

at least in theory were decided according to the principles of the Code Napoleon.

It is not difficult to fathom the motives of that astute autocrat in thus establishing, for the leading Mohammedan nation, a new code of law entirely alien to the sacred Sheriat. The Code Napoleon was a much more workable system and much better adapted to the standards of an advancing civilization than was the ancient Sheriat with its primitive, Semitic regulations. But, what doubtless weighed still more in the tyrant's mind, was the fact that the new code recognized no privileged religious class and left no power in the hands of the ecclesiastical organization as such. Abd ul Hamid, in the absolute personal rule which he exercised so successfully for over a quarter of a century, could brook no rival. No power but his own must be recognized in the nation, not even that of the official religious leaders. It is hardly conceivable that Abd ul Hamid intended to weaken the power of Islam, or that he had planned to undermine any of its fundamental principles. Nevertheless the establishment of the civil code of law probably did more than all other forces combined to weaken the theocratic principle which is so essential to a Moslem state. Ecclesiastical leaders chafed with the utmost impatience under the insult thus dealt to the sacred Sheriat, but the hand of the autocrat was heavy on all who ventured to give public expression to their rebellious attitude. Had the career of Abd ul Hamid been cut short soon after the institution of the hated irreligious code the nation would have sprung back with great reactionary force to the holy law of their faith, to the exclusion of every other legal system. But the experience of a quarter of a century of life under a much more enlightened and practical code proved to be a form of political education which weakened the fanatical devotion of the masses to the Sheriat. All unconsciously