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The Arab Factor in Young Turk Politics  
- Aspects from the Istanbul Press -

With the Young Turk revolution of 1908 a period of political activity, socio-economic change and discussion was started in the Ottoman Empire which in many respects prepared the way for the emergence of modern Turkey. Quite rightly the decade of Young Turk rule is first of all associated with a policy having finally led to the ruin of the Ottoman state but on the other hand - and far more important - it is characterized by numerous positive measures and attempts of experimentating with new methods in government and administration as well as by a very active intellectual and cultural life.

Furthermore the Young Turk period means a change in the relations between Turks and Arabs or rather between the Ottoman government and the Arab provinces. Until about the end of the 19th century - so at least the prevailing view - the Arabs had lived in total cultural and religious harmony under the protection of the Ottoman state. Especially the policy of Abdulhamid had attributed special importance to the Arab provinces and pursued a policy of employing Arabs in all grades of public administration and the army. This policy had completely changed after the revolution and rising national ideas on Turkish and Arab side had eventually led to the final break. Above all the national and secular policy of the Young Turks is considered an important factor in the development of Arab nationalism.

Examples of Ottoman Arabs (as Sati al-Husri, Bedi Nuri or ekib Arslan) who act and stand up as Ottomans for the Ottoman state without any difference to their Turkish fellow-citizens are a first indication to the fact that a great part of the Arabs certainly far longer supported the Ottoman case than this is usually assumed.

Nevertheless, the following remarks will be restricted to some events at the beginning of that last decade of common Arab - Turkish past, giving some information on the way how the first appearance of - homogeneous or non-homogeneous - Arab groupings in and outside the parliament was treated by the Istanbul press.

As far as the first Arab society "al-Ikha al-<sup>c</sup>Arabi al-<sup>c</sup>Uthmani" is concerned the description of its foundation and the discussion before throw some light not only on the situation of the particular club, but also on the general atmosphere in the early Young Turk period, an atmosphere of optimism, enthusiasm for the constitution and awareness of Ottoman unity.

Besides that the discussion caused by an apparently anonymous interview with a Syrian deputy on the political line of the Arab delegates in the parliament as well as speculations on all sorts of rumours about the first appearance of an "Arab Party" are considered interesting enough to be looked at in some detail.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİHİ ARAŞTIRMA VAKFI

## The Society of Arab - Ottoman Brotherhood

Relatively soon after the Young Turk revolution, on the evening of the 2nd September 1908, the first Arab society "al-Ikha al-<sup>c</sup>Arabi al-<sup>c</sup>Uthmani" was constituted at Beyoğlu's Varieté - Saloon".<sup>1</sup>

The foundation of the society was preceded by a discussion in the daily paper 'Ittifaq' which had been started by Ahmet Na'im who shows his deep concern about the forthcoming existence of a club calling itself explicitly "Arab".<sup>2</sup> Under the headline "An advice to our Arab brethren" he admits - after having expressed his respect towards the people speaking the language of the Qur'an and a general appreciation of the newly created conditions of the "meşrutiyet" - that he began to feel quite uncomfortable when he heard about the idea of such a club and also about the one of making up a list of all Arab residents at Istanbul. Without assuming any bad intention he considers the use of the term "Arab" disagreeable from an Islamic point of view and wonders whether this did not mean the beginning of a segregation in a time when it was actually necessary to strengthen Islamic fraternity. All his remarks are characterized by his concern about keeping up Islamic unity and supported by examples from Qur'an and Hadith as well as by historical examples showing the destructive influence of national consciousness. At the end he urgently calls the new society not to restrict itself to Arab members but to be open to all people and give them the chance to learn from each other.<sup>3</sup>

Only two days later we find - again on the first page - a reaction to A. Na'im's views by Mehmed Emin<sup>4</sup> who is defending the foundation of the society concerned by giving more information about it. His article also contains some remarks on the present state of Arab - Turkish relations as well as his personal reasons for joining the club.

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<sup>1</sup> Ittifaq No. 18, 3.9.1908, p.3

<sup>2</sup> Ittifaq No. 14, 30.8.1908, p.1

<sup>3</sup> Ittifaq No. 14, 30.8.1908, p.1

<sup>4</sup> Ittifaq No. 16, 1.9.1908, pp. 1/2

M. Emin complains of the discriminating treatment towards Arabs seeing it as a result of a tendency to generalize the perfidious and faithless activities of Arabs like Izzet Abid and Abu l-Huda during the reign of Abdülhamid. 5

Pointing out administrative practices like bribery, torture and acquisition of agricultural areas by force in the time of Izzet's responsibility for Syria he shows that they were directed against Arab interests and comes to the conclusion that "the uninterrupted series and succession of cruelties had turned this continent into a mourning-house". Once again he appeals to the readers not to generalize Izzet's treachery.

In this context he blames the newspapers for having supported this bad image of the Arabs by publishing appropriate articles. To give an example he quotes from one of the papers: "An Arab can never be as loyal to his Turkish master as a Turk"<sup>6</sup> commenting that, if the difference of nationality was opposed to loyalty, no state should be formed of different ethnical groups.

Another point of criticism is directed against the paper "Millet" which in connexion with Abu l-Huda's banishment reports about the existence of a certain committee of Arab unity in Egypt and Syria raising the question whether it was not dangerous to send a man like Abu l-Huda to such an area. M. Emin denies the existence of that society and criticizes again the paper for spreading destructive news instead of informing official authorities if there was any truth in the matter.

Interesting is the information that he apparently had been suggested to become member of another club some time ago but had refused then, defending the view of the absolute necessity for all Ottomans to act in common. He apparently also used to consider names as "Arab club" unsuitable because they could include an idea of segregation whereas such a club had to be open to all people.

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<sup>5</sup> As an example he mentions the story of two Arabs in traditional dresses who - while they were walking along Babiâli Street - were immediately offered a photograph of Izzet by one of the streetsellers - not without a few despicable words.

<sup>6</sup> The name of the source is not mentioned.

Now the necessity of the protection of own rights and rejection of unjustified insults are summed up among the reasons for him to join the new society as well as the desire to call the press for account: "one individual can't defend the rights of a people by himself".<sup>7</sup>

These lines obviously sounded convincing enough to make A. Naim get rid of his suspicions towards the new foundation as we see in an article addressed to M. Emin<sup>8</sup>, in which he admits lack of information about the society in regard to matters as the joint participation of Christians and Muslims. He agrees with M. Emin on the dubious role of the press and stresses the close relation of Arabs and Turks which had always been without disagreement, stating that a deputy for the Arabs could be a Turk as well as a deputy for the Turks could be an Arab. The Islam is seen as the connecting link nihilating all differences, even creating a kind of dependency : "The Turk couldn't do without the Arab, the Arab couldn't live without the Turk."<sup>9</sup>

This opinion of extremely harmonic Turkish - Arab relations is in a way representative for most remarks to be found on the topic in official statements at that time.

A. Naim doesn't believe that the hostility against Izzet and Abu l-Huda is based on the fact of their being Arabs, but only on their activities and functions within the former regime. He also stresses that the role of the press should not be overestimated in this connexion since "each word of each paper is not the interpreter of thoughts and feelings of a nation".<sup>10</sup>

After having learned the aim of the society to support the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress, A. Naim welcomes and congratulates the club stressing its role and importance in strengthening Ottoman unity. He explains his two contrary statements with concern about his country. At the same time he announces that he would not follow the invitation to the first meeting of the society. There were no doubts on his side about the honest intentions of the club anymore so that he would not like to give the impression of a sort of "spy".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ittifik No. 16, 1.9.1908, pp. 1/2

<sup>8</sup> Ittifik No. 17, 2.9.1908, pp. 1/2

<sup>9</sup> Ittifik " "

<sup>10</sup> Ittifik " "

<sup>11</sup> Ittifik " "

After all those discussions, trying to clear up the aims of the society, al-Ikha was finally founded by the Syrians Nadra Mutran<sup>12</sup> and Şefik al-Mu'ayyad. In Beyoğlu's crowded Varieté - Saloon the statements concerning basic principles of the society - as maintenance and defence of the constitution, loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate, equality of all Ottomans and impossibility of a division of the Ottoman state - and demands for an economic strengthening of the Arab provinces and advancement of the provincial school-system in Arabic, put forward by Nadra Mutran were followed by the election of an executive committee.<sup>13</sup>

The Ittifikak obviously is not fully content with the result: "However, the majority of the members elected is regarded as having authority, there should not have been some young people among them who graduated from the highschools". The paper expresses the hope that the founders will reconsider the situation. As an argument for the realisation of that hope the election of Zeki Muğamiz is mentioned who had not been on the original list of recommendation but was considered because of a proposal from "outside".<sup>14</sup>

In the course of the evening a lot of speeches were held in both Arabic and Turkish, and in an atmosphere of real enthusiasm especially the ideas put forward by Nadra Mutran apparently quite impressed the audience. "He mentioned that although the foundation of this club was to work for strengthening the connexion and the union being existent between the Ottomans it was also based on aims as to provide twice as much participation in the favour of education for the Arabs and to publish a newspaper at Istanbul serving Ottoman unity."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> N. Mutran mentions the hope of founding the society in his memoirs "Réflexions d'un vieux Jeune-Turc", Constantinople 1908, p.42

<sup>13</sup> among the members are aš-Şerif Ğāfar Pāšā, Zeki Muğāmiz, Şākir Efendi al-Ālūsī, Şafīq al-Mu'ayyad Bey al-Azmī, Şükrü Pāšā al-Ayyübī, Şükrü Bey al-Husaynī, Muḥammad Pāšā al-Maḥzūmī, Nadra Muṭrān Bey, Yūsuf Şitvān Bey

<sup>14</sup> Ittifikak No. 18, 3.9.1908, p.3

<sup>15</sup> Ittifikak No. 18, 3.9.1908, p.3

Not only Arabic speeches like the ones by Şefik al-Mu'ayyad or Mehmed Emin are presented but also Turkish ones, for example by the editor in chief of the 'Ittihak' in which he expresses his congratulations for "the ideas of the society serving Ottoman union and harmony" or the one by a major of the military forces about the "Committee of Union and Progress" and "Ottoman fraternity" as a basis for "Ottoman union", a speech which was followed by the slogan: "Long live the Committee of Union and Progress".

In a very much applauded and enthusiastic speech on Ottoman unity, constitution and freedom the speaker's sentence: "Nobody will be able anymore to seize our freedom from us" is answered by the audience: "Even if we die we won't give it." <sup>16</sup>

The festivity ended with a "qasida" by the poet <sup>C</sup>Aziz Efendi Şa<sup>C</sup>b who is praising freedom and equality: "From now on our path is justice, fraternity, equality, freedom.", but also mentioning the Padishah: "Long live Sultan Abdülhamid Han, the Padishah of the government of constitution and consultation." <sup>17</sup>

The foundation of the society is of course highly welcomed by the Arab press in Istanbul which wishes all success to al-Ikha in realizing its aims. <sup>18</sup>

As far as the Turkish press is concerned it seems to continue to look in a positive way at al-Ikha. At least this seems to be indicated by a remark in the Sabah: "... there are really patriots among the officials of this society". The paper continues its information on al-Ikha by explaining the aims of the club to its readers: "The actual organization of the society concerned consists of support for the government in protecting the constitution and spreading and generalizing education, trade and industry among the Arabs too." <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ittihak No. 18, 3.9.1908

<sup>17</sup> translation of the Qasida in Ittihak No. 18 , 3.9.1908

<sup>18</sup> al-<sup>C</sup>Adl No. 1, 5.11.1908, p.3

<sup>19</sup> Sabah No. 6905 15.12.1908, p.3

Not very long after its first meeting the club obviously managed to find a place in Çağaloğlu, Kapalı Fırın Sok., which was able to function as a meeting centre for its members, and announced that in different papers. <sup>20</sup> It must also have been in this centre where the deputies of the Arab provinces were welcomed in quite a pompous way by high officials and members of the club in the morning after their arrival. <sup>21</sup>

At the end of 1908 the paper "Insaf" announces the intention to start - within the general context of "the duty to bring forward for consideration the necessary remarks on public and private ideas which the honorable deputies express during parliamentary discussions and to defend or reject matters, as disputes resulting from elemental confusions and other personal circumstances, which were to be defended or rejected" - to present to its readers "which services relative to all Arab regions the special Arab society constituted under the name 'Ottoman brotherhood' was working for so far...on behalf of state and nation." <sup>22</sup>

10 days later we are informed by an article that the discussion about the society's name doesn't seem to have stopped and a few people thought about changing the name into "Uhuvvet-i osmaniyye cemiyeti" (Society of Ottoman Brotherhood) but it doesn't seem likely that this demand was actually realized. Nevertheless "Insaf" continues to appreciate this idea with remarks like "As far as this <sup>23</sup> is concerned ... it is extraordinary praiseworthy" adding the well-known view that it was more reasonable to look for the benefit in the midst of all Ottomans. <sup>24</sup>

In February 1909 "al-<sup>c</sup>Adl" announces the first number of a paper called "al-Ikha al-<sup>c</sup>Uthmani" published by Şefik al-Mu'ayyad, one of the founders of the society and also deputy of Damascus. <sup>25</sup> The paper is introduced as the official "mouthpiece" of the club.

<sup>20</sup> Insaf No. 10, 13 Teşrin-i sani 1324, p.4 (=26.11.1908); Insaf No.11, 20 Teşrin-i sani 1324, p.3 (=3.12.1908); Şams al-Adāla No.9, p.6 25.11.1908 "Since the 'Society of Arab - Ottoman brotherhood' has moved to a building in Kapalı Fırın Sok. No.5 near the retirement fund of the Mülkiye in Çağaloğlu it is announced that members of the society can apply every evening after 8 o'clock to the society - centre."

<sup>21</sup> Insaf No. 12, 28 Teşrin-i sani 1324 (=11.12.1908)

<sup>22</sup> Insaf No. 15, 18 Kanun-u evvel 1324 (=31.12.1908)

<sup>23</sup> the change of name

<sup>24</sup> Insaf No. 16, 28 Kanun-u evvel 1324 (=10.1.1909)

<sup>25</sup> al-Adl No. 15, 12.2.1909, p.2



According to some other information the Arab paper "Šams al-<sup>C</sup>Adāla" published at Istanbul in 1908/09 had also been closely connected to the society al-Ikha.<sup>26</sup>

In the Young Turk paper "Tanin" al-Ikha is mainly mentioned in regard to certain events in Syria: in January 1909 the paper tells that according to reports from Syria the population had started protests against Reşid Mutran and a society al-Ikha al-<sup>C</sup>Arabi following demands for Syrian autonomy. In a letter to the "Tanin" al-Ikha al-<sup>C</sup>Arabi al-<sup>C</sup>Uthmani, Istanbul, strictly denies any relation between Reşid Mutran and the society and assures that "the society's aim consists of trying to reduce differences ...between the Ottoman elements".<sup>27</sup>

Although al-Ikha was closed after the counterrevolution of the 31 Mart the society nevertheless appeared "in public" once again in May 1909 protesting against an article on reactionary movements in Syria in the "Tanin" which describes in detail the threats and activities of the reaction by excusing some leaders of exploiting the masses in order to gain advantage for themselves: "Ata Paşa Bekri, Abdülkadir al-<sup>C</sup>Ağlani and two or three sheykhs mentioned are the founders of the societies al-Ikha al-<sup>C</sup>Arabi and Ikha al-Muhammadi in Damascus and are working for the deception of the naive population and for raising a feeling of aversion against the constitution to ensure their own personal advantage."<sup>28</sup>

Al-Ikha, Istanbul, again strictly denies any connexion with the individuals concerned and stresses that there were also no branches or representatives of the society in Syria, a statement, which the "Tanin" considers falsed information. The paper also expresses its surprise about the fact that societies like al-Ikha al-<sup>C</sup>Arabi and al-Ikha al-Muhammadi still exist: "We were thinking these societies would try and let not hear their own names after the reactionary event of the 31 March which had brought to light the true nature of such societies." In this context the "Tanin" tries to show the connexions of the club with Syria by giving information about its supposed branches in Arabian lands<sup>29</sup> and the society's personnel affairs in Damascus.<sup>30</sup>

Al-Ikha al-<sup>C</sup>Arabi al-<sup>C</sup>Uthmani was succeeded in its function as a centre for Arabs at Istanbul by the "Literary Club" al-Muntada al-Adabi which was founded in summer 1909.

<sup>26</sup> Tanin 30.3.1912

<sup>27</sup> Tanin 18.1.1909

<sup>28</sup> Tanin 18.5.1909

<sup>29</sup> apparently around 40

<sup>30</sup> Tanin 20.5.1909

## Arabs in Parliament

As for Arab parliamentary activity a first indication to a view of regarding the Arab deputies as a special group is found in the Ottoman press shortly before the opening of parliament when the daily paper "Servet-i Fünun" <sup>31</sup> published the unshortened version of an interview with one of the Syrian delegates <sup>32</sup>.

In that the deputy assumes a number of at least 70 Arab members of parliament in the first chamber <sup>33</sup> and gives his opinion on the attitude of the Committee of Union and Progress towards the Arabs in the "meclis-i mebusan". He declares that there had not been proposed any cooperation by the Committee so far and also - in contradiction to usual official remarks- stresses the fact of lack of agreement between the two groups. Only a change of the Young Turk programme could eliminate differing points of view and create the conditions for an understanding.

In regard to the feasibility of a cooperation with other ethnical groups his statements sound far more optimistic. Joint action with Greeks, Armenians and Albanians should be certainly easier under the present circumstances, with common aims and ideas although there had not existed any basis to act on together before.

Apart from that he tries to avoid comments in this context, leaving the reporter's question on his likely reaction in case of an appearance of national problems in the chamber unanswered and blames him instead for trying to discover opinions before the events actually happen. He also expresses the assumption that the Young Turks would try not to give place to the emergence of national problems - without forgetting to mention, however, the unity of the Arabs and their readiness for resistance.

For "Servet-i Fünun" this interview is nothing else than a reporter's fantasy: "We are expecting the Arab deputies whose brotherly thoughts, hopes and feelings we have not the slightest doubts in to reject and deny that " is the simple expectation. <sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Servet-i Fünun (daily paper) No.167, 18 Teşrin-i sani 1324 (=1.12.1908)

<sup>32</sup> There is no name mentioned. The interview was published first in the Greek paper Anagenisis and is taken from that.

<sup>33</sup> There were 60 Arabs in the first chamber.

<sup>34</sup> Servet-i Fünun No.167, 18 Teşrin-i sani 1324 (=1.12.1908)

Only a few days later - following the second publication of the interview in the Greek paper - we find a reaction to it by Şefik al-Mu'ayyad, deputy of Damascus, who obviously feels responsible for commenting that matter: "Until recently there wasn't any deputy of Syria here besides myself and as for me I have never made such a statement." 35

In his article he stresses the strict Arab loyalty which would never give way to any aims being opposed to the state's public interests. Talking about the political line, the Arab deputies in the chamber were about to follow, he mentions basic principles as the indivisibility of the Ottoman Empire, deep respect and veneration towards the sultanate and total equality of all inhabitants. He continues: "I strongly hope that in general the deputies of the Arab provinces will attempt to perform good work referring to all sincere and willing people and especially in consent with the Turkish element to carry out the necessary reforms in matters of state according to temporal and local conditions, to create manufacture and activities of public work everywhere in the Ottoman lands ...and to approach whatever the development of prosperity and improvement and the rise of glory and might depends on, under the condition of establishing a .. real administration securing the freedom not known yet and other human rights by adjusting existing laws and orders or introducing new ones." 36

Interesting is the only slight reservation expressed: before the elections some delegates apparently had assumed certain obligations which, whatever their nature may be, are said to have no connection with their Arab voters. Şefik al-Mu'ayyad is not able-or doesn't want-to give any information on the background of the affair and refers to the necessity of a meeting to take place after the arrival of all Arab deputies to discuss the matter. The Arab voter, however, that's what he is sure about, agrees with the views of Arab strategy mentioned above. 37

35 Servet-i Fünun No.171 ,23Teşrin-i sani 1324 (=6.12.1908)

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Şefik al-Mu'ayyad's statements don't remain without an answer but provoke the reaction of one of his Arab colleagues.<sup>38</sup> Qasım Zeynel, deputy of Jidda, in general apparently approves Şefik al-Mu'ayyad's way of rejecting the content of the interview concerned, nevertheless he considers a few items of the article worth of comment. Al-Mu'ayyad's reflections give the impression, he says, as if he had wanted to present his own personal principles to the world and at the same time tried to call in question the other Arab delegates as well as all Arabs in general, creating by that an atmosphere of dissension, which actually was an attribute of the old regime, a fact he is describing at extent. Qasım Zeynel clearly shows his disagreement with the Syrian deputy by stating that neither he himself nor any of his colleagues would accept a view like that. In this context he explicitly calls attention to the existence of a - even if very small - group of people who still tried to sow discord between Arab-Turkish fraternity.

Talking about certain "obligations" of Arab deputies Qasım Zeynel is very sure that they are not combined with any negative attitudes but could have taken place within a limit of kind intentions and patriotism only.

Besides that he stands up for a defence of Young Turk policy towards the Arabs by remarking sarcastically that he had heard about some initiatives aiming at the protection of Arab rights "as if the Committee of Union and Progress had digested and hidden Arab rights".<sup>39</sup> The Arab delegates at least would not pay any attention to rumours like that. Qasım Zeynel says that there was no point for Turks to seize any Arab right since they had had to suffer in the same way from the period of despotism, or even more. The present period is considered a time of transition where even all sorts of gossip had to be tolerated for the sake of the aims to be achieved.

He also adds that in his view the Arabs had chosen their delegates to represent them by being "Ottoman deputies" but not to be representatives of a tribe or small community.

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<sup>38</sup> Servet-i Fünun No. 174, 26 Teşrin-i sani 1324 (=9.12.1908)

<sup>39</sup> " " "

Furthermore Qasim Zeynel wonders what people like the Syrian delegate might expect or hope. "Do they want to live like an India, Algeria or Turkestan? That's what I don't understand. I can't understand it and I don't want to understand it either"<sup>40</sup>, demonstrates explicitly the differing views of two Arab members of parliament.

Referring to the circumstances of his own election Qasim Zeynel reports that he had been chosen without having announced any programme for his activity in the chamber but very simply because he has been known to the population because of his good relation to the Turks, a relation which he is determined to continue in this positive way. Without forgetting to mention the often quoted reasons for the close connection of Turks and Arabs "vatan"(motherland) and "din"(religion) he announces his resistance against all elements who want to destroy Arab-Turkish friendship and harmony. "Whoever it is I'll be opposed and contrary to him in the 'meclis-i mebusan' together with all my colleagues", so putting an end to a first "appearance" of Arab members of parliament in the Ottoman press at greater length.<sup>41</sup>

About two months after the opening of the parliament the Ikdam reports about meetings of the Arab deputies<sup>42</sup> in the house of Nafi Paşa, deputy of Aleppo, aiming at the foundation of a political party: "their intentions consist of fixing a political path for themselves in the 'meclis-i mebusan' and following that path".<sup>43</sup> In discussions apparently lasting at times half of the night they agreed on the following to be included as demands in the party's programme:

- "the right of appointment in degrees of the relation of population figures belonging to each part of the population" (proportional representation)
- strengthening of the fundamental ties of Ottoman unity

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<sup>40</sup> Servet-i Fünun No. 174, 26 Teşrin-i sani 1324 (=9.12.1908)

<sup>41</sup> " " "

<sup>42</sup> apparently more than 60 people from Bagdad, Aleppo, Damascus, Basra, Trablusgarb, Hicaz, Yemen, Mosul, Bengazi and Jerusalem as well as from Zor and Mardin)

<sup>43</sup> Ikdam 10.2.1909

- determination of those parts of the constitution requiring change
- consideration of special local interests in matters of education and public work
- possibility of membership in the Arab party for all deputies accepting this programme
- contact to all other parties whose programme is not basically  
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contrary to this programme

Only a few weeks earlier the question of parties had been discussed in the 'Tanin' by Hüseyin Cahit<sup>45</sup>, who mentions the general fear of a possible establishment of national parties in the parliament. Taking notice of the event, however, that Reşid Mutran's manifest with demands for an independent administration in Syria was disapproved immediately by the Arab deputies and also protested against in form of telegraphs coming from Syria seems to be reason enough for him to come to the conclusion: "The Ottoman Parliament in its present state is definitely not inclined to national policy."<sup>46</sup>

Hüseyin Cahit speaks of the large support for the Young Turk programme even by non-members of the Committee and considers the unanimous acceptance of the constitution an evidence for that.

The lack of contrary views in basic matters<sup>47</sup> is also seen as an important fact within the explanation why political parties were not established so far. Still each matter was treated separately and groups constituted according to the problem concerned. However, in Hüseyin Cahit's view there definitely did not exist any political party in the parliament.

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44 Ikdam 10.2.1909

45 Tanin 16.1.1909

46 Tanin 16.1.1909

47 disagreement were apparently only concerned with details as to which council a certain matter should be transferred to

Now, on 10th February 1909<sup>48</sup> the 'Tanin'<sup>49</sup> expresses its opinion on a changing situation in the chamber and announces the foundation of an oppositional party with regard to an article in "Indépendance Belge". It reports that there had come into being a party of about 120 members which existed out of Turks, a big part of the Arabs and all Armenians and Greeks and was holding the policy of Kamil Paşa. The members of the party would be acting together in all matters related to public interests but would be free to vote according to their convictions as far as special national interests were concerned.

The article reports about an atmosphere in the 'meclis' being different than usual, calls attention to an exceptionally long motion in regard to various topics which had been signed by about 50 deputies and wonders whether that event could be associated with the formation of the party apparently constituted.

The Tanin now stresses the importance and advantage of an oppositional party in general but nevertheless the paper - closely connected with the Young Turks - considers the first appearance of the new party, of course, a failure. Even some of the motion's signers apparently gave up supporting the matter in the course of the debate.

There remains the question about the identity of this new party and its programme, and even if the paper decides not to follow the matter further it can't help escaping to accuse the Belgian paper of distributing "wrong information"<sup>50</sup> or discuss the question of possible reasons of that separation.<sup>51</sup>

One day later<sup>52</sup> the discussion about the oppositional party changes its direction by considering the article about an "Arab party" in the Ikdam mentioned above. The 'Tanin' immediately stresses that it thought the event to be quite unlikely in the way it was reported and draws attention to the patriotic ideas and feelings of the Arab members of parliament who could not be imagined to act like that.

<sup>48</sup> the same date as the Ikdam article mentioned above

<sup>49</sup> Hüseyin Cahit : 'The first clash' in :Tanin 10.2.1909

<sup>50</sup> like exaggerating the number of party members

<sup>51</sup> Tanin 10.2. 1909

<sup>52</sup> Tanin 11.2.1909

As far as the programme is concerned the paper expresses the conviction that it contained a national point of view even if the aim of strengthening Ottoman unity is explicitly mentioned. Giving reasons for considering the content of the programme opposed to Ottoman unity, the consequences of a realisation of proportional representation within areas as parliament and civil service are summed up as support for a growing independent living of each ethnical group. Proportional representation would lead to disregard for the priority of ability in favor to ethnical standpoints and also become a threat to Turkish as the only official language. Altogether this article of the programme meant the wish for the independence of each ethnical group.

Referring to the protection of local interests demanded in connection with education etc. "local" is to be replaced by "Arab" - at least in the Tanin's opinion - since the consideration of all the different local interests in an area as large and manifold as the Arab provinces could never be combined under a common programme.

Apart from that the paper thinks that the existence of a local parliament (meclis-i umumi) in each province should be enough to guarantee the maintenance of local interests. According to the programme - so 'Tanin' - there was also no doubt that this party would encourage the foundation of other parties on a national basis.<sup>53</sup>

Then, on 12th February 1909 we find news about statements of Arab deputies either denying any connection with such a party or saying that the event had not taken place as described in the 'Ikdam,' and especially that there were no national ideas to be followed up.<sup>54</sup>

In the 'Ikdam' the matter is brought to an end in a letter by Riza Nur (deputy of Sinope) who expresses his satisfaction with Nafi Paşa's explanation in regard to the supposed "Arab party". In his lines Riza Nur admits his former concerns about the dangerous consequences of national parties possibly founded in the parliament, concerns which had been completely dispelled now.

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<sup>53</sup> Tanin 11.2.1909

<sup>54</sup> Tanin 12.2.1909 (and Tanin 13.2.1909 within the answer to an article in the Greek paper Pro'odos concerning supposed national parties in the parliament)



Nafi Paşa had assured that the new party was not restricted to Arabs but open to all Ottoman deputies - being a party of Ottoman moderation (Osmanlı itidal fırkası). "The Arab deputies definitely never met to negotiate for special Arab interests and will nether meet to do so either." 55

In March 1911, however, once more an Arab group is mentioned whose members decided to keep on belonging to their different parties in future but to unite in Arab matters.<sup>56</sup>

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55 İkdam 13.2.1909

56 Tanin 27.3.1911