The Use of Hadiths on Social Responsibility and Justice in the Sermons of Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı

Muhammed Alparslan KARTAL[1*], Muhammed Usame ALPTEKİN[2]

[1*]Associate Professor, Kafkas University, Kars, Turkey, ORCID ID: 156-167-156-167. Email: kartalalparslan@hotmail.com

[2]Kafkas University, Kars, Turkey. ORCID ID: 156-167-156-167X. Email: muhammedusame@yandex.com

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ABSTRACT:
This study examines the sermons delivered at the pulpit of the Hagia Sophia Mosque by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, one of the late Ottoman scholars (ulema). It focuses on the usage and source analysis of selected narrations (riwayats) based on determined socio-political themes from the sermons published under the title "Mevaiz" in the journal Sırat-ı Müstakim. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries a period characterized by intense political turmoil, factionalism, and Westernization movements it is observed that the sermon pulpit ceased to be merely a space for spiritual guidance (irshad). Alongside guidance activities, it transformed into a powerful mechanism of mass communication that shaped social consciousness and offered Sharia-compliant solutions to the crises of the era. In this context, the research identifies the presence of the narrations that constitute Manastırlı's sample in classical hadith sources, particularly the Kutub al-Sittah. Furthermore, it analyzes the function of these hadiths in grounding socio-political issues. The detailed textual analysis reveals that narrations were presented through purpose-driven excerpts rather than in their full text. Moreover, it is determined that these narrations were dynamically employed as tools of legitimization in themes such as social solidarity, obedience, meritocracy, justice, and relations with non-Muslims.

Keywords: Hadith, Sermon, Sırât-ı Müstaqim, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, Ottoman ulama

Introduction

During the final years of the Ottoman Empire, Islam was practiced through a reinterpretation that incorporated both the traditional religious heritage and the changing social and political context. This dual structure transformed the sermon pulpit from being merely a place where faith was strengthened, moral conduct was reinforced, and believers were encouraged to engage in self-examination. Indeed, the sermon pulpit can be described as a dynamic institution that influenced and guided society. It assumed particular importance during periods of state crisis, serving as a means of constructing a common discourse within society. For this reason, the sermon pulpit emerged as a powerful instrument of mass communication.

One of the scholars (ulema) most frequently mentioned during this period was Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı. His sermons should not be regarded merely as speeches dealing with moral issues. Rather, the subjects he addressed constitute a multilayered discourse encompassing the intellectual and social structure of the period in which he lived. Manastırlı's scholarly background, his defence of kalām and ʿaqīdah, his engagement with works of tafsīr and fiqh, and, above all, the political and social developments of his time were among the principal factors shaping the content of his sermons. As one of the most active and widely respected members of the ulema during the process of legitimising and promoting the Constitutional Monarchy (Meşrutiyet) among the public, Manastırlı's sermons focused particularly on themes of brotherhood (uhuvvet), liberty (hürriyet), justice, and social responsibility. Sermon pulpits played a crucial role in communicating these issues to the public, and the pulpit of the Hagia Sophia Mosque was among the most influential. Manastırlı made effective use of this pulpit, employing Qur'anic verses and hadiths in his sermons to advocate the values of the Constitutional Monarchy. Accordingly, this study aims to evaluate his interpretations of hadiths in which his views on justice and social responsibility are particularly prominent. Owing to the scope of the study, only the

interpretations of relevant hadiths in two of his sermons have been examined. When the literature is examined, it is evident that numerous studies have been conducted on Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, one of the scholars (ulema) of the late Ottoman period, and his works across various disciplines, including the Basic Islamic Sciences (Kalām, Tafsīr, Hadith, and Fiqh) as well as History. These studies can essentially be classified into four main groups.

The first group consists of studies examining the refutational (raddiyya) literature produced in response to Westernization, Orientalism, positivism, and materialism, together with the author's overall intellectual stance. In the criticisms that emerged following Abdullah Cevdet's translation of Dozy's Tarih-i İslamiyet, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı's Hak ve Hakikat has been taken as the central work for analysing his methodology of refutation, his defence of the Qur'an against Orientalist claims, and his philosophical analyses (Ceylan, 2019; Yenilmez, 2015; Uğur, 2024).

The second group comprises studies focusing on Manastırlı's understanding of kalām, ʿaqīdah, and the Sunnah. The thesis examining his understanding of prophethood (nubuwwah) and the methodology of reasoning (istidlāl) he employed in demonstrating the proof of prophethood (Çifci, 2020), together with studies based on his theological views and his work Telhisu'l-Kelam (Baki, 2001), concentrate on his contributions to the field of ʿaqīdah. In addition, this group includes studies that, through his work Mevaidü'l-İn'am, prepared for military and civil high schools, examine the late Ottoman ulema's emphasis on adherence to the Sunnah and their criticism of bidʿah (Akalın, 2019).

The third group consists of textual analyses of the author's works in the fields of fiqh, legal methodology (uṣūl), codification, and family law. Within this context, studies examining Ottoman family law, the processes of legal codification, and women's rights through Manastırlı's work Vesailü'l-Felah fi Mesaili'n-Nikah (Dirikol, 2025), together with legal and political analyses demonstrating his perspective on the debates concerning ijtihād during the Second Constitutional Period (II. Meşrutiyet), his argument that Islamic law possesses the capacity to respond to the needs of every era, and his defence through both rational and textual evidence of the continued openness of the gate of ijtihād (Duman, 2004), occupy a prominent place in the literature.

The fourth and final group comprises theses examining the author's studies on tafsīr and the Qur'anic sciences. In this context, studies focusing on Manastırlı's tafsīr articles analyse his approach as a Qur'anic exegete and his balance between transmitted (riwāyah) and rational (dirāyah) exegesis (Şamlı, 2016). Likewise,

studies that transcribe and analyse his manuscript Fusulü't-Teysir fi Usuli't-Tefsir, prepared as a textbook on the methodology of tafsīr for the Darülfünun and the Mekteb-i Mülkiye, and examine his perspective on the Qur'anic sciences, also occupy an important place in the literature (Çetiner, 2019).

The existing literature has been examined comprehensively. In his sermons and articles, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı consistently preferred particular hadith narrations. These narrations address socio-political issues, justice, equality, religious and national unity, as well as liberty. However, no independent study has been identified in the existing literature that directly centres on these narrations. For Manastırlı, the sermon pulpit was not merely a platform for religious and moral guidance. Rather, he used it to advocate the ideals of the Second Constitutional Period (II. Meşrutiyet) and the constitutional order. At the same time, he emphasised justice, social equality, and the concept of citizenship (uhuvvet-i vataniyye). He legitimised and defended all of these ideas through Qur'anic verses and, in particular, hadiths. Nevertheless, no previous study has examined this process in a comprehensive manner. The present study is therefore conducted on the basis of a specifically selected sample of hadiths. It explains how Manastırlı grounded his defence of the Constitutional Monarchy in the Prophetic tradition. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the intellectual resources of hadith scholarship were brought together with the political thought of the period. In this way, the study aims to fill an important gap in the existing literature.

The present study focuses on the manner in which Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı employed socio-political hadiths in his sermons. It demonstrates that hadiths in sermons were not merely religious texts conveyed for instructional purposes. Rather, it is observed that the manner in which these narrations were employed was often intended to provide a foundation for the political thought that supported the modernization process of the period. In this respect, the narrations constituted one of the fundamental building blocks of the sermons. Accordingly, the study examines the sources from which the selected narrations were derived within the framework of the identified themes, how these texts were incorporated into the sermons, their place within the classical hadith corpus, and how the interpretation of these hadiths was influenced by the political and social climate of the Constitutional Period (Meşrutiyet). It also considers whether excessive interpretation (ifrād) occurred in this regard.

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı (His Life, Scholarly Personality, and Works)

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı was a scholar who lived during the final period of the Ottoman Empire. His family originally came from Konya and later migrated to Manastır. His grandfather, Abdülvehhab ez-Zaimi, left Konya during the Vak'a-i Hayriyye (Auspicious Incident), when the Janissary Corps was abolished, and settled in Manastır (Baltacı, 1976, 10). During the Ottoman period, Manastır became an important centre of learning and culture. Following its conquest, the establishment of madrasas transformed the city into a regional centre of education. These madrasas functioned not only as institutions providing formal education but also as strategic establishments that facilitated the dissemination of Islamic religion and culture while promoting socio-cultural integration and harmony between the state and society (Baltacı, 1976, 10).

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı was born in 1846 (Hijri 1263) in the city of Manastır, which was an important centre of Islamic learning and culture during the Ottoman period and is now located within the borders of present-day North Macedonia. His father was Sancaktar Yüzbaşı Hacı İbrahim Efendi, and his mother was Hatice Hanım (Bursalı, 1333/1914, I/365). Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı began his education in Manastır, which was an important centre of learning during the Ottoman period. He received his primary education at the Mekteb-i İdadiye in the Eski Cami from Hafız Yahya Efendi, a student of Debbağ İsmail Efendi, who had studied in Istanbul. He subsequently studied

ṣarf (Arabic morphology) and naḥw (Arabic syntax) under Hacı Mustafa Efendi, one of the former muftis of the period. At only eighteen years of age, he demonstrated his scholarly competence by delivering lessons from İsmail Hakkı Bursevî's Ruhu'l-Beyan tafsīr after the afternoon prayers during the month of Ramadan at Hacı Salih Mosque in Manastır. Following the death of the former mufti, he continued his education at the Haydar Gazi Madrasa, where he studied under Süleyman Efendi (Bursalı, 1333/1914, I/365).

While still young, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı travelled to Istanbul to further his education and completed his madrasa studies there. He studied Arabic under Mustafa Şevket Efendi and received an ijāzah in the Islamic sciences from Tikveşli Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi, one of the instructors of the Huzur lectures. He was subsequently appointed to distinguished scholarly positions, including Shaykh of the Pulpit (kürsü şeyhliği) at the Hagia Sophia Mosque, and later served as Pulpit Professor (kürsü müderrisliği) at the Fatih Mosque (Albayrak, 1980, II/285). Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı possessed remarkable oratorical skills (Duman, 2004, 78). He delivered sermons in several of Istanbul's most prominent mosques, and his sermons at Dolmabahçe Valide Sultan Mosque in 1874, Süleymaniye Mosque in 1898, Sultan Ahmed Mosque in 1901, and Hagia Sophia Mosque in 1907 attracted considerable public attention. In addition to his preaching activities, he also held active positions in education, teaching Arabic at the Eyüp Military Secondary School, fiqh at the Mekteb-i Hukuk (School of Law), ʿaqīdah at both the Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun and the Military Medical School, and tafsīr, hadith, and kalām at the Mekteb-i Mülkiye. In 1899, he was appointed as a professor (müderris) of uṣūl al-fiqh and tafsīr at the Darülfünun of Istanbul, and in recognition of his twenty-four years of academic service, he was awarded a fourth-class Ottoman decoration (Artuk, 2003, 27/301–302; Pakalın, 1983; T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999).

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı was also actively involved in politics. On 16 December 1908, he became a member of the Meclis-i Ayan (Ottoman Senate). During his tenure, he accompanied Sultan Reşad on a journey to Rumelia, where, in a sermon delivered in Thessaloniki (Selanik), he emphasised the importance of Muslims acting in unity and obeying their rulers. This sermon was later published as a book under the title Kosova Sahrası Mev'izası (Manastırlı, 1327/1909). Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı was proficient in Arabic, Persian, and Bulgarian, possessing both an extensive cultural background and a strong scholarly foundation. Mehmed Akif Ersoy, the national poet who also served as the editor-in-chief of the journal Sırat-ı Müstakim and inspired the nation through his poetry, described Manastırlı's death in an article written in 1912 as the loss of one of the country's most valuable figures (Kara, 2005, 205; Albayrak, II/286).

Manastırlı authored numerous works in various fields:

Hace-i Lisan-ı Osmani is a work written by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı in Ottoman Turkish on language and was published in Istanbul in 1294/1878 (Yavuz, 2003, 18/564).

Fusulu't-Teysir fi Usuli't-Tefsir is a work authored by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı on the methodology of tafsīr. Although this work is not mentioned by name in other sources, it is referred to in another of Manastırlı's own works entitled Şerhu's-Sadr bi Fedail-i Leyleti'l-Kadr (Manastırlı, 1325, 2; Baki, 2001, 56).

Mevaiz consists of the sermons delivered by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı at the Hagia Sophia Mosque and was compiled and published by Eşref Edip (Fergan) (Manastırlı, 1959, I/8). The first edition, containing eight lessons, comprised 328 pages and was published in Istanbul in 1324. In addition, lessons 46 through 62 were published serially in the journal Sırat-ı Müstakim (Sırat-ı Mustakîm, 1959).

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı passed away on 5 December 1912 at his residence in Anadoluhisarı. He was buried in the cemetery of the Fatih Mosque (Yavuz, 2003, 27/564). Following his death, numerous newspapers and journals of the period published obituaries and

condolence articles in his memory (Sırat-ı Mustakîm, 1959, II–IX/40–222, 248–249). The journal Sırat-ı Müstakim also published a note of appreciation expressing its gratitude for the widespread public response to Manastırlı's passing:

"On behalf of the entire Islamic community, we extend our gratitude to the Ottoman press, which demonstrated an unparalleled act of devotion by dedicating three, five, or even seven lines in their valuable columns to the late and distinguished İsmail Hakkı Efendi a sacrifice the like of which has never been witnessed anywhere else in the world." (Sırat-ı Mustakîm, 1959, II–IX/40–222, 248–249).

Evaluation of the Relevant Narrations Used in the Sermons of Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı

Under this heading, the source analysis and interpretations of the narrations found in the sermons of Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı and selected in accordance with the themes of justice and social responsibility are discussed. After identifying the place of these narrations in the classical hadith literature, the study aims to explain how they were treated in the sermons, which parts were emphasised, which objectives of religious guidance these preferences served, and how the socio-political conditions of the period were reflected in the interpretation of the hadiths. When the use of hadiths in works from the Ottoman period is considered in general, it is observed that matters such as including the chain of transmission, identifying the source, and conducting criticism of the chain and text were not prioritised (Kartal, 2021, 29). It is known that hadiths were used primarily to explain and substantiate the subject being discussed, and that the conformity of the text or meaning with the intended activity of religious guidance took precedence over the authenticity or soundness value of the hadith (Kartal, 2021, 29). Although this situation naturally varied according to the genre of the work and the sensitivity of the author, the general tendency of the period was in this direction. The transmission of narrations in the sermons of Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı is also consistent with this broader Ottoman tradition of preaching and religious guidance.

When the understanding of tafsīr and hadith among the ulema of the Constitutional Period is examined, two elements generally stand out. The first is the greater emphasis placed on relevant verses and hadiths in accordance with current political, social, and economic developments. A selective approach is clearly evident during this period. The second is the instrumentalisation of verses and hadiths by interpreting them differently from classical commentaries in order to legitimise the constitutional system of government and its principles (Mertoğlu, 2001, 8–9). Although explaining verses and hadiths by relating them to contemporary issues does not in itself constitute a problem, excessive interpretations, excessive exposure to the influence of politics, and the instrumentalisation of the religious texts sometimes bring certain risks to the forefront. The close relationship of the ulema of the Constitutional Period with politics, together with their active role in legitimising the constitutional regime and persuading the public in this regard, became decisive in shaping the relationship between the ulema and politics in later periods. It is noteworthy that, in one of his sermons, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı referred to verse 46 of Sūrat al-Anfāl and stated: "How political a book the Qur'an is. Allah is giving us a political lesson" (Manastırlı, 1325/1909, 159–160). It is occasionally observed that the interpretation of hadiths containing socio-political content went to excess, departed entirely from traditional interpretation, and moved away from meanings permitted by the wording. Due to the limitations of the study, the analysis will be confined to Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı's socio-political interpretations of several hadiths.

Social Responsibility and Coexistence: The Ship Metaphor

In the 46th lesson of the article entitled Mevaiz, published in the journal Sebilürreşad, with Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı as the lecturer (mukarrir) and Sirozlu Hafız Eşref Edip as the

editor (muharrir), a hadith is cited in its complete form (Manastırlı, 1959, I/3, 45). Abu Nuʿaym narrated to us; Zakariyya narrated. I heard ʿĀmir say: I heard Nuʿmān b. Bashīr (may Allah be pleased with both of them) say that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"The example of the one who observes Allah's limits and the one who transgresses them is like that of a group of people who drew lots for places on a ship. Some of them occupied the upper deck, while others occupied the lower deck. Whenever those on the lower deck needed water, they had to pass by those above them. So they said, 'If we were to make a hole in our own part of the ship, we would not trouble those above us.'

If those on the upper deck leave them to do what they intend, all of them will perish together. But if they restrain them (and prevent them), both they themselves will be saved, and all of them together will be saved." (Buhârî, Şirket, 6) In addition to Imam al-Bukhārī, this narration was also transmitted by al-Tirmidhī, who classified it as ḥasan (Tirmizî, Fiten, 12). The hadith was likewise narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (İbn Ḥanbel, 1436/2015, No. 18370). In his work, the text of this narration is presented in a more concise form. Although it has been claimed that ʿUmar delivered this narration in a sermon and that it is therefore a mawqūf hadith, the predominant opinion is that the narration is marfūʿ (Işık, 2017, 99).

On the basis of the narration containing the ship metaphor, Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı stated that all the elements constituting society are subject to a common destiny. He further argued that those on the upper deck should take preventive action against the conduct of those on the lower deck when such actions would cause harm to the whole. He supported this view with the phrase from the narration, "But if they restrain them (and prevent them) …". He also emphasised in his sermon that every segment of society bears responsibility towards one another for the preservation of social order, highlighting this point through the protective character of the Constitutional Monarchy (Meşrutiyet) (Manastırlı, 1959, 45).

The citation of this hadith from the pulpit of such an important mosque as Hagia Sophia during the Constitutional Period (Meşrutiyet), when concepts such as liberty (hürriyet), brotherhood (uhuvvet), justice, and equality (müsavat) had become widespread, is significant. Certainly, this hadith had been frequently cited in sermons for centuries. However, the context in which the hadith was cited and the nature of its interpretation are of particular importance. Indeed, after quoting the hadith, Manastırlı made the following comment:

"This liberty, this brotherhood, encompasses all of us. Our interests are common. One should not look down upon others; one should always assist one another so that one may be respected... Administer justice, act in accordance with equality... Your trade is free, your transactions are free. Wherever you go, you will be treated with respect. Is it truly living to live constantly with malice and deceit?" (Manastırlı, 1959, 46).

Departing from the classical interpretation of the hadith, Manastırlı employed the narration with the aim of legitimising the principles of the Constitutional Monarchy (Meşrutiyet). In the traditional interpretation of the hadith, it is generally understood within the context of the mutual responsibilities of Muslims towards one another. During the Constitutional Period, however, it was interpreted in the context of the principles governing relations between Muslims and the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, since Muslims and non-Muslim subjects lived within the same state, Muslims were advised to act towards them with greater justice, equality, and respect. This interpretation suggests a criticism that, prior to the Constitutional Period, non-Muslim subjects had not been treated with justice and equality. Furthermore, the presence of many different communities within the Ottoman population, together with the efforts of Western powers to weaken the Ottoman Empire by promoting nationalism among these groups, may also be cited as a factor contributing to the growing

sensitivity towards safeguarding the rights of non-Muslim subjects (Bozkurt, 1996, 40).

By contrast, the hadith was interpreted by the classical hadith commentators within the framework of al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar ("enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong"). They explained that those who distanced themselves from the commands and prohibitions of Allah should be warned by pious believers, prevented from persisting in their actions, and, if necessary, punished (Aynî, 2001, 13/80–81). Likewise, those who remained silent in the face of oppression and wrongdoing committed within society were regarded as being together with those who exceeded the limits by boring a hole in the bottom of the ship (İbn Hacer, 1379, 5/295).

Like many Ottoman intellectuals and members of the ulema who supported the Constitutional Monarchy, Manastırlı appealed to Qur'anic verses and hadiths in his sermons in order to encourage public acceptance of the constitutional system. By interpreting them somewhat differently from the traditional understanding, he presented them as evidence supporting the values of the Constitutional Monarchy. This is noteworthy in demonstrating the influence of contemporary political developments and the political environment on the interpretation of hadiths. This approach may be understood not as altering the original meaning of the hadith text, but rather as reinterpreting it by relating it to the social and political issues of the period. Accordingly, in Manastırlı's sermons, hadiths function not only as religious evidence but also as elements of discourse that support the legitimacy of the social order and the ideal of coexistence envisaged by the Constitutional Monarchy.

Justice and Public Order: The Narration of Assisting the Oppressor and the Oppressed

In the sermon contained in the 46th lesson of the series entitled Mevaiz, published in the journal Sebilürreşad and authored by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, a hadith is quoted in a form appropriate to the style of the pulpit as, "...Help your brother, whether he is oppressed or an oppressor...," without mentioning its chain of transmission (Manastırlı, 1959, 31). Considering its use within the context of religious guidance, the hadith is cited in this manner in order to emphasise the portion that most directly conveys its intended message. Indeed, the hadith is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, together with its chain of transmission, as follows:

ʿUthmān b. Abī Shaybah narrated to us; (he said) Hushaym narrated from ʿUbaydullāh b. Abī Bakr b. Anas and Ḥumayd al-Ṭawīl, who narrated from Anas b. Mālik (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed person." (Buhârî, Maẓâlim, 5)

This hadith is also narrated in al-Tirmidhī's Sunan. Furthermore, it is evident from the narration in this work that a dialogue has been incorporated into the text (Tirmizî, Fiten, 65). In this version, the Companions ask, "O Messenger of Allah! We can help the oppressed, but how can we help the oppressor?" The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) replies, "By preventing him from committing oppression (or by restraining his hand from oppression); that is how you help him" (Tirmizî, Fiten, 65). Similarly, the narration recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān preserves the conversational form. The Prophet's response is: "It is by preventing him from oppression" (İbn Ḥibbân, 1435/2014, No. 5167).

In his sermon, which centred on the concepts of citizenship and equality introduced during the Constitutional Period (Meşrutiyet), Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı Efendi defined the common basis of coexistence with the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire through the concept of "brotherhood of the homeland (uhuvvet-i vataniyye)" (Manastırlı, 1959, 31). He cited the above narration in his sermon to emphasise the preservation of this sociological unity and the prevention of oppression (Manastırlı, 1959, 31). He further presented the preservation of the political order, the establishment of justice, and the prevention of injustice as collective social

responsibilities, stating: "Striving to remove oppression is a farḍ kifāyah. If it is not fulfilled, the entire ummah becomes responsible" (Manastırlı, 1959, 31).

Unless there is evidence indicating otherwise, the concept of "brother" in the expression "Help your brother" found in the narration appears to have been understood by the early Muslim scholars (salaf) as referring to the bond of religious brotherhood among Muslims. Indeed, the Qur'an states, "The believers are but brothers" (Hucurat 49:10), and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) explicitly established the rights of this brotherhood by saying: "A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he neither oppresses him nor abandons him without assistance..." (Buhârî, Maẓālim, 3; Muslim, Birr, 58). The classical hadith commentators likewise interpreted the narration within this framework. Ibn Baṭṭāl approached the narration entirely from moral and legal perspectives, concentrating on explaining the nature of the concept of "assistance" mentioned in the hadith. His commentary contains no discussion concerning the scope of the term "brother", but instead adopts the meaning understood within the context of the classical Islamic community (Ibn Baṭṭal, 2003, VI, 572). Aynî interpreted the hadith in a similar context and reiterated the classical views (Aynî, 2001, XII/406–407). Although no explicit statement was made that the term "brother" referred exclusively to Muslims, no opinion was advanced extending it to non-Muslims either.

By contrast, under the influence of the concept of brotherhood of the homeland (uhuvvet-i vataniyye) promoted by the Constitutional Monarchy (Meşrutiyet), Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı broadened the scope of the concept of "brother" mentioned in the hadith. Rather than restricting it solely to religious brotherhood, he interpreted it so as to encompass all Ottoman subjects living under the same state. Thus, without making any alteration to the wording of the hadith, he re-evaluated the semantic scope of the concept in accordance with the political and social conditions of the period. This demonstrates that, in the religious discourse of the Second Constitutional Period (II. Meşrutiyet), hadiths functioned not only in their classical sense but also as references supporting a new understanding of social unity and common citizenship without completely abandoning their traditional meanings.

In the classical commentaries on hadith, this narration was explained as meaning that assistance to the oppressor is realised by preventing him from committing oppression, thereby aiming to establish justice at both the individual and social levels. Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, while preserving this fundamental meaning, reinterpreted the hadith within the political and social conditions of the Constitutional Period. According to him, preventing oppression was not merely an individual moral responsibility but also an essential duty for preserving public order and maintaining the shared rights of citizenship within the Ottoman society composed of different religious communities. Accordingly, while the narration retains its classical framework of al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar ("enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong"), in Manastırlı's interpretation it acquires a socio-political content that supports the rule of law, justice, and public order. Thus, the hadith becomes not only a religious text regulating individual morality but also one of the religious foundations of social peace and political legitimacy. Nevertheless, the form assumed by efforts to preserve the rights of non-Muslims and establish justice following the Reform Edict (Islahat Fermanı) provoked considerable reactions. It was seriously debated whether excesses had occurred in this regard and whether Muslims themselves had been subjected to injustice in their own homeland in favour of non-Muslims (Kara, 2000, 307).

Even certain concepts that belonged exclusively to Islam were, during this period, broadened within the framework of the prevailing principles of brotherhood (uhuvvet), liberty (hürriyet), justice, and equality. For example, the scope of the distinctly Islamic concept of the ummah was expanded in an attempt to include

the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. This view, advocated by the Kazasker of the period, was in fact intended to legitimise the representation of non-Muslims in parliament. However, the subjection of Qur'anic verses and hadiths to excessive interpretations for the purpose of achieving political objectives was criticised by some scholars of the period. For instance, Hilmi b. Hüseyin al-Bosnevî (d. after 1886), in his work Risâle fi's-Siyâse, wrote a refutation directed against the Kazasker and all the intellectuals, scholars, and politicians who shared the same view (Bosnevî, 1295). In his work, he argued that the Qur'an and hadith explicitly prohibit taking non-Muslims as allies and that, should they enter parliament, there would be a high probability of their gaining access to the Sultan's confidential affairs (Aydın, 2025, 9–10).

The admission of non-Muslims into parliament gave rise to profound political divisions within Ottoman society (Tunaya, 1978, 6/227). This situation also caused divisions among the ulema. Alongside those scholars who fully supported the Constitutional Monarchy and the changes it introduced, there were also scholars who defended traditional principles and opposed the privileges granted to non-Muslims. There were likewise scholars who did not reject all the innovations brought by the Constitutional Monarchy but nevertheless opposed the regulations concerning non-Muslims (Dinç, 2020, 117). For example, al-Bosnevî was not opposed to the establishment of a parliament itself. Rather, the issue he criticised was the presence of representatives of non-Muslims within that parliament (Dinç, 2020, 122). According to him, Muslims and non-Muslims were not equal and could not be regarded as brothers. He further argued that, as a consequence of the policies of equality that had been pursued, the Ottoman Empire had lost Bosnia and Herzegovina (Aydın, 2025, 12).

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, in one of his sermons, regarded the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy (II. Meşrutiyet) not merely as a political change of regime but as a historic turning point in which an unprecedented unity and solidarity emerged between Muslims and non-Muslims within Ottoman society. According to him, the Ottoman subjects belonging to different religions and nations, who had lived for centuries amidst various conflicts and hostilities, became, through divine grace, a single body within a short period of time. Even the Bulgarian revolutionary committees, among the most significant opponents of the state, embraced this new order and laid down their arms. Grounding this extraordinary unity in Qur'an 8:63 (Sūrat al-Anfāl), Manastırlı emphasised that uniting people's hearts to such an extent could not be achieved through material means but only through the grace of Allah. In this way, he interpreted the unity that emerged between Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman citizens after the Second Constitutional Monarchy within a framework of religious legitimacy, presenting it as a divine manifestation of both the principle of equality (müsavat) and the concept of brotherhood of the homeland (uhuvvet-i vataniyye) centred upon a common homeland (Manastırlı, 1326/1908, 112).

Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı was one of the late Ottoman scholars who did not restrict the concept of brotherhood solely to religious brotherhood but instead developed a multi-layered understanding of it. According to him, there exist among human beings religious brotherhood (uhuvvet-i diniyye), ethnic or tribal brotherhood (uhuvvet-i cinsiyye), and brotherhood of the homeland (uhuvvet-i vataniyye). Since people living in the same homeland share common interests and common hardships, they become parts of a single body. Consequently, Muslims and non-Muslims are also regarded as brothers insofar as they are children of the same homeland. Manastırlı based this view on the Qur'anic passages in which the prophets are described as the "brothers" of their own peoples (al-Aʿrāf 7:65, 73, 85; al-Shuʿarāʾ 26:106, 124, 142, etc.), on the Prophet's reminder to the people of Mecca during the conquest of Mecca of the words spoken by Prophet Joseph to his brothers, and on the

Prophetic teachings concerning the rights of neighbours (Manastırlı, 1326, 256). He regarded the objections to describing non-Muslims as "brothers" as a form of ignorant fanaticism arising from the confusion of religion with the concept of brotherhood. He argued that the statement, "The believers are but brothers" (al-Ḥujurāt 49:10), does not mean that believers are brothers only among themselves, but rather emphasises the particular rights of brotherhood that exist among believers. He further maintained that those who rejected brotherhood of the homeland with non-Muslims without taking these verses into consideration had failed to understand the Qur'an's manner of expression and, in some cases, had fallen into the danger of denying its explicit statements (Manastırlı, 1326, 222). Thus, in order to promote unity and solidarity within the multi-religious and multi-ethnic Ottoman society of the Second Constitutional Period, Manastırlı reinterpreted the concept of brotherhood within an expanded framework encompassing religious brotherhood, brotherhood of the homeland, and ultimately universal human brotherhood (uhuvvet-i insâniyye).

Conclusion

This study has not only identified the place of the hadiths employed by Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı in his sermons delivered from the pulpit of the Hagia Sophia Mosque within the classical hadith sources, but has also demonstrated how these narrations were reinterpreted within the political and social conditions of the Second Constitutional Period (II. Meşrutiyet). The two hadiths examined show that, without rejecting the classical hadith tradition, Manastırlı reinterpreted it in accordance with the needs of his own time. Indeed, both the ship metaphor and the hadith "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or the oppressed" are explained in the classical commentaries primarily within the framework of al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar (enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong), individual responsibility, and the rights of brotherhood among Muslims. Manastırlı, however, interpreted these narrations as evidence supporting the fundamental principles of the Constitutional Monarchy, namely justice, liberty, equality, social responsibility, and the idea of common citizenship. This demonstrates that, although hadiths possess an established world of meaning throughout history, their interpretation has not developed entirely independently of historical and political circumstances. During the Second Constitutional Period, a considerable number of the ulema made extensive use of Qur'anic verses and hadiths in order to legitimise the constitutional order, the parliamentary system, and the concept of Ottoman citizenship. Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı was among the most influential representatives of this movement. He used the pulpit of the Hagia Sophia Mosque not only for religious guidance but also as a powerful public platform through which the ideals of the Constitutional Monarchy were communicated to the people. In his sermons, he transformed hadiths into texts that produced not only religious but also political and social legitimacy. In particular, his reinterpretation of the concept of “brother” in accordance with the understanding of brotherhood of the homeland (uhuvvet-i vataniyye), whereby Muslims and non-Muslims were brought together within a common framework of brotherhood by virtue of belonging to the same homeland, stands out as a remarkable interpretation not encountered in the classical hadith commentaries. Nevertheless, in developing this new approach, Manastırlı did not reject the classical hadith tradition in its entirety. Rather, he preserved the fundamental moral messages of the narrations while expanding their semantic scope in accordance with the political needs of the period. However, this mode of interpretation was not accepted by all the ulema of the period. In particular, those scholars who opposed grounding the new relationship of citizenship established with non-Muslims in the religious texts argued that the Qur'anic verses and hadiths were being subjected to excessive interpretation for political purposes. Bosnevî Hilmi's Risâle fi's-Siyâse constitutes one of the most important examples of these criticisms. Thus, the Second Constitutional Period (II.

Meşrutiyet) was not only a period of political transformation but also the setting for significant scholarly debates concerning the semantic scope of hadiths, the extent of religious concepts, and the limits of the classical tradition of interpretation. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the interpretive history of hadith should be examined not only through the literature of transmission and commentary but also by taking into account the political, social, and intellectual conditions in which interpretations emerged. The example of Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı shows that hadiths could be reinterpreted in response to changing historical circumstances; however, it also reveals that such interpretations could at times depart significantly from the classical exegetical tradition and serve to legitimise political objectives. In this respect, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between hadith and politics in the late Ottoman period, as well as the transformation of religious discourse during the process of modernization.

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