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# Social Change in the Works of Cemil Meriç and Kemal Tahir

## *Cemil Meriç ve Kemal Tahir'in Eserlerinde Toplumsal Değişme*

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## Abstract

*The concept of social change is at the core of sociology and social structure studies. From this point of view, considering the social structure of Turkey, social change refers to the processes of Westernization, modernization, and globalization which started in the Tanzimat Era and is still progressing. Even though it is given different names or definitions, this whole process corresponds to a single social change movement in the history of Turkish society. This change, which is in progress from the Ottoman Empire to the Establishment of Turkish Republic, from the first years of the Republic to the present, is generally referred as Westernization. Cemil Meriç and Kemal Tahir are two important thinkers who should be referenced in order to understand the social structure of Turkey. Meriç dealt with social change as the main factor determining the structure of Turkish society and he tried to investigate the impact of historical processes such as Tanzimat Era and the proclamation of the Republic on the social structure of Turkey. Tahir, on the other hand, presented his works with a sociological perspective as a novelist who believed that the problems of Turkish society could be resolved within the framework of historical and social conditions. In the works of both Meriç and Tahir, the structure of Turkish society is dealt with on the themes of the East - the West conflict, Westernization and social change. The most important common feature of Meriç and Tahir is that they both analyze the society with an indigenous frame of reference, but with a critical approach. Both names are the great thinkers who tried to find solutions to the social problems of Turkish society; both set out to conquer the world of Western thought and they reached their national values at the end of the journey.*

*Keywords: Social Structure, Social Change, Cemil Meriç, Kemal Tahir, Social Structure of Turkey.*

## *Özet*

*Toplumsal değişme kavramı, toplumsal yapı analizinin ve sosyolojinin merkezinde yer almaktadır. Buradan hareketle Türkiye'nin sosyal yapısı ele alınırken toplumsal değişme; Tanzimat ile başlayıp günümüze kadar etkileri süren Batılılaşma, modernleşme ve küreselleşme süreçlerini ifade etmektedir. Farklı isimlerle ifade edilse, başka şekillerde tanımlansa da bu sürecin tamamı, Türk toplum tarihi içinde tek bir toplumsal değişme hareketine karşılık gelmektedir. Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete, Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından günümüze kadar uzanan bu değişim, genelde Batılılaşma olarak anılmaktadır. Cemil Meriç ve Kemal Tahir, Türkiye'nin toplumsal yapısını anlamak bağlamında başvurulması gereken iki önemli düşünce*

*adamıdır. Meriç, Türk toplum yapısını belirleyen temel etmen olarak toplumsal değişmeyi ele almış; Tanzimat Devri, Cumhuriyetin ilanı gibi tarihsel süreçlerin Türkiye'nin toplumsal yapısındaki etkilerini gözlemlemeye çalışmıştır. Tahir ise, Türk toplumunun sorunlarının tarihî ve sosyal şartlar çerçevesinde çözüme kavuşabileceğine inanan bir romancı olarak eserlerini sosyolojik bir bakışla ortaya koymuştur. Hem Meriç'in hem Tahir'in eserlerinde, Türk toplum yapısını; Doğu-Batı çatışması, Batılılaşma ve toplumsal değişme ekseninde ele aldıkları görülmektedir. Meriç ve Tahir'in en önemli özelliği; yerlilik ekseninde, fakat eleştirel bir yaklaşımla toplumsal çözümlemeler yapmasıdır. Türk toplumunun sosyal sorunlarına çözüm bulmaya çalışmış olan iki isim de Batı düşünce dünyasını fethetmek üzere yola çıkmış ve yolculuk sonunda kendi millî değerlerine ulaşmıştır.*

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal Yapı, Toplumsal Değişme, Cemil Meriç, Kemal Tahir, Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Societies are not static structures that remain the same and do not change (Marshall, 2009: 136). Social change is a universal and inevitable process experienced within the framework of each society's own dynamics; it is a historical event (Tolan, 2005: 279; Arslantürk & Amman, 2011: 423; Ozankaya, 1973: 47). When social change occurs, the relations that make up the social structure and the social institutions that regulate these relations also change (Bottomore, 2015: 313). Accordingly, social change refers to an interactive process. The concept of social change deals with the changes in the social context in an objective way, without making a value judgment.

Sociology originates in the necessity of explaining the sweeping changes in the social structure ushered in by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, social change has been one of the most important subjects of sociology. Cemil Meriç and Kemal Tahir also consider social change as a fundamental social problem. In this study, the social change approaches of Meriç and Tahir has been analyzed both at the conceptual level, that is, in the context of contemporary sociological theories; and at the factual level, that is, in the context of their perspectives on Turkey's social change process.

## 2. SOCIAL CHANGE

Dramatical changes in the social structure in the period following the 1789 French Revolution and the mid-eighteen-century Industrial Revolution were the reasons that prepared the emergence of sociology as a science. The attempts to explain the structural changes of societies and social institutions resulted in sociological analysis. Therefore, social change has always been one of the main subjects of sociology.

Social change is a phenomena that has existed throughout history consistently influenced by various factors. Change can occur as a result of geographical mobility and population density arising from population growth. As well, it can be rooted in state and government policies, social movements created by non-governmental organizations, social processes that begin through discovery and expansion, technological developments, international political and economic changes (Marshall, 2009: 136; Arslantürk & Amman, 2011: 440).

Saint-Simon, as an early social theorist, has a great effect on Meriç and his social analysis. On the social change, Saint-Simon's ideas developed in two different ways. On one hand, he wanted to preserve society. On the other side, he realized the need for social reforms, especially in the economic system (Ritzer, 2010: 15).

August Comte, who had an enormous influence on later sociological theorists, was one of the first theoreticians concerned with social change, besides social statistics. To analyze the laws of social life, both social statistics and social dynamics were given importance. Though, he reflected those social dynamics significantly influences the scientific analysis of the society (Ritzer, 2010: 15).

Emile Durkheim's view of social change is more of an evolutionary nature (Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992: 182). In his work titled Division of Labor in Society, he states that changes in the division of labor have a significant impact on the social structure. Durkheim built his social change analysis on the basis of the way the individual brings the society together and the form of social solidarity established by the individual. According to him, one of the main causes of social change is population growth and the growing division of labor. In traditional civilizations, family and society was self-sufficient, there was a low division of labor, and the social structure was characterized by mechanical solidarity. In contrast, specialization of tasks and increasing social differentiation shapes the modern society (Durkheim, 1960: 57; 268; Ritzer: 2010: 85). These new forms of social organization resulted in the evolution of the social structure, in which division of labor has become much more complex, from the mechanical solidarity to an organic one (Slattery, 2011: 115).

As a result of social change, modern society is integrated with a bond of organic solidarity. Mutual interest and economic dependence have transformed modern society into a structure that can survive with cooperation.

According to Karl Marx, who examines social change within the framework of dialectical materialism, history is an ongoing process, and the basic dynamic of this progress is economic development. Society consists of social, political, and ideological institutions (state, law, family, etc.) and these institutions are shaped by the economic infrastructure consisting of productive forces, instruments of production and relations of production. Those who own the means of production and those who take an active role in the production process are in a dialectical relationship. The dialectical relationship means that the social structure is in constant conflict with its opposite. Capital owners increase the exploitation of the workforce in order to maintain their profits, and thus class struggle deepens (Marx & Engels, 2013: 30-41; 61; 63; Slattery, 2011: 103; 105; Arslantürk & Amman, 2011: 435; Kongar, 1995: 121). Working class sells its labor in the production process but cannot buy the product it produces in the mode of production that aims for profit. This alienation pushes the working class to struggle to change the mode of production, and this struggle ushers in a new society with a new economic system through revolution (Hughes, Sharrock & Martin, 2003: 52). Such a revolution, in which the mode of production changes, transforms ideas and institutions as well as production process and property relations (Lefebvre, 1905: 52). The entire social structure, such as family relations, state structure, property relations, classes and division of labor, undergoes changes following the mode of production. In summary, according to Marx's materialist conception of history, social change is a prospective, essential, and predictable process arising from conflict (Marx & Engels, 2013: 54-55; 61; Arslantürk & Amman, 2011: 435).

Max Weber, who wrote The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism by examining the great changes led by the Industrial Revolution and capitalism, indicates that there are connections between social change and religion. Contrary to Marx, he thinks that non-economic factors play a key role in the changes of modern society (Giddens, 2006: 92). Accordingly, religious belief has a great place among the reasons that trigger the pressure required for social change (Weber, 2011: 76). Weber (1949: 27), who criticizes those who analyze social change with the concept of progress, also rejects the single-factor view and argues that change should be approached from a pluralistic perspective, and that change may arise from many unpredictable reasons (Ritzer, 2010: 27; Swingewood, 1998: 168). He sees the rationalization process as one of the results of social change in modern societies and states that the rationalized society loses the warmth and humanity of social life and moves away from the things that make sense of human existence (Weber, 2011: 155-156). Emphasizing the importance of authority while addressing the factors that play a role in change,

Weber implies that social change will begin thanks to rationalization and bureaucratization, but charismatic authority will be required to maintain it (Ritzer, 2010: 133).

## 3. SOCIAL CHANGE IN CEMIL MERIÇ

Meriç emphasizes the subject of social change in his works. However, he has dealt with social change from a negative point of view. According to him, social change is a process which results in colonization, materialization, and alienation.

Meriç declares that in every age social change occurs through the interaction of civilizations. Additionally, he defines the East as a civilization that has inspired the world for centuries (Meriç, 2015a: 149). As a result of the technical, economic, scientific and cultural changes experienced by the West, two civilizations have had a one-way interaction; from the West to the East (Meriç, 2016a: 99). According to Cemil Meriç, Eastern civilizations had been coming to the end of their glory and the Western society wanted to destroy the weakening Eastern civilizations. Therefore, the West presented the innovations it experienced as a necessity and a must for civilization and aimed to colonize the East (Meriç, 2009: 30). As stated in Meriç, colonization, which is hidden behind various names, plays an important role in social change. Exploitative practices of the colonialists were first called as "Europeanization" and then "Westernization", and finally when these are considered repulsive, it was called "modernization". Yet, the exploitation has been continued under all these names (Meriç, 2016a: 99). Meriç approaches the colonization/colonialization process as an economic and cultural result of social change. The colonization process includes results such as development and capitalization as well as the processes of Europeanization, Westernization and modernization.

Meriç states that "Europeanization" is the first phase of the colonization process and it emerged in the 16th century. Since then, Europe, which has been "an uneasy spirit that has not been able to establish its order" has used this name to spill blood on the world. "Europeanization" aims to provide those social systems which are suitable for Europe to invade non-European societies. Therebeside, it intends to inspire exploited peoples to be like their masters (Meriç, 2009: 33; 38; 43; 45). In spite of all, Meriç thinks that there are two completely different societies and that it is not possible for them to resemble each other (Meriç, 2016b: 25).

According to Meriç, "Westernization" is an expression which was made up by our enemies to hide their exploits. "Europeanization" changed into "Westernization" after the loss of power in Europe and the emergence of the imperial aims of the USA on the world stage. However, Eastern civilizations became conscious and understood the imperial aims behind "Westernization" and found this word disturbing. As a result, "modernization", which is a more comprehensive concept, has replaced Westernization (Meriç, 2009: 32; 45; 2016b: 25).

Meriç considers modernization as an economic-based social change on the axis of development-underdevelopment. In the classification and comparison of societies, cultural or geographical features are not regarded but economic success is taken as a criterion. Societies that are considered underdeveloped or outdated aim to accelerate social change by achieving economic success through social and political planning. For Meriç, "modernization" is the name given to this process and it functions as a model of social change. He also remarks that "modernization" is a cultural assimilation (Meriç, 2009: 46-49; 99). For the sake of "modernization" he mentions, we adopt the spiritual values of the West and move away from our own values and finally become alienated from ourselves. Since modernity and anachronism, development and underdevelopment are determined within the framework of the criteria determined by the West, they represent a one-sided reality (Meriç, 2016b: 25).

Meriç considers capitalization or industrialization as a social change in the economic field. He sees colonization as a process determined by the capitalist economy, and he quotes "The history of modern colonization is an aspect of the history of capitalism." (Meriç, 2009: 93). In order for industrial development to be possible in the East, it was necessary to adopt a capitalist economic system accepted by the West, which dominates the industry (Meriç, 1992: 162). Thus, the East industrialized in order to modernize, and it became capitalist in order to industrialize. The international relations of Western countries are shaped by the politics of colonization. Therefore, the capitalization process of the Eastern society has been used as an opportunity of new markets for the goods produced by the West. Western politics considered it necessary to change the habits and behaviors of the local society in order to make them buy the goods. In this manner, unindustrialized countries have been culturally exploited (Meriç, 2009: 439).

Meriç criticizes materialization as another result of social change. The materialization process also includes the stages such as rationalization and commodification. The development of science and positivist thought has caused rationalization; thereafter society has become commodified, materialized and lost its values with the effect of rationalization (Meriç, 1999: 357).

Meriç criticizes to approach positivism with a progressive point of view, and he estimates it as a process with heavy consequences. Positivism means "non-metaphysical" or "non-theological". From this point of view, he thinks that positivism is an ideology against religious and spiritual values (Meriç, 1999: 35; 290). For him, while the positivist Western societies were strengthened financially, they lost power and remained incomplete spiritually. He said; "They killed their soul, turned their back to the universe, became alienated to the great, eternal and absolute truth. In a word, they sold their souls to the devil." (Meriç, 2016a: 241).

As reported by Meriç, rationalization is one of the factors that confronts the society with the result of materialization. Rationalism means rationalness, according to him, and the European understanding of rationalism does not correspond to reason, which has a special place in Islam. In Islam, the human mind is a way to realize the divine wisdom. The Western rationalist understanding does not accept any phenomenon as real unless the human mind can reach it (Meriç, 2016a: 327; 1984: 66; 78). Rationalization is a curse that has affected all areas of social life (Meriç, 2016b: 18) and its main purpose is to destroy spirituality and to establish morality on foundations other than theology (Meriç, 1984: 22). Rationalism, by rejecting holiness and making individuality an independent external reality, causes a rupture of relations between the individual and society (Meriç, 2009: 335). The rationalist view was both shaped by the influence of capitalism and bureaucracy and also created capitalism and bureaucracy. Meriç describes rationalism as a covering on the murders and ingloriousness of capitalism and notes that it enslaves the individual by commodification (Meriç, 2016b: 18). In contemporary society, human beings are only half of a whole, according to him. Today's people are spiritually deficient and exist only materially (Meriç, 2016a: 215).

As for Meriç, rationality itself is irrational and humankind's commodification is named as rationalization (Meriç, 2016: 187-188). Moreover, the effect of Protestant ethics and Calvinism on European thought is not rationalization, as Weber claimed, but commodification. Meriç defines commodification as alienation of a producer from her/his product and the product's process of becoming an objective reality. He also states that alienation and commodification complete each other. Commodification is one of the factors that provides the necessary environment for Capitalization. According to Meriç, today's Capitalist world, which humanity has to live in, is irrational as well as it is commodified (Meriç, 2016b: 21-22). The commodification puts people under the command of their own work and furthermore it is a "consciousness disorder" that is inhumane and destructive for people and values (Meriç, 1999: 207, Meriç, 2016b: 22).

Meriç regards alienation as the most important result of social change. He describes two types of alienation. The first one is the alienation of the East and especially the Islamic civilization from its past bright times (the successes it achieved in science, art, politics and trade) (Meriç, 2009: 213). The second type of alienation refers to the loss of national consciousness and the destruction of national values. Turkish society has become economically and subsequently socially alienated after the economic invasion of Europe; this is an example for the second type of alienation. The social change movement initiated in the Tanzimat Period led to devastating results such as harming the national culture, loss of national consciousness and alienation of the intelligentsia (Meriç, 1999: 279). In this context, it is necessary to focus on Meriç's views on culture and civilization, language change and the role of the intellectual.

Meriç deals with culture and civilization through a comparative analysis of Eastern and Western civilizations on the axis of social change. He recognizes that Western civilization has made progress in technical and scientific fields; however, he opposes imposing this level of civilization and the historical development process of this civilization on other nations. For Meriç, civilization should be understood and studied in a historical context. He criticizes the West's progressive and evolutionary approach to the concept of civilization, which connects the past to the present (Meriç, 2015b: 52). According to him, each civilization has its own historical development line, and the West takes place in human history only as a chapter (Meriç, 2015a: 167-168). Evaluation of the West as the highest and most advanced civilization is a misconception that occurred due to the fact that scientific and technical developments were experienced in the West. Thus, the West has found a legitimate means of colonization by creating the aim of "civilizing countries where science and technology are not developed" (Ata, 2014: 166). For the West, especially for Europe, civilization is a purpose more than a reality (Meriç, 2016b: 82). Through the concepts of culture and civilization, the West threatens the fundamental elements of the social dynamics of the East (Ak, 2014: 158).

On the relationship between culture and civilization with social change, Meriç expresses that interaction between civilizations is inevitable and cultural diversity is important in the progress of civilizations. In this context, while societies affect each other, social issues cannot be transferred from one society to another as they are, and the effort to transfer eliminates the richness provided by diversity. Meriç gives importance to language, and he highlights that the language of a nation creates its national memory and culture represents this memory. Language is the way a society communicates with itself. Societies are able to know, understand, or record their past, values, works and goals with the opportunities provided by the language (Taşdelen, 2010: 98). Alphabet revolution, which he considers as the only freedom in the republican period, and language simplification are the policies that are applied on the language (Meriç, 2017: 266). As a result, these changes in Turkish language destroyed the culture, cut the ties between the traditions and society, and left the society rootless. The bridges between generations have been blown and a generation that lost its memory has been produced (Meriç, 2015a: 70). Language has lost its richness, thus generating ideas has become worthless and subsequently, the foundation of civilization has been shaken (Meriç, 2015b: 161). According to Meriç, the language revolution is a Vandalism and Turkish intellectuals competed each other in harming the language. He is against the intervention in the language and mentions that the language will develop on the same terms as the society. According to him, no one has the authority to reach this common treasure of past, present, and future. He verbalizes that it is crazy to move the language away from its richness by the means of narrowing it down, especially with the policy of purifying Turkish from foreign language words. Meriç also emphasizes that such a harmful change will not occur in any region of the world (Meriç, 2017: 266-270).

Meriç analyzes and criticizes social change deeply, therefore he did not deal educational institutions out. The most important aim of education is to raise intellectuals. In Meriç's thought, the intellectual actually means the ideal person. He compares the madrasa, the educational institution of the ulema class, with the European-style schools of the intelligentsia. Meriç describes the ulema as individuals from the public. The education given by the madrasa opened every door in the Ottoman Empire as it was the only educational institution. To become a Kazasker, imam or mudarris (madrasa teacher), it was necessary to have a madrasa education. The ulama did not give importance in worldly affairs and they turned to religious life in time. Hence, they stayed away from the developments in the West such as the Reformation, the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution. Eventually, this class lost its effectiveness and socially fell into background (Meriç, 1999: 391).

With the importance of westernization in the Ottoman Empire, education became westernized and European-style educational institutions were opened. The Translation Office has become the main institution that trains intellectuals. Besides, the primary condition of being an intellectual/scholar was considered as knowing a foreign language. Moreover, Meriç embodies that knowing a foreign language could bring a person up to the position of grand vizier (the prime minister in Ottoman). There was no need for any other qualifications. He criticized the superficiality of education in the Tanzimat Period (Meriç, 1999: 392).

It is clearly seen that Meriç concerns the Turkish education history with a critical approach. With the development of science, the Turkish education system has got out of date and has become empty in content. Schools have not been able to have a fully European-style content, have not been able to recognize the great ideas of the West, and have not been able to provide a high level of foreign language education. In addition to these, the education system does not have a fully national character. Eastern thinkers are not found to be worth reading, young generations grow up without knowing their history because they cannot read Ottoman Turkish, the establishment of a secular education system has raised a generation that has lost its spiritual values (Meriç, 2017: 267).

As for alienation, it is one of the consequences of social change and Meriç blames Turkish intellectuals for being responsible for alienation (Cangızbay, 2006: 536). Turkish intellectuals do not, cannot or do not want to see that social movements such as modernization, secularization and liberalization naturally progressed in Western societies. As a result, the intellectuals got disconnected from the social reality and alienated from its own people, history and values (Meriç, 2004: 210; 2017: 61). Meriç refers to the intellectual class as the "janissary of the West" and "the destitute". The intellectual class of the Tanzimat Era lost its identity and cultural values during the Westernization period (Meriç, 1999: 279). He describes the intellectual group who tried to memorize European thought like a catechism as a foolish servant who steals medications from his master. He means that they imitated the practices of Western societies without understanding Western thought. The intelligentsia was in a state of unconsciousness. Without knowing the essence, history and scope; Turkish intellectuals used the terms such as modernizing and modernization which express the bad intentions and political ambitions of the West (Meriç, 2009: 32; 79-80; 2017: 229). Meriç, after 19th century intellectual class, denotes that the intellectuals in the 20th century did not know the West but they either admired or became hostile to the West. He criticizes these two fronts. The mistakes made by the intellectuals under the influence of the Westernization movements of the Tanzimat and Republican era made a group hostile to the West. This group, hiding behind tradition, approached all innovations with hesitation, fear and hostility. On the other hand, there was a segment that did not realize the disappearing values while Westernizing, that regarded tradition as obscurantism, that did not know its past or that was

ashamed of it. This group admired and accepted every Western thought without question. Both groups have dragged Turkish society to an intellectual and political disintegration, corruption and extinction (Meriç, 2004: 197). "It is blindness not to learn Europe but the person who learns Europe got disconnected from his country." Meriç says (Meriç, 2017: 282). He thinks that intellectual alienation is a bilateral situation in Turkey. Just like being stuck in the past, escaping from it is an alienation that will always lose eventually.

When it comes to religious institution, Meriç analyzed it by comparing the Muslim East with the Christian West. East represents soul, spirituality and heart. The West, on the other hand, separates physical and spiritual activities and value only the material without understanding the unity of spirit and material (Meriç, 2018: 23; 29).

According to Meriç, the Ottoman Empire represents a miracle, because it perfectly incorporated Turkish blood and the religion of Islam (Meriç, 2017: 260). Thanks to Islam, the Ottoman Empire established a civilization based on the unity of faith, assembling different nations under the same roof. The administration of Ottoman Empire was based on the ecclesiastical rules that Meriç defines as "nomocracy". This type of an administration benefited from the pan-islamism and it got its strength from principles such as supremacy of ecclesiastical law. Meriç states that Islam is a religion based on equality and democratic perspective. Islam has already conquered the equality that the West is trying to achieve, he says. In the modern Western perspective, God is the mind. However, according to Meriç, this perspective has chained society to materials and figures. The religion of Islam does not divide people materially and spiritually. In the West, rationalism opposes the church and religion because the church protects privileges such as the class and the wealth. In the Ottoman Empire, wealth does not bring any privileges to individuals. From a legal point of view, Islam makes the caliph and the beggar equal, does not recognize any class and appeals to humanity. Religion is an opium for Europe. For the Ottomans, religion is consciousness, communion, love. In terms of Western society structure, secularization is a progress. Meriç emphasizes that in Turkish society secularization resulted in spiritual disintegration (Meriç, 1999: 282; 2016a: 172-182).

According to Meriç, the religion of Islam lost its social importance in the social change experienced in the years from the Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic. During the Tanzimat Era, Ottoman intellectuals admired the strengthening Western civilization. In this period, rationalization and secularization processes were imitated inexperiencedly and roughly by ignoring historical and social differences. However, they resulted in failure. According to Meriç, to become westernized means to move away from Islam and to break with belief (Meriç, 1999: 291; 397). Europe's relationship with the East was driven by imperialist aims, and the West aimed to kill the divine feelings in the Turkish intellectuals and to turn the Ottomans into an ethnic dust. Europe achieved these imperialist goals, at least on the part of the intellectuals. The intelligentsia regarded Islam as obscurantism and instead, they adopted Western materialistic values. The public was faithful to their religion, but their faith was transformed into a shallow, apathetic and reified belief (Meriç, 2016a: 176-177; 2017: 230). In the years after the proclamation of the Republic, a new state ruled by bureaucrats was created and the Westernization movement that started in the Tanzimat Era was institutionalized. Islam is the institution that keeps our ties with the Ottomans alive, as it is the basic element that makes up the Ottoman lifestyle. However, the Republican regime wanted to cut its connection with its roots in the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, the Republican ideology paid attention to emphasize the Central Asian roots by deliberately leaving religion in the background (Meriç, 1999: 164; 293; 398).

Social change constitutes the basic context of Meriç's thoughts and works. In this article, his views and comments on the concepts of culture and civilization, the elements that make up the

culture, the education system, the Turkish intellectual, and the religion as a social institution have been analyzed in the social change context. Meriç's critical point of view to the social change could be seen in all his works. Because he was known as a conservationist, his viewpoint seems predictable. However, Meriç emphasizes that his travel started in the Western world of ideas. Meanwhile, Meriç strengthens his ideas referring to many different thinkers and eventually he arrives a point which is distinctive and synthesized.

## 4. SOCIAL CHANGE IN KEMAL TAHIR

Kemal Tahir focused on analyzing the dynamics of the Turkish social structure in his works and he tried to examine the historical background of social change (Gündüz, 2010: 322). In his works, he dealt with the living conditions of the Ottoman society, the transformation to the Republican regime, and the traces of this process in social life.

One of the reasons for Tahir to focus on the subject of social change is to reach the unchanging, underlying phenomenon. He concludes that the underlying basis of the change is the East-West opposition (Eğribel, 2010: 65; Yıldırım, 2010: 272). Tahir considers the Westernization process as a policy and displays a negative approach to this process. On the other hand, he accepts the expressions "modernization" and "rationalization" as concepts referring to a positive change (Tahir, 1992a: 13).

Dealing with the change in the transition period from the Ottoman state and society structure to the Republican period, Tahir first analyzes the social conditions under which this change took place. As an Eastern state, the Ottoman Empire undertook the task of defending the East against the West. In addition, in the Ottoman social structure, the state took on the task of continuing production and providing basic services. When the territory of the Ottoman Empire expanded as a result of military and political successes, the defense costs of the state and the cost of the services it provided to the society increased. Therefore, the state began to fail to fulfill its duties, and this caused deterioration in the social order. Meanwhile, the bourgeois class in the West was growing, developing its economic and political power, forming a unique idea and belief system, and establishing its dominance by winning social and political victories. While the bourgeois class developed and strengthened by gaining experience in trade, politics, law and science, it also changed and strengthened the Western states with itself. While the West was getting stronger, the Eastern states were confident of their own power and superiority until they suffered major military defeats. It was these great military defeats that made the Ottomans accept the superiority of the West. Only after these defeats, Ottoman statesmen believed that a change was necessary and took the technical developments of the West as an example (Tahir, 1992b: 391-392; 313-314).

Tahir is also interested in how the change takes place and deals with this process, which started in the Tanzimat Period and extended to the Republican years, in the context of historical continuity. He states that social change in the Ottoman Empire occurred as an obligatory, slow, top-down and baseless process. In order to prevent collapse, statesmen applied to Westernization first in the military and technical field, and then as a cultural modeling process. In this process, the Ottoman state structure had to resemble a structure that represented the opposite of itself and could even be considered its enemy. While applying this undesirable change, the governors adopted a principle of "the later the better and the less the better". Tahir directly associates this with the Eastern society structure which was introverted and lacking organic ties. Furthermore, he implies that in the East many changes concerning the whole society were made by the administrative staff. These changes did not originate from a fundamental and social basis, hence, were not adopted by the people. However, the ruling class strived to continue without the support of the people and without a real ground. According to Tahir, social change, which started in the

Ottoman Empire but did not end with it, turned into a policy in the Republican regime. He described the social change movement in the foundation period of the Republic with the term "Westernization leap" and criticized going on this movement with the wrong methods started in the Ottoman Empire. In the Republican regime, The Westernization policy continued to be a process implemented by the decision of the government authority instead of relying on social background. The government officials tried to strengthen the state and political authority in order to find solutions to social problems. Yet, they made mistakes. Even though the state gained power in an authoritarian sense, it was under difficult economic and political conditions. Thus, the state applied pressure on the people, could not fulfill its promises and could not solve the problems of the people. The most important mistake that reveals this result was to try to change by ignoring the needs and tendencies of the people. According to Tahir, westernization in this way is a futile effort (Tahir, 1992a: 14; 31-38; 63).

Tahir also criticizes that in Turkey, social change was understood as capitalisation. In Western societies, the capitalist-bourgeois class came to the point to shape the legislative and executive system, judicial system, economic order, industry, and science after a process that lasted for centuries (Tahir, 1992c: 119-120). Yet in our country, it was believed that raising a bourgeois class was sufficient to be strong like the West. Consequently, the state spent a great effort making individuals rich and putting state enterprises at the service of the rich. This policy created an exploitation system which means the loss of the most important feature of the state structure. The Anatolian Turkish state had always had a populist characteristic throughout its history. This new statist-capitalist structure was a social system in which the people were exploited, and the rich were favored. Thus, it caused a break and corruption in the state-society relationship. Furthermore, the newly created wealthy class retained its old mentality, since it had not gained in a capitalistic thinking in its historical background. It was aimed to share the task of carrying out the economic relations fully undertaken by the state with a newly formed bourgeois class. However, the burden got heavier with useless investments since this class did not emerge (Tahir, 1992a: 64).

According to Tahir, the Western society was based on exploitation and the main reason why the Eastern social structure could not prevail over the Western is the lack of bourgeois class. The East's refusal to accept personal property, which is characteristic of the East, prevented the formation of a bourgeois-like class. This situation made it easy for the East to establish empires, grow and rise rapidly, and live long, but later on, it lagged behind the developments. The Ottoman Empire experienced economic problems under these conditions, and those who wanted to save the state chose to imitate the development model of the West.

While Tahir states that intercultural interaction is possible, it is also impossible for a society to leave one civilization and enter the domain of another (Tahir, 1989a: 151). It should be paid attention to preserve cultural and traditional value during their interaction with each other in order to prevent the disintegration of civilizations. It is not possible for social change to be beneficial by one society to imitate another. However, when societies choose the path of enrichment with the features suitable for their own structure, they can experience a correct and beneficial social change process. Westernization in our country is not structural but a modal policy and a superficial social movement that does not have roots in the deep (Tahir, 1992c: 45). Tahir claims the economic structure determines the circle of civilization to which a society belongs. Therefore, he considered the Ottoman Empire as an oriental society in terms of infrastructure rather than geography. All the steps taken in the Westernization process, which started in the Ottoman Empire and continued in the Republican years, were inconclusive and unsuccessful, as

they were limited to the technological field, lifestyle and traditions, not applied in the economic basis (Tahir, 1992b: 56).

Tahir regards Westernization as a colonization policy directed by the West to the Eastern societies. Western colonialists evaluate the transformation need of the East as an opportunity for their interests. This colonization policy, which is incompatible with the social structure and not based on social dynamics, results in a cultural crisis or alienation (Tahir, 1992a: 13; Taşdelen, 2012: 22; Sümbüllü, 2006: 441). Tahir emphasizes that societies will be fed from their own history in the process of change and states that those who do not know their own historical facts cannot be able to benefit from any foreign cultures (Tahir, 1989a: 273).

Since social change plays an important role in the relationship between language and culture, Tahir also touched upon this issue. Language is an undeniable tool that creates thought (Tahir, 2005a: 48). Language is a national institution that develops with the society and takes shape with the history of the society, as well as forming the cultural structure of a society. With the intervention to simplify the Turkish language, the natural flow of the language was changed, and the language was damaged. With the Westernization movements, Turkish society has moved away from its history, and this is reflected in the Turkish language. According to Tahir, the change that the language, as a product of national memory, undergoes in the natural process is positive, but it is harmful to make political innovations in the language (Tahir, 1989a: 29; 181; 302).

Tahir gives importance to the interaction of socio-cultural structure and educational institution in his works, and he also deals with educational institutions affected by social change. He compares the religious education predominantly given in the madrasa with the modern education in Western schools. In this framework, madrasas are presented as corrupt institutions where arbitrary practices are observed. Those who receive education and give education in madrasas are represented as people who abuse it to gain social status (For detailed information, see Tahir, 2010a: 82-86; 152; 2009: 124; 2006: 89; 151; 2000; 52; 1995: 161; 1996: 262; 1976: 285). In addition, Tahir discusses the effects of the new state policy on education, the adoption of Latin letters, the alienation of education, and tries to outline the problems of madrasa and modern educational institutions together. He emphasizes that the new intellectuals distance themselves from Turkish culture and history due to the influence of their education. They do not recognize the social conditions in which they live, and they even find them strange. In Tahir's novels, there are some characters who are sent to Western countries for education or who study in Western-style schools and Tahir portrays them as individuals alienated from social structure and historical realities. On the occasion of these characters, he wants to picture that it will cause a break between the intellectuals and social reality to change the education system without a foundation or a ground and to apply the system based on another society. In Tahir's novels, the characters who are educated in Western-style institutions, appear as estranged and alienated intellectuals (Tahir, 2005a; 2010a; 2016). Another point he emphasizes is that the imperial powers use the education system to colonize. The West has reached its goal of destroying the Ottoman Empire by educating pro-Western intellectuals in its schools and continues its colonization policy by offering Westernization as a solution and a recipe to the problems (Tahir, 2005b: 243; 1992a: 134).

One of the problems Tahir mentions about the education system is related to the alphabet revolution. According to him, the alphabet revolution is a rootless change (Tahir, 2010b: 98). Tahir thinks that our educational system is deprive of a national inclination and a unique Turkish conception of the world; hence, education has turned into a mess with the new alphabet. Societies that adopt and imitate patterns that do not fit their own structure are condemned to humiliation (Tahir, 1992a: 220).

In Tahir's works, two types of intellectuals are compared, and intellectuality is discussed in this way. The first type of intellectual is educated by Western methods and alienated, but also s/he is also portrayed as an honest and good-hearted individual. In addition, the second type, who was educated in a madrasa, abuses the religious feelings of people, and appears as a deceitful and bad hodja (See. Tahir, 2010b; 2016). Among these two types of intellectuals that Tahir compares, the given message is that the real intellectual is the first type of intellectual who is well-intentioned, albeit alienated. But this real intellectual, caught between two worlds, was dragged into the drama caused by social change.

The trilogy named Esir Şehir is a work that focuses on the place and responsibility of intellectuals during the First World War and the political events that followed it. The protagonist, Kamil Bey, symbolizes Kemal Tahir's view of the intellectual. He is an intellectual who is unaware of the social realities of his country, alienated from his people, and he represents the intellectuals of the period. Tahir has drawn a picture of an intellectual who is pro-Westernization, who knows Western languages and the social conditions of the West, but is unaware of the political, economic and social structure of the Ottoman Empire. Kamil Bey confronts the realities of his country only when his economic situation deteriorates, and he has to return to Istanbul. Thanks to his friends who are supporters of the Kuvayi Milliye, he mingles with the people and begins to feel sensitivity and responsibility towards social problems. Tahir criticizes that the intellectuals remained distant from the people in the Ottoman Empire through the character of Kamil Bey. Yet, on the other hand, he shows that the defeat of the empire left the intellectuals under the influence and discouraged them. In addition, he expresses that the Westernization policy created a differentiation in the social structure: the intellectuals' and the people's understanding of Westernization was completely different from each other, and it was not possible to be westernized as it was idealized (Tahir, 2005a: 10-11; 72; 186-188). In other respects, when the intellectual encounters the social reality, tries to learn his society and understand his people, and remembers his national values, he will have fulfilled his duties towards his country and people (Tahir, 1990: 9-11).

One of the subjects that Tahir pays attention in the center of social change is the phenomenon of crime. He has a critical viewpoint towards crime. In his works, traditional social structure does not care about education, on the contrary, educated individuals are perceived as the ones who move away from moral values and become irreligious (See. Tahir, 1976: 192; 1995: 59-60). Tahir reflected that as a result of this false belief, individuals are deprived of education and this deprivation is the most important factor that increases criminal behavior (Erol, 2013: 898). While the primary factor that reveals the deviant behavior in Tahir's novels is regarded as ignorance and lack of education, poverty is emphasized as another factor. The historical background of the novels covers the collapse period of the Ottoman Empire, the years of national wars, and the process experienced under difficult conditions such as the 1st and 2nd World Wars. Within the framework of these conditions, poverty emerges as an important factor that pushes the characters into crime (Gülendam, 2008: 386-387). According to Tahir, both lack of education and poverty, which cause the individual to commit crime, are related to the incorrect state policies implemented in the process of social change. Meanwhile the society is left uneducated, the newly established state failed to raise awareness in the society and even distanced the society from the state. Tahir marks that by applying an imitative policy of progress, society has become distant from its social origins. He thinks that this process of metamorphosis results in moral collapse and inclination to crime (Erol, 2013: 893).

Tahir points out that the effort for social change, which has been going on for 150 years regardless of the social structure and historical conditions, has failed as a result of its rootlessness

and distance from being scientific. He thinks that the Turkish states established in Anatolia are inclined to a socialist social change model in terms of their social structure and historical development conditions. According to Tahir, if the Ottoman Empire had met with socialism, it could have carried out a Westernization movement that was more suitable for its socio-economic conditions. From his standpoint, the Republic of Turkey should abandon its statist capitalist socio-economic structure and turn to state socialism, which opposes domestic and foreign exploitation and has a truly populist understanding, and the policy of social change should be rearranged in this way (Tahir, 1992a: 15; 61; 66).

## 5. CONCLUSION

With regard to social change, it can be observed that the views of Meriç and Tahir intersect at many points. Both agree that social change is an economic-based metamorphosis process, a capitalisation effort. Meriç thinks that the aim of colonizing the East is legitimized by false names such as modernization and Westernization. Tahir agrees with Meriç's view and states that Westernization is a process of colonization. The main issue that unites the two thinkers is that they consider the East and the West as two conflicting civilizations and that social change is an economic-based process. Meriç discusses social change through the clash of civilizations and emphasizes that the main purpose of the West is to exploit the East economically. While considering these two civilizations as the antithesis of each other, Meriç regards the West as the dominant ideology in the context of cultural imperialism. Tahir's approach is in this direction as well. Tahir implies that the main factor that separates the two civilizations from each other is the current economic conditions and production styles. Tahir explains the Ottoman society and the Eastern society structure with the concept of AMP (Asiatic Mode of Production). He views the relations established with the West as creating an exploitation order. Both thinkers criticize capitalist ideology and imperialist political aims in their works. This means that they approach the issue from the perspective of conflict theory.

Meriç and Tahir differ in their views of the meaning they attribute to the concepts of modernization and rationalization. Tahir shows a positive approach to these modernization and rationalization processes and views them as scientific, cultural and economic developments. Meriç, on the other hand, perceives the modernization process as one of the names of colonization and he believes that it is not different from concepts such as Englishization, Westernization or modernization, and that they are names used to cover up the same bad intentions. He mentions that the rationalization process looks like referring to a scientific or technical progress, but actually drags the society into mechanization and into losing its moral values.

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