

The Secularism in Contemporary Turkey

--The Controversies on the relation between Politics and the Religious
Groups--

1st year student

Thailand Field School

Research Field: The Republic of Turkey

Manami NISHIYAMA

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Background and objectives of my research

My research aims to clarify the potentiality of religious groups in secularist-dominant society, by focusing on the some cases of contemporary Turkey. For this aim, I examine the controversies on the religious groups called Sufi orders (*tarikats*) and *cemaats* (which mean organizations), which are supposed to be problematic because of their immense influences on the public spaces like politics, education and economy.

Generally speaking, Sufi orders are the groups of the people who gathered to practice Sufism, a tendency of Islam which puts the best importance on the inner dimension. In the Republic of Turkey, the Sufi orders were prohibited by the new government, which was established in 1923 and held secularization as its official ideology. The prohibition was so strict that some leaders of the orders escaped from Turkey, and some orders were closed. The remaining orders could continue their practices but only secretly. Under such circumstances, instead, people founded new types of religious group, called *cemaats*, which aiming at the understanding of Sufism took more flexible shapes like social circles. After difficult experiences, we can see a number of Sufi orders and *cemats* today. Also it is well known that some of these

groups are related to the politics and they establish hospitals, dormitories, private preparatory schools, holdings and religious schools to teach the *Kur'an* and Sufism.

Most of the previous researches have only described such social activities or limited themselves to discussions about the secularism and its theoretical perspectives. I, based on these researches but trying to seek a further step, will focus on the controversies on the relations between the secularism and the religious groups that have not been paid enough attentions so far. Analyzing the controversies, I hope to clarify a part of the social problems of the contemporary Turkey.

Pictures



A standing signboard which says “Respect the differences” in Istanbul

(This may be installed in relation with the argument about wearing a scarf in public spaces.)




Two of the new books criticizing the leader of one of the biggest *cemaat*'s

Azîz Mahmûd Hüdâyî Vakfı
Derya gönüllülerden yükük, kimsesiz, çaresiz ve yorgun gönütere...

HÜDÂYÎ'DE KURBAN

2010

Balkanlar, Orta Asya, Kafkasya, Orta Doğu ve Afrika'da
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Adres: 41000 Mahmut Aksoy Sok. Aziz Mahmud Hüdai Vak. Çarşı Sok. No: 101/100/101 İstanbul - 34398/101
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A poster of a religious group inviting donations for the foreign countries