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# Transmission of Western *Hadīth* Critique to Turkey: On the Past and the Future of Academic *Hadīth* Studies

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"Batılı Hadis Tenkidi  
Düşüncesinin Türkiye'ye  
İntikali: Akademik Hadisçiliğin  
Geçmişi ve Geleceği Üzerine"

**Özet:** Hadis ilmine *dışardan ve eleştirel* bakış esasen Batı kaynaklı bir yaklaşımdır. *İçerden ve eleştirel* bakışı ise kısaca cerh ve ta'dil ilmi sayesinde hadis ehli temsil eder. Batılı İslâm araştırmacılarının hadise yönelik 'dışardan ve nesneleştirici' yaklaşımları, özellikle Avrupa aydınlanma hareketinden itibaren İslâm ülkelerinde yaygınlık kazanmaya başlamış, bilimsel objektiflik anlayışı çerçevesinde, son iki yüzyıl boyunca önemli bir mesafe kat etmiştir. Tanzimat sonrası Türkiye'sinde İzmirli İsmâil Hakkı ve Babanzâde Ahmed Na'ım ile başlayan, M. Tayyib Okıç, Muhammed Hamîdullah, Fuad Sezgin ve Mehmet Said Hatiboğlu ile günümüze kadar devam eden ve akademik hadisçilik olarak nitelendirilen bu anlayış, Türk düşünce tarihinin önemli kazanımlar elde etmesine vesile olmuştur. Klâsik dönemdeki 'içerden' ve 'uygulama' amaçlı ilmi faaliyetin 'dışardan' ve 'meslek' kaygısıyla yapılan bilimsel faaliyetlere dönüşmesini doğuran akademik hadisçilik, bilimsel birikimin dil ve ülke sınırı olmaksızın, ortak kullanımını temin etmesi açısından ise Türkiye ilim hayatına önemli katkılar sağlamıştır.

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Anahtar kelimeler: Hadis, Sünnet, Oryantalizm, Türkiye, Eleştirel düşünce, Çağdaşlaşma ve hadis.

## I. Introduction

*Hadīth* stood at the center of many political and intellectual debates in the history of Islam. These debates gained a great dynamism during the last two centuries. Muslim scholars began using the methods originally developed by Western academics in the study of *hadīth* which produced serious research works both in the Muslim and the Western worlds.<sup>1</sup> These studies reflect the

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include G. H. A. Juynboll's *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden 1969) and Daniel Brown's *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge 1999). These authors compare Muslim and Western approaches to *hadīth*. For a re-

preoccupation of researchers with the question of certainty in proving whether words actually belong to the one who is claimed to have said it. Both Western and Islamic civilizations are in constant search for its authentic cultural and religious roots. To this end, both civilizations developed coherent and systematic methods. However, if these methods, which have been developed to research the authenticity of religious texts either in the Muslim or in the Western worlds, were applied to the religious texts from another civilization, it would expectedly give rise to serious debates.

Following the age of Enlightenment, the communication between Muslim and Western worlds took place in an environment in which the balance of power changed in favor of the West. The transmission of the Western critical thought to the Muslim world took place during this period of colonization and struggle with the support of Western powers. Therefore, it would be wrong to see this process as a spontaneous and natural transmission of knowledge from one civilization to another.

The essential relationship between knowledge and practice in the Muslim tradition of scholarship impelled the Ulemā to emphasize the practical implications of knowledge. For this reason, it would be impossible, especially in the early Islamic history, to talk about a system of knowledge which is isolated within the narrow walls of academia on the Western model. Consequently, "academic study of *hadīth*" as a term indicates the new perspective on *hadīth* which gained shape through the relations with the West following the Tanzimat era. This new perspective represents an "external," "top-down" and "critical"<sup>3</sup> approach to *hadīth*. It also indicates the institutional base on this new approach which was provided first by Dārulfunūn (formerly Istanbul University during the late Ottoman State) and presently by Council of Higher Education in Turkey. Yet, most importantly, in this article, "academic study of *hadīth*" as a term is used to indicate a particular research method which I will elaborate on later.

Academic studies are conducted to produce scientific works which goes beyond the limits of a particular country, language, style, perspective, the level of knowledge and perception. This is true at least for the successful products of academic research. In this article, the changes and shifts in the study of *hadīth* during the era of modernization in Turkey will be analyzed from this perspective. The word "Turkey" is used in the title of the article yet the focus will not be limited only with the modern Turkey. Instead, the developments since the

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view on Brown's book see, İbrahim Hatiboğlu, "Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought Üzerine", (yaz. Daniel Brown), *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1998, no 2, pp. 225-232.

<sup>2</sup> Mehmet Emin Özafşar, "Hadisin Neliği Sorunu ve Akademik Hadisçilik", *İslâmiyât*, III (2000), sayı 1, 33-53.

<sup>3</sup> M. Hayri Kırbaoğlu, *İslâm Düşüncesinde Sünnet: Yeni Bir Yaklaşım*, Ankara 1993.

Tanzimat era which falls in the late Ottoman history will also be explored by analyzing the works of the first generation of the Ottoman Ulemā who conducted academic studies on hadith. Following, the works of scholars who lived until the present day and made contributions to the field of *hadith* studies will be introduced and analyzed.

The non-academic *hadith* studies, which concentrate on the implementation of *hadith* by Muslims in daily life, fall outside the focus of this article. Academic publications will be the exclusive focus of this paper including conference proceedings. The purpose of this endeavor is to analyze the content and the methods of the academic literature on *hadith*.

## II. Turning Points of Academic *Hadith* Studies in Turkey

Beginning with the Tanzimat era, the impact of modernization was strongly felt on Islamic scholarship as in the bureaucratic, political and social domains. This development prompted the leading Ottoman Ulemā of the time, who are also labeled as "Islamists" or "reformist scholars," to come to terms with the encounter with the West. They undertook endeavors which require a great determination and effort such as learning a European language, despite their mature age, with the purpose of reading the works of Western authors in their original language. Following the intense encounter with the Western literature, the first generation of academically oriented Ulemā learned French efficiently the high level of which can be seen as a mirror for their stance towards changing notions in culture and scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

It is expected that social developments which follow an unnatural course will inescapably face difficulties and challenges. For instance, since the works of Western scholars of Islam are characterized by an external approach, academic study of *hadith* does not reflect the relationship between knowledge and practice as well as knowledge and morality. This is one of the great challenges academic *hadith* studies face. In other words, the knowledge which is the subject matter of study is not part of the value system of the academics who conduct research on it. Therefore, the academics do not feel obliged to practice and follow it. In this sense, the academic perspective has first entered Turkey with Dārulfunūn and initiated a process of change to produce the desired outcomes.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that this drastic and swift change is directly related with the sweeping changes in other parts of life in Turkey. Dārulfunūn was set up as an alternative to the traditional structure of education. It was

<sup>4</sup> Scholars such as İzmirli, Babanzāde, Elmalılı, Manastırlı, Âkif decided to learn Western languages after their forties and their private libraries contained a significant number of books by Western authors.

<sup>5</sup> Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, "Dārulfunūn", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, İstanbul 1993, VIII, 521-525.

planned as a symbol of institutional change. The Ulemā on whom this study will focus worked for the establishment of Dārulfunūn. This institution was established on the model of its Western counterparts which initiated a process during which Muslims tried to learn the critical thinking, which was the guiding element of the Enlightenment movement, and also looking at Islamic issues as "outsiders". Scholars reacted differently to these developments which took place in that period.

### 1. Remnants of Traditional *Hadīth* Scholarship in Turkey (1876–1949)

The first generation of academically orientēd Ulemā combined the traditional and modern knowledge. Therefore it is possible to see *hadīth* studies in that period as still being dominated by a traditional perspective. In this period, there are two leading scholars in Turkish *hadīth* scholarship: Babanzāde Ahmed Naīm and İzmirli İsmāil Hakki.<sup>6</sup> Both scholars were prolific writers with a solid philosophical foundation. Likewise both scholars were receptive to Western thought. Yet Babanzāde was closer to the conservative line of thought while İzmirli was closer to Islamist camp. In addition, both scholars carried on their research from an academic perspective owing to their familiarity with the Western thought. Both intellectuals are among the leading Ottoman intellectuals from the era of quest for change. Since they had both traditional and modern education, they were aware of the differences between Eastern and Western thoughts. They shouldered the heavy responsibility of being Muslim scholars in such a period of conflict and transition. In particular, İzmirli saw Western and Eastern thought compatible with each other and tried to combine elements from both civilizations. This stance shaped his approach to *hadīth* studies also. Therefore, it is possible to see him as the forerunner of the academic *hadīth* studies in Turkey.

One of the elements which contributed to the deep familiarity of İzmirli with the Western thought was his efficiency in several Western languages including French, Russian, Greek and Latin—in addition to Arabic and Persian. He was a respectable scholar at the international level also which is testified by his membership in the L'Académie des Sciences in France. In 05.09.1912 the French state conferred him a medal of honor for his academic achievements. His participation in the efforts of reforming the traditional Ottoman *madrasa* system—based on the conviction that the traditional educa-

<sup>6</sup> For the *hadīth* studies from the era of the first encounter with the Western approaches, see, İsmail L. Çakan, "1876–1976 Arası Türkiye'de Hadis Çalışmaları Bibliyografyası (Kitaplar)", *İslām Medeniyet Mecmuası*, IV, 3, 33–55.

tion and approach were no longer sufficient in the encounter with the Western civilization—is directly related to the academic transformation he underwent.<sup>7</sup>

In that period, Western researchers were just beginning to subject Islam to critical study in the Western academic and educational institutions. This approach was yet to be adopted by Muslim researchers in the Muslim world. In his book on the *History of Hadith*, İzmirli claims to be the first to use the term “history of *hadith*” which reflects a deliberate stance.<sup>8</sup> This attitude reflects the external, top-down and critical approach to *hadith* which are characteristics of the academic *hadith* studies in the recent historical period. Yet there is no concrete evidence that İzmirli was influenced by the Western academics and Orientalists in that conjecture. Yet it is possible that he might have interacted with them during his visit to Paris and their visit to Istanbul which started in 1913 when Western academics were first brought to Istanbul to help reform Dârulfunûn which continued until the end of WWII. However, the fact that Western scholars who came to Istanbul taught only History of Civilization makes difficult to arrive at a conclusive connection between İzmirli and them. It is also possible that İzmirli was indirectly influenced by the Western academics through their impact on Arab scholars with whom İzmirli was in touch. Taking all these into consideration, it is possible to conclude that the most important factor in prompting İzmirli to incorporate a critical approach to *hadith* studies was the impact of the people and works which represented the Western academic approaches.<sup>9</sup>

İzmirli was appointed as a professor to the School of Theology at Dârulfunûn in Istanbul which was set up on the model of Western universities on 21 April 1924. His book *History of Hadith*, which was printed in limited number through lithography in 1924, may be seen as an indication that he taught *hadith* from the beginning of his career there and authored that book as a text book. İzmirli was also part of the commission which worked to transform

<sup>7</sup> Because of his waste experience and knowledge, as efforts continued to reform *madrasas*, İzmirli was appointed to the council of Suleymaniye *Madrasa* which was the highest institution of education in that period. He was also appointed as inspector when *madrasas* were united under the common name of Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Âliyye. See (“Dârü'l-Hilâfeti'l-Âliyye Medresesi'ne Mûte'allık Tevcihât”, *Ceride-i İlmiye*, I, Islâh-ı Medâris Özel Sayısı, 27 Eylül 1330 (20 Zilka'de 1332/10 Ekim 1914), p. 369.

<sup>8</sup> He uses this expression for the first time in his manuscript titled *History of Hadith* where he states in a footnote in page 479 that he is the first to use the term “history of *hadith*.” See, İzmirli İsmâil Hakkî, *Hadis Tarihi* (nşr. İbrahim Hatiboğlu), İstanbul 2002, s. 283.

<sup>9</sup> The first book to be remembered in that connection was *the History of Islam* by Reinhart Dozy which was translated by Abdullah Cevdet (*Târîh-i İslâmiyet*, I-II, Kahire 1908). Translation of this book and its wide dissemination among general public caused a great debate (See. İbrahim Hatiboğlu, “Osmanlı Aydınlarınınca Dozy'nin *Târîh-i İslâmiyyet*'ine Yöneltilen Tenkidler”, *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, sayı 3, 1999, s. 197–213). A similar book by Leone Caetani on Islamic history was translated by Hüseyin Cahit (Leone Caetani, *İslâm Târîhi*, (tr. Hüseyin Cahit), İstanbul 1924–1927).

Dârulfunûn to Istanbul University. In this process, on August 1, 1933, the School of Theology was closed and in its place the Institute for Islamic Studies was opened where İzmirli was appointed as "Emeritus professor of History of *Hadîth*" and the director of the Institute.<sup>10</sup>

In his book *History of Hadîth*, İzmirli adopted a broader perspective to the history of *hadîth* including *hadîth*, methodology of *hadîth*, the sub-branches of *hadîth* discipline as well as the history of *hadîth*. He also discussed the views of different Islamic Schools of thought on *hadîth* other than the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Given the period in which İzmirli authored his book, this is a novel academic approach. Likewise, his book *Fenni Menâhic: Méthodologie* includes important comparisons between Islamic and Western concepts and demonstrates its author's well-grounded familiarity with the Western thought.<sup>11</sup> His interest in the methodological issues must have played a role in starting to teach under the title of "History of *Hadîth*," which used to be traditionally taught as "*Hadîth-i Sharîf*". This change is a first step in the direction of studying *hadîth* as part of culture and as an historical phenomenon rather than the second source of religion after the Qur'an in Islam.

On the other hand, there is a relationship between the attempts for critical examination of traditional Islamic disciplines and the efforts of reforming Islam. In the traditional period, the critical examination of Islamic disciplines used to be carried on within the tradition but in the period of westernization, which reflects the impact of modernization, Islamic disciplines have been approached as an "historical phenomenon" and criticized from the perspective of an outsider. Implicit in this approach is that the subject matter is not to be learned as it is but to be seen as suffering from weaknesses that must be subjected to critical scrutiny.<sup>12</sup>

In the School of Theology at Dârulfunûn, the Islamic disciplines as a whole were studied in 'their historical reality'.<sup>13</sup> This approach was also reflected in its journal, *Dârulfunûn İlahiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, which focused on the academic study of Islam and did not include any article about *hadîth* or *Sunnah*. One of the important and long articles by Zâkir Kâdirî Ugan deals with

<sup>10</sup> İzmirli İsmâil Hakki worked for the institute for three years until 1936 at the age of sixty six. He died in Ankara where he went for a visit on February 2, 1946.

<sup>11</sup> See İzmirli İsmâil Hakki, *Hadis Tarihi* (nşr. İbrahim Hatiboğlu), İstanbul 2002, p. 281-282.

<sup>12</sup> İzmirli, *Târîh-i Hadîs*, s. 479.

<sup>13</sup> The courses offered by the School of Theology included history of theology, history of Islamic law, history of Islamic mysticism and history of Islamic religion. The emphasis on history is striking. Around the same time when İzmirli authored *History of Hadîth* (*Târîh-i Hadîs*, İstanbul 1340) other scholars also produced similar works dealing with the history of their disciplines. See Mehmed Ali Aynî *Tasavvuf Tarihi* (İstanbul 1341), Mehmed Şerâfeddin *Kelam Tarihi* (İstanbul 1341), Bergamalı Ahmed Cevdet *Tefsir Tarihi* (İstanbul 1343), Sa'îd Bey *Fıkıh Tarihi* (İstanbul 1340), M. Şemseddin *İslâm Dini Tarihi* (İstanbul 1340).

“Religious and non-Religious Narratives.<sup>14</sup>” The article, which has the size of a book, reflects the academic approach to *hadīth*. The academic study of *hadīth* which was initiated by İzmirli and Ugan was later transferred to Institute for Islamic Studies when they retired.

Whether Western researchers had an impact on the academic approach of İzmirli still remains as a seriously debated problem. However, soon after the death of İzmirli, the Turkish academics in the Institute for Islamic Studies were introduced to Alfred Guillaume who gave a series of conferences at the Institute where he explained and zealously advocated the Western critical approach to *hadīth* as formulated by Ignaz Goldziher.<sup>15</sup> Yet the questions asked by the Turkish audience in this encounter were so superficial that they reflected that the Turkish academics were still at the beginning on this issue.

Another important figure from this period is Babanzade whose Introduction to *Tajrīd al-Sarīkh*, a concise edition of Bukhārī’s *hadīth* collection, where he explored the issues of *hadīth* methodology, is an outcome of great intellectual and philosophical effort. He demonstrated his excellence in explaining the methodology of *hadīth* critique even though it is not related with the Western philosophy. Babanzade followed developments in Western science with great eager and skillfully found or coined Turkish terms to correspond to French terms used in Philosophy.<sup>16</sup> In particular, he seriously followed the level Westerners reached in methodological discussions. He tried to facilitate understanding of classical methods which had been used by classical scholars of history and *hadīth* by comparing them to modern methods. These issues which he explored in his Introduction to *Tajrīd* are still a useful reference points for the contemporary researchers.<sup>17</sup> As the time passed, the representatives of the period, which I characterized as the study of *hadīth* under the impact of traditional approach, passed away after the closure of the School of Theology at Dārulfunūn. Consequently, in the field of *hadīth*, academics with self-confidence were no longer raised in Turkey.

Briefly put, the process of transition from Tanzimat era to Republican period brought serious changes and transformations in the scholarly traditions.

<sup>14</sup> Zâkir Kâdiri Ugan, “Dinî ve Gayr-i Dinî Rivayetler”, *Dâdû'l-Fünûn İllâhiyat Fakültesi Dergisi (DFİFD)*, 1926, I-IV, sene 1, sayı 4, 132–210.

<sup>15</sup> These conferences had been translated to Turkish and published in the *Journal of the Institute for Islamic Studies*. See, “Profesör A. Guillaume’un İstanbul Üniversitesi’nde ‘Garpçe İslâm Tetkikleri’ Mevzuuna Dair Verdiği Konferanslar”, *İslâm Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi*, I/1–4, 1953, İstanbul 1954, s. 119–145).

<sup>16</sup> İsmâil L. Çakan, “Babanzâde Ahmed Naim”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, İstanbul 1991, IV, s. 375–376.

<sup>17</sup> See, Babanzâde, “Metodoloji’den Bir Bahis”, *Sahih-i Buhârî Muhtasarı Tecrid-i Sarīh Muhtasarı*, Ankara 1982, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, I, p. 82–100.



Yet, the encounter with the West caused great distress on the part of Ulemā, which may be comparable to the contemporary situation. However, the Ulemā of that time managed to face the challenges posed by the Western thought in that period with the help of the traditional *madrasa* education.<sup>18</sup> The tradition of scholarship with a long history, in which they were educated, coupled with the scholarly responsibility, helped them to establish close relationship with the centers of learning at their time and to produce scholarly works with a fascinating style and content. Again with their efforts the traditional *hadīth* education continued until the Dārulfunūn was closed. The Institute for Islamic Studies which was opened to take the place of the School of Theology at Dārulfunūn which hosted German scholars beginning with WWII prepared the ground for a healthy interaction between the two traditions. Therefore it is not an accident that the articles and books originating from that period and the level of debates are admirable even today.

## 2. Departure from the Tradition in the *Hadīth* Studies (1949-1983)

Muhammad Hamīdullah served as a cornerstone in the rise of academic *hadīth* studies in Turkey.<sup>19</sup> His arrival to Istanbul in 1951 coincided with Guillaume's trip to Istanbul to give a series of conferences on *hadīth*. Hamīdullah did a great service to Turkish intellectuals and academics who felt helpless in the face of critiques leveled against *hadīth* by Western Orientalists.<sup>20</sup> In this period, the Institute for Islamic Studies at Istanbul University raised such scholars as Fuad Sezgin and Salih Tug who made significant contributions to the field of *hadīth*. Sezgin wrote his doctoral dissertation in 1956 on the origins of Bukhārī's *hadīth* collection (*Buhārī'nin Kaynakları Hakkında Araştırmalar*) as a response to Goldziher's claims with respect to oral traditions.<sup>21</sup> One of the important aspects of Sezgin's work was that he studied Bukhārī's *hadīth* collection, which is considered by Muslims the second source of Islam after the Qur'an, regarding its own value but not its value as a theological source. On

<sup>18</sup> For *hadīth* scholars from that period, see. Emin Aşıkcutlu, "el-Mesiratü't-târihiyye li'd-dirâsâti'l-hadise el-akâdimiyye fi Turkiye ve mevkufuhâ mine't-tahaddiyâti'l-mu'âsıra", *el-Hadisü's-şerif ve tehaddiyâtü'l-'asr nedve 'ilmiyye devliyye sâniye*, I-III, Dubai 2006, s. 1017-1037.

<sup>19</sup> For the contributions Hamīdullah made to the *hadīth* studies in Turkey, see İbrahim Hatiboğlu, "Bir İslâm Araştırmacısı ve Hadisçi Olarak Muhammed Hamīdullah", *Hayatı, Kişiliği ve Düşünceleriyle Muhammed Hamīdullah Sempozyumu*, Bursa 18-19 Kasım 2005, (unpublished paper).

<sup>20</sup> There was an enormous interest in Hamīdullah work against Orientalist claims on *hadīth*. His work on the *Sahife-i Hemmâm b. Münebbih* was translated in Turkish by three independent translators. All three of these translations were published in the same year. See, *İlk Hadis Mecmualarından Hemmâm b. Münebbih'in Hadis Mecmuası* (tr. Râgıb İmamoğlu, Ankara 1967), *Muhtasar Hadis Tarihi ve Sahife-i Hemmâm b. Münebbih* (tr. Kemal Kuşçu), Istanbul 1967) and *Hemmâm b. Münebbih'in Sahifesi* (tr. Talat Koçyiğit, Ankara 1967).

<sup>21</sup> The thesis was published later. See, Fuad Sezgin, *Buhārī'nin Kaynakları Hakkında Araştırmalar*, Istanbul 1956.

the other hand, the library of the Institute for Islamic Studies had an excellent collection of books including the works of Muslim and Western authors which may be seen as an indication of the high level of scholarship carried on by its members. Unfortunately, the Institute did not offer courses to the general student population of the university. Therefore its production was limited only to a small number of graduate students which crippled the efforts to lay the foundations of a solid academic system for the study of *hadith*.

Another important figure in that conjecture was the Bosnian scholar Muhammed Tayyib Okiç who came to Istanbul in April 10, 1945 from Germany and never returned to homeland i.e. Bosnia. Okiç filled an important gap at a time when academic tradition suffered a great weakness. His service to academic *hadith* studies as a professor of *hadith* is comparable to the service of İzmirli in founding departments of *hadith*. Following the opening of the School of Theology at Ankara University, Okiç made his contributions as a member of the Department of *Hadith* where he played a key role in raising a new generation of *hadith* students and future scholars of *hadith*.

His Western style education in Bosnia, coupled with his doctoral work in Paris and his interactions with French Orientalists, gave him a solid academic foundation and a wide ranging experience which prepared him to fill a crucial gap in the Turkish academia in that transitional period. His book, *Studies on Some Hadith Problems (Bazı Hadis Meseleleri Üzerine Tetkikler* [Istanbul 1959] and his valuable articles in the *Journal of the School of Theology* at Ankara University (*AÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*) opened new horizons in the minds of students and scholars during this transitional period. In this period, two prominent future scholars of *hadith*, Talat Koçyiğit and Mehmet Said Hatiboğlu, have been raised in the Department of *Hadith*.<sup>22</sup> The influence of Okiç can be observed in the works of Hatiboğlu who authored two important yet unpublished works. The first one is *The Rise of Critical Thinking in Islam and Hadith Critique (İslâmî Tenkit Zihniyetinin Doğuşu ve Hadis Tenkitçiliği* [1963] which is his Ph.D. thesis. The second one is titled *The Relationship between Hadith and Social and Political Event until the End of Umayyads (Emevîlerin Sonunu Kadar Siyâsî-İçtimâî Hadiselerle Hadis Münâsebeti)* which presents a summary of Goldziher's thesis to the effect that the corpus of *hadith* is a product of social and political events of following periods of Islam.<sup>23</sup> In addition, on Okiç's advice, a well-known work of Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (I-II, Halle 1889-1890), was translated to Turkish by Hatiboğlu (*Hadis Tedkikleri*,

<sup>22</sup> Salahattin Polat, "Modern Dönemde Hadis İlminin Temel Meseleleri", *Modern Dönemde Dini İlimlerin Temel Meseleleri -İlmî Toplantı-*, TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, İstanbul, 14-17 Nisan 2005 (unpublished paper).

<sup>23</sup> Mehmet Emin Özafşar, "'Hadisin Neliği' Sorunu ve Akademik Hadisçilik", *İslâmiyat*, III (2000), sayı 1, s. 33-53.

Ankara 1966) which was an important step in the rise of a Western style critical approach on *hadīth*.<sup>24</sup>

Yet the classical Ulemā of *hadīth* disappeared in this period leaving a vacuum behind them as some of them died due to old age, some of them were forced to leave the country while the new institutions of religious learning got involved in transforming the society and focusing on practical issues. It was impossible to continue scholarly activities only with the support of some foreign scholars mentioned above. This resulted in adopting the findings of Western thought rather than their methods. The lack of depth and choosing the easy path to success decreased interest in learning Eastern and Western languages and producing globally respectable works, instead it led academics to focusing on changing people, gaining social prestige and proving legitimacy. Consequently, apart from the works of a few guest scholars, academic study of *hadīth* in Turkey did not produce serious works but oscillated between life and death. The literature from this period was aimed at meeting the needs of the larger population rather than scholarly community. As a result there was a vacuum. Academics who were not familiar with the traditional *hadīth* education and alienated from it tried to fill this vacuum by translations from the Western languages.

### 3. *Hadīth* Studies without Tradition in Turkey (1983-Present)

Recently, all Schools of Theology in Turkey was unified under the umbrella of Council for Higher Education which brought about superficial divisions and specializations. The faculty was divided into small units, depending on their area of specialization, such as major branches, branches and departments which inadvertently undermined depth and breath of academic studies. Consequently, the academic articles have remained within the narrow boundaries of the academic department the author belongs to. These divisions had an undeniable impact on the weakening awareness about social and academic responsibilities of scholars. According to the above categorization, the academics who specialize on *hadīth* constitute the third generation of scholars who conducted academic study of *hadīth*, yet, academically speaking, they are below the level of their predecessors who lived almost a century ago. This is because they are not aware of their responsibilities as scholars in the face of changes and developments. Escaping from the heavy burden of being a scholar

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<sup>24</sup> The translation of Goldziher's book was completed in 1966. Photocopies of the translation were distributed to the interested academics. Other books by Western authors which were translated in this period include: *Die Zahiriten: ihr lehrsystem und ihre geschichte* (Zāhirīler: Sistem ve Tarihleri, trc. Cihat Tunç, Ankara 1982), *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature* (Klāsik Arap Literatürü, trc. Rahmi Er-Azmi Yüksel, Ankara 1993), *De richtungen der Islamischen koranauslegung* (İslām Tefsir Ekolleri, trc. Mustafa İslamoğlu, İstanbul 1997), *Le dogme et la loi de l'Islam* (İslām'da Fıkıh ve Akāid, trc. İlhan Başgöz, Ankara 2004).

or remoteness from representing the Ulemā tradition, whatever the reason is, there is a problem of competence at the social level. For this reason, conducting academic studies based on the principle of "broad interest but narrow specialization" may serve as an important step in peacefully integrating neighboring disciplines and preventing the break in the tradition of scholarship.

Hatiboğlu has occupied a central place in the academic study of *hadith* with a critical approach since the ties with the tradition were severed especially after the death of Okıç in 1977. His works advocate modern critical study of *hadith*, on the one hand, and tracing this approach to the tradition, on the other. In particular it is possible to say that under his editorship, the journals of *İslâmî Araştırmalar* (Ankara 1886–1997) ve *İslâmiyât* (Ankara 1998–) have gained the identity of a school. Yet it is unclear how and by whom his legacy will be carried on further. Furthermore, since 1983, with the rapid increase in the number of the Schools of Theology and the involvement of a large number of students in the study of *hadith*, the academic study of *hadith* with high quality research gave way to quick and low quality translations and citations from the Western authors due to the lack of familiarity with the literature and Western languages. This poses a serious problem before academic study of *hadith* in Turkey which strives to form a tradition of its own.

Among the scholars who did not live in Turkey but had a significant impact on the academic study of *hadith* in Turkey through the translations of their works are Dozy, Caetani, Goldziher,<sup>25</sup> Schacht, Sibā'î, el-A'zamî, Fazlurrahman, G. H. A. Juynboll, Motzki and Daniel Brown.<sup>26</sup> Numerous articles have been written dealing with the claims of these authors while orientalism has been the subject matter for symposiums, special issues of academic journals.<sup>27</sup>

Although they do not have a long history, the following journals frequently publish articles related to *hadith*. *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* (Istanbul 1997-), *Marife* (Konya 2001-), *Hadis Tetkikleri Dergisi* (Istanbul 2003-), *Usûl İslâm Araştırmaları* (Adapazarı 2004). A significant number of these articles introduce and discuss Western methods of critique. In particular *Hadis Tetkikleri Dergisi* persistently publishes an article largely on methodology which was

<sup>25</sup> See for his ideological background and approach to *hadith*: İbrahim Hatiboğlu, "Goldziher ve Kullandığı Metodun Hadise Yaklaşımına Etkisi", *Oryantalistlerin Gözüyle İslâm Yaklaşımlar-Örnek Metinler* (ed. Ahmet Yücel), İstanbul 2003, s. 15–50.

<sup>26</sup> The impact of each one of these figures on the Turkish *hadith* scholarship requires independent study.

<sup>27</sup> Examples include *Oryantalizmi Yeniden Okumak Batı'da İslam Çalışmaları Sempozyumu* (Ankara 2003), *Oryantalistlerin Gözüyle İslâm Yaklaşımlar-Örnek Metinler* (ed. Ahmet Yücel, İstanbul 2003), special Orientalism issue of the *Ma'rife* Journal (II/3, Konya 2002).

written by a leading Orientalist and have an international effect at each issue. These journals with the line of academic thought they adopt may serve to a mutual understanding between Islamic and Western civilizations. It is evident that continuity of a journal is very much related with formation of a school of thought around it. The continuity of academic journals in the West owes their existence to such a function.

During the last twenty years it is possible to observe that there has been a gradual explosion in the *hadīth* publications in Turkey. However a very limited number of these publications are comparable to the classical *hadīth* works or the modern academic works originating from the West. Consequently, compared to the works of the first generation of the academically oriented Ulemā, the works of the present generation have a limited impact, despite their great volume, concerning translations to Western languages and references made to them in the international literature.

### III. The Content and the Problems of Academic *Hadīth* Literature

If we analyze the *hadīth* literature after the Age of Enlightenment, we see that editions of classical works constituted the majority of the publications in the Arab world while in the non-Arab Muslim countries majority of the *hadīth* literature focused on analysis. In contrast, it is possible to say that the works by Orientalists had a solid structure regarding method, construction and originality. Needless to say those contemporary researchers of *hadīth* must be equipped with a solid foundation in *hadīth* scholarship for their analysis to reflect the reality. Yet, it is a fact that non-Arab scholars of *hadīth* suffer from a relative deficiency of knowledge.

In the present period, unlike the previous periods, the most fundamental problem with the Turkish *hadīth* scholarship is the lack of awareness about axiomatic principles of Islamic civilization. The lack of having a "reference point" and adopting an "academic stance," owing to the insufficient relationship with the *hadīth* literature, escapes from the eye because it has been seen for many years as a prerequisite. However, this approach which looks innocent in the guise of scientific objectivity (!) led to ignoring traditional values during research which caused disconnecting the researcher from the civilization he belonged to. Consequently, the aspects of Islamic civilization which apparently conflicted with the Western civilization have been represented as its negative features and used against it. Using the discipline of *hadīth* as an example, one can say that it is a prerequisite for the researcher to accept the possibility of *hadīth* belonging to the Prophet Muhammad and the reliability of the *isnad* system and the narrators. Yet, Western researchers carry on their discussions based on the conviction that *isnad* system, the narrators and the *hadīth* literature in general as a corpus have been constructed on lies and fabricated net-

works of relations. Accepting these assumptions without questioning reflects the external approach to the literature. In contrast, critically examining violations in the isnad system, while accepting its reliability as a system, reflects the internal approach. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the approach to *hadith* at the outset whether it should be looked upon as a "construction" as Orientalists do or as a "possible condition" as *muhaddiths* do. And the research should be conducted accordingly.

This is the goal in explaining the subject, purpose, originality and findings of a research in an article. However, in Turkey, the research on *hadith* in the recent past has been conducted without reflecting a standpoint based on a concept of civilization. Consequently, these issues occupy a limited space in the papers. Furthermore, the lack of this mental background which is not clearly expressed in the writings has a significant impact on the value and the life of the academic articles. The absence of this element would also lead to searching for supportive evidence from the classical literature for an advocated idea without considering the system as a whole. Such a narrow perspective may somehow make each time finding some supportive evidence possible.

It is true that the academic value and life of an article are commensurate with the number of references made to it in the literature. Looked from this perspective, the articles from the last quarter of the century are heavily information loaded. In other words, the information relevant to a particular issue is gathered together, categorized and presented. This observation is true for all branches of *hadith* studies including methodology, history, biography, book reviews and the analysis of single narratives. This approach which gives priority to gathering information undermined interpretive research and critical thinking.

Looking at the structure of *hadith* transmission, it is possible to determine the most important interest of the discipline of *hadith* as to assess whether a statement or an action which is ascribed to a person really belong to him. From this perspective, it becomes a necessity for the contemporary academics to comparatively analyze the methods used in different civilizations to achieve this goal. The efforts of Western Orientalists in determining the origins of *hadith* have been based on the assumption that the *hadith* corpus does not belong to the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, the textual criticism method as used by Orientalists is an attempt to disprove the claim that *hadith* belongs to the Prophet Muhammad. Accepting the works of Orientalists at the face value without taking into account their philosophical and conceptual background prepared the ground in Turkey for the production of a literature which is nothing more than a commentary on the Orientalist literature. For this reason, the research problem and methods used in these articles may not be compara-

ble to their Western counterparts but the conclusions they arrive are frequently the same.

For the reasons some of which I have already mentioned above, during the period of break from tradition (from 1983 onward) most of the research is not well-grounded in the classical literature. In addition, these works are not known in the commonly used international languages. Consequently, one can say without exaggeration that this literature has no impact on the Arab world. Nor do they have an impact on the Western academic world due to the lack of depth and methodological problems.

#### IV. Orientalism: Building a Tradition in Language and Style

It is possible to say that the goal of Orientalism, particularly during colonialism, has been to convince the East to accept Western values. Since then, it gained an immense experience in conveying its convictions about Islam and its Prophet, which it refuses to, accept that they have a divine origin, in an undisturbing manner to the societies which it aims to transform. A long time experience was needed for Orientalism to learn how to use language without revealing its real intentions, present the topic to its audience in an understandable and coherent manner yet never ignoring its own historical tradition regarding method and approach. It was clear that the most important obstacle before fulfilling this mission successfully was the high level of prestige the identity of "alim" enjoyed in Muslim societies.<sup>28</sup> The present author also agrees with this observation. This is where lays the greatest obstacle for Orientalist projects, on the one hand, and the key for the revival of Islamic civilization and culture, on the other.

The above assessment of the West should not lead to think that Orientalist tradition is homogeneous. Western academic literature on *hadith* can be classified into two categories which reflect two different approaches, giving rise to their own literature. Since this differentiation can be realized only with great attention, there is a chaos in the approach to each category. Consequently, academic circles are hesitant about how to refer to them.

Of these two trends in the *hadith* studies emanating from the West the first and the dominant one employs Western style research methods. The second one follows the traditional style of *hadith* scholarship. It is possible to characterize the first one as "modern historical critique method" while the latter can be characterized as "traditional *muhaddith* approach". The number of Muslims who adopt the Western style supersedes, in particular owing to the familiarity of Muslims with the Western languages at the age of colonization, the number

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<sup>28</sup> G. H. A. Juynboll, "The 'Ulamâ and Western Scholarship", *Israel Oriental Society*, X, Tel-Aviv 1980, s. 173-181.

of Westerners who are using the methods of traditional Muslim *hadith* scholars. Furthermore, the Westerners in this group constitute a very tiny minority in the West compared to the dominant Orientalist approach. Yet, ironically, among the Muslims, those who adopt the Western approach in their studies are very influential both in the West and in the Muslim countries.

Newly developed methods, coupled with the continuity in the ideology, terminology and the research questions, contributed to building a dominant Orientalist tradition during the last two centuries. These efforts resulted in the rise of a new community of Western scholars specializing on Islam, which is analogous to the Ottoman *Ilmiyye* class. Yet in the Muslim world the rise of this tradition is not well understood. Muslims adopted a distant approach to Orientalists and their works. They either submissively accepted all its findings and claims or they adamantly refused everything superficially. Consequently, the Orientalist literature on *hadith* has not been taken seriously and ignored or, in contrast, it was introduced as "objective, unbiased and away from generalizations."<sup>29</sup>

Another area which needs to be studied to enrich the present era with lasting and comprehensive works is the history of *hadith*. It is necessary to study the same topics and with the same seriousness as Orientalists in a manner that they would take it seriously. To this end, qualified researchers with a broad vision are needed.

Determining the research topic is yet another problem in the academic study of *hadith*. It is not clear today which type research should be valued as original and promising. There are not even commonly accepted standards to be used in the footnotes and references. Academic studies look like repetition of the same information, away from depth and creativity because research is conducted without pursuing the goal of scientific originality, inventing new methods or implementing a new method to the field—which are also emphasized by the Commission of Higher Learning. These studies can still be qualified as academic because the existing knowledge always needs to be revisited and reinterpreted in the light new developments and needs.

What contributes to the success of an article is its theoretical framework, philosophical background, be it explicit or implicit, a language and style which would allow a solid construction of the subject in writing, and employing modern technology which would facilitate using new means and techniques of presentation. Although it is impossible to be innovative in the mental background, it is possible to be innovative in the construction and methods of research. Due to this concern, *hadith* studies which followed Western thought

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, these and similar expressions are frequently used in the prefaces for the Turkish translations of Junybol's works.



adopted an approach which took into consideration all these three issues. For instance, the presentation of the chain of *isnad* in a Turkish article is perceived as an ordinary practice but in the research by Westerners it is made a subject for serious study and analysis.

One should pay attention that the articles written in the Western tradition reflect a particular intellectual, philosophical and sociological background. Such an approach adds strength to the article which is commensurate with the power of the background in concern. Yet this background is not always expressed explicitly in the articles although they have an impact on the methods of contextual analysis, methods of literary critique, text-centered or *isnad*-centered analyses which are employed in these articles. For instance, after accepting a social theory which assumes that narrative reflects social reality, it becomes possible to research the social events which caused the fabrication of individual narratives.

Today, the language and the style of academic *hadith* studies, which limits its audience, is one of the most important problems. The issues discussed above are clearly not a concern for every one because the targeted audience is the academic community. It becomes necessary to use an academic style due to our focused interests which are narrowly defined. The result is a language that is difficult to understand by the laymen. It is expected that academic studies have a specialized language which is difficult for non-specialists to penetrate. However, not representing the Muslim tradition of scholarship, coupled with failure to reshape academic *hadith* study in such a way that it becomes compatible with the Islamic tradition of knowledge, constitutes a shortcoming and an obstacle before the present day *hadith* studies.

## V. Conclusion

Western method of critique has gradually entered Turkey after Tanzimat era and significantly contributed the development of academic study of *hadith*. In this process from İzmirli to M. Said Hatiboğlu, many native and foreign scholars made important contributions to the development of academic study of *hadith*. Among these scholars are Babanzâde, Fuad Sezgin, Salih Tuğ, Hamidullah and Okıç. The last two are not Turkish as mentioned above.

The history of academic study of *hadith* in Turkey dates back to a century ago. The first generations of scholars who conducted academic studies on *hadith* produced serious works because they were well-trained in the traditional Islamic style and also were very familiar with the Western thought. After the first generation, it is possible to say that the incompetence of Turkish scholars in required languages was compensated by the foreign scholars who worked in Turkey. It is possible to say that the works of the recent generation of academic *hadith* researchers reflect the lack of a well-grounded knowledge

in Islamic and Orientalist traditions and the hasty conclusions in research. Such a hasty approach in research has resulted in a chaotic perception concerning Western and Islamic civilizations. New research is underway in recent years to diagnose and analyze this chaos. In particular, the works of Muslims in the West which are characterized by originality contribute greatly to the efforts with this goal.

**“Transmission of Western *Hadith* Critique to Turkey: On the Past and the Future of Academic *Hadith* Studies”**

**Abstract:** The external critical approach to *hadith* originates from the West while the internal critical approach to *hadith* originates from *Ahl al-Hadith*. The latter is embodied in the methods used for the *jarh and ta'dil*. The Western approach to *hadith* is external. It also turns *hadith* into a subject. This approach gained prominence after the Enlightenment in the Muslim world as part of the notion of scientific objectivity for the last two centuries. In Turkey, since the era of Tanzimat until today, the academic study of *hadith* has been first carried on by scholars like İzmirli İsmail Hakki and Babanzade Ahmed Na'im, M. Tayyib Okic, Muhammed Hamidullah, Fuad Sezgin and Mehmet Said Hatiboğlu who made significant contributions to the field of *hadith*. The traditional study of *hadith* was characterized by being internal and practice-oriented while the academic study of *hadith* is characterized by being external and career-oriented. The methods academic study of *hadith* employs transcends geographical and cultural borders and thus makes possible significant contributions to the field of *hadith* in Turkey.

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