

## UTOPIA IN TURKISH THOUGHT: CONSTRUCTION OF HEAVEN-SPACES

“I tried to enlighten you  
Travelled from moon to sun, day and night  
From sun to moon, Prophets  
Promise the heaven after life,  
I appeared to make this world; paradise”

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### Abstract

*For some, history of utopia was dated back to Sumerian tabloids or archaic ages while some argue that the origins are from “Heaven” narratives in monotheistic religions. Regardless of its origin, the most important assertion about utopia is that as a form of freethinking, it is not so common in Eastern societies which refer to “Neverland”. In this study, it is argued whether they have features of utopia or not by scanning narratives of early Turkish utopias.*

Keywords: Utopianism, Turkey, Literature

Introduction: Utopia and Utopianism

History of utopia was started from the book “The Republic” which is written by ancient philosopher Plato at 375 BC. However proliferation of utopia as a literary movement and a way of thinking in political philosophy was occurred after 18th century Enlightenment Era. The word “utopia” consisted of integration of “ou” which means “none”, “eu” which means “good” and “topos” which means “place” (Yumuşak, 2012: 48). Yalçınkaya (2004) defines utopianism which is sum of different phases of concept; such as utopia as literary form, utopia as a way of thinking and utopia as an attitude towards world.

The work that gives utopia the name is book of Thomas More “Utopia” which collects all the features of utopia in it, is published at 1516, England. In this book it is imagined “a new country” against the country – Britain – where the Queen gather all the wealth for herself and leave people poor and govern the country mercantilist/absolutist politics at pre-modern times (More, 2011). This country is an island, just like Britian; nevertheless what Britain has got, “utopia” has not got (or has the contrary): utopia is a picture of equality, shared wealth and collective happiness. Enlightenment thought create political ideologies which enable to design world with human intervention and revolutionist belief concerning man can constitute his happy world on his own.

It is mentioned that there were more than 70 utopias written at 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain which can be considered as an effect of Enlightenment (Yalçinkaya, 2004).

When Enlightenment appeared, it is Europe-centered thought, however philosophical frame which constitutes modernity spread to whole world. The idea that happiness based on humanism and human can be created now and here and politics should help this creation is modern thought which capture whole world and is the “child” of Enlightenment. Likewise, with Enlightenment thought, utopianism occurred in several forms in Ottoman.

#### Utopia in Turkish Thought

Emerging of utopias in Europe dates back before Enlightenment idea and originated from “Heaven” in Christianity thought and “Millennium” idea that is expected to live in future (Yalçinkaya, 2004; Usta, 2014). Before they fall on earth because of their sins, the heaven where Adam and Eve live is the true answer of utopia in human thought. Usta (2014:26), on the other hand, connects utopias’ history to “Eden Gardens” which are originated to Sumerian age. The word “Eden” which is frequently mentioned in Torah as heaven-place is rooted Sumerian tabloids. Golden times in Eastern cultures which is called “Era of Bliss”(Asrı- Saadet) does not take part as ahistorical paradise narrative. Era of Bliss refers to the time when Islam Prophet Mohammed lives. In the eyes of an ordinary Muslim, those times are the times when equality and collective happiness provided. The difference at this point is significant. For Islam, history is circular and every political mentality provides collective happiness is reference to past, the golden time that experienced. Real past times are in the memory of Muslim’s.

Hereby, another discussion welcomes us which is as follows: Does utopian literary emerge in Eastern societies including Ottoman/Turkey in the manner that to correspond the concept. In this regard some thoughts are positive whereas some are negative. According to definition of utopia; it needs to contain idea of future and to be a critical contrary of existing order that involves egalitarianism and transparency. Yet, that kind of utopian radicalism has not seen in Turkish thought. Turkish modernity experience restricts the borders of world of thought to “powerful state”. Even, interestingly utopia literature occurred at right thought instead of loft thought where it would be expected to grow utopian ideas.

Turkish literal and political literature experienced its most effective age between 1900 and 1918. However, in can be encountered some kind of utopias as “dreams” or “news from future” before that time (Usta, 2014). Indeed, “political dreams” have an important place on Turkish thought and literature. Herein after a short abstract of early utopias in Turkish thought is given and at conclusion part, an analysis towards Turkish utopias will be made.

#### Dreams of Ziya Pasha and Namık Kemal

Ziya Pasha and Namık Kemal are top-end politicians who are exiled at the time of Abdulhamit 2<sup>nd</sup> (he is known as despotic Ottoman Sultan), influenced from Enlightenment thought and defend opinion of legitimacy. The book of “Dream”(Rüya) by Namık Kemal published at 1872 is mostly influenced by French Revolution and Western thought and is written with an utopian future idea according to its era. One of the evidence that the book symbolically influenced from “European” idea is that in the book there is a part imitating the woman of famous “Liberty Leading the People” painting. Dream begins with this beautiful and strong woman’s breaking of the chains. Utopia kneaded by equality, freedom and saturity finish when Namık Kemal wakes up. Ziya Pasha’s “Dream” which is published at 1910 criticize social and political crisis of Ottoman, but the solutions of these crises are again restricted to new constitutional order. Although this book was written before Namık Kemal’s “dream”, it is more like a political/societal reform program which is based on the idea of “happier and more egalitarian Ottoman”.

#### Darürrahat Muslims – İsmail Gaspıralı (Muslims’ Comfortable Country)

Gaspıralı was born at 1851, Crimea. He is an Ottoman thinker who is impressed by Russian Democrats and European Enlightenment. In his book, Molla Abbas fall asleep during the visit of Alhambra Palace. At the edge of sleep and awake he follows 12 fairy girls and after passing through the tunnel, he reaches the land called Muslim's Comfortable Country. Muslim's Comfortable Country is Gaspıralı's utopia. Utopia, as might be expected, is the country of equality, wealth and freedom. This freedom involves that women can have the education as they want and can communicate socially as the wish. This way of thinking was literally utopic for the 19th century Ottoman society. On the other hand, citizens can communicate with each other by advanced technology. There are glass-mirror gadgets in the book that we can consider them as antecedents of monitoring cameras (they called MOBESE in Turkey) we have in today's world.

Hayat – I Muayyel (Imagined Life) - Hüseyin Cavit Yalçın

Utopia written by Yalçın who is influenced from not only socialist ideas but also enlightenment thought (Usta, 2014:114) is one of the pieces that holds the features of utopia at most. In this utopia, regardless of locality and identities there is a world bravely designed appropriate to "Neverland". The nature is just like Thomas More's utopia's nature (2011): there are "big oceans fighting eternal storms between past and now" and everything is new, even "hearths, feelings and sky" (Yalçın, [1910] 2014). Society does not need private property and money. There is a division of labor occurs spontaneously and based on individuals' will and skill. Since there is no luxury and private property in this division of labor, no one overworks. No one is anyone's servant, in other words social classes are removed and everybody has time for art and poetry. Decisions being made collectively, on the one hand austerity, on the other hand freedom, solidarity and working exist together. In the words of Yalçın; it is "plain, simple and generous" life (Yalçın, 1910-11).

Unlike other utopias, it might be said that this life is being fed by couple and family romanticism: there is familism integrated with couple romanticism (love) and child that not found on More's utopia. Couples committed to each other with love and sympathy first spend their time on shared environments and then their "home" with feeling romantic love. Closely; peace, security and happiness of this country is materialized on this elementary family. A couple lives in this country think as follows: "in our deep quiescence, only the desires of our love promise that we are just for each other. There we were happy from this confidence and live with this safety" (Yalçın, 1910-11). From couples, there will be healthy and worthy of this country "Adam and Eve's" (Yalçın, 1910). Yalçın, even seek a place in Anatolia to substantiate his utopia.

A Quite Awake Sleep (Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku)- İsmail Kılıkzade Hakkı

This utopia was published on newspapers at 1913 and is characterized as a utopia, a political program of Kemalist Revoultion (Usta, 2014: 121). The signature of the work is "Timsal Emel" and means "dreams that human life is not sufficient for and inexhaustible desire" (Usta, 2014:122). It is a utopia that limited to readjustment and even cannot present a republican manner. Restriction of authority includes Sultan's and whole Empire not excepting private property, compulsory monogamy, equality of citizens and establishment of constitutional administration are discussed. It is typical Ottomanism ideology and "Ottoman utopia"; locality, Islamic-Turkishness emphasizes are very dominant.

In utopia, there is such a strong anxiety on losing land; every Turkish needs to have "a box of bullets, a military uniform and other munitions of mobilization" and, besides having a target practice place in every districts and get gun and horse training regardless of gender are mandatory. Another suggestion for unity and solidarity is reform in religion: all madhhabs and doctrines come together and a new doctrine will be constituted and finally possession authority of all kinds of Islamic monasteries will be removed.

In utopia, no one intervene the clothes of women. Shaykh al-islam (highest religious authority) cannot write declaration dealing with women dress and being covered; in fact, a utopia as a heaven-place where women do not covered with modest dresses and have an education possibility (including medical school) is a "dream" of

Kemalist Revolution. Equality is valid “only on courts”, since there is “no equality from creation” everybody is equal in his own strata (Hakkı, 2013). Social classes are mentioned.

#### Conclusion

As İdris Küçükömer signifies, main dynamic of whole Turkish modernization is “saving the country.” This dynamic influenced Turkish Utopianism, as well (2009). On the origin of this influence, there are anxieties and concerns arise from ideas of Enlightenment and crashing of Ottoman Empire which occurred concurrently. On the one hand the Empire is losing land and country feels the fear of colonization, on the other hand there are modern reforms are practiced under Sultan administration’s observation. In the works of these utopia authors who are Ottoman intellectuals and exiled by the Empire, national concerns created by fear of “statelessness” are obvious. Moreover, they are very precautious about equality and freedom tendency even in their dream. Even in the work of Hüseyin C. Yalçın, where equality and freedom principles were constituted radically – refers correctly the utopia concept by these means – there are emotional localities mentioned. As Parla (2004) indicates, new “romantic couple love” appeared as a practice of liberation against old arranged marriages. Utopias constituted lately have focus on “locality” since they are originated from “right” axis. For example in Safa’s – who is a conservative author – novel (first published at 1951) there is a utopia called “Simeranya” where both conservative moral gain a victory and utopian imaginarieness create a dream land. “Space Farmers” (2002) (Uzay Çiftçileri) is another example which is written more lately. In this Islamic science fiction, although technology reaches to establish transportation between Earth and Moon, village life has not been destroyed in Islam Union. In this utopia, world is divided between Islam Union and the West. In Islam world everything is in order, but in the West people gets worse. It is seen that, considering utopia as “a political program” continues in Turkish thought. This situation strengthens the fact that utopian thinking is lacking in Turkish thought and in my opinion, it should be considered about the motives of it.

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