



## THE INFLUENCE OF CLERGIES FROM AMASYA DURING THE YEARS OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE<sup>1</sup>

*Millî Mücadele Yıllarında Amasyalı Din Adamlarının Etkisi*

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### **Abstract**

In the success of the National Struggle and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the efforts of the soldiers fighting on the front lines were as effective as the struggle behind the front lines. Following the Armistice of Mondros, harmful minority activities intensified in Amasya and its surroundings, as in many parts of Anatolia. In order to eliminate these activities, the clergy in the region declared their commitment to the National Struggle and caused the public's perspective on the National Struggle to change. Success came in this environment of unity and

<sup>1</sup> This study was prepared from Anıl Yüksel's doctoral thesis titled "*Türk İstiklal Harbi Sürecinde Amasya*", which is ongoing at the Marmara University Institute of Turkiyat Studies, Department of Ataturk's Principles and Revolutionary History.

solidarity. Knowing the relationships between the clergy of Amasya and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during the National Struggle will be important in correcting the mistakes we know as right and eliminating the prejudice against the clergy. This study will examine the contributions of religious figures in Amasya and its surroundings to the National Struggle during the War of Independence.

**Key Words:** War of Independence, Minorities, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Clergy, Amasya.

## Öz

Millî Mücadele'nin başarıya ulaşmasında ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluş sürecinde cephe mücadelede eden askerlerin gayretleri kadar cephe gerisindeki mücadele de son derece etkili olmuştur. Mondros Ateşkes Antlaşması'nı takip eden süreç içerisinde Anadolu'nun birçok noktasında olduğu gibi Amasya ve çevresinde de zararlı azınlık faaliyetleri yoğunlaşmıştır. Bu faaliyetlerin ortadan kalkması adına bölgede bulunan din adamları Millî Mücadele'ye olan bağlılıklarını bildirmiştir ve halkın Millî Mücadele'ye olan bakışının değişmesine sebep olmuşlardır. Bu birlik ve beraberlik ortamında başarı gelmiştir. Millî Mücadele sürecinde Amasyalı din adamları, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ile olan ilişkilerinin bilinmesi doğru bildiğimiz yanlışları düzeltmemiz ve din adamlarına karşı olan önyargıyı ortadan kaldırmak adına önemli olacaktır. Çalışmamızda da Millî Mücadele sürecinde Amasya ve çevresinde din adamlarının Millî Mücadele'ye olan katkıları incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Millî Mücadele, Azınlıklar, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Din Adamları, Amasya.

## Entrance

By the beginning of the 20th century, Greek separatist ideas began to emerge. In this vein, Clematyos, a Greek-American priest and citizen, founded the Pontus Society in 1904. Around the same time, the Greek Irfan Club and the Pontus Society were founded in Amasya and the surrounding area, led by a teacher at Merzifon American College. These societies published a magazine called Pontus to demonstrate their presence through the press.<sup>2</sup> With the encouragement and protection of the United States, which was involved in missionary activities alongside Greece, which aimed to revive Byzantium, the Greeks began to organize in and around Amasya after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy. The Greek representative in the region was the Metropolitan Germanos of Samsun. It was Karavangelis. In accordance with the requests of the Fener Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul, Hrisantos in the Trabzon region, Lavrentios around Giresun, and Germanos around Samsun and Amasya. Karavangelis They served as the political representatives<sup>3</sup> of the Pontic people. The established societies operated without any obstacles. In this regard, with the support

<sup>2</sup> Yılmaz Kurt, *Pontus Meselesi (The Pontus Issue)*, TBMM Basımevi (Turkish Grand National Assembly Culture and Arts Publications), Ankara, 1995, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Dahiliye Şifre Kalemi (DH. ŞFR.), 107/85. The population of Amasya district before 1914 was around 230,263. This population included 23,017 Armenians and 24,950 Greek. As of 1914, 9,598 Armenians lived in the central district of Amasya, 343 in Lâdik, 335 in Havza, 1,032 in Vezirköprü, 3,549 in Gumushacıköy, and 8,160 in the district of Merzifon. See Also: Kemal H. Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu 1830-1914 (Ottoman Population 1830-1914)*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları (History Foundation Publications), İstanbul, 2003, p. 217: Among the

of both Allied Powers and immigrants from Russia, the Greek population in the region increased significantly.

The defeat in World War I led the Ottoman Empire into a process of disintegration in military, administrative, and diplomatic terms. With the armistice, the state's sphere of influence was effectively opened to the control of the Allied Powers. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who took over the command of the Yıldırım Armies, believed that the disbanded army was not entirely dysfunctional.<sup>4</sup>

Following the signing of the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918, the British occupied Mosul, the Italians occupied Antalya and its surroundings, and the French occupied Adana, Antep, Urfa, and Maraş and their surroundings. This confirmed Pasha's concerns about the region. Therefore, he ordered resistance against a possible British landing on the Iskenderun coast. As a result of this ongoing process, the Yıldırım Armies were disbanded on November 7, 1918, and it was decided that Mustafa Kemal Pasha would be summoned to Istanbul.

Following the unrest in and around Samsun, Greeks, particularly those in Samsun and its surroundings, claimed that the Turks were arming themselves and attacking them. In response, representatives of the Allied Powers requested the appointment of an inspector to the region to assess the situation. The appointment of Mustafa Kemal Pasha as Inspector of the 9th Army Corps on April 30, 1919, was one of the most critical decisions made in Istanbul. The directive issued to Pasha on May 6th granted him extraordinary powers over both military units and the civilian administration.<sup>5</sup> According to this directive:<sup>6</sup>

- All military and administrative operations of the 3rd and 15th Corps were placed under the command and control of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, thus placing all regular forces in the region under the authority of the Inspectorate.
- Supervising the duties of corps commanders and proposing their dismissal to Istanbul when necessary was defined as being within Pasha's area of authority.

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places with a high concentration of Armenians, including Sivas province, were Amasya and Merzifon. Reports indicate that Armenians in Sivas province alone had gathered and armed 30,000 people, with an additional 15,000 kept ready in reserve.

<sup>4</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Atatürk'ün Bana Anlattıkları Mustafa Kemal'in Ağzından Vahdettin* (What Atatürk Told Me: Vahdettin from Mustafa Kemal's Perspective), Pozitif Yayıncılık (Pozitif Publications), İstanbul, 2006, pp. 68-72.

<sup>5</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Directorate), *Atatürk ile İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri 1911-1921* (Archival Documents Related to Atatürk 1911-1921), Ankara, 1982, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Directorate), *Atatürk ile İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri 1911-1921* (Archival Documents Related to Atatürk 1911-1921), Document No: 21, pp. 23-24.

- Preventing the unauthorized recruitment of soldiers in the region and apprehending deserters and returning them to their units were among the primary duties of the Inspectorate.
- The systematic collection of surplus weapons and ammunition and the control of unlicensed weapons in the public were officially assigned to Pasha as security responsibilities.
- Mustafa Kemal Pasha was granted the authority to take military and administrative measures against Greek and Turkish armed elements disrupting public order in the region.
- Governors, district governors, sub-governors, and all other civil administrators were obliged to comply with instructions from the Inspectorate. - Examining the personnel, provisions, transportation, logistics, and ammunition status of the corps and reporting these findings to the Grand Vizierate and the Ministry of War was defined as one of the Pasha's primary duties. - In case of discrepancies between orders from the center and the actual situation in the region, Mustafa Kemal Pasha was granted the freedom to exercise his own discretion according to local conditions. - The restructuring of transportation, public order, and administrative order along the Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia lines was assigned to the Inspectorate within the scope of the Pasha's civil authority.

In response to this request, Mustafa Kemal, who left Istanbul on May 16, 1919, was tasked with conducting an investigation in the region. He met with Sultan Vahdettin at Yıldız Palace. During this meeting:

"In a small hall of Yıldız Palace, we were sitting very close to Vahdettin, almost knee to knee. To his right was a table on which he rested his elbow, and on it was a book. From the window of the hall overlooking the Bosphorus, we could see a row of enemy ships with their cannons pointed at Yıldız Palace. From where we were sitting, we only needed to turn our heads left and right to see the view. Vahdettin began with words I will never forget: 'Pasha, Pasha! You have served the state very well; all of this is now recorded in this book, in history. Forget all of that,' he said. The service you will render now will perhaps be the most important. Pasha, Pasha! You can save the state! These last words astonished me. Thank you for your kindness and the trust you have placed in me. Please trust me, I will do my best to serve you in the best way possible, sir.' "Please don't worry, sir. I understand your brilliant perspective." "If your request is granted, I will act immediately and will not forget your instructions

for a single moment. After listening to your wonderful speech, I wish you success and depart from your presence.”<sup>7</sup>

The days following Mustafa Kemal Pasha's arrival in Samsun on May 19, 1919, constituted a critical period both for assessing the actual security situation in the region and for making the first strategic moves against Istanbul. Just three days after his arrival in the city, on May 22, 1919, Mustafa Kemal sent a detailed report to the Grand Vizierate. According to the report, it served as a direct refutation of the propaganda spread by the Entente Powers, particularly the British, claiming that Turks were attacking Christian elements in the region.<sup>8</sup> In his report, Mustafa Kemal Pasha explicitly stated that, contrary to the attacks, the armed activity in the region was initiated by Greek gangs, and that the Turkish and Muslim population had only taken measures to protect their lives and property.<sup>9</sup>

However, this silence began to be broken, especially in the interior of Anatolia, by the influential rhetoric of the clergy, the people's spiritual leaders.<sup>10</sup> Along this historical line, extending from Samsun to Amasya, the local support and guidance of the clergy played a vital role in legitimizing the War of Independence in the eyes of the people. In this context, Amasya was not merely a transit stop; it also played a key role in Mustafa Kemal's efforts to build both political and social support.<sup>11</sup> The example of Amasya is significant in demonstrating that religious leaders in the War of Independence were not only figures who provided moral support but also actors who guided social mobilization. The sermons given in mosques, the declarations with the theme of “defending the homeland is jihad” read during Friday sermons, and the awareness-raising activities carried out in the lodge circles reveal the powerful role that religious discourse plays in organizing the people with a collective consciousness against the invaders.<sup>12</sup>

However, the issuance of fatwas by the Sheikh al-Islam in Istanbul in support of the occupying forces led many clerics in Anatolia to question their ties to this authority.

<sup>7</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Atatürk'in Bana Anlattıkları Mustafa Kemal'in Ağzından Vahdettin* (What Atatürk Told Me: Vahdettin from Mustafa Kemal's Perspective), pp. 128-130.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmet Semerci, “Anadolu'da Millî Mücadeleyi Engelleme Girişimleri (Attempts to Hinder the National Struggle in Anatolia)”, *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* (Journal of Turkish World Studies), Vol.95, Issue: 189, İstanbul, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> A. Semerci, “Anadolu'da Millî Mücadeleyi Engelleme Girişimleri (Attempts to Hinder the National Struggle in Anatolia)”, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk (1919-1927)*, Prepared by: Zeynep Korkmaz, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları (Atatürk Research Center Publications,) Ankara, 2019, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Hüseyin Menç, *Millî Mücadele Yıllarında Amasya: Olaylar, Belgeler* (Amasya During the National Struggle Years: Events—Documents—Portraits), Amasya Valiliği Yayınları (Amasya Governorship Publications), Amasya, 2007, pp. 73-76.

<sup>12</sup> Yaşar Akbıyık, *Millî Mücadelede Güney Cephesi Maras* (The Southern Front in the National Struggle Maras), Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları (Ministry of Culture Publications), Ankara, 1990, p. 257.

In the face of the official fatwas, penned in 1920 and equating armed resistance to the occupation with atheism, the national religious stance that took shape in Anatolia brought about not only a political but also a struggle for religious legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> This dual structure facilitated the orientation of local religious cadres toward the Ankara-based movement and its legitimization in the eyes of the public.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, this study aims to examine the impact of religious structures and discourse in Amasya on social resistance during the War of Independence, which began with Mustafa Kemal Pasha's arrival in Samsun. In addition to the critical political role of Amasya, the fundamental axis of analysis is how religious life and institutions in the city gave meaning to and shaped the resistance.

## 1. The Impact of the Sociological and Religious Structure in Amasya on the National Struggle

The War of Independence was not merely an armed resistance waged on the front lines, but also a multifaceted mobilization conducted within the mental, intellectual, and spiritual realm of the people. Strong ties between religious structures, clergy, and the public, particularly in the interior regions of Anatolia, played a decisive role in the success of this process. In this context, Amasya is a center notable for both its strategic location and its deep-rooted religious institutions. Its proximity to the center of Anatolia and its position as a crossroads between East and West transformed the city into a logically and symbolically powerful location for the War of Independence.

During the Ottoman period, Amasya was not only an administrative center but also an important scientific and religious focal point, known for its madrasahs, dervish lodges, and mosques. Its reputation as the city of princes contributed greatly to the enrichment of its cultural and religious heritage; structures such as the Bayezid Pasha Madrasa, which operated in the late 19th century, played a vital role in both education and social guidance.<sup>15</sup> These madrasahs were shaped not only by academic scholarship but also by a religious understanding closely intertwined with the people. The teachers, muftis, and preachers who emerged from these institutions became both religious and social guides for the people, and from the pulpits of the mosques, they dispensed not only counsel but also, when necessary, calls for resistance.

In this context, Mustafa Kemal's activities in Samsun continued, and he arrived in Havza on May 25, 1919. This event is a sign of a critical visit in the history of the National Struggle, marking not only a ministerial movement but also the beginning

<sup>13</sup> Ali Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle), Vol. 1, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları (Directorate of Religious Affairs Publications), Ankara, 2012, p. 148.

<sup>14</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle), pp. 158-159.

<sup>15</sup> H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yıllarında Amasya* (Amasya in the National Struggle), p. 120.

of the intellectual foundation for a national uprising in Anatolia.<sup>16</sup> Mustafa Kemal's arrival in Havza aroused great excitement among the people, and he was greeted by District Governor Faik Bey, Mayor İbrahim Efendi, and prominent notables. The main reason for this welcome was the unrest created in Anatolia by the occupation of İzmir. Rauf Orbay, in his memoirs, states that the people of Havza were waiting for a spark in May 1919, and that with the arrival of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, this spark turned into a fire. From his first meetings, the fundamental idea expressed by the Pasha was that the occupation of İzmir was not only a matter for Western Anatolia, but that if the occupation was not stopped, the whole of Anatolia would be dragged into a similar fate.<sup>17</sup> This assessment is the first clear expression of the idea that the will of the nation should be brought into play, which formed the intellectual basis of the National Struggle.

The choice of Amasya after Havza was not merely a result of geographical considerations. It was shaped by a multi-dimensional assessment encompassing security, administrative stability, social structure, and religious support. Amasya's location further inland compared to Merzifon and Samsun indicated an area where the influence of Pontus gangs and British patrols was limited. This was a critical factor in meeting the Pasha's need for a secure center.

The communication capabilities provided by the Amasya telegraph office were also decisive in this choice. The telegraph office established rapid and uninterrupted connections with both the interior regions of Anatolia and the Black Sea basin, ensuring that the Pasha's orders and circulars reached a wide geographical area quickly. Therefore, the Pasha's move to Amasya was less about changing the center of his inspection region and more about consciously determining the first administrative and military center of the national movement that would take shape in Anatolia. This step was one of the most important moves taken towards the organized structure of the National Struggle.

The positive telegram sent by the Mufti of Amasya, Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, to the Pasha was one of the most important factors strengthening the legitimacy of this choice. The Mufti's words, "The people of Amasya will embrace those who fight for the defense of the homeland," were not merely an expression of politeness. It was a demonstration of the open support given to the National Struggle by Amasya's religious authority and local opinion leaders.<sup>18</sup> This stance can be considered one of the

<sup>16</sup> Gotthard Jaschke, "Havza'da Mustafa Kemal Paşa (Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Havza)", *Belleten*, Vol. XLVI, No. 181-184, TTK, Ankara, 1983, p. 347. A. Semerci, "Anadolu'da Milli Mücadeleyi Engellemeye Girişimleri (Attempts to Hinder the National Struggle in Anatolia)", p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Sevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Tek Adam (The Lone Man)*, Vol. 2, Remzi Yayınevi (Remzi Publications), İstanbul, 2014, pp. 20-22.

<sup>18</sup> H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yıllarında Amasya (Amasya in the National Struggle)*, p. 101.

first signs of the religious and social foundation that would ensure the acceptance of future political initiatives within society.

With Mustafa Kemal Pasha's arrival in Amasya on June 12, 1919, a strong interaction emerged between the city's religious authorities and the public. Among those welcoming the Pasha were figures such as the then-Amasya Mufti, Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, and Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, a man deeply respected by the public.<sup>19</sup> Following this welcome, not only bureaucrats but also the ulema (religious scholars) participated in the meetings held during the Pasha's stay in the city, playing an active role in ensuring the local adoption and dissemination of the decisions made. This demonstrates that the National Struggle gained not only political but also religious legitimacy in Amasya.

Amasya, however, presented a different picture. Although the city had been politically shaken during the late Ottoman period, it was one of the rare centers that still preserved its scholarly tradition, its madrasa (religious school) circles, its Sufi order structure, and its powerful elite. Initial reports indicated that Mustafa Kemal Pasha was coming to Amasya not for a routine inspection, but to launch a new movement aimed at re-establishing state authority in Anatolia through the will of the people. This news was received with great seriousness by the city's spiritual leaders, including Mufti Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, Preacher Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, Mevlevi Sheikh Cemaleddin Efendi, and Judge Ali Himmet Efendi.<sup>20</sup> The Mufti sent word not just to a small circle, but to all religious and intellectual representatives of Amasya. Madrasa teachers, imams, preachers, members of Sufi orders, and opinion leaders from various families quickly gathered. The minutes of this meeting have not survived to the present day. However, the testimonies recounted by Hüseyin Menç and the relevant pages of the Amasya Yearbook clearly reveal the atmosphere in the city. The main issue of the meeting was how the religious and social circles would react to the Pasha's arrival in Amasya. The consensus was embodied in the following sentence: "This arrival is not an ordinary visit; it is necessary to welcome the Pasha in the strongest possible way, out of loyalty to the state, respect for the nation, and

<sup>19</sup>H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yıllarında Amasya* (*Amasya in the National Struggle*), p. 93. Some of those who welcomed Atatürk in Amasya were: Müftü Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, Vaiz Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, Mevlevî Şeyhi Cemaleddin Efendi, Kadı Ali Himmet Efendi, Hoca Bahaddin Efendi, Hoca Abdülhalim EfendiŞirvânîzade Mehmet Efendi, Hatuniye Camii İmamı Hafız Ahmed Efendi, Fetihîye Mahallesi İmamı Ali Efendi, İmamzâde Hacı Mahmut Efendi, Sofu Hasan Efendi, Molla Mehmet Efendi.

<sup>20</sup> Cemal Kutay, *Örtülü Tarihimize* (*Our Concealed History*), Vol. 2, Hilal Yayıncılık (Hilal Printing House), Istanbul, 1975, p. 945.

duty to religion.<sup>21</sup> The reception of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Amasya clearly demonstrates that it was not merely an administrative ceremony, but a declaration of the collective will of the people and the religious scholars.

Upon hearing the news that the Pasha was approaching the city, a large crowd had gathered around Cülüs Tepe. Although some accounts mention a period of unease due to the delay, with people wondering if there would be anyone to greet them, the atmosphere in this area transformed into great enthusiasm as the carriage appeared. At that very moment, the elderly and respected religious scholar, Preacher Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, called out, "Greetings, people of Amasya!" at the end of his journey. This departure was a spiritual sign that guided the emotional outpouring of the procession.<sup>22</sup>

Before entering the city, Mustafa Kemal Pasha had established a secret line of contact with religious leaders. Following the initial meeting near the Mufti's residence, they proceeded to the Government House. There, in a speech addressed to the people of Amasya, and especially to the religious leaders, Pasha emphasized the subjugation of Istanbul, the spread of occupation, and the necessity for the nation to assert its own will. These words, spoken in a dark room under the dim light of a few gas lamps, had a profound impact on the city. The effect of this speech was particularly evident in the historic sermon given the following day at the Sultan Bayezid Mosque. On Friday, June 13, 1919, Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, who took the pulpit, began his speech with verses from the Quran. He then drew the congregation's attention to the national disasters and proclaimed the following sentence:

"The only solution is for our people to directly take their sovereignty into their own hands and exercise their will."<sup>23</sup>

This sentence was the first time the idea of national sovereignty, which formed the basis of the National Struggle, was declared to the people from a religious source. The strong reaction of the Amasya congregation to these words shows that the spiritual foundations of the resistance were laid in the mosque pulpit.

Following the separation of preparations, the official founding meeting of the Amasya Defense of Rights Society was held at the Atik-i Ali School on June 14, 1919. Mustafa Kemal Pasha's individual participation in the meeting is an indication of the importance of the initiative. In his speech, Pasha emphasized that the national struggle should not be undertaken under the influence of any political faction, but rather directly in the name of the nation. Attention was drawn to the words of Mufti Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi at the meeting. Efendi reminded everyone of Amasya's

<sup>21</sup> H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yıllarında Amasya* (*Amasya in the National Struggle*), p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yıllarında Amasya* (*Amasya in the National Struggle*), p. 111.

<sup>23</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (*Religious Leaders in the National Struggle*), p. 202.

historical significance and stated that everyone should do their part.<sup>24</sup> A humanitarian event that occurred during the founding of the movement holds symbolic value in the history of the National Struggle. Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi's presentation of the gold he had accumulated over many years to Mustafa Kemal Pasha in a red handkerchief is considered one of the first voluntary and sincere financial contributions to the National Struggle.<sup>25</sup>

One of the leading religious figures in the region was Hacı Tevfik Efendi. Hacı Tevfik Efendi was a scholar raised in the Ottoman classical education system and steeped in madrasa culture. In his sermons during the War of Independence, he emphasized that resistance was not only a national but also a religious responsibility, stating, "Defending the homeland is a fundamental duty."<sup>26</sup> A document contains detailed notes regarding the Amasya Mufti's activities to inform and raise public awareness. In these sermons, Hacı Tevfik Efendi addressed not only the city center but also the rural areas; he encouraged the active participation of the people in the struggle through meetings he held in the villages.<sup>27</sup>

This aspect of his character became more evident during the founding of the Amasya Society for the Defense of Rights. He led the society in reaching out to villages, appointing some village imams as local representatives of the National Struggle.<sup>28</sup> This organization ensured that mosques functioned not only as places of worship but also as logistical hubs for the resistance. Thus, both religious responsibility and national duty intertwined, creating a powerful mobilization among the people.

Known as Sheikh Müderris by the people of Amasya, Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi exerted a wide influence as a madrasah teacher and public preacher. In his sermons, he criticized the Istanbul government's collaboration with the occupying forces, describing this situation as a disgrace that contradicts the dignity of Islam.<sup>29</sup> With these words, Tevfik Efendi demonstrated that religion is not merely a collection of rituals, but also a spiritual source that provides resilience to society. With such pronouncements, Tevfik Efendi demonstrated that religion is not merely a collection of rituals but also a spiritual source of society's resilience.

Tevfik Efendi didn't just speak out; he pioneered the formation of volunteer units from among the students of the madrasah in Amasya. These young men engaged in

<sup>24</sup> Necdet Refik Aktaş, *Atatürkün Bağımsızlık Savaşı Nasıl Başladı* (How Atatürk Prepared for the War of Independence), Varlık Yayıncıları (Varlık Publications), Istanbul, 1973, pp. 64-73.

<sup>25</sup> H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yillarda Amasya* (Amasya in the National Struggle), p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle), p. 183.

<sup>27</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle), p. 188.

<sup>28</sup> Abdurrahman Rahmi Erdan, *Makine Başında Mustafa Kemal'le 15 Gün* (15 Days with Mustafa Kemal in Amasya at the Machine), Fer Yayıncıları (Fer Publications), Istanbul, 1989, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> H. Menç, *Millî Mücadele yillarda Amasya* (Amasya in the National Struggle), p. 10.

food and intelligence operations behind the lines, and some were directly incorporated into resistance units.<sup>30</sup> The volunteer units established with the encouragement of Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi also played an active role in systematically delivering aid collected from mosque congregations to the front lines.

Dürrizade Abdullah, on April 11, 1920, declaring the Ankara-based resistance “rebels” was not taken seriously in Amasya. On the contrary, the Amasya ulema, gathered under the chairmanship of Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, issued a counter-fatwa issued in Anatolia, signed by Rıfat Börekçi, and read in all the city's mosques.<sup>31</sup> The following statements were repeated in local sermons: Istanbul's words were written with the ink of occupation. The pen of truth is in Anatolia. This opposition created a shift in public legitimacy, not only political but also religious; it spread the idea that the parliament in Ankara should be supported. Thus, the people of Amasya were convinced that resistance to the occupation was not only a right but also a duty of faith.

Religious discourse in Amasya encompassed not only men but also women and youth; sermons emphasized that “jihad can be waged not only with weapons, but also with willpower and morality.” In line with this understanding, women were active behind the lines in tasks such as intelligence, food supply, and wounded care; these contributions were described in the press of the period as sacred service.<sup>32</sup> Sermons given to female students in madrasahs emphasized, with exemplary hadiths, that women can also shoulder the burden of the ummah, thus cementing the idea that moral participation is a responsibility regardless of gender.<sup>33</sup>

During the War of Independence, Amasya became not only a political center but also a city that legitimized the struggle on a spiritual level, thanks to the strong bond established by religious discourse with the people. The calls of clerics like Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi and Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, rising from the pulpit of the mosque, the pews of the madrasah, and the conversations of the dervish lodge, not only generated religious enthusiasm but also laid the groundwork for an organized popular movement. In this context, Amasya earned its place in history as one of the cities of the War of Independence where not only circulars were issued but also organized by faith.

## 2. Public Relations of Religious Institutions during the War of Independence

<sup>30</sup> Ş. S. Aydemir, *Tek Adam (The Lone Man)*, Vol. 2, pp. 38-39.

<sup>31</sup> Bayram Sakallı, *Ankara ve Çerresinde Millî Faaliyetler ve Teşkilatlanma (National Movements in Ankara and its Surroundings)*, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları (Ministry of Culture and Tourism Publications), Ankara, 1988, p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.kirmizilar.com/sivas-anadolu-kadirlari-mudafa-i-vatan-cemiyeti-ve-nizamnamesi/>

<sup>33</sup> Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, “Millî Mücadele'de Anadolu Kadınları Müdafa-i Vatan Cemiyeti (Anatolian Women's Defense of the Homeland Society in the National Struggle)”, *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi (Atatürk Research Center Publications)*, Ankara, 1996, p. 38.

The War of Independence was not merely a military resistance; it was also a multi-layered struggle for independence waged through the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual mobilization of the people. One of the most important factors influencing the success of this struggle was the religious institutions that established direct relations with the people and the scholars and sheikhs who led these institutions. Mosques, madrasas, dervish lodges, and preaching pulpits were not only places of worship but also served as centers for organizing, guiding, and fostering spiritual solidarity among the people. Throughout the War of Independence, the relationship between religious institutions and the people was decisive on both political and sociocultural levels, legitimizing the resistance and enabling it to gain a foothold.

By the late Ottoman Empire, religious institutions occupied a significant place in social life. Madrasas not only educated the public but also trained a portion of the governing bureaucracy. Sermons in mosques were one of the primary sources through which the public followed political and social developments. Tekkes, particularly in rural areas, served as centers of both religious and social solidarity.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the War of Independence in Amasya, mosques were the most effective centers for raising public awareness and mobilizing. Amasya Mufti Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi, in particular, called on the public to resist the occupation in his Friday sermons, resonating strongly with the public conscience with his pronouncements that defending the homeland is a religious obligation for every Muslim.<sup>35</sup>

Centrally located places of worship, such as the Amasya Central Büyük Ağa Mosque and the Hatuniye Mosque, became not only places of worship but also places where the public and the community converged. In these mosques, the calls of the Society for the Defense of Rights were publicized; recruitment for the front lines and fundraising activities were organized outside the mosques. Documents from 1919 show that cash donations collected, especially after Friday prayers, were recorded in ledgers and delivered to the Society for the Defense of Rights.<sup>36</sup>

If we examine the madrasahs in Amasya, we see that, as a city home to established madrasahs such as the Bayezid Pasha Madrasa and the Gökmedrese, it was also one of the centers that built the intellectual front of the War of Independence. In their lectures and conversations, scholars with madrasa roots, such as Abdurrahman

<sup>34</sup> Ali Yılmaz, “Selçuklu ve Osmanlı Dönemi Medreselerinde Geleneksel Yapı ve İslah Çalışmaları: Konya Örneği (Traditional Structure and Reform Studies in Seljuk and Ottoman Period Madrasahs: The Konya Example)” *Milel ve Nihal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, May – August, 2008, p. 170.

<sup>35</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle)*, p. 206.

<sup>36</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle)*, p. 207.

Kâmil Efendi and Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, viewed the struggle not merely as a political resistance but as a matter of preserving faith.<sup>37</sup>

Volunteer units were formed among students studying at these madrassas, and some participated in intelligence and logistics services behind the lines. Internal correspondence from the Amasya Society for the Defense of Rights from 1920 indicates that, under the direction of Tevfik Efendi, young people from the villages were trained and assigned to mobilization activities.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the madrasas, the Halveti, Naksibendi, and Mevlevi lodges in Amasya served as structures that kept the public's morale and motivation alive during the War of Independence. One of the Halveti sheikhs, Ahmed Şükrü Efendi, in particular, emphasized in his conversations that consent to the occupation is not religiously permissible, and told his disciples that supporting the Ankara-based resistance was a religious obligation.<sup>39</sup>

Some lodges operating in the Sofular and Pirler neighborhoods played a role in providing food and ammunition to the front; this aid was shipped from Amasya to Sivas and Erzurum. One of the most important roles of religious institutions in Amasya was to establish religious legitimacy in the public mind. In response to the Dürrizâde fatwa issued in Istanbul on April 11, 1920, the Amasya ulema adopted a counter-fatwa written by Rıfat Börekçi, and these texts were publicized in mosques.<sup>40</sup>

Jihad for freedom, not the caliphate, is also indicative of the transformation in religious rhetoric. Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi's declaration, "The sun rising in Ankara is the future of the ummah," in particular, became widespread among the public as a call for both religious and national unity.<sup>41</sup>

Mosques, lodges, and madrasahs became not only the moral foundations of the National Struggle in Amasya, but also its operational organizing centers. Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi's sermons from the mosque pulpit, Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi's con-

<sup>37</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle), pp. 208-209.

<sup>38</sup> Mehmet Evsile, "Millî Mücadele Döneminde Amasya (Amasya During the National Struggle Period)", Vol. 5, *Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi* (TUBA), Ankara, 2023, p. 438.

<sup>39</sup> Ömer Yılmaz, "Anadolu Millî Mücadele Hareketine Tekke ve Tarikat Şeyhlerinin Katkıları (The Contributions of Tekke and Tarikat Sheikhs to the Anatolian National Struggle Movement)", *Journal of Analytic Divinity International Refereed Journal*, 2020, pp. 155-161.

<sup>40</sup> Ali Sarıkoyuncu, "Mehmet Rıfat Efendi (Börekçi)'nin Millî Mücadele'deki Hizmetleri (The Services of Mehmet Rıfat Efendi (Börekçi) in the National Struggle)", *Diyonet İlmî Dergi*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 1995, pp. 90-91.

<sup>41</sup> A. Sarıkoyuncu, *Millî Mücadele'de Din Adamları* (Religious Leaders in the National Struggle), p.205.

versation circles, and the religious guidance activities of the lodges brought the people of Amasya into the struggle not only through faith but also through organized consciousness.

The success of the National Struggle in Amasya rested not only on political will but also on the prestige of the religious institutions that garnered popular support for this political will. In this context, Amasya should be recognized as one of the symbolic cities of religious and civic solidarity in the history of the Republic.

### Conclusion

The National Struggle was not merely an armed resistance waged by armies on the front lines; it was also an awakening movement initiated in the soul, mind, and heart of the nation. One of the most valuable bearers of this awakening in Anatolia was undoubtedly the clergy. In this sense, Amasya is no ordinary provincial town; with its historical and religious heritage, it is an exceptional center that shaped both the intellectual and spiritual course of the National Struggle. For in this city, mosques, madrasas, dervish lodges, and the clergy who presided over them, became not merely places of worship or leaders of circles of learning, but sources of wisdom that revitalized the spirit of the people.

Figures such as the Amasya Mufti Abdurrahman Kâmil Efendi and Hacı Hafız Tevfik Efendi, known as the sheikh mudarris, particularly instilled in the public the belief that the National Struggle was not only a political but also a religious responsibility. This belief was reinforced not only by pronouncements from mosque pulpits but also by calls for mobilization extending to villages, direct participation in community activities, and even active roles in food and intelligence organizations operating behind the lines. Thanks to these pioneers, the public viewed the National Struggle not merely as a call from political leadership but as a faith-based duty. They wholeheartedly participated in this process, which unfolded in close proximity to the mosque, the dervish lodge, and the madrasa.

The influence of religious structures in Amasya on the National Struggle was multi-faceted. While these structures ensured the public legitimacy of the new political will taking shape in Ankara, they also served as centers of resistance against Istanbul's collaborationist fatwas. The counter-fatwas issued in Amasya against the rebel fatwa issued by the Sheikh al-Islam on April 11, 1920, and the sermons delivered in mosques to this effect, reinforced Ankara's legitimacy in the public mind. In this respect, Amasya became not only the city where the Circular was published but also a center where the National Struggle was spiritually grounded, finding a place in the hearts and minds of the people.

The fundamental duty expressed from the mosque pulpits has become not only a religious command but also a social movement. These religious pronouncements provided the religious legitimacy of the national will, fostered a sense of unity among the people, and sustained the spirit of resistance. The collaboration of village imams with the Defense of Rights Societies, in particular, enabled mosques to function not

only as places of worship but also as provincial organizations of the National Struggle. This enabled the resistance in Amasya to be organized not only in the urban center but also in the rural areas.

On the other hand, lodges and religious orders also appear to have played important roles in the struggle. Halveti, Mevlevi, and Naksibendi sheikhs encouraged resistance against the occupation in their conversation circles, explaining to their disciples that supporting the National Struggle was not only a political choice but also a religious obligation. The fact that some sheikhs described the National Struggle as a second migration gave the resistance a spiritual meaning, which in turn led to a deeper commitment among the people to participate in the struggle.

The example of Amasya demonstrates that the religious structure encompasses not only a spiritual sphere but also a sphere of political and social influence. This structure possesses a unique potential for establishing direct contact with the public, building public opinion, and expanding organization. The role of the clergy as legitimators was one of the important sociological dynamics that laid the groundwork for the newly established Republic of Turkey. The influence of religious discourses in resonating with the spirit of the National Struggle plays a key role in explaining both the psychological atmosphere of the period and social cohesion.

In conclusion, the positions of Amasya's clergy during the National Struggle demonstrate how religious legitimacy merged with political will, how the people rose up with spiritual motivation, and how traditional institutions in Anatolia regained their meaning. Among the dynamics shaping the foundations of the Republic of Turkey today, the quiet yet unwavering contribution of the Amasya clergy should not be forgotten. This contribution is not only a historical asset, but also a reminder of the people's potential for organized solidarity, the power of resistance shaped by faith, and the socio-political impact of religious institutions.

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