délibéré en assemblée générale, que cette délibération soit légalisée, sur une présentation officielle par un *fetva* du Cheikh-ul-Islam Effendi et, dans le cas où ce *fetva* l'autorise, que le sultan la sanctionne en ordonnant l'exécution.<sup>423</sup>

Suavi argues that Âli Paşa began to violate this principle beginning with

le khatt de 1856, khatt rédigé le 19 janvier 1856, non par une délibération d'assemblée générale, mais par le conseil particulier du grand vézir avec quelques-uns de ses collègues, copiant le mémorandum de trois ambassadeurs et promulgué le 18 février 1856. De cette date ont commencé dans l'empire ottoman les violations du principe établie, *véritable frein* du peuple.<sup>424</sup>

Suavi also published a Turkish translation of this letter to Lord Derby as a pamphlet.<sup>425</sup>

Included in the pamphlet are the Turkish translations of a speech by H. A. Munro-Butler-Johnstone<sup>426</sup> and a letter from the Foreign Affairs Committee to the sultan.<sup>427</sup> The speech and the letter make the same arguments as Suavi's letter to Lord Derby regarding the need for consultation. The criticism of what they viewed as the arbitrary or despotic rule of Ottoman high officials was a concern that Suavi shared with the other Young Ottomans. The example that Suavi provides here helps to clarify exactly what they were so critical of. The disregard for established procedure, and thus for the will of the people, goes hand in hand with reform carried out under European pressure.

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>425</sup> Ali Suavi, *Suavi'nin fi 28 Desambir 1875 (Evahir Zi'lkada 1292) Tarihiyle İngiltere Hariciye Nâzırı Lord Derby'ye Yazmış Olduğu Mektubun Türkçe Tercümesi* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1876). The only copy of this pamphlet that I was able to locate is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 4-7. As we saw in Chapter II, H. A. Munro-Butler-Johnstone was a Conservative politician and member of the Urquhart circle.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 8.

The third book in Suavi's *A Propos de l'Herzégovine* series then focuses on Montenegro. Most of the book is devoted to a chronology of events in Montenegro between 1852 and 1876. Suavi presents his main arguments in the form of a quote from the *Gazette allemande* of 9 October 1872.

Le Monténégro, comme État, est une monstruosité ; c'est un État de brigands et de sauvages où couper la tête, les oreilles et le nez aux Turcs passe pour la principale vertu. Nous reprochons à l'Autriche et à la Russie d'avoir laissé vivre cet État de brigands qui devrait disparaître de la carte de l'Europe. C'est là que la Russie, à un moment donné, tendra ses filets. Le jour viendra où l'on maudira cette politique autrichienne à courte vue et insensée qui a soutenu cet État de brigands.<sup>428</sup>

Suavi first addresses efforts by certain European writers and journalists to portray Montenegro as an independent state, something which he counters with a detailed history of the Ottoman conquest and Ottoman rule.<sup>429</sup> Suavi also discusses the history of Montenegrin massacres of its Muslim inhabitants.<sup>430</sup> The chronology then details the history of the Montenegrin “brigands” and of the support rendered them by Russia, Austria, and France.<sup>431</sup>

The second crisis that occupied Suavi's attention during this period involves the Ottoman foreign debt.<sup>432</sup> In 1875 the Ottoman government announced that it would soon be forced to cut payments on the interest from its foreign debt in half. A suggestion was announced for recalculating the Ottoman debt to avoid a default, known as the Hamond Scheme, and

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<sup>428</sup> Ali Suavi, *III<sup>me</sup> A Propos de l'Herzégovine: Monténégro* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1876), 6.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-40.

<sup>432</sup> The Muharrem Decree of 20 December 1881 established the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, giving foreign creditors direct control of a large portion of Ottoman revenue. See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 453. Clearly Suavi's fears regarding the dangers of foreign debt were well-founded.

around the end of 1875 Suavi published a pamphlet, in Turkish, promoting this scheme.<sup>433</sup> Suavi explains that for many of the Ottoman Empire's foreign loans, for every hundred lira of debt the Ottoman government only received eighty, seventy, sixty, or in some cases just forty-five lira. Under the Hamond Scheme, the Ottoman Empire would only be required to pay back the amount it had actually received, and furthermore the interest payments would be recalculated based on this reduced amount. The Ottoman government would then be required to cancel a new loan that was being prepared at the time.<sup>434</sup> This suggested reduction of the Ottoman debt would require the acceptance of its foreign creditors, and this was debated and approved by the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Committee, an organization which had been founded by David Urquhart.<sup>435</sup> Suavi includes a summary of this meeting in his pamphlet, which includes some remarks by committee chairman George Crawshay in which he quotes Suavi on Herzegovina.<sup>436</sup> The remainder of the pamphlet contains translations of letters, news articles, and telegrams publicizing and encouraging the implementation of the Hamond Scheme. Suavi also mentions that he will soon be publishing more material on this topic.<sup>437</sup>

On 19 November 1875 David Urquhart wrote a letter to the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Committee asking them to write to the sultan with advice on the subject of the empire's

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<sup>433</sup> Ali Suavi, *Devlet Yüz On Altı Buçuk Milyon Lira Borçtan Kurtuluyor/Hamond's Scheme Making Turkey a Present of £. S. 84,476,720 and Relieving Her Revenue of £. 5,368,469 a Year* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1875).

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>435</sup> The Newcastle Foreign Affairs Committee was one of many Foreign Affairs Committees active in this period. According to Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 120, these committees were made up of men who shared Urquhart's Russophobe, Turcophile views.

<sup>436</sup> Ali Suavi, *Devlet Yüz On Altı Buçuk Milyon Lira Borçtan Kurtuluyor*, 6.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

foreign debt. Suavi translated Urquhart's letter and published it as a pamphlet.<sup>438</sup>

Urquhart writes that:

The means must be anxiously looked for by which this load of debt can be made bearable and finally got rid of. Those means will be found to bear on every point in regard to which it is necessary that measures should be taken, if the Empire is to be reconstituted; for nothing less than that is now required to save Turkey.<sup>439</sup>

He then discusses the earlier refusal of the Ottoman government to borrow money until the time of the Crimean War.

Turkey, therefore, remained free from debt until the fatal date of 1854. When Lord PALMERSTON wanted to arouse public feeling in favour of Turkey, he said: 'She has no Poland and no Siberia.' He took care not to add, 'She has no debt;' because it was his intention and object to impose one on her.<sup>440</sup>

Urquhart explains that "the object, then, was not merely to impose a debt upon Turkey. That was all that Russia, acting as an enemy, could do. England, acting as a friend, could do much more. She could lead Turkey into the ways of extravagance and corruption."<sup>441</sup>

After more historical discussion, Urquhart returns to his immediate concern:

The resolution to which the Turks have now to be brought, in reference to the financial position, is this; that it is the debt itself that has to be dealt with – the capital sum, and not merely the interest. This is all important, and this, I am convinced, may be done, because their sense of honour and self-respect are now directly involved.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> Ali Suavi, trans., *Letter from Mr. D. Urquhart to the New Castle Committee on the Subject of the Turkish Debt, Translated in Turkish 11 Dec. 1875/İngiliz Hükemasından Vakıf-ı Umur-i Alem ve Hayırhah-ı Ümem David Urquhart Efendi'nin bu Kere Umur-i Ecnebiye Komitelerinden Newcastle Cemiyetinin Reisi Mister Crawshay'e Yazdığı Tahrirat-ı Nesayih-ayatın Kendi Kalemıyla Olan İngilizce Aslından Lisan-ı Osmaniye Tercümesi* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1875). This pamphlet is available at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. However, the original English text was also published in Urquhart's *Diplomatic Review*, which at the time of writing was available online through Google Book Search. My quotations here are from the English original.

<sup>439</sup> David Urquhart, "Mr. Urquhart on the Turkish Debt and Insurrection: Two Letters to the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Committee," *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 1 (January 1876): 7.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Urquhart suggests that the Committee encourage the sultan to draw on his private treasury in order to pay down the Ottoman foreign debt.<sup>443</sup>

On 8 December 1875 the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Committee proceeded to write to the sultan as Urquhart had requested. In its brief letter the Committee advises the sultan to accept the Hamond Scheme, and concludes:

According to our belief it is wrong for a nation to incur debt. Our own country has set an evil example in this, and Your Majesty's Empire is suffering from having followed our example. But we trust that the generous conduct of our countrymen, under the guidance of our honourable townsman, Mr. HAMOND, may result in the relief of Your Majesty's Empire from a great part of the load of debt under which it suffers, and may thus contribute to its prosperity and stability.<sup>444</sup>

At the bottom of the letter it is noted that "Mr. BUTLER JOHNSTONE, M.P., has undertaken to be the bearer of this address to Constantinople."<sup>445</sup>

Shortly thereafter, in January of 1876, the Foreign Affairs Committees of England also wrote a much longer letter to the sultan, which Suavi translated into Turkish and published as a pamphlet along with another letter from Urquhart to the Şeyhülislam.<sup>446</sup>

The Committees' letter opens with an explanation of their views on the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>444</sup> Newcastle Foreign Affairs Association, "To His Imperial Majesty the Sultan," *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 1 (January 1876): 42. This organization is normally referred to as the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Committee, including elsewhere in the very same issue of the *Diplomatic Review*, and this is the only place I have seen it referred to as the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Association. Perhaps this letter was translated into Turkish and then back into English. However, I am not aware of a published Turkish translation of this letter, or of any involvement by Suavi. However, as mentioned in Chapter II, Butler Johnstone would later be a guest at Suavi's house in Istanbul.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Ali Suavi, trans., *Huzur-ı Şevket-mevfur-ı Padişahiye, İngiltere'de Umur-ı Ecnebiye Komiteleri Canibinden Seksen Dört Buçuk Milyon Liralık Hakk-ı Düyun Layihasını Kabul Niyazıyla Arzuhal* (Paris: Victor Goupy, 1876). A copy of this pamphlet is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Çelik writes

The object of our institution has been to combat the delusions of our countrymen respecting Turkey. They have been industriously taught to believe:

1. That Turkey is weaker than Russia, and cannot exist without the protection of the European Powers against Russia.
2. That the Turkish Government is intolerant and that it persecutes the Christians, who require the protection of their co-religionists.
3. That Turkey has to reform herself by imitating the institutions of Europe, and to abolish the Koran and substitute for it the Code Napoleon.

But our founder, Mr. URQUHART, who has resided in Turkey and has associated with Turks has told us:

1. That Russia is much weaker than Turkey, and that she maintains her position by combining the European Powers against Turkey under the mask of friendship.
2. That the Mussulman Government of Turkey is more tolerant to its Christian subjects than the Government of England (the most tolerant of the Christian Powers) is to those who dissent from the religion of the State.
3. That the salvation of Turkey is to be sought in adhering to the rules laid down in the Koran, particularly to those which enjoin lawfulness in respect to war, simplicity in taxation by means of the municipalities, liberty of commerce, and the avoidance of debt.<sup>447</sup>

The Committees then go on to point out that “when we try to persuade the Turks to tax commerce and industry, and to contract a National Debt, we are persuading them to imitate the follies which we have learnt to be ashamed of ourselves.”<sup>448</sup> The rest of their letter is then devoted to the following three topics:

1. The position of Turkey as regards Russia.
2. The position of the European Powers as regards Turkey.

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that he was unable to find the English original of this letter in published form, but in fact it was reprinted by the *Diplomatic Review* in the same issue as Urquhart’s letter above. See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 515. Quotations here are from the English original.

<sup>447</sup> The Foreign Affairs Committees of England, “To His Imperial Majesty the Sultan: The Address of the Foreign Affairs Committees of England,” *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 1 (January 1876): 44.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

### 3. The results of having borrowed money from foreigners.<sup>449</sup>

Regarding Russia, the Committees write that

Turkey is endangered not by her being weaker than Russia, but because she is so much stronger that Russia is actually a dependency of Constantinople, and is thus induced to make constant efforts to abolish this dependence by occupying Constantinople herself. This dependence has been repeatedly acknowledged by Russia.<sup>450</sup>

They quote the Russian Prince Gorchakov to the effect that “the closing of the Bosphorus kills Russian commerce. ... SHE MUST POSSESS CONSTANTINOPLE.”<sup>451</sup> However, as the Committees conclude, “Russia does not possess Constantinople. It is only because she is too weak to take possession of it.”<sup>452</sup>

Regarding the European Powers, the Committees write that since 1806 “not one of them has really supported Turkey or has given her any advice except to yield to Russia.”<sup>453</sup>

They suggest that the sultan “act as before without consulting the European Powers,” and moreover that he “denounce the illegal and fraudulent Declaration of Paris which forbids the attack on an enemy’s trade.”<sup>454</sup> This would allow the Ottomans to close the Bosphorus to the Russians, something which would “annihilate the commerce and menace the existence of Russia.”<sup>455</sup>

On the topic of the Ottoman foreign debt, the Committees write:

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 47. The Committees cite Suavi’s *A Propos de l’Herzegovine* as the source for this quote.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.



Of all the operations that have been attempted against the Ottoman Empire the most successful is that which has burdened her with a national debt. This is an imitation of Europe, in which Europe, after all, is not imitated. We do not here in England borrow money from foreigners but from our own countrymen, so that if we were bankrupt no foreign State would acquire a hold over us.<sup>456</sup>

Arguing that “the Ottoman Empire is more endangered by the debt which it has incurred to foreigners than by any other circumstance, and can only acquire strength and be in a position of safety by freeing itself from that debt,” the Committees encourage the sultan to accept the Hamond Scheme.<sup>457</sup> They then conclude their letter with more advice for the sultan.

Finally we beseech Your Majesty to restore your Empire to happiness and prosperity by following those maxims of the Koran which, while they protect the Christian rayah, do not permit the abuses and follies of Europe, but which enjoin liberty of commerce and simplicity of taxation. And we further entreat that Your Majesty will declare yourself liberated from all the obligations which have been fraudulently imposed on Turkey by a compact which has never been observed when in her favour, the so-called Treaty of Paris.<sup>458</sup>

Urquhart’s letter, which takes up the final three pages of the Turkish pamphlet, makes many of the same arguments in an attempt to convince the Şeyhülislam to support the Hamond Scheme.<sup>459</sup>

Many of the points that Urquhart and the Committees make in these letters are points that Suavi himself argues repeatedly in his own writings, and as we saw above Suavi is even cited as a source of information in one of the letters. While it seems that Suavi’s only

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Ali Suavi, trans., *Huzur-ı Şevket-mevfur-ı Padişahiye*, 14-6.

contribution here was the translation and publication of these letters, it is very likely that he was in full agreement with their contents.

The third crisis that Suavi addressed in his writings during this period was the insurrection in Bulgaria, along with the uproar surrounding it in the European press. In late 1876 Suavi published a series of articles and letters on the Bulgarian insurrection in David Urquhart's periodical *The Diplomatic Review*. Some of this material had earlier appeared in French in *Le Rome* and *Le Mémorial Diplomatique*,<sup>460</sup> and it was also then collected as a pamphlet with the title *The Truth about Bulgarian Affairs*.<sup>461</sup> This was clearly meant to counter the one-sided version of events in Bulgaria that was appearing in the European press at the time, which ignored atrocities committed against Muslims while focusing exclusively on and exaggerating those committed by Muslims.

Suavi begins with "The New Report of the Notables of Philippopoli," which summarizes a report sent to the Ottoman grand vizier by the "Committee of the Notables of Filibé."<sup>462</sup> The report first gives numerous examples of villages allegedly burnt by Ottoman irregulars, but points out that "it will suffice only to know the date of each act of incendiarism in order to understand that these crimes were committed before the arrival" of Ottoman forces in these places.<sup>463</sup> The report then details several atrocities carried out

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<sup>460</sup> I have been unable to locate *Le Rome*.

<sup>461</sup> Ali Suavi, *The Truth about Bulgarian Affairs: Communicated to the "Diplomatic Review,"* October, 1876 by Ali Suavi Effendi (London: Office of the "Diplomatic Review," 1876).

<sup>462</sup> Ali Suavi, "The Bulgarian Insurrection: The New Report of the Notables of Philippopoli," *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 4 (October 1876): 244. It is not clear if this article was previously published in French or not.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

by insurgents, for example “ten Mussulmans in the neighbourhood, and two zabtiehs who were in the town, were put to death after unheard of and unimaginable tortures, of which the human heart would shrink to hear the recital.”<sup>464</sup> The report then mentions efforts by the notables to calm the unrest, with examples of Christian villagers agreeing to oppose the insurgents alongside their Muslim neighbours.<sup>465</sup> Suavi notes that “this part of the report is very interesting, as showing that in reality there existed no discontent among the Bulgarians, and that the insurrection was only the artificial production of foreign agitators.”<sup>466</sup> The report then contrasts the actions of the insurgents with those of the Ottoman irregular forces.

At Battak, when the insurgents were besieged in the church, believing that when once they were conquered the Turks would maltreat them, slew their wives and daughters. The Bashi-Bazouks on forcing the doors of the church, saw this horrible massacre; and when the insurgents were able to perceive the moderation and clemency of their conquerors, they bitterly deplored the acts they had in their error committed.<sup>467</sup>

Suavi then moves on to “Revolutionary Documents Found Upon the Leaders of the Insurrection in Bulgaria.”<sup>468</sup> Among the documents included here is “Decisions of the General Assembly Held in the Madjka Balkan,” which consists of instructions for the insurgents in question-answer format. The point of publishing these documents was to show that the atrocities committed against Balkan Muslims were premeditated and

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>468</sup> Ali Suavi, “The Bulgarian Insurrection: Revolutionary Documents Found Upon the Leaders of the Insurrection in Bulgaria,” *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 4 (October 1876): 248-58. An earlier and shorter version of this article was published in French as Ali Suavi, “L’Insurrection de Bulgarie: Pièces Révolutionnaires Trouvées sur les Chefs des Insurgés en Bulgarie,” *Le Mémorial Diplomatique* 13, no. 35 (1876): 561-3.

constituted an integral part of the plan for the insurrection. The more noteworthy sections are italicized, as in the following articles:

10.-*Q. But if these mixed villages resist, what punishment do you propose?*

*A. Fire, massacre, and pillage.*

11.-*Q. What do you decide with regard to the Mussulman villages?*

*A. They must, at the beginning of the Insurrection, and without losing a moment, be forced by fire and massacre to submit.*<sup>469</sup>

Also included are letters from eyewitnesses to the events in Bulgaria, reporting on claims by the revolutionaries “*that the Mussulmans would be entirely exterminated.*”<sup>470</sup> Another important point that Suavi repeatedly emphasized in his works from this period was that the insurrections in the Balkans were the work not of the local populations but of foreign agitators. A letter from a Bulgarian revolutionary explains that “*the insurrection is necessary next spring, and the people must rise even if they have to be forced to it.*”<sup>471</sup>

The next contribution by Suavi consists of a pair of letters on the subject of the Bulgarian insurrection. The first of these is addressed to Viscountess Strangford and opens:

Having learnt that your ladyship has promised your co-operation in the subscription for the Bulgarians, while continuing to disavow the spirit of hostility which reigns in England against Turkey, I take the liberty to send you some information upon the Bulgarian affair.<sup>472</sup>

Suavi then continues,

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 250-1.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid., 253-4.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>472</sup> Ali Suavi, “The Bulgarian Insurrection: Letters by Ali Suavi Effendi: No. 1, to Viscountess Strangford,” *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 4 (October 1876): 270. This article was first published in French as Ali Suavi, “Affaires de Bulgarie: Lettre à Lady Strangford,” *Le Mémorial Diplomatique* 13, no. 37 (1876): 591-2.

To be able to disavow the spirit of hostility which now exists, it appears to me to be necessary for you to make the English hate lies, and to do so, it must be enough to prove to that honest people that the accounts of the atrocities committed by the Turks in Bulgaria are nothing but lies.<sup>473</sup>

He then provides a long quote from a letter he had received from a Bulgarian correspondent full of examples of the humanity displayed by the local Muslims during the insurrection. Suavi finishes the letter by pointing out that, contrary to claims made in the House of Commons that “*no insurrection had been planned, but that the population had been driven to despair,*” the insurrection had in fact been completely planned in advance, and he refers Lady Strangford to the “Decisions of the General Assembly” cited above, a document which had been found on an “insurgent chief.”<sup>474</sup>

The second letter is addressed to the editor of the *Mémorial Diplomatique*, and opens with the explanation: “as you know the rumours of which M. Schuyler, the American Consul, has made himself the echo, in his report on the atrocities committed in Bulgaria, it is important to be able to make some corrections in that document.”<sup>475</sup> As an example, countering Schuyler’s claim that a particular town had not been involved in the insurrection, Suavi asks “how then are we to explain the fact that a week before the insurrection broke out, this town had been surrounded with intrenchments [sic] by the inhabitants?”<sup>476</sup> The English version of this letter is shorter than the original French, in

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>475</sup> Ali Suavi, “The Bulgarian Insurrection: Letters by Ali Suavi Effendi: No. 2, The Report of Mr. Schuyler,” *The Diplomatic Review* 24, no. 4 (October 1876): 273. This letter was first published in French as Ali Suavi, “Affaires de Bulgarie: A Propos du Rapport de M. Schuyler, A M. le Directeur du Mémorial Diplomatique,” *Le Mémorial Diplomatique* 13, no. 38 (1876): 606-8.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

which Suavi states that Schuyler is “l’ami intime du général Tcherniaeff”<sup>477</sup> and concludes that “nous voulons montrer à l’ami du général commandant l’armée serbe que, bien qu’habitant Paris, nous l’avons suivi pas à pas dans ses recherches, et cela au simple point de vue de l’historien.”<sup>478</sup> One can only guess that this claim, which if true would serve to undermine any claim Schuyler might have to impartiality, must have been removed from the English version for political reasons of some sort.

In “Parallèle Politique entre L’Hétairie et le Comité de Moscou,” Suavi compares the Greek secret society Filiki Eteria, which in the early nineteenth century had worked “to overthrow Ottoman rule over Greece and to establish an independent Greek state,”<sup>479</sup> and the Comité de Moscou, of which he writes that “son but est le panslavisme sous le patronage de la Russie.”<sup>480</sup> According to Suavi, a comparison of the work of the Filiki Eteria from 1817 to 1827 and of the Comité de Moscou from 1866 to 1876 shows that “l’Europe n’a pas fait un pas de progrès en politique et que les diplomates d’aujourd’hui ne font que copier les anciens.”<sup>481</sup> Suavi points out that in the 1820s the European press ignored atrocities committed by Greek insurgents while making exaggerated claims of Ottoman brutality.<sup>482</sup> He furthermore points out that during the Greek rebellion the rebels had been aided by English volunteers, and on this subject he quotes an 1824 note from the

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<sup>477</sup> Ali Suavi, “Affaires de Bulgarie: A Propos du Rapport de M. Schuyler,” 607.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 608.

<sup>479</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filiki\\_Eteria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filiki_Eteria), accessed August 25, 2011.

<sup>480</sup> Ali Suavi, “Parallèle Politique entre L’Hétairie et le Comité de Moscou: A Monsieur le Directeur du Mémorial Diplomatique,” *Le Mémorial Diplomatique* 13, no. 39 (1876): 623. This letter seems not to have been reprinted in the *Diplomatic Review*.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

Grand Vizier to the British ambassador in response to British claims that the government had no power to punish those aiding the rebels.

Supposons (ce qu'à Dieu ne plaise) qu'une partie des sujets de la Grande-Bretagne fussent en rébellion ouverte contre leur roi, et que les sujets d'un autre souverain en paix et amitié avec la Grande-Bretagne (disons par exemple ceux de la Sublime-Porte), leur envoyassent publiquement des secours de toute espèce, des munitions de guerre, des provisions, de l'argent et des officiers du service effectif de la Sublime-Porte, est-ce que l'Angleterre admettrait comme excuse d'une pareille conduite que la Porte n'aurait pas le pouvoir de contrôler les mauvaises actions de ses sujets, parce que les lois du pays donnent à tout musulman le droit de faire la guerre à ceux qui ne professent pas la même foi que lui ?<sup>483</sup>

Suavi then points out that:

Aujourd'hui, c'est la Russie qui tient ce même langage ; les journaux russes, défendant ainsi des milliers de Russes, parmi lesquels se trouvent des officiers de l'armée et qui servent dans les rangs des insurgés serbes, disent que, d'après le Code russe, l'empereur n'a pas *le pouvoir* de les empêcher.<sup>484</sup>

Suavi quotes article 202 of the Russian code to show that the tsar in fact did have the power to stop those aiding the insurgents.<sup>485</sup> He then concludes that, taking into account several circumstances that favored the Ottomans, "*la Russie NE PEUT PAS AUJOURD'HUI faire la guerre à la Turquie.*"<sup>486</sup>

There is one more publication on Bulgaria that was likely prepared by Suavi while he was still in Europe, entitled *Question of the Day - Turk or Christian*.<sup>487</sup> This work was brought to light by Çelik, who summarizes it as follows.

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 624.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 625.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> [Ali Suavi], *Question of the Day - Turk or Christian* (London, 1876). Although this work was published anonymously by "an Englishman," Çelik argues convincingly that Suavi was responsible for its publication. See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 276-8, 504-5. Copies of this work are held at several different

The pamphlet was prepared as a response to Gladstone's publications on the Bulgarian issue. The first 16 pages deal with the subject in a general manner, while the remaining 37 pages are devoted to the observations of G. B. Saint Clair, who was in the region during the 1875 Bulgarian uprising. The pamphlet, which is entirely in English, supports the Balkan policy of the Ottoman State.<sup>488</sup>

Çelik provides no further information on the contents, and this superficial treatment is typical of his discussion of Suavi's English and French works. Given the available information it is likely that this pamphlet contained many of the same arguments we have seen in Suavi's other works from this period.

Suavi's final European publication consists of two brief chapters in F. Le Play's multi-volume *Les ouvriers européens*, one of them written entirely by Suavi and the other "complété avec le concours de Suavi-Effendi."<sup>489</sup> This latter chapter, entitled "Sur la constitution de la propriété territoriale en Turquie," is mostly devoted to an explanation of the various categories of land in the Ottoman Empire, including several pages on "Wakfi" (pious foundation) lands and goods.

The chapter of Le Play's book written entirely by Suavi is entitled "Sur l'institution de la justice et l'hierarchie des Ulémas."<sup>490</sup> In this chapter, Suavi describes the procedure to be

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libraries, but I was not able to obtain a copy in time for inclusion here and have instead been forced to rely on Çelik's summary.

<sup>488</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 505.

<sup>489</sup> F. Le Play and Ali Suavi, "Sur la constitution de la propriété territoriale en Turquie," in *Les ouvriers européens*, vol. 2, *Les ouvriers de l'Orient*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., by F. Le Play (Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1877), 256. Çelik learned of but was unable to locate Suavi's contributions to Le Play's book. See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 282, n. 510. I have not seen this material mentioned anywhere else in the literature on Suavi. I was able to locate it myself thanks to Google Book Search.

<sup>490</sup> Ali Suavi, "Sur l'institution de la justice et l'hierarchie des Ulémas," in *Les ouvriers européens*, vol. 2, *Les ouvriers de l'Orient*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., by F. Le Play (Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1877), 265-71.



followed in order to obtain a legal ruling on a matter.<sup>491</sup> He explains the ranks of the ulema hierarchy, from the lowest to the highest. Of the twelfth rank, he writes that

La plupart des Muderris n'acceptent pas ces postes [as judges], bien qu'ils puissent ainsi parvenir au rang de Cheïkh-ul-islam. Ils préfèrent à cet honneur la gloire de continuer leurs enseignements qui les mettent à même de donner tous les quinze ou seize ans des diplômes à leurs élèves. Ces professeurs ont une haute renommée de vertu, et ils exercent beaucoup d'influence sur les affaires de l'État. Ils constituent le personnel dont le gouvernement doit gagner les suffrages dans les délibérations où se règlent les grands intérêts publics.<sup>492</sup>

Of the top of the hierarchy, Suavi writes that “la 19<sup>e</sup> classe enfin, la plus élevée parmi les Ulémas, ne comprend qu'un seul membre : c'est le Cheïkh-ul-islam, ou grand Mufti, qui est, à proprement parler, « l'interprète de la loi ».”<sup>493</sup> He then goes on to point out that “à côté de cette organisation générale de la justice, il existe une excellente justice patriarcale dans quelques parties de l'Empire, notamment dans le *Vilayet* de Bagdad, dans le Kurdistan, dans quelques parties de l'Asie Mineure et dans l'Arabie.”<sup>494</sup> Following a description of its functioning, he concludes the chapter by stating:

Ce mode patriarcal de rendre la justice peut être considéré comme un des plus précieux restes de l'antiquité. Malheureusement, dans un siècle qui compte tant d'hommes voués à la conservation des anciens monuments de l'architecture, il ne se trouve personne pour perpétuer ces précieux monuments des antiques vertus.<sup>495</sup>

In this brief chapter we not only see the importance Suavi placed on education, but we also see his ongoing concern for institutions that acted to check the power of the government. What is more, his concluding arguments show his concern with preserving

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<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

traditional institutions, as well as his frustration with the lack of respect such institutions received in his nineteenth-century world.

The period 1871-1876 was a period in which Suavi devoted most of his energies to the publication of books and of articles in European periodicals. His most significant publications from this period are concerned with the threat from Russia, both in Central Asia and in the Balkans, and in countering the propaganda offensive known as the Eastern Question. Much of this involves pointing out the double standards that were applied to the Ottoman Empire on issues such as the treatment of religious minorities. Suavi argues that the Ottoman Empire should stand up to Russia, stop bowing to foreign pressure and stop imitating Europe. He is concerned with the preservation of old customs, particularly as regards the functioning of the Ottoman government, and the preservation of these customs goes hand in hand with resisting foreign pressure and rejecting imitation. At the same time, Suavi writes of the necessity of adopting modern practices in industry and agriculture. Suavi accurately perceives the Ottoman foreign debt as a threat to the independence of the Ottoman Empire. When criticizing the Ottoman (or Persian) government, Suavi places the blame for any policy failures squarely on the shoulders of the ministers and refrains from directly criticizing the monarch. He claims that there is an Ottoman nationality, independent of race or religion, though the centrality of Islam for this Ottoman nation is never in doubt.<sup>496</sup> Suavi would continue to articulate many of these same concerns in his writings for the Istanbul press following his return from Europe.

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<sup>496</sup> As we saw in Chapter I, the Ottoman Citizenship Law of 1869 created an Ottoman nationality independent of race or religion.

### **Return to Istanbul: Newspaper Articles, 1876-1878**

Suavi's only published work from the period between his return to Istanbul and his death consists of articles published in the Istanbul newspapers *Vakit*, *Basiret*, and *Sadakat/Müsavat*, many of which are in the form of letters to the editors of these papers. Suavi also reportedly wrote a number of articles for *Ümran*, but none of the relevant issues of this periodical seem to be extant.<sup>497</sup> His writings for *Vakit*, a newspaper published by the same Filip Efendi who had been responsible for the Istanbul *Muhbir* and for Suavi's early career as a journalist, greatly outnumber his writings for the other newspapers. Suavi's writings from this period have received much more attention than his books discussed in the previous section above, probably due to the fact that these newspapers are written in Turkish and are readily available in Turkey. Kuntay includes the entire transliterated text of many of these articles in his book.<sup>498</sup>

Suavi's writings began appearing in *Vakit* shortly before his return to Istanbul. One of the most significant of these earlier writings, published simply as "A Letter from Paris," appeared in the issue for 19 September 1876. Suavi begins with a statement that would later be partially echoed in his final writing the day before his attack on Çırağan.

However great [and] however heavy are the current difficulties of the Ottoman State, the solution to these difficulties is just as small [and] just as light.

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<sup>497</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 310.

<sup>498</sup> See Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi*, 90-138.

In order to know that the solution is so easy it is sufficient to know Europe, which is the source of these troubles – not as everyone knows her – [but] as she really is.<sup>499</sup>

Suavi writes that he understands how little people in Istanbul know about Europe from the questions they ask him. In response to questions about issues such as public opinion in England, Suavi responds with a series of statements correcting the misperceptions upon which such questions are based.

1 In England public opinion... does not exist.

2 In Europe government... does not exist.

3 In Europe politics... does not exist.

4 Good politics for the Ottoman Empire... is to not engage in politics.<sup>500</sup>

He then proceeds in the remainder of the article to explain exactly what he means by these four statements.

Suavi first addresses the topic of public opinion, asking:

Can there exist public opinion where there exist a constitution and a cabinet?

There used to be the Gladstone-Granville cabinet, the Disraeli-Derby group toppled it, and now the Gladstone-Granville group are trying to topple them. Whatever the means necessary to bring this about, they will be used.

Should these means harm other states, they still will be used.

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<sup>499</sup> Ali Suavi, "Paris'ten Mektup," *Vakit* 323 (19 September 1876): 1. Several paragraphs from the middle of this article are translated and included in Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 382-3. Mardin does not explain what the article is about, and by giving his readers only disjointed fragments of Suavi's reasoning he again portrays Suavi as being prone to launching into barely comprehensible rants. Only two of the passages quoted below are based on Mardin's translation, and these two passages are all that Mardin quotes from this article. The remaining quotes are my own translations from the original article.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

Someone wrote in the *Daily News* that ‘the Turks have committed many barbaric acts in Bulgaria,’ and this is called *débats*.<sup>501</sup>

Suavi concludes of the inflammatory newspaper articles and reports that accompany English party politics,

If in this uproar you see things such as the Eastern Question, the Bulgarian Question, the disturbance in Herzegovina, the support or lack of support for the Ottoman Empire, [and] public opinion in England, how wrong [you are].

If from this uproar you perceive and understand the consequences of the constitution and cabinet, how right [you are].<sup>502</sup>

When Suavi states that public opinion in England does not exist, he therefore means that this “uproar” that an Ottoman might interpret as a reflection of English public opinion in fact is manufactured solely to serve the needs of political factions in England, and that its ultimate purpose has nothing to do with the issue at hand and everything to do with English domestic politics.

Suavi next moves on to a discussion of government, asking “can government exist in a place where there is a cabinet?”<sup>503</sup>

In olden times in Europe there was neither a law [*şeriat*] nor established usages and customs such as morality that could limit the government.

In later centuries, as wise men and rulers came along who considered ‘hearing and obeying’ to be the foundation of government, the depredations of despotic government on property [*mal*], considered the kindling of life [*can yongası*], became too much for the people to bear, and so one day they said ‘we cannot endure this’ and, understanding that they were demolishing the foundation, they elected a consultative assembly of ‘notables’ to keep track of revenues and expenditures.

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<sup>501</sup> Ibid. Here I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 382-3, with some modifications. Mardin does not include the final sentence.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

Yes, everywhere national assemblies began with this pretext of property. Later ‘notables’ went under and ‘deputies’ arose.

The high council came to an end and the tumult of the lower classes began.

The deputies – this or that manufacturer, usurer, poet, writer, journalist, grocer, vegetable seller, butcher, doctor and the like – every one of the deputies began to decide and judge the needs of thirty to forty thousand people based on his sole authority and his own opinion. The population’s right to what is available, the right of the people [*cumhur hakkı*] disappeared, despots increased and multiplied.

Here I use the word *cumhur* [the mass of the people, the public] not in the nonsensical sense in which the Europeans use it, [rather] I refer to the meaningful *cumhur* in the sense it has had with us.

Just as it was with us in olden times, in most places in Europe if in a village there was a matter [that needed settling], one villager, five villagers, ten villagers, that is to say the whole population, would assemble and state the situation to the government. Who would talk? Men would talk, and women would talk, and children would talk, everybody would tell what he knew, what he had seen, what he had heard.

Of course the matter would be brought to light and resolved.

This authority, which I call the right of the people [*cumhur hakkı*], exists no more.<sup>504</sup>

Suavi goes on to describe the lack of stability that ensues when the deputies claim the authority to change the laws and even the religion. “These [deputies] were the choice of

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid. For this passage I have followed the translation of Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 382-3, although with some important modifications. Mardin combines Suavi’s short paragraphs, many of which consist of only one sentence, into much longer paragraphs. This seemingly minor change is in fact not so minor. The pauses between paragraphs – whether one is reading the article out loud or silently – allow each point to sink in before moving to the next. Suavi’s arguments are thus communicated more effectively when the original formatting is retained. Mardin’s translation contains mistakes that render parts of the passage nonsensical, and in general Mardin has taken great liberties in rewording and even reinterpreting Suavi’s writing. While word for word translations from Turkish to English are often not possible due to the different structures of the two languages, in my translations I have tried to be as literal as possible even if the result is clumsy or awkward at times. At the same time I have attempted to retain as much as possible the feeling of the Turkish original, without either covering up or unnecessarily emphasizing Suavi’s shortcomings as a writer.

the population, and once the ministers were chosen from among them... the chamber of deputies became politicians, it became the government.”<sup>505</sup>

Suavi then moves on to the question of politics in Europe. He writes:

There is no politics in Europe, because there is no government, because there is no stability.

Such a place is a republic today, maybe a monarchy tomorrow, most likely an empire the following day, and a commune the day after that...<sup>506</sup>

He explains that under such circumstances everything is temporary, “every plan is temporary, every agreement is temporary, every letter is temporary, every spirit is temporary, all temporary.”<sup>507</sup> Regarding the changes that had been taking place in Europe in recent history, he asks:

If a history were written of the transformations in Europe, based not on their theories but based only on their practical consequences, what would be seen?

It would become evident that they have led to the loss of millions and millions of people and billions and billions of francs, the concentration of the public wealth in a small number of hands and the creation of some millionaire ‘princes,’ along with the affliction of the public with poverty and want.

For example in France, which seems the richest, all of the trade and industry has become concentrated in just 280 (two hundred eighty) hands.<sup>508</sup>

He points out that the diet of German farmers and laborers had changed in recent decades as a result of increasing poverty, and now consisted of “*pomme de terre* (Frankish ground

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid. Here “letter” and “spirit” (*lafiz* and *mana*) are used in the sense of “the letter and the spirit of the law.”

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

apple) for lunch, *pomme de terre* for dinner, always *pomme de terre*, all *pomme de terre*.”<sup>509</sup>

Suavi then arrives at the real point of this article:

There is only one ‘government’ in Europe: Ottoman. For five centuries it has been the sons of Osman Ghazi. No change. No transformation. For this reason – yes, only for this reason – there is no *révolution* among us. However if like the Franks we believe that it is possible to change the basic rules of government just like one changes neckties, and if we proceed in that manner, what will happen? Perhaps the titles of one or two ‘illustrious’ [*devletlû*] Muslims will be written ‘*son altesse*,’ perhaps some ‘Christian notables’ [*çorbacı*] will become millionaire ‘princes,’ but the people, what will become of the people? The people will lose their rice and their helva, and that is when there will be ‘*révolution*.’<sup>510</sup>

He concludes that Ottoman stability lies in not imitating Europe, and that this stability is the source of Ottoman strength and its “essence of life.”<sup>511</sup> The conservatism evident in this piece has been remarked by Mardin, who correctly observes that Suavi’s ideas are influenced by the counter-revolutionary sociologist Frederic Le Play, with whom he had been associated in France.<sup>512</sup> Suavi’s conservatism is a paternalistic, aristocratic variety of conservatism, not a liberal capitalist variety, as evidenced by his criticism of the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and his concern for the diet of the common folk.

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 383. For more on Le Play, see Chapter II above.



At the same time, Suavi's views on parliamentary government from this piece have been used to show that he contradicted views expressed in his other writings,<sup>513</sup> and his failure to construct a modern political theory in these writings pointed to as a "purely ideological failure."<sup>514</sup> However, Suavi's discussion of parliamentary government in this piece was intended to illustrate his assertion that European parliamentary government was fraught with problems, which in turn was meant to support his main point regarding the importance of Ottoman stability. In such a context it cannot be expected that Suavi would include a truly candid or nuanced discussion of his views on parliamentary government, or that he would attempt to elaborate a theory of government. Criticisms of this sort are distractions that avert our attention from what Suavi was trying to accomplish in his writings.

Suavi also addressed the issue of European protection of Ottoman Christians in the pages of *Vakit*. In the issue for 22 November 1876 he writes that

I was born in Istanbul but I have been traveling since I was fifteen. I have seen the Eastern Christians in their communities, I know from personal observation. During the time that I was in Europe I had a lot of communication with them. ... Neither in Anatolia nor in Rumelia [the Balkans] do the Christians love the Frank [European]. Europe's greatest ignorance [is that] they want to tell a people that they need protection, but that people does not want to listen to them. '*Wa hum lahu kārīhūna*' [they don't want it].<sup>515</sup>

In the 8 February 1877 issue of *Vakit* appeared the first of several writings by Suavi on Midhat Paşa. The constitution of 1876 had been promulgated largely due to the efforts of

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<sup>513</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcı Ali Suavi*, 97.

<sup>514</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 383.

<sup>515</sup> Ali Suavi, "Vakit Müdürü Efendi'ye: el-Maruz," *Vakit* 383 (22 November 1876): 1.

Midhat Paşa. However on 5 February 1877 Sultan Abdülhamit relieved him of his duties as grand vizier and sent him “on an extended trip to Europe.”<sup>516</sup> Suavi writes:

If today in Europe someone in the illustrious service [of the Ottoman Empire] like Midhat Paşa, rather than being a tool of malicious people, were to fight against foreign interference and to say ‘I was on the job, and I understood for certain that there is no evil present in the administration of the Ottoman state besides your interference and listening to you,’ he would truly render a service.<sup>517</sup>

Two days later, in the *Vakit* of 10 February 1877, Suavi suggests that Midhat Paşa learn from Le Play and a host of other eminent Europeans and Russians. The lessons to be learnt are that the Ottomans must stop imitating Europe and stand up to Russia. Suavi explains that Le Play would tell Midhat Paşa:

No state (sultanate, empire, kingdom) in the world has fallen unless the fall was preceded by a decay of the customs and ceremonies of the palace. Changing the ancient customs and ceremonies of the palace, even the change of a very insignificant custom, results in changes to the sultanate.<sup>518</sup>

The Russian ambassador then tells Midhat Paşa:

Whenever Russia has wanted to make war on the Ottoman Empire, she has spent two years preparing. Every time that the Ottoman Empire has not given her these two years, she [the Ottoman Empire] has won the war. This rule has reached a level of certainty similar to the results of a clinical experiment.<sup>519</sup>

Lord Derby is then quoted for the benefit of the Paşa, saying that “suggesting reforms to a country requires a knowledge of the local geography of manners and predispositions. As

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<sup>516</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, 180.

<sup>517</sup> Ali Suavi, “Tard-ü-Tağrib,” *Vakit* 460 (8 February 1877): 2.

<sup>518</sup> Ali Suavi, “Vakit Müdürü Efendi’ye: el-Maruz,” *Vakit* 462 (10 February 1877): 1.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*

for us foreigners, we have no one who can instruct us on this matter.”<sup>520</sup> Suavi’s criticism of Midhat Paşa thus mostly centers on the fact that he was a liberal westernizing reformer.

In another article published the following day, Suavi compares Midhat Paşa to Fuat Paşa. He writes that Fuat Paşa, when asked what would become of the Ottoman Empire without men such as himself, responded that “the Ottoman Empire has no shortage of great men. This nation and this state will never fall.”<sup>521</sup> Suavi goes on to write of Fuat Paşa:

This is state and fatherland. This is a great man who knows his limits. Now Midhat Paşa is arrested and dismissed for having betrayed the dynasty of the exalted sultanate, and on his way out he says ‘now this nation has fallen.’

This is Midhat Paşa. This is a traitor to state and fatherland. This is a little man who does not know his limits.<sup>522</sup>

It has been suggested, by Kuntay among others, that Suavi was attempting to ingratiate himself with Abdülhamit by criticizing Midhat Paşa in this manner.<sup>523</sup> Kuntay calls these attacks “ugly,” while Çelik writes that Suavi was merely “belittling himself.”<sup>524</sup> To a certain extent Suavi’s attacks on Midhat Paşa can be attributed to their very different outlooks, to Midhat Paşa’s openness to the “imitation” that Suavi was so critical of, but beyond that I have no explanation to offer for the particular virulence of Suavi’s attacks. I find it likely that some critical piece of information is lacking here, something that would explain Suavi’s intense dislike of Midhat Paşa at this point.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>521</sup> Ali Suavi, “Vakit Müdürü Efendi’ye: el-Maruz,” *Vakit* 463 (11 February 1877): 2.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi*, 110.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.; Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 306.

<sup>525</sup> On the other hand, perhaps there is no explanation that would serve to justify these “ugly” attacks. In Chapter II we saw that the falling out between Suavi and Namık Kemal originated in a very specific disagreement, but perhaps there was nothing of the sort in the case of Suavi and Midhat Paşa.

In a brief letter that appeared in the *Vakit* of 15 July 1877, Suavi writes about how foreign newspapers were trying to stir up trouble among the Ottomans by encouraging partisan bickering.

France also lost in this way. The Prussian's strongest weapon [was] the Austrian and English newspapers [which] provoked the Parisians, [and] when the enemy was at the gate inside could be found parties of Napoleon supporters, Republic supporters, de Chambord supporters, d'Orléans supporters, and Commune supporters. Each party fought with the others [and] they wounded each other. This facilitated the work of the enemy. If [a bunch of] little mice that are living, running around and playing with each other inside a loaded cannon that is about to be fired should abandon their wretched greedy schemes and work together to break open the cartridge and empty the cannon, they would deserve their safety.

At such a time, it is incumbent upon those who understand where a stroke like this might come from to offer advice.<sup>526</sup>

Suavi's advice for the Ottomans is to put aside partisan bickering in wartime.

Suavi also praised Abdülhamit in the context of a discussion of reasons for not giving up hope in the war with Russia. In the *Vakit* for 28 July 1877, he writes "the head and feet are healthy. We have a sultan who, despite the fact that he is young and vigorous, has observed three [previous] sultans."<sup>527</sup> Among the other reasons for optimism he gives is that "our enemy is so weak that as soon as we hit him once, even if it happens by accident, he will fall."<sup>528</sup> Suavi's purpose here is clearly to encourage a dispirited Ottoman public, but behind the exaggerated account of Ottoman advantages in this article

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<sup>526</sup> Ali Suavi, "Vakit Müdürü Efendi'ye: el-Maruz," *Vakit* 617 (15 July 1877): 1.

<sup>527</sup> Ali Suavi, "Vakit Müdürü Efendi'ye: el-Maruz," *Vakit* 630 (28 July 1877): 1.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

lie the same ideas that Suavi had repeated in his earlier work. Suavi on many occasions had argued that the Ottoman Empire was stronger than Russia.

On 20 September 1877 a letter appeared in *Vakit* in which Suavi criticized the English government in particularly harsh terms. As mentioned in Chapter II, this letter received attention in the European press and led the English ambassador to pressure the Ottoman government to relieve Suavi of his duties at Galatasaray. Hüseyin Çelik argues that the amount of time that passed before the sultan dismissed Suavi from his post indicates that he was in fact reluctant to do so.<sup>529</sup> In the article, Suavi writes that

All my appreciations of European policy may be summed up in the following words: *The source of every political evil, of every crime, is the English government.* Those who can understand this phrase will have no difficulty to overcome.<sup>530</sup>

Suavi then goes on to explain the root cause of the problem as he sees it.

I am so concerned with England because all the evils from which the world suffers come from the English Government. I believe that if England reforms herself the world will equally reform itself. If the English, cause of every ill, were really bad people, I would not trouble about them. They do bad things not because they are bad men, rather they are good men who do not know any better. To make the English aware of their ignorance would be to render a great service to the whole world and particularly to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>531</sup>

Regarding the consequences of this ignorance, he writes that “if ignorance were blotted out from England the blood of thousands of men, leaving thousands of orphans and widows, would not have been shed, and millions would not have been added to the

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<sup>529</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi*, 37-8.

<sup>530</sup> Ali Suavi, “Vakit Müdürü Efendi’ye: el-Maruz,” *Vakit* 684 (20 September 1877): 2. The English translation of this passage is from *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News” 1877: With a Connecting Narrative Forming a Continuous History of the War between Russia and Turkey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan, 1878), 527.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid. The English translation is from *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News”*, 528, though in this case I have made significant changes to bring the text more in line with the Turkish original.

national debt.”<sup>532</sup> Suavi concludes of England that “if she does not take care she will end by ruining herself,” and states that he intends to give lectures on this topic at Galatasaray.<sup>533</sup>

In the *Ceride-i Havadis* newspaper for 5 October 1877 appeared an announcement from Ali Suavi concerning the collection of aid for refugees from the war with Russia in the Balkans.

On Sunday the twenty-ninth of Ramadan following the afternoon prayer in the holy Ayasofya mosque I will deliver a sermon on assistance and generosity as narrated in the hadith.

At the private enclosures by the middle door [and] at one outside door will be three known, respected men of marked public spirit whose reputations will be announced [to the congregation]. In front of these men will be sealed coffers with holes in the top.

Everyone will put money in these coffers for the assistance of the refugees, based solely on his ability and generosity.

After the congregation has dispersed the coffers will be opened and whatever has been collected will be counted and immediately handed over to the illustrious presidency of the refugee assistance commission.

27 Ramadan Ali Suavi.<sup>534</sup>

Suavi seems to have been genuinely concerned with helping the refugees. It is also worth noting that Suavi was an important enough public figure to stage an event of this sort.

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<sup>532</sup> Ibid. The English translation is from *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News”*, 528.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid. English translation from *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News”*, 528.

<sup>534</sup> Ali Suavi, “Masrafsız Cem-i İane,” *Ceride-i Havadis* 3517 (27 Ramazan 1294/5 October 1877): 3.

As mentioned in Chapter II, in late 1877 Suavi was nominated as a candidate for the Ottoman parliament. On 22 November 1877 his message of thanks appeared in *Vakit*. He writes that he cried when he saw the signatures on his nomination.

How should I not cry?

You are electing [me] to an assembly whose votes will result in the benefit or detriment of forty million Ottoman subjects and perhaps of two hundred million Muslims.

The one you have elected is humble and insignificant. He has no capital besides your good opinion, nothing to rely on but your kindness. The work is great, the burden heavy, the time little, the present bad, the enemy without faith or mercy.<sup>535</sup>

Here Suavi again emphasizes the difficult situation the Ottoman Empire was in at the time. His pan-Islamist leanings can also be seen in his claim to “perhaps” represent all of the world’s Muslims, although this could also be taken as a simple statement of the fact that the Ottoman Empire was the leading Muslim power, both because it was the largest and strongest Muslim country and because it was the seat of the caliphate. Ottomanism and pan-Islamism thus overlap to a considerable extent.

It is Suavi’s happiness at being nominated as a candidate for parliament that leads Kuntay to conclude that Suavi’s views on parliamentary government are contradictory.<sup>536</sup> I find no contradiction here, as Suavi may well have been honored to be nominated as a candidate, while at the same time regarding parliamentary government in general with a certain degree of ambivalence.

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<sup>535</sup> Ali Suavi, “Teşekkürname,” *Vakit* 746 (22 November 1877): 4.

<sup>536</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi*, 97.

Suavi's final published writing is the short message that appeared in the pages of *Basiret* on 19 May 1878.

Everybody and all the newspapers are talking about the danger of the current situation. Based on the people's trust in me, I have no doubt that everyone will listen to what I am going to say.

The current difficulties are great, but the solution is quite easy.

In tomorrow's paper with everyone's permission I will briefly announce and explain this solution. This letter today is to draw the public's attention to tomorrow's publication.

Ali Suavi<sup>537</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter II, this message led Suavi's readers to expect some important political article the following day, but instead they were greeted with the sound of gunshots at Çırağan Palace as Suavi tried unsuccessfully to liberate the former Sultan Murat from his confinement there.

The solution that Suavi writes of clearly involves Murat, but there is not much else that can be deduced from the text of the message itself. The language Suavi uses in his final brief message is almost identical to the language he uses in an earlier article, "A Letter from Paris" discussed above. In that article, the solution Suavi proposes centers around his argument that Ottoman stability lies in not imitating Europe. "A Letter from Paris" was published in September 1876 while his final message appeared the day before his death in May 1878. While it is certainly true that Suavi's ideas evolved to a certain extent over the course of his career as a journalist and public intellectual, at the same time there is a large amount of continuity in his writings. Suavi repeatedly emphasized many of his

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<sup>537</sup> Ali Suavi, "[untitled article]," *Basiret* 2444 (7 May 1294/19 May 1878): 2.



principal concerns over the years, one of these concerns being that it was not in the interest of the Ottoman Empire to imitate Europe. This alone is not enough to explain an attempted coup. Still, lacking any direct evidence of Suavi's intentions or motivation in carrying out his attack on Çırağan Palace, our only option is to look for an explanation in his writings, paying particular attention to concerns that he articulated repeatedly over the years. Efforts of this sort have in the past incorrectly and anachronistically interpreted Suavi's attack on Çırağan as an effort to overthrow the tyrant Sultan Abdülhamit. This will be discussed in Chapter VI below.

In Suavi's newspaper writings from this final period of his life we see his continued insistence that Ottoman stability was to be found through not imitating Europe. Suavi's harsh criticism of Midhat Paşa in this period can be partly explained by the fact that Midhat Paşa was in favor of the sort of westernizing reforms that Suavi considered to be imitation and that resulted in Ottoman weakness and instability. As the Russo-Turkish War began in April 1877 and continued into 1878, Suavi repeatedly argued that the Ottoman Empire was stronger than Russia but that she must abandon the partisan bickering that also weakened her. In a writing that would cost him his job, Suavi harshly condemned the "evil" influence of the English government on the Ottoman Empire and on the world, attributing this negative influence to English ignorance.

Suavi's thought, as expressed in the writings reviewed in this and in the previous chapter, will receive further attention in Chapter VI as part of a broader analysis of Ali Suavi's historical significance. First, however, Chapter V turns to an exploration of the widely

divergent portrayals and interpretations of Suavi that have appeared in the secondary literature over the years.

## CHAPTER V

### A MULTITUDE OF SUAVIS

The title for this chapter is loosely borrowed from Midhat Cemal Kuntay, who concludes his book on Ali Suavi with a very short chapter entitled “Bir Yığın Suavi” (A Heap of Suavis). The chapter highlights instances where Suavi (seemingly) contradicted himself on various topics, especially in his own writings, and is divided into sections such as “Brand-New Suavi” and “Very Backwards Suavi.”<sup>538</sup>

The multitude of Suavis that concern us in this chapter have little to do with cases of Suavi contradicting himself. Instead, the focus here is on the abundance of often contradictory representations of Suavi in the literature, on the ways Suavi has been portrayed and frequently misrepresented in writings about him. In some cases this includes ways that his legacy – or at least some aspect of it – has clearly been used to serve some purpose other than simple scholarly inquiry. This chapter builds on the earlier work of İsmail Doğan and Hüseyin Çelik.

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<sup>538</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi*, 186-91.

İsmail Doğan devotes several pages to a discussion of the widely divergent views of Suavi that are prevalent in the literature.<sup>539</sup> He points out that Namık Kemal at first had nothing but praise for Suavi, but that after their falling out Kemal would describe him as a charlatan and “pürmesavi” (full of evil acts). Doğan supplies several quotes from writers who adopted Kemal’s point of view and notes that many of the newspaper articles written after the Çırağan Incident could be included in the list as well. He then quotes several writers who have positive or idealized views of Suavi and notes that the one thing everyone can agree on is Suavi’s extraordinary intelligence. Doğan concludes that Suavi must have had both a positive and a negative side “just like all people... .”<sup>540</sup>

Hüseyin Çelik devotes significantly more space than Doğan to discussing representations of Suavi, and he includes more analysis as well. In addition to scattered references throughout his book, Çelik devotes sixteen pages solely to a discussion of both negative and positive depictions of Suavi after his death.<sup>541</sup>

Çelik begins with those who “curse” Suavi, noting that they can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group is composed of Namık Kemal and those close to him, including other former Young Ottomans. Like Doğan, Çelik also points out that Kemal had initially praised Suavi. He goes on to explain that following Suavi’s death, it was due to Kemal’s influence that Ebuzziya Tevfik and the young poet Abdülhak Hamid adopted

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<sup>539</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 229-31.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>541</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 450-65.

Kemal's negative view of Suavi.<sup>542</sup> Kemal's influence on Ebuzziya is particularly important since Ebuzziya, himself a Young Ottoman, is the author of *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi* (History of the Young Ottomans), a lengthy and much-cited account of the movement. Çelik makes the important point that "writers and poets who are fans of Namık Kemal – we have not felt the need to list all of them here – have all regarded Suavi from Namık Kemal's sentimental point of view."<sup>543</sup>

The second group that Çelik describes is composed of people who were either sympathetic to Sultan Abdülhamit or who disapproved of Suavi's actions at Çırağan due to the delicate political situation at the time. Included in this group are those who lost their positions after Çırağan or who simply wished to curry favor with the sultan. Çelik includes Mahmud Celaledin Paşa and Abdurrahman Şeref in this group.<sup>544</sup> These men were both important Ottoman statesmen in the Hamidian period, and both wrote books in which they portrayed Suavi in a very negative light.

Çelik then moves on to a discussion of positive depictions of Suavi. He discusses how Suavi was portrayed as a sort of epic hero by the Young Turks, and how this continued into the republic though with a slight change of emphasis. He points out that during the Second Constitutional Period the Islamists also claimed Suavi as a predecessor.<sup>545</sup> He also

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 450-1.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 452-3, 459-60. These pages contain the bulk of Çelik's analysis, and will be discussed at greater length in the relevant sections below.

notes the emphasis on Suavi's Turkism in the republic, though he does not go into any detail on this point.<sup>546</sup>

The following discussion of the various representations of Ali Suavi is arranged in roughly chronological order, with related or similar sources grouped together. It takes the work of Doğan and Çelik as a starting point but also includes a great deal of material that these two scholars did not discuss, as well as much original analysis. While Suavi was portrayed by the Young Turks as an epic hero in the struggle against tyranny, during the early years of the Turkish Republic Suavi was instead portrayed as an early Turkish nationalist and an advocate of secularizing reform. While both the Young Turk and the Republican portrayals of Suavi are based on misrepresentation and either neglect or very selective use of Suavi's writings, they, along with the harshly critical works that can be traced to Namık Kemal or to Hamidian official circles, have shaped almost everything that has been written about Suavi to date.

### **Early Slander**

While Suavi initially received mostly respectful treatment in the press during his first years as a public figure, there were some exceptions. A caricature that appeared in an Istanbul newspaper in 1867 or 1868 is the subject of a brief article by one Ahmet Hamdi Tanyeli. The caricature portrays Suavi's turbaned head as a stopper for a bottle of "Chlum Bercer," with assorted casks and drinking vessels scattered around. Tanyeli explains that the caricature, which appeared in the pro-government newspaper *Resimli İstanbul* while

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<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 465.

the Young Ottomans were active in Europe, is an attack on Suavi for his alleged addiction to alcohol.<sup>547</sup>

In early 1869 the newspaper *Kevkeb-i Şarki* published a pair of articles that refer to Suavi in extremely harsh terms. The first article, entitled “The Reason Why Ali Suavi’s Vituperative Barking Has Increased in Intensity,” calls him “unjust,” “ignorant,” “shameless,” and an “infidel.”<sup>548</sup> Though these articles belittle the Young Ottomans as a group, they focus their most vicious attacks on Suavi. The second article calls him a “scoundrel” and claims that “he has grown accustomed to receiving insults and hatred from everyone.”<sup>549</sup>

### **Pamphlets**

In late 1869 and early 1870 several pamphlets were published in Paris by the Young Ottomans Reşad Bey and Kanipaşazade Rıfat Bey in which they attacked Suavi. In one pamphlet Reşad Bey accuses Suavi of being ignorant and of writing about topics that he does not know anything about, such as accounting.<sup>550</sup> In another pamphlet he goes even further and accuses Suavi of drinking alcohol during Ramadan, of wearing a hat, and of attending Protestant religious services.<sup>551</sup> He also calls Suavi “crazy” and a “charlatan.”<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanyeli, “Ali Süaviye Ait Bir Karikatür,” *Tarih Dünyası* 1, no. 8 (1 August 1950): 347.

<sup>548</sup> “Ali Suavi’nin Av’ava-yı Teşni’inin Sebeb-i İzdiyad-ı Şiddeti,” *Kevkeb-i Şarki* 22 (10 January 1869): 2.

<sup>549</sup> “Suavi, Ziya Miya,” *Kevkeb-i Şarki* 24 (12 January 1869): 1.

<sup>550</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 210.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

Kanipaşazade Rıfat Bey's pamphlet is an attack on the other Young Ottomans in general and on Ziya and Suavi in particular, though Suavi is singled out for many of the harshest attacks. He is again called "ignorant" and accused of wearing a hat and drinking wine "and so many other things that are contrary to the Islamic law."<sup>553</sup> Rıfat Bey claims that Suavi had been known as "Protestant Suavi" in his early days as a mosque preacher,<sup>554</sup> a claim which according to Ebuzziya Tevfik – no friend of Suavi himself – is an absolute fabrication.<sup>555</sup> He criticizes Suavi for removing his turban and getting married in England,<sup>556</sup> and he ridicules him for writing about a wide variety of topics as if he were an expert on all of them.<sup>557</sup>

Doğan points out that while *Hakikat-i Hal* is cited by all the sources on Suavi, the response that Suavi himself wrote to this pamphlet is not cited in any of the sources and "this has been one reason for the spread of anti-Suavi attitudes."<sup>558</sup> Doğan further points out that even now the range of anti-Suavi claims continues to stay within the limits set by Kânipaşazâde Rıfat in *Hakikat-i Hal*.<sup>559</sup>

### **Namık Kemal and His Followers**

Namık Kemal was initially full of praise for Suavi. In a letter written in 1865 when Suavi first began publishing his writings in the Istanbul newspapers, Kemal refers to "his

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<sup>553</sup> Kânipaşazâde Rıfat, *Hakikat-i Hal der Def-i İhtiyal* (Paris: V. Janson, 1286/1870), 8.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>555</sup> Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar: İmparatorluğun Son Dönemindeki Genç Türkler* (Istanbul: Pegasus Yayınları, 2006), 243.

<sup>556</sup> Kânipaşazâde Rıfat, *Hakikat-i Hal der Def-i İhtiyal*, 1.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>558</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 229.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*



Excellency Hoca Suavi Efendi, [who] has rendered very great services to the world of learning with his perfect pen, blending Eastern knowledge with Western thought.”<sup>560</sup>

When Suavi began writing for *Muhbir* in 1867 Kemal wrote “of those newcomers to culture, this person is an ornament and a cause of pride.”<sup>561</sup>

In Chapter II we saw that the conflict between Kemal and Suavi may have originated with a dispute concerning an article that Kemal wrote for *Le Mukhbir*. The dispute centered on the fact that in the article Kemal directed his criticism directly at the sultan rather than at his ministers, and Suavi did not approve. Mithat Cemal Kuntay attributes the conflict between the two to precisely this difference, that Suavi was a strong supporter of the monarchy (*padişahçı*) and Kemal was not.<sup>562</sup> He also points out that Kemal would not forget how Suavi had criticized him in the pages of *Ulum* for continuing to accept money from Mustafa Fazıl Paşa.<sup>563</sup> Likewise, Çelik explains that it was because of what Suavi had written about Namık Kemal, culminating in some very negative pieces in *Muvakkaten*, that Kemal and his admirers “never forgave Suavi either during his life or after his death. It is because of this that this group spoke ill of even Suavi’s positive aspects. At the head of these comes the writer of *History of the Young Ottomans*, Ebuzziya Tevfik.”<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Namık Kemal’in Husûsî Mektupları*, vol. 1, *İstanbul, Avrupa ve Magosa Mektupları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1967), 32.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>562</sup> Mithat Cemal Kuntay, *Namık Kemal Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1944), 501.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 503.

<sup>564</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 245.

Kemal's attitude towards Suavi grew increasingly negative in later years. After learning of Suavi's death Kemal writes "may God curse him."<sup>565</sup> He later describes Suavi in the harshest of terms in an oft-quoted letter to the poet Abdülhak Hamid:

Suavi was not at all the man you think he was. You must have been deceived by appearances. Let other people say what they will, I was friends with him for two years. That man was not 'a little bit selfish, a little bit overcome by ambition...', he was a charlatan the likes of which the world has never seen... he was so ignorant, and along with his ignorance he was so conceited that if he wrote three lines of Turkish he would become the laughing-stock of the world... at no time and in no manner is any good to be imagined from the speech, acts, attitude, manner, remembrance, or thought of that sort of person.<sup>566</sup>

Kemal's reference to Suavi as a charlatan is quite well known. However, Doğan points out that Namık Kemal also referred to Ahmet Midhat as a charlatan, and that he apparently used the word quite frequently. Ahmet Midhat is by no means the sort of colorful or controversial character that Suavi is.<sup>567</sup> Doğan also points out that Kemal gave no explanation as to how the word applied to Suavi.<sup>568</sup>

In his *History of the Young Ottomans*, Ebuuzziya Tevfik perpetuates the negative view of Suavi that originated with Namık Kemal. For example, at one point he accuses Suavi of populating his writings with imaginary characters and sources,<sup>569</sup> an accusation that fits nicely with Kemal's characterization of Suavi as a charlatan. However, as we saw in

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<sup>565</sup> Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Namık Kemal'in Husûsî Mektupları*, vol. 2, *İstanbul ve Midilli Mektupları - I* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1969), 326.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>567</sup> Ahmet Midhat, a conservative publisher and novelist during the Hamidian period whose work was largely aimed at educating the people, has been called "the Benjamin Franklin of the Turks." Niyazi Berkes' discussion of the differences between Midhat and Kemal suggests that Kemal did not understand the common people and neither shared nor appreciated Midhat's ability to reach them with his writings. See Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 281-6. Perhaps it is this common element of their popularity with the common people that led Kemal to view both Suavi and Midhat as charlatans.

<sup>568</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 229-30.

<sup>569</sup> Ebuuzziya Tevfik, *Yeni Osmanlılar*, 144-5.

Chapter II most of this can be explained by the fact that Suavi avoided mentioning Urquhart and his friends so as not to anger his patron at the time, Mustafa Fazıl Paşa. In general Ebuzziya blames Suavi for the breakup of the Young Ottomans and emphasizes the negative aspects of Suavi's personality. At the same time, he does not include many of the more slanderous claims that can be found in *Hakikat-i Hal* or in later works by Abdurrahman Şeref and others.

The famous poet Abdülhak Hamid (1852-1937) was a contemporary of the Young Ottomans and a friend of Namık Kemal. He met Suavi and refers to him several times in his published letters, and just like Namık Kemal his initially positive views of Suavi soon turn negative. In a letter written shortly before Suavi's return to Istanbul in 1876, Abdülhak Hamid writes

I see quite a lot of Suavi. I have found his situation and his thought to be even more excellent than I wished or anticipated. One of our superiors who is accustomed to being wronged, one of our treasures who is oppressed by insults, is Suavi Efendi. He is going to Istanbul in the next five or ten days. I think they will also stick him in the Council of State like Kemal Bey.<sup>570</sup>

The editor of the letters then explains in a footnote that he had heard from Abdülhak Hamid on numerous occasions that he had been mistaken with regard to his initial positive view of Suavi.<sup>571</sup> Abdülhak Hamid would later write of one of Suavi's admirers that "his commander is Suavi, while mine is Kemal. We'll see which side will be defeated... ." <sup>572</sup> However, his view of Suavi would remain more ambivalent than

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<sup>570</sup> Abdülhak Hamid, *Mektuplar*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1334/1915), 245.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., 259.

Kemal's. Shortly after Suavi's death he wrote that "it has become clear that Suavi was crazy. But it seems to me that he was crazy with patriotism."<sup>573</sup>

The views of Namık Kemal and his friends regarding Ali Suavi have had a great influence on later scholarship. Namık Kemal is generally held in high esteem in Turkey and regarded as a great patriot, and as we have seen numerous volumes of his personal letters have been published. Moreover, the fact that he is the subject of numerous scholarly works that use his letters as a source has helped to perpetuate his views. Falih Rıfkı Atay, whose work will be discussed in more detail below, explains that:

Since Ali Suavi is not known by literary scholars, and nobody would be familiar with his work, what Namık Kemal wrote about him would almost take on the character of a court verdict. This example shows us how carefully history, especially the type of histories by official historians [*yakanîvis*], has to be read.<sup>574</sup>

The irony here is that Atay himself, as we shall see below, manipulates Suavi's story just like the earlier official historians he cautions his readers about.

### **Vilification of Suavi During the Hamidian Period**

The day after Suavi stormed Çırağan the newspapers carried an official announcement regarding the event. Many of them went beyond this official explanation and added their own efforts to vilify Suavi. The newspaper *Basiret*, which had published many of Suavi's writings over the course of the previous year as well as his final announcement the day before Çırağan, now rushed to condemn him in the harshest terms, referring to him on their front page as a "traitor to religion and state" and calling down God's curse on

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<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>574</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Başveren İnkilâpçı*, 57.

him.<sup>575</sup> The following day *Basiret* introduced their discussion of Suavi with a couplet that translates as “do not imagine that the traitor will achieve happiness; either his head will be cut off or he will be hanged.”<sup>576</sup> The newspaper then proceeds to describe Suavi as “despicable, base, traitorous, irreligious, shameless, foolish, [and] ill-mannered.”<sup>577</sup> Despite these efforts, *Basiret* was soon shut down by the government.

Suavi was also now vilified in *Vakit*, another newspaper that had published many of his articles and that, not coincidentally, was owned by the very same Filip Efendi who had owned the original *Muhbir* and given Suavi his start as a journalist. Not only did *Vakit* discuss Suavi’s “abominable deed,” they also claimed that Suavi had been dismissed from Galatasaray “due to mismanagement that threatened to destroy” the school.<sup>578</sup> However, *Vakit* apparently felt less need to distance itself from Suavi than *Basiret*, as the attacks in *Vakit* are not nearly as vicious.

The harshest attacks on Suavi in the period immediately following Çırağan came from the newspaper *Tercüman-ı Şark*. According to this paper, Suavi was dismissed from Galatasaray because the measures he attempted to carry out represented “corruption not reform.”<sup>579</sup> In another article published several days later the focus was on “Suavi’s life in

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<sup>575</sup> “Dün Akşam İlave-i Mahsusa ile Neşrolunan İlan-ı Resmidir,” *Basiret* 2446 (9 May 1294/21 May 1878): 1.

<sup>576</sup> “Sanma ki Haini Berhudar Olur, Ya Başı Kesilir ya Berdar Olur,” *Basiret* 2447 (10 May 1294/22 May 1878): 2.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> “Ali Suavi’nin Mel’aneti,” *Vakit* 927 (22 May 1878): 1.

<sup>579</sup> “Ali Suavi,” *Tercüman-ı Şark* 44 (11 May 1294/24 May 1878): 4.

Europe.”<sup>580</sup> Most of the claims in this article are obviously complete fabrications. The article claims that Suavi became known as a swindler in Paris and that he was sent to prison twice for cheating “thousands” of French people out of their money.<sup>581</sup> At the same time the article claims that Suavi worked as a secret agent for the French police.<sup>582</sup> He was later deported from England “as a common pickpocket.”<sup>583</sup> While these claims are not credible, the article also includes the claim that Suavi had earlier been forced to leave the school where he had taught in Bursa after looking inappropriately at a boy.<sup>584</sup> While the wilder claims in this article would not be repeated in later attacks on Suavi, vague claims of moral faults and inappropriate behavior can be found even in recent articles.

A long period then followed in which any mention of Suavi or of Murat was not allowed by the government censors. However, some people who were close to official circles during the Hamidian period later published books in which they mention Ali Suavi. One of these people is Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa (1839-1899), an important statesman who was close to Abdülhamit and held many important government positions during his life.<sup>585</sup> He refers to Suavi as *sefiḥ-i ruzgar* (dissolute of circumstances) and writes disparagingly that “the fellow’s mind was always [involved] in mischief.”<sup>586</sup> He goes on to claim that Suavi used his wife’s beauty to gain access to the palace after his return to

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<sup>580</sup> “Suavi’nin Avrupa’da Yaşayışı,” *Tercüman-ı Şark* 47 (14 May 1294/27 May 1878): 3-4.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>585</sup> [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahmud\\_Celaleddin\\_Paşa](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahmud_Celaleddin_Paşa), accessed April 13, 2011.

<sup>586</sup> Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa, *Mirat-i Hakikat*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1327/1908), 138.

Istanbul, and that it was due to this strategy that Suavi ultimately succeeded in having himself appointed director of Galatasaray.<sup>587</sup>

Abdurrahman Şeref (1853-1925) was an Ottoman statesman during the Hamidian period who served among other things as Minister of Education. He was also the last official historian (*vakanüvis*) of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>588</sup> What is more, he was actually a student at Galatasaray while Suavi was the director.<sup>589</sup> He would later write one of the most negative depictions of Suavi to appear in print. Focusing on Suavi's physical appearance, he writes that "his eccentric appearance comes to mind for those who know."<sup>590</sup> He goes on to write that:

Both his speech and his conduct were disorderly. His walking around the school with his jacket with the drooping collar and his trousers whose legs dragged on the ground that he had bought from the sellers of ready-made clothes brought to mind his former status as a *softa* [poor theological student; fanatic] and became a cause for laughter. With his incompetence and his claim to know so much he disrupted the order and instruction. What is more, he was also a cause for talk due to his being involved in the disrespectful act of passing the night at the school with a beautiful woman he had brought along with him from Europe and who was referred to as his *muallime* [lady teacher]. Since it was in no way feasible for him to remain as director of the school, he was dismissed and after his dismissal began to live a wretched life.<sup>591</sup>

In his discussion of the Çırağan Incident, Abdurrahman Şeref writes that nobody was aware of the "mad impudence" that enabled him to carry out such an attempt.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdurrahman\\_Şeref](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdurrahman_Şeref), accessed April 13, 2011.

<sup>589</sup> Ali Canip Yöntem, "Ali Suavi Nasıl Bir Adamdır?" *Yakın Tarihimiz* 4, no. 51 (14 February 1963): 353.

<sup>590</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref, *Tarih Musahabeleri* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1339/1920), 181.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 288.

Çelik points out that even Ebuzziya Tevfik described Suavi as a clean and tidy dresser, and that moreover there was nothing strange or objectionable about Suavi's staying in the school director's quarters with his own wife.<sup>593</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref also claims that Suavi wrote articles critical of Midhat Paşa in order to gain favor with the sultan and that that is how he managed to get appointed director of Galatasaray.<sup>594</sup> Here Çelik reminds us that Suavi was appointed director of Galatasaray before he even began writing about Midhat Paşa.<sup>595</sup>

The negative depictions of Ali Suavi that appeared in the works of Mahmud Celaledin Paşa and Abdurrahman Şeref have been quite influential, with their claims being repeated even in recent books and articles. Considering the circumstances of Suavi's death at Çırağan, it is only natural that anyone in official circles would dismiss him as a traitor. However, we have seen that the writers mentioned above went beyond this and questioned the legitimacy of Suavi's efforts at Galatasaray, casting doubt on his qualifications and even on his personality and his marriage. Perhaps they resented the fact that a popular mosque preacher and journalist from a humble background who had spent years in exile for criticizing the government could return to Istanbul with his foreign wife and be elevated to such a lofty position at Galatasaray. We saw in Chapter II that Suavi had been forced to bypass the unresponsive Ministry of Education and report directly to the sultan on his reforms at the school, and his stubborn unwillingness to play politics and compromise also likely rubbed many in official circles the wrong way.

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<sup>593</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 361-2.

<sup>594</sup> Abdurrahman Şeref, *Tarih Musahabeleri*, 180.

<sup>595</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 362.



### **Ali Suavi as Epic Hero for the Young Turks**

Çelik's discussion of the use of Suavi's image by the Young Turks is excellent, and on most counts the discussion in this section follows him closely, though with some additional detail. In Young Turk writings Suavi "was elevated to the status of an epic hero. A literature was developed centering on him and on Çırağan."<sup>596</sup> Çelik notes that the Young Turks were also fans of Namık Kemal, and that their interest in Suavi was not based on his personality or his ideas. Rather they were interested in Suavi due to the fact that he had rebelled against the hated Sultan Abdülhamit and become a "martyr" in the process.<sup>597</sup> "According to the Young Turks, Sultan Abdülhamid was the enemy of freedom and constitutional government. Therefore Suavi, who had rebelled against him, was the *pir* [patron saint or spiritual teacher] of those who give their lives in the name of freedom."<sup>598</sup> The Young Turks thus ignored the fact that Suavi and Abdülhamit had actually held similar views on the matter of constitutional government.<sup>599</sup>

While Suavi became the hero of the imaginary "Çırağan Palace Epic," the man responsible for Suavi's death, Beşiktaş chief of police Hasan Paşa, became the villain. "On the one hand is Suavi marching to Çırağan, in other words marching against slavery, his eyes flashing like lightning, a dagger in his hand and a revolver at his waist. On the other hand is the symbol of servitude to tyranny, Hasan Paşa, cudgel in hand."<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 453.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

One of the first Young Turks to write about Suavi was Mizancı Murad Bey.<sup>601</sup> Ali Suavi's picture appeared on the front page of an 1897 issue of his newspaper *Mizan*, published in Geneva. In the accompanying article Murad Bey mentions Namık Kemal's view of Suavi and writes that even if Suavi "didn't know how to live, he knew how to die magnificently. He showed a very great practical example for this suffering nation."<sup>602</sup>

In 1899 in Geneva a Young Turk by the name of Süleyman Midhat published a play about Ali Suavi. Çelik writes that "in the play Suavi is portrayed, in an extremely sentimental manner, as a hero who gave his life in the name of freedom."<sup>603</sup> The author writes in his introduction about how Suavi set an example for his "fellow citizens" with his "one day of heroism," and concludes that he was "one of the greatest geniuses of Ottoman history."<sup>604</sup>

In 1901 Derviş Hüma, a Young Turk of Albanian origin, praised Suavi in his *Makber-i Ahrar*, a lithographed book also published in Geneva. In this work Derviş Hüma refers to Suavi as a "holy martyr" (*şehid-i mukaddes*).<sup>605</sup>

The Young Turk Halil Halid published his English-language memoirs in London in 1903, and he briefly discusses Suavi in the context of attempts to overthrow Sultan

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 453-4.

<sup>602</sup> Mizancı Murad Bey, "Ali Suavi Merhum," *Mizan* 1, no. 26 (28 June 1897): 1.

<sup>603</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 456.

<sup>604</sup> Süleyman Midhat, *Ali Suavi* (Geneva, 1316/1899), 2.

<sup>605</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 456. The only copy of Derviş Hüma's work that I have been able to locate is in Berlin, so I have not consulted the original in this case.

Abdülhamit.<sup>606</sup> He writes that “the most daring of these attempts was made by a certain Suavi Effendi, whose name I mentioned before, who was a very cultured as well as courageous member of the *Ulema* class, and was one of the organisers of the once powerful Young-Turkish movement.”<sup>607</sup> He goes on to explain that Suavi “was engaged in educational and journalistic work” after his return to Istanbul, but without going into further detail.<sup>608</sup> His description of the Çırağan Incident is very restrained and sober compared to other Young Turk accounts, but his depiction of Hasan Paşa is more colorful.

The mere rustic private who is credited with having cut Suavi Effendi himself down is now the all-powerful Hassan Pasha, the present head of the police guarding those quarters of the capital which border on Yildiz Kiosk. He is a man of great physical strength and ferocity. Most men who are denounced as being Young-Turkish adherents are handed over to him before being sent into exile, and terrible tales are related about his beating the prisoners.<sup>609</sup>

Abdullah Cevdet, an atheist Young Turk, was arrested as a young student for having assembled an album of pictures of Suavi and the other Young Ottomans.<sup>610</sup> He would later write about Suavi in the newspaper *İctihad* in 1905 and 1906, claiming that he was “un des plus vaillants défenseurs de notre Constitution” and that the attempt at Çırağan was carried out “dans le but de reconstituer le règne du libéral Sultan Murad V.”<sup>611</sup> In another article he describes Suavi thus:

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid., 458.

<sup>607</sup> Halil Halid, *The Diary of a Turk* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), 188.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 454-6.

<sup>611</sup> Abdullah Cevdet, “Ali Suavi et Gapone,” *İctihad* 3 (February 1905): 11.

Pope musulman tombé dans le combat qu'il avait engagé contre l'usurpateur qu'est le sultan actuel de Turquie. Le mort de notre héros fut une vie éternelle, son sang jaillit comme un éclat de rire et illumina, pour ainsi dire, la voie d'une lutte que nous [devons] suivre et achever."<sup>612</sup>

Of the man who killed Suavi, Abdullah Cevdet writes that "Hassan était renommé par ses systèmes de torture infernale qu'il pratiquait en personne sur les mécontents du régime actuel."<sup>613</sup>

In the newspaper *Doğru Söz* which he published in Cairo in 1906, Ahmed Kemal printed a full-page picture of Suavi along with a poem that he had written about him, previously published by Abdullah Cevdet in *İctihad*, entitled "Pir-i Can-Fedâ-yı Hürriyet" (Patron Saint of Those Who Die for Freedom).<sup>614</sup> He writes that his choice of a title for his paper is inspired by Suavi and is meant to show that he is a "follower and adorer of [Suavi's] path."<sup>615</sup>

Following the 1908 Young Turk revolution and the freedom of the press that ensued, several of Suavi's works were reprinted either in book form or as serials in newspapers or journals. At the same time postcards were produced bearing his image. One of these is simply the best-known image of Suavi in his turban and robes, described as "Ali Suawi Effendi, Le grand Patriote Turc" and in Turkish simply as "the late Ali Suavi."<sup>616</sup> Another postcard features a more crudely drawn reproduction of the same image and describes Suavi as "sacrifice of the motherland [and] esteemed teacher Ali Suavi Efendi." Suavi's

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<sup>612</sup> Abdullah Cevdet, "Le Leur et le Nôtre," *İctihad* 12 (June 1906): 184.

<sup>613</sup> Abdullah Cevdet, "Ali Suavi et Gapone," 11.

<sup>614</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 456-7.

<sup>615</sup> Ahmed Kemal, "Mukaddeme," *Doğru Söz* 1 (22 March 1906): 1.

<sup>616</sup> This postcard is held at the Atatürk Kitaplığı in Istanbul.

image is surrounded by the slogans “long live the army,” “long live the motherland,” “long live freedom.”<sup>617</sup>

The magazine *Bahçe*, published in Salonika beginning in 1908, printed a photograph of Suavi wearing his turban and described him as “Martyr for Freedom Ali Suavi Efendi.” Later issues of this magazine would reprint an article of Suavi’s from *Ulum*, though without any commentary or analysis.<sup>618</sup>

Basiretçi Ali Efendi was the publisher of the newspaper *Basiret*, which had printed many of Suavi’s articles after his return to Istanbul in 1877. Suavi’s final announcement had also appeared in *Basiret*, and although Ali Efendi had tried to distance himself from Suavi by running negative pieces about him the newspaper was shut down by the government soon after. However, in 1909 Basiretçi Ali followed the Young Turk trend of Suavi idolization in his memoirs, describing him in glowing terms as “one of the superior Islamic scholars and one of the most esteemed men of the Ottoman state.”<sup>619</sup>

The novelist Saffet Nezihî’s 1910 novel *Müsebbib?!: Milli Roman* was inspired by the Çırağan Incident.<sup>620</sup> At one point there is an allusion to the acts of a “noble-hearted,

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<sup>617</sup> This postcard can be viewed at <http://www.muallimnurikutuphanesi.com/post%20card-ali%20suavi%202.JPG>. Accessed May 9, 2011.

<sup>618</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 458. I have not been able to locate this periodical and so have relied on Çelik for this information.

<sup>619</sup> Basiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul’da Yarım Asırlık Vekayi-i Mühimme* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Hüseyin Enver, 1325/1909), 58.

<sup>620</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 459.

patriotic hero<sup>621</sup> at Çırağan, but for the most part the novel does not deal directly with Suavi or Çırağan.

In Moralızâde Vassaf's play *Sultan Murad*, published in 1911, the “second hero of the play” is Ali Suavi.<sup>622</sup> To make this clear, a picture of Suavi is printed under the picture of Murat at the beginning of the book. The attack on Çırağan is described as “a miracle, an attack that upsets worlds,” and Suavi is described as “leader of the champions of the motherland.”<sup>623</sup>

Tarsusîzâde Münif's 1914 book of poetry, *Zafer* (Victory), is dedicated to Suavi and includes a quatrain written for him. The dedication is “to the immaculate soul of the late Ali Suavi, pride of patriotism and greatest of martyrs,” while the poem begins with the line “what a happy thing to die for homeland and nation.”<sup>624</sup> As we shall see below, Suavi's memory would continue to be invoked in connection with the glory of dying for one's country.

During the Second Constitutional Period Suavi's legacy was claimed not only by the Young Turks but by the Islamists as well. As Çelik points out, the Islamists were interested in Suavi not because of the circumstances surrounding his death but because of his advocacy of Pan-Islamism. For example, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi numbered Suavi

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<sup>621</sup> Saffet Nezihi, *Müsebbib?!: Milli Roman* (Istanbul: Suhûlet Kütüphanesi, 1326/1910), 140.

<sup>622</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 458.

<sup>623</sup> Moralızâde Vassaf, *Sultan Murad* (Istanbul: Artin Asaduryan Matbaası, 1327/1911), 46-7.

<sup>624</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 459. I have not consulted the original of this book but have quoted from Çelik.

among his predecessors on the topic of Pan-Islamism, though he considered Suavi an “extremist.”<sup>625</sup>

It is interesting to note that, with the exception of the Islamists, most of the works from this period do not discuss or even mention Suavi’s written work or the ideas contained therein, even though some of his works were reprinted during this period. Suavi’s significance for the Young Turks is based on a single act, his attempt to liberate Murat from Çırağan Palace. What is more, Suavi’s motivations in carrying out this act are either ignored or deliberately misrepresented, and he is presented as a champion of constitutional government. The interest of the Young Turks in Ali Suavi was not academic but rather practical. As Çelik puts it, in a sense they used him as a “flag” to rally around in their struggle against Sultan Abdülhamit, and the historical Suavi was completely irrelevant to their purpose.<sup>626</sup>

### **Suavi in the Republican Era**

Interest in Suavi continued through the period of the armistice following World War I and into the early years of the Turkish Republic, though initially this interest was not as strong as it had been in the Second Constitutional Period.<sup>627</sup> However, a renewed interest in Suavi, albeit with a change in emphasis, soon became apparent beginning in the late 1930s and especially in the 1940s. A precursor of this new approach can be seen in the work of Abdurrahman Adil.

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<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., 459-60.

Abdurrahman Adil was the most ardent admirer of Ali Suavi during the period of the armistice, and in 1923 published several articles about Suavi in his journal *Hadisat-ı Hukukiye*. Çelik observes that while Abdurrahman Adil's approach to Suavi was not as melodramatic and emotional as the Young Turk approach, it was not exactly scholarly either. "While A. Adil grasps some important points regarding Suavi's thought and personality, he was not able to refrain from looking at him as a disciple looks at his teacher."<sup>628</sup> He develops his ideas on Suavi over the course of several articles referring to him first as "a great Turkist."<sup>629</sup> In the next article he explains that Suavi's "publications in Paris show that he was aware of the struggles and efforts of Turkism before anyone else."<sup>630</sup> Finally, in the longest article he wrote on Suavi, which focuses entirely on Suavi's political thought, he refers to him as "one of the earliest Turkists" and even "the earliest Turkist."<sup>631</sup> Abdurrahman Adil is the earliest writer I could find who emphasized Suavi's alleged Turkism, an idea that would later be taken up in official circles in the 1940s, and if the idea did not originate with him he at least is responsible for articulating it in such a manner that it could easily be taken up by later writers.

An unsigned article entitled "Ali Suavi Efendi Abdülhamid'i Nasıl İskat Edecekti?" (How Was Ali Suavi Going to Depose Abdülhamit?) appeared in *Haftada Bir Gün*, a supplement to the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, in 1926. While the article is presented as a

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>629</sup> Abdurrahman Adil, "Hakimiyet-i Halk ve Ali Suavi," *Hadisat-ı Hukukiye* 6 (1339/1923): 74.

<sup>630</sup> Abdurrahman Adil, "Ali Suavi: Mebadi-i Hayatı, Zihniyeti, Hukuka Hizmeti," *Hadisat-ı Hukukiye* 11 (September 1339/1923): 145.

<sup>631</sup> Abdurrahman Adil, "Ali Suavi ve Efkâr-i Siyasiyesi," *Hadisat-ı Hukukiye* 12 (November 1339/1923): 167.



historical piece, it is in fact wildly inaccurate and filled with patently false claims. Among other things, the article claims that Suavi was working to restore constitutional government, that he was dismissed from Galatasaray for inciting the students to oppose Abdülhamit, and that he was only wounded at Çırağan but was then dragged to Beşiktaş where Hasan Paşa proceeded to beat him to death.<sup>632</sup> Rather than exemplifying the new approach to Suavi that would soon become prevalent in the Republican period, this article is more of a throwback to the emphasis on Çırağan in the Young Turk era. However, a major shift would soon occur in the scholarship on Ali Suavi.

In his discussion of Turkish politics in the 1930s and 1940s, Erik Zürcher notes some commonalities with fascist Italy including among other things “the extreme nationalism, with its attendant development of a legitimizing historical mythology and its racist rhetoric.”<sup>633</sup> The Turkish Historical Society was founded in 1931 to produce this official national history, while the Turkish Linguistic Society worked to nationalize the language by ridding it of its Arabic and Persian elements. At the same time, the People’s Houses (*Halk Evleri*) were established by the government to spread nationalist ideas through public lectures and other educational activities.<sup>634</sup> Thus in the Republican era, while Suavi was still celebrated as the hero of the Çırağan Incident, he was also now “regarded from the perspective of the revolutions and the understanding of history that came along with the Republic.”<sup>635</sup> Çelik explains that “the newly founded Turkish Republic needed new

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<sup>632</sup> “Ali Suavi Efendi Abdülhamid’i Nasıl İskat Edecekti?” *Haftada Bir Gün* 1, nos. 12-3 (16-23 December 1926): 4-6; 6-7; Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 460-1.

<sup>633</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 185-6.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*, 180, 190-1.

<sup>635</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 460.

heroes. Ottoman history and the heroes it had brought up needed to be erased. It was like this for Ali Suavi... People who had rebelled against the Ottoman sultanate began to be considered heroes in the Republican period.”<sup>636</sup> Suavi was used in the Republican period to justify the new secular Turkish national identity that was being promoted to replace Ottoman Muslim identity, as well as to justify the accompanying reforms in areas such as language and education.

An early example of this new emphasis can be seen in a 1938 article by the writer and politician İbrahim Alaattin Gövsa. Gövsa describes Suavi as “fiery” and “full of contradictions,” but claims that he was one of the first thinkers to put forth the ideas of Turkish nationalism.<sup>637</sup> In an accompanying illustration by the famous painter and illustrator Münif Fehim, Suavi is shown lying helplessly on the ground with a look of fear on his face as a frowning Hasan Paşa raises his cudgel to deliver the death blow. The handful of onlookers all wear the fez, while Suavi wears his turban and robes. The dramatic use of shadows in the background and on the figures of everyone but Suavi, combined with the difference in dress and headgear, conveys a strong image of a helpless man being menaced by the servants of despotism. In other words, it is abundantly clear where the artist’s sympathies lie. Curiously enough, the same illustration would be used again in 1953 by a writer hostile to Suavi.

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<sup>636</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>637</sup> İbrahim Alaattin Gövsa, “Ali Suavi,” *Yedigün* 12, no. 300 (6 December 1938): 10.

In the early 1940s İhsan Sungu, then undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and an active member of the Turkish Historical Society, mentioned Suavi in a couple of works. In an article on the Young Ottomans published in 1940 Sungu focuses almost exclusively on Kemal and Ziya, though he briefly mentions Suavi in explaining that the Young Ottomans were forced to sever their connections with *Le Mukhbir* due to the fact that Suavi's writing was at odds with the Society's program.<sup>638</sup> Then in 1942 the newspaper *Ulus* printed a summary of a speech on Ali Suavi that Sungu had delivered to the Ankara People's House.<sup>639</sup> In his speech Sungu refers to Suavi as "the great nationalist" and "the great thinker," and after a well-researched account of Suavi's life based largely on *Ulum* he proceeds to emphasize Suavi's writings on the Turks and on other topics related to the reforms that were eventually carried out in the Turkish Republic.<sup>640</sup> For example, he writes that "Suavi's ideas on the caliphate are so advanced and brilliant as to constitute a turning point in the history of our revolution."<sup>641</sup> The same issue of *Ulus* also included an interesting piece by one Kemal Zeki Gencosman entitled "Zulme Çekilen İlk Yalın Kılıç" (The First Naked Sword Drawn Against Oppression), which refers to Suavi as "the flag of Turkish nationalism" and concludes that Suavi is a hero about whom Turkish children must be told "with veneration."<sup>642</sup> On the same page there is an announcement about a conference that had been held on the life and works of Ali Suavi at the Üsküdar People's House.

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<sup>638</sup> İhsan Sungu, "Tanzimat ve Yeni Osmanlılar," in *Tanzimat I (Yüzüncü Yıldönümü Münasebetile)* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940), 806-7.

<sup>639</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 461-2.

<sup>640</sup> İhsan Sungu, "B. İhsan Sungu'nun Dünkü Konuşması: Ali Suavi," *Ulus*, 21 May 1942, 2.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.

<sup>642</sup> Kemal Zeki Gencosman, "Zulme Çekilen İlk Yalın Kılıç," *Ulus*, 21 May 1942, 2.

Based on the above, it would seem that around 1940 an official decision was made to focus on Suavi and to repackage him as a hero of the Turkish revolution, to make him a part of the “legitimizing historical mythology” that Zürcher mentions. İhsan Sungu’s sudden interest in Suavi is striking, especially considering that his 1940 article on the Young Ottomans did not even discuss Suavi outside of one negative reference in a footnote. Considering Sungu’s position at the Ministry of Education, it is probably safe to say that he was involved in this decision. In any case, he was certainly involved in promoting interest in Ali Suavi through his own scholarship, and the books by other authors that were published on Suavi during the 1940s and 1950s can also be considered part of this effort. The writers of two of these books, İsmail Hami Danişmend and Falih Rıfkı Atay, specifically mention that they had access to İhsan Sungu’s personal collection, which included a complete set of *Ulum* as well as other works that Suavi published in Paris.<sup>643</sup>

The first of these books, historian İsmail Hami Danişmend’s *Ali Suâvi’nin Türkcülüğü* (Ali Suavi’s Turkism), is really more of a pamphlet at 32 pages. It was originally published as a serial in the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in 1941 and was then printed as a book in 1942 by the Secretary General of the ruling Republican People’s Party.<sup>644</sup> Danişmend writes that

Ali Suâvi may have lived in the past but he is a man of the future: Physically he is contemporary with the men of the Tanzimat, but his spirit is contemporary with us... this fiery creature saw the dream of Secularism in the era of Theocracy, of Republicanism in the era of Absolutism, of

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<sup>643</sup> İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Ali Suâvi’nin Türkcülüğü*, 9; Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Başveren İnkılâpçı*, 4-5.

<sup>644</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 462.

Turkism and Turkish Nationalism in the era of Ottomanism, he tried to express these dreams of his and yet in the end he was martyred for the sake of these dreams.<sup>645</sup>

In general then Danişmend emphasized the aspects of Suavi's thought and actions that were in harmony with the reforms that had been and were still being enacted in the Turkish Republic at the time of his writing, while ignoring aspects that would not have suited his purpose. Danişmend's particular emphasis on Suavi's alleged Turkism would become a recurring theme among Turkist fans of Suavi, and the large number of articles in this vein will be discussed in the following section.

A 1942 article by Yunus Kâzım Köni on "Ali Suavi's Personality" begins by mentioning the new interest in Suavi, pointing out that he had previously been portrayed by official sources as "a bad man" but was now presented as "one of the great Turkish nationalists."<sup>646</sup> Köni argues that the key to understanding Suavi's personality, as well as the characteristic that differentiated him from the other Young Ottomans, is his humble background, the fact that he was "a child of the people" and not a paşa's son.<sup>647</sup> On the issue of Suavi's alleged nationalism, Köni distinguishes between "*romantik*" and "*realist*" Turkish nationalism and argues that Suavi's discussion of the Turks places him firmly in the romantic camp since it involves no claim to political power.<sup>648</sup> Köni concludes that Suavi would have had a much greater influence on Turkish history if he had devoted his life to writing instead of action.<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Ali Suâvi'nin Türkçülüğü*, 5.

<sup>646</sup> Yunus Kâzım Köni, "Ali Suavi'nin Şahsiyeti," *Yeni Adam* 388 (4 June 1942): 6.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*

Nationalist poet and biographer Midhat Cemal Kuntay's 1946 book *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi* (Ali Suavi, Turbaned Revolutionary) is "a little bit more scholarly" than Danişmend, though to a certain extent Kuntay follows the Young Turk view of Suavi as an epic hero who dared to rise up against Abdülhamit.<sup>650</sup> Whereas Danişmend's pamphlet and Atay's book below are basically selections of Suavi's writing thrown together with some commentary, Kuntay's book is a well-researched biography that, at 191 pages, gives a relatively full account of Suavi's life. Kuntay writes that "Suavi translated the expression of civilized heroism into Turkish with his own blood. I leave this epic of his death to the great voice of poetry. What I have written is the Suavi of the documents."<sup>651</sup> Kuntay does for the most part refrain from the hyperbole that characterizes much of the other work on Suavi. However, he continually refers to Suavi as "the turbaned revolutionary," an epithet which has persisted in the literature.

Journalist and politician Falih Rıfki Atay's 1951 book *Başveren İnkilâpçı* (Self-Sacrificing Revolutionary) is largely a reiteration of Danişmend's view of Suavi. As Çelik explains, "Atay accepts the national state that Atatürk founded as the realization of Suavi's thought."<sup>652</sup> Atay claims that Suavi "is the first Turkish nationalist" and that "he was even the first to suggest the principles of secularism."<sup>653</sup> He writes that

Ali Suavi is a Muslim Turkish nationalist, he is a revolutionary, he is not a freshwater Ottoman. He knows that no good will come to the state or the

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<sup>650</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 463.

<sup>651</sup> Midhat Cemal Kuntay, *Sarıklı İhtilâlcî Ali Suavi*, 8.

<sup>652</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 463.

<sup>653</sup> Falih Rıfki Atay, *Başveren İnkilâpçı*, 5.

nation from the freshwater Ottomans, who are only good at imitating the Europeans and belittling everything that belongs to the Turk.<sup>654</sup>

Atay is especially interested in Suavi's views on language. He identifies Suavi as the first *Türkçeci*, or advocate of reforming the Turkish language to make it more Turkish, because of his efforts to "bring the written language closer to the spoken language and simplify the spelling."<sup>655</sup> Atay explains that the later "nationalization" of the language started with the foundation laid by Suavi.<sup>656</sup> Atay concludes that "Ali Suavi left an example of intellectual heroism that is unparalleled in the history of the Turkish revolution."<sup>657</sup> Atay could not have made a clearer statement of his reasons for studying Suavi. Not only was it important to find historical heroes for the new Turkish state, but it was also important to find precedents for the sweeping reforms that had recently been implemented. Suavi met both of these needs.

Atay also makes an interesting point regarding Çırağan. Atay cites a Turkish general in claiming that Suavi's chance of success was greater than the chance of success for the (ultimately successful) 1908 revolution. He goes on to wonder "what would have happened if Ali Suavi had been able to put Sultan Murad on the throne and the war had continued? If in May 1919 Atatürk... had been taken by the English and had not been able to reach Anatolia... what would today's writers say about his attempt?"<sup>658</sup> Atay is suggesting here that success at Çırağan could have been as important historically as Atatürk's assumption of the leadership of the movement that would lead to the

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<sup>654</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

establishment of the Turkish Republic. However other writers, for example Mustafa Müftüođlu below, believe that Suavi's success would have been a disaster for the state.

Hikmet Dizdarođlu, a writer who was actively involved in the reform of the Turkish language through his work for the Turkish Linguistic Society, follows Atay in emphasizing Suavi's reformist views on language. He finds in Suavi's work justification for the linguistic reforms he was helping to enact, and he concludes that "in this field he was ahead of his time and his contemporaries and was on the right path."<sup>659</sup>

In 1962 a three-act play by İlhan Tarus entitled *Suavi Efendi* was published by the Ministry of Education, and the play was performed in the State Theatres that same year. The play focuses on the preparation for Çırađan in early 1878.<sup>660</sup> In explaining his reasons for the planned coup, Tarus has Suavi exclaim: "The motherland is in danger, my friends. A traitorous and cowardly sultan is not doing what he can for the nation, further darkening its destiny."<sup>661</sup>

In his well-known work on intellectual history, *Türkiyede Çađdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (The History of Modern Thought in Turkey), Hilmi Ziya Ülken writes that Suavi's "igniting the Turkish nationalist movement can be considered an intellectual reaction against Ottomanism."<sup>662</sup> According to Ülken, Suavi was a proponent of secularism and of

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<sup>659</sup> Hikmet Dizdarođlu, "Ali Suavi'de Dil Anlayışı," *Türk Dili* 7, no. 80 (May 1958): 379.

<sup>660</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 464-5.

<sup>661</sup> İlhan Tarus, *Suavi Efendi: Üç Perdelik Piyes* (Ankara: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1962), 19.

<sup>662</sup> Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiyede Çađdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, vol. 1 (Konya: Selçuk Yayınları, 1966), 101.



republicanism.<sup>663</sup> Ülken concludes that Suavi was ahead of his time, but that his ideas did not have much influence because his “harsh personality” provoked so many attacks both during his life and after his death.<sup>664</sup>

The *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of the Turkish Language and Literature) explains that Suavi was a secularist, and that this was the reason for his split with the other Young Ottomans. It goes on to claim that he advocated adoption of the Latin alphabet for Turkish and was opposed to the institution of the caliphate, and explains that his views earned him the nickname “Protestant Suavi.”<sup>665</sup> While this alleged nickname was originally intended to be slanderous, here it is mentioned approvingly.

In the Republican period the focus is not solely on Çırağan as it had been for the Young Turks, but the other aspects of Suavi that now receive attention are misrepresented to serve the needs of the day. That is, Suavi’s legacy is again altered to turn him into a suitable hero for the new Turkish Republic by portraying him as a Turkist and an early advocate of the reforms that would later be enacted. By portraying Suavi as an early Turkish nationalist and an advocate of secularizing reforms, these writers wished to show that these ideas were not novelties but could be traced to a respected Ottoman Turkish hero. This manipulation of Suavi’s legacy then was a part, however small, of the concerted effort during this period to justify the very existence of the secular Turkish Republic.

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<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 103-4.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>665</sup> Nuri Akbayer, “Ali Suavi,” in *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*.

A recent book by Mehmet Erdül, who has written books on a variety of unrelated topics, tells Ali Suavi's life story in the first person. In the introduction Erdül refers to Suavi as "one of the first leaders of Turkish nationalism."<sup>666</sup> Erdül clearly idolizes Suavi, as when he writes "who in the world would not want to be Ali Suavi? ... everyone in their own heart must answer the question 'If we had lived in the 1800s would we want to be Ali Suavi's friend?'"<sup>667</sup> The book is well-researched, and seems to follow Çelik's account of Suavi's life. At the same time it presents Suavi as an early Turkish nationalist who helped pave the way for the reforms of the Turkish Republic, and also celebrates the fact that he died for his country. In short, it would be difficult to imagine a more positive portrayal of Ali Suavi, or one that followed more closely the trends we have seen from the Young Turk and Republican periods of selectively emphasizing certain aspects of Ali Suavi's life.

### **Suavi the Turkist**

Çelik mentions the fact that a large number of articles have been written with the sole purpose of emphasizing Suavi's Turkism, though he does not discuss these articles in his book. He does however provide a partial list in a footnote, and this has served as a point of departure for what follows.<sup>668</sup> Many of the writers who focus on Suavi's alleged Turkism base their arguments on Suavi's book *Hive fi Muharrem 1290*. This exclusive focus on Suavi's Turkism is also prevalent in Pan-Turkist circles.

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<sup>666</sup> Mehmet Erdül, *Başveren İnkılâpçı: Ali Suavi*, 9.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>668</sup> See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 465. I have added several articles to Çelik's original list.

An article by Neşet Halil Atay published as a serial in 1944-1945 tells Suavi's story in his own words, mostly from the pages of *Ulum*. The tone is scholarly and free of hyperbole, but Atay situates Suavi firmly "among the founders of scientific Turkism."<sup>669</sup>

In a 1951 article in the Turkish nationalist journal *Orkun*, M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu discusses Suavi's book *Hive fi Muharrem 1290*. Kırzioğlu laments the fact that the new generation is not more familiar with Suavi's name.<sup>670</sup> In discussing Suavi's book he follows other Turkist writers in emphasizing the "Turkish" in Suavi's discussion of "Turkish Muslims," while as we have seen for Suavi the fact that they were Muslims was the important element. Kırzioğlu concludes dramatically,

How noble, how national, how just... are the sentiment and thoughts in the very valuable treatise and its "conclusion" that the late Ali Suavi wrote 78 years before our time, on the eve of the fall of Khiva, one of the most important Turkish countries outside the borders of Turkey, into the captivity and condemnation of the Muscovites, who are the greatest enemy of our race and nationality!<sup>671</sup>

This shows how Suavi's Russophobia found a sympathetic audience among right-wing Turkish nationalists and Pan-Turkists, for whom the biggest enemy both ideologically and geopolitically was the Soviet Union.

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<sup>669</sup> Neşet Halil Atay, "Ali Suavi Kendine Göre," *İstanbul Halkevleri Dergisi* 3, nos. 25-33 (December 1944-April 1945): V, 8.

<sup>670</sup> M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, "Ali Süavi'nin «Hıyva» Kitabı ve Türkçülüğü," *Orkun* 25 (23 March 1951): 4.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Another article that appeared in *Orkun* in 1951, this time by nationalist writer H. Fethi Gözler, refers to Suavi as “one of our unforgettable Turkists.”<sup>672</sup> The article focuses on Suavi’s “sentiment of revolt against oppression” and is illustrated by an anecdote that Suavi recounted in the pages of *Ulum*.<sup>673</sup> In a later article, Gözler argues that “We Need to Know Ali Suavi” and describes the lack of interest in Suavi as “a loss for our national history.”<sup>674</sup> The article is mostly composed of extensive quotes from Suavi’s works, with the final and longest section devoted to his book *Hive fi Muharrem 1290*, which according to Gözler “clearly shows Suavi’s Turkism.”<sup>675</sup> Gözler concludes that “Suavi is one of the leading figures in the history of Turkish nationalism. We must not forget that Turkish nationalists are obliged to always remember him.”<sup>676</sup>

A 1963 article by Ali Canip Yöntem, a politician and writer who had been involved with Turkish nationalist publications during the Young Turk era, asks “What Sort of Man is Ali Suavi?”<sup>677</sup> Yöntem concludes that “he is a Turkish nationalist, in his style of writing and in his thought.”<sup>678</sup> He goes on to explain that writers who criticize Ali Suavi such as Namık Kemal and Abdurrahman Şeref “are the ones who do not really understand this blessed martyr.”<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> H. Fethi Gözler, “Suavi’de Zulme İsyân Duygusu,” *Orkun* 33 (18 May 1951): 5.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6. A similar anecdote is included in Chapter II.

<sup>674</sup> H. Fethi Gözler, “Ali Suavi’yi Tanımalıyız,” *Türk Kültürü* 6, no. 64 (1968): 236.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>677</sup> Ali Canip Yöntem, “Ali Suavi Nasıl Bir Adamdır?” 353.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

A brief article discussing Suavi's reforms at Galatasaray seems to be nothing more than an opportunity to once more assert that Suavi was "the first Turkist."<sup>680</sup> Another brief article simply consists of a series of quotes from Ali Suavi concerning the Turks and "Turkishness" (*Türklük*).<sup>681</sup>

Cemal Kutay, a journalist and untrained yet prolific historian, writes that what set Suavi apart from the other "Islamist" Young Ottomans was his "Turkism," characterizing Suavi's publication of *Ulum* as a "battle of nationalism."<sup>682</sup> Kutay concludes his long discussion of Suavi by stating that "we are Turkists in a free country... He was the *only Turkist in exile* a hundred and six years ago. May he sleep in radiance in his unknown unmarked grave... ." <sup>683</sup>

A 1983 article in *Orkun* by Mehmet Kara asserts that "one of the greatest figures in the history of Turkism is Ali Suavi. He holds a distinguished place among the golden pages of the history of Turkism. In the years of the empire he erupted like a volcano with the idea of Turkism." Kara goes on to emphasize Suavi's Turkism with particular attention to his ideas on language.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Bedi Şehsuvaroğlu, "Ali Suavi ve Galatasaray Lisesi," *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi* 9 (June 1968): 41.

<sup>681</sup> A. Süheyl Ünver, "Ali Suavi'nin Görüşüyle Türkler ve Türklük," *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası* 4 (1974): 7-9.

<sup>682</sup> Cemal Kutay, *Örtülü Tarihimiz*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Hilal Matbaası, 1975), 1141.

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, 1143.

<sup>684</sup> Mehmet Kara, "Yakın Tarihimizden Meşhur Simalarından Ali Suavi (1839 - 20/5/1878)," *Sanat, Bilim ve Kültürde Orkun* 7 (January 1983): 28.

A 1988 article by the historian Ercüment Kuran again discusses Ali Suavi's book *Hive fi Muharrem 1290* and "the birth of Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman state."<sup>685</sup> Kuran points out that Suavi's work has been ignored by many of the writers on the Turks of Central Asia, despite the fact that it was "one of the first publications to get Turkish public opinion interested in the fate of the members of their race living in Central Asia."<sup>686</sup> He concludes that Suavi "was one of the leaders in awakening an awareness of Turkishness among the Ottoman Turks."<sup>687</sup>

The above examples serve to illustrate the fact that Turkish nationalist writers wished to show that Turkism had a long history, and that by selectively emphasizing certain aspects of his writings Ali Suavi could be claimed as an early Turkish nationalist.

### **Continuing Vilification**

The continuing vilification of Ali Suavi in the twentieth century largely comes from writers who are admirers of Namık Kemal or who rely heavily on the work of Ebuzziya Tevfik, whose *History of the Young Ottomans* is itself heavily influenced by Namık Kemal. The works of Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa and Abdurrahman Şeref have also been influential in shaping later negative views of Suavi. Works that criticize Suavi without attacking his character or his wife are few and far between, though a few do exist.

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<sup>685</sup> Ercüment Kuran, "Ali Suavi'nin *Hive Fi Muharrem 1290* Başlıklı Kitabı Ve Osmanlı Devleti'nde Türkçülüğün Doğuşu," in *Turkestan als Historischer Faktor und Politische Idee: Festschrift für Baymirza Hayit zu Seinem 70. Geburtstag, 17. Dezember 1987*, ed. Erling von Mende (Köln: Studienverlag, 1988), 97. The irregularities in the Turkish spelling in the title are reproduced from the original.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

In a newspaper article published in 1920, Namık Kemal's son Ali Ekrem argues that Suavi's attempt to rescue the former sultan was motivated by self-interest. According to Ali Ekrem, successfully restoring Murat to the throne would have meant high positions for Suavi, while in the event of failure the plan was to take Murat aboard an English ship and use him as leverage against Abdülhamit.<sup>688</sup> He discusses (and refutes) allegations that Abdülhamit wished to have Murat assassinated, arguing that the sultan would not have used a "vagabond" like Suavi to carry out such a sensitive mission.<sup>689</sup>

In his English memoirs which were published in 1920, the Ottoman statesman and eventual Albanian nationalist Ismail Kemal Bey refers to the "stupid plot of Ali Suavy [sic], at the very moment when the Russian Army was before the walls of Constantinople."<sup>690</sup> Ismail Kemal refrains from attacking Suavi's morals or personality, which sets him apart from many of the other authors mentioned here. At the same time, the fact that he was a friend of Midhat Paşa<sup>691</sup> might help explain his dislike for Suavi and his disapproval of his "foolish attempt."<sup>692</sup>

İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal sets the tone for his discussion of Suavi and the Çırağan Incident in his monumental fourteen-volume *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadriazamlar* (The Last Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Era) by observing that "those who were friends with

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<sup>688</sup> Ali Ekrem, "Sehayif-i Hatrat 12: Bir İcmal Tarihi," *Yenigün* 309 (24 January 1336/1920): 3.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid.

<sup>690</sup> Ismail Kemal Bey, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 120.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid., 121.

him for a long time” called him “Süavii pür mesavi,” or “full-of-evil-acts Suavi.”<sup>693</sup> The reference here is clearly to Namık Kemal and his circle. İnal goes on to claim that when Suavi was appointed director of Galatasaray, “just as he disrupted the order and regularity and instruction of the school from the day he started... he also invited justifiable gossip by sleeping at the school with a beautiful woman he had brought from Europe.”<sup>694</sup> He thus repeats the claims of Abdurrahman Şeref with minor variations. As is typical of Suavi critics, İnal fails to mention that the beautiful woman was Suavi’s wife. İnal is convinced that Suavi wished to restore Murat to the throne for purely selfish reasons, in order to advance his own career in government service.<sup>695</sup> He concludes that carrying out such an attempt with “the armies of the enemy at the gate of the capital” was “either an act of madness or of treason.”<sup>696</sup> In contrast, İnal uses a very respectful tone towards Sultan Abdülhamit.<sup>697</sup>

Relatively recent works are critical of Suavi because of his marriage to an Englishwoman and because of his alleged dissipation. As Çelik points out, these claims are based on Namık Kemal and Ebuzziya Tevfik.<sup>698</sup> Mehmed Kaplan, a scholar who worked on the history of Turkish literature, writes that the Young Ottomans were distracted from their work by the amusements that Paris had to offer. He singles out Suavi for criticism, claiming that “as soon as he saw Paris he forgot his piety and patriotism and began

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<sup>693</sup> İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadriazamlar*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1969), 762. This multi-volume work was originally published between 1940 and 1953.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, 764.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, 772.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*, 773.

<sup>697</sup> Ali Canip Yöntem, “Ali Suavi Nasıl Bir Adamdır?” 353.

<sup>698</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 107.



chasing after women.”<sup>699</sup> He then quotes Kemal referring to Suavi’s “*madam*,” so it appears that Kaplan’s only example of a woman that Suavi chased after was actually his wife.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar is by no means one of Suavi’s harshest critics, and his discussion of Suavi in his best-known book, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (The History of Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature), raises some important and interesting points. However, when he writes of Suavi that “although he claimed to be a man of religion he wore a hat and lived together with a Christian woman” he is repeating the same slander that Suavi had attempted to address himself while he was still alive.<sup>700</sup> Tanpınar follows Suavi’s critics in neglecting to mention that the woman in question was in fact Suavi’s wife. Tanpınar goes on to mention how Suavi’s “megalomaniac and *pérsecuté* maniac personality” always shone through in his writing, making it easy to identify unsigned letters and articles as Suavi’s work.<sup>701</sup>

In his well-known book *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler* (Political Parties in Turkey), Tarık Zafer Tunaya makes the claim, without citing a source or providing any explanation, that Ali Suavi was a Freemason. Tunaya’s work deals with a later period, but he attempts to link earlier movements for freedom and constitutional government to the Freemason organization. Along with Suavi, he claims that Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, and Fuat and Ali

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<sup>699</sup> Mehmed Kaplan, *Namık Kemal: Hayatı ve Eserleri* (Istanbul: İbrahim Horoz Basımevi, 1948), 63.

<sup>700</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi, 1985), 235. This book was originally published in 1949.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

Paşas were Freemasons.<sup>702</sup> Some of these men very well may have been Freemasons. However, Tunaya ignores the fact that for the latter part of his career Suavi was opposed to constitutional government. Ottoman Freemasonry seems to have been sympathetic to liberal westernizing reformers, and thus held positions that were diametrically opposed to Suavi's views. Tunaya's effort to lump Suavi in with the liberal westernizing reformers may have been an attempt to downplay the aspects of Suavi's thought that did not mesh well with the program of reforms carried out in the Republic.

In a 1953 article Server R. İskit, best known for his work on the history of Turkish newspaper publishing, argues that Suavi was a victim of his own ambition. İskit attributes all of Suavi's actions, including his death at Çırağan, to his personal ambition and pursuit of his own selfish interests.<sup>703</sup> İskit argues that Suavi was not a patriot because of his criticism of Mithat Paşa, his opposition to constitutional government, and his denunciations of fellow Young Ottomans.<sup>704</sup> He also argues that Suavi must have known that his actions at Çırağan were not in the interest of his country.<sup>705</sup> The article includes a photograph of "the English woman teacher that Suavi brought from Europe," and goes on to explain that while he was at Galatasaray "he slept at the school together with his mistress (and there are many who say his wife)."<sup>706</sup> İskit echoes Abdurrahman Şeref when he describes Suavi's "untidy, coarse" appearance as he wandered around the school "with

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<sup>702</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 1, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi 1908-1918* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1984), 381-2. This work was originally published in 1952.

<sup>703</sup> Server R. İskit, "Kaynar Bir Adam; Ali Suavi Efendi," *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası* 4, no. 42 (June 1953): 2374-6.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 2375.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, 2376. This is one of the only sources I have seen that includes a picture of Suavi's wife.

his jacket with the drooping collar and his trousers whose legs dragged on the ground that he had bought from the sellers of ready-made clothes.”<sup>707</sup> İskit thus repeats some of the most slanderous claims made about Suavi. At the same time, the article also includes a picture of a very distinguished and tidy-looking Suavi while he was head of Galatasaray, as well as the same Münif Fehim illustration that accompanied the 1938 article by Gövsa discussed above, an illustration which portrays Suavi as the helpless victim of despotic oppression.

Ahmed Bedevî Kuran, a writer and politician who was an opponent of the Young Turks when they were in power,<sup>708</sup> has a negative view of Suavi but does not resort to the type of personal attacks we have seen elsewhere except on the issue of Suavi’s ambition and egotism. Kuran writes that in 1867 the other Young Ottomans were not happy with the contents of *Le Mukhbir*, that “the very ambitious and ego-driven Süavi Efendi wrote whatever he wished, and he wanted the reforms that were to be carried out in the country to be based on religious foundations.”<sup>709</sup> Regarding Çırağan, Kuran writes that Suavi’s ambition “can be counted among the factors” for this attempt,<sup>710</sup> and he concludes that “perhaps it shows Süavi to have been a determined and resolute, yet hasty and impudent revolutionary.”<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Ibid. İskit borrows this description from Abdurrahman Şeref, *Tarih Musahabeleri*, 287, without providing any citation.

<sup>708</sup> [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmet\\_Bedevi\\_Kuran](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmet_Bedevi_Kuran), accessed April 14, 2011.

<sup>709</sup> Ahmed Bedevî Kuran, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İnkılâp Hareketleri ve Millî Mücadele* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1956), 63.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid., 120.

Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, a literary scholar best known for his publication of the letters of Namık Kemal in multiple volumes, is perhaps one of the most outspoken twentieth-century critics of Ali Suavi. In his writings concerning Suavi, Tansel relies on the often biased and inaccurate claims of Ebuzziya Tevfik, who as mentioned above was also heavily influenced by Namık Kemal's views of Suavi.<sup>712</sup> Tansel also follows Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa in claiming that Suavi used his wife – “a lighthearted and beautiful English woman” – to gain access to the palace.<sup>713</sup> In a 1969 article based largely on the letters of Namık Kemal, which Tansel was in the process of publishing at that time, he accuses Suavi of being a Russian agent.<sup>714</sup> Tansel sums up his view of Suavi as follows:

Ali Suavi is not, as many people suppose, a proponent of freedom and a great patriot, a great scholar with a sound knowledge of Eastern and Western languages, a hero who gave his life for the sake of his ideals and the good of our country, he is a charlatan, an extremist opposed to freedom and constitutional government.<sup>715</sup>

Here Tansel has basically assembled paraphrased fragments of Namık Kemal's letters, and it never seems to occur to him that Kemal's description of Suavi might not be entirely reliable.

An article by Abdülkadir Karahan focuses on a letter Suavi wrote in which he discussed the possibility of establishing an Islamic state in northern Africa. Karahan interprets this to mean that Suavi was proposing the separation of certain territories from the Ottoman state. Karahan concludes that in light of this letter it is “not easy to accept [Suavi as a]

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<sup>712</sup> For an example see Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 70.

<sup>713</sup> Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Namık Kemal'in Husûsî Mektupları*, vol. 2, 153.

<sup>714</sup> Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, “Memleketimizde, 1908'den Önce Ruslar'ın Gizli Çalışmaları ve Namık Kemal'in Komünizm, Sosyalizm Hakkında Düşünceleri,” *Türk Kültürü* 7, no. 75 (January 1969): 196.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

‘turbaned revolutionary’, ‘self-sacrificing hero’, [or] ‘sincere Turkist’,” and that more research is needed on this “strange personality.”<sup>716</sup>

Mustafa Müftüoğlu, a journalist and writer of history books, describes Suavi as “unbalanced” and quotes Abdurrahman Şeref regarding the reasons for Suavi’s dismissal from Galatasaray.<sup>717</sup> He goes out of his way to portray Suavi’s behavior as erratic and his positions as inconsistent, concluding that “Ali Suavi’s actions are suspicious, and that’s because he is an English agent!”<sup>718</sup> Müftüoğlu praises Abdülhamit for “knowing how to scrupulously protect the right and the interests of the nation,” and attributes all of the attempts to restore Murat to the throne, including Suavi’s, to the desire of the foreign powers to restore the only Freemason sultan to the throne.<sup>719</sup> Müftüoğlu concludes his discussion of Suavi by stating that “we are obliged to know the acts of treason in our history as much as the acts of virtue, and to recognize the traitors... as for the fact that Ali Suavi’s attempt did not result in success, it enabled the state to remain standing for a while longer.”<sup>720</sup> This is exactly the opposite of the view espoused by Atay above.

The negative view of Suavi has made it into an important reference work published in the late 1980s, the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam). The article emphasizes Suavi’s “inappropriate behavior” and

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<sup>716</sup> Abdülkadir Karahan, “Bilinmeyen Bir Mektubuna Göre Ali Suavi’nin Kişiliği ve Mısır Yönetiminde Bir Afrika Devleti Kurma Hayali,” in *VII. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Ankara, 25-29 Eylül 1970*, vol. 2. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1973), 590.

<sup>717</sup> Mustafa Müftüoğlu, *Yakın Tarihimizde Siyasî Cinayetler*, vol. 1, *Tanzimat Devri* (Istanbul: Yağmur Yayınları, 1987), 259-60.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

blames the rift with the other Young Ottomans entirely on Suavi. The author of the article clearly follows Abdurrahman Şeref when he mentions the “breakdown of the administration and discipline [at Galatasaray] and rumors about his living at the school with his English wife.”<sup>721</sup> Following a discussion of Suavi’s writing which includes the oft-repeated claim that Suavi advocated adopting the Latin alphabet, the author concludes that since 1908 “outside of a small group of early Turkists, his work and thought have not had a lasting effect on later generations like other post-Tanzimat writers and thinkers.”<sup>722</sup>

Another writer, Cemil Meriç, argues that we should learn about Suavi from his contemporaries, pointing out that Namık Kemal knew him very well.<sup>723</sup> Meriç gives serious consideration to claims that Suavi was an English agent.<sup>724</sup> He asserts that Suavi would have been a suitable hero for a Dostoevsky novel and concludes that “Suavi, like all psychopaths, was a fan of his own self.”<sup>725</sup>

Historian Ziya Nur Aksun cites Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa and Abdurrahman Şeref on Suavi, and points out that Suavi’s “*madame* or mistress [was] known for her beauty.”<sup>726</sup> Aksun goes on to discuss how Suavi is glorified as a secular Turkist hero, arguing that application of such ideas in the nineteenth century would have meant “desiring the suicide of the enormous state and the destruction of the Turk.”<sup>727</sup> However, Aksun is not

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<sup>721</sup> Abdullah Uçman, “Ali Suâvi,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 446.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>723</sup> Cemil Meriç, *Mağaradakiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), 146.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>726</sup> Ziya Nur Aksun, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1994), 339.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

only critical of Suavi. He laments that “unfortunately, since the nineteenth century those who have been presented to our nation as leaders, who have been glorified and exalted, are all men just like ‘full-of-evil-acts Suavi’.”<sup>728</sup>

The interesting thing about all of these negative portrayals of Suavi is that almost without exception these writers resort to attacks on Suavi’s personality or appearance, or else on his wife, in order to discredit him, and they often include claims for which there is no credible source. When these writers address Suavi’s thought or his actions, they are most often distorted or misrepresented. A simple attack on Suavi for attempting to carry out a coup in wartime, emphasizing that the loss of Cyprus was a result of his attempt, would have constituted a more serious charge. Perhaps such a charge would have been accepted more broadly in intellectual circles if it were not accompanied by attacks on Suavi’s personality.

### **From Vilification to Revisionism**

Some of the claims made by Suavi’s earlier critics have since been taken up by more recent historians, many with a revisionist bent. Gradually leaving behind the excessive character assassination of earlier writers, these scholars instead focus on claims that for example Suavi was a Freemason, or that Suavi or his wife may have been an English agent.

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<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 341.

Enver Ziya Karal briefly discusses Suavi in his multi-volume Ottoman history. Karal stresses how beautiful Suavi's wife was, presumably to give weight to his claim that Suavi was an anglophile. He also claims that Suavi was a Freemason and emphasizes his ambitious nature.<sup>729</sup> Another major history book, *Türkiye Tarihi* (The History of Turkey), edited by the revisionist historian Sina Akşin, repeats the claim that Suavi was a Freemason and adds that Suavi's wife may have been an English agent.<sup>730</sup> According to Akşin Suavi was "ill-tempered, full of excesses, uncongenial, arrogant, and therefore unable to keep friends."<sup>731</sup> At the same time, he emphasizes Suavi's "important place in the history of Turkish nationalism."<sup>732</sup>

The political commentator Mümtaz'er Türköne wrote his 1990 doctoral thesis, since published, on "the birth of Islamism as a political ideology."<sup>733</sup> Türköne explains that the Young Ottomans used Islam as a means or tool of opposition to the Ottoman government, and cites Kânipaşazâde Rıfat Bey's description of a hat-wearing wine-drinking Suavi as evidence that despite their use of Islam in their ideology the Young Ottomans were not in fact sincere Muslims.<sup>734</sup> Çelik responds to Türköne's claim by reminding us that a person's failure to live up to his faith does not make him insincere.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>729</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 8, *Birinci Meşrutiyet ve İstibdat Devirleri 1876-1907* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), 499-500.

<sup>730</sup> Sina Akşin, ed., *Türkiye Tarihi*, vol. 3, *Osmanlı Devleti 1600-1908* (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1988), 165.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*, 329-30.

<sup>733</sup> Mümtaz'er Türköne, *Siyasi İdeoloji Olarak İslamcılığın Doğuşu* (Ankara: Lotus Yayınevi, 2003). This was originally published in 1991.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>735</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 548.



In a 1995 article, the journalist and historian Orhan Kolođlu questions the motives of Suavi's English friends. The article is a response to elik, who was the first to uncover and explore Suavi's relationships with David Urquhart, Charles Wells, and H. A. Munro-Butler-Johnstone in any detail, and who concluded that these men were true friends of the Turks. Kolođlu asserts that it would be more correct to describe them as "agents provocateurs" who by publicly opposing the policies of their own government created the illusion of independence from it.<sup>736</sup> While it is impossible to prove definitively that Suavi's wife or David Urquhart were *not* English agents, claims that they were are based not on any solid evidence but either on the earlier claims of Suavi's critics or on inferences drawn from very inconclusive evidence.

The influence of the recent revisionist view of Suavi can be seen in a recent novel based on ırađan. The novel is surprisingly well-researched and even includes a brief bibliography. The author follows elik for most of Ali Suavi's life, but then seizes on the unsubstantiated suggestion that Suavi's wife may have been an English agent. In the novel, the British government asks David Urquhart to arrange Suavi's marriage to their agent Maria Stanley, which he does.<sup>737</sup> While the scenes in the novel are of course imaginary, they are based on the suggestions of scholars mentioned above. The author seems to agree with the view held by some scholars that there must have been some

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<sup>736</sup> Orhan Kolođlu, "Tanzimat'ın İkinci Kuşak Aydınlarının Açmazı Üzerine Ali Suavi ile İngiliz 'Türk ve İslâm Dostları'," *Tarih ve Toplum* 23, no. 138 (June 1995): 9-10.

<sup>737</sup> İhsan Tombuş, *ırađan Baskını* (Ankara: A.P.R.I.L Yayıncılık, 2007), 51-3.

power supporting Suavi's attempted coup, ready to step in should he meet with success.<sup>738</sup>

These recent revisionist works have simply extracted the most credible or reasonable-sounding accusations against Suavi from the work of some of Suavi's harshest critics, and shorn of the accompanying attacks on Suavi's wife, personality, and appearance these claims take on a new air of respectability. However, as we have seen above these reasonable-sounding claims about Freemasons and English agents cannot be traced to any reliable source and are not based on any actual evidence.

### **Views of Suavi in English-Language Works**

The English-language works that discuss Ali Suavi are necessarily based on the Turkish works discussed in the preceding sections, and they therefore perpetuate many of the extreme views of Suavi discussed above. This section includes works by Turkish scholars who published in English, and it really serves to illustrate how limited the available information on Suavi actually is, as well as how most of it is still dominated by the approach to Turkish history based on modernization theory that was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s.

In *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, Roderic Davison writes that in London "Ali Suavi's *Muhbir* became more vitriolic and fanatically Muslim in tone. Mustafa Fazıl finally ordered it stopped in the spring of 1868, after Namık Kemal and Ziya had become quite

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<sup>738</sup> Ibid., 152.

disgusted with Ali Suavi.”<sup>739</sup> In discussing Suavi’s tenure as director of Galatasaray, Davison refers to “the stormy petrel Ali Suavi, who was a disaster as the director of the school.”<sup>740</sup> At the same time, Davison correctly points out that Suavi’s “extremely slight” Turkism has been exaggerated by many Turkish writers.<sup>741</sup>

In *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Bernard Lewis blames the breakup of the Young Ottomans on Suavi’s “insistence on a religious reform as the starting-point of a revived Islamic state and law” and on his “ambition and obstinacy.”<sup>742</sup> At the same time, Lewis argues that in the pages of *Ulum* Suavi expressed “a *Turkish* as distinct from an Islamic or Ottoman loyalty.”<sup>743</sup>

In *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Şerif Mardin uses Namık Kemal as a source when he explains that the breakup of the Young Ottomans was due partly to “Suavi’s egomania.”<sup>744</sup> Mardin then devotes an entire chapter to “Ali Suavi: the Zealot” which is worth quoting from at length.

Whether the products of Ali Suavi’s mind are worth analyzing in detail is a question which anyone willing to follow his adventurous life has to consider seriously. The dominant pathological traits of his personality are so striking as to require no special *expertise* to single them out, and yet there is more to him than his eccentricities. In recent times his figure has been surrounded by an aura of reverence due to the fact that he was the first modern Turk to die in the pursuit of democratic ideals. But there is very little of the real Suavi in that image, the product of a belated political

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<sup>739</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 217. As seen in Chapter II, Mustafa Fazıl Paşa was the patron of the Young Ottoman movement at this point.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>742</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 154.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>744</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 47.

canonization. To his political companions Suavi was a charlatan and, to many of his contemporaries, a crank. Such a harsh judgment is not surprising coming as it did from an age not as yet steeped in the cult of the colorful and the bizarre. There is one reason, however, for which Suavi's conduct as well as his ideas should be given serious attention today: they were the product of the same kind of frustrations as have produced the ambivalent personality of the demagogic ulema of our time. Suavi was an Islamic radical quite akin in his ideals and his conduct to the leaders of the various modern Islamic politico-religious associations which have made an undeniable contribution to the instability of the contemporary Middle East. Like them too, his essential force consisted in being in touch with that large, inchoate mass of dissatisfaction which modern political manipulators usually equate with "the people."<sup>745</sup>

From the above it is clear that Mardin does not view Suavi's being a "real representative of 'the people'" as a positive thing.<sup>746</sup> Not only is he extremely critical of Suavi's Islamism, but he also does not accept the argument that Suavi was a Turkist to any significant extent. He writes dismissively that "Suavi was still too much interested in all of his Islamic brethren to be labeled a 'Turkist' although 'Turks' were given greater importance in his writing than heretofore."<sup>747</sup> As we saw above, Mardin also perpetuates some of the attacks on Suavi's personality and morals. He writes that Suavi "had attached to his person a young and beautiful Englishwoman whom he was later to bring back to the capital."<sup>748</sup> On the following page he adds that she was in fact his wife, but only in the context of repeating the claim that he had "scandalized many socially conservative Turks by establishing his English wife in the headmaster's suite."<sup>749</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 360. Kemal Karpat calls this "a pedantic statement that ignores the essence of the extraordinary events of 1875-78 and their creative effect." Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 127.

<sup>746</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 79.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid., 364.

In *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, Niyazi Berkes describes Ali Suavi using a quote from one of the other Young Ottomans in Paris, Nuri Bey Menapirzâde, who writes that “Suavi’s craziness, his moral faults, and his selfish aims, were known to all of us, and one of our concerns was to treat him tactfully to prevent him from any kind of action that would create bad impressions against all of us.”<sup>750</sup> Berkes later discusses Ali Suavi’s “nationalistic ideas”<sup>751</sup> and explains that he was

the only apologist among the Young Ottomans to use nationalistic arguments. Contrary to Namık Kemal, he stressed the unrecognized part played by the Turks in Islamic civilization. His views, however, were attributed by his associates to his eccentricity, or pedantry.<sup>752</sup>

Erik Zürcher devotes most of his discussion to the Young Ottomans in general and Namık Kemal in particular. He then notes that Ziya was more conservative than Kemal while Suavi was a “radical Muslim fundamentalist.”<sup>753</sup>

The ambivalence towards Suavi in much of the scholarship discussed above stems from the fact that many of these scholars are attempting to trace the developments that led to the emergence of a secular national state based on Turkish identity. While Suavi’s writings on the Turks and his use of colloquial Turkish are very important parts of this narrative – so important, in fact, that his contributions in these areas cannot be ignored by these scholars – his strong advocacy of Islamism conflicts with it. The problem with studying Suavi is not so much that he contradicted himself; rather, it is that very few of

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<sup>750</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 208.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>753</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 68-9.

the people who have written about Suavi are at all sympathetic to many of the positions he held on the various issues that he wrote about. That is why many of the scholars cited above seem to alternate between admiration and contempt for Suavi.

### **Recent Developments**

Journalist Nazile Abbashlı's book on Suavi originated as her 1994 M.A. thesis. When she published it in 2002, she apparently neglected to make any revisions based on Çelik's findings. Her book repeats the claims that Suavi was a Turkist and an advocate of republican government, but at the same time asserts that he was dismissed from Galatasaray for "mismanagement and excessive acts."<sup>754</sup> Another recent book, this time on the man who killed Ali Suavi, Hasan Paşa, includes a lengthy section devoted to Suavi and Çırağan. It too is an interesting amalgam of several of the different approaches to Suavi. The book is largely based on secondary sources, and the author, Ethem Erkoç, notes how lucky we are to have Hüseyin Çelik's dissertation as a source for Suavi's life.<sup>755</sup> However, he proceeds to explain Suavi's departure from Galatasaray based on Abdurrahman Şeref,<sup>756</sup> and his Turkism based on Danişmend.<sup>757</sup> The extremes in Suavi scholarship show no sign of disappearing.

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<sup>754</sup> Nazile Abbashlı, *Ali Suâvi'nin Düşünce Yapısı*, 204, 209.

<sup>755</sup> Ethem Erkoç, *Beşiktaş Muhafızı Yedi Sekiz Hasan Paşa ve Bir Devrin Hikayesi* (Çorum: Pegasus, 2004), 69.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Most of what has been written about Ali Suavi, from the beginning of his career as a public figure up to the present, is either extremely critical or full of glowing praise. Even writers who have attempted a more balanced approach have inadvertently perpetuated the extremes of these earlier works. The most persistent negative views of Suavi can be traced back to Namık Kemal and his circle on the one hand, and Hamidian official circles on the other. The positive views of Suavi, as an epic hero fighting tyranny for the Young Turks, or as a secular Turkist for the early Republican writers, relied on misrepresentation and selective use of sources to reach their conclusions. The efforts of writers in the early years of the Turkish Republic to identify Suavi with their own ideological orientations – that is, to portray him as an early Turkish nationalist and advocate of the secularizing reforms that were carried out in the Republic – were part of the larger effort to justify the existence of a secular Turkish nation-state. Although the Turkish Republic was not founded until nearly fifty years after Suavi's death, it is almost impossible to avoid approaching Suavi other than through a Turkish nationalist lens. A further discussion of the implications of Turkish nationalist historiography for a study of Suavi and his legacy will be taken up in the following chapter.

Some of the more extreme positive and negative claims about Suavi have been disproven in the more recent works on Suavi, though as we have seen they still pop up in the literature. Much of Çelik's book is dedicated to sorting out baseless accusations and myths from documented facts, and I find his arguments convincing. However, it must be acknowledged that Çelik's book – as well as Doğan's book, Karpat's discussion, and this

thesis – could be considered apologetic by scholars who take a more critical view of Suavi. Are we really justified in giving Suavi the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the accusations made against him? Suavi may well have been a difficult personality who rubbed many people the wrong way. However, he maintained close friendships with very respectable people until the end. These include the family of Sami Paşa, who had been an early benefactor of Suavi's, and Munro-Butler-Johnstone, who worked closely with Suavi in Istanbul shortly before Çırağan. I interpret this to mean that Suavi was capable of forging strong and lasting friendships at the same time as he was capable of inspiring intense hatred in his enemies, but that our image of him comes mostly from the latter.



## CHAPTER VI

### RETHINKING ALİ SUAVİ

This chapter is an assessment of Ali Suavi's legacy and historical significance. It marks a break with the earlier work on Suavi in several ways. This is the first study of Suavi that pays more than superficial attention to the views expressed in his books. It is also the first attempt to discuss Suavi's views with reference both to theories of nationalism and to recent revisionist views of late Ottoman history that challenge Turkish and Arab nationalist accounts. It is an attempt to situate Suavi in a broader framework than that of "Turkish Studies" or the "Emergence of Modern Turkey" narrative, to study him in his Ottoman context and thus reevaluate his legacy and the larger trends in which he played a part.

It begins with some remarks on Suavi's image and his style of writing. It then moves on to a discussion of his motives for his attack on Çırağan, the most dramatic and well-known aspect of Suavi's career. Ali Suavi and the Young Ottomans are most often discussed in the context of the eventual emergence of the Turkish Republic, as precursors to the later Turkish nationalists, and it is Suavi's role in this narrative that is considered next. Following that is a discussion of Suavi's importance for Ottoman history in its own right, an attempt to evaluate Suavi without constant reference to the Turkish Republic. Ali

Suavi is one of the most important early figures in the development of what Erik Zürcher has called Ottoman Muslim nationalism, and his main historical significance lies in this Ottomanist/Islamist continuity that has been obscured by nationalist historiography and modernization theory.

### **Some Remarks Concerning Suavi's Aims, His Image, and His Style of Writing**

It has been remarked in previous chapters that Suavi was often accused of contradicting himself in his work. Suavi was accused of many other things as well, but the charge that his work was full of contradictions was specifically intended to portray him as inconsistent, erratic, and unreliable. It is curious that any scholar would expect an intelligent person like Suavi not to change his mind on various issues as he matured and as he was faced with the turbulent and rapidly changing environment that was his world in the 1860s and 1870s. The consistency that seems to be expected of him would be better described as rigidity.

If we judge Suavi based not on his changing positions on specific issues such as his support or lack of support for representative government or for Sultan Abdülhamit – that is, on his “contradictions” – but based instead on whether his changing positions on specific issues were based on continued adherence to certain core principles as circumstances around him changed, the conclusion we reach about him will be rather different and it will be more difficult to portray him as unstable or inconsistent. For example, his support for a strong monarch should not be interpreted to mean that he was a blind supporter of Abdülhamit but then inexplicably changed his mind. Rather it seems

that in Suavi's view Abdülhamit had failed to live up to his duty to be a strong monarch, making it necessary to replace him with someone who would live up to this duty. Suavi's attempt to overthrow Abdülhamit can thus be interpreted as an example of his consistent belief that the sultan had a responsibility to carry out his duties effectively in order to keep his throne.

In other words, talk of Suavi's contradictions is akin to criticizing an intelligent person for voting for a certain candidate in one election and then not voting for her in the following election. It ignores the fact that this informed voter likely has a good reason for dropping his support for the candidate, and it would be reasonable to expect that this surface contradiction is in fact the result of continued adherence to some core principle that might not be readily apparent. Concluding that it is a contradiction and nothing more allows us to avoid digging beneath the surface in an effort to identify this core principle. The only way to avoid this appearance of inconsistency and unreliability would involve blind and unwavering support for the candidate in question. The fact that Suavi has been judged in this manner says more about the mindset of his early biographers, and perhaps about Turkish political culture at the time they were writing, than it does about Suavi's own personality or thought.

What is more, it is not necessarily the case that a person's opinions and principles can all be neatly reconciled with each other. F. Scott Fitzgerald famously remarked that "the test of a first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same

time, and still retain the ability to function.”<sup>758</sup> At the same time it is important to remember that Suavi’s various writings were written for different audiences, to serve various purposes, and in reaction to various events. I have therefore not been overly concerned with identifying contradictions in Suavi’s writings, but rather with identifying the ideas and themes that he returned to repeatedly in his writings over the years.

Suavi’s physical appearance has also received a great deal of attention in the literature. Many of the more critical writings on Suavi focus on his appearance, or on changes he made to his appearance. The more extreme negative depictions seen in Chapter V, which would have Suavi walking around Galatasaray with his pants dragging on the ground, are simply not credible. We have seen that even Ebuuziya Tefvik described Suavi as a clean and tidy dresser.<sup>759</sup> The changes that Suavi made to his appearance, as seen in the several existing photographs of him – as well as the simple fact that he had such photographic images made – indicate an awareness of the importance of his image as well as a conscious manipulation of this image.<sup>760</sup>

As noted in Chapter II, photographs of Suavi were being sold in Istanbul around the time of his initial exile to Europe in 1867. This was presumably one of the images of Suavi in his robes and turban, as his fame at the time was largely based on his being a popular preacher in the Istanbul mosques. These images of Suavi in his turban have an air of piety

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<sup>758</sup> <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Intelligence>, accessed June 8, 2011.

<sup>759</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 361-2.

<sup>760</sup> These photographs are most readily available on the covers of the various books on Suavi, and can be accessed through a Google image search for “Ali Suavi.” I am only aware of the existence of two images of Suavi in his turban and two in his fez.

and spirituality about them. On the other hand, the later picture of Suavi that appears in the front of *A Propos de l'Herzegovine* in 1875 portrays him as a distinguished Ottoman official wearing a fez, and another photo of Suavi as headmaster of Galatasaray is a very similar image of a distinguished official wearing a fez. We see then that the image Suavi wanted to project changed with his changing circumstances, that Suavi adjusted his public image to suit his purposes. This is underscored by the fact that a photo of Suavi without his turban and wearing a necktie, which was reportedly published in one of Reşad's anti-Suavi pamphlets, would be considered scandalous.<sup>761</sup> At no point did Suavi wish to project an image of himself as westernized or Europeanized.

Suavi's style of writing has also received critical attention. On Suavi's writing style, Şerif Mardin writes:

While Suavi's writings are devoid of the literary polish which makes the products of Kemal's pen such captivating reading, they too bear a characteristic stamp – that of an unmistakable, rather primitive, and crude style. The confused but fervent world of his ideas [was] often dismissed as the lucubrations of a maniac by his Young Ottoman colleagues...<sup>762</sup>

Mardin then proceeds to quote at length from one of Suavi's articles which he presumably finds to be crude and confused, but which I do not.

We have seen that in Suavi's earlier works, before he began writing for *Muhbir* in 1867, he wrote in classical Ottoman style. This style can also occasionally be seen in his later writings, for example in his message of thanks when he was nominated as a candidate for

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<sup>761</sup> See Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 212. I have not been able to locate the pamphlet with the scandalous photo.

<sup>762</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 365.

the Ottoman parliament. While Suavi may never have been capable of writing as elegantly as Kemal, that is really beside the point. Çelik also has pointed out that Suavi was perfectly capable of writing fancy Ottoman Turkish when the need arose.<sup>763</sup> That means that the adoption of the “crude” style that Suavi used was entirely intentional. Before he began his career as a journalist Suavi had spent a considerable amount of time preaching in the mosques, so he clearly knew how to get his ideas across to an audience that included illiterate people. He then used the same style he had used in his sermons in his newspaper articles. This makes even more sense if one remembers that newspapers were often read aloud in coffeehouses, meaning that the audience for a newspaper article also likely included illiterate people. Suavi clearly wished to address the general public in his writings and not merely the educated elite who were capable of understanding classical Ottoman Turkish. He likely also wished to sell more newspapers. His adoption of such a “crude” style was thus a conscious choice made for very practical reasons, and not the result of some intellectual limitation as Mardin would have it. Just as he changed his appearance to suit the circumstances, he also changed his writing style to suit the audience or the occasion.

### **Interpreting the Çırağan Incident**

In many of the earlier works on Suavi, his death receives more attention than his life or his writings. In Chapter V we saw some of the ways in which the circumstances surrounding his death have been (mis-)interpreted. İsmail Doğan also provides a brief overview of some of these interpretations, which attribute Suavi’s attempt to his ambition,

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<sup>763</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavi ve Dönemi*, 638.

or to his desire for revenge following his dismissal from Galatasaray, or to a plot organized by Abdülhamit himself to have Murat killed.<sup>764</sup> However, Doğan himself seems not to have reached any conclusions regarding Suavi's motives.

Much has been made of Suavi's writings regarding the right to resist oppression and tyranny, and his views on this subject interpreted as an explanation for his attempt to overthrow Abdülhamit. The Young Turks certainly regarded Abdülhamit as a tyrant, and Suavi as a martyr who died for the cause of freedom, as we saw in Chapter V. However, at the time Suavi attempted to overthrow him, Abdülhamit was still young and inexperienced and had not yet been labeled a tyrant either by his Ottoman or his Western critics. Explaining Suavi's attempted coup as an attempt to overthrow the tyrant is thus anachronistic. It also ignores the evidence from Suavi's own writings and from actual events.

It should be remembered that since Suavi was killed in the process of trying to liberate Murat from Çırağan Palace, since there is no surviving documentary evidence from Suavi or his accomplices, and since the official investigations were in many ways inconclusive, we really do not know with any certainty what Suavi planned to do next. While his attack on Çırağan is often referred to as an attempted coup, the plan may not have included removing Abdülhamit at that time. Suavi may have meant to take Murat to Bulgaria to place at the head of the uprising there. It is also really not clear if there were highly-placed co-conspirators waiting to step in should the coup meet with success, but who

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<sup>764</sup> İsmail Doğan, *Tanzimatın İki Ucu*, 216-7.

ultimately remained undetected by the official investigation. Any explanation of Çırağan will thus necessarily remain a theory. However there is a theory, advanced by a handful of historians over the years, that is not only backed up by Suavi's views as expressed in his writings but also makes sense considering the historical circumstances at the moment of the attempt.

We know that Suavi was a strong supporter of the sultanate, but that he also strongly believed the sultan had certain duties. Suavi, as well as Urquhart and his circle, repeatedly urged the sultan to resist European interference in Ottoman affairs and to stand up to Russia. The most convincing explanation of Suavi's attempt is thus his disillusionment with Abdülhamit following the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano, and his belief that he needed to be replaced with a stronger ruler who would live up to his duties as sultan by continuing the war with Russia and standing up to the Western powers. Popular sentiment at the time was in favor of exactly these things, lending additional weight to this interpretation. This theory has been advanced by a number of historians with minor variations in the details.

Abdurrahman Adil writes that Suavi was in favor of continuing the struggle with the Russians but was unable to convince Abdülhamit to do so, and that this is a partial explanation for Suavi's attempted coup.<sup>765</sup> İsmail Hami Danişmend agrees with Abdurrahman Adil on this count, and in support of this explanation he further points out that the war had just been ended under very harsh peace terms, while at the same time the

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<sup>765</sup> Abdurrahman Adil, "Ali Suavi ve Efkâr-i Siyasiyesi," 170.



streets of Istanbul were filled with destitute refugees from the Balkans.<sup>766</sup> He also reports that during the attempt Suavi took Murat by the arm and appealed to him to “come deliver us from the Muscovites!”<sup>767</sup>

Şerif Mardin tentatively accepts this explanation, though he confuses the matter by bringing Atatürk into his discussion.

A tentative explanation of Suavi’s conduct is that he had been disappointed by Abdülhamid’s failure to lead ‘the nation in arms’ in an inch-by-inch defense of the Ottoman soil against the Russian invaders. The apocalyptic figure for whom Suavi yearned did not appear in this instance. Such a personage was to rise up only much later at the end of the First World War and thus fulfill a deeply seated popular need for success in battle which had been cumulating since the great Ottoman military reverses in the eighteenth century. This contribution of the *Gazi*, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, explains the extent to which he was able to ride over popular conservatism and carry modernization much farther than anybody had dared until that time.<sup>768</sup>

Mardin seems to be suggesting that Suavi’s disappointment in Abdülhamit was unreasonable, but then at the same time he suggests that Atatürk was the leader Suavi was waiting for. While Suavi certainly would have supported the Anatolian resistance which Mustafa Kemal led, he certainly would not have supported the formation of a secular Turkish Republic or the reforms that followed. Mardin is likely correct when he states that it was success in battle that allowed Atatürk to carry out such far-reaching reforms. However, while Suavi in 1877 and 1878 advocated armed resistance similar to that which Mustafa Kemal would later lead, he also consistently opposed the type of Westernizing reforms that were carried out in the Turkish Republic. Support for the former does not

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<sup>766</sup> İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Ali Suâvi'nin Türkçülüğü*, 15-6.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>768</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 365.

imply support for the latter, and Suavi himself would have been aligned with the “popular conservatism” that Mardin describes.

Kemal Karpat correctly notes that Suavi was critical of “the sultan’s refusal to support fully both the Muslim resistance in Bosnia against the Hapsburgs and the Muslims’ anti-Bulgarian, anti-Russian revolt in the Rhodope mountains.”<sup>769</sup> However, he states incorrectly that Suavi was also critical of the dismissal and exile of Midhat Paşa and of the sultan’s “anticonstitutionalist attitude.”<sup>770</sup> As we have seen, Suavi was in fact critical of Midhat Paşa, and was critical of the sultan for very different reasons.

Hüseyin Çelik provides a more detailed explanation to back up this theory. He argues that Suavi completely lost faith in the sultan after the Ottomans signed the Treaty of San Stefano on 3 March 1878, a treaty which created an autonomous Bulgaria and thus ended Ottoman rule in much of the Balkans. The Ottomans signed this treaty despite continued arguments from Suavi and the Urquhart circle that England would never allow Russia to enter Istanbul.<sup>771</sup> Çelik further points out that Suavi had lived and worked in Filibe (Plovdiv) in what is now Bulgaria, and that he continued to correspond with friends there.<sup>772</sup> What is more, Suavi’s friend G. B. Saint Clair was in Kırcaali (now Kardzhali in Bulgaria) in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains leading the fight against the Russians.<sup>773</sup> Çelik concludes that “in our opinion, Suavi’s basic aim was to overthrow Sultan

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<sup>769</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 129.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>771</sup> Hüseyin Çelik, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, 378.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

Abdülhamit rather than to bring Sultan Murat to the throne. However in the event that he was able to bring Sultan Murat to the throne, he may have hoped to be able to get him to put into effect the ideas that he knew to be correct.”<sup>774</sup> Taking into consideration the views Suavi expressed in his writings, as well as the turbulent climate in 1878 Istanbul, this theory remains the most convincing.

There is one further piece of evidence which adds weight to this theory, and as far as I know it has not been previously discussed in any of the literature on Suavi or Çırağan. In *III<sup>me</sup> A Propos de l’Herzégovine: Monténégro* Suavi discusses a planned coup against Sultan Abdülmecit that was uncovered in 1859, known as the Kuleli Incident. This little-understood plot is generally interpreted as either an early constitutional movement or a reaction against the Tanzimat reforms.<sup>775</sup> However, Suavi provides a very different explanation. He writes of how an Ottoman army sent to put down an uprising in Montenegro in 1858 was ordered to retreat as a result of European pressure on Istanbul.

On 11 and 12 May 1858,

Les Monténégrins, au nombre de 4,000 tombent à l’improviste sur les derrières de l’armée en retraite et en font un massacre ; ils incendient Grahovo. Kadri-Pacha, qui commandait cette arrière-garde, tombe blessé l’un des premiers et tous les hommes sous son commandement périssent autour de lui.

Un officier de gendarmerie autrichienne envoyé sur les lieux quelques semaines plus tard put encore compter 2,237 squelettes épars autour de Grahovo.

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<sup>774</sup> Ibid., 437.

<sup>775</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 203-4.

A la suite de ce massacre, la diplomatie intervint, non pour affirmer le droit de représailles de la Turquie, mais pour proposer une conférence afin de régler *la question pendante entre la Porte et le Monténégro*.<sup>776</sup>

Suavi then explains in a footnote that the commander of the army in question,

Husseïn-Daïm-Pacha et toutes ses divisions d'armée fut tellement indigné de la conduite politique du Gouvernement et voyant qu'au lieu d'autoriser à venger ce massacre on l'appelait avec son armée à Constantinople, qu'il résolut un jour, dans la caserne de Koulélie, et de l'avis unanime de ses soldats, de se révolter pour amener l'abdication du sultan Abdul-Medjid. Mais, dénoncé par quelqu'un, la caserne fut cernée par des forces considérables.

Voilà d'où vint et ce que fut cette révolution de Koulélie (17 septembre 1859) qui coûta la vie à des généraux et à un grand nombre d'officiers supérieurs.<sup>777</sup>

Suavi's comments on this earlier conspiracy date from 1876, approximately two years before his own attempted coup. He clearly sympathizes with the earlier conspirators, and there are some interesting parallels with the circumstances surrounding Suavi's own attempt. The common thread here is that a military setback cannot be rectified because the Ottoman government is not willing to stand up to diplomatic pressure from Europe. The solution of the Kuleli conspirators as Suavi portrays it – to overthrow the weak sultan and bring in a new ruler to stand up to diplomatic pressure and take the appropriate military action – also fits perfectly with the most likely theory for Suavi's own coup attempt.

### **Ali Suavi and the Emergence of Modern Turkey**

Almost all of the research on Ali Suavi to date has been carried out in the Turkish Republic, so it is only natural that discussions of Ali Suavi's significance would focus

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<sup>776</sup> Ali Suavi, *III<sup>me</sup> A Propos de l'Herzégovine: Monténégro*, 27.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 1.

overwhelmingly on his significance for the Turkish Republic. Much of the research on the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire in general, both by Turkish and non-Turkish historians, is preoccupied with tracing the origins of the Turkish Republic, and in this respect the work of Western Orientalists has much in common with Turkish nationalist historiography. For example, Selim Deringil explains that until recently “Turkish (and, surprisingly, non-Turkish) historians were too prepared to accept at face value the official version of early republican historiography.”<sup>778</sup> The Orientalist view of a declining Ottoman Empire that began to modernize due to the impact of the West, until eventually being reborn phoenix-like as a secular nation-state following the first World War, has in recent decades been challenged by younger generations of scholars. As we saw in Chapter V, the way we interpret late Ottoman history and the emergence of the Turkish Republic is an important factor in determining how we interpret Ali Suavi’s life and contribution.

The classic treatments of the Ottoman march towards modernization are *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* by Bernard Lewis and *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* by Niyazi Berkes, both originally published in the early 1960s. They are both strongly marked by modernization theory, which posited that traditional societies would modernize by following the universally applicable Western model. Scholars who take this approach, which was widely accepted in the 1950s and 1960s and can still be seen in some later works,<sup>779</sup> “see the basic theme of modern Turkish history as a struggle between light and dark: modernizers and pro-Westerners on the one hand, religious

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<sup>778</sup> Selim Deringil, “The Ottoman Origins of Kemalist Nationalism: Namik Kemal to Mustafa Kemal,” *European History Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (April 1993): 170.

<sup>779</sup> For example in Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2.

reactionaries on the other.”<sup>780</sup> Thus any critiques of or opposition to modernization or westernizing reform could be dismissed by attributing them to the “fanaticism” of “reactionaries” and “obscurantists.” As we saw in Chapter V, Suavi was often labeled a fanatic or zealot by his critics.

In recent years scholars have begun questioning some of the basic assumptions regarding the impact of the West and the modernization of the Ottoman Empire. For example, the work of Rifa‘at Abou-El-Haj shows an Ottoman Empire in the middle period that was undergoing transformations that were driven by the needs of groups within Ottoman society rather than by external stimuli. According to Abou-El-Haj, “the adoption of cultural patterns, whether from Europe or elsewhere, was not simply the result of a foreign presence, nor was it just an emulation of an attractive outside model: it was determined by the needs of the Ottoman ruling elite.”<sup>781</sup> And Benjamin Fortna’s recent work on education during the Hamidian era stresses Ottoman agency in actively adapting (as opposed to passively adopting) Western models. Fortna explains that “the late Ottoman state assigned education the conflicted task of attempting to ward off Western encroachment by adapting Western-style education to suit Ottoman needs.”<sup>782</sup> Fortna also finds that similar changes were being carried out at the same time in France, Russia and Japan, making for a “truly global trend.” The absence of any time-lag then leads Fortna to

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<sup>780</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 360.

<sup>781</sup> Rifa‘at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 68.

<sup>782</sup> Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

question whether the expansion of Ottoman state education was purely a matter of the “impact of the West.”<sup>783</sup>

While contemporary accounts of the late Ottoman Empire were for the most part clearly marked by the Eastern Question that Suavi struggles to counter in many of his writings, the situation began to change in the 1920s with the founding of the Turkish Republic. Though in 1920 Lord Balfour would refer to Mustafa Kemal as a “bandit,”<sup>784</sup> as Suraiya Faroqhi points out “from the later 1920s onward, the Kemalist project of founding a Turkish national state aroused considerable sympathy and even enthusiasm among foreign historians and philologists.”<sup>785</sup> Many books were written in the West about the “New Turkey,” which stood in sharp contrast with its Ottoman predecessor. The Kemalists of this period were meanwhile busy rejecting their Ottoman-Islamic history and looking instead to a pre-Islamic Central Asian Turkish past, at times adopting wild theories about Turkish history and the Turkish language to bolster their nation-building project. Western and Turkish scholars were thus united in playing down the continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

Bernard Lewis’s *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* – though it contains much to criticize on other counts – helped restore this continuity, tracing the origins of “Modern Turkey” back to the reign of Selim III in the late eighteenth century. Kemal Karpat’s work in the

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<sup>783</sup> Ibid., 27-8.

<sup>784</sup> Henry H. Cumming, *Franco-British Rivalry in the Post-War Near East: The Decline of French Influence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 138.

<sup>785</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 209.

1970s also did much to re-emphasize the continuity between empire and nation-state, and at a time when the study of Ottoman history was still regarded with suspicion in Turkey.<sup>786</sup> More recently, Erik Zürcher has gone so far as to propose a revisionist periodization with an extended “Young Turk” period stretching from 1908 to 1950.<sup>787</sup> While this might be a bit extreme, it does help to highlight certain elements of continuity that could otherwise be missed. Zürcher’s work has thus served as a corrective to early republican historiography.

In many of the works that trace the late Ottoman reforms as a sort of “pre-history” of the Turkish Republic, the establishment of the secular Turkish nation-state is portrayed as the inevitable conclusion. This has been referred to as the “secularist/modernization teleology,”<sup>788</sup> which in practice means starting with the outcome and then basically telling the story backwards. This entails downplaying or ignoring nineteenth-century developments that do not fit into the “Emergence of Modern Turkey” narrative. This interpretation of Turkish history can be seen in the classic works of Bernard Lewis and Niyazi Berkes, as well as in some more recent works. At the same time, this problem has received increasing attention in recent decades. C. A. Bayly and Leila Fawaz explain that recently,

Historians of the Middle East have been rightly concerned not to create a teleological narrative that constantly seeks to find the historical origins of

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<sup>786</sup> See Kemal H. Karpat, ed., *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

<sup>787</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3-4.

<sup>788</sup> Virginia Aksan, “Review of Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923*,” H-Turk, H-Net Reviews, July 2007. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=209301189534080>.



contemporary nation-states. After all, this is what early nationalists themselves mined history for.”<sup>789</sup>

While it has been said that “historical thinking is always teleological,”<sup>790</sup> the author of this quote likely did not have in mind the sort of selective use of data that characterizes the teleological nationalist historiography at issue here. Admitting that, as Edward Hallett Carr puts it, “our sense of direction, and our interpretation of the past, are subject to constant modification and evolution as we proceed,”<sup>791</sup> is a far cry from accepting the validity of the sort of manipulation we have seen in the example of Ali Suavi’s legacy.

An example of a corrective to the teleological view of Turkish history can be found in a 1957 article by Dankwart Rustow pointing out that the victory of the Kemalists was due to very specific historical events. Rustow refers to the Şeyhülislam’s 1920 fatwa denouncing the Kemalists as “the watershed between a religious past and a secularist future,” as things would have gone very differently if the sultan and the şeyhülislam had joined or supported the resistance.<sup>792</sup> While Rustow’s pronouncements show the stamp of the modernization theory that was prevalent at the time of his writing, he is correct to remind us that a secular Turkish Republic was not inevitable. Erik Zürcher also reminds us that “nineteenth-century Ottomans certainly did not see themselves as part of the prehistoric phase of any Turkish Republic.”<sup>793</sup>

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<sup>789</sup> C. A. Bayly and Leila Fawaz, “Introduction: The Connected World of Empires,” 15.

<sup>790</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 142. The quote is from J. Huizinga, translated in *Varieties of History*, ed. F. Stern (London: Thames & Hudson, 1957), 293.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>792</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, “Politics and Islam in Turkey 1920-1955,” in *Islam and the West*, ed. Richard N. Frye (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), 77.

<sup>793</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 6.

Writing about the history of this period, particularly when it involves a topic like Turkish nationalism, can be compared to a tightrope walk. On the one hand lies the danger of ahistorically overstating the nationalist proclivities of early figures like Ali Suavi. On the other hand lies the danger of understating the importance of nineteenth-century developments for the eventual emergence of Turkish nationalism and the Turkish Republic. In other words, on the one hand lies the risk of an overly deterministic and teleological view, on the other the risk of ignoring important elements of continuity. There is presumably a way forward that avoids the extremes on either hand, but at times it is difficult to discern where that way forward lies. Thus in staking out a position on any number of related issues there is always the risk of falling towards one of the extremes.<sup>794</sup>

Selim Deringil provides an example of this when he explains that the abolition of the sultanate and caliphate was

the result of a long historical process. In tracing the Ottoman origins of Kemalist nationalism, it is nevertheless very difficult not to fall into the teleological trap of ‘the inevitability of the nation state’. Yet Mustafa Kemal was no accident of history, and it is accordingly necessary to account historically both for him and for the movement he led.<sup>795</sup>

We have seen that Turkish nationalist historiography in fact incorporates both of the extremes mentioned above. On the one hand there is a general rejection of the Ottoman past as part of the effort to portray the Turkish Republic as something new. On the other

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<sup>794</sup> This is similar to the problem of “lumpers” and “splitters” encountered primarily in disciplines which involve classification, such as linguistics or biology. Lumpers emphasize similarities while splitters emphasize differences. Lumpers “consistently tried to create coherent patterns” and have been criticized for the selective use of data (“mining”) to support their theories; “any evidence that did not fit their arguments was ignored as aberrant.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lumpers\\_and\\_splitters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lumpers_and_splitters), accessed September 28, 2011.

<sup>795</sup> Selim Deringil, “The Ottoman Origins of Kemalist Nationalism,” 181.

hand there is the selective use of certain elements of Ottoman history to construct the prehistory of the Turkish Republic, as in the teleological view mentioned above. While these two features of Turkish nationalist historiography may seem contradictory on the surface, taken together what they mean in practice is a very selective use of certain elements of Ottoman history, which are then reframed to make them part of Turkish national history. We have seen how this was carried out in the case of Ali Suavi. In works that portray Suavi as one of the early Turkish nationalists, his strong statements in favor of Ottomanism and pan-Islamism and his rejection of “racist” nationalism are necessarily ignored. After a handful of authoritative books have been produced portraying Suavi as a secularist Turkish nationalist and an early advocate of many of the reforms carried out in the Turkish Republic, a decades-long stream of articles then follows in which these false claims are perpetuated based solely on the authority of this original handful of books. This state of affairs would last until Hüseyin Çelik’s scholarly account of Suavi’s life and work.<sup>796</sup>

In attempting to avoid studying Suavi from the perspective of later Turkish nationalist historiography, I do not wish to imply that Suavi has no relevance for later developments, merely that the links are more distant and more complex than in the nationalist account. Suavi was made into a hero of the Turkish revolution, but if he had actually lived in the early Turkish Republic he would have been considered a reactionary and a fanatic. While

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<sup>796</sup> Considering that Çelik devotes over 700 pages to clearing up the mess created by earlier studies of Suavi, it would be unfair to criticize him too harshly for, for example, neglecting Suavi’s books, or failing to discuss Suavi with reference to theories of nationalism. The fact that Çelik has given us a lengthy and reliable source on Suavi means that we can proceed to explore areas of inquiry that Çelik may have hinted at but did not have the space to explore adequately in his own work.

we have seen that efforts to portray Suavi as an early Turkish nationalist are without merit, at the same time we cannot deny that in some ways his work contributed to the foundations upon which the Turkish nationalists would later build. This is particularly true of his use of simple colloquial Turkish as a written language. Suavi did this not out of any sort of nationalism, but rather simply as a means to reach a wider audience and in the process sell more newspapers. We have seen that his simple style was based on the style of his sermons, the audience for which likely included many illiterate and semi-literate people. However, as has been repeatedly pointed out, the mere fact of publishing newspapers in a particular language contributes to the formation of an imagined community based on that language.<sup>797</sup> Suavi thus inadvertently participated in trends that would eventually undermine the Ottoman and Islamic solidarity he wished to promote and contribute to the ethnic nationalism he rejected.

### **Ali Suavi in Ottoman History**

Putting aside considerations of how Ali Suavi may have contributed to the later emergence of Turkish nationalism, or discussions of his significance to the prehistory of the Turkish Republic, we move now to an evaluation of Ali Suavi's importance to late Ottoman history and of the role he played in trends that were not merely in their embryonic stages during his life. Based on what we have seen in the preceding chapters, it would not be unreasonable to argue that Suavi's greatest significance was as an Ottoman patriot. Much of his work was devoted to promoting the development of the Ottoman Empire, not only through education and the spread of knowledge through

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<sup>797</sup> See Juan R. I. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890-1920," 359.

publishing but also through his advocacy of the exploitation of the empire's natural resources and the promotion of trade and industry. Suavi not only defended the Ottoman Empire from the European propaganda offensive known as the Eastern Question, he also actively encouraged Ottoman and Islamic solidarity in the face of European and Russian imperialism. Ali Suavi played an important role as a public intellectual and journalist, and especially as a leading figure in the emergence of Ottoman Muslim solidarity or patriotism in the face of Russian and Western imperialism during the final years of his life. He argued that the Ottomans formed a nation regardless of race or religion, though at the same time he asserted the centrality of Islam for the Ottomans. But can we argue that Ali Suavi was a nationalist? Attempting an answer to this question requires reference to theories and definitions of nationalism.

Regarding "theories of nationalism," C. A. Bayly points out that:

These theories should really be seen as tools of interpretation, rather than theories proper. They can help to illuminate one case or another of late-nineteenth-century nationalism, singly or in conjunction. But they have no predictive value, and none of them taken separately can possibly explain the nature, still less the timing, of the emergence of nationalism.<sup>798</sup>

To these theories of nationalism, some aspects of which are discussed below, Bayly adds

the importance of armed conflict, particularly armed conflict between states, but also conflict among their constituent populations. The intensification of nationalism during the nineteenth century was itself preeminently a consequence of war and invasion. Nationalism defined itself against 'others.' The experience of common military service, basic education in the ranks, and elite leadership widely transformed peasants and workers into nationalists.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 202.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

Ernest Gellner attempts a theory of nationalism as a whole. He defines nationalism as “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>800</sup> He also provides provisional definitions of the nation:

1 Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.

2 Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation.<sup>801</sup>

For Gellner the emergence of nationalism is a function of modernity and is closely linked to industrialization.<sup>802</sup> He explains that “the industrial order requires homogeneity within political units, at least sufficient to permit fairly smooth mobility, and precluding the ‘ethnic’ identification of either advantage or disadvantage, economic or political.”<sup>803</sup> Various factors in industrial society “impel it into a situation in which political and cultural boundaries are on the whole congruent.”<sup>804</sup> Gellner reminds his readers that group loyalty and patriotism existed before; his argument is that “nationalism is a very distinctive species of patriotism, and one which becomes pervasive and dominant only under certain social conditions, which in fact prevail in the modern world, and nowhere else.”<sup>805</sup>

Gellner’s explanation of nationalism as being linked to industrialization does not fit the case of Suavi, and indeed the Young Ottomans are generally referred to as Ottoman

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<sup>800</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2006), 1.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, 109-10.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>804</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

patriots. However, taking into consideration Gellner's definitions, it should be remembered that Suavi explicitly argued that there was an Ottoman nation. Based on Gellner's definition, an Ottoman nationalist argument would consist of something along the lines of the dual proposition that "we are the Ottoman nation, and we need to have our own state." Suavi's arguments are a clear step in this direction, with his claims of Ottoman nationhood and his defense of the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. However, his arguments stop short of being nationalist.

Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."<sup>806</sup> It is an imagined community since it is not based on actual contact among all its members. Anderson sees the rise of these communities as the result of several processes, including the spread of print-capitalism and mass vernacular literacy, the decline of universal religion and dynastic rule, and changing perceptions of time. The fact that Suavi was a journalist and that he made a point of writing in colloquial Turkish fit neatly with Anderson's description of the formation of "imagined communities," though the anticipated result in this case would be Turkish nationalism, which as we have seen did not emerge until much later.

Instances of modern solidarity based on religious identity present a problem for Anderson's theory. Juan Cole's remarks on the pan-Islamism of Sayyid Jamal al-Din are relevant to our consideration of Suavi and of Islamic solidarity in the 1870s.

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<sup>806</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

The pan-Islamicist imagining of a Muslim nation both confirms and subverts Benedict Anderson's notion of print capitalism driving a new conception of national relatedness. He coded religion as 'universal' and tied to dynastic rule as a medieval phenomenon subverted and displaced by the territorial, largely secular nation-state. In fact, pan-Islam proved more imaginary than imagined as a practical project of state-building, and its bankruptcy was complete by 1924, when the Ottoman caliphate was abolished by the secularist nationalist Atatürk. Yet Islam and Muslim reform did reemerge as central to Middle Eastern state-building projects later in the twentieth century in ways that suggest that the Andersonian antinomy between medieval religion and modern nationalism is too lacking in nuance.<sup>807</sup>

In a sense we can say that Anderson's theory echoes the view expressed by Hans Kohn in 1929 that:

The intellectual and social life of the East is to-day undergoing a process of transformation at the close of an historical epoch in which religion and a religious moral code dominated the whole inner life, and at the beginning of a new epoch in which, upon the European model, nationalism is destined to succeed to the rôle of religion.<sup>808</sup>

Partha Chatterjee provides us with a counter-example to this when he reminds us of the modern "idea that 'Indian nationalism' is synonymous with 'Hindu nationalism',"<sup>809</sup> and that Hindu nationalists identify Islam and Muslim rule with oppression and medieval decline.<sup>810</sup> In other words, Indian nationalism is based on membership in a specific religious community, with another religious community within the same state being viewed as the "other." Chatterjee directly addresses Anderson's theory when he asks, "if nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from

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<sup>807</sup> Juan R. I. Cole, "Printing and Urban Islam in the Mediterranean World, 1890-1920," 360.

<sup>808</sup> Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1929), 14.

<sup>809</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 110.

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, 93, 98.



certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?”<sup>811</sup>

In the “emergence of modern Turkey” narrative, Ottomanism and Islamism are generally considered to be earlier or imperfect forms of what would eventually evolve into the secular ethnic Turkish nationalism of the Turkish Republic. One rarely finds references to “Ottoman nationalism” or “Islamic nationalism” but rather to “Ottomanism” and “Islamism.” When attempting to discuss these ideologies, scholars are often at a loss for words or are forced to resort to lengthy and awkward descriptions.

Regarding the ideology of the Young Ottomans, Roderic Davison writes that “this is still Ottoman patriotism rather than Turkish nationalism, though the germs of the latter were contained within it.”<sup>812</sup> He notes that “even Ali Suavi remained an Ottoman, and never made the transition to Turkish nationalism, which in view of the desire to defend the whole Ottoman Empire would have been almost impossible.”<sup>813</sup> At the same time, he tells us that “the main components of public feeling in the 1870’s were a political Russophobia and an emphasis on Islam which more and more verged on pan-Islamic sentiment,”<sup>814</sup> culminating in “a sort of Islamic patriotism, an antiwestern rigidity, which was revealed in the crisis of 1876-1877.”<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>812</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 221.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., 277.

Şerif Mardin refers to the ideology of the Young Ottomans as “protonationalism.”<sup>816</sup>

Niyazi Berkes writes that:

The end of the political Tanzimat came when the Turkish element showed signs of revolt against its economic and political nonentity. Despite its national basis, the reaction was still far from being nationalistic. The anti-Tanzimat movement took the form of an amalgam of constitutionalism and religious nationalism as was represented by the Young Ottoman movement.<sup>817</sup>

Berkes later refers to the “anti-Western, anti-Christian sentiment in Turkey” as “Islamic Nationalism.”<sup>818</sup> He also describes Namık Kemal’s “ideology of patriotism [as] pan-Ottomanism with Islamist ‘nationalism’ at its base.”<sup>819</sup>

Kemal Karpat, writing much later than the scholars cited above, remarks that the failure of Suavi’s attempted coup represents the end of “the radical, populist phase of Ottoman Islamism that had flourished from 1875 to 1878.”<sup>820</sup> At the same time, he asserts that “the Suavi incident marked the beginning of self-initiated popular actions for the defense of the fatherland or for changing the government, which until then had been beyond the scope of the commoners’ thinking.”<sup>821</sup> He explains that the Rhodope Rebellion, which Suavi supported, “soon turned into an armed movement for self-government and independence,” and that “the public opposed any territorial compromise and urged the sultan to aid the rebels.”<sup>822</sup> He explains that “the mistrust of the Ottoman Muslims toward their own government went hand in hand with a search for support that turned into a

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<sup>816</sup> Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 248.

<sup>817</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 159.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>820</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 129.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>822</sup> *Ibid.*

feeling of political solidarity with Muslims in other parts of the world and to a call for concrete popular action,” and quotes the British ambassador as reporting that “the natural desire for national preservation has risen to such a pitch as to lead in all probability to important and combined action on the part of the Mohammedan races of European Turkey.”<sup>823</sup> He refers to this “Islamic sense of solidarity and self-preservation” as “nationalism” in quotation marks, and points out that the rebels in the Balkans “were not ethnic Turks but Slavs and Albanians, who nonetheless considered themselves Muslims, Ottomans, or ‘Turks,’ as all these terms meant the same thing.”<sup>824</sup>

The common element that emerges from all these descriptions is Ottoman Muslim solidarity. However, the assumption is that when nationalism appears it will be ethnic – that is, Turkish – and that otherwise the word must be placed in quotation marks or else qualified in some way. Thus these authors are at a loss for appropriate terminology in trying to describe the ideology of Ali Suavi and the other Young Ottomans or the popular sentiments of the 1870s. At the same time, it must be noted that many of the phrases cited above sound suspiciously like descriptions of nationalism, as when Karpat describes the Rhodope Rebellion as “an armed movement for self-government and independence.”<sup>825</sup>

Orientalists and Turkish nationalists generally regard the Islamism of the Young Ottoman movement and of Abdülhamit’s reign as a step backwards. For example, Niyazi Berkes states that the Young Ottoman movement “was more progressive than the Tanzimat while

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<sup>823</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>824</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., 131.

it retrogressed from the Tanzimat secularism.”<sup>826</sup> At the same time, scholars preoccupied with tracing the emergence of Turkish nationalism generally fail to appreciate or describe what was happening during these years. For example, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar finds it strange that in *A Propos de l’Herzegovine* Suavi presents himself to European public opinion as an Ottoman-Muslim rather than as a Turk.<sup>827</sup>

Many long-held assumptions about late Ottoman history have been challenged in recent decades. C. A. Bayly reminds us that, just as late Chinese history has been reappraised since the 1980s so that “the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 now seems less of an inevitability,”<sup>828</sup> so also:

The Ottoman Empire has been subject to a thorough-going reevaluation in the last two decades. Historians now see it as a viable, sophisticated system for adjusting ethnic and religious disputes, rather than a bear pit of nationality problems. The “Sick Man of Europe” was the victim of Western medical imperialism. Ottoman patriotism survived well into the twentieth century amongst Arab and even Greek subjects of the empire. It might even have survived the First World War had the Committee of Union and Progress, a group of young officers who attempted to reinvigorate the regime, not chosen the wrong side.<sup>829</sup>

Recent scholarship has shown that until the end of the Ottoman Empire “identities remained open and contested. The beginnings of pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism, and regional patriotisms could coexist in tension with the older sense of Ottoman or Mediterranean identity.”<sup>830</sup> In his study of the diary of a young soldier in Jerusalem in

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<sup>826</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 159. This interpretation should not come as a surprise since this work, as clearly stated in the title, is devoted to tracing the emergence of secularism in Turkey.

<sup>827</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 246.

<sup>828</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 398.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid.

<sup>830</sup> C. A. Bayly and Leila Fawaz, “Introduction: The Connected World of Empires,” 15.

1915, Salim Tamari finds “inclusive Ottoman affinities in which the borders of Arab and Turkish ethnicities were not clearly defined.”<sup>831</sup> In different contexts Private Ihsan sees himself as belonging to the “Ottoman nation” or the “Arab nation.”<sup>832</sup> It has also been pointed out that the nationalist movement in Egypt in the late 1870s “was by no means anti-Ottoman in ideology, but it was nonetheless testimony to a growing sense of Egyptian solidarity.”<sup>833</sup>

Hasan Kayalı argues that during the Young Turk period the government turned not to Turkish nationalism but to Islamism in their attempts to preserve the empire.<sup>834</sup> He points out that “any campaign aimed at Turkification would have had to include Turks as well, if Turkification meant more than teaching the language, as those who spoke Turkish hardly perceived themselves as an ethnic community.”<sup>835</sup> Kayalı describes the official ideology of this period as “a redefinition of Ottomanist ideology [with] a greater emphasis on Islam as a binding force,” accompanied by “an intensive Islamic propaganda effort embellished with anti-imperialist rhetoric.”<sup>836</sup> Kayalı describes Ottomanism as a “supranationalist” ideology of state patriotism based on allegiance to the sultan, and tells us that “a constantly redefined Ottomanism accommodated the many changes in the political fortunes of the empire until its final partitioning at the end of World War I.”<sup>837</sup> Kayalı’s work challenges both Arab and Turkish nationalist histories, but in describing the

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<sup>831</sup> Salim Tamari, “The Short Life of Private Ihsan: Jerusalem 1915,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 30 (Spring 2007): 34.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>833</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 215.

<sup>834</sup> Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>835</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>836</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

ideology of the Young Turks he is forced into the same type of contortions that we saw above in earlier attempts to describe the ideology of Ali Suavi and the Young Ottomans.

Erik Zürcher goes even further in breaking with Turkish and Arab nationalist historiography and actually suggests a solution to this terminological conundrum when he argues that “the period of the national independence movement (between 1918 and 1920) and the subsequent war for independence (between 1920 and 1922) was the zenith of Ottoman Muslim nationalism.”<sup>838</sup> He points out that the Turkish Republic “had its roots in the Anatolian resistance movement of 1918-1922, so modern Turkish historiography sees the resistance as Turkish nationalist from its start.”<sup>839</sup> Zürcher traces this Ottoman Muslim nationalism through the preceding decade of Young Turk rule. He argues that, if one looks not at the writings of Young Turk intellectuals but rather at the actual policies of the Young Turk government, “the political and military leaders of the crucial decade under review were guided not by Ottomanism, not by Turkism and not by Islamism.”<sup>840</sup> They were not Ottomanists “because they did not desire to win over the non-Muslim communities by granting them equal rights,” they were not Turkists because they included Kurds, Arabs and other Muslims, and they were not Islamists because they had no interest in “basing state and society on Islamic values and Islamic law.”<sup>841</sup>

The Unionists were motivated by a peculiar brand of Ottoman Muslim nationalism, which was to a very high degree reactive. It was defined in a particular and antagonistic relationship between Muslims who had been on the losing side in terms of wealth and power for the best part of a century

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<sup>838</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 161.

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*

and Ottoman Christians who had been the winners. The Unionists' ideology was nationalist in the sense that they demanded the establishment of a state of their own: before 1918 they took every step to make the existing Ottoman state the Muslims' own and after 1918 they fought to preserve what remained of that Ottoman Muslim state and to prevent it from being carved up. But the nation for which they demanded this political home was that of the **Ottoman Muslims** – not that of all the Ottomans, not only that of the Turks and certainly not that of the Muslims of the world. In other words, what we see here is an ethnicizing of religion; the movement was political and not religious, but the nationalist program is based on an ethnicity whose membership is determined largely by religious affiliation. That is why the Muslim nationalism of the Young Turks could go hand-in-hand with secularist modernizing policies.<sup>842</sup>

According to Zürcher, it was only in 1923-24 that “the Kemalist leadership of the Republic broke the bonds of solidarity forged during the preceding ten years and opted instead for far-reaching secularization and for Turkish (as opposed to Ottoman-Muslim) nationalism.”<sup>843</sup> He further argues that “there was certainly nothing inevitable about it, and the switch was far too sudden to be explicable on the basis of any underlying socio-economic process.”<sup>844</sup> At the same, it should be noted that Zürcher does not believe that the new state could have included any of the Arab territories. He writes that “because nearly all of the leading cadres of the national movement [in Anatolia] had served in the Arab provinces during the war, they were far too disillusioned to harbor any dreams of reestablishing Ottoman rule there.”<sup>845</sup>

Keith Watenpaugh makes some of the same arguments as Zürcher, although he does not use the term “nationalism” when referring to the Ottoman Muslim resistance that

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<sup>842</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid., 169.

followed the First World War. Watenpaugh's work focuses on Aleppo in what is now northern Syria. He argues:

An exclusive focus on the rise of Arabism and Turkism in the immediate postwar period is misplaced and obscures the fact that what is now conceptualized as nationalism, especially so-called popular nationalism, were forms of consciousness – political, class-based, religious, or otherwise – that operated within their own universe of meaning and language of symbols and signs, and possessed dimensionality for which nationalism cannot always account.<sup>846</sup>

Watenpaugh then explains,

The Ottoman Anatolian resistance taking shape in the province of Aleppo's northern reaches presented itself as not only a military movement bent on the expulsion of Westerners and the suppression of their Christian allies, but also a drive to reestablish the Ottoman Empire and everything that it encompassed.<sup>847</sup>

He points out that “many in the Eastern Mediterranean continued to adhere to an imagined *Ottoman-Islamic* community,” and that “such a persistence subverted colonial and local efforts to impose alternative national imaginings upon the region's inhabitants.”<sup>848</sup>

At the same time as the Ottoman Muslim resistance formed in Anatolia, a Society for the Defense of Rights also formed in Aleppo in 1919 under the leadership of Ibrahim Hananu. Watenpaugh argues that Hananu's guerrillas were “linked inextricably to the revived Ottoman movement in Anatolia itself.”<sup>849</sup> He dismisses arguments that Hananu's resistance was motivated by any sort of Syrian or Arab nationalism.

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<sup>846</sup> Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 130.

<sup>847</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.



Far from reflecting the formation of a popular Syrian nationalism, the armed resistance and committees drew from the shared values and textures of identity of the prewar period, especially a corporate identification with the Ottoman state as protector of Islam and Muslim prerogative.<sup>850</sup>

When the Greeks invaded Anatolia in 1921, the Anatolian resistance made peace with France and abandoned Hananu and Aleppo. However, Watenpaugh reminds us that, contrary to the Syrian nationalist account, “rather than being a ‘Syrian’ rebellion, Hananu’s revolt tied into the larger trans-Eastern Mediterranean resistance against European imperialism and the broader struggle to rebuild the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>851</sup>

Michael Provence sees in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927 evidence of the emergence of a non-elite Syrian “collective national identity.”<sup>852</sup> However, there is also much in his book that points to continuity with the Ottoman Muslim solidarity described by Zürcher and Watenpaugh rather than (solely) to the emergence of Syrian Arab nationalism. Provence explains that the revolt “owed much of its national character to the bonds between” former army officers who had been educated in Istanbul and served in the Ottoman – and in some cases Arab – army.<sup>853</sup> He gives an example of a soldier who attended the Ottoman military academy, fought in the Anatolian resistance (which he refers to as the Turkish War of Independence), then fought alongside Ibrahim Hananu, before finally fighting and dying in the Syrian Revolt.<sup>854</sup> In the case of rebel leader Fawzī al-Qāwuqjī, Provence seems bewildered by the fact that his “theoretically untidy mix of

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<sup>850</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>852</sup> Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 152.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>854</sup> Ibid., 97.

religion, anti-imperialist agitation, and class warfare evidently mobilized the majority of Hamâh's citizens."<sup>855</sup> The fact that in 1925 "the rebels did not see the need to defend or explain the existence of a national community requiring patriotic sacrifice"<sup>856</sup> also points more to continuity with older allegiances that would not need to be defended or explained. Finally, Provence describes how one of the rebel leaders

would call the villagers to arms by announcing that they were all engaged in a struggle like that of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal and telling the villagers that their village was like Ankara in 1920. This was apparently wildly popular among Muslim and Christian villagers.<sup>857</sup>

It is hard to imagine that by this point none of these villagers had heard of the abolition of the caliphate by the Kemalists in 1924, and it is interesting to learn that the Christian villagers were also inspired to emulate Mustafa Kemal. If by 1925 the Ottoman Muslim solidarity in Syria was slowly being eclipsed by the new realities, there were still important elements of continuity that are often ignored, a continuity that stretches back at least to Ali Suavi and the Rhodope Rebellion.<sup>858</sup>

William Cleveland has provided us with a fascinating case study of how one Ottoman Muslim, in this case a Lebanese Druze, dealt with the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. In his book, which is subtitled *Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism*,

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<sup>855</sup> Ibid., 98. Note how if we remove the element of class warfare, Provence's description here of a "theoretically untidy mix of religion [and] anti-imperialist agitation" sounds like the descriptions of "a sort of Islamic patriotism, an antiwestern rigidity" that Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 277, applies to 1870s Istanbul. It also recalls descriptions of the "ideological failure" of Suavi's "theoretical constructions" in Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 383.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>858</sup> It is interesting to note that the Rhodope Rebellion, like Hananu's resistance and the Great Syrian Revolt, does not fit comfortably in any later national history. The Rhodope Rebellion was not ultimately successful, and it took place in what is now Bulgaria. Thus the fact that it is the focus of very little scholarly attention should come as no surprise. However, it is exactly the type of event that in other cases plays a central role in national history, as when the post-World War I resistance in Anatolia was retrospectively claimed as the beginning of the Turkish national movement.

Cleveland points out that the last generation of Ottoman Arabs “tended to view political organization and cultural affiliation in terms of their formation as Ottomans and to regard the post-World War I settlement in the Arab Middle East as neither permanent nor fitting.”<sup>859</sup> Cleveland tells us that “Arslan was particularly hostile to Atatürk, feeling that political independence was not to be used to imitate the West, but to preserve cultural integrity.”<sup>860</sup> He notes that Western scholarship has focused on secular nationalism and neglected Islamism, and he attributes this neglect to modernization theory, which predicts increased secularism and regards Islamists as reactionaries.<sup>861</sup>

Cleveland does not argue that Arslan’s views were widely shared by other Arab Ottomans. On the contrary, he reminds us that “even among the strongest exponents of pan-Islamic Ottomanism, few turn-of-the-century public figures in the Arab provinces wished to be known as friends of the Turks. Shakib Arslan was an exception.”<sup>862</sup> Echoing earlier figures like Ali Suavi, Arslan predicted that “a divided Empire would fall to Europe.”<sup>863</sup>

In the early 1920s Arslan was a wandering exile, “caught peculiarly between emergent Arabism and a twilight Ottomanism as represented by the CUP in exile.”<sup>864</sup> Cleveland tells us that “before he could become a dominant figure in the Arab exile movement,

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<sup>859</sup> William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), xiii.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*, xx.

<sup>861</sup> *Ibid.*, xx.

<sup>862</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

[Arslan] had to come to terms with the failure of Ottomanism and recast his pan-Ottoman identity into a more suitable Arab mold.”<sup>865</sup> According to Cleveland it was Atatürk’s secularism that drove Arslan to seek an Arab identity; it was becoming increasingly clear that there was no longer any Ottoman government to restore.<sup>866</sup>

Arslan went on to become “an effective spokesman for Arab independence and Islamic revival.”<sup>867</sup> Cleveland writes that “there was a consistency to his overall perspective, an uncompromising opposition to the occupation of Arab lands by Europeans, which created a favorable impression among an Arab audience which came to look on him as their conscience in Europe.”<sup>868</sup>

His urgent propaganda and his contemptuous denunciations were more than a defense of a particular society at a given historical moment. They were Arslan’s defense of his world and of the al-Afghani/‘Abduh/Ottoman legacy to which he, in his own way, was a faithful heir. He had to resist the West for what it had done to that world, for the threat it implied to the legitimacy of that legacy.<sup>869</sup>

Cleveland further tells us that “in Arslan’s view, the most pernicious force among the Westernizing secularists was Kemalist Turkey. ... It was as though Atatürk was burying Arslan’s past, and he responded with sustained outrage.”<sup>870</sup> Cleveland’s sympathetic description of Arslan’s efforts recalls the earlier related efforts of Ali Suavi, and also drives home the point that Suavi would have been equally outraged by Atatürk’s reforms.

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<sup>865</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>869</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid., 122.

As we saw above, Niyazi Berkes states that the political Tanzimat ended “when the Turkish element showed signs of revolt against its economic and political nonentity,”<sup>871</sup> that is, with the Young Ottoman movement. However, in light of the above discussion, it would be more correct to say that the Young Ottoman movement, and Ali Suavi in particular, represent the revolt not of the Turkish element but of the Ottoman Muslim element, the earliest stage in the development of what Zürcher has called Ottoman Muslim nationalism. The Rhodope Rebellion, the Anatolian resistance, Hananu’s revolt, and even the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927 then make more sense when viewed as part of a common history of Ottoman Muslim resistance to imperialism, rather than when compartmentalized and viewed from the separate perspectives of Ottoman, Turkish, and Syrian history. The continued importance of Ottoman Muslim identity also helps explain why Egyptian nationalism was initially not anti-Ottoman. And in the figure of Shakib Arslan we see what happens when the Ottoman Empire is removed from the equation, leaving what William Cleveland has termed “Islamic nationalism.”

Partha Chatterjee’s arguments regarding the emergence of Indian nationalism serve to highlight the difficulty of studying the emergence of nationalism among Ottoman Muslims. Chatterjee discusses how the period of “social reform” that preceded the emergence of an explicitly nationalist movement

was actually made up of two distinct phases. In the earlier phase, Indian reformers looked to the colonial authorities to bring about by state action the reform of traditional institutions and customs. In the latter phase, although the need for change was not disputed, there was a strong resistance to allowing the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting

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<sup>871</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 159.

‘national culture.’ The second phase, in my argument, was already the period of nationalism.<sup>872</sup>

There is a clear parallel here with the westernizing reforms of the Tanzimat, and with the subsequent Young Ottoman critique of excessive westernization and foreign interference in Ottoman affairs. However, if one expects to find signs of an emergent Turkish nationalism in the 1860s and 1870s one will be for the most part disappointed, and forced to conclude that what Chatterjee describes is of little relevance for the Ottoman case. However, if we look for an emergent Ottoman Muslim nationalism in the Young Ottoman movement the parallel with the Indian case is much clearer. While Ali Suavi and the Young Ottomans did not make explicit nationalist demands, by Chatterjee’s standards the Young Ottoman movement would mark the beginning of the “period of nationalism” if the nationalism in question is not Turkish but rather Ottoman Muslim nationalism.

Elements of the Ottoman Muslim nationalism discussed by Zürcher can be seen in the Young Ottoman ambivalence towards inclusive Ottomanism. Roderic Davison writes that:

The New Ottomans generally defended Osmanlılık, but there was an ambivalence in their defense. Sometimes they argued that all peoples of the empire should have equal treatment, that all should equally love and defend the empire, that it was impossible to separate them. But true Osmanlılık suffered whenever they defended Islam as the proper legal base for the state, or let their anger at Christian rebellion or privileges for Christians carry them away, or when they vented their wrath on Âli Paşa for his supposed favoring of Christians.<sup>873</sup>

Davison’s description makes much more sense if we view Ali Suavi and the other Young Ottomans not as Turkish protonationalists, but rather as precursors to the Ottoman

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<sup>872</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 6.

<sup>873</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 222.

Muslim nationalism that Zürcher describes. The Young Ottomans of the 1860s and 1870s were not as completely disillusioned with Ottomanism, and the Islamic element is much stronger in their writings, but otherwise there is clearly a great deal of continuity from the concerns of the Young Ottomans to those of the Young Turks and to the other later developments discussed above.

This continuity of political concerns from the Young Ottoman to the Young Turk period can also be seen in architecture. Sibel Bozdoğan points out that the origins of the National Architecture Renaissance of 1908-1931 – that is, of the architectural movement that came to prominence in the Young Turk era and lasted into the early years of the Turkish Republic before being declared “reactionary” – can be traced to the 1870s.

The historical roots of this anti-orientalist and modern self-consciousness go back to the Young Ottoman movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. Young Ottomans, mostly intellectuals, bureaucrats, and journalists educated in Europe, were the first to begin thinking about the empire as a political community or an “Ottoman nation.” It should be immediately added that many scholars characterize the Young Ottoman movement as a “proto-nationalist” movement in which Islam and the patrimony of the Ottoman sultan, rather than ethnicity and language, still constituted the primary elements of social cohesion and solidarity. Nevertheless, many of the elements that Benedict Anderson, in his classic work on nationalism, has identified as playing a major role in “imagining a nation” – maps, the census, the first novels, and especially the first newspapers – had in fact emerged in the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s. It is no coincidence that the stylistic vocabulary of the National Architecture Renaissance goes back to the seminal text *Usul-i Mimari-yi Osmani* (Principles of Ottoman Architecture), produced in 1873, in the heyday of the Young Ottoman movement. This volume compellingly reflects the desire of educated Ottoman elites to redress the balance of excess Westernization in the preceding Tanzimat period and to install a new sense

of patriotism that included pride in the artistic and architectural heritage of the empire.<sup>874</sup>

Just as Ottomanism is now seen to have persisted longer than once thought, so too the Ottoman National Architecture Renaissance persisted well into the early Turkish Republican period. Efforts to nationalize the history and the language began in the early 1930s, and it is no accident that the Ottoman National style was abandoned then.<sup>875</sup>

To sum up, the trends that Ali Suavi was a part of are much more prominent and comprehensible when liberated from the distorting influence of twentieth-century Turkish and Arab nationalist historiography. There is a great deal of continuity between the concerns of Ali Suavi and the other Young Ottomans on the one hand, and the ideology of the Young Turks in power and the Anatolian resistance on the other, and it has little to do with the emergence of Turkish nationalism. What is more, we have seen that this Ottoman Muslim identity was important in Syria even after the end of the First World War. The Ottoman Muslim solidarity that Zürcher describes is also evident in the writings of Ali Suavi and the other Young Ottomans and in the popular sentiment among Ottoman Muslims during the turbulent 1870s. We should not let a discussion of whether or not the Young Ottoman ideology or public sentiment in the 1870s can be labeled “nationalist” – whether Ottoman, Islamic, or Ottoman Muslim – distract us from an appreciation of their significance. The rigidity of the labels applied to these ideologies – nationalism is assumed to be ethnic, Ottoman solidarity must include the Christian minorities, Islamism

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<sup>874</sup> Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>875</sup> See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 359 and 433 for the founding, respectively, of the Turkish Historical Society in 1930 and the Turkish Linguistic Society in 1932.



by definition involves a call for Islamic values and Islamic law – has, as we have seen, made it very difficult for scholars to describe the ideologies in question in the 1870s, in the Young Turk era, and in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. These ideologies do not follow the “‘modular’ forms” that Chatterjee mentions and are thus to a certain extent rendered incomprehensible.

The almost exclusive focus on the development of Turkish nationalism by both Turkish and non-Turkish scholars, and the resulting neglect of Ottomanism and Islamism, has compounded the difficulty. The fact that Ottomanism and Islamism were considered reactionary in the new Turkish Republic certainly did nothing to encourage interest in their study. As we have seen, the absence of ethnic Turkish nationalism in the 1870s does not mean that there was no basis for solidarity in resisting Russian and Western imperialism and defending the Ottoman fatherland. What is more, viewing the Anatolian resistance of 1918-1922 as motivated by Ottoman Muslim rather than ethnic Turkish solidarity brings into focus similarities with the earlier Ottoman Muslim resistance in the Balkans, and in particular with the Rhodope Rebellion, which can then be viewed as a precedent for the later struggle for independence. While it would be a stretch to call Ali Suavi himself a nationalist, at the same time it should be recognized that the fact that he is not now regarded as one of the first Ottoman Muslim nationalists is due solely to the Kemalists’ 1923-1924 decision to make ethnic Turkish nationalism the basis for the new Turkish Republic.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have seen that as early as the final decade of the nineteenth century, the attention paid to Ali Suavi in writings both scholarly and popular was shaped by political considerations. While the Young Turks portrayed him as a self-sacrificing hero who died attempting to overthrow the tyrant sultan, in the Turkish Republic Suavi was portrayed instead as an early Turkish nationalist and advocate of many of the secularizing reforms that were carried out beginning in the 1920s. The distortions that arise from regarding Ottoman history through the lens of later nationalist historiography – be it Turkish, Arab or other – have made it difficult to grasp the significance not only of Suavi but of a host of other figures, events and trends from the tumultuous final decades of the Ottoman Empire.

Based on a study of Suavi's actions and writings, and drawing on the valuable work of scholars such as Kemal Karpat, Erik Zürcher, Hasan Kayalı, William Cleveland, and Keith Watenpaugh, I have attempted to reevaluate Suavi's legacy through an approach that does not draw on the assumptions of nationalist historiography, Orientalism, or modernization theory. The picture that emerges from this approach is of an Ottoman Muslim solidarity movement that began with Ali Suavi and the other Young Ottomans in the 1860s, and which became more widespread on a popular level during the crisis years

of the 1870s. The Rhodope Rebellion at the end of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 represented popular Muslim resistance to foreign occupation of Ottoman territory. Descriptions of this rebellion, and of popular sentiment during these years, show scholars grasping for the correct words to describe them, though the word “nationalism” is often employed in quotation marks. All of this, then, is the background for the emergence of the Ottoman Muslim nationalism that guided Young Turk policy during World War I and served as the basis of solidarity for the Ottoman resistance in Anatolia and in what is now northern Syria, resistance that had a precedent, generally ignored, in the earlier Ottoman Muslim resistance of the Rhodope Rebellion. The Great Syrian Revolt of 1925-1927 also drew on this same Ottoman Muslim solidarity, although by this point, as we also see in the case of Shakib Arslan, Ottoman Muslim nationalists were increasingly faced with the fact that there was no longer any hope of restoring the Ottoman Empire.

The Kemalist decision to break with this Ottoman Muslim identity and make ethnic Turkish nationalism the basis for a new secular nation-state has had far-reaching consequences in many areas. We have already explored some of the effects of nationalism on the study of Ottoman history in previous chapters. In discussing the later significance of the switch from Ottoman Muslim to Turkish nationalism, Zürcher reminds us that the Turkish nationalist account of the founding of the Turkish Republic

does not explain why the Kemalist regime, which established the secular nation state, met with so much stubborn opposition from large parts of the population and even from parts of the national movement itself and why it

was voted out of office as soon as that population gained the right to express itself in free elections after World War II.<sup>876</sup>

Zürcher refers here to the victory of the Demokrat Parti (Democratic Party) over the Kemalist Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party) in the 1950 election.<sup>877</sup>

The Democratic Party is generally described as “a conservative party responsible for relaxing Turkey's strict secularism laws” in the 1950s.<sup>878</sup>

Hüseyin Çelik, the scholar responsible for the most reliable work on Ali Suavi, a work that sets the record straight on many of the errors and politically motivated misrepresentations that plague most of the earlier writings on Suavi, was elected to parliament in 1999 as a member of the conservative center-right Doğru Yol Partisi (True Path Party).<sup>879</sup> The True Path Party is itself a successor to the Democratic Party of the 1950s mentioned above.<sup>880</sup> In 2001 Çelik then became a founding member of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP; Justice and Development Party), subsequently serving as Minister of Culture and Tourism from 2002 to 2003 and as Minister of Education from 2003 to 2009.<sup>881</sup> The core of the Justice and Development Party is composed of the reformist or modernist faction of the earlier Islamist Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party), which was banned by the government in 2001, and which itself was only the latest of a long series of political parties to be shut down by the Turkish government for challenging – or allegedly challenging – the secular establishment. There have also been several

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<sup>876</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” 175.

<sup>877</sup> For more information see Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 221.

<sup>878</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic\\_Party\\_\(Turkey,\\_current\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_(Turkey,_current)), accessed December 1, 2011.

<sup>879</sup> [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hüseyin\\_Çelik](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hüseyin_Çelik), accessed December 1, 2011.

<sup>880</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic\\_Party\\_\(Turkey,\\_current\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_(Turkey,_current)), accessed December 1, 2011.

<sup>881</sup> [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hüseyin\\_Çelik](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hüseyin_Çelik), accessed December 1, 2011.

unsuccessful attempts to shut down the Justice and Development Party for various reasons, including its advocacy of lifting the ban on female students wearing headscarves in universities.<sup>882</sup>

Political changes in Turkey over the last few decades have been accompanied by changing attitudes towards the Ottoman past and its study. Ottoman archival materials are now fairly accessible, and there is a great deal of quality scholarly work being produced in Turkey. The political climate that has allowed the Justice and Development Party to hold power has also allowed increased questioning of Turkish nationalist historiography and a more nuanced approach to the study of the Ottoman past. Hüseyin Çelik's treatment of Ali Suavi and of late Ottoman history can be regarded as part of this larger trend in Turkish scholarship, while his political career, and particularly his membership in the Justice and Development Party, place him in the midst of the corresponding political changes that have been taking place in Turkey. Thus we can say that while Çelik's work constitutes a break with the earlier Turkish nationalist view of Suavi and of Ottoman history, at the same time it still fits into the larger pattern of Suavi scholarship reflecting political circumstances. The important difference is that Çelik's portrayal of Suavi is, as far as I can tell from my own research, for the most part accurate and reliable, reflecting as it does this increased openness to studying Ottoman history outside of the Turkish nationalist framework.<sup>883</sup>

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<sup>882</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice\\_and\\_Development\\_Party\\_\(Turkey\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_and_Development_Party_(Turkey)), accessed December 1, 2011.

<sup>883</sup> I do not wish to suggest that members of Islamic-leaning political parties are uniquely qualified to write about the Ottoman past. Considering the fears of Turkish secularists that the ultimate goal of the Islamists is to establish an Islamic Republic of Turkey, it should be acknowledged that Suavi's legacy could just as easily be misrepresented in order to justify such ends.

While Çelik significantly breaks with Turkish nationalist historiography in his account of Suavi, he is still very much writing from a Turkish perspective, although it is a Turkish perspective that embraces rather than rejects the Ottoman-Islamic past. What I mean by this is that Çelik shows little interest in Suavi and the Young Ottomans beyond their relevance to the Turks and Ottoman/Turkish history. It is my view that Suavi's life and work are of continuing relevance on a much broader world-historical level. Many of the issues that occupy Suavi's attention in his writings – imperialism, reforms carried out under foreign pressure, foreign debt as a means of domination, income inequality, bias in the media, the effect of electoral politics on foreign policy – are strikingly relevant to the world of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. My portrayal of Suavi, then, emphasizes precisely those aspects of his work and thought that in my view are relevant to the world we live in today.

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