



The Roots of Secularism in Northern Cyprus and Turkey's Ambition of Islamization

Riskiansyah Ramadhan
Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia
riskiansyah.ramadhan08@gmail.com

Abstract

The conquest of Cyprus by the Ottoman Empire in 1571 had an impact on the growing Muslim population there. However, the majority Muslim population does not make Northern Cyprus adopt Islam as the official religion of the country. This article aims to analyze the roots of secularism in Northern Cyprus, some of which are caused by British government policies, the rise of Kemalism, the emergence of Alevism and Linobambaki, and the repression of Sufi orders at the end of Ottoman rule. Besides, the political situation in Turkey turned out to have an impact on Northern Cyprus, where Turkey sought to implement the Islamization policy there.

Keywords: *islamization, northern cyprus, secularization, turkey*

A. Introduction

The conquest of the Ottomans of Cyprus in 1571 brought a new ethnological and cultural element. The Ottoman government began to build various institutions, including waqf and education, and transform the church's function into a mosque. Over time, the number of Muslim populations in Cyprus has increased. In Cyprus, the Muslim population grown in several ways, such as through migration and the conversion of Christian communities into Islam.

However, Cyprus is currently one of the most secular countries in the world. This phenomenon then raises the question, since when did secularization occur? How did the secularization process occur? Some scholars like Ateşin (2006) argue that the first step of the secularization of Cyprus began in the 1920s when the British government intervened in religious institutions and the educational process. British policies greatly influenced the secularization process in Cyprus. Besides, is British government policy the only factor in secularizing Cyprus? Of course not. Several

other factors have contributed to the secularization process. In this research, the author seeks to elaborate on the results of research from several scholars related to several things about Cyprus, specifically about the process of secularization that occurred there.

Historically, Cyprus is very closely related to the Ottoman Empire, today's modern Turkey. Since 1974, Cyprus has become an essential aspect of Turkey's foreign policy. Moreover, since Northern Cyprus declared itself an independent country, Turkey's interest on the island got stronger. Indirectly, Turkey's social and political conditions will undoubtedly impact the country's policies, including Islamization. Therefore, apart from analyzing the roots of secularism in Northern Cyprus, this article will also review Turkey's efforts to carry out Islamization in the country.

B. The origin of Muslim Population in Cyprus

In Cyprus, Islam looks back at a history of almost 1400 years ago, since the religion was founded. The first Muslim expedition to Cyprus was actualized in the period of Caliph Abu Bakar in 632. The expedition to the island was realized in the Caliph Uthman period in 647, under the leadership of Damascus Governor, Muawiya, in which Cyprus people were obliged to pay taxes to the Muslim in the same amount they had paid to Byzantium.

The most prominent evidence of Muslim expedition into the island in the seventh century is that Ummu Haram, who came to Cyprus with the first Arab raids in 648-649, fell from her mule at the spot of the grave and was buried there (Hamansah, 2004). A mosque was built on the spot and is the essential worship site for Muslims in Cyprus. It is also considered as the third most sacred place in the Islamic world after the Kaaba and Prophet Muhammad's shrine in Medina. Second, Hazret-i Ömer, the burial place of the "Seven Martyrs", died on the island during the first raid (Hamansah, 2004). The widely accepted Turkish version of the history of Hazret-i Ömer says that small masjid was built after the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in the sixteenth century.

However, Islam took root, grew, and institutionalized on the island in 1571 under the Ottoman Empire administration when they conquer the island. Following the conquest of Cyprus, the Sultan ordered settlement of the island by migrants consisting of 1,689 families from twelve different regions of Anatolia as well as 4000 soldiers who participated in the war and remained on Cyprus (Yesilada, 2009, p. 50). Others also insisted that the substantial portion of the island's Muslims were Christian converts. Those who converted to Islam were from Latin Catholic, Armenian, or Orthodox Christian, whose motivations are various. Some of those who converted hoped to avoid taxes imposed by the Ottoman rulers, while others

were due to intermarriages or fear-inspired conversion (Demosthenous, 2018, p. 256). Both opinions are probably correct, as several documents were found stating that some Christian residents converted to Islam in the early Ottoman Empire (Nevzat & Hatay, 2009, p. 912).

C. Research Methods

This research is an analytical descriptive study in which the author describes the phenomenon of Northern Cyprus society where Islam is the religion with the most dominant adherents. However, on the other hand, this country does not make Islam the official state religion and chooses to become a secular country. The methods used are collecting, compiling, describing data, and analyzing the data collected. The descriptive method is also used to describe the relationship between Turkey and Northern Cyprus, where the former was very ambitious to carry out Islamization in the secular country.

Moreover, data analysis is done through three techniques. First is collecting data related to the research topic, then selecting and reducing the data. The selected data are then presented in a systematic and easy to understand manner. The final step is to draw conclusions by interpreting the data collected, reduced, and presented in descriptions and explanations.

D. How was Cyprus Secularized?

During Ottoman rule, the island became a province of the Islamic state base on Sharia law. During their period, the Ottoman applied *Millet System* to organize the empire's population, including in Cyprus. This system was a form of indirect rule based on the religious difference with three basic *millets*: the Greek, the Jewish, and the Armenian communities. This system was successfully applied and highly functioning, which enabled the Ottoman to categorize its religious groups into autonomous and self-regulating communities (Barkey & Gavrilis, 2015, pp. 24-26). During this time, religious groups coexisted peacefully until finally, the government was handed over to the British. The secularisation of Northern Cyprus was caused by at least several factors, including the British government policy, the rise of Kemalism in the 1920s, the emergence of Alevism and Linobambakoi, and repression against Sufi orders at the end of Ottoman rule.

In 1878, the Ottoman handed over the island's administration to the British based on the Cyprus Convention. The Convention provided that the island was still an Ottoman territory, and Muslim affairs should be executed according to the previously existing arrangements, with the Ottoman Sultan as the supreme authority. In practice, however, the British administration started introducing changes in Islamic institutions and curtail the Ottoman say in investing religious scholars

(Hendrich & Strohmeier, 2015, p. 3). The British government secularized Cyprus, at least, in two ways, namely religious and educational institutions.

Right after the Ottoman conquer Cyprus, various Vakfs were launched on September 15, 1570, for the assistance of the Muslim community in their spiritual, social, and cultural needs. These vakfs were created by converting the cathedral of the city into a mosque and laying it as the first pious foundation. Not only the vakf run religious affairs and maintain all religious buildings but also provide support and service to people in low income by allocating accommodation or giving scholarships for young people (Yıldız, 2009, pp. 117-18). The vakfs were controlled and maintained by local religious leaders where Ottoman, as the central government, would inspect the development and the vakfs itself several times a year. In 1826, however, the Ottoman issued a policy of centralizing the vakfs to the center of government in Istanbul.

In 1878, the Ottoman transferred Cyprus's sovereignty to the British following a convention signed between the two governments. The British government then restructured the administration of the vkafs. Although a dual delegate system consisting of a Turkish and a British representative was introduced to oversee the administration of the evkaf, in practice, the control was assumed by the British rulers (Sabri, 2015, p. 514). The British rulers had considered the control of Vakfs, and its vast material resources to consolidate their power within the island's Muslim-Turkish community. This process started from the early years of the occupation by relocating the authorization procedures regarding the upkeep and maintenance works on Waqf properties within the colonial authorities and bureaucracies domain (Sabri, 2015, p. 523).

During the period of second half of the 1920s, the British government began to tighten its control over Muslim institution, including eliminating the Office of the Kadi in 1927 (Nevzat & Hatay, 2009, p. 918). In 1928, The British Colonial Government abolished the post of Müftü, which Moslem population had this institution since 1571. Instead of Müftü, the post of Fetva Emni was created under the Evkaf Department and Hürremzade Hakkı Efendi was appointed there. He was supporting the Kemalists and also made a meeting together with the teacher for replacing the Arabic alphabet with the Latin at the schools (An, 2016, p. 5).

Between 1571 and 1600, Eleven Sibyan schools were opened for elementary education. In 1632 and 1640, Büyük Medrese and Küçük Medrese were opened for young people who wanted to acquire religious and legal knowledge. These schools were under the administration of the evkaf (Süha, 1971, pp. 235-37). In 1862, the first modern secondary school, Rüştüye, was opened, and the first modern gymnasium was also opened in 1897. In 1937, a Muslim Theological School was established to replace Büyük Medrese, which was demolished. The establishment of

this theological school was criticized by Advocate Mehmet Rifat, one of the supporters of the Kemalist movement (An, 2016, p. 5).

After 1908, the curricula of Cyprus's Muslim schools were also altered to incorporate more secular teachings with increasingly nationalist undertones. Positive sciences and courses in history and geography began to account for more significant proportions of school time (Nevzat & Hatay, 2009, p. 917). The growing politicization of the communities and their education finally compelled the British to try to centralize control of schools. In 1920 every Muslim teacher was absorbed into the public service. This shows the step forward secularization attempt of Muslims' education. The British government lured Muslim teachers with a better salary if they engage as a government employee rather than being an imam on the payroll of Vakfs. The British tactic was quite successful, with many of the more qualified and capable teachers preferring the former profession, which impacted the decrease of capable imams as well as affected the quality of religious instruction (Ateşin & Peristianis, 2006, pp. 337-38).

In 1928, however, Sir Ronald Storrs, the governor of the British government in Cyprus, ended the practice of paying the mufti, the religious leader of the Muslim minority, as a government official. This policy downgraded that position of the mufti and affected the decline of religious and educational activities in the Muslim community (Gates, 2013, p. 873).

The secularization of Cyprus is also very closely related to the emergence of the Turkish Cypriot national identity. Niyazi Kizilyürek (2003) argues that the Turkish Cypriot identity was a product of the development of Atatürk's modernizing reforms in Turkey and reaction to the Greek nationalism in Cyprus (Kizilyürek, 2003, p. 198). The radical reform of Atatürk aimed to construct a secular nation-state in Turkey impacted the cultural revolution, which excludes traditional elements affiliated to Islam and Ottoman. Atatürk began the campaign with several radical reforms, which included abolishing caliphate, outlawing the Sufi orders and lodges, omitting Islam from the constitution as the state religion, replacing Islamic law with an adaptation of the Swiss civil code, secularizing and monopolizing education, abolishing religious and traditional dress, replacing the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet (Kizilyürek, 2003, p. 199), and even restoring the use of Arabic for the call of prayer (Beckingham, 1957, p. 83).

The impact of Kemalist ideology upon the Turkish Cypriots started as early as the 1920s. The educated young generation of the 1920s and '30s focused their attention on the radical reforms of Atatürk and demanded the implementation of these reforms in the Turkish Cypriot community. For example, the Latin alphabet has replaced the Arabic already in 1928, the same year as in Turkey (Kizilyürek, 2003, p. 199). Moreover, in 1932, the Kemalist intelligentsia hailed the translation

of the Quran from Arabic into Turkish. Furthermore, they also commended its recital in Turkish. A year later, in 1933, the Turkish Cypriot followed Attaurk's command in voicing the call of prayer in Turkish (Nevzat & Hatay, 2009, p. 924). In this period, they even refused to be called Muslims and started calling themselves the Turks of Cyprus instead (Kizilyürek, 2003, p. 200).

In 1930, the Kemalist initiated a Turkish National Congress following their success in the Legislative Council election to campaign their modernity idea. This congress brought clashes between the modernist and traditionalist, which became the conflict about the Turkish Cypriot identity. On the one hand, there was a Kemalist modernist who was eager to implement a secular nation. On the other hand, some traditionalists were loyal to traditional religious values (Kizilyürek, 2003, p. 200). Hence, Ataturk's idea of modernization affected the birth of Turkish Cypriot's national identity and the rise of secularism on the island.

The reform Kemalist had made did not stop there. By the 1940s, the traditionalist Muslim politicians were vanishing from the Cypriot political scene. In the municipal elections of 1943, the first to be held since the 1920s, virtually all candidates were stridently Kemalist (Nevzat & Hatay, 2009, p. 921). Moreover, in 1956, the British government handed over control and administration of evkaf to the Turkish Cypriot community. Accordingly, the evkaf's new administration decided not to repair mosques or develop support for the meager income of religious staff, but rather, it sought a loan from Barclays Bank as an additional source of finance to build modern landmarks hotel in central Nicosia. Furthermore, by the 1950s, religious activities at tekkes and shrines were extinct. Those tekkes and shrines tend to become sites for picnics instead of religious activities.

The Kemalist's idea of modernism finally reached the educational institutions and attempted to get rid of religious subjects. For example, in the 1960s, only one hour a week was allotted to divinity classes in the second, third, and fourth forms of primary school. Furthermore, there were no classes at all for junior and high school students until 1976. Moreover, those assigned to teach divinity classes to Turkish Cypriot primary school students had little religious knowledge or training as to how the subject should be taught (Aydın, 2017, p. 9).

Some researchers argue that Alevism contributes to the secularization of Turkish Cypriot. Alevis were widely known as Qızılbaş (Redheads) to indicate a loyalty to or descent from Ali (Hurd, 2014, pp. 419-20), a pejorative term used within the Ottoman Empire and derived from the name used for the followers of the Iranian Shah Ismail. According to the 2011 census information, the Alevis population on the island comprised around 10,000 people. Some studies equate Alevism and Shiism. However, Alevism is not Twelver Shiism, but rather its Sufi centric form of

Shiism. Moreover, although they share some common beliefs with the Twelver Shia, their rites and practices are different from Shiism (Özmen, 2013, p. 150).

The Sunni religious narrative is based on a tradition stemming from the interpretation of the Quran and Hadith on how to organize everyday life. However, beliefs that were sincerely held in everyday life could be incorporated as practices and contrary to the Quranic and academic understanding of Islam. Furthermore, these beliefs then created folk Islam. Alevi's primary written sources are *Velāyetnāmes*. The *Velāyetnāme* tradition dates back to the thirteenth century, and vast numbers of people who had limited or no access to Quranic Islam or Madrasah Islam came into contact with this tradition via the *Velāyetnāmes*. *Velāyetnāmes* were mostly transmitted to ordinary people by dervishes and disciples via an oral tradition (Akdemir, 2020, p. 5).

Yeşilada (2009) conducted quantitative research to examine the religious values of Turkish Cypriot. His findings show that almost all of the Turkish Cypriots believe in the importance of God in their lives and consider themselves as moderately religious individuals, but very few attend regular mosque service. Yeşilada also argues that a sizeable number of the Turkish Cypriot community are either descendant of Alevi settlers from Anatolia or Bektaşî Janissaries, who held religious values different from those of their Sunni Ottoman relatives (Yeşilada, 2009, pp. 49-59).

The Alevi in Turkey mostly do not attend mosques, but many hold rituals known as *cem* in *cemevi*. The *cem* ritual involves praying to Ali, recalling the names of the first twelve imams, and mourning Husein's martyrdom (Hurd, 2014, pp. 420-21). Like those in Turkey, the Alevi in Cyprus also do not attend mosques or engage in religious education (Hatay, 2015, p. 44). The existence of Alevi groups that are religiously different from Sunni Muslims contributes to the Turkish Cypriot people's lack of religiosity. Besides, this phenomenon also reinforces the values of secularism in the country, which far from the values of religiosity.

Not only The Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571 had a significant impact on the development of Islam but also affected the emergence of the new sect within it. This sect called Linobambaki, which its followers live between Muslims and Christians. They could not judge which religion is the best and very "prudently" follow Christianity and Islam. They go to the mosque on Friday, and to the church on Sunday. R. L. N Michel (1908) argues that this sect's origin is to be traced to the days following the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1570. The followers of Linobambaki had been adherents of the Greek or Latin Church.

Some of the causes of the emergence of this sect are, first, the hatred of Orthodox Greek Cypriots towards the Venetian and Latin rules which treat them harshly. The colonial government also closed all Greek schools. The Cypriots tend

to show favors to the Ottoman rule. Second, after the Ottomans succeeded in power, the Latins only had the alternative of Islam, death, or slavery. Most of them eventually embraced Islam to avoid persecution (Michel, 1908, pp. 51-53). Motivation to embrace Islam, which is significantly caused by fear and to avoid persecution, has an impact on the quality of their religion. It is still seen the impact to this day where Islamic religious values are not practiced in everyday life, both in rituals and others.

Hatay (2015) argues that besides affected by the British policy, influenced by the Kemalist, and having root to Alevism, secularism in Cyprus has its root in the Ottoman policy through suppressing against Sufi folk practices. Sultan Mehmed II's reform initiative in 1826 in response to the army's modernization affected the dissolve of Janissary. Moreover, Sultan Mehmed II also prohibited the Bektashi order due to its close relationship with the Janissaries. The lodges belong to Bektashi were transferred to Nakshibendis and Kadiris, which some of them were turned into mosques (Michel, 1908, pp. 56-57).

Sultan Mehmed II's significant reform affected not only the abolishing of Bektashi orders but also all Islamic institutions of the Empire. Islamic waqf is the most affected institution. This institution used to be controlled and maintained autonomously by local religious leaders. However, the policy ushered in the exemption from taxation of Islamic endowments under the central authority under the Ministry of Endowments' authority in Istanbul. Furthermore, many sheiks affiliated with Sufi lodges also maintained their owned family endowments whose incomes were used to provide for the poor and maintenance to meet the daily needs of the dervishes (Barrens, 1987, pp. 87-97). Moreover, after the policy of centralization, many local endowments directors appointed by Istanbul, who brought to the vacant positions of previous members of the board of trustees.

When the British came on the island, many orders weakened due to the lack of material resources. Mevlevi order was the only order to survive and succeeded in receiving a warrant from Sultan, which allowed them to control their endowments. With the Republic of Turkey's establishment, however, all orders were banned, including Mevlevi orders.

To this phenomenon, Hatay (2015) argues that the existence of such orders in Cyprus was essential in terms of making Islam widely spread and practiced, particularly by those living in rural areas. The wandering dervishes from village to village had significantly contributed to the spreading of Islam on the island. In addition to the lodges in cities, the lodges were utilized as shelters by the poor. The modernization affected not only the destruction of the religious institutions but also abandoned Cypriot Muslims without spiritual guidance. Furthermore, to meet their religious needs, they either convert to other religions or find new spiritual guides

(Hatay, 2015, pp. 58-60). Of course, those who did not convert to other religions and embraced Islam instead were not fully get the maximum education and deepening of religion. This, of course, affected the emergence of secularism in the Cypriot Muslims.

E. Turkey's Islamization in Northern Cyprus

Islamization in Northern Cyprus has its linkage to the rise of political Islam in Turkey. In analyzing the root of Islamism in Turkey, the Milli Görüş movement, founded by Necmettin Erbakan, occupies a central place. The Milli Görüş movement's ideology is mainly shaped by the nineteenth-century Islamism that grew out due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the colonization of former Ottoman lands (Dayıoğlu & Köprülü, 2019, pp. 3-4). Turkey then used Milli Görüş to legalize the military intervention as an 'anti-western' act and legalize Turkey's presence in Cyprus through the Islamization (Moudouros, 2016, p. 325).

The invasion and the occupation in the northern part of Cyprus in 1974 marked the activities of Islamization. Many churches were turned into mosques in the main towns and villages. Religious propaganda on the island was in line with the increasing activities of the Islamic parties in Turkey. Between 1971 and 1974, two religious association were built, namely the Turkish Cypriot Islam Association and Cyprus Turkish Islam Cultural Association (An, 2016, pp. 7-8).

The self-declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983 led to the imposing of the embargo that affected to the TRNC's dependence on Turkey's aid to its economic and political development. Under these conditions, the Turkish Cypriot policy in many sectors, including education, curricula, textbooks, and educational reforms, has been significantly influenced by Turkey's political factors (Latif, 2018, p. 3). During the period of Erbakan's Welfare Party (*Refah Party*), several Islamization operations were conducted by building many new Islamic institutions in Northern Cyprus (Moudouros, 2019, p. 27).

Textbooks used in religious subjects in Northern Cyprus are the same textbooks used in Turkey. Latif (2019) found that the content of the Religious Culture and Morality Knowledge textbooks for the fourth and fifth grades dominantly cover the fundamental Sunni Muslims, including the importance of the religion, main Islamic concepts, and practices. There is no reference to world religions or other Islamic sects (Latif, 2018, pp. 7-8). Analysis of the Religious Culture and Morality Knowledge textbooks for the fourth and fifth grades, as conducted by Latif, reveals that the content area is dominated by the core Sunni Islamic beliefs, which are regarded as the essentials of Sunni Islam.

Through the AKP, Turkey's efforts in carrying out the Islamization program in Northern Cyprus include opening summer religious courses, including Qur'an

courses, as well as making religion courses compulsory in secondary schools in North Cyprus. Moreover, after 2009, there also opened the Hala Sultan Divinity College and the Turkish Embassy's Office for Development and Cooperation, which allocate huge budgets to the TRNC as part of the Improvement of Religious Service Project (Dayıoğlu & Köprülü, 2019, p. 9).

Despite the rejection from various elements of the Cypriot community, the Islamization efforts undertaken by Turkey cannot be denied by the government. Even Ulusal Birlik Partisi (UBP) or National Unity Party, which came to power in 2009, could not refuse and contended that since the class hours dedicated to religious culture and morality courses were insufficient, religious courses were necessary. Since that time, the courses were made compulsory as one hour per week for fourth to eighth-grade students. This policy drew a reaction from the majority of Turkish Cypriot, as well as Alevis. The reason for the reaction was because the content of the religious and culture morality courses was mostly devoted to Hanafi-Sunni school rather than general knowledge of religion and morality (Dayıoğlu & Köprülü, 2019, p. 9).

Islamization through Islamic institution succeeded in changing the social and political order in Turkey, despite challenges from several parties. One tactic is allowing the entrance of Imam-Hatip of public Islamic school alumni into higher education institutions, while the governing party appears to be favoring Imam-Hatip alumni's appointment to various government departments and institutions (Michael, 2014, pp. 23-24). Turkey's success in implementing the policy then attempted to be penetrated to Northern Cyprus. Therefore, to build more mosques and more religious education have been the two general pillars of the strategy followed by the Turkish state concerning the ideological transformation of Turkish Cypriots (Moudouros, 2019, p. 37).

Between 1974 and 2009, 39 mosques have been built. Of those, 31 were financed by the Directorate of Aid Committee of the Turkish Embassy. Mosques in Northern Cyprus by law belong to the Waqfs Administration. However, only 5 percent of Waqf Administration's revenue was allocated for the mosque upkeep and clerical salaries. The remaining 95 percent come from the Ministry of Finance, which request this amount from Turkey. This is evident that Turkey provides the cost of construction, maintenance, and staffing (Dayıoglu & Hatay, 2010).

The most significant development in 2013 was the opening of the Hala Sultan Divinity College. This college received significant financial support from the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey. On the same day of college's opening, construction began on additional facilities, including male and female dormitories and the Hala Sultan Mosque (Dayıoglu & Hatay, 2010). This certainly caused various opposing reactions from various groups, especially the secular

Turkish Cypriot society. They believed that the college opening was part of the AKP's efforts to establish a more religiously conservative mentality in Cyprus.

Since 1974, the Cypriot government seems to be shackled by Turkish policies. The declaration of independence carried out at that time had an impact on alienating Cyprus from the international world and was only recognized by Turkey. This has an impact on Cyprus's powerlessness economically, socially, and militarily, and can only depend on Turkey.

Direnç Kanol and Nur Köprülü (2017) researched the quality of democracy in unrecognized Northern Cyprus based on the analysis of the period between 2010 and 2016. The findings show that non-recognition has triggered economic and military dependence on the patron state, which is Turkey. During 1983 and 1994, Turkish Cypriots could trade with other countries by using the Republic of Cyprus (RoC). However, after the TRNC decided to use its own stamp, the international community immediately reacted. Since 1994, the Turkish Cypriot could only reach other countries via Turkey (Kanol & Köprülü, 2017, p. 5).

Furthermore, non-recognition also handcuffed Turkish Cypriot into economic isolation, which affected the economic development from several sectors. Since 1974, there is no direct shipping to the North as well as direct flight as part of embargos. Moreover, Turkish Cypriot is marginalized from the international world and isolated from international institutions and organizations such as tourism membership, international organizations, and financial considerations. This isolation certainly impacts economic development in Northern Cyprus with no financial sources other than from Turkish companies (Gökçekuş, 2009, pp. 73-75).

F. Conclusion

Secularism, which is closely related to the Turkish Cypriot identity, is at least influenced by several things: first, the British government policy that seeks to control religious and educational institutions. Efforts to weaken Islamic religious values can be seen clearly in reducing hours of study in religious subjects, even replacing religious subjects with positive subjects. The emergence of Kemalist in the early 1920s increasingly motivated the Turkish Cypriot community to fight against the British government while implementing the values of secularism in the lives of the people in Northern Cyprus.

Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire's modernization policy during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II resulted in the removal of Sufi orders in Cyprus. Based on several studies, Sufi orders have an essential role in spreading the values and teachings of Islam, especially for those who live in rural areas. Alevism in Northern Cyprus plays a vital role in the phenomenon of lack of religious practices there. Linobambaki, a sect whose followers embraced Islam and Christianity. Looking at the historical

record, those who adhere to Linobambaki are Christians who embraced Islam because of compulsion motivations. This has an impact on their daily religious life, which also has an impact on the quality of religious values in Northern Cyprus in general.

The phenomenon of secularism in Northern Cyprus has become a particular concern for Turkey, especially since the reign of Necmettin Erbakan. Since then, efforts to Islamize through religious and educational institutions have continued to this day, the efforts of the Turkish government have certainly come under fire from some secular Turkish Cypriots. However, TRNC's status as an unrecognized country puts the country in a difficult situation. The only country that recognizes it is Turkey, where since the mid-1990s, Turkey has been an intermediary country for TRNC in making contact with the international world. In this case, TRNC seems to be shaken by Turkish policies, both economic, social, and political, including the Islamization policy in the country.

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