

guilds was known as Fütüvvet. This institution had Pan-Islamic origins;¹⁵ during its development it was influenced by the Ottoman Empire's Turkish religious and economic conditions, and in every respect became a powerful medieval social institution. Initially, only Turks who were both coreligionists and artisans plying the same craft could join its ranks.

That the Islamic element governed the Fütüvvet is confirmed not only by its ideological but also by its entire internal structure, traditional customs, and rituals, all of which were strictly religious in nature. This is attested by a considerable body of Turkish literature on the subject known as Fütüvvet-Nâmes. Although they all bear the same name and are generally similar in content, each is a distinct work;¹⁶ they also constitute the bases of the monographic studies of the Turkish authors mentioned above. It should be pointed out that Urakh Grigor's text also contains a part of a Fütüvvet-Nâme not found in other texts, especially those sections that describe the rituals.

The historical significance of a Fütüvvet-Nâme lies in the fact that it paints an authentic picture of the structure and administrative governance of the Turkish trade guilds. Each guild represented a particular trade led by a şeyh; and all the şeyhs in turn were responsible to the *şeyh al-şuyuh* (sheikh of the sheikhs).¹⁷ In Urakh Grigor's work the latter is called in Armenian transcription *sheykh sabaa* (Turkish, *şeyh sabaa*), that is, "sheikh of the seven."¹⁸ This designation derived from the fact that the *şeyh sabaa* was superior to the other seven ranks in the Fütüvvet.¹⁹ In the lower ranks, next to the *ahis* (brothers in a religious fraternity or trade guild),²⁰ who were the deputies of the şeyhs, the *nakibs* (wardens of a guild or community) occupied the most important positions. Their main function was to convene and run the assemblies. Their leader was the *nakib al-nukaba* (warden of wardens).

The religious nature of the trade guilds was guaranteed essentially through their dominance by the religious şeyhs; as such, the Fütüvvet belonged to the group of socioreligious institutions known in the Islamic world as *tarikats* (religious order).²¹ This totally religious nature of the Fütüvvet becomes more evident in light of its close affinity with the well-known tarikats of the Ahi and Bektâşi orders.²² As an integral part of the tarikats, therefore, the Fütüvvet was organized to strictly and faithfully adhere to the Islamic tenets and concepts.

In discussing the Fütüvvet it is also important to take into account a fact that has escaped the attention of Turkish scholars. In historical and archival sources we find references to trade guilds known as *lonca* (guild or corporation),²³ which were governed by principles quite different from those of the Fütüvvets. In the Fütüvvet system, each trade guild was led by a şeyh and his assistant the ahi, and was administered