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Religions and Sacredness Leadership-Charisma and Religion

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental claim of the research titled "Religions and Sacredness" is to depict the relationship between the religious individual and the sacred, based on R. Otto's definition that "religion is the experience of the sacred," and to explore the individual and social manifestations of religiosity. Furthermore, the distinction made by J. Wach regarding the expressions of religions:

PRACTICAL EXPRESSION: WORSHIP - ETHICS - INTERACTIONS
SOCIOLOGICAL EXPRESSION: COLLECTIVE RELIGION (COMMUNITY) - INDIVIDUAL RELIGION¹

has been instructive. The research process is ongoing.

Key Words: *Religion, Sacredness, Charisma, Charismatic Leader.*

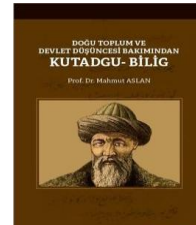
INTRODUCTION:

As a follower of Islam, I have had experiences with all the aforementioned sacred elements. This situation forms the dimensions of belief and worship within me concerning the Absolute Sacred of Islam, Allah. In fact, these beliefs and worship practices are relevant for every follower of any religion and are related to the Absolute Sacred. Because all these relationships are established to please the Absolute Sacred.

The main concept that needs to be understood here is the concept of "sacred." The term "sacred" is formed in Turkish by adding the possessive suffix "-sal" to the concept of "kut," which corresponds to the Arabic-rooted terms "mukaddes" and "kudsi." The term "kut" in the Orkhon Inscriptions (735)³ means "blessed by God" as the equivalent of "mübarek" (blessed). Indeed, Kutluk Khan means a khan blessed by God. This attribute, during the process of Islamization, was interpreted as:

"El mülükü mülhemün - inspiration comes to rulers"⁴
it takes shape.

"Kutadgu Bilig" for us is important not only as the history of a single Turkish state and as a cultural element, but rather, it sheds light on the material and spiritual upheavals of entering a completely new cultural and civilizational environment that changes the historical fate of the entire Turkish nation and reveals an emerging new synthesis.

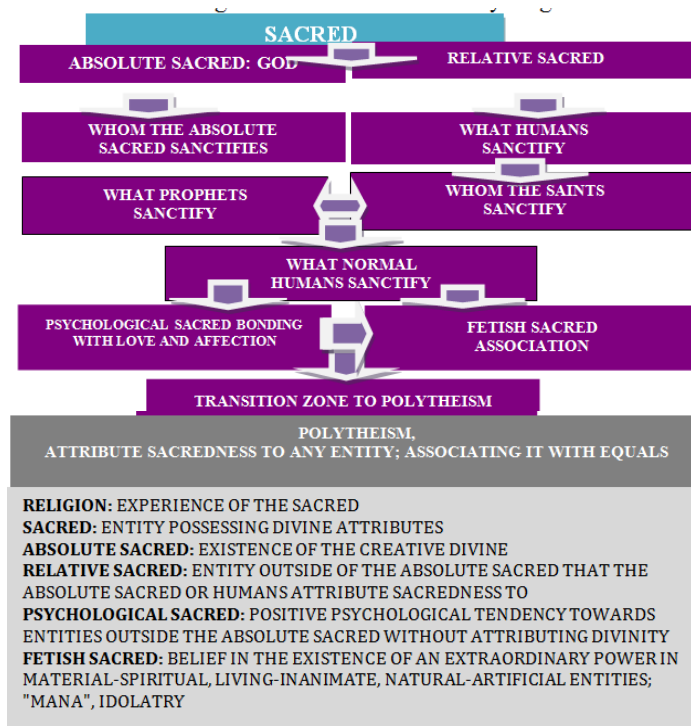


The following Schema Summarizes Everything:

1 Wach, Joachim, (1951) *Religionssoziologie*. Tübingen. Din Sosyolojisi, (Çev. Ünver Günay), İstanbul 1995.

3 See: Talat Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları: Kül Tigin, Bilge Kağan, Tunyukuk*, İstanbul 1995.

4 See: Zeki Arslantürk, *Naîmâ'ya Göre XIV. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Toplum Yapısı*, Ayışığı Yayınları, İstanbul 1997.



Actually, all religions have their own sacred elements. Regardless of the religion:

THEISTIC RELIGIONS - ATHEISTIC RELIGIONS
MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS - POLYTHEISTIC RELIGIONS
PROPHETIC RELIGIONS - NON-PROPHETIC RELIGIONS
REVELATORY RELIGIONS - CULTURAL RELIGIONS
SCRIPTURE-BASED RELIGIONS - NON-SCRIPTURAL RELIGIONS
INSTITUTED RELIGIONS - INVENTED RELIGIONS
UNIVERSAL RELIGIONS - LOCAL (NATIONAL) RELIGIONS

religions create their own cultures with their sacred elements and come to life in society with the culture they create. In the scheme above, we see the status of "absolute sacred" and "relative sacred" in terms of sanctity and blessing:

In all religions, the absolute sacred is God or divine sanctities. Other sacred elements are related to God or divine sanctities.

One of the concepts associated with the sacred is the concept of "**charisma**". Charisma is a concept introduced to sociology by **Max Weber**.⁵ The literal meaning of the word is a gift of transcendent existence, extraordinary.

Charisma is an attribute, a characteristic. Individuals with charisma are centers of attraction in society whether they want it or not. If these qualities are perceived by society, they become leaders of society. Although they are referred to as reformers, messengers, sorcerers, soothsayers, saints, prophets, and founders of religions, they represent a certain or several authorities. This authority is the power of the transcendent existence (Supreme God). Therefore, they are considered as representatives of God in the universe.

As the expressions indicate, charisma is directly related to the phenomenon of religion. It is most typically manifested in prophets. Prophets emerge during periods when societies experience an increase in religious beliefs and needs. In other words, there is a mutual relationship between the structure of society and the prophet. Society essentially summons the prophet, who then emerges or is sent. Subsequently, in accordance with the reason for their emergence, they undertake their mission and seek to regulate society according to the orders and prohibitions of the authority they represent.⁶

Official leaders seek to benefit from charismatic authority. They do this sometimes by including these charismatic individuals by their side, and sometimes by assuming both authorities. Therefore, in traditional societies,

5 **Weber**, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Zeynep Aruoba, Hill Publications, Istanbul, 1997, pp. 46-51.

6 Wach, Joachim, pages 419-424.

charismatic individuals and religious figures have consistently occupied positions in the upper echelons.⁷

Similarly, some individuals attribute charisma to themselves and gather followers to form a religious group. The way to distinguish between the false and the true is to abstract their attributed charisma and examine their remaining personalities.

If you remove the attribute of prophethood from Prophet Muhammad, what remains is the "monument of humanity."

A charismatic leader, based on the mission they carry, demands obedience and followers. This obedience is based on internal will and control. Relationships and behaviors are expected to conform to belief systems rather than reason and logic. All hierarchical orders, social groups, and institutions are formed around this system.⁸

In fact, in all these types of authority, including democratic and legal authority, there is no "pure and absolute" quality. Because removing or eliminating the desire for human domination, traditions, and belief systems is not possible. The "purity" and "purity" here are relative characteristics. It expresses on which basic feature a relationship or social group and institution are based.

Charisma is a psycho-social phenomenon. It is not solely a religious and mystical characteristic. Especially in times of turmoil and crisis in societies, it is the hope of salvation when reason and logic do not work. Societies have a sense and logic of creating great leaders, saviors. Charismatic leaders shape the destinies of nations.⁹ Oğuz Kaan (Mete Khan) is the figure who engraved the Turkish nation in history, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is the personality who saved it from being buried in history.

**Lider's personal qualities are important alongside how their group perceives them and the conditions within the group.
"The Sheikh does not fly; it is the disciple who makes him fly."**

My intention here is not to present the research mentioned above. My aim is to address two aspects related to sacred individuals and sacred places discussed in the research. Sacred places and sacred individuals are what constitute a nation.

**In other words,
a nation's historical consciousness is embodied in its sacred places and sacred individuals.**

The space upon which a person resides is not merely a material entity. It is a place where all kinds of material and spiritual actions take place, sometimes nourished by happiness, sometimes by sorrow and tears, sometimes where blood is shed, where ancestors' graves lie, and likely where the person themselves will be buried. It is a homeland. It is a psychological object that harbors all kinds of memories within.¹⁰

Just as there is a spiritual connection between the individual and the space, there is also a spiritual connection between the social unity and the space. Because when a social unity settles in a place, it becomes connected to this place through historical events and the works it creates in this "place." Moreover, these achievements do not necessarily have to belong to the social unity that settled in later; they can also be the achievements of various eras and social units. The newly settled social unity merges with the old ones, forming an inseparable unity. This mutual interaction between social units brings about a cultural change and integration, resulting in the emergence of a new culture.¹¹

Space determines the successes and actions of an individual and social group to such an extent that people are willing to sacrifice themselves for this psychological object (an attitude object) - their homeland. Throughout human

7 Wach, pages 404-416.

8 Weber, pages 46-51.

9 Krech, 254-264. Ertuğrul Hamit Arslantürk, "Leadership, Organizational Change, and the Impact of Employee Alignment on Employee and Firm Outcomes," Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Gebze Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation) Gebze, 2023. Ercan Ergün and Ertuğrul Hamit Arslantürk, "Effects of Mutual Goal Commitment, Leader-Member Exchange, and Leader Team Effectiveness," Journal of Social Sciences, January-June 2010.

10 Mengüşoğlu, Introduction to Philosophy, Istanbul 1988. 162-167.

11 Mengüşoğlu, 162-167.

history, such love for one's homeland has never been lacking. The disappearance of this love leads to the disappearance of that social unity.¹²

During the process of nation-building, such an attitude towards the space object plays an important role in the survival of nations. However, it undoubtedly has a negative impact on human destiny as well. Wars, conflicts, disagreements often arise from such bonds. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that conflict, as much as cooperation and harmony, is a social reality; it is impossible to remove it from human nature. The only thing to do is to accept it as it is.¹³

Human is not only a thinking being but also a believing one. Reason lies at the foundation of thinking. In situations where reason is insufficient, imagination goes beyond reason and enables adaptation to new circumstances. At this stage, the phenomenon of belief comes into play and influences thinking.

Religion is based on the phenomenon of belief. However, religious belief, within the framework of knowledge and faith integrity, is to believe that statements (religious dogmas) are correct. With this characteristic, religious belief distinguishes itself from other types of beliefs (attitudes).

Religious belief begins with human belief in the (transcendent) sacred being and decides to be subject to it. Now, the believing individual is a servant of this transcendent and sacred being. Thus:

Religion becomes the manifestation of the communication between the servant and God in the servant's life.

In other words, religion is the phenomenon of submission to the sacred and transcendent being. However, humans, in the face of this phenomenon of submission, want to resist by emphasizing their own abilities. When they realize the weakness of their abilities, they submit to another power:

**"In the face of death,
humans submit to the one who has the power to kill."**

The Enlightenment era is the age when humans are aware of their own abilities; it is the age when reason is deified. Believing that reason can solve everything and that there is no need for another being, humans, as they approach the limits of reason, realize that their horizon expands and widens: They find themselves compelled to ask the question, "What lies beyond the boundary, at the end of the horizon?"¹⁴

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

A God-centered mindset and behavioral phenomenon affect other social events and phenomena; their structures. Thus, when religion moves from the relationship between God and humans to the relationship between humans, it becomes a sociological phenomenon. In other words, the fact that religion influences other social events and phenomena on the one hand, and on the other hand, its establishment as a social phenomenon and institution in society, brings up its relationship with other social phenomena and institutions.

What is sacred? How does a place become sacred? In other words, how is a normal place transformed into a sacred place by humans? Why do religions have different sacred elements or why do some religions share common sacred elements?

The sacred serves as the fundamental point that connects all the elements within a religion and ensures the believer (the religious person) remains within the religion.

The sacred is a completely abstract concept for humans living in the tangible world and is outside the human world. Nevertheless, throughout human history, the sacred has always been at the center of human life. The places where the sacred emerges and becomes visible are distinct for believers from other places. These places are taboo for those who wish to enter without permission.

Even if beliefs change, places that have gained sacredness continue to maintain their sacredness.

Especially the places where religions emerged, where religious founders were born, lived, and performed miracles have become sacred. In other words, humans have elevated the beings to whom they attribute sacredness, associated them with the divine, and then formed attachments to them.

12 Mengüşoğlu, 162-167.

13 Mengüşoğlu, 162-167.

14 Zeki Arslantürk, "The Return of the Sacred and the Quest for a New Society", Istanbul, 1998, p. 8.

While sometimes the sacredness itself emphasizes the sacredness of places, at times when this is not the case, humans have sanctified places to establish a connection with the sacred.

Individuals strive to bring the abstract concept of the sacred, which they cannot perceive with their senses, to a reachable and approachable position in their own world. The interest and attachment of believers to sacred places, as well as their efforts to proliferate sacred places, are the result of their need to be close to the sacred.

In this study, we aimed to focus on the general concept of the sacred. We left the discussion of specific religions and their sacred elements for another study. In essence, our findings here serve as an introduction to a future research project.

In conclusion, it can be said that the individuals who sanctify as much as the sanctified beings themselves are important. Among them, someone emerges as the leader of the group; the leader's charisma comes into play and leads the group forward.¹⁵ Dr. Ertuğrul Hamit Arslantürk's observations have been guiding in the context of the relationship between leader and social group/society.

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¹⁵ Ertuğrul Hamit Arslantürk, "Leadership, Organizational Change, and the Impact of Employee Alignment on Employee and Firm Outcomes," Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Gebze Technical University, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), Gebze, 2023. Ercan Ergün, Ertuğrul Hamit Arslantürk, "Effects of Mutual Goal Commitment, Leader-Member Exchange, and Leader's Team Effectiveness on Team Performance," *Journal of Social Sciences*, January-June 2010.

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