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ISLAM AND MODERNITY

*Zehra GÜVEN KILIÇARSLAN**

ABSTRACT

In Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*, it is argued that if the West is considered the place of historical progress, modernity, scientific development, and then the "Orient" is deemed remote from the enlightening process of historical change.

When the Orient have faced with the West, there has been a discussion of whether it's appropriate or true to acquire modern, Western forms of knowledge, European practices, institutions, or technologies. Muslims have dealt with this issue by approaching from one of three methodological points: First, Islam must adapt itself to modernity by excluding all beliefs and practices that are incompatible with modernity. Second, Islamic modernity rejects all modernist principles that are inconsistent with Islamic teachings. Finally, modernity and Islam are mutually compatible and reconcilable when based on a particular reinterpretation of Islam.

'Modernity' covers a number of important elements such as secularization, nationalism, rationalization, individualism, democratization, and industrialization. Depending on these characteristics, Muslims have perceived "modernity" in various ways and have held different views on its relevance to and compatibility with Islam. Most of Islamist thinkers have opposed to idea of modernity as interpreting it accepting Western values. However, some other Muslim thinkers have supported the idea of modernity saying that it is important to distinguish "modernization" from "Westernization." Nevertheless, the exposure of the European power and ideas have inspired the leaders beginning from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. In this paper, first similar examples of the modernization policies in different contexts

Dr. Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat Bölümü, E-posta: zguvenki@outlook.com

(Uzbekistan, Turkey and Afghanistan) will be presented, and then how Muslims have responded to the perception, reality, and representation of modernity will be discussed.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

In Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*, it is argued that if the West is considered the place of historical progress, modernity, scientific development, and then the "Orient" is deemed remote from the enlightening process of historical change. The "Orient" is considered to be essentially no different in the 18th century than it was in the 20th century. Therefore, it was regarded as primitive and backwards.

When the Orient have faced with the West, there has been a discussion of whether it's appropriate or true to acquire modern, Western forms of knowledge, European practices, institutions, or technologies. Muslims have dealt with this issue by approaching from one of three methodological points: First, Islam must adapt itself to modernity by excluding all beliefs and practices that are incompatible with modernity. Second, Islamic modernity rejects all modernist principles that are inconsistent with Islamic teachings. Finally, modernity and Islam are mutually compatible and reconcilable when based on a particular reinterpretation of Islam.

Modernity is characterized by distrust, if not opposition, towards tradition; the primacy granted to the individual and the crucial importance of freedom; the belief in reason, progress and science, the three being linked together; the detachment of society with regard to the sacred and religion through the process of secularization; the enhancement of the value of change and discovery; and more generally, the primacy granted to self--reflectiveness and self--institution; finally, in the political level, the emergence of a private sector which is distinct from the public sector, the importance of law and state and the necessity of building and defending public liberties which are the conditions of democracy.

As it is clear in the definition, "modernity" covers a number of important elements such as secularization, nationalism, rationalization, individualism, democratization, and industrialization. Depending on these characteristics, Muslims have perceived "modernity" in various ways and have held different views on its relevance to and compatibility with Islam. Most of Islamist thinkers have opposed to idea of modernity as interpreting it accepting Western values. However, some other Muslim thinkers have supported the idea of modernity saying that it is important to distinguish "modernization" from "Westernization."

Although most of the thinkers have not approached to the Western modernity positively, nevertheless, the exposure of the European power and ideas have inspired the leaders beginning from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. These leaders have become the supporters of modernization; especially during the Tanzimat period (1839---1876) a number of European practices were implemented in the sphere of education, law, economy, etc. During that time, some Muslims criticized these reforms for introducing un---Islamic innovations into the state and society. Therefore, starting from the Ottoman Empire, later continued with the nation---states, all countries have had to deal with this modernization process either by accepting/adopting it or rejecting it

(which seems impossible for them to do so). In this paper, first similar examples of the modernization policies in different contexts (Uzbekistan, Turkey and Afghanistan) will be presented, and then how Muslims have responded to the perception, reality, and representation of modernity will be discussed.

Keywords: Islam, modernism, East and West, modernization policies (Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Afghanistan).

İSLAM VE MODERNİTE

ÖZ

Edward Said'in *Oryantalizm* kitabında, "Batı'nın tarihsel ilerlemenin, modernliğin, bilimsel gelişimin yeri olarak kabul edilip edilmediği, buna karşın "Doğu'nun, tarihsel değişimin aydınlanma sürecinden uzak sayılıp sayılmadığı tartışması yapılır. Doğu, Batı ile karşılaştığında, modern Batılı bilgi biçimlerini, Avrupa uygulamalarını, kurumlarını veya teknolojilerini edinmenin uygun veya doğru olup olmadığı üzerine bir tartışma başlar.

Müslümanlar bu konuyla şu üç metodolojik noktadan birine yaklaşarak ilgilenmişlerdir: İlk olarak, İslam, modernite ile uyumlu olmayan tüm inanç ve uygulamaları dışlayarak kendisini modernite ile uyumlu hale getirmelidir. İkincisi, İslami modernite, İslami öğretilerle tutarlı olmayan tüm modernist ilkeleri reddetmelidir. Son olarak, modernite ve İslam, yeniden yorumlandığında karşılıklı olarak uyumlu ve uzlaşabilir bir hal alabilir.

"Modernite" laikleşme, milliyetçilik, rasyonalizasyon, bireycilik, demokratikleşme ve sanayileşme gibi birçok önemli unsuru kapsamaktadır. Bu özelliklere bağlı olarak, Müslümanlar "moderniteyi" farklı şekillerde algılamış ve İslam'la ilgisi ve uyumlu olup olmadığı ile ilgili çeşitli görüşler ortaya atmışlardır. İslamcı düşünürlerin çoğu, modernite fikrini Batılı değerleri kabul etme şeklinde yorumlamaya karşı çıkmışlardır. Ancak, diğer bazı Müslüman düşünürler, "modernleşmeyi" Batılılaşma'dan ayırmanın önemli olduğunu söyleyerek modernite fikrini desteklemiştir. Bununla birlikte, Avrupa iktidarına ve fikirlerine maruz kalan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu da son yıllarından başlayarak bu fikirlerden etkilenmişlerdir. Bu yazıda, önce farklı bağlamlardaki (Özbekistan, Türkiye ve Afganistan) modernleşme politikalarının benzer örnekleri sunulacak, daha sonra Müslümanların modernliğin algısına, gerçekliğine ve temsiline nasıl cevap verdikleri tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam, modernite, Doğu ve Batı, modernleşme politikaları (Özbekistan, Türkiye ve Afganistan).

In Edward Said's book, *Orientalism*, it is argued that if the West is considered the place of historical progress, modernity, scientific development, and then the "Orient" is deemed remote from the enlightening process of historical change. The "Orient" is considered to be essentially no different in the 18th century than it was in the 20th century. Therefore, it was regarded as primitive and backwards (Said, 1979).

When the Orient have faced with the West, there has been a discussion of whether it's appropriate or true to acquire modern, Western forms of knowledge, European practices, institutions, or technologies. Muslims have dealt with this issue by approaching from one of three methodological points: First, Islam must adapt itself to modernity by excluding all beliefs and practices that are incompatible with modernity. Second, Islamic modernity rejects all modernist principles that are inconsistent with Islamic teachings. Finally, modernity and Islam are mutually compatible and reconcilable when based on a particular reinterpretation of Islam.

At this point it is important to identify what "modernity" is. Using Dominique Wolton's definition, "modernity is characterized by distrust, if not opposition, towards tradition; the primacy granted to the individual and the crucial importance of freedom; the belief in reason, progress and science, the three being linked together; the detachment of society with regard to the sacred and religion through the process of secularization; the enhancement of the value of change and discovery; and more generally, the primacy granted to self---reflectiveness and self---institution; finally, in the political level, the emergence of a private sector which is distinct from the public sector, the importance of law and state and the necessity of building and defending public liberties which are the conditions of democracy" (Ramadan, 2012).

Saktanber states that

with its major claims of ever---increasing and linear economic development supplied by industrialization and the use of the technology, a strong shift from tradition, in the form of the displacement of the authority of the religion, is seen as inevitable. Moreover, in these scheme of thought secularization is seen as vehicle to provide norms for rationality and relativism, and hence, with the increasing existence of competing realities, religious doctrine would not only become less dogmatic, but it would also focus more on happiness in life and less on other---worldly compensation. In addition, because of the compensation among competing versions of the truth, 'truth' would become a matter of personal opinion. Other than these particular assumptions of modernization theory, in the modernist paradigm as a whole... the power of religion was to be downgraded in modern society only in terms of institutional power/authority rather than its cultural aspects" (Saktanber, 2002: 3).

As it is clear in the definition, 'modernity' covers a number of important elements such as secularization, nationalism, rationalization, individualism, democratization, and industrialization. Depending on these characteristics, Muslims have perceived "modernity" in various ways and have held different views on its relevance to and compatibility with Islam. Most of Islamist thinkers have opposed to idea of modernity as interpreting it accepting Western values. However, some other Muslim thinkers have supported the idea of modernity saying that it is important to distinguish "modernization" from "Westernization."

In terms of theoretical approach, Muhammad Qasim Zaman pays much attention to the modernity and Islam. He shows different approaches from different prominent Islamist thinkers. According to his book, there are modernist Muslims who support acquiring modern, Western forms of knowledge, European practices, institutions, or Technologies in an Islamic country, because the time has changed drastically, and if Muslim communities want to survive, they need to turn their faces to the West, and make such kind of changes (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 6). Also, they have argued that Islam needs to be reinterpreted considering the changing needs (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 6). However, 'ulama have a different opinion on this issue. They believe that modern Western cultures challenge the authority of the religion and bring corruption to true and authentic Islam. Most of the Islamists in Princeton Reader view the West as the main enemy of Islam and the wrong model of civilization for Muslims. For these Islamists, the West is viewed as a single, homogenous civilization, which will eventually collapse. According to Hasan Al---Banna, the West couldn't be a fundamental source for the modern Islamic Renaissance, because Western civilization "is now bankrupt and decline" (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 58) Also, he accuses the path of

Europe, as being materialistic as opposed to the path of Islam, and this will cause them to be destroyed.

It would be inexcusable for us to turn aside from the path of truth--- the path of Islam--- and to follow the path of freshly desires and vanities---the path of Europe. Along the path of Europe are to be found outer Show and cheap tinsel...But the path of Islam is glory, impregnability, truth, strength, blessedness, rectitude, stability, virtue, and nobility... Luxuries only annihilate nations and its comforts (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 73).

In his historical review of the development of the Muslim world Nadwi follows the Orientalist separation between the “materialistic” West and more “spiritual” East. Although he praises science, he cautions against its use in the Western materialist context (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 107-112). Sayyid Qutb, in his critique of the West, goes even further than Al---Banna or Nadwi. He points out that the Communist bloc led by Russia is also not an appropriate model for Muslim countries. Humanity needs new leadership and a new worldview that is Islam. According to him, the epoch of Western domination is on the final stage, because technical progress led to the decline of moral norms and the domination of materialism in all spheres of human life (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 129-145). Al---Sadr (1934---1980), an Iraqi Islamist, also argues for an Islamic economic system which is independent from the Western models (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009, 181-186). Moreover, Sudanese Hasan al---Turabi (1932---) characterized an Islamic state as not being secular and nationalistic (Euben and Qasim Zaman, 2009: 207-213).

Alongside materialism, Islamist authors blame nationalism as a product of Western world, which is not the right future for Muslim countries. Therefore, almost all the Islamist thinkers view the West not only as a wrong model of civilization for the Islamic societies, but also as a threat to Islamic civilizations.

Although most of the thinkers have not approached to the Western modernity positively, nevertheless, the exposure of the European power and ideas have inspired the leaders beginning from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. These leaders have become the supporters of modernization; especially during the Tanzimat period¹ (1839---1876) a number of European practices were implemented in the sphere of education, law, economy, etc. During that time, some Muslims criticized these reforms for introducing un---Islamic innovations into the state and society. Therefore, starting from the Ottoman Empire, later continued with the nation---states, all countries have had to deal with this modernization process either by accepting/adopting it or rejecting it (which seems impossible for them to do so). This paper, first, presents similar examples of the modernization policies in different contexts (Uzbekistan, Turkey and Afghanistan), and then discusses how Muslims have responded to the perception, reality, and representation of modernity.

Modernization Process

This process in almost all countries has become very destructive for societies live in these countries and obviously for the religion/ Islam, rather than the harmony and the social process in these societies. The question is not the modernization, but rather the disruptive method and understanding of modernity that causes conflict between the ruler and ruled. Before dealing with how Muslims have responded to the perception, reality, and representation of modernity it is better to see the similar examples of the modernization policies in different contexts.

¹ The Tanzimât meaning *reorganization* of the Ottoman Empire, was a period of reformation that began in 1839 and ended with the First Constitutional Era in 1876. The *Tanzimât* reform era was characterized by various attempts to modernize the Ottoman Empire, to secure its territorial integrity against nationalist movements and aggressive powers.

To begin with Uzbekistan, Uzbek people have experienced modernity in three stages: Jadidist, Stalinist, and Post---Soviet (Zanca, 2012). The first stage called jadidist occurred between 1870---1930. During this period, young intellectuals attempt to reform Islam and take advantage of Western science and technology. In the second stage called “Stalinist modernism,” Uzbeks have come to include industrialization, however, the power was not in the hand of Uzbek people, but Soviet dictators. Last is the Post---Soviet stage coincides the present time. In this period economic and industrial modernization are the main concerns (Rasanayagam, 2010). Throughout the creation, duration, and fall of the Soviet Union came waves of cultural renewal, recreation, and destruction. Among the affected cultural institutions, religion remained a highly contested part of national and personal identity for observant followers.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, officially Uzbekistan is presented as a secular state. The government of President Islam Karimov has used Islam as well as secularism as the important parts of the state’s nation---building project, which is conceived as modernist and progressive, to shape the society (Rasanayagam, 2010). Central to the government’s nationalist project is its construction of ‘Uzbekness’ (Rasanayagam, 2010). He has instrumentalised Islam within the ideology of national independence to replace the Marxist Leninism of the Soviet period (Rasanayagam, 2010). Therefore, “Islam in Uzbekistan is not treated as a transcendent or codified system of belief and practice that exists independent of Uzbek culture. Rather, the Islam constructed within state discourses is subordinated to the national spiritual heritage” (Rasanayagam, 2010). Although more than 90% of the Uzbek population are Muslims, their religious expression are closely monitored, and like the governments of many Muslim majority states, the government in Uzbekistan attempts to shape the way Islam is interpreted and expressed by citizens.

Interpretations of Islam not recognized within state discourse are considered as “extremist” and “Wahhabi” (Rasanayagam, 2010). Any religious practice not compatible with the preferred version of Islam is aggressively repressed, and the Soviet structures for monitoring and regulating religious activities have been retained and modified for this purpose (Rasanayagam, 2010). Citizens in Uzbekistan must show themselves in terms of the government’s creation of good and bad Islam, tolerant tradition and extremist Wahhabism.

In May 1998, the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which codifies the government’s position on religious expression, was passed (Rasanayagam, 2010). Although this law restates the secular character of the state, secularism here is not regarded as the separation of religion from a public political sphere. According to the law, the state is able to decide what religious expression is permissible; guarantee the observance of what it considers good, tolerant practice; and exclude ‘fanaticism’ and ‘extremism’. The state has even interfered in the wearing of religious clothing in public. In public religious clothes other than officially accepted ones are banned. Anything taken by the government as anti---state propaganda or weakening ideas, as well as the storage or distribution of extremist literature and other material, is also banned. Every mosque or church is legally an independent religious organization that must apply for registration to the Ministry of Justice, and applications must also be approved by the Committee for Religious Affairs (Rasanayagam, 2010). All of these activities are the parts of a broader nationalist project by which creation of a new modern nation state and a new society have been aimed.

Another destructive modernization movement occurred in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, innovative and modernist King Amanullah made great efforts to modernize the Afghan people, but he eventually failed. As David Edwards states, Amanullah was fascinated with the West, he undertook a number of reforms. He did not only undertake a number of reforms, but also with his own appearance he set an example to Afghan people (Edwards, 2002). Edwards mentions a scene from the movie Naim and Jabar in which two boys were in a bazaar. While the camera watched them

behind, the older boy said something to the younger one, and after that the young boy removed his turban from his head that shows how the modernization policy had an impact on the young individuals (Edwards, 2002).

Amanullah's reforms diminished the authority of the tribal chiefs and the influence of the clergy. He constructed secular courts of justice and claimed that all mullahs must be recertified before they are permitted to attend to the affairs of their followers. He attempted to modernize family and marital relations. He introduced a series of reforms that included mixed education for boys and girls, sending students, especially girls without chaperons, abroad, a ban on polygamy, and the total abolition of the burqa. Obviously, King Amanullah's reforms damaged the position of the clergy, and challenged the authority of tribal chiefs (Bashiri, 2012).

With all these reforms and such Amir Amanullah intended to create a new nation. However, although some of his reform attempts were successful, most of them failed because the people in Afghanistan were not ready to adapt these reforms which, they thought, had undermined the traditional values, and social status of the traditional tribal leaders of Afghanistan. Therefore, Amanullah's modernization faced revolts and resistance by the tribal residents mainly by Pashtun tribes (Edwards, 2002).

Turkey has experienced a more successful modernization movement than these two countries, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. With establishment of the Republic of Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish state has decided to side with modern Western world. Turkish people have experienced a series of political, legal, cultural, social and economic policy changes by which transforming the new Republic of Turkey into a modern, secular nation---state where practice of religion in numerous parts of life was limited was aimed. They were implemented under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in accordance with Kemalist ideology.² According to Kemalist ideology, the most civilized society is Western society; thus, Turkey, to gain access to the level of Western societies, it is essential to take the West and especially its economic and social values as an example (İnalcık, p.104). Westernization is essential (İnalcık, p.104). The reform movement started with the modernization of the constitution, and the adaptation of European laws and jurisprudence to the needs of the Turkish republic. This was followed by a full secularization and modernization of the government, with particular focus on the education system. Central to these reforms were the idea that Turkish people would have to westernize them both politically and culturally in order to modernize (Millers, 2009).

Under the Kemalist reforms official recognition of the Ottoman millets was withdrawn. A common, secular authority replaced it. The religious education system was replaced by a national education system, and the office of caliphate was abolished. The Islamic courts and Islamic canon law gave way to a secular law structure based on the Swiss Civil Code. Official measures were gradually introduced to eliminate the wearing of religious clothing and other overt signs of religious affiliation. The Hat Law introduced the use of Western style hats instead of the fez. Another control on the dress was passed that banned religion---based clothing, such as the veil and turban, while actively promoting western---style attire. By enactment of the law related to religious covenants and dervish lodges, such institutions were declared totally illegal (Millers, 2009).

The new Turkish alphabet was introduced replacing the previously used Perso---Arabic script. The removal of Arabic script was defended on the ground that it was not appropriate for the authentic Turkish phonology, which needs a new set of symbols to be correctly represented.

² Kemalism is the principle that defines the basic characteristic of modern Turkey: Republicanism (*cumhuriyetçilik*), Nationalism (*milliyetçilik*), Socialism (*halkçılık*), Secularity (*laiklik*), Solidatory Corporatism (*devletçilik*), and Revolutionarity (*devrimcilik*).

However, the main reason for this alphabet change was cutting the ties between old Ottoman nation and the modern Turkish Republic (Millers, 2009).

Consequences of Modernization

We do not have an appropriate measurement to evaluate the success or the failure of these state's modernization policies. However, as far as I am concerned, it is possible to discuss the consequences of modernization efforts, and how people have responded to these policies.

First of all, because of these modernization movements, which have affected the people's religious identity, different representations of Islam have emerged such as Turkish Islam, Uzbek Islam, traditional Islam, or secular Islam, and even modern Islam, etc. As oppose to the monolithic idea of Islam, a faith possessed of the revelation of God in the Quran, modernization policies of the states have brought these distinctive kinds of cultural "Islams".

Also, many people in the Muslim World have been reactionary, but tried to produce alternative universal ideologies that aimed to displace Western ones. One of these alternatives is the emergence of what it is called in Saktanber's book *Living Islam*, "counter society" (Saktanber, 2002). Ordinary people in these countries have developed strategies to cope with changing political, social and religious conditions. In the rest of the paper, I will try to show different instances of the "counter societies" in the previously mentioned countries.

First instance to the counter society is from ordinary Uzbek people. In Uzbekistan case, the government suppression influences a local understanding of public restrictions and developing Muslim identities. In the context of Uzbekistan we have a counter space that maintain religious activities that has not been viewed as a threat by the state. As the discourse of the Soviet left some shrines for museum-like visits and new Uzbek government nationalist discourse is operating with ancestral shrines, people do not have much choice but express their devotions through the tropes of shrine symbolism ---since the mosques and madrasas were associated by the state with extremist 'evil forces' and operate under so much state scrutiny. These sacred places give people the belief or hope that they can continue to be religious within changing social and economic life. After living under 70 years of Soviet domination, people lost their religious knowledge, institutions, and practices, but they tried to keep their Muslim identity by mixing it with tradition and nationality under modern state (Louw, 2017).

In addition, sociality and morality become sources of examining Islam in Uzbekistan. The constructive aspects of direct experience with the divine, the interpretation of experience through illness, and the spirits become sites for debating the form and content of Islam. People personalize their understandings of Islam out from their moral experience (Rasanayagam, 2010). As Rasanayagam argues, in the case of post-Soviet Uzbekistan, in which the state controls any public debates, it is the experience becomes a site for moral reasoning and individuals use their moral reasoning to establish their own Muslimness (Rasanayagam, 2010). In other words, in the absence of a hegemonic form of Islamic orthodoxy imposed on the people, moral quality of experience through intelligibility provides a ground on which different understandings of what it means to be Muslim can coexist in Uzbekistan. Therefore, in addition to visiting of the shrines, Uzbek Muslims shape their understanding of Islam through moral reasoning, such as in the experience of illness, hailstorms, the supernatural, and experience with spirits (Rasanayagam, 2010).

Another example to the "counter space" is from Muslims in Turkey. Islamists in Turkey express the "politics of resentment" against secular domination: they protest against the apparent impersonality and lack of warmth of the urban, where they feel themselves to be unjustly excluded. Regarding this, religious people or what Saktanber calls conscious Muslims in Ankara created a site. Site is an apartment complex constructed exclusively for religious families, designed in a way that

those families actualize and practice an Islamic way of life, as an alternative to that of secular sections of the society (Saktanber, 2002). From this model of site in Ankara, we can make a generalized assumption that Muslims' private sphere in Turkey constitutes another example to the "counter society". Despite all the pressures from the secularist levels, these conscious Muslims have managed to carve out a space for themselves. In their private sphere, they managed to lead their everyday lives in accordance with Islamic principles.

Furthermore, for the people in Cairo listening cassette sermons, and acting in accordance with these is another example to the counter society. Preachers affiliated with Islamic groups were banned or strictly monitored in Egypt under Mubarak. Therefore, they used cassette recordings of sermons to propagate their messages. These cassettes were listened in shops, markets, taxicabs, buses, homes etc. (Hirschkind, 2006). As Hirschkind states that these cassette sermons have impact on their audiences. The obligatory sensibilities that many of those engaging in cassette sermon listening see as enabling them to live as devout Muslims in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationalities (Hirschkind, 2006).

Besides these examples, there are also other people who are voiced their displeasure of modernization/ Westernization in a different way that is another example to counter---space. Although his activities were not compatible with Islamic values, Osama bin Laden and his followers created their counter space as opposed to Western, in particular American, domination in an extremist way.

To conclude, most of the Islamic countries (I examine only three of them: Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Afghanistan) have faced with modernity, and most of the leaders have been in favor of modernization. In these countries, religious peoples have experienced oppression, discrimination, and even persecution under the name modernization. As a result, these religious people have responded to the negative attitudes towards them in a different ways. Most importantly, they have created their own way of living Islam under the state observation.

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