



KOREA IN THE OCCUPATION PROCESS AND ABDÜRREŞİD İBRAHİM

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ABSTRACT

The early 20th century meant the beginning of the Japanese colonial era for Korea. Turkish/Tatar activist Abdürreşid İbrahim went to Korea from Japan just before the annexation. Upon visiting a number of Korean cities, towns, and villages, he felt an affinity towards the Koreans. He followed its religious and political issues closely. The intense Christian missionary activities there disturbed him deeply. Likewise, he was upset that he himself could not deliver them the message of Islam. During his brief time in Korea, he tried to talk with as many locals as possible in order to learn what they thought about their Japanese administration. However, since almost every dialogue took place through Japanese interpreters, he was not sure that he was able to learn the truth. He was well aware that Koreans were a noble nation, and yet he felt uneasy when he saw that the Koreans themselves felt intimidated by the Japanese occupation. In his view, if Korea was to be a colony, it was better that it be ruled by Japan rather than other powers; nevertheless, he was unwilling to accept it that it was under anyone's control at all. He, thus took a stance that was in favor of Korean independence, and urged those Koreans he talked with to struggle for that cause.

Keywords: Korea, Abdürreşid İbrahim, Japan, Colonial, Independence

İŞGAL SÜRECİNDEKİ KORE VE ABDÜRREŞİD İBRAHİM

ÖZ

20. yüzyılın başları, Kore için Japon sömürge döneminin başlangıcı anlamına geliyordu. Türk/Tatar aktivist Abdürreşid İbrahim ilhaktan kısa bir süre önce Japonya'dan Kore'ye gitti. Kore'de birkaç şehir, kasaba ve köyü ziyaret edince Korelilere karşı bir yakınlık hissetti. Dini ve siyasi meselelerini yakından takip etti. Oradaki sıkı Hıristiyan misyonerlik faaliyetleri onu ciddi manada rahatsız etti. Buna karşılık İslam'ın mesajını onlara ulaştıramadığı için de üzgündü. Kore'de geçirdiği kısa süre boyunca, Japon idaresi hakkında ne düşündüklerini öğrenmek için mümkün oldukça çok sayıda Koreli ile konuşmaya çalıştı. Ancak bu diyalogların hemen hepsi Japon tercümanlar aracılığıyla gerçekleştiğinden doğruyu öğrenip öğrenemediğinden emin olamadı. Korelilerin asil bir millet olduğunu fark etmekle birlikte Japon işgaline karşı onlarda gördüğü yılgınlıktan rahatsız oldu. Ona göre, eğer Kore bir koloni olacaksa, diğer güçler yerine Japonya tarafından yönetilmesi tercih edilirdi; yine de Kore'nin hiç kimsenin kontrolü altına girmesini istemiyordu. Bundan dolayı Kore'nin bağımsızlığından yana bir tavır sergiledi ve konuştuğu Korelileri bu amaç için mücadeleye teşvik etti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kore, Abdürreşid İbrahim, Japonya, Sömürge, Bağımsızlık.

Araştırma Makalesi

Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 13.11.2021; Yayına Kabul Tarihi: 05.03.2021

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Introduction¹

Abdürreşid İbrahim's impressions of Korea, and his political thoughts on Korean society and the future of Korea are the main subject of this essay. İbrahim Efendi, who is famous for his travels, was closely involved with the religious and political aspects of the societies he observed, as well as their social life. In his writings and speeches, he often expressed his longing for freedom for societies in captivity. In Korea, as a matter of fact, he was worried about the sufferings of the occupied Korea's people, and he tried to offer solutions for their problems.

An analysis of a country through the eyes of a foreigner may involve some specific information. Issues that have become commonplace for the people living there can be interpreted differently and meaningfully by an outsider. İbrahim Efendi was a firm Muslim who was knowledgeable about Islam, influential intellectually, and active in his lifestyle. He had a unique vision and sense of duty. The fact that he did not have an ordinary view, and that he acted firmly in line with his beliefs and with striking political calculations almost everywhere he travelled makes his thoughts on Korea even more relevant.

Although there is a large literature on Abdürreşid İbrahim, what has been written about his Korean travel is very limited. It can be assumed that this is due to the short time he spent in Korea. Abdürreşid İbrahim describes his travels from Kazan to Istanbul, which covered Siberia, Mongolia, Manchuria, Japan, Korea, China, India, Hejaz, Beirut and Damascus, in his book titled *Âlem-i İslâm ve Japonya'da İntişarı İslâmiyet* (The World of Islam and the Spread of Islam in Japan) (1328a[1910/1911]); *Âlem-i İslâm*, vol. 2 (1329-1331 [1912-1913]). In this travel book, he gave surprisingly vivid information about Korea, Koreans, Korean social life and religious-political situation.

Hee-Soo Lee wrote in one of the chapters of his work *İslâm ve Türk Kültürünün Uzak Doğu'ya Yayılması* about Abdürreşid İbrahim's travel to Korea. The information provided was explained through some footnotes. Besides, some illustrative information was given in the text and short comments were made (1988). A book chapter by M. Ertan Gökmen titled *Bir Seyyah Olarak Abdürreşid İbrahim'in Seyahatnamesine Göre Kore* (2018) conveys Abdürreşid İbrahim's impressions of Korea and makes some evaluations based on the information he provided. In addition to these, various works such as Selçuk Esenbel's *Japon Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı* (2019); Ali Merthan Dünder's *Panislâmizm'den Büyük Asyacılığa* (2006) and İsmail Türkoğlu's *Sibiryalı Meşhur Seyyah Abdürreşid İbrahim* (1997) were utilized for this essay.

Organized information on Korean history is offered in such books as Djun Kil Kim's *The History of Korea The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations* (2005) and Kyung Moon Hwang's *A History of Korea* (2010). Eun Kyung Jeong's review titled *Kore Milliyetçiliği* is noteworthy in that it deals with the process leading to independence from the Japanese occupation in Korea (2016). The sources used in the review to confirm or discuss the information given by Abdürreşid İbrahim include, among others, Donald N. Clark's *Culture and Customs of Korea* (2000) and E-Wha Lee's *Korea's Pasttimes And Customs A Social History* (2006).

In the present essay, the information given by Abdürreşid İbrahim about Korea, which was in crisis, in the early 20th century was evaluated by comparing it with studies dealing with that period from different perspectives. Also, his political views on the future of Korea were examined and his approach to religious and social issues was analysed in detail.

¹ I would like to thank Dear Asst. Prof. Eun Kyung Jeong who generously offered her help regarding some issues we encountered while preparing this essay.

The Chosŏn Dynasty, which was established in Korea in 1392 with the support of reformist neo-Confucian scholar-authorities, continued until 1910 (Kim, 2005, p. 72). The country ruled by this long-lasting dynasty experienced a series of internal and external changes and serious problems in the 19th century. Korea was cut off from the outside world for most of the 19th century. It only had a special relationship with China. Meanwhile, the dramatic increase in dissatisfaction in the form of peasant revolts began to shake Korea. The uprising of unhappy miners in Northwest Korea almost turned into a civil war. A movement started by a religious leader in the southwest in the 1860 threatened central control for a short period of time. Meanwhile, British, French and American naval ships began to appear in Korean waters. In 1876, the Japanese sent a warship to the Koreans, which forced them to sign an agreement to establish commercial and diplomatic relations with Japan. This was followed by agreements with the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, France and others in the 1880s. Western Protestant and Catholic missionaries settled in major cities and towns in Korea, establishing churches and opening schools (Clark, 2000, p. 15).

In the last quarter of the 19th century, relations between Korea and Japan remained positive except for one or two tensions and some disagreements (Dündar, 2006, pp. 137-138). However, in 1894, the Tonghak rebellion broke out in the southwestern region of the country, the largest peasant revolt Korea had ever seen. The rebels were demanding an end to foreign interventionism and the removal of social inequality in Korea. The uprising was suppressed with the support of soldiers from Japan and China. After this turmoil, King Kojong tried to set the foreign powers against each other, but this attempt was unsuccessful. Local factions and influential conspirators, some siding with China and others with Japan, prepared his end. Kojong, whose pro-Russian queen was killed by Japanese assassins, was forced to take refuge in the Russian Embassy. Meanwhile, Japan won the war (1894-1895) between China and Japan, which was caused by the struggle for influence in Korea. In the same period, with the influence of Japan, Gabo reforms were implemented in Korea. The reforms aimed to modernize the institutions, and within this framework caste would be abolished and slavery would be banned. When Kojong proclaimed the Greater Korean Empire in 1897, the centuries-old Chinese state status of Korea actually ended (Salmon, 2020, p. 15).

Thousands of Japanese soldiers and police, who came to the peninsula during the Russo-Japanese war, had established Japanese sovereignty in Korea and forced the Korean authorities to make agreements about cooperation. The first treaty, which was signed in 1904, allowed Japanese troops to be stationed on Korean soil. Thanks to a treaty signed later, Japan increased its financial, military and diplomatic influence over Korea. The "1905 Treaty", which Korean ministers signed under pressure, led to establishment of a government in Korea under the protection of the Japanese, and Itō Hirobumi, a senior Japanese statesman, arrived in Korea as the first inspector general in early 1906. In 1907, Korea sent a secret delegation to The Hague, which forced Emperor Kojong to abdicate the throne to his son and withdraw from the empire, and it resulted in a new treaty in which the Japanese took full control of Korea. Itō was assassinated a few months after his resignation in October 1909. One year after this incident, Korea was directly annexed in 1910 (Hwang, 2010, pp. 153-154).

In the 19th century, great changes were seen in many countries of the world. In fact, in every society that undergoes change, there is chaos peculiar to that society. Changing the lifestyle, especially, the change in understanding of civilization and attitudes of the ruling classes, disturbs people (Ortaylı, 2013, p. 23). The discomfort and reaction in Korea was something else. Heavy political blow Korea was exposed to supported the nationalist sentiments among the Koreans, and during the collapse of the Chosŏn state, the urge to

defend national sovereignty emerged. Except for the problems that the country was experiencing within itself, the situation it had fallen into as a result of a series of interventions was bothering people at the very least. The independence movement in Korea developed in this way, aiming to liberate the country from the colonial rule of Japan, and for the Koreans to establish their own national and national states. However, among those who joined the nationalist movement in Korea, there were those who directly demanded Chosŏn's independence, as well as those who indirectly supported the movement, simply by strengthening the country culturally or economically (Jeong, 2016, p. 85).

The trip of Turkish/Tatar activist Hodja Abdürreşid İbrahim to Korea coincided with the period when the country started to experience this painful experience. He left Japan, one of the most important stopping points of his trip, and went to Busan port of Korea on 19 June 1909 (Türkoğlu, 1997, p. 62). In Korea, where he traveled with great interest, he mainly observed the political situation and social life of the country, apart from cities, roads, buildings, houses, customs and traditions. He tried to get information from the Koreans about the current situation in Korea and learn their opinions. He displayed a marked sensitivity in his dialogues with them. Since Abdürreşid İbrahim felt very close to the Japanese, he could be expected to take a pro-Japanese or neutral stance towards the Koreans, but he didn't. He gave messages to the Koreans he met, encouraging the freedom and independence of Korea, which he considered they deserved. He tried to encourage them by telling them not to be discouraged by the Japanese occupation of Korea.

Korean Impressions

As soon as Abdürreşid İbrahim arrived at the port of Busan, the first thing that caught his attention was the resemblance of the Koreans to the Ural Bashkirs. He saw an extraordinary similarity between these two societies, from their clothes to their faces (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a (1910/1911), p. 460). However, he stated that there was no relation in terms of language (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 471). It is understood from his words that he was satisfied with this similarity. Indeed, Koreans have cultural structures similar to Central Asian Turks. There are also researchers who say that Turks and Koreans share the same origin. Abdürreşid İbrahim could not see any affinity in terms of speech, but both languages are from the Altaic language group (Jeong, 2016, p. 23, 27). Even today, it is stated that the general appearance and physical characteristics of Koreans bring about the same opinion among Turks who meet Koreans for the first time (Gökmen, 2018, p. 104).

Abdürreşid İbrahim, who went to the train station on a rickshaw (rickshaw) after giving half a yen to the boatman who took them from the ferry to the shore, was very impressed when he saw that the boatman brought the change of money, four kuruş, while leaving the Japanese guesthouse at the station. He praised the fact that the boatman brought the money back by covering a 20-minute walk, even though it was quite a small amount of money, and emphasized that the system of education in the Orient had a different view of the rightful share, as he always did (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 460-461). Abdürreşid İbrahim, as an intellectual, was of the opinion that civilization has existed in the Orient since ancient times. According to him, Westerners were just reaching the civilization of Easterners. He admitted that Easterners, Muslim or non-Muslim, fell behind compared to Westerners, but he hoped that this would be overcome soon (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328b, p. 226).

Abdürreşid İbrahim, who traveled around Busan in Korea, stated that the people of the region were extremely poor and that their houses consisted of huts made of reed and so on, which were not pleasant at all. Except for the newly built government house, he

didn't see a decent building. He stated that while the public consisted of Koreans generally, the officers and soldiers were mostly Japanese. One of İbrahim Efendi's first impressions in Korea is that women are not seen around very often. When asked why, he was told that Koreans have a women's room called harem in their home, and that foreigners are not allowed to enter that part. Abdürreşid İbrahim drew attention to the similarity of these features to Islamic customs (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 461). On the other hand, from the perspective of a Western observer, Korean women were perceived as a segment of society whose lives were regulated and monitored strictly in terms of their physical mobility, clothing and social interactions (Yoo, 2008, p. 27).

Wrestling has been very popular in Korea since classical times (Lee, 2006, p. 107). When Abdürreşid İbrahim went to the town of Gizan, he witnessed a festival where wrestling matches were held. He watched the wrestling matches excitedly in a square with the Japanese flag on one side and the Korean flag on the other. He also likened the wrestling of the Koreans to the wrestling of the Ural Bashkirs. After stating that many of the customs of the Koreans, from the way they dress to their home environment or threshing fields in villages, are similar to Tatars, he reiterated that there is no relation in terms of language. Abdürreşid İbrahim, who visited some villages in the region, had the opportunity to closely examine the living conditions of the villagers and came across drunk Koreans almost everywhere. He mentioned the rice fields, herds and houses he saw on his way to Seoul by train, and he felt the need to point out that the Japanese houses had tile roofs, while the Koreans' houses were mostly covered with straw (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 463-464).

In 19th century Europe, there was a great change and population growth due to industrialization in capitals such as London, Paris and Berlin (Roberts, 2016, pp. 705-706). Seoul, which is quite far from these cities, was also experiencing the changes more or less in the modern world. Most of the foundations of the projects for the material transformation of modern Korea were laid by the Royal Household Ministry. East Asia's first and most advanced power generation system was established in Seoul in the mid-1880s by the Edison Company at the Royal court. Seoul had hundreds of electric street lights in ten years. The first tram line built by the Seoul Electric Company was put into service in May 1899. The construction rights of the Seoul-Inch'ön rail line, the foundations of which were laid by an American company, were transferred to a company partially owned by the Japanese government. The railway, which was planned as two main lines, contributed a lot to Japanese expansionism (Hwang, 2010, pp. 142-143).

Abdürreşid İbrahim, who came to Seoul on June 20, 1909, described the city as a capital surrounded by a large wall, in which there was almost nothing spectacular for the public except the emperor's castle palace. It is possible to summarize what he saw in the form of single-floor houses, shops and a few magnificent mansions where the prominent people of the society lived (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 465). One of the reasons why houses were single-storey buildings may be that it was forbidden to build higher than the king's palace in Seoul (Salmon, 2020, p. 8). Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that only castles could be mentioned as historical artifacts in Korea, and that architectural arts evoked the Chinese style. Again, according to his observations, the streets were quite wide, even in the villages they were quite wide and straight. The streets were also not complicated, but somewhat regular. Abdürreşid İbrahim, who specifically talked about the palace gate and castle gates in the capital city of Seoul, mentioned two animal pictures on both sides of the palace gate. He stated that there was an inscription similar to the Arabic script on the underside of the stone here, and that although he tried very hard, he could not read this slightly faint inscription (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 470-471).

Abdürreşid İbrahim, who was keen on educating the younger generations (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328d, pp. 55-57), also gave some information about the schools in Korea. He stated that the Japanese opened about 1200 primary schools in Korea and there were about 10 high schools. He stated that Koreans were told that general education would be compulsory like the Japanese, and that Koreans were usually sent to Japan for higher education. He observed that the education in Korean schools was in the national language, but most of the teachers were Japanese, only in schools in Seoul most of the teachers were Korean. He also mentioned that in some villages of Korea there was an old-fashioned education, children sat on mats, there were no desks or blackboards, and he said that apart from these, the schools opened by the Japanese were really well-designed (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 467). Through these observations, he again expressed the fact that he considered science, knowledge and reading essential for the awakening and future of Eastern societies (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328c, p. 267).

Abdürreşid İbrahim especially emphasized in his notes that the Korean administration was under the control of the Japanese. He stated that there were Koreans among the civil servants, but they only did their job, and that the managers in charge of all of them were Japanese (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 466). As a colony, Japan saw Korea as a supplier of rice and other raw materials, a consumer market for Japanese industrial products, and an unregulated capital investment destination. The Government-General expropriated vast rice fields and forests that were traditionally unregistered but cultivated and used by peasants. These lands were also sold to Japanese investors, especially to the Oriental Development Company, at cheap prices. Also, Korean entrepreneurs needed government permission to set up new companies. Customs duties were imposed on Japanese exporters. But these taxes were so low that small Korean manufacturing industries could not compete with them (Kim, 2005, p. 126).

In order for this system to work properly, a serious infrastructure and transportation network was needed. Stating that the Japanese took Korea as their property, Abdürreşid İbrahim said that Korea was developed by the Japanese with railways, highways, ports, trams, telephone, telegraph and postal services, and that the Japanese did their best to stay in Korea permanently. Abdürreşid İbrahim also mentioned the population migration from Japan to Korea and stated that there were almost no foreigners in Korea except missionaries (1328a, p. 472).

The vast majority of Western travelers to Korea in the 19th and early 20th centuries described Koreans as lazy and old-fashioned (Salmon, 2020, p. 36). On the other hand, Abdürreşid İbrahim listed the characteristics of the Koreans as a nation that dresses very simply, reproaches more after obtaining enough for livelihood, takes the trouble, does not complain about the weight, does not get tired of the work they do, does not ask a favour, loves cultivation and does not beg. However, he stated that apart from a few lumber merchants, there were no people of considerable wealth in Korea. A Japanese in Seoul told him that it was hardly possible that wealthy people would appear among them even in the future, as there was no long term opinion in their nature (1328a, p. 473). It is difficult to say that this prediction turned out to be correct. Undoubtedly, this can be explained in various ways, but in the second half of the 20th century, Korea was a rapidly developing country in industry and trade. Several companies that achieved great success in electronics, communication technologies, white goods and automotive sectors were established in Korea and these companies reached a level where they could compete with many industrial and commercial organizations in the world market (Uzun, 2010, pp. 152-153).

One of the issues that Abdürreşid İbrahim focused on was that women in Korea were mostly veiled. He stated that although there were some partly veiled ones, most of

the Korean women covered their bodies from head to toe with a veil called *çapan*. He also stated that besides the women who wore a robe-like dress like the Muslim women in Bukhara or Turkestan, there were also women who wore a white chador. He also said that women did not coexist with men. Abdürreşid İbrahim asked a Korean clergyman named Kungsi Yama (군시 야마)² whether women in Korea covered for religious reasons or because of their tradition. The Korean clergyman stated that it was a natural condition for women to cover their bodies and that they had to be covered in order to protect themselves from men. He stated that the Europeans who came to Korea sexually harassed Korean women because they were weak and incapable of self-defense, and that their women suffered from bad moral state. When Abdürreşid İbrahim said that all Europeans could not be evaluated in the same way, the man replied;

“— No, I am a native here, I am over sixty years old. I have seen many Europeans, even there are many of those who have come here for religious training. Even though it is forbidden for them to get married according to their religion, they have always violated the laws concerning our women, they are always the women that you see without a veil. As they accept Christianity, they immediately prefer ... (*he used a slang word*). They corrupted the morals of the nation in the name of religion” (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 467-468).

Interestingly, at about the same time, there were theologians in Europe who argued that religion and morality were almost equivalent. For example, German Adolf Harnack stated that religion could be called the spirit of morality and morality the body of religion (1903, p. 79). The contradiction between this view and those stated in the paragraph above is inexplicable. It should be noted, though, that there are several aspects to moral problems in Korea. When asked by İbrahim Efendi about the future of Korea, the Korean said that those who killed the spirit of the nation in Korea were the original Christian missionaries, and continued that it was only a matter of life that was left for the Koreans, and that the future of Korea would be shaped in the hands of the Japanese. In response to these desperate statements, İbrahim Efendi tried to encourage his Korean interlocutor by saying that although the Tatars remained under Russian rule for four hundred years, they preserved their tribe and hoped to create and implement their law in the future (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 468-469).

Negotiation with the Korean Minister of the Interior

Italian historian Raimondo Luraghi criticized the efforts of the Japanese to take part in colonial powers with the following statements:

“... Britain was exporting the worst thing it had to Japan, as it did to other overseas countries. If Japan had been a wealthy country, perhaps it would have been subjugated from the very beginning. Since it was left to its own devices, it was more difficult for them to be subjugated. But Japan was not the last stronghold of the subjugated peoples against the invaders and moved in the opposite direction. Japanese militarism preferred to howl with the wolves rather than defend the lambs; they felt closer to the wolves. The day when Japan, too, would enter the frenzied race for colony would come” (2000, p. 185).

Could the Japanese really have acted differently? We don't know, but there was something that wasn't pleasant at all for the Koreans. This unpleasant situation is very evident in an anecdote of Abdürreşid İbrahim. While he was in Japan, he met the Korean Minister of Interior and the minister gave him his business card and asked him to stop by

² This name must be in Japanese.

Korea. Upon this invitation he visited him in Seoul.³ İbrahim Efendi spoke with admiration about the minister, who hosted him at his home and gave him a special welcome. The Minister told him that they did not give the necessary importance to education in time and that they had fallen into a miserable situation, and expressed their regret. According to the minister's statement, the king (Sunjong), who was a unserious person, did not express his sadness at the invasion of Korea by the Japanese. He even sometimes said that the nation would feel more comfortable under the rule of the Japanese compared to their own administration. But the crown prince (Yi Yong) and his women cried a lot when the country got into that bad situation. When Abdürreşid İbrahim asked whether it was possible for Korea to have a special and autonomous administration by saying "I asked, although it was hard to ask", the minister said:

"— There is nothing left to manage. Today, the Japanese want two-thirds of the country. From the day the Japanese came, the nation felt a sense of freedom. Yes, the Japanese will be cruel and unjust, they will still want the Japanese even though they know this. Because the Japanese opened some doors for the nation, roads were built, many ferries, and Japanese are responsible for the cleaning and enlightenment of the cities. When people see these, they will undoubtedly prefer them over our administration. We will reluctantly accept it, too, there is not much left now. In any case, the Japanese are better for us than the Chinese, if the Japanese do not invade, the Chinese will" (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 465-466).

It is stated that the typical attitude of governments towards the economy is that they consider that they are obliged to do something for the economy (Hobsbawm, 2018, p. 207). Members of the Korean government did not have the opportunity to do anything for Korea. In response, in order to get the Koreans accept colonial rule, the Japanese improved agriculture in Korea, encouraged industrialization, and offered some Koreans attractive business venture opportunities. They opened schools, built transportation lines, while all this was being done, the apparent aim was to bring civilization to Korea. But Japan's priority had never been Korea's welfare. Thanks to Korea, Japan wanted to contribute to its economy and strengthen its international position. Accordingly, the lands of tens of thousands of farmer families would be confiscated and most of the work permits would be given to the Japanese. This situation would cause a serious reaction and the Korean nationalists would resist with all their strength (Huffman, 2020, p. 114).

As for the Minister's display of such a hopeless approach on behalf of his country; this situation was directly related to the conditions in Korea. In accordance with the Korea-Japanese New Treaty signed in 1907, the approval of the Japanese governor-general was required for the appointment of all senior officials in the Korean government. All the undersecretaries of the Korean government were appointed by the Japanese. In such a period, it was not possible to expect a minister who was in charge of the government to be conscious of national sovereignty (Lee, 1988, p. 256).

Although Abdürreşid İbrahim admired the rise of Japan as an Asian country, he sided with the Koreans in Korea due to his anti-imperialist and nationalist understanding (Esenbel, 2019, p. 297). It is also an expression of his own point of view that, after the above dialogues, even though the minister seems to have accepted the situation, he felt that he was cut to the bone. When Abdürreşid İbrahim was about to leave, the minister stated that Tatars may have come to Korea before him, but that he was pleased to be

³ Abdürreşid İbrahim said that the name of the minister was Ke Yi Lin, but Lee wrote that The Interior Minister of Korea at that time was Song Byōng-chun, and that the name Ke Yi Lin might be his nickname in Japanese (Lee, 1988, p. 255).

honored for the first time in his own home. Meanwhile, the Korean minister told Abdürreşid İbrahim that for some reason, people in charge of teaching Islam were not seen in Korea, but it was rumored that Arabs came at some time in history. When Abdürreşid İbrahim asked who came and when they came, the minister replied that they might have come to preach about religion 1000 years ago, and the meeting ended with these dialogues (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 466).

Christian Missionaries and Korean Society

There are many religions and belief systems in Korea. They can be dealt with in three main categories: "established", "newly rising" and "popular". "Established" religions are Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. "Newly rising" include the Unification Church and many other sects derived from Christianity, as well as derivatives of Buddhism and the famous Korean Religion of the Heavenly Way (Ch'ōndokyo). Among the "popular" religions is Shamanism, which has been a part of Korean life since the beginning of civilization (Clark, 2000, p. 29). Throughout Korean history, Shamanism has maintained its value in society through agricultural rituals such as praying for a bountiful crop or rain (Ju Brown et al. 2006, p. 45). The spread of Christianity in Korea started with the active work of Catholic missionaries in 1784 and Protestant missionaries in 1884, and over time, a predominantly Protestant Christianization took place (Kurtuluş, 2002, p. 198). The influence of relations with the United States of America is important in this Christianization movement. As an example of the developments that contributed to the increase in the number of Christians, the Peace, Friendship, Trade and Maritime Agreement signed in 1882 between the Kingdom of Chosŏn and the United States can be cited. This agreement relieved the activities of American missionaries to a great extent in Korea (Oğuz, 2019, p. 130).

Even though missionaries working in critical regions of the world say that they only carry out a religious mission and that they are far from national or international politics, in reality, missionary activities are in close relationship with Christian power groups. It is possible to see that Western hegemonic powers protect the missionaries in the societies they control politically and militarily, prepare the appropriate environment for their activities and act together with the missionaries. Christian missionary activities have continued as efforts to expand the political and military dominance of various power groups, as well as their religious purpose (Gündüz, 2009, p. 24).

Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that the country where the missionaries work most freely and effectively is Korea, and that the missionaries do more business in Korea than in other countries, because they do not only rely on the power of money, but also resort to actual force and coercion. Another interesting piece of information he gave on the subject is that the criminals accepted Christianity and received protection from the consuls. He stated that thanks to these sophisticated works, the number of Christians in Korea reached millions (1328a, p. 469). A Russian traveler who came to Korea 10-15 years before Abdürreşid İbrahim said that the country where missionaries achieved the least success in the world was Korea, since European customs were viewed extremely negatively (Eşmid, 2019, p. 64). If something has not gone unnoticed, this information shows that Christianity spread very quickly in Korea in a short time.

Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that Christianity helped the consumption of alcohol and that the first tool used by the missionaries in the Orient for their purposes was alcohol. He said that alcohol consumption was very common in Korea and that people who fell drunk could be found almost everywhere. He said that even when a person who has never drunk in his life accepts Christianity would drink alcohol regarding it as the blood of Jesus at least once a year and that he had to drink it religiously. According to him, in order to

understand how Christian scholars cultivate the morality of nations, it is sufficient for the one who is objective and think rightously to make a judgment on this belief (1328a, p. 470). Emphasizing that the consumption of alcohol also seriously damaged the moral structure in Korea, İbrahim Efendi talked about a situation where a missionary gathered a few Koreans, male and female, to serve raki, give them as much as they wanted, and get them all drunk on any evening. He stated that the next morning, the missionary wanted the drowsy Korean to accept Christianity for a glass of raki, and if he accepted, he immediately recorded his name in the notebook and gave a glass of raki (1328a, p. 474).

Christianity has had a great success in Korea compared to other non-Western countries. Foreign Protestant missionaries entered the country mostly thanks to the fact that there were more and more North Americans there in charge of diplomacy, education, medicine, and commerce. In this process, the growth of Catholicism, as well as Buddhism, was weaker. The success of the missionaries is explained by their skill in using the Korean alphabet, their mastery of biomedical methods and technologies, their implicit promise of social freedom and their overt promise of posthumous salvation, and their strong stance concerning development. The city of Pyongyang, which was the center of Korean Protestantism during the colonial period, was called the “Jerusalem of the East”. The identification of Protestantism with resistance to Japanese rule in Korea was also an important factor in the spread of Christianity (Hwang, 2010, pp. 170-171).

There is also information contrary to these generalizations in İbrahim Efendi’s anecdotes. While leaving Korea, where he stayed for a week or ten days, he had an impressive conversation with an outspoken Korean named Van-Bin-Yu (반-빈-유) on the train (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 483). The conversations between the two give a lot of insight into how the current conditions in Korea put people in a state of psychology:

Abdürreşid İbrahim:

“— Isn’t your sect Buddha? Asked İbrahim to the Korean.

The Korean replied,

— Yes, our main sect used to be Buddha. Then I became Orthodox for the sake of interest, now my own mind is my sect” (1328a, pp. 479-480).

It is understood from the statement made by the Korean after Abdürreşid İbrahim said that they should work at least as much as the Japanese did in order to get the country back from the Japanese, in the later stages of the dialogue, that this answer pointed to the political, social or economic impositions behind people’s choices in the Korea of the period:

“— It is too late to take back the country, only if we could preserve our humanitarian law, our lives could have been secured to some extent. Now our entire generation is disappearing. Because drinking is too much, if it continues like this, reproduction will stop. On the one hand, syphilis has also entered, especially all those who have become Christians have been caught by these two diseases, it spreads from month to month, not from year to year. Whoever suffers from hunger in the country becomes a Christian” (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 484).

Morality is often one of the first things to stand out in a society, and the corruption in Korean society makes the suffering of this sensitive Korean understandable. However, for the missionaries, it was a very profitable method to analyze the social, political and economic problems of the people in the region of activity and to take advantage of the conditions created by these problems (Gündüz, 2009, p. 118). Abdürreşid İbrahim was

also uncomfortable with the opportunities provided by the conjuncture to the missionaries, that is, the personal or political weaknesses of the Koreans. As a religion, he considered many beliefs in Christianity, especially the trinity, unacceptable. According to him, only the creed of tawhid and moral values of Islam could revive a society.

It is understood that the missionaries played an active role in the transfer of the Western mentality to Korea and the transfer of Western-style business rules (Uzun, 2010, p. 82). Missionary activities continued for the Christianization of Koreans in one way or another, and in the following years, South Korea became one of the important centers for training missionary in the world.⁴

Abdürreşid İbrahim's Thoughts on Korea's Future

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Japanese rolled their sleeves up for Korea and started their initiatives with the excitement of intervening in the Asian continent. After what he saw in Korea, Abdürreşid İbrahim did not have much hope for the independence of this country. The strong Japanese presence he felt in Korea caused him to draw the conclusion that Korea would no longer be the name of a country after a few years, and that it would become the "Korean Province of Japan". Moreover, he thought that it would be good for Korea to remain under the auspices of Japan because of the other imperialist movements in the region and the intimidation of the Koreans. The Japanese knew the Koreans well and, according to him, could help to some extent in their particular interests (1328a, p. 474). Abdürreşid İbrahim's contact with figures who were influential in political and social life in Japan such as former prime minister Ito Hirobumi, Japanese nationalists Shigenbu Okuma, Mitsuru Toyama, Ryohei Uchida, Tunetaro Nakano and Captain Bukei Ohara must have influenced his approach to this issue (Misawa, 2012, p. 278).

One of the most important handicaps of Abdürreşid İbrahim in Korea was the language problem. He spoke to Koreans mostly through Japanese translators, and he did not know Korean and could not meet a Korean who spoke Russian in Korea. Although he met many Koreans who spoke Japanese, he was not sure of the information he would receive from them, since most of them were supporters of Japanese politics. Besides, his Japanese wasn't very good either. In fact, he wanted to find out if there were groups among those Koreans who were opposed to the ideas he had had (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 475). He had this opportunity only when he was leaving Korea, with a Korean named Van-Bin-Yu, with whom he chatted on the train mentioned above. He was very pleased that the Korean was an open-minded person apart from knowing Russian. He told Van-Bin-Yu that, considering the present situation of the country, he thought Korea was out of the hands of the Koreans, but he might change his mind with the information he received from him. He expressed his sorrow for the sudden extinction of a nation that had reigned for thousands of years and wanted to know his thoughts on the future of Korea (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 479-480).

On the other hand, Van-Bin-Yu said that their country was lost because they could not think of their own interests. According to him, the Japanese administration could be better compared to the Korean administration, but even though the administration of the Korean government was not good, it would not be too disturbed because it was his own

⁴ Today, South Korea is among the leading countries in the world in terms of the number of missionaries. It comes second after the USA among the countries having the most Christian missionaries. In proportion to the population, it is on top of the list. Korean missionaries are sent to the target regions or countries determined by the churches, and they are the volunteers who get government grants. Poor countries, especially the ones in Asia and Africa which suffer from civil war, are preferred for the missionary activities (Selçuk Çolakoğlu et al. 2008, p. 45).

father, like a child who was victimized and oppressed by his father. Van-Bin-Yu added to his statements that although the Japanese invested a lot in Korea and treated the people well, no one owned their own house and had to share half of their earnings with the Japanese, and frequently emphasized patriotism in his speeches (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 480-486). With his words, he seems to have expressed a feeling about the current situation that many Koreans can't agree to. This feeling would become more evident in the following years, and Korea, which it annexed in 1910 after the patronage period, would become the colony that caused the most problems for Japan (Huffman, 2020, p. 114).

Despite the hopeless picture drawn by the Korean, Abdürreşid İbrahim said that they should not be discouraged and that they should work to get their country back from the Japanese. Because without applying the methods required by knowledge and time, it was impossible to live, and the country could not be protected with ignorance. Van-Bin-Yu, on the other hand, was of the opinion that it was too late for them to get their homeland back. He thought that the inability to protect their humanitarian law caused them to be unable to protect their lives and that they turned into bodies without souls with the material and moral losses they experienced. In the face of this pessimistic attitude, Abdürreşid İbrahim stated that the Koreans should focus on education and training for a few years for their national domination, and then they can gain their independence by taking advantage of the opportunity. He felt the need to point out to him that the Tatars had been under Russian rule for four hundred years, but that they did not despair. Moreover, he said that if the Japanese did not invade Korea, the Russians would invade, and the dialogues continued in this way (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, pp. 484-485).

Cemil Meriç stated that until the 19th century, thousands of people who have a high opinion of thought and emotion spent their lives for the explanation, interpretation and spread of Islam, but the material conquests of Europe brought about the silence of Islamic scholars and they faded from the scene (Meriç, 2016, p. 228). Hodja Abdürreşid İbrahim, who was passionately devoted to the Ottoman Empire, was among those who resisted, and he did not lose anything from his enthusiasm for preaching Islam. However, he could not explain Islam in Korea due to insufficient means. In the letter he sent from Seoul to his Muslim friend Ohara in Japan on June 25, 1909, he wrote that he could not do the work that he considered his duty, that is, telling people to accept Islam, and that he could not teach Islam to the Koreans, since he stayed in Korea for a short time and did not know Korean. However, he stated that they would fulfill this duty after their societies decided and the mosques in Tokyo were completed (Abdürreşid İbrahim, 1328a, p. 476). Abdürreşid İbrahim made some attempts to promote the religion of Islam in Japan, and agreed with the Muslims there on the construction of mosques in Japan and the work to be done to spread Islam (Barlak, 2020b, pp. 671-692).

Issues such as the Koreans' addiction to alcohol and the disorder of social life upset Abdürreşid İbrahim, and he suffered the agony of not being able to introduce this religion to a nation that could be revived with Islam. It is stated that one of the reasons why Koreans inclined to Christianity is the overlap between monotheistic belief in Korean Shamanism and belief in God in Christianity (Ju Brown et al. 2006, p. 45). This is strange. Because in Christianity, belief in God is based on the perception of trinity, which consists of three elements (Theophilus Antiochenus, *Ad Autolyicum*, I: XV; Marshall, 2004, pp. 17-44; Dünzl, 2007, pp. 11-20): the God [the Father], the Son of God [Jesus] (The Holy Bible, Mk. 1:1; Lk. 22: 70) and the Holy Spirit (The Holy Bible, Mt. 28:19). On the other hand, the religion of Islam has a pure belief in one god (The Holy Qur'ân and Its Meaning, 2018, İhlâs 112/1-4; Maturîdî, 2003, pp. 37-42; Eliade, 2003, p. 93). In other words, considering the monotheistic belief, there seems to be a stronger possibility that Koreans would accept

Islam if they were exposed to Islam and Christianity simultaneously. Perhaps because of such an intuition, the fact that he could not explain Islam to the Koreans upset Abdürreşid İbrahim even more.

Abdürreşid İbrahim was shaken by the exposure of the Koreans to a religion that he knew had been corrupted. Christians could, of course, invite people to their religion. What bothered him was the possibility that Islam could not be presented to the Koreans simultaneously, that it could not be conveyed, or that it was misrepresented as he saw it in Japan (Barlak, 2020a, pp. 188-197). Korean Eun Soo Kim, who converted to Islam in 2003, can be cited as a vivid example of this situation. Kim, who became a Muslim during her university years, states that she first met Christianity when she searched for a god, but she moved away from this religion because of some issues, especially the belief in the triple god in Christianity. Later, during his trip to Turkey, Kim was influenced by what happened between him and the two Turks, and started to research Islam. Saying that Islam was taught to them in high school years as a religion founded by Muhammad and in a very different way from the original, Kim found the creator god he was looking for in Islam after three months of hard research and said that it was the last religion of that god (Allah) (the religion of Allah). He discovered that it was Islam (Kim, 2019).

One hope of Abdürreşid İbrahim came true when South Korea gained independence [1945] (Lee, 2007, p. 10), 36 years after his trip to Korea. In the Korean War (1950-1953), which took place shortly after independence, the Turks took an important step to improve their friendship with the Koreans. With a decision taken on July 25, 1950, Turkey became the first state after the United States to declare that it would send troops to Korea (Artuç, 1990, p. 109). The total number of people in the three Turkish brigades participating in the Korean War was 15.000. In the war that lasted for three years, the Turks lost 3.277 people in total including martyrs, wounded, captured and lost (Artuç, 1990, p. 352). The first three brigades fought successfully in every battle they entered and honored the Turkish Armed Forces which they belonged to. With their courage and behavior, they won the great love and respect of South Koreans. The Ankara School, which was opened and supported by the brigade in the city of Suwon in the most critical environment of the war during the 1st Brigade's time, has an important role in this (Özçelik, 2017, p. 20).

Due to the fact that Abdürreşid İbrahim could not teach Islam to the Koreans, the unfulfilled desire he had was satisfied by the Turks in the same process. Abdülgafur Karaismailoğlu and Zübeyir Koç, the brigade imams that Turkey sent to South Korea, informed the Koreans about Islam at the conferences they gave in Seoul. They also opened a mosque there. As a result of their work, many Koreans became Muslims. Abdullah Yu-Do and Omer Abdurrahman Jin-Kyu Kim, who were Muslim Koreans, founded the Korean Islamic Society in 1955. The activities of Turkish army imams also attracted the attention of other Islamic countries. In the 1960s, preachers from Malaysia and Pakistan came and tried to spread Islam. In 1967, some Muslim groups established an institution under the name of Korea Islamic Foundation and gained a legal status in the eye of the government. The 1970s were the years when Islam was recognized and spread rapidly in Korea. In 1976, mosques were built in Seoul, then in Busan and Kwangju. The number of Muslims in South Korea rose to 10.000 in 1979; In 1994, it rose to 35.000. The number of mosques in the country increased to five (Lee, 2002, pp. 200-201). Although Islam seems to have been delivered to a very limited number of Koreans in South Korea, it is understood that the number of Muslims in the country is increasing day by day.

Conclusion

Turkish/Tatar activist Abdürreşid İbrahim Efendi's examinations and evaluations on the political positions and belief-morality profiles of the countries he visited have a special place in his travels. His course of action is the same in Korea, where he was at the beginning of the summer of 1909. He paid close attention to the political, religious and social issues of this country, where he stayed for a very short time, and evaluated what he saw and heard from his own perspective. In his travel notes, he focused on the general characteristics of the Koreans, their similarities to the Tatars, and presented vivid, if not detailed, accounts of Korean cities, towns and villages. Hard living conditions of the Koreans and the burnout syndrome he observed in the society affected him deeply. Despite some of the negativities he faced, he adopted a protective and supportive attitude towards the Koreans, with an approach stemming from his sympathy for the Eastern nations, his religious belief, and his anti-imperialist and nationalist point of view. Almost like a Korean patriot, he felt the pain of this country and made suggestions to overcome the troubles. He could not help himself from associating a small good behavior he encountered with the Koreans' Eastern style of upbringing.

By 1909, after the agreements signed one after another at the beginning of the 20th century, Japanese influence in Korea had become more evident. Korea, which Abdürreşid İbrahim saw, was a country where Japanese influence was noticed from administration to education, from transportation to urban layout. He had established strong connections in Japan, where he stayed for a long time before Korea, and liked the Japanese as a nation. Moreover, he had great religious and political ideals for the Japanese. Despite this, he did not want Korea to be a colony of Japan. A different attitude could not be expected from a Turkish intellectual who was suffering from the fact that Tatar Turks remained under Russian rule for four hundred years. In effect, the Koreans he spoke to seemed to have already accepted Japanese rule. However, he still tried to discover a spirit of resistance for independence in Koreans, and made statements to the Koreans with whom he had dialogues so as to stimulate the idea and excitement of independence. The reason why he said that Japan would be the best colonial administration if Korea became a colony stemmed from the fact that he never saw other options as acceptable.

Christianity was spreading rapidly in Korea thanks to the operations led by the North Americans. Abdürreşid İbrahim, who immediately realized this situation, was disturbed by the activities of the Christian missionaries. He was almost certain that the Western mentality and Western style of life would enter Korea with the missionaries. He had no confidence in any of the Western powers that passionately went to almost every corner of the world, and he saw missionaries as representatives of the West. He did not believe that any Westerner would contribute to the development of a country for the good of the people living there. He was of the opinion that what they gave with a spoon, they would take back with a ladle. Even if the Westerners apparently provided development support, they would actually win. On one hand they would offer some benefits, on the other hand they would kill the feeling, thought, morality and tradition of the people of that country. Moreover, he could not deliver the message of Islam to the Koreans. His time was limited and he did not speak Korean. He was sad because he thought that only through Islam could people be liberated individually and as a society.

Abdürreşid İbrahim's impressions of Korea and his thoughts on this country provide an example of human sensitivities. Rather than remaining as a mere spectator, he showed a great empathy for the distressed Korean people, even if he was not one of them. With his approach to Koreans, he showed that altruism is almost a political virtue as well as a moral one. In *Âlem-i İslam*, İbrahim Efendi gave some valuable information, including Korean political history, missionary movements in Korea, Korean traditions, Korean national

characteristics, etc. It is significant that this information is conveyed by a Muslim Tatar Turk who felt close to the Koreans. In this way, he revealed the social and cultural commonalities between the Koreans and the Turks more than a century ago. Abdürreşid İbrahim can be considered a pioneer for those who want to get to know Korea and the Koreans today. Those who are interested in Korea as a researcher or in different ways will get some valuable information from him, and it will probably be interesting for the Koreans to look at themselves from the perspective of a Turkish Muslim activist who came to their country one hundred and twelve years ago.

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