

# **CONSTITUTIVE AMBIGUITIES**

**Subjectivities and Memory in the Case of Romeika-Speaking Communities  
of Trabzon, Turkey**

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**I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and contributions  
from other persons are fully cited and referenced.**

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## ABSTRACT

Studies in social sciences and humanities on Turkey tend to focus on margins and resistances (such as, modernist and nationalist impositions on minorities) and how the state was engaged in the construction of Turkishness as a homogeneous national identity. Although these endeavours are undeniably necessary and helpful, how Turkish subjectivities are constituted out of a multitude of local socio-cultural distinctions in different geographies has rarely been a matter of scholarly inquiry. Addressing this largely overlooked aspect of Turkish studies, this dissertation highlights different modalities of subject formation through the analysis of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, in northeastern Turkey. Staunchly (Turkish) nationalist communities of the province have been “discreetly” speaking Romeika, a local variant of Greek with archaic linguistic features, in a number of valley systems for centuries. Through an ethnographic study conducted in 2015 in the Trabzon area, I demonstrate how subjectivities and socialities of these communities are configured in relation to historical, political, gendered, and religious dynamics in Turkey. In addition to producing an account of socio-cultural implications of an unstudied socio-cultural phenomenon, this dissertation helps us to go beyond monist and homogeneous representations of Turkish subjectivities to highlight their distinct, fragmented, and heterogeneous constitutions.

I first discuss the private and discreet status of Romeika to trace it through locals’ nationalist imaginaries, gendered configurations, and approaches to the landscape. Then, I argue how local masculine subjectivities are produced through gendering of bodies across the Valley in close connection to the state and politics. Finally, I discuss religiosities in the area to highlight local patterns of piety in relation to Romeika, nationalism, the state, and local customs. Through these successive themes, I demonstrate the heterogeneous, fragmented, and performative constitution of subjectivities that approximate different registers of Turkishness. I conclude the analysis with the claim that the theme of Turkish subjectivity should be scrutinised further in order both to reveal distinct socio-cultural heritages within this parochial understanding of Turkish subjectivities and to account for how non-resistant subjectivities are produced out of these distinctions through alignments with nationalist and statist discourses in these local contexts in particular forms.

## CONTENTS

List of Figures, Tables, and Photos	6
Acknowledgements	7
Chapter I. Introduction	8
Chapter II. Methodology and Ethics	24
Ethnography: Orientation, Surprise, and Methods	24
Ethics	39
Chapter III. Subjectivities: Limits, Modalities, and Ambiguities	45
Theoretical Trajectories: Foundations and Convergences	46
Tension and Ambiguity: “Moving Back and Forth”	64
Chapter IV. Site, Context, and History	69
Brief History: Trabzon and the Valley	69
Contemporary Site	73
Citizenship and Nationalism in the Turkish Context	78
Memory: How to Relate to the Past?	84
Chapter V. Romeika in the Valley: Prevalance, Toponyms, and the Future	91
Romeika and the Valley: Heterogeneous Prevalence	91
Toponyms and the Persistence of Geographical References	99
Future of the Language	102
Chapter VI. Romeika and Socialities: Gendered Differences and Communal Privacy	103
Unwanted Connotations and the Uncanny Character of Romeika	104
Gendered Moves across Languages and Variants	107
Discreet Presence of Romeika: Communal Privacy	118
Conclusion	125

Chapter VII. “Can’t You See?”: Discretion, Places, and Treasure Hunts	127
(In)Visibility of Romeika in the Valley	131
Landscapes and Treasure Hunts: Ways to See the Past and the Present	138
Conclusion	152
Chapter VIII. Spaces and Movements: Constructing Masculinities	154
Stately Spaces and Proximity: the Town Centre	159
Men in Public: Masculine Commute and Coffeeshouses	166
Inducting Men as Citizens	172
Conclusion	177
Chapter IX. Masculinities, The State, And Conspiracies:	179
Like The State, Like The Citizen?	
Conspiracies in the Valley: Masculinities at Play	184
Embodying the State: Approximating Potency and Knowledge	193
Enacting the State and the Emergence of Sovereign Men	199
Conclusion	204
Chapter X. Religiosities In The Valley: History, Practices, And Norms	207
Tracing Islamic Practices and Integrating the Particular	210
Delegation of Religiosity to Aesthetic Reiterations	225
Pious Subjects at Play	234
Conclusion	242
Chapter XI. Conclusion	244
Bibliography	259
Appendix A: Ethics Committee Approval	284
Appendix B: Samples From Field Notes	285

## FIGURES, TABLES, AND PHOTOS

Figure I. Sketch Map of the Valley	93
Figure II. Sketch of the Town Centre and Institutions	162
Table I. Population of the Valley	73
Table II. Parliamentary Election Results	79
Photo I. Ruins of the Castle	139
Photo II. <i>Toprak kaldırma</i>	141
Photo III. A Treasure Document	146
Photo IV. Ogün Samast with Officers	179

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Two of my companions in this inconspicuous restaurant in Trabzon were Zeki and Fahri, both in their early fifties, knowing each other for decades as childhood friends. While we discussed my research and the upcoming parliamentary elections, a sudden silence pervaded the restaurant with almost all other guests, including the waiters, focusing on the TV and listening to the breaking news report: The Fenerbahçe team bus was just assaulted on its way from Rize to Trabzon airport by a group of locals that shot the bus driver to possibly kill and injure the team members. The hostility between Trabzonspor and Fenerbahçe was never a secret, as Fenerbahçe was accused of match fixing in the preceding years and of unjustly holding the league title at the expense of Trabzonspor. The issue was still alive but this attack was the most extreme result of the local discontent. And yet, everyone in the restaurant was seemingly more concerned about the image of Trabzon rather than the violence itself. Trabzon had been already and pervasively associated with nationalist and conservative violence, which made it a bit hard for me to grasp the level of anxiety locals displayed. What was at stake was made clear the following day: When the Fenerbahçe team landed in Istanbul, fans chanted all together, “Bastards of Pontos cannot browbeat us!”<sup>1</sup>

In a cold January morning in 2007, a young man wearing a white beret shot Hrant Dink to death in Istanbul. Dink, an outspoken Turkish-Armenian intellectual, was targeted because of his views that defied conventions of the nationalist-statist ideology. As hundreds of thousands gathered in solidarity with the deceased in the following days, the assassin was caught in Samsun on his way to his hometown, Trabzon. In his first statement, he admitted to have decided to kill Dink, whom he and his accomplices perceived as an enemy of *Türklük* (Turkishness), after Dink’s remarks on the Armenian genocide.<sup>2</sup>

In recent decades, Trabzon has been a hotspot in the Turkish socio-political scene because of sporadic outbursts of violence in the city. In addition to its links

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<sup>1</sup> *Pontus’un piçleri, yıldırılmaz bizleri!* Pontos, as a Greek term, refers to the Eastern Black Sea littoral around Trabzon.

<sup>2</sup> “*Ogün Samast’in İfadesi Ortaya Çıktı* (Ogün Samast’s Statement Emerged),” *Takvim*, December 9, 2014. In one of his articles in the Turkish-Armenian daily, *Agos*, Dink had argued against the obsession of the Armenian diaspora with recognition of the genocide by Turkey. One of his concluding remarks was widely discussed in the country. Dink was prosecuted under the infamous Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code and was found guilty in 2006, constituting the only high profile case among Turkish intellectuals as charges against all others (including Orhan Pamuk, Perihan Mağden, and Elif Şafak) were dropped eventually.



to the assassination of Dink, the city had also witnessed the blocking of the port by locals to prevent the Orthodox Patriarch's visit to "prevent his *Pontusçu* propaganda,"<sup>3</sup> lynching of political activists who were accused of being PKK sympathisers, and the murder of the Catholic priest Santoro in 2006 by a young local who was against the missionary activities of the church personnel. The violent and ardent nationalism of people hailing from the province is now well known<sup>4</sup> across the country and the city is noted to be the "spine" or "pillar" of the unity of Turkey.<sup>5</sup> State and media reports also note the strong nationalist sentiment in the city, indicating that the national(ist) sensitivities of locals were "incited" (*tahrik edildi*) in each of these incidents and people acted impulsively in defence of their sacred values, as in Turkishness.<sup>6</sup> For instance, lynched political activists were charged and no one from the lynching mob got arrested in the following juridical investigation. Samast, policemen, assassins, lynchers, and the fans, evidently, demonstrated their ardent nationalist loyalty through acts that produced an "exceptional" and "heroic" breach of the law for "benign" causes, thereby claiming to be guardians of Turkishness of the country.

Yet, the story did not end there. Many commentators, circling around the "not-quite-Turkish surname" of the assailant, indicated that the Samast family was indeed of Greek, or Armenian, descent: "According to what I was told by my sources," one journalist with anti-nationalist alignments claimed, "Ogün Samast's grandmother speaks Greek (*Rumca*) and is Greek ([...] *Rumlarından*)." Her statement was uttered as a revelation of a concealed truth, giving away the ultimate cause of these incidents: the violent nationalism of the city was in fact a cover-up by locals, who wanted to *be* Turkish. Reflecting a general trend in non-nationalist circles, this assumed contradiction between a non-conforming ancestry/essence (speaking a local variant of Greek) and a contemporary

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<sup>3</sup> *Pontusçu* refers to nationalist Greek attempts to revive the Pontic/Trabzon Greek Empire in the region.

<sup>4</sup> Following these violent incidents and toxic rhetoric, two books were published to comprehend local dynamics: "*Karardı Karadeniz*" (2012) and *Trabzon'u Anlamak* (2010).

<sup>5</sup> In the words of a local commentator: "Do you know that we are very serious when we say that the T of Trabzon is the T of Turkey? We say it sincerely from the bottom of our hearts when we indicate that Trabzon is the cement of Turkey?" Harun Çelik, "Pontus'un Piçleri Öyle mi?" *Haberula*, April 6, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> According to news reports, the Governor warned the protestors: "We will not let those disturb the public peace." "Trabzon Valisi Tayad'lıları Uyardı," *Haber7*, June 26, 2006.

performance (of Turkish nationalism) was circulated widely to highlight *the cause* of recent social unrest: Samast did it to “cover up” his “essence.” A Greek *striving* to be Turkish, he was a misfit. (Intriguingly, as I will discuss later in detail, Trabzon is indeed *still* home to Greek-speaking communities, who are both Muslim and overall ardent Turkish nationalists, spread across a number of valley systems in the province.)

Others, who are more aligned with nationalism and religious conservatism, conspiratorially used this “revelation” as a proof that this non-Turkish subject had probably been exploited by foreign forces to destabilise the country, harm the social peace, and tarnish the country’s image. Samast was a misfit again; only this time he was a Greek *pretending* to be Turkish. Most people I encountered throughout my research outside Trabzon, regardless of their educational and socio-cultural background, also raised similar questions: “They were Greeks (*Rum*), no? Did they know that they were Greeks?” Most were certain that locals who speak Romeika, a local variant of Greek with archaic linguistic characteristics,<sup>7</sup> were “essentially” Greeks, and “in denial.”

I was also subjected to similar inquiries because of my paternal ancestry from the province: “Are you Greek, too?” Some gave me inquisitive looks as if I were also in denial when I indicated I did not know enough about the familial ancestry of my interlocutors—nor did I find it academically or ethically pertinent. I, alongside locals hailing from Trabzon, was perceived to be concealing something. The more *Trabzonlular* (Trabzonians) denied such secrecy, the more the others were convinced of the existence of a not-so-well-kept secret, the denial of which functioned as the proof of its authenticity. In spite of the complexity of social and cultural life and historical trajectories, many were convinced that there was something captivatingly simple that lucidly explained this violent entrenchedness of *Trabzonlular* in Turkish nationalism, as in the “exposed secret” of Samast. I was not so sure. For me, the problem lay somewhere else.

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<sup>7</sup> See: Ioanna Sitaridou, “The Romeyka Infinitive: Continuity, Contact and Change in the Hellenic Varieties of Pontus,” *Diachronica*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2014.

## ***Türklük* as an Enigma: Permeating with No Trace**

For many, nationalist or liberal, left or right, the matter was related to the fact that he was a non-Turkish subject at the end of the day. *Türklük* (Turkishness) as a socio-political phenomenon was at the centre of the issue, infusing both these acts and discourses, and yet simultaneously elusive and spectral, as in the Turkishness of Samast. It was both in and out of these discussions, glimpsed for a moment only to disappear immediately. It emerges in its difference and separateness from Greekness, Christianity, Kurdish identity, or from Armenianness and yet still includes a degree of ambiguity—an ephemeral phenomenon that is hard to pinpoint and yet gives a clear sense of what it is not. Hence, I should specify how I understand this elusive and yet permeating concept.

Various scholars have demonstrated how national identities are created through political interventions in close connection to socio-cultural and politico-economic transformations since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> Construction of national identities emerged as one of the fundamental aspects of modernisation across the globe, implemented through state technologies, education policies, law, economy, and socio-cultural practices. In tandem, Turkishness emerged out of this transformation as an element of political discourses in the last phases of the Ottoman era, highlighting both the disintegration of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic empire and the emergence of the Turkish nation-state, alongside many others, out of this transformation.<sup>9</sup> Scholarship on Turkey has worked on widely this matter, exploring how state policies were implemented throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create a Turkish nation and how certain communities (as in the case of Kurds) have resisted these processes. These analyses, however, mostly focused on state practices and discourses, without really accounting for technologies and transformations experienced in everyday life. Moreover, when

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<sup>8</sup> Please see, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso: London and New York, 1996 [1983].

Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Please see: Bora Isyar, "The Origins of Turkish Republican Citizenship: The Birth of Race," *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol, 11, No. 3, 2005.

they attended to the everyday, subjects of such inquiries were generally those communities who explicitly or implicitly resisted the modernist-homogenising aspirations of the Republic, as in Kurds, Islamists, or Alevi. How certain communities developed ambivalent relationships with Turkishness without instances of resistance, in this sense, remained mostly unaccounted for.

Forged as part of attempts to create a homogeneous nation-state,<sup>10</sup> Turkishness evolved in close connection to Turkish citizenship. Affected by discussions on identity and nationalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, which was characterized by a contention between ethnicist-exclusionary German and statist-inclusionary French models,<sup>11</sup> Republican elites crafted a particular form of identification that brought both models together.<sup>12</sup> Within this context, Turkishness assumed a dual meaning, ascribing both its political aspect (as in being a “citizen” of the Republic of Turkey with a set set of rights) and socio-cultural heritage (as in being a “Turk”, mostly associated with Turkish as a mother tongue). Although some scholars argue that juridical sources of Turkish citizenship posit “a formal definition and citizenship and national identity [that] emphasizes territoriality rather than ethnicity,”<sup>13</sup> others would argue that even these fundamental texts (such as constitutions in their description of Turkish citizenship) include an “ambiguity” that points to an insurmountable “gap between citizenship and Turkishness.”<sup>14</sup> Reflecting this “ambiguity” and inderterminancy, competing factions can simultaneously argue that Turkishness is a political affiliation crosscutting socio-cultural differences (as exemplified by *ne mutlu Türk’üm diyene*) or a specific ethno-cultural identity (illustrated best by the combination of folkloric Islam and Turkish language).

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<sup>10</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Please see: W. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge and London, 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Ayşe Kadioğlu, “Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey: The Triumph of Will over Reason,” *Cahier d’Etudes sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, Vol. 26, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Mesut Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 6, 2004, p. 55 and 61.

Moreover, although founding texts of the Republic legally consider all non-Turkish elements as Turkish citizens, everyday experiences, including juridical interpretations at the expense of non-Turkish communities,<sup>15</sup> have clearly demonstrated this discrepancy between Turkishness and Turkish citizenship. Apparent distrust of the state toward “non-Turks” took many forms, ranging from the secret population codes for family genealogies for non-Muslim communities<sup>16</sup> to banning the use of minority languages, such as Kurdish, in public. Even though the state frantically enforced assimilation policies, even Muslim communities, such as Kurds, were viewed with suspicion, once again highlighting the discrepancy between Turkish citizenship and Turkishness.

Although thinking Turkishness alongside citizenship helps us note its limits, it does not allow us to reflect on differences through which a diverse range of communities (Circassians, Lazi, Arabs, immigrants from the Balkans, Georgians etc.) has been aligned with state ideologies and Turkish identity. Not limiting our discussion to the juridical domain, I argue that Turkishness should not be conflated with its ethnic and socio-cultural connotations but rather be comprehended as a set of socio-cultural and juridico-political alignments of selves with state policies, nationalist prescriptions, political trajectories, cultural patterns, and socialities. Turkishness, I argue, encompasses a sense of hegemony that is experienced in relation to non-Turkish elements, embraces a particular form of Islam,<sup>17</sup> and has a peculiar non-antagonistic relationality to the state (as

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<sup>15</sup> Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” p. 56.

As an illustration, one can note the strict regulation and confiscation of properties of foundations of non-Muslim communities, please see: Aysel Çelikel, “Gayrimüslim Cemaat Vakıflarının Taşınmaz Mal Edinmesi ve 27.01.2004 Tarihli Yargıtay Kararı,” *Istanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 8, 2005. For a historical trajectory of Jewish communities in Turkey, please see: Şule Toktaş, “Citizenship and Minorities: A Historical Overview of Turkey’s Jewish Minority,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Recently, the public learnt that population registry assigned secret codes for legally recognized non-Muslim communities. Greek Orthodox [*Rum*] communities were assigned 1 while Armenians 2, and Jews 3. The scandal was revealed when a family, who converted back to Christianity from Islam, wanted to enrol their child in an Armenian school in 2013 was given green light by the Ministry of Interior as they had earlier converted to Islam from Christianity. The revelation highlighted the fact that, for the state, even Islamization does not automatically mean assimilation as the secret records about “ethnicity” were preserved nonetheless.

<sup>17</sup> Although secularism was nominally one of the most fundamental aspects of Turkish modernisation, Turkish identity was still intricately tied to Islam. Kemal Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” p. 6 – 7.

M. D. Baer, *The Dönme*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2010, p. XI.

in “possessing the state”<sup>18</sup>) through which its hegemonic position in public is enforced and preserved. It is flexible enough to include a range of difference as long as this particular relationality to the state ideology is upheld and enacted in public. It enigmatically infuses socialities through this differentiation without necessarily imprinting itself on subjects in explicit and distinguishable forms.

In this sense, Turkishness, within its carefully prescribed form, has never been limited to the Turkish-speaking Sunni majority but could accommodate secularist-modernist Alevi communities, multilingual communities of the Black Sea littoral (as in the Laz, the Hemshin of Rize and Artvin as well as Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon), Albanians, Bosnians, Pomaks, Circassians, immigrants from the Balkans, and other communities of the Caucasus, Tatars, Arab-speaking communities, and many others. Thus, it can be said that Turkishness already extends well beyond its imaginary ethnicist limits, as exemplified in its immigration policies favouring communities from the Caucasus and Balkans that do not speak Turkish. These communities, in their gradual integration into Turkishness, uphold nationalist-statist values in public and privatise their socio-cultural distinctions. Along lines, although historically eager to assimilate them, it currently seems to leave out Kurds, who resist the call to assimilate by insisting on their difference in public, and non-Muslim minorities, as in Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Assyrians, whose non-Muslim faith renders them ineligible.

Hence, rather than solely characterized by a dichotomy between citizenship and ethnicity, I first argue that Turkishness is characterised by an ambiguity, allowing selves to flexibly appropriate changing meanings of Turkishness in relation to their socio-political alignments. Various respondents from the Valley, for instance, causally moved between these different definitions, using them as they pleased. Many both claimed (ethnically) Turkish ancestry and yet indicated that it would not have made any difference in their allegiance to the Turkish state and nationalism if they were of Greek ancestry. Various respondents from

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<sup>18</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, June 2005, p. 147.

Trabzon continuously shifted between different aspects of Turkish identity, conveniently using it as a political affiliation/loyalty (citizenship), ethnic difference (being of Turkish descent), or a socio-cultural community composed of diverse communities. Although Turkishness as citizenship seemed to be more prevalent, it did not necessarily exclude references to Turkishness *qua* ethnicity. Rather, they are used interchangeably and often merge into one another. This ambiguity and flexibility, I argue, renders Turkishness both quite resilient in the face of growing criticism and allows selves to preserve their diverse socio-cultural distinctions in private. If we fail to comprehend this inherent ambiguity that render a simultaneous interplay of inclusion and exclusion possible, one cannot comprehend how Turkish subjects are forged.

In addition, Turkishness should be thought alongside the diversity of socio-cultural practices it encompasses, as long as it can accommodate them within the contours of nationalist ideology of the state. Hence, I argue that Turkishness is also to be understood as a regime of visibility through which appropriate public representation are articulated. It configures which socio-cultural practices are to be rendered visible in public and which are to be secluded into the private sphere. How Romeika survived up to this day in the privacy of Valley communities lucidly illustrates the intricate relation of Turkishness to the interplays of visibility/invisibility.

As demonstrated by both legal discourses and everyday experiences (including state practices), Turkishness is in flux, incessantly oscillating between an ethnic identity and a political affiliation. It is, hence, plagued by ambiguities with regards to its imaginary limits and everyday practices and yet it still emerges to be an ever important aspect of selves, permeating discourses around socio-cultural life and providing a general sense of identity and belonging. However, it is also an elusive element of subjectivities and socialities, transiently glimpsed in its absences, as in the un-Turkishness of Samast, or its eruptions, as in the sensitivity of Turkish subjects to justify a breach of law, examples of which are further discussed in this thesis.

## Scope

In the Turkish context, the post-1980 period roughly corresponds to a new engagement with the past within which differences, both past and present, have become publicly visible in an unprecedented manner.<sup>19</sup> The uniform and hegemonic public of the Kemalist Republic seems to have been shattered by interventions of Islamist and Kurdish groups alongside many others (such as feminists, progressives, LGBTQ groups), giving rise to heterogeneity and multiplicity. All around the country, the process witnessed the emergence of identities and memories through which socio-cultural distinctions became increasingly visible, as in the case of the Kurdish identity and the Armenian community. In the middle of this bursting of memory, the country witnessed various dialogues and reconciliatory initiatives, including official apologies for past massacres, *Kürt Açılımı* (Kurdish Initiative), intergovernmental dialogues, investigations, the memorialisation projects, and testimonies.

All these endeavours were intended as catalysts for a wider social engagement with past wrongdoings to pave the road for justice, a peaceful sociality and politics. They followed, in a sense, a much wider logic prevalent in similar initiatives in different contexts. The revelation of truth would eventually lead to change, remorse, reconciliation and a re-articulation of the socio-political structure towards justice.<sup>20</sup> Remembrance, in this sense, is conceived as a radical politico-ethical intervention through which forgetting is rightfully replaced by a just re-ordering, leading the society to comprehend “the value and worth of

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<sup>19</sup> This historicisation should be conceived not as a homogenous and coherent process with a single rupture that differentiates successive historical periods. The shattering of the Kemalist unitary public, I claim, has its roots in 1960s and 1970s, when a rich political atmosphere rendered it possible for different groups, such as Kurds and feminists, to organise around their causes. Continuities and discontinuities within this historical trajectory, rather than a single break in 1980, should be kept in mind. One should remember the arrest of Leyla Zana and others, even though members of the Parliament have legal immunity from prosecution, after she uttered Kurdish words in the General Assembly Hall in 1991. This continuity of the repressive operations of the unitary-nationalist public illustrates this complexity of the historicisation of the public sphere in the Turkish context. This periodisation, thus, should be read as a series of back and forth movements.

<sup>20</sup> Katherine Ranharter and Gareth Stansfield, “Acknowledging the Suffering Caused by State-Mandated Sexual Violence and Crimes: An Assessment of the Iraqi High Tribunal,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 2016, p. 39.



‘cultural diversity within, [...] as the basis of [...] a more differentiated mode of national cohesion.’<sup>21</sup>

These endeavours, however, do not always produce the assumed effect, a phenomenon that is observable not only in Turkey but elsewhere as well.<sup>22</sup> This presumed automatic progression from acknowledgement of past wrongdoings and diverse socio-cultural practices to “structural social change”<sup>23</sup> and re-articulation of subjectivities do not seem to be operative in all contexts, as we have seen in the staunch persistence of Turkish nationalism in contemporary Turkey. The post-1980 period, for instance, also witnessed the intensification of violent Turkish nationalism as a reaction to this unprecedented visibility of distinctions in public. Almost all Turkish cities witnessed lynchings of political activists and citizens of Kurdish descent.<sup>24</sup>

One significant aspect of these discussions in the post-1980 period is their almost universal focus on non-Turkish subjects and communities. Narratives circulated in the post-1980 period exclusively related to the experiences of non-hegemonic communities of the country. They concretely ranged from the lost Kurdish girls of Dersim to Armenian grandmothers, or from the cruel torture of Kurdish prisoners in notorious prisons to the dispossession of Greek and Armenian communities. This specific aspect of contemporary narratives posits Turkish subjectivity with an imaginary homogeneity and coherence. Turkishness is construed by its negation/absence, e.g. the non-Turkishness of Samast, in

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<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Povinelli, “The State of Shame: Australian Multiculturalism and the Crisis of Indigenous Citizenship,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1998, p. 581.

<sup>22</sup> For a similar illustration of the absence of such redemptive engagement with the past, one can note the motion picture *The Act of Killing*, a documentary depicting contra-guerilla operations in Indonesia under the military rule where hundreds of thousands of ethnic Chinese and leftist activist were killed. The murderers, who were portrayed during the documentary showed little signs of remorse, except one of the protagonists, and the state and society at large seem to be implicated in this remorselessness. Joshua Oppenheimer (Producer), & Christine Cynn and Anonymous (Directors), 2013, *The Act of Killing*, Denmark.

<sup>23</sup> Lauren Berlant, “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics,” in *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics, and the Law*, Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (eds.), The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1999, p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> Tanıl Bora discusses these lynchings in his recent book. Tanıl Bora, *Türkiye'nin Linç Rejimi*, Birikim: İstanbul, 2008.

A map, produced by a Turkish artist, Hakan Akçura, visually depicts the pervasiveness of lynchings across the country since 1992.

these narratives of suffering, subalternness, and marginalisation. Additionally, in the face of ever-growing interest in (others') past (sufferings), Turkish subjects are differentiated by their clinging to their own mode of relating to the past, that is, non-remembering or a refusal to remember, as I discuss in Chapter IV (Section IV). Within this context, I explore how communities still uphold and reproduce Turkishness, despite these socio-political transformations.

This research explores practices by and assumptions about *Trabzonlular*, the subjects of this research, through which subjectivities are articulated, enacted, and represented. The analysis also highlights the contours of public discussions around identities and subjectivities in contemporary Turkey and other modern contexts, which assign every individual into one of a number of mutually exclusive categories (Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Kurd etc.) with a presumed essentialism and coherence within (See Chapter III, Section II).<sup>25</sup> One has to be either Greek or Turkish, as most of my interlocutors ruled out the possibility of at least a third option, if not many more, where such categories are more transiently and porously articulated with no clearly defined limits. This essentialist and holistic understanding of subjectivity, within which subjects can belong to only one side, also posited national identities as irreconcilable categories of being and belonging without accounting for their historicity. Thus, when others learnt the fact that locals spoke Romeika natively, it was almost an automatic inference that they must be Greeks who either "pretend" or "strive" to be Turkish.<sup>26</sup> Locals, on the other hand, staunchly counter such conclusions, claiming Turkic ancestry.<sup>27</sup> They "explain" their knowledge of Romeika as a "remnant" (*kaldı*) of their centuries-long co-habitation with Greek-speaking

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, Routledge: London, 2005, p. 15 and 78.

<sup>26</sup> Even academic texts, such as the one by Hakan Özkan, a linguist who wrote on Romeika, Trabzon, can repeat these assumptions: "[i]n contrast to those who do not see any Greekness in their identity, many of my informants take a totally different stance. Surprisingly they frankly acknowledge a Greek (T *Rum*) identity lying beneath their Turkish national identity." Hakan Özkan, "The Pontic Greek Spoken by Muslims in the Villages of Beşkøy in the Province of Present-day Trabzon," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013, p. 138.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, a local of the Valley indicates in his amateur book that Turkic tribes began populating the littoral since 3000 BCE. Hasan Tiryakioğlu, *Dede Biz Rum Mıyuz? (Grandpa, Are We Greeks?)*, Berikan: Ankara, 2014, p. 66 – 67.

Fuat Dünder, "Milli Ezber: Saf Türk – Karışık Öteki," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, Vol. 4, Tanıl Bora (ed.), İletişim: İstanbul, 2009, p. 896.

Orthodox Christians of the region.<sup>28</sup> Turkishness, then, emerges as a holistic and coherent phenomenon for locals and outsiders alike. Identities, such as Greekness or Turkishness, within these frames, are conceptualised as stagnant, ahistorical, and essential, “lying beneath” the surface and withstanding social changes and implications.

The vocabulary of subjectivities, at least in its most elemental and pervasive forms as they are circulated in public, does not seem to include a potential for multiplicity and incoherence but rather attempts to squeeze it all into one single category that is supposedly homogeneous and coherent. This articulation of identities, I believe, is embedded in the historicity of Turkish society and radically interrelated with its specific modality of remembering.

This conception, thus, envisions a monolithic account of Turkishness enacted and experienced temporally in the same manner everywhere. In line with the (official) history of the nation, distinct experiences in a diverse range of geographies, each of which went through an immensely different set of historical processes, are rendered invisible and irretrievable. Experiences of recent Balkan immigrants, for instance, remain unaccounted for, alongside *mübadiller* (immigrants of the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange of 1923). This absence of local distinctions for the sake of a singular and glorious national narrative is plainly clear even when one traces the Balkan Wars of 1911-13, World War I, and the post-war occupation along with the national struggle against it.<sup>29</sup>

I believe that going beyond this homogenous and monolithic representation of Turkish subjectivity requires us to be attentive to how concrete local historical trajectories and socio-cultural distinctions are transformed in such manner to generate subjects that identify themselves with the uniform imaginary of Turkishness. Why and how contemporary resurgence of past wrongdoings did not produce the assumed transformation of the socio-political structures, I

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<sup>28</sup> Ali Çelik, *Trabzon Çaykara Halk Kültürü*, Doğu: Istanbul, 2005, p. 10, 22, 28, 33, and 52.

<sup>29</sup> It is important to underline that such a monolithic image of Turkish subjectivity, as the one and only overarching singular possibility of selfhood in the whole geography, is also generally shared in narratives of non-Turkish interlocutors, e.g. Greek, Armenian, or Kurdish narratives, as the subject that inflicts wounds on others.

believe, might be related to our inability to go beyond this coherent and homogenous representation of Turkishness, and, to account for how it is “particularly configured within local places”<sup>30</sup> in close connection to historicities, socialities, state practices and policies, politico-economic possibilities and alignments, socio-cultural distinctions, traditions, geographies, memories, and religiosities. The very failure of transcending this holistic representation, I assert, both hinders our comprehension of contemporary Turkish society, which cannot solely be limited to analyses of technologies and policies of the state, and forecloses the possibility of differences in modalities of subject formation in different contexts. Turkishness, as a socio-cultural and political phenomenon, in this sense, should be traced in mundane and everyday settings. In order to develop this line of argument, I will analyse my object of study, Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

This dissertation is an attempt to comprehend how Turkish subjectivities in Trabzon are formed and enacted through an analysis of their relations to Romeika, landscapes, gender, state, and religiosities. I explore different modalities of subjectivity that are fragmentally forged in various domains of life, including but not limited to memory, culture, gender, politics and the state, religion, and relations to space. In the light of these wider socio-political developments, I embarked on my research on Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon through a series of questions that grappled with my initial confusion about the co-existence of a violent Turkish nationalism with the persistence of a distinct socio-cultural heritage, Romeika. I was specifically intrigued by how Romeika-speaking locals of the Valley<sup>31</sup> could be ardent Turkish nationalists while also preserving their native language, considering the antagonistic positions Greece and Turkey occupy in the socio-cultural imaginary.

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<sup>30</sup> Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> In tandem with local customs to address the area as *boğaz* (valley, pass), I will use Valley to denote the area.

My primary objectives, however, in time evolved to ask much wider questions to include processes of subject formation: How are Turkish subjects constituted in the case of Romeika-speaking communities? What are the different modalities of subject formation? How is the past engaged in such processes? How is the state implicated in the production of (local) subjectivities? How is gender implicated in these different registers? What are the ways to conceive local men's religious engagements? These questions, in a sense, all address one central theme of this dissertation through a sequence of fragments: How are Turkish subjectivities forged through everyday engagements in particular places?

This dissertation should be read not solely as a glimpse into a local setting where a unique sociality is depicted through an intriguing configuration, even though this is clearly one of the main themes of the analysis. Eventually, I was pushed, by the complexities and multiplicities of locals' social engagements, to ask further questions alongside the axes of gender, religion, and the state to better comprehend the different dimensions of Turkish subjectivities. Masculinities and religiosities emerged as additional focal points of the research within this context. This dissertation, then, should be read as an attempt to highlight different modalities that constitute and operationalise subjectivities, a term that I discuss in reference to a number of theoretical trajectories, in a peripheral Valley community where a unique heritage is kept alive. Dynamics of (in)visibility and how it affects local subjectivities constitute the first step of this analysis. This is followed by a succession of chapters that explore how this (in)visibility produces new forms of engagement with the past, how masculinities are produced through spatial alignments, how the state is enacted by peculiar reiterations of masculinity, and how religiosities are affected by local customs and take a peculiar form.

## **Outline**

In Chapter II, I chart my methodological and ethical commitments to explore their implications for my analysis. I also use this space to discuss the limits of this research in highlighting gendered, socio-cultural, and political factors. In

Chapter III, I explore subjectivity as a theoretical and analytical category to work through in succeeding analytic chapters. This chapter presents a meta-theoretical framework for the analysis through identifying theoretical streams that nurtured my comprehension of the way subjects are formed and how they should be traced. Chapter IV provides the reader with a context within which research questions and analyses can be situated within a concrete geography and history. It both discusses the historicity of Trabzon and explores configurations of citizenship and memory in Turkey.

In Chapter V, I describe the state of Romeika in settlements across the Valley. This ethnographic detailing of Romeika is vital for the dissertation as it provides the groundwork upon which subsequent analysis of subjectivities and socialities is constructed. In these analytic chapters, I trace different modalities of Turkish subjectivity in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon. I generally start from an ethnographic vignette, indented so as to differentiate the text from the analysis. Then, I pose questions that arise from my engagements in the field to develop my analysis further, specifically with regards to modalities of subjectivation. The prose, in this sense, moves back and forth between ethnographic observation and analysis throughout the dissertation without privileging either one of these at the expense of the other.

The first analytical section, Chapter VI, starts with the particularities of local socialities that are more complex and fragmented than assumed by conventional binaries around gender and privacy/public. Through highlighting various mechanisms of invisibility and disclosure, I provide a contextualisation of Romeika within the contemporary socio-political climate in order to situate the language in its elusive and nonetheless pervasive presence within the community. I finish the chapter by demonstrating how Romeika can be seen as a communally private element of socialities.

In Chapter VII, I introduce how Romeika is embedded in interplays of visibility and invisibility and how local subjectivities and socialities are affected by this dynamic. I discuss theoretical implications of (in)visibility by relating this

practice to the literature and claim that Romeika constitutes a “public” secret through which “discretion” becomes one of the key elements of local socialities. Following this discreet status of Romeika, I detail how the landscape emerges as the site of memory in its muted form, which can be deciphered only through local knowledge and practices. Following local engagements with treasure hunts I highlight the possibility of a different form of corporeally-enacted memory. Landscape, I discuss, generates a particular mode of remembrance and subjectivity.

In Chapter VIII, I turn my focus to gender and its construction in the Valley. Through tracing the movement of masculine bodies from villages to the town centre, I depict the construction of masculinities by means of this convergence and proximity within the context of a new physical space and new notions of citizenship, nation, and the public sphere. I claim that while men are situated in the town centre, a public space where politics is conducted, while women are confined to villages, a seemingly more private domain within which Romeika is more casually circulated. By highlighting this spatial arrangement and new modalities of being and belonging, I foreground how these spatialities play a part in the very formation of gendered subjects.

Chapter IX attempts to trace the way conspiracy theories operate in the area and how they can be seen as an element of subjectivation processes. In addition to constituting one of the key elements of state functioning in the region, conspiracy theories, I claim, produce a peculiar form of masculinity that is acting in the name of the state in a sovereign and potent manner. Thus, this chapter pursues how conspiracies and the state enactment are embedded in the constitution of local masculine subjectivities. The last analytic section, Chapter X, discusses religiosities and how we can approach local religious engagements as an aesthetic reiteration of piety. These practices by local men, I argue, inducted them as Muslims with a peculiar relationship to normativity.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS

#### I. Ethnography: Orientation, Surprise, and Methods

Through its historical trajectory, ethnographic research has evolved from a colonial practice that attempts to know, situate, and represent the “other”<sup>32</sup> to a critical and dialogic analysis of processes through which communities are understood. Contemporary ethnographic praxis focuses on “the analysis of people's ‘meanings’ from their own standpoint”<sup>33</sup> and produces a representation that is “neither complete, fixed, disinterested, universal, nor neutral but instead situated, local, interested, material, and historical.”<sup>34</sup> Ethnographic embeddedness can provide us with opportunities to explore the social life of interlocutors by including “tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture.”<sup>35</sup> It enables us to see contradictions, gaps, inconsistencies, and silences that are not always included in the representation of selves in controlled settings, as in interviews or surveys.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, ethnographic analysis can potentially capture elements of social life by integrating affective circulations, encounters, and frustrations as transient and elusive fragments of social life,<sup>37</sup> thus emerging not only as a

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<sup>32</sup> Michel Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York and Basingstoke, 2003, p. 29.

John D. Brewer, *Ethnography*, Open University Press: Buckingham and Philadelphia, 2000, p. 38.

M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, Routledge: London, 1997, p. 1.

Bruce Kapferer, “How Anthropologists Think: Configurations of the Exotic,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 2013, p. 819.

Michael Jackson, *Paths Towards a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1989, p. X.

Joel Robbins, “Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2013, p. 449.

<sup>33</sup> Brewer, *Ethnography*, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce Homer, “Critical Ethnography, Ethics, and Work,” in *Ethnography Unbound: From Theory Shock to Critical Praxis*, S. G. Brown and S. I. Dobrin (eds.), SUNY Press: New York, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Kathleen M. Dewalt and Billie R. Dewalt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*, Altamira Press: Walnut Creek, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Fahy also highlights the importance of silence in anthropological studies. Sandra Fahy, “Recalling What Was Unspeakable: Hunger in North Korea,” in *The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach*, Jonathan Skinner (ed.), Berg: London and New York, 2012, p. 229.

<sup>37</sup> James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus (eds.), University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 1986, p. 14.

Mary Louise Pratt, “Fieldwork in Common Places,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, p. 49 – 50.



methodology but also as a productive and open-ended process, affecting both the epistemology and the analysis significantly.<sup>38</sup>

## I.I. Subjects of Study

Historically, anthropology involved a (mostly) European subject—the anthropologist—embarking on an unprecedented journey *to know* the exotic *other*.<sup>39</sup> In close connection to colonialism, anthropology “became a flourishing academic profession [...] carried out by Europeans, for a European audience – of non-European societies dominated by European power.”<sup>40</sup> Such accounts rarely gave voice to research subjects, conventionally colonized communities, and derived a (western) normalcy according to which deviation and difference could be conceived.<sup>41</sup>

Thanks to critiques in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anthropological inquiries increasingly focused on modalities of resistance through which agency of subaltern communities is highlighted in the face of colonial-capitalist hegemony and domination. As a result, new techniques, such as collaboration and multivocality, were introduced and a much wider range of themes were addressed, as we can observe through the range of anthropological inquiries dealing with suffering, violence, poverty, oppression, war, and dispossession.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dewalt and Dewalt, *Participant Observation*, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Kapferer, “How Anthropologists Think,” p. 821 and 833.

Talal Asad, “Introduction,” in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Talal Asad (ed.), Ithaca Press: London, 1975, p. 11, 15 – 17.

Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, p. 39.

Henrietta L. Moore, *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994, p. 119 – 120.

<sup>40</sup> Talal Asad, “Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter,” in *The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism and Sexism toward a View from Below*, G. Huizer and B. Mannheim (eds.), Mouton: The Hague and Paris, 1979, p. 90.

<sup>41</sup> James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus (eds.), University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 1986, p. 109, 111.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, James Scott’s famous analysis, *Weapons of the Weak* (1987), reveals how peasantry was not a passive element of history but asserted its agency in different forms. Nancy Scheper-Hughes details the misery and struggle of women in Brazil in her famous account, *Death without Weeping* (1993). Another widely acclaimed study, Veena Das’ influential book, *Life and Words* (2006), captivatingly provides readers with a theory of communal violence and its implications in India. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff depict change and everyday life in Africa through different means and contexts in their voluminous list of publications,<sup>42</sup> Joao Biehl

The same inclination to address the issue of subjectivity mostly through instances of resistance and subversion can be traced in major contemporary theoretical discussions as well. Judith Butler, for instance, criticises this “emancipatory model of agency” of liberal-humanist tradition, within which the subject is posited in antagonism to power to praise a liberatory resistance.<sup>43</sup> And yet, her theorisations, notably, situate agency as the very possibility of resignification through which the terms of normativity could be rearticulated and “appropriated” to generate new relationalities among the signs for socio-political objectives, “for which [they were] explicitly not designed.”<sup>44</sup> Only on these occasions of subversion and slippage, when new articulations of signs are rendered possible, agency is glimpsed as a potentiality.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, Butler also claims that “agency may well consist in opposing and transforming the social terms by which it is spawned.”<sup>46</sup>

Although anthropology has long focused on subaltern, suffering, and non-European subjects,<sup>47</sup> I underline the usefulness of anthropological methodology to further enhance our understanding of subjects who are assumed to be “normal,” hegemonic, and not-so-exotic socialities and subjectivities throughout this research. In line with Talal Asad and Michael Taussig, I claim a greater deal

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underlines the fragility of life for Brazilian AIDS patients who are “unemployed, homeless, involved with prostitution and drug” in his famous book, *Vita* (2005). Abu Lughod provides us a parallel depiction of the daily life of Bedouin women where they carve out spaces of agency within a patriarchic Muslim society in her famous book *Veiled Sentiments* (1986).

<sup>43</sup> Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 128. At page 135, Butler, for instance, claims that: “‘Agency’ is to be found precisely at such junctures where discourse is renewed.” Quoted by: Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 135.

<sup>46</sup> Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, p. 29. Quoted by: Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Robbins, “Beyond the Suffering Subject,” p. 448. Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, p. 39. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, p. 6 – 7.

Even when the anthropological gaze is geared towards non-colonial settings, it mostly focuses on marginalised communities, African-Americans, HIV patients, dispossession, drug addicts, violent socialities, poverty, deprivation, stigmatisation, and racial tensions. Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg’s influential book, *Righteous Dopefiend* (2009), illustratively pursues racialised and discriminated men across urban margins of the US. Similarly, powerful observation and analyses of Begoña Aretxaga on women’s experiences in *Shattering Silence* (1997) draws on similar positions where subjects, nationalist women in Northern Ireland, are captured with regards to their subjection and violation in the hands of the state. Similar to colonial ones, non-subaltern subjects were also captured and depicted in their suffering, marginalised, and non-hegemonic conditions.

of anthropological inquiry into non-subaltern socialities might bring in new insights into these elements that have long been neglected or taken for granted as coherent and homogenous entities. As Michael Taussig claims, such attempts might be conducted through

re juxtaposing the terms of the colonial inquiry, recycling and thus transforming the anthropology developed in Europe and North America through the study of colonized peoples back into and onto the societies in which it was instituted, where the terms and practices imposed upon and appropriated from the colonies [...] are redeemed and come alive with new intensity.<sup>48</sup>

As anthropology might also be construed as an indirect way of explaining things about the colonial societies through their analyses of colonised ones;<sup>49</sup> such re-orientation with a more immediate focus might also bring long overlooked aspects of modernity to light. Here, I follow the footsteps of Talal Asad, Michael Taussig, Saba Mahmood, and Yael Navaro-Yashin to study subjects who cannot easily be associated with resistance. These scholars have opened productive paths through which one could critically engage with the docile bodies of hegemonic socialities, which are conventionally discussed through a theoretical frame around power/state that avoids critical inquiry.

The Turkish context cannot be easily characterised as a setting where the colonized other is systematically analysed to produce knowledge in tandem with capitalist control and exploitation. And yet, the interrelationship between communities with regards to power relations and how they are accommodated in public, or not, might be productive lines to pursue. In the Turkish context as well, many studies tend to focus on non-Turkish and non-hegemonic communities that fall beyond the contours of Turkishness, e.g. Kurdish communities and Alevis. For instance, village/nomadic communities and their enclosed systems were captured through their integration into national-capitalist space (Sirman 1990) while religious communities and socialities were depicted in their adaptation into a world that is forcefully secular and mundane (Tugal 2009). Similarly, Kurds are presented in their resistance to the

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Taussig, "Maleficium: State Fetishism," in *The Nervous System*, Routledge: New York and London, 1992, p. 117. He further adds: "There is no anthropology of the ruling class that rules over us, just as there is no sociology of it, either." (p. 134)

<sup>49</sup> Jackson, *Paths Towards a Clearing*, p. 3 - 4.

assimilationist policies of the Turkish state (von Bruinessen 1992; Darıcı 2011), Alevi as a constellation of heterodox communities and their belief systems were similarly presented in juxtaposition to the state-backed Sunni orthodoxy.<sup>50</sup> As most analyses focus on the structural transformation initiated by the Republican reforms, “what people did with this new identity and how they coped with it was left out of the picture,”<sup>51</sup> rendering how (Turkish) subjects—an apparent majority of the general population of the country—are formed concretely a mystery.

I value such analyses for bringing these previously invisible experiences to light. Yet, I also want to contribute to analytic inquiries to explore how hegemonic subjectivities are constructed and enacted in daily settings. This inquiry, I argue, includes the potential to go beyond unitary explanations around subjectivity and sociality, which have long focused on the structural enactments of nationalist-statist ideology of the state in the Republican Period and also neglected the ways in which Turkish subjects are constituted practically in its banal and mundane dealings. This research, then, is not an anthropological inquiry through which the margins of the state, which are easily replaceable by society or economy, are analysed to render what has been suppressed visible.

As argued in the succeeding chapters, my analysis also draws on this particular conceptualisations of agency and subjectivity by which the contours of these terms are not drawn solely through the binary of subversion(/resistance) and consolidation(/obedience) of norms. Rather, in line with Mahmood’s claims and yet via a different trajectory and with different conclusions, I am more interested in particular modalities of engagement with these norms and concrete ways within which subjectivities are produced out of these idiosyncratic entanglements. My objective, in this sense, is to get a better grasp of subjectivities that are not characterised by resistance/subversion, but actively participate in the constitution of hegemonic and sovereign socialities. It entails

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<sup>50</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, “Alevism and the Myths of Research: The Need for a New Research Agenda,” in *Turkey’s Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2003, p. 3 – 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam: Women, Religion and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey*, IB Tauris: London and New York, 2002, p. 128.

deciphering modalities of subject formation for social actors that do not fit into the category of the subaltern, as their relationality to hegemonic normativity and politics cannot be understood simply through their resistance or subversion. My object of study, in this sense, emerges to be how ideologies and hegemonies are maintained and reproduced on a daily basis.

Through focusing on the everyday, I want to bring out how “subjects come to be formed, and [...] not just formed in the abstract, general ways but within systems of ethnic, gender, and sexual difference that are particularly configured within local places.”<sup>52</sup> How the nationalist-modernist project is concretely appropriated in this peripheral part of Turkey, hence, constitutes one of the primary elements of this inquiry. Focusing socialities and subjectivities that are not solely characterised by resistance and subversion but display a much more complicated in-between picture, we can re-configure subjectivity as a fragmented and ambiguous, enabling and subjecting, constrictive and expansive, presumed-to-be perennial and yet incessantly changing process.

### I.II. Openness and Dynamism of the Research

Ethnography, both as a praxis and analytics, emerges as the best way to study elusive social phenomena that are harder to locate but saturate the whole social texture. As Romeika is a “discreet” element of local socialities, that is, it is not easily visible for outsiders as I discuss further in Chapters VI and VII, this analysis is rendered possible only through extended participation in local life that conjures up the non-locals to learn the ways to see it. Being especially relevant with regards to its public (in)visibility, then, ethnography emerges as a key component of this analysis.

This dissertation includes a wider range of themes that I did not previously plan to study and incorporate into the analysis. Against my preliminary assumptions (as in, a community whose socio-cultural life is over-determined by the silent perseverance of a supposedly “secret” language), the dynamism of ethnography

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<sup>52</sup> Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, p. 9.

“forced [me] to think”<sup>53</sup> as what I witnessed and participated in proved to be much more diverse, interchanging, dynamic, and multi-dimensional. Closely related to the general organisation of Turkish society along a multiplicity of social, cultural, economic, political, and juridical lines, I learnt to be aware of continuities these socialities display even in their most secluded forms. Discussions in succeeding chapters try to highlight this juxtaposition. Ethnographic methodology made it possible for me to realise and represent, even though fragmentally and in a limited scope, a juxtaposition of phenomena that are conventionally thought to stand apart, as in Turkish and Romeika.

I had to radically construct new perspectives and frames in order to accommodate the intricacies of everyday life in the Valley. My participation in different spheres of community life thoroughly altered the way I perceive subjectivity, masculinity, the state, heritage, memory, and pieties. Local religiosities, for instance, initially generated confusion due to my understanding of religion as an individualised ethics, misleadingly causing me to think of religiosity solely as internalised belief. Only through my extended participation and a process of familiarisation, have I come to adapt to the peculiarity of local engagements with Islam. Thus, methodology, once again, affected the way I formulate questions and my potential answers, while forcing me to ditch my assumptions.

### I.III. Methods: Tools and Limitations

Throughout my stay in the Valley in the first six months of 2015, I gathered relevant data mostly through fieldnotes and printed materials. After a minor delay because of the violence in numerous Kurdish towns in late 2014, I was able to start my field research in the winter-spring period, beginning in January and exiting the field in June 2015, right before the parliamentary elections. This time frame was chosen specifically in order to enhance my embeddedness in the community. As the Valley has recently become a tourist hotspot, summers are

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<sup>53</sup> Gastón R. Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*, Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2014, p. 24. Emphasis is original.

busy with busloads of tourists visiting the Valley and the pastures. Furthermore, people who are originally from the Valley but located elsewhere, usually come back in summer, from June until early September, to visit their ancestral villages and the pastures. Hence, summer periods are taken up with relatives visiting and touristic merchandise (shops, services, transportation, and hospitality). Even those elders who do not engage with such activities would move up to their houses in the pastures for a cooler and less humid air in line with the long-held tradition of the Valley. As I avoided this busy season, I could follow locals across the Valley in a much calmer and secluded atmosphere.

The data gathered throughout my stay in the Valley are used to present narratives and practices through which I can trace relevant themes (as in gender, nationalism, or religiosity). I avoid imposing my own perspective on local discourses and practices as much as I can even though I cannot say that I am always bound by such commitments, as evident in my analyses of treasure hunts (Chapter VII), conspiracies (Chapter IX), and religiosities (Chapter X). Through my perception of local socialities, I attempt to “offer perspectives on what [locals] say and [...] they might not agree” with my way of formulating questions and analyses.<sup>54</sup> It should be stated that, even bringing a number of diverse practices and discourses together, as in treasure hunts and Romeika heritage, is itself an act of interpretation which some of the respondents and academic interlocutors might disagree with. I should underline that I am more than willing to hear out these challenges as the specific configuration of my arguments is intended to generate insights about modalities of subjectivation that are generally overlooked.

The principal ethnographic method to gather relevant data for this research was participant observation. I accompanied locals in their workspaces, homes, coffeehouses, villages, forests, or walks across the Valley. I also socialised in the billiard hall of the lodge I stayed in. My days typically involved interacting with local men in different spheres of life. The men I interacted with had a range of

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<sup>54</sup> Gregory M. Simon, *Caged in on the Outside: Moral Subjectivity, Selfhood, and Islam in Minangkabau, Indonesia*, University of Hawai'i Press: Honolulu, 2014, p. 13.

occupations: teachers, engineers, truck drivers, clerks, imams, shopkeepers, tradesmen, technicians, carpenters, officers, security guards, or caretakers. Their ages also ranged from the closest companions being closer to my age, late 20s and early 30s, to most of the others in their early 50s-60s and sometimes in their 70s. Considering the overall population patterns in the Valley from which many families moved to big cities for economic and socio-cultural benefits, it is not unusual that mostly older men populate the town centre and villages. If they grew up there, many young men, as I could observe directly and hear, would leave the Valley either to work or to study in other cities and would return only for short (summer) visits afterwards.

I also socialised in local coffeehouses while also half-working in one for free tea in return, which in turn provided me with many more occasions to meet others from villages across the Valley and witness daily encounters between locals in these confined spaces where local men sought refuge in winter. In addition to these increased chances of expanding my social circle, my continuous presence and engagement in the Valley assured locals of my semi-insider status. Yakup, the owner of the establishment, trusted me with the daily operation of his coffeehouse. His trust presented me as a local, initiating many encounters with questions about my ties to Yaşar (*Neyi oluyorsun?*), which then generally led to my provenance, “Which village are you from (in the Valley)?”, rather than the usual query, “Where are you from?” Although just being there also produced a sense of proximity and familiarity, this employment in Yakup’s coffeehouse provided me with an invaluable opportunity through which locals openly and quickly engaged with me in this intimate space, where outsiders would rarely wander into, and generated a sense of trust.

My interactions in shops and houses helped me to be involved in private lives of local men in a much deeper sense. They also opened a domain of local men’s lives through discussions that move through sexuality, kinship, money, politics, memories, aspirations, personal grievances, and friendships. In addition to teaching me how to play billiards through hours-long practice almost every



night, these more “private” engagements also demonstrated the intricate status of Romeika as an integral element of social and cultural life.

It is also useful to remind the reader that I was situated in the Valley as an inbetween subject, that is, as both an insider and outsider. As my paternal ancestry also hails from Trabzon, this common heritage turned into a vital relationality, *hemşehrilik*,<sup>55</sup> which I was reminded of by almost all the locals I encountered. As one of the most important elements of socialities in the Turkish context, *hemşehrilik* entails common provenance and the category gained further importance throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the aftermath of urbanisation at an accelerated rate. As it produced a social safety net for new urban immigrants, who could not easily get integrated into formal systems of healthcare or housing services, its significance continued through the establishment of *hemşehri dernekleri* (fellow townsman associations) in major urban centres, reaching great proportions over decades.<sup>56</sup> Yet, even though I was perceived as a subject with roots in the province, a fellow *Trabzonlu*, I was still distant at the same time since I did speak neither Turkish in the local accent nor Romeika. Moreover, as I lived in the UK, studied in a foreign university, spoke only a non-local Turkish, and displayed preferences of a different and non-rural sociality and class, locals must have undoubtedly perceived a sense of strangeness, blurring my proximity and positioning me as a semi-outsider as well. This status was, though, I should underline, relational as my (semi-)insider status was further strengthened, for instance, when a group of friends were visiting me in the field from Istanbul and abroad. In comparison to these friends, I was a *Trabzonlu*, a local subject with knowledge of the space and socialities.

To make matters simpler and to ease my access to local life, I personally relied on my *hemşehrilik* ties and established contacts with locals through my paternal relatives, who also hail from the province. I also reconnected to certain locals that I had known before and this familiarity enhanced my encounters immensely

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<sup>55</sup> Fellow townsmen, hailing from the same area, sharing a common provenance and probably culture and heritage.

<sup>56</sup> Meliha Coşkun, *Village Associations as Migrants' Formal Organizations: An Empirical Study in Mamak, Ankara*, Unpublished MA Thesis, Bilkent University: Ankara, 2003.

as it granted a semi-insider and a quasi-native status that is rarely extended to those who do not share the same heritage. That specific entry into the field also provided me with a unique position with the help of which I could navigate both inside and outside the communal boundaries comfortably.

In line with the general objectives of participant observation, I participated in conversations around politics, society, culture, nation, foreigners, the Valley, or Romeika. I mostly relied on field notes that I gathered quickly throughout the day. Supplied with pocket notebooks that I always carried with me, I tried to capture as many details as possible during the day and transformed them into more coherent and neat texts with some supplementary analytic thoughts every night in the privacy of my small room in the local Lodge, where I stayed through an informal arrangement at a discounted rate, thanks to *hemşehrilik* ties and my contacts. At intervals of going back and re-reading my notes and analytic points to reflect upon, I was able to trace some new streams and reconfigure my articulations in a way that I had not envisioned earlier.

Prior to the field work, I had planned a number of in-depth interviews with locals around local subjectivity, Romeika, collective/personal memories, and their views on contemporary Turkish society, culture, and politics. Yet, owing to the idiosyncratic social status of Romeika, such attempts did not work as well as I hoped. Because of the reasons that are significantly related to the way contemporary Turkish politics is organised<sup>57</sup> and local subjectivities are produced and aligned with statist-nationalist discourses, locals were hesitant to actively name and own the language. Especially when accompanied by my requests to audio-record, which almost all research participants refused, the reluctance of locals to associate with Romeika during the interviews was evident. Most of them rejected outright any such audio recording and tried to distance themselves from any such solid association. Such reluctance rendered interviews mostly ineffective for my analysis other than this prevalent pattern of unwillingness to associate with the language. Thus, it would not be wrong to

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<sup>57</sup> Violent experiences Kurdish minority went through should be kept in mind, especially with regards to the resurgence of the armed conflict since the second half of 2015.

state that methodological possibilities and difficulties are, in one way or another, reflected in my analysis as they highlight the way local socialities could be approached and point out the contours of local subjectivities in the case of men.

In addition, I have relied on material that I gathered before, during, or after my field research. These sources including from local books to so-called *define* (treasure) maps, local web sources, and photographs, provided complementary information through which my observations and deductions could be strengthened or countered. I gathered relevant local and national media news about the Valley in addition to joining various social media groups that helped me get a better sense of Romeika and its vocabulary.<sup>58</sup>

#### I.IV. Limits of the Research

This dissertation is—mostly—about masculine experiences in the Valley. Although I had opportunities to interact with local women, some of whom I am still in touch with, their impact is mostly contained in the way Romeika is accommodated in local socialities and how it helps to produce gendered bodies and spaces. Even though I assumed an impeccably rigid gender separation—which was to severely hinder my access to women as research participants—I realised that the way genders, as they are multiple and re-configured incessantly in different contexts, are managed and situated is much more flexible and diverse. Nevertheless, the places that I could wander into casually and where I was able to socialise with locals were inhabited exclusively by men while women were more or less present in houses that were not accessible to me at will. (Please see discussions around space and gender in Chapter VIII) When I accompanied my closest friends in the Valley into their houses, for instance, I was not allowed in the house without the presence and oversight of a male member of the family. Even in these instances, one should remember, though, male guests are strictly confined to the specifically designated guestrooms and not allowed further. Thus, masculine subjectivities emerged to be much more

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<sup>58</sup> A specific social media group, for instance, constantly discusses Romeika words and their variations in different villages across the Valley with sentences exemplifying their use.

accessible and present throughout my stay in the Valley and found their way into my analysis as the primary interlocutors of my inquiries and dialogues. The way women experience Romeika, landscape, memories, politics, the state, public, and religion emerges as a further question to be pursued and I have no doubt that a research on local women would produce intriguing and idiosyncratic results that might contradict or supplement arguments presented here.

Secondly, I am not a Romeika-speaker and this inability to speak the language was felt strikingly in the beginning of this research. During the initial weeks of my stay in the Valley, Romeika was absent due to both my non-fluency and semi-outsider status. Although this obstacle was partially overcome through familiarisation, which led to the flooding of social life from all directions with Romeika, albeit in a “discreet” manner, I was still dependent mostly on my friends’ kindness for simultaneous translations. As I discuss further in Chapters V and VI, Romeika emerges as an elusive element of local socialities, secluded into intra-communal encounters that can be characterised as private. It was, hence, not surprising to experience its absence at the beginning of my stay as I was gradually settling in the Valley and was to familiarise myself with my interlocutors.

As locals helped me to get a sense of what is being communicated in Romeika, their amicable assistance ensured that I could spot Romeika and receive a “translation” of utterances by locals. Chapters dealing with Romeika are, then, an attempt to comprehend Romeika’s status in socio-cultural life of the Valley rather than an analysis of what is being communicated through Romeika as a medium. The focal point of this dissertation is not what is said in Romeika, as such an analysis would fall within the limits of linguistics, but how Romeika, as one of the primary elements of local socio-cultural structure and heritage, affects socialities and subjectivities with or without the presence of outsiders, including myself. As Romeika’s presence is intermingled with a structural invisibility and inarticulation in public, my objective through this dissertation is not to depict how Romeika linguistically operates in the Valley, but rather how locals relate to

the language, move in and outside of this domain, and utilise and dissociate themselves from it.

Thirdly, the duration of the study should be considered alongside the limitations of doctoral studies, funding, and the practicalities of Valley life. Although my stay in the Valley was shorter than any conventional anthropological field research, I was already familiar with the Valley thanks to both my familial connections and earlier visits during my MA research in 2011 and 2012. These past contacts and my ancestral link to the province rendered my settling in the Valley easier.

#### I.V. Reflexivity

Especially at the beginning of this research, similar to the amazement of outsiders that I mentioned in the Introduction, I was both fascinated by the veiled status of the language and attracted by an urge to “discover” the hidden interiority, the “truth” of the community. Yet, through the field research, I realised that local socialities in the Valley did not conceal much anyway—at least no more than others and I did normally. There was no one single kernel to be discovered or no ultimate truth to be revealed. Romeika was all around, albeit in different forms, infusing all aspects of social life. Furthermore, Romeika was not the secret kernel of local subjectivities and socialities, a grasp of which would then lead to the comprehension of all other aspects. Many other elements, equally present and visible, contributed to the formation of subjectivities and socialities.

The complexity and dynamism of the actual experience and other modalities of being, belonging, and remembering helped me to tackle my own assumptions around secrecy, gender, identity, subjectivity, and religiosity. It is helpful to remember that subjectivities cannot be taken as perennial and stable categories but should always be thought through their transformation and interaction with various aspects of life. Similarly, there seem to be multiple modalities of remembrance that defy our conventional comprehension. Echoing questions raised by trauma studies and discussions around testimony, this research, for

instance, hints at the possibility of a physical and spatial remembrance that is not registered in public discourses, as exemplified in the case of treasure hunts, which I discuss in Chapter VII. Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapter X, religious practices can produce immensely rich juxtapositions that seem contradictory and insincere in the beginning—at least that was my initial experience. Both the research process and the writing of the dissertation proved to be the ways to reflect upon how these seemingly incoherent practices are not unique to the Valley communities.

What is more remarkable about the research process, however, was not solely how it forced me to rearticulate these categories that I attempted to analyse local socialities with. It also led me to re-view my own experiences in life through a different lens, which highlighted widely known and yet conspicuously neglected presence of heterogeneities all around: That our neighbours spoke Bosnian at home and in the streets, that Armenians used to live in the village where my family have hazelnut fields, that a close relative has narratives about treasures buried in a well where Armenians were “buried” in the aftermath of the *kırim*,<sup>59</sup> that a neighbour’s grandfather was in fact of Armenian descent and had been “left behind” while his family was “relocated” and lost in 1915, that an aunt-in-law was a native Albanian speaker and learnt Turkish at school *even though* she was born and raised in İstanbul, that a close friend’s father was stationed in the very same Valley for his military service twenty-or-so years ago and learnt a number of Romeika words to communicate with local kids, that one of my friends in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade was a recently-arrived immigrant from Bulgaria and was named Yordanka, or that it was not uncommon for Muslims in Turkey to visit Christian shrines and attend religious ceremonies and vice versa. I do not claim any essential categories of identities, here. What I want to highlight is how these lived experiences concretely amalgamate with one another and produce complicated patterns of subjectivity and socialities that are impossible to grasp within the discourse of nationalism, which renders such complexities illegible. All these invisible distinctions that I found fascinating in the case of Romeika-

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<sup>59</sup> *Kırım*, unsurprisingly, has two meanings in Turkish, the first is destruction as in *soykırım* (genocide) while the second would imply an epidemic/disease. Also, it is the toponym for Crimea in Turkish.

speakers of Trabzon are indeed commonplace and ever present in İstanbul and elsewhere in the country in a similar fashion, half visible and half veiled. There are numerous forms and contexts in which these are revealed and concealed.

Thus, identities are indeed much more complicated than we think of them, and they reflect the complexity of socialities through amalgamating what we are inclined to think as mutually exclusive. Practices that are associated solely either with Turkishness and Greekness come together in certain cases and force us to reconsider through which mechanisms these admixtures can be comprehended and represented. Zeynep Türkyılmaz's research into *Kromlides, Kurumlular* in Turkish, a relatively unknown community that was based in the vicinity of Trabzon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrates this complexity of lived experiences: *Kurumlular* were practicing both Islam and Christianity, which disturbed the schematisation of the Ottoman bureaucracy greatly.<sup>60</sup> The contemporary world, as well, deals with such modernist rigidity through which complexities of social life are moulded to produce a coherent and homogenous narrative, inevitably leading to the invisibility of aspects that are deemed incomprehensible.

Relatedly, modernist-nationalist discourses cannot accommodate such admixtures but smooth out all these "misfit" elements to carve out a national body. Reflected in all implications of the nationalist hegemony, ranging from education to history or from family genealogies to religious affiliation, these interminglings of supposedly exclusive categories are rendered illegible as they run counter the fundamental premises of the nationalist ideology. This dissertation also tackles these impasses and presents a view through which these complexities of lived experiences can be accounted for.

## **II. Ethics**

I also must specify ethical principles that informed the formation of both my research and subsequent analysis. As is a fundamental principle of any ethical

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<sup>60</sup> Zeynep Türkyılmaz, *Anxieties of Conversion: Missionaries, State and Heterodox Communities in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2009.

research, I reiterate my commitment to the ethical guidelines that are accepted by various organizations, such as the American Anthropological Association (AAA) or Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA), with regards to ethical ethnographic research. Fundamentally, these guidelines demand the researcher to “avoid harm or wrong” that might affect research subjects, “to respect the well-being of humans” both through and after the research process, and “to consult actively with the affected individuals or group(s) or with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties involved.”<sup>61</sup> These principles constitute the basic tenets of my engagement through which the research design was formed. In this sense, “the primary responsibility [of the research] is to those [who are] studied [and] this responsibility *supersedes* the goal of knowledge, completion of project, and obligation to funders or sponsors.”<sup>62</sup> Throughout the study, I ensured that interlocutors were aware of and genuinely understood the scope of my research through providing them with necessary information and my contact details so that I could be reached conveniently. Even in quite intimate contexts, such as initiation to and other rituals in the Order, I was open to others about the fact that I was a researcher and these instances could eventually be integrated into my analysis.

In addition to this commitment to the well-being of research subjects and the transparency, the privacy and confidentiality of the research data should be noted as another important dimension of the research design. Similar to other ethnographies dealing with socialities that are plagued with “ambiguity and ambivalence,” this project also has a “paradoxical task” to “simultaneously expose and conceal.”<sup>63</sup> Keeping this in mind, I assured that all relevant information such as names of participants, geographical references, audio-visual

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<sup>61</sup> D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, 2005, p. 110.

“Do No Harm,” *Ethics Blog of American Anthropological Association (AAA)*.

“AFS (American Folklore Society) Position Statement on Research with Human Subjects,” *AFS website*.

<sup>62</sup> D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*, p. 111. Emphasis is original.

<sup>63</sup> Silvia Posocco, *Secrecy and Insurgency: Socialities and Knowledge Practices in Guatemala*, The University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 2014, p. 16.



records, intimate/private details of individual/communal life and interactions are completely confidential and anonymised to protect their privacy and to prevent any result that might bring stress to respondents.

While discussing possible implications of the research on locals' lives and their position within the general Turkish public, I also need to mention potential political implications of one of the themes, Romeika. When considered in relation to recent socio-political developments in the Turkish context, it would not be surprising if my analysis might be perceived as a step to minoritise Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon along the lines of ethnic-linguistic distinctions. As echoed by my experiences outside the Valley, which reduced all complexities around heritage and contemporary socio-cultural engagements to binaries, e.g. between Turkish or Greek "ethnicities," revelation of the perseverance of Romeika across communities in the Valley might be read, by outsiders and nationalists of all sorts, as an indication of not-quite-Turkishness or crypto identities of locals, which I challenge and counter throughout the dissertation.

This dissertation focuses on how local subjects construct and enact Turkishness out of the multiplicity of their past and present experiences, however, my research, does not aim at producing a minority position for those communities who speak Romeika in the privacy of their communal settings. On the contrary, I try to go beyond nation/ethnicity-centred conceptions around identity, subjectivity, and memory through highlighting investment and performances across socio-cultural boundaries and binaries. Rather than seeing certain socio-cultural practices as a mark of rigid social differences or "essences," which I regard as a reproduction of nationalist imaginaries, I aim at deciphering new modalities of being, belonging, and remembering that cross-cut imagined and reified socio-cultural and political limits.

Furthermore, I believe that it is academically, ethically, and socio-culturally important to understand a specific cultural practice in all its complexity and heterogeneity. It may also be regarded as an ethical imperative to take the case out of its politically charged impasse within the nationalist imaginary, or from

the constraints of either-or logic, to a new terrain. Broadening and multiplying our limits for being, belonging, and remembering, I assert that a research on Romeika might help us to go beyond mutually exclusive and presumably coherent and essential categories,<sup>64</sup> traverse nationalist fantasy around identity and subjectivities, and to preserve fragile heritages that are destined to disappear.<sup>65</sup> Yet, one needs to underline the fact that research participants might not necessarily share this set of goals. My determination to break away from the nationalist binaries, especially with regards to Romeika, should also be seen as my ethical responsibility towards my interlocutors who either overwhelmingly deny such allusions/claims (“that they are Greeks in essence”) or dismiss the significance of “ethnicity” or ancestry for their contemporary socio-cultural status as Turkish citizens.

As a last point, which constitutes one of the most important ethical motivations for this research, it must be stated that no other research has been conducted so far for the study of the socio-cultural status of Romeika in Trabzon. Although a number of linguists have shown interest in the language and analysed its syntax and vocabulary, no analysis was conducted around the social implications of Romeika and how it is accommodated in socio-cultural life. This striking absence might have been due to a number of reasons. The first of these reasons relate to the general unknown status of the language. Although various personal accounts and some scant references mentioned the existence of a Pontic variant of Greek

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<sup>64</sup> With regards to discussions around conversions and crypto-Christianity in contemporary eastern Turkey, for instance, many discussions around Armenian heritage and Kurdishness fall into the trap of such essentialist articulations by claiming a perennial and stable Armenian identity beneath the Kurdish one. In his account of difficulties for Kurds who want to convert to Christianity from Islam Raffi Bedrosyan claims that

The hidden Armenians have no control over their ethnic roots or their genetic identity—they were given no choice. They were born as Armenians, even though the fact that they are Armenians was not revealed to them until later in life. Some of them have now made a conscious decision to return to their ethnic roots. (Raffi Bedrosyan, “To Baptize or Not to Baptize the ‘Hidden Armenians,’” *The Armenian Weekly*, August 14, 2015.)

Such articulations assume a clearly defined ethnicity that is almost biological that is independent of socio-cultural and political interventions.

<sup>65</sup> Romeika is an endangered language that is predicted to be extinct soon because of emigration, lack of intergenerational transmission, and absence of institutional support, as in education and publication.

that is spoken among the Muslim populations of some Valleys in Trabzon,<sup>66</sup> it was a relatively unknown and unstudied phenomenon until very recently. The second of these reasons relate to the very socio-cultural status of the language as a discreet and elusive aspect of local community. Only through prolonged engagement and access to local forms of socialities, can one comprehend its saturation of life overall.

The last reason relates to the organisation of local communal life that is not that penetrable for outsiders due to local family and village structures. Villages, due to geographical factors, are generally secluded and hard for outsiders to wander into. Roads leading to villages across the Valley are relatively new in comparison to the centuries-long history of settlements and it was not until recent decades that roads were connected to the national grid. Since villages are very secluded and roads into villages would not lead to anywhere other than specific family estates, one does not simply pass through these routes, rendering them quite private.

Families, similarly, are almost completely independent and detached units within villages. Estates of these families, consisting not only of the cottage and fields to cultivate but also of forests and meadows, are esteemed to be highly private and separated from one another by a considerable distance in most cases. Separate and unpaved roads serve almost all such estates. One's presence on such spaces should, thus, be clearly justifiable. As no one would ever wander into these spaces and routes by chance, as in passing through to reach some other destination, they should be prepared to answer the question "who are you?" (*sen kimsin?*) or "of whom are you?" (*sen kimlerdensin?*), questions that are posed not only to identify the interlocutor, and thus to locate him in a social map of the Valley, but also to demand a justification of their presence in that specific spot—an implicit evoking of the question: "What are you doing here?" Aggravated by the pervasiveness of conspiratorial thinking, the presence of uninitiated locals quickly raises eyebrows and is questioned. I personally heard a

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<sup>66</sup> Peter Mackridge, "Greek-Speaking Moslems of North-East Turkey: Prolegomena to a Study of the Ophitic Sub-Dialect of Pontic," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 11, 1987, p. 117.

number of encounters that lead to the expulsion of visitors, who came to the area either to ask questions about Romeika or to interact with locals, by security forces on the request of locals.

## CHAPTER III

### SUBJECTIVITIES: LIMITS, MODALITIES, AND AMBIGUITIES

This dissertation presents an account of different modalities of subject formation through the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, Turkey. Subjectivation, or subject formation, within the contours of this research relates to processes out of which fragments of selves emerge in different registers of the social, as in gender, politics, religion and so forth.<sup>67</sup> Subjectivation therefore is articulated in and through constitutive tensions and intersections between the individual and the social. As the ethnographic material in succeeding chapters presents subjects and socialities that are not unitary and one-dimensional, it is an imperative to highlight the plurality, dynamism, and fragmentedness of these formations alongside the multiplicity of processes of subjectivation.<sup>68</sup> In addition to deciphering different modalities, attending to these processes informs us about how selves are constituted and positioned within given socialities and historicities, including but not limited to corporealities, gender, movements, presences, gatherings, investments, anxieties, relationalities, spaces, politics, economy, religiosities, memories, utterances, and imaginations.

What Foucault posed as the primary objective of his works, that is, “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects,”<sup>69</sup> still informs many analyses from different perspectives. Although subjectivity emerges to be a concept that permeates social theory, it is hard to clearly define and fit it into a stable category. “[T]he moment we try to define subjectivity,” as Oksenberg Rorty claims, “the sense of certainty vanishes,” reflecting its complexity and centrality for our social world.<sup>70</sup> Substantiating

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<sup>67</sup> Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 2005, p. 604.

Lynne Layton, “What Divides the Subject? Psychoanalytic Reflections on Subjectivity, Subjection and Resistance,” *Subjectivity*, Vol. 22, 2008, p. 61.

<sup>68</sup> Silvia Posocco, *Secrecy and Insurgency: Socialities and Knowledge Practices in Guatemala*, The University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 2014, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1982, p. 777.

<sup>70</sup> Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, “The Vanishing Subject: The Many Faces of Subjectivity,” in *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2007, p.34.

what I mean with the term subjectivity, then, grounds this analysis theoretically with a structure to work through in the succeeding chapters, each dealing with a different modality of subjectivation in different registers of life. It also constitutively shapes how I formulate analytical questions and how I approach to the ethnographic material.

To provide the reader with a theoretical background upon which contemporary discussions are founded and to explain the way I conceive the concept, I will briefly trace major trajectories that attempt to account for the constitution of subjectivities. Their implications are not limited to subjectivities and how they are constituted in different settings and yet, they help us to conceive what subjectivity means and how we can adopt an approach to such an elusive and complicated category to accommodate complexity and the multitude of ways it is constituted through.

## **I. Theoretical Trajectories: Foundations and Convergences**

The history of the concept of subjectivity can be traced back to its Aristotelian roots, *hupokeimenon*, which emerged as a reference to (one's) standing and substance of things.<sup>71</sup> Crystallised through Descartes' famous axiom, *cogito ergo sum*, modern understandings of subjectivity evolved to attribute a sense of consciousness of one's existence, individuality, predication, interiority, affective states, and the external world while indicating an autonomous subject endowed with reason and the will.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Subjection and Subjectivation," in *Supposing the Subject*, Joan Copjec (ed.), Verso: London and New York, 1994, p. 6.

Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Vanishing Subject," p. 35 - 36.

<sup>72</sup> Calum Neill, *Lacanian Ethics and the Assumption of Subjectivity*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2011, p. 15.

Oksenberg Rorty, "The Vanishing Subject," p. 35.

Joao Biehl, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman, "Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity," in *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2007, p 6.

Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1995, p. 43.

In addition to philosophical-political articulations of the concept, the term “subjectivity” historically also has a clear juridico-political aspect, as in being subjected to political/legal authority and law, a conceptualisation which might be as old as the subject (of philosophy) *qua* autonomous individual.<sup>73</sup> This specific articulation similarly conceives of a subject that is to follow the law enforced by the political authority, e.g. the prince, and is individually held responsible for *his* (a gendered—male—subject)<sup>74</sup> breaches.<sup>75</sup> The subject, in return, is assumed to possess a temporal and rational coherence, consciousness,<sup>76</sup> fundamental autonomy, and a reason to make sense of the law and obey authority.

Continuing this tradition of theorising subject as an individual, the leading scholars of English empiricism and liberalism, Hobbes and Locke crafted their theories on politics and social life through a fundamental premise of individualised subjectivity that is conceived in its relative autonomy from the social and the political.<sup>77</sup> Presupposing a coherent and essential agency for the self, these articulations clearly situate the subject in antagonism to the social, whose effects are external and (usually) restrictive to the self. This particular articulation of subjectivity, still permeating its colloquial uses, is based upon an idea of an individual that is universally and innately endowed with a capability for autonomy, consciousness, and reason.<sup>78</sup> Informed by the biological standing of humans, they conceive an essential and perennial foundation, prevalent in all selves, which innately emerges as the source of subjects’ actions, feelings, and thoughts.<sup>79</sup> This line of reasoning around subjectivity still continues to inform

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<sup>73</sup> Biehl et al., “Introduction,” p. 6.

Michael M. J. Fischer, “Epilogue: To Live with What Would Otherwise Be Unendurable: Return(s) to Subjectivities,” in *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2007, p. 423.

Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, Schocken Books: New York, 1986, p. 280.

<sup>74</sup> Monique Wittig, “The Point of View: Universal or Particular?” *Feminist Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 64. Quoted by, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge: London and New York, 1999, p. 27.

<sup>75</sup> Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, p. 92.

<sup>76</sup> Seigel, p. 95.

<sup>77</sup> Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2004, p. 115.

<sup>78</sup> Seigel, p. 92 and 94.

<sup>79</sup> Seigel, p. 47.

what we mean by subject in daily life, “as a synonym for inner life processes and affective states,”<sup>80</sup> and emerges to be one of the themes that has been heavily criticised by theories that followed liberalism, as in Marxism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis.<sup>81</sup>

### I.I. Accounting for the Social

Although there seems to be a considerable diversity with regards to what constitutes the subject across these theoretical streams that criticised liberal articulations of subjectivity, what is shared in these propositions is the centrality of the social for the constitution of the (individual) self. Karl Marx’s writings about politics, economy, history, and ideology can be pursued through this prism and can provide a perspective within which the self emerges as a product of the structure, encompassing the mode of production and its reflections in socio-cultural and politico-economic domains.<sup>82</sup> In contrast to liberal conceptualisation of the *a priori* individual as a transhistorical and perennial subject, Marx underlines its socio-economic constitution. Challenging and inverting Hegelian Idealism, Marx opposes universalist conceptualisations of subjectivity and highlights how subjects and socialities are produced in relation to the particular organisation of the means of production within concrete historical and social contexts.<sup>83</sup>

Underlining the interplay between selves and the social, Marx’s theory pinpoints a conception of subjectivity which is not only structured but can also be structuring to mould the social in particular temporalities, as in revolutionary

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<sup>80</sup> Biehl et al., “Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity,” p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Henrietta L. Moore, *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994, p. 118.

<sup>82</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, International Publishing Co.: New York, 1898, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> Marx and Engels, for instance, claimed that “[p]olitical power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another.” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marxist Internet Archive, 2010 [1888], p. 27.) Various experiences, either in the form of the unexpected emergence of the Soviet Union or the very failure of socialist movements’ to prevent the rise of fascism in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, forced many thinkers to reflect upon the way non-economic factors are implicated in the constitution of socialities and subjectivities. Antonio Gramsci’s writings, for instance, can be put forward with regards to his articulations around hegemony that unveiled the significance of consent rather than mere domination.



epochs, when the dialectics is “sublated” to generate new forms.<sup>84</sup> Human subjects, thus, are far from being determined solely by the (economic) structure, as Marx highlights, but encompass an intriguing relationality to the social, co-constituting and incessantly affecting each other.

What Marx initiated through his analysis of how economic relations (“the means of production”) are structurally implicated in the constitution of socialities and subjectivities, thus, informed many theoretical perspectives afterwards, all of which include this constitutive interplay between the self and the social in different degrees and forms. In what can be characterised as a post-Marxist literature, ranging from Althusser’s writings on ideology to Foucauldian theory on power and discourse, these theories account for the role played by the social in subject formation and oppose liberal-Cartesian conceptualisations of the subject as an essential, coherent, and autonomous being. Likewise, these theoretical trajectories claim that subjectivity is “not grounded in some transhistorical understanding of human nature but rather is overdetermined by economic, cultural, corporeal, and political processes and open to ethico-political reorientation.”<sup>85</sup> The importance of these interventions, I argue, might be traced to their articulation of subjectivities, as socio-historically embedded phenomena affected deeply by power, materialities, and ideology.

### *Productive Power*

As modernity brought forth structural alterations in which subjects, power, spaces, and socialities are re-figured, the Foucauldian perspective deals with the way power/discourse is implicated in subject formation, *assujétissement*, which

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<sup>84</sup> Sublation as a term was discussed particularly by Hegel to define dialectical interplay and its implications on social phenomena:

What is sublated does not thereby turn into nothing. [...] The German “*aufheben*” (“to sublate” in English) has a twofold meaning in the language: it means both “to keep,” “to ‘preserve,’” and “to cause to cease,” “to put an end to.”

Georg Wilhel Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, Translated and Edited by George Di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 2010, p. 81 – 82. Emphases are original. Ralph Palm, *Hegel’s Concept of Sublation: A Critical Interpretation*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Institute of Philosophy: Leuven, 2009, p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> Yahya M. Madra and Ceren Özselçuk, “Jouissance and Antagonism in the Forms of the Commune: A Critique of Biopolitical Subjectivity,” *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 22, No. 3, July 2010, p. 481 – 482.

entails both the emergence of subjectivity and its subjection to power.<sup>86</sup> Michel Foucault explores historical processes and (material) practices through which subjects are constituted in relation to transformations in moral-scientific or socio-political genealogies.<sup>87</sup> Through his analyses of the historical trajectories of psychiatric clinics, penal systems and the techniques of confinement, sexuality, and sciences, Foucault demonstrates how bodies and subjects are produced through material practices and disciplinary regulations that form a regime of truth.

Foucault aims “to discover how multiple bodies, forces, energies, matters, desires, thoughts, and so on are gradually, progressively, actually and materially constituted as subjects, or as the subject” by power through tracing it in the “field of application.”<sup>88</sup> He integrates genealogies and their transmutations across temporalities and traces material practices and shifts in discourses to account for the emergence of new modalities and practices through which selves are generated. Challenging Hobbesian and liberal articulations that conceive power as repressive,<sup>89</sup> Foucault highlights the transition from the sovereign “right to take life or let live” to “make live and let die,”<sup>90</sup> which conceives power as productive and capillary, permeating all socialities.<sup>91</sup> His articulation of power goes against state-centred perspectives, which “assume that power emanates from one or the other [...] central points in society.”<sup>92</sup> Power and the individual,

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<sup>86</sup> Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” p. 781.

<sup>87</sup> Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” p. 777 - 778.

Nancy Fraser, “Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions,” in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Polity: Cambridge, 1989, p. 19.

Rooted in Nietzsche’s theory of history, genealogy in Foucault’s writings refers to “the idea of an ‘analysis of descent’ or ‘emergence’. [However], [t]his should not be confused with a search for origins, which, in Foucault’s view, is a metaphysical project which attempts to capture the exact essence of things.” Lois McNay, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*, Continuum: New York, 1994, p. 89.

<sup>88</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> Kevin Jon Heller, “Power, Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault,” *SubStance*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Issue 79, 1996, p. 83.

<sup>90</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, Penguin: London, 2003, p. 241.

<sup>91</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, Pantheon Books: New York, 1978, p. 94 – 95.

Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 27 and 29.

<sup>92</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions,” in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Polity: Cambridge, 1989, p. 25.

then, should not be conceptualised as antagonistic categories since “the individual is in fact a power-effect.”<sup>93</sup> Foucault claims that alterations in *episteme*<sup>94</sup> radically re-define the truth,<sup>95</sup> reconfigure the modality of being, belonging, and remembering for subjects. The Foucauldian subject as a product of power, however, should not lead us to conceive a total enclosure of the self with no possibility of change. Significantly, Foucault indicates that “[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”<sup>96</sup> Rather than designating the subject as a passive product of operations of power, Foucault’s theory conceives change as a structural element of power relations.

Foucault’s analysis helps me to account for the ways in which subjectivities are generated through technologies and discourses of power in the context of Turkey. As a productive element of the social, for instance, I explore how the technologies and materialities of the state generate new modalities of subjectivity and discourses around being and belonging, as I discuss in the analytical chapters. Subjects, within this quest, emerge as products of this aggregate of state practices and the regime of truth. In this sense, I trace power in capillary and diffused forms, as in conspiracies, and situate socialities in a genealogy to detect continuity and discontinuities, as in the reconfiguration of Romeika as an uncanny element of local identity.

### *Interpellation and Ideology*

Foucault’s analyses however do not explain how subjectivities are hailed into such structuring operations of power/discourse and how subjectivities come to occupy their assigned positions. His genealogical accounts provide the reader

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<sup>93</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 30.

<sup>94</sup> In line with Foucauldian theory, *episteme* should be thought as “a fundamental code governing the way in which people understand, and act in, the world.” Mark Bevir, “Foucault, Power, and Institutions,” *Political Studies*, Vol. XLVII, 1999, p. 347.

<sup>95</sup> For Foucault, truth “is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it.” Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault’s Thought*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), Penguin Books: London, 1991, p. 74.

<sup>96</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 95.

with a structural-material analysis through which one can track discontinuities in the way subjects, socialities, and the world are comprehended; and yet they do not offer an account of psychic processes through which this *assujétissement* is experienced and enacted for subjects. At this point, I claim, Althusser's contributions would be helpful with regards to a focus on the way subjects are hailed into these subject positions as prescribed by power/discourse or ideology.

In his theorisation of ideology and subjectivity, Althusser explores mechanisms of subjectivation operative in all forms of ideology. Reversing conventional assumptions around the relationship between subjectivity and ideology, he asserts that subjects emerge through an address and recognition by an already existing symbolic:

[...] that ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or “transforms” the individual into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or *hailing*, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there!”<sup>97</sup>

Thus, subjects, for Althusser, come into being through this address within the field of signification since “to be addressed is not merely to be recognized for what one already is, but to have the very term conferred by which the recognition of existence becomes possible. One comes to “exist” by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other.”<sup>98</sup> In parallel with Foucault, Althusser then inverts the notion of the self as the autonomous initiator of acts and re-positions it as an effect of ideology.

This interpellative operation of ideology as the very site of subjectivation, then, is premised on “the ‘existence’ of a Unique and central Other Subject,” “the Subject *par excellence*,” “he who is through himself and for himself (‘I am that I am’), and he who interpellates the subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, the subject emerges through the ideological interpellation, reminding us of the Foucauldian “paradox of *subjectivation*: the

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<sup>97</sup> Louis Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation*, 1970, p. 1504. Emphasis is original.

<sup>98</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Routledge: New York and London, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>99</sup> Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, p. 1506.

very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent."<sup>100</sup> Thus, through this address, one is both embodied as a subject and subjected to the symbolic (structure) within and through which the interpellation takes place.<sup>101</sup>

Althusser's analysis, in this sense, allows me to account for intricate ways through which subjects are interpellated into positions by the ideology. Demonstrated in different forms, ranging from local men's convergence in the town centre to their incessant circulation of conspiracies, I trace how statist-nationalist ideology is reproduced in mundane and capillary forms to hail people as subjects of the state.

Yet, although Althusserian and Foucauldian articulations provide a (structural<sup>102</sup>) theory of how subjectivities are produced and altered in relation to the genealogy of materialities and technologies of power/discourse,<sup>103</sup> "we do not find an analysis of subjective investments that produce passionate attachments, providing the conditions [...] of the maintenance of" these

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<sup>100</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 17. Emphasis is original. Althusser articulates almost in the same manner on the "ambiguity of the term *subject*": "In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission." (*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, p. 1057)

Judith Butler, "Subjection, Resistance, Resignification," *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1997, p. 83.

<sup>101</sup> "The paradox of subjectivation (*assujétissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power." Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, Routledge: London and New York, 1993, p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> It should be stated that Foucault refused to be labeled as a structuralist. He said: "In France, certain half-witted 'commentators' persist in labeling me a 'structuralist'. I have been unable to get it into their tiny minds that I have used none of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterize structural analysis." (Michel Foucault, "Foreword to the English Edition," in *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge: London and New York, 1989, p. XV.) I use the term to refer not to the structuralist analysis in the footsteps of Saussure, Levi-Strauss, or Althusser but to a much general range of theorisations of the subject within an already existing socio-symbolic domain, epistemes and discourses in the case of Foucault. This might also be the reason why Foucault was probably considered a "structuralist" by some "witted commentators." Etienne Balibar, "Structuralism: A Destitution of the Subject?," *Differences*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Madra and Özselçuk, "Jouissance and Antagonism," p. 482.

structures.<sup>104</sup> How subjects come to occupy certain subject positions, how they do resist, or not, how they derive certain affective derivations or enjoyment from their engagements,<sup>105</sup> how their divergences in tactics in similar contexts can be comprehended, and how particularities of subjective positions affect subjects' alignments seem to be missing elements of this Foucauldian-Althusserian stream. "Ultimately, the self cannot be reduced to a discursively constituted subject," Henrietta Moore argues, "since desire, fantasy and unconscious motivation cannot be contained completely by discourse."<sup>106</sup> Moore's appeal to be alert to "desire, fantasy and unconscious motivation" should be considered alongside the multi-dimensionality and complexity of socialities and subjectivities that always exceed structural limitations, interpellations, and prescriptions. Moore pertinently argues, "human social and psychic life are shaped not just by the potentialities and positive effects of power and its circulations, but also by what escapes the determinations of power."<sup>107</sup>

### III. Psychoanalysis

Rather than trying to find out the exact limit where the social gives way to the individual, the interrelationship between the two emerges to be much more productive when it is considered as a co-constitution.<sup>108</sup> Even though discourses and technologies of power have drastic effects on their constitution, operation, and representation, subjectivities should be conceptualised "neither as an epiphenomenal effect of some underlying [...] structure nor as an ideological supplement that merely facilitates the smooth functioning of the [ideology]."<sup>109</sup> Rather, we should conceive both categories as co-constitutive registers that are simultaneously and reciprocally dependent on and implicated in each other.

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<sup>104</sup> Madra and Özselçuk, "Jouissance and Antagonism," p. 484.

<sup>105</sup> Madra and Özselçuk, "Jouissance and Antagonism," p. 486. Madra and Özselçuk, for instance, propose to approach subjectivity in terms of social fantasies that, by organising and channeling subjective libidinal investments, enable the constitution of a social link (in Althusserian terms, a "society effect" or, in psychoanalytic terms, "social transference") in the face of its central and constitutive derailment by the smear of *jouissance*. (p. 487.)

<sup>106</sup> Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology*, p. 18.

<sup>107</sup> Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology*, p. 45.

<sup>108</sup> Madra and Özselçuk, "Jouissance and Antagonism," p. 482.

Jason Read, "The Production of Subjectivity: From Transindividuality to the Commons," *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, Issue 70, 2010, p. 115.

<sup>109</sup> Madra and Özselçuk, "Jouissance and Antagonism," p. 481.

Inviting us to consider the potential presented by psychoanalysis to account for complexities around subjectivities and their relation to the social, Moore argues that there are always certain aspects of subjectivities that resist and transiently evade and amend regulatory technologies of power and ideology.<sup>110</sup> Ethnographic findings presented throughout this dissertation also compel us to consider the aspects of subjectivities that do not operate along the prescribed lines (of power/discourse) and cannot be explained solely through consolidation of or resistance to the imperatives of power or ideology. Thus, I believe it is an imperative to delve into another trajectory of subjectivation, namely psychoanalysis, through which this disregarded aspect can also be integrated into the analysis of subject formation.

Since its inauguration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, psychoanalysis influenced theories of subjectivity through its attempts to decipher dynamics of the constitution of the (sexed) subject. It helps us to comprehend other modalities of subjectivation that are impossible to accommodate within theories of the social since they generally disregard particularities of individual experiences. Psychoanalysis, then, might be useful with regards to its attempt to comprehend how subjectivities are formed and affected through their integration, in different forms, into the social/symbolic. As Frosh and Baraitser argue, in recent decades many scholarly analyses across social sciences and humanities have “turn[ed] to psychoanalysis as the discipline that might offer convincing explanations of how the ‘out-there’ gets ‘in-here’ and vice versa, especially through concepts such as projection, internalisation and identification.”<sup>111</sup>

To begin with, it can be said that psychoanalysis dismantles “the integrity of the ego [...] with its claims for the essential autonomy of the ‘self’.”<sup>112</sup> Rather, psychoanalytic articulations “reject the concomitant notion of the subject as the

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<sup>110</sup> Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology*, p. 45.

<sup>111</sup> Stephen Frosh and Lisa Baraitser, “Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies,” *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2008, p. 347.

<sup>112</sup> Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix, and Rob Pattman, “Taking a Stand: Using Psychoanalysis to Explore the Positioning of Subjects in Discourse,” *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 42, March 2003, p. 40.

Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1995, p. 36.

agency that ‘subjectivizes’, moulds and makes sense of the inert – senseless in-itself.”<sup>113</sup> For Lacanians, for instance, the subject emerges as the subject of the unconscious<sup>114</sup> and “is always (being) constituted in relation to the Other and, in particular, in relation to the desire of/for the Other.”<sup>115</sup> Thus, for psychoanalysis, consciousness is “one property of mental life, which may co-exist along with other properties,” as Freud claims, “or may be absent” altogether.<sup>116</sup> The unconscious, in return, observable through its disruptive symptoms, contains repressed ideas that “lie outside consciousness [and] cannot easily be controlled, but instead are the source of many behaviours and experiences.”<sup>117</sup> As Freud indicated, “what we call our ego behaves essentially passively in life [...] and [...] we are ‘lived’ by unknown and uncontrollable forces.”<sup>118</sup>

What is assumed to be thoroughly intimate and individual, then, is constituted only through the incorporation of the subject into language, “creating those enigmatic strands that link what is most central in the psyche to what is extrinsic to it.”<sup>119</sup> Subject is “barred, impossible, incomplete, divided”<sup>120</sup> and does entail “a becoming, an assumption”<sup>121</sup> rather than denoting a coherent and unified selfhood. It is “a subject in motion, a subject which is neither ever secure nor securable; a subject which arises in becoming without ever assuming to be as such.”<sup>122</sup> It is constituted “in and through the order of the symbolic, that is, the

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<sup>113</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Is There a Cause of the Subject?,” in *Supposing the Subject*, Joan Copjec (ed.), Verso: London and New York, 1994, p. 103.

<sup>114</sup> Joan Copjec, “Introduction,” in *Supposing the Subject*, Joan Copjec (ed.), Verso: London and New York, 1994, p. xi.

Unconscious in psychoanalysis refers to the “mental phenomena [that are] not available to awareness, but which nevertheless [have] a powerful influence on psychological life.” (Stephen Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis: An Introduction to Freudian and Post-Freudian Theory*, Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1999, p. 22) It is an analytic category we are “obliged to assume” and that is traced through its (disruptive) effects on the symbolic. (Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, The Hogarth: London, 1950, p. 9.)

<sup>115</sup> Calum Neill, *Lacanian Ethics and the Assumption of Subjectivity*, p. 16.

<sup>116</sup> Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 9.

<sup>117</sup> Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 24.

<sup>118</sup> Frosh, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 35.

<sup>119</sup> Stephen Frosh, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions*, Palgrave Macmillan: London and New York, 2013, p. 46.

<sup>120</sup> Neill, *Lacanian Ethics*, p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> Neill, *Lacanian Ethics*, p. 26.

<sup>122</sup> Neill, p. 29.



field of the Other,” and thus it “can never be in its own place; it has no place of its own.”<sup>123</sup>

As a result of its social constitution, the subject is always already alienated, displaced, and disjointed<sup>124</sup> since it is constituted through the “internalisation” of the external image.<sup>125</sup> As illustrated through Lacan’s mirror stage, this false assumption of a coherent selfhood “is created only in relation to something outside itself, coming into being as an ‘imaginary capture’, a moment of mistaken self-identification that is the beginning of a permanent tendency whereby the subject seeks imaginary wholeness to paper over conflict, lack and absence.”<sup>126</sup> “[R]ather than being the source from which communications flow,”<sup>127</sup> the self is produced only through the internalisation of what is external, highlighting the centrality of the social/symbolic in psychoanalytic theory. Thus, subjectivity emerges to be about how selves “consistently misrepresent and misrecognize themselves as coherent, self-produced and self-identical, [while] failing to recognize the otherness that is at the core of identity and self-other relations.”<sup>128</sup>

Here lies one of the most intriguing implications of psychoanalytic theory, through which the subject in its colloquial form, as the autonomous initiator of acts, is not only opposed but also replaced by misrecognition of the fragmented state of the self as a coherent whole.<sup>129</sup> In his account of hauntings, Stephen Frosh, highlights the significance of these spectres within the self and claims

each of us is inhabited by the spectre of otherness – by a set of “messages” that come from outside of us and that are the subject of a lifelong effort at decoding. We do not know exactly what others want of us, what desire they put into us, what we mean to them. We know only that something is passed between people, that we inherit others’ unconscious material and have to find our own ways of living with it.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Neill, p. 31.

<sup>124</sup> Neill, p. 31.

<sup>125</sup> Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, p. 36.

<sup>126</sup> Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix, and Rob Pattman, “Taking a Stand: Using Psychoanalysis to Explore the Positioning of Subjects in Discourse,” p. 40.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen Frosh et al., “Taking a Stand: Using Psychoanalysis to Explore the Positioning of Subjects in Discourse,” p. 40.

<sup>128</sup> Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology*, p. 56.

<sup>129</sup> Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, p. 36.

<sup>130</sup> Frosh, *Hauntings*, p. 11.

Psychoanalytic theory, then, attempts to tap into this uncharted territory in the constitution of subjectivities through which the prescribed symbolic functioning is always already subjected to malfunctioning and distortions. Subjects' entry into these symbolic structures, though, is never smooth and always produces remainders that incessantly disfigure its functioning.

Although psychoanalytic articulations have been deemed to be Eurocentric, individualistic,<sup>131</sup> and ahistorical,<sup>132</sup> they cannot solely be understood as universal statements crosscutting all socio-cultural and politico-historical differences. On the contrary, psychoanalysis claims "that the operations of the unconscious do not occur in a historical vacuum or beyond the reach of the structural factors of oppression," as also demonstrated by examples of psychoanalytically informed social theory and anthropological analyses.<sup>133</sup> As the materiality and the socialities surrounding subjects "may be taken to constitute a condition of possibility for the psychical operations in question," psychoanalytic theories cannot be confined, through their very constitution, to the limits of the inner dynamics of the individual self.<sup>134</sup> Derek Hook, for instance, highlights the centrality of the intersubjective in psychoanalytic theory and proposes an approach that structurally binds psychoanalytic assertions to the social within which these psychical enactments occur and are reflected.<sup>135</sup> Slavoj Žižek makes a similar claim in *Mapping Ideology* where he invites us to think the unconscious

in the strictly Freudian sense, as 'trans-individual'—that is, beyond the ideological opposition of 'individual' and 'collective' unconscious: the subject's unconscious is always grounded in a transferential relationship towards the Other; it is always 'external' with regard to

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<sup>131</sup> Frosh and Baraitser, "Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies," p. 347.

Lynne Layton, "What Divides the Subject?," p. 61.

<sup>132</sup> Derek Hook, "Postcolonial Psychoanalysis: Fanon, Desire, Fantasy and Libidinal Economy," in *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial: The Mind of Apartheid*, Routledge: Hove, 2011, p. 99.

<sup>133</sup> Derek Hook, "Postcolonial Psychoanalysis," p. 100.

Yael Navaro-Yashin, for instance, situates a psychoanalytically informed concept, cynicism, and relevant psychoanalytic theories in her analysis of Turkish society and state. Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2002.

<sup>134</sup> Hook, "Postcolonial Psychoanalysis," p. 100.

Layton, "What Divides the Subject?," p. 66.

<sup>135</sup> Hook, "Postcolonial Psychoanalysis," p. 100 – 101.

the subject's monadic existence.<sup>136</sup> Psychoanalysis, hence, should not be solely confined to an individualised endeavour. Its concepts and claims should also be conceived as tools to think through the encounters between the social and the self.

Psychoanalytically informed contributions into discussions of subjectivity, especially with regards to my analysis of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, allow us to comprehend different modalities of subjectivation better, as they integrate certain elements that do not harmoniously fit into schemes of appropriate subject positions with which locals align themselves. What is left out from these conscious alignments, though, does not necessarily disappear smoothly but takes many different forms that incessantly disrupt the normal functioning of the symbolic. Chapter VII, for instance, explores how locals' distinct socio-cultural experiences and Romeika cannot be accommodated within the official-nationalist historical narrative and hence return as an enchantment and haunting of the landscape.

This, however, should not be considered as a suggestion that psychoanalysis is solely of use when there is a mismatch between what is expected and what is observed. On the contrary, through highlighting for us the very centrality of such mismatches and disjoints for processes of subject formation, psychoanalytic theory, alongside others, provides another angle through which the multiplicity of differences in subjectivation processes can be explored. It constantly reminds us of the importance of being attentive to the way social (ideological or discursive) constitution fails. It also reminds us of the importance of paying due attention to the ways fantasies, traumas, affects, desires, and psychic attachments play a crucial role in the way subjects are formed and amended.

### I.III. Gender and Performativity

Psychoanalysis also allows us to account for the way gender is implicated in processes of subject formation. As liberal and post-Marxists theories accounted

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<sup>136</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, Verso: London, 1994, p. 33. Quoted by Derek Hook, "Postcolonial Psychoanalysis," p. 101.

for a male subject under the cloak of subject-in-general,<sup>137</sup> psychoanalysis produces a more focused theorisation of the sexed subject, bringing sexualisation to the very core of the subject formation. Lacanian psychoanalysis, for instance, postulates, “that sexual difference should always and everywhere be constructed in terms of a binary relation between two mutually exclusive categories”, “to ‘be’ or to ‘have’ phallus” corresponding respectively to feminine and masculine positions.<sup>138</sup>

Going beyond the binaries of this heterosexual matrix, Judith Butler highlights how hegemonic narratives around sexuality and gender produce the illusion of a “substantive” sexual foundation upon which gender is founded, “postulating ‘sex’ as ‘a cause’ of sexual experience, behaviour, and desire.”<sup>139</sup> Her theorisation of gender as performative highlights the foreclosure of other sexual experiences and desires, upon which this binary is founded.<sup>140</sup> As my research deals with local masculinities through corporeal, enunciative, and spatial operations, I believe Butler’s articulations are immensely helpful with regards to processes through which gendered subjects are constructed and enacted.

Butler also highlights the interrelation between what is assumed to be individual and the social-symbolic through highlighting how heteronormativity is inscribed in individual bodies. Following Lacanian psychoanalysis, Austinian speech act theory,<sup>141</sup> and Foucauldian understanding of power and resistance, Butler theorises performativity to trace heteronormativity and its implications in processes of subject formation. In her theorisation, “[a] performative act is one which brings into being or enacts that which it names, and so marks the

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<sup>137</sup> Monique Wittig, “The Point of View: Universal or Particular?” p. 64. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 25.

<sup>138</sup> Moore, *A Passion for Difference*, p. 45.

Introductions written by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose should be specifically noted here. “Introduction I and II” in *Feminine Sexuality*, Macmillan: London and Basingstoke, 1982.

<sup>139</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 31.

<sup>140</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 26 – 27.

<sup>141</sup> As a critically important distinction between Althusserian and Austinian conceptions, Butler highlights the fact that “where Austin assumes a subject who speaks, Althusser, in the scene in which the policeman hails the pedestrian, postulates a voice that brings that subject into being,” which she bridges by “offer[ing] an account of how the subject constituted through the address of the Other becomes then a subject capable of addressing others.” Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 25 – 26.

constitutive or productive power of discourse.”<sup>142</sup> In the footsteps of Foucault and Nietzsche, Butler’s theorisation goes against the Cartesian articulations and claims that subjects are products of these reiterations, rather than their source: “To the extent that a performative appears to ‘express’ a prior intention, a doer *behind* the deed, that prior agency is only legible *as the effect* of that utterance.”<sup>143</sup> Consequently, Butler opposes articulations of subjectivity as an agent that “is endowed with a will, a freedom, an intentionality [...] to which all humans *qua* humans have access.”<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, she asserts that the subject as an effect of power is embedded in the very processes he or she might resist: “[T]here is no opposition to power which is not itself part of the very workings of power, that agency is implicated in what it opposes, that ‘emancipation’ will never be the transcendence of power as such.”<sup>145</sup>

Through a reiterative process, performativity produces a material and corporeal normativity that needs to be reinforced incessantly via citation and “conceals the dependence of norms on the process of reiteration.”<sup>146</sup> Echoing the Althusserian reading of Blaise Pascal—“kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe,”<sup>147</sup>—Butler’s theory underlines this performative and corporeal element in the very construction of subjectivity, concealing the contingency of normativity while inscribing it in the body as natural and un-contingent.<sup>148</sup> As performativity is dependent on the very signification process, it always includes

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<sup>142</sup> Judith Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, Routledge: New York and London, 1995, p. 134.

<sup>143</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 134.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler quotes Nietzsche: “[T]here is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage: New York, 1969, p. 45. Quoted by, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

<sup>144</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 136.

<sup>145</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 137. For similar arguments, please see: Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1997, p. 17 and 84.

<sup>146</sup> Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, “Judith Butler—in Theory,” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, Susan M. St. Ville and Ellen Armour (eds.), Columbia University Press: New York, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 25.

<sup>148</sup> Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 5.

Saba Mahmood, “Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject,” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, p. 189. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, “Judith Butler—in Theory,” p. 5 and 7.

the possibility of failure and/or alteration, inherently embodying the potential for resistance and change:<sup>149</sup>

To be constituted by language is to be produced within a given network of power/discourse which is open to resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from within, and interruption and inadvertent convergences with other such networks.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, while producing the very subject it addresses, normativity appears to be contingent as there is always a possibility of “slippage and inaccuracy.”<sup>151</sup> In this way, the subjects are endowed with the possibility of resistance, yet this possibility of a radical re-configuration of the field of signification lies “within structures of power (rather than outside of it),” highlighting the premise that “there is no possibility of ‘undoing’ social norms that is independent of the ‘doing’ of” them.<sup>152</sup> It is at this very juncture, informed by the contingency and alterability of reiterative processes, Butler locates her articulations around agency: “If the subject is a reworking of the very discursive processes by which it is worked, then ‘agency’ is to be found in the possibilities of resignification opened up by discourse.”<sup>153</sup>

Butler’s theorisation underlines the utility of bringing post-Marxist perspectives together with psychoanalysis to account for processes of subjectivation in a more comprehensive manner that not only provides a concrete socio-historical and political context but also aims to decipher how these structural workings are accommodated in selves. In the footsteps of Butler, I explore how masculine subjectivities are constituted through daily commutes between villages and the

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<sup>149</sup> Amy Hollywood, “Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization,” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, p. 252.

<sup>150</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 135.

<sup>151</sup> Karen Trimble Alliaume, “Disturbingly Catholic: Thinking the Inordinate Body,” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, p. 103.

<sup>152</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 20 and 21.

With regards to gender identity, Butler indicates: “If the ground of gender identity is stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.” Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journals*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Dec 1998, p. 520.

<sup>153</sup> Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” p. 135. As for resignification, following Nietzschean articulations around sign chain and how it changes in time, Butler argues that the “temporal gap between usages produces the possibility of a reversal of signification, but also opens the way for an inauguration of signifying possibilities that exceed those to which the term has been previously bound.” (Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, p. 94.)

town centre, convergences in coffeehouses, and moves between Romeika and Turkish in the Valley in Chapter VIII.

#### I.IV. Psychosocial Paths

In the light of Butler's theorisation, it can be claimed that human subjectivity cannot simply be reduced to either a social determinism completely encapsulating the self or to an innate individualism that is perennial and essential for all humans with an unwavering autonomy from the social. Rather, I argue that both accounts should be bridged to grasp the complexity of subjectivities better, paving the way for a theory within "which we are always internally and externally imbricated with others."<sup>154</sup> This bridging, however, should be conducted in a peculiar manner in order to go beyond conventional articulations around the incommensurability of the social and the subject without succumbing to "the easy assumption of 'in here, out there,' subject and object, psychic and social."<sup>155</sup>

In her analysis of "the political experience of nationalist women"<sup>156</sup> in Northern Ireland, Begoña Aretxaga, highlights the need to combine structural theorisations of subjectivity with aspects that are socially or individually implicated in the unconscious, as well. Referring to both Foucauldian articulations on power/knowledge and Lacanian theorisation of the unconscious, Aretxaga links subjectivity to history "that is as much personal as collective, a history that includes not only conscious narratives but also forgotten episodes and hidden discourses."<sup>157</sup> This amalgam, for Aretxaga, "allows us to go [...] beyond what is consciously experienced by the individual to analyse the discourses, practices, and motivations that configure particular subjectivities."<sup>158</sup> This coming together, of the social and unconscious processes renders it possible for us to account for subjectivities in their complex positioning right at the

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<sup>154</sup> Layton, "What Divides the Subject?," p. 66.

<sup>155</sup> Frosh and Baraitser, "Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies," p. 350.

<sup>156</sup> Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1997, p. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, p. 18.

<sup>158</sup> Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence*, p. 18.

intersection of the social and unconscious.

Out of this concern, psychosocial studies emerges to produce a body of knowledge that aims to account for the critical issue of subjectivity through going beyond conventional conceptualisations of the subject and the social. Then, it can be claimed that “psychosocial studies [is] a critical approach interested in articulating a place of ‘suture’ between elements whose contribution to the production of the human subject is normally theorised separately.”<sup>159</sup> It brings these analytic categories together as co-constitutive conceptions that are thoroughly imbricated into one another. Through this specific articulation of the relationality between the self and the social, it traces “a type of subject which is both social and psychological, which is constituted in and through its social formations, yet is still granted agency and internality.”<sup>160</sup> One needs to explore all these registers to account for the complexity posed by intricacies of selves. Especially relevant with regards to how human subjects are formed and amended with regards to a multitude of factors, I believe, psychosocial perspectives, as critical engagements with both streams to give rise to an embedded sociality within the subject and vice versa, might be potentially productive through its ability to move across registers and to be able to accommodate what is missed out of these theories that focus on the structure.

## **II. Tension and Ambiguity: “Moving Back and Forth”**

Subjectivity, hence, emerges as a concept that is implicated in the constitutive tension between the individual and the social. As explored above, in addition to being “formed not within a single ideological line,”<sup>161</sup> subjectivities present a complicated interplay. Structural elements of socio-cultural life (political discourses, state policies, customs, kinship structures, geographies, collective memories, economy, and law) undoubtedly play a crucial part in the way people come to assume certain subject positions as they circumscribe a space of (im)possibilities. Yet, the meanings of being man, woman, citizen, Muslim,

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<sup>159</sup> Frosh and Baraitser, “Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies,” p. 348.

<sup>160</sup> Frosh and Baraitser, “Psychoanalysis and Psychosocial Studies,” p. 349.

<sup>161</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 186.



Turkish, *Trabzonlu* (Trabzonian), or *Kadahorlu* (of Kadahor) would still take particular forms and appeals within this general configuration. How these positions are approximated and the way they are occupied and comprehended depend on subjects' histories, their socio-cultural background, corporealities, genealogies, socialities, affective investments, desires, feelings, vulnerabilities, strengths, perceptions, and aspirations that incessantly amend and distort these structural constructions and messages.

Subjectivity, then, is generated out of constitutive tensions and interrelatedness, involving "how we put the diverse parts of our personal being together into some kind of whole"<sup>162</sup> in contingent, heterogeneous, fragmented, and various ways.<sup>163</sup> Subjectivities are fragmentally and transiently constituted as "consequences of actions, behaviour, or 'performativity' [rather] than as their source," highlighting their non-essential composition.<sup>164</sup> As subjectivity cannot be reduced to its biological determinants,<sup>165</sup> which Butler demonstrates in the case of gender and sex, it is an imperative to emphasise multiple, unfinished,<sup>166</sup> social, and evolving composition of subjectivities. Far from demonstrating coherent and unitary entities, they should be conceptualised as constellations of fractured, mobile, porous, and multiple aspects that are structurally prone to contradiction.<sup>167</sup> Especially relevant in the case of everyday experiences—as I trace through this dissertation—how this tension is implicated in the formation of subjectivities requires one to be attentive to socio-cultural structuring and how norms are internalised, accommodated, resisted, and amended by individuals and socialities. Rather than trying to dissolve this tension, though, it might be much more productive to pursue how actors are constituted and move

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<sup>162</sup> Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, p. 17.

<sup>163</sup> Arthur Kleinman and Erin Fitz-Henry, "The Experiential Basis of Subjectivity: How Individuals Change in the Context of Social Transformation," in *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2007, p. 53.

<sup>164</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, "Whole Bodies, Whole Persons? Cultural Studies, Psychoanalysis, and Biology," p. 353 – 354.

Read, "The Production of Subjectivity," p. 114.

<sup>165</sup> Arthur Kleinman and Erin Fitz-Henry, "The Experiential Basis of Subjectivity: How Individuals Change in the Context of Social Transformation," p. 53.

<sup>166</sup> Henrietta L. Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology: Gender Symbolism and Psychoanalysis*, Polity: Cambridge and Malden, 2007, p. 40 – 41.

<sup>167</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, "Whole Bodies, Whole Persons? Cultural Studies, Psychoanalysis, and Biology," in *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2007, p. 353 -354.

across these registers in response to both their psychosocial backgrounds and the socio-cultural contexts they are embedded in.

Similarly, in her discussion of subjectivity within social theory, Sherry B. Ortner highlights how subjectivity cannot simply be reduced to either of these aspects, but needs to be accounted through their co-existential and ever-changing implications. She uses subjectivity to refer to both “the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, [...] fear that animate acting subjects” and “the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke these modes of affect, thought, and so on.”<sup>168</sup> Consequently, she “move[s] back and forth between the examination of such cultural formations and the inner states of acting subjects”<sup>169</sup> to account for the complexity of processes of subject formation in various forms. My discussion of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon can be read as an illustration of this complexity where the subjects are always in excess of the prescribed subject positions, ranging from national(ist) affiliations to religious identities. Hence, throughout my analysis, I also “move back and forth” between these registers to capture the implications of both domains in order to avoid reducing subjectivation processes to a single domain.

Thus, as an agency that is embedded within a given symbolic structure, subjectivity should be conceived to emerge in correspondence to a number of structuring discourses through which its alignments and manoeuvres take form.<sup>170</sup> This embeddedness, though, should always be thought alongside the dynamism and fractured composition of subjectivities, as open-ended processes, through which different subject positions are produced and approximated. Such diversity and fragmentation with regards to subject positions, I argue, constitute another significant aspect of subjectivities: ambiguity. Devoid of essential coherence and unity, as I have touched upon more explicitly through psychoanalytic trajectories, it is not surprising to witness ambiguous

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<sup>168</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, “Subjectivity and Cultural Critique,” in *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*, Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2006, p. 107.

<sup>169</sup> Ortner, “Subjectivity and Cultural Critique,” p. 107.

<sup>170</sup> Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology*, p. 8 and 55.

subjectivities as they are “based on a series of subject positions, some conflicting or mutually contradictory, that are offered by different discourses.”<sup>171</sup>

Within the scope of this thesis, then, my objective is to decipher these different registers through which men of this small Valley community go through subjectivation processes in a number of ways, ranging from movements across the Valley to gatherings in coffeehouses to discuss national matters, from state enactment to engaging with the collective memory in a peculiar manner, or from moving across languages and accents to conspiratorial enunciations. In Chapter VII for instance, I illustrate that local engagements with the landscapes they dwell in give rise to a specific modality of subjectivity through which memory is corporeally articulated and situated in ways that could be accommodated only through a semi-illegal practice, that is, *definencilik* (treasure hunts). In parallel, through my discussion of masculine circulation of conspiracies and mundane enactments of the state in Chapter IX, I argue that local men produce a sovereign subjectivity that is characterised by potency and unwoundedness in tandem with the general tone of nationalist history. Although they are simply fragments of a much richer and more diverse range of subject positions, my aim remains to underline how these different registers operate to produce particular aspects of local communities.

As, such processes require one to attend to both social factors and how they are implicated in the self, throughout this dissertation I utilise premises from post-Marxist analyses, performativity, and psychoanalysis to account for the peculiar forms that subjectivities take in different aspects of everyday life. Foucauldian theory, for instance, is utilised to underline the changing regimes of truth by which modalities of being and belonging are rearticulated. Emergence of the national(ist) identity, I argue, constitutes an illustration of such transmutations through which Romeika can no longer be articulated in public. Relying on psychoanalysis, too, I discuss how this muted status in public might be related to the prevalence of treasure hunts as a haunting of places by unaccounted memories.

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<sup>171</sup> Moore, *A Passion for Difference*, p. 4.

Similarly, following Foucauldian articulations of power, I trace how modern governmental techniques and materialities generate a public sphere and citizenship out of which masculine subjectivities are constructed. In close connection, following an Althusserian path, I trace how men are hailed by a nationalist-modernist ideology to assume their positions as citizens in the public sphere. I explore, both in Chapter VIII and IX, how such interpellations promise equality, coherence, and potency to local men. Simultaneously, though, I also account for how gender is strictly related to a set of reiterations, in the footsteps of Butler, through my analysis of local men and how particular corporealities, spatialities, enunciations, and presences generate gender. My analysis of local religiosities, too, in Chapter X, follows a similar logic and explores how a convergence of productive technologies of power and local distinctions produce a particular religious reiteration that constructs local subjectivities.

In line with these theoretical articulations, subjectivity should be conceptualised as “both an empirical reality and an analytic category: the agonistic and practical activity of engaging identity and fate, patterned and felt in historically contingent settings and mediated by institutional processes and cultural forms.”<sup>172</sup> Their formation displays immense diversity and requires the analysis to be attentive to both its ongoing transformation and the way they are affected by their socio-cultural surroundings. Throughout this dissertation, they are represented in fragments that are always situational, incoherent, malfunctioning, ever changing, embedded in their psychosocial environment, and affected by a multiplicity of factors implicitly or explicitly.

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<sup>172</sup> Biehl et al., “Introduction,” p. 5.

## CHAPTER IV

### SITE, CONTEXT, AND HISTORY

#### I. Brief History: Trabzon and the Valley

Constricted in the narrow littoral, Trabzon has always been a significant place in the socio-political imaginary of Turkey. Although relatively small in size and economy, Trabzon still emerges as a hotspot, not only because of the recent incidents that profoundly shook and changed the Turkish political landscape, but also as a city where a rich history is still partially alive in the nationalist and conservative present.

Founded in antiquity, the city has since found itself a spot in succeeding imperial structures, gaining regional capital positions in Byzantine, Hellenic, and Ottoman bureaucracies. When Latin crusaders ransacked the Byzantine capital in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine royals fled to Trabzon to establish a Hellenic empire in the region, *Trabzon Rum İmparatorluğu* (Greek Empire of Trabzon).<sup>173</sup> Throughout this period, until its acquisition by Ottoman forces in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, the area had been under the Hellenic influence that affected socio-cultural, economic, and religious domains of subjects of the Empire, which stretched along the narrow littoral from Samsun in the west to Georgia in the east.<sup>174</sup> In time, numerous churches and monasteries were founded across the coast and along the valleys, spreading and consolidating Hellenic culture further.<sup>175</sup>

In the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman imperial forces consolidated their rule over the Western plains of Anatolia and the Balkans and gradually incorporated Trabzon. When Ottomans captured the city in 1461, a date that is still vividly in circulation as illustrated by the recent establishment of a new football team, *1461 Trabzon*

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<sup>173</sup> For further information about the province in antiquity and the Greek Empire of Trabzon, please see: William Miller, *Trebizond: The Last Greek Empire*, Adolf M. Hakkert: Amsterdam, 1968.

<sup>174</sup> Miller, *Trebizond*, p. 11.

<sup>175</sup> Miller, *Trebizond*, p. 6.

Rustem Shukurov, "Foreigners in the Empire of Trebizond (The Case of Orientals and Latins)," in *At the Crossroad of Empires: 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century Eastern Anatolia*, Deniz Beyazit (ed.), Paris, 2012, p. 71. Proceedings of the International Symposium, İstanbul May 4-6, 2007.

*Spor*, the city had a stark majority of Greek-speakers who professed Orthodox Christianity.<sup>176</sup> Following the conquest, in line with Ottoman bureaucratic procedures, measures were taken to increase the Turkish-Muslim presence and influence vis-à-vis the Greek-Christian majority.<sup>177</sup> To this end, (Turkish-)Muslim families from other parts of the Empire were resettled in the city and its vicinities.<sup>178</sup> The Empire also levied extra taxes for non-Muslim communities, acting as economic incentive/coercion for conversion into Islam.

Communities of the Valley, according to official records, emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century within this context.<sup>179</sup> Ottoman population records in 1486 indicate that the upper Valley had four settlements that continued up to this date: Ğorğoras, Holayısa, Paçan, and Zeno.<sup>180</sup> All of these settlements were, according to records, inhabited by Orthodox Christians with scant Muslim families. Over the course of centuries, the Valley took its current form with the emergence of many other settlements and the gradual Islamisation of the local population.

### *Islamisation of the Littoral*

In time, Trabzon in general acquired a Turkish-Muslim outlook through conversion and resettlements. Registers of the city depict a Muslim majority in the population around the late 16<sup>th</sup> century though non-Muslim communities of Greeks, Armenians, and Latin Catholics still constituted a sizable minority.<sup>181</sup> Moreover, according to Michael Meeker and Heath Lowry, even though religious affiliation witnessed a sweeping change in this first century of Ottoman rule, socio-cultural change seems to have been much slower: Even when the majority

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<sup>176</sup> Ayşe Hür, "Trabzon'un Etnik Tarihine Bir Bakış (A View on the Ethnic History of Trabzon)," in *Trabzon'u Anlamak [Comprehending Trabzon]*, Güven Bakırezer and Yücel Demirer (eds.), İstanbul: İletişim, 2010, p. 128.

<sup>177</sup> Hür, "Trabzon'un Etnik Tarihine Bir Bakış," p. 129.

<sup>178</sup> Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, p. 93.

<sup>179</sup> M. Hanefi Bostan, "Çaykara ve Dernekpazarı Tarihi," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Çaykara Dernekpazarı: Tarih Toplum Kültür*, Hasan Hüsnü Durgun, İsmail Sarı and Orhan Durgun (eds.), Çaykara ve Dernekpazarı Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği: İstanbul, 2005 p. 18 – 20.

<sup>180</sup> Bostan, "Çaykara ve Dernekpazarı Tarihi," p. 18

<sup>181</sup> For a detailed reading of the demographic transformation of the city in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, please see: Heath Lowry, *The Islamization and Turkification of the City of Trabzon (Trebizond): 1461 - 1583*, İstanbul, 2009.

of the population were Muslim, “the *lingua franca* of the city in this period was still almost certainly Greek.”<sup>182</sup>

Although the city centre witnessed these changes in a dramatic manner, Turkification and Islamisation of more isolated valley communities of the province were slower and gradual. As indicated by Meeker, an Islamic majority in the town of Of could only be established in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, “almost four hundred years after the rest of northeastern Anatolia.”<sup>183</sup> Possibly as an example of “social conversion,”<sup>184</sup> “the Bishopric of Of has disappeared from the episcopal lists of the Patriarchate of Constantinople [only] in 1645.”<sup>185</sup>

Intriguingly, this period also witnessed the emergence of Islamic seminaries in the Of Valley, which were subsequently recognised by and integrated into the imperial establishment in İstanbul.<sup>186</sup> These seminaries eventually evolved to be one of the key religious teaching centres of Anatolia. Through supplying scholars to work as imams in Anatolian villages, these academies also produced the widely known *Oflu Hoca* persona, which embodies an ambiguous and humorous imam, which I discuss in Chapter X.

Local narratives around Islamisation generally highlight the role played by three brothers from Maraş, *Maraşlı hocalar* (Hodjas of Maraş). These *hocas*, as it is recounted, were indeed originally from the Valley but had settled in the Maraş region long before one of them had an oracular dream, telling him to go to the Valley and spread Islam, which they did. Christianity in the Valley gradually lost its majority although churches and other (religious) structures remained erect till recently, as indicated by a number of ruins around. The mosque in Kadahor, for instance, had preserved its original church structure till 20 years ago when it was replaced by a new one.

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<sup>182</sup> Lowry, *The Islamization and Turkification of the City of Trabzon*, p. 164.

<sup>183</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 90.

<sup>184</sup> Evgeni Radushev, “The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans: Revisiting Bulliet’s Method on Religious Conversion,” *Oriental Archive*, Vol. 78, 2010, p. 364.

<sup>185</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 161.

<sup>186</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 161 – 165.

Although locals claim that the area had no Christian population by the 1920s, when the population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey ordered Orthodox Christians of the region to leave for Greece, they also mention visits and contacts with distinct kin from Greece, who share the same surname. How families fell apart through this religious difference and when such divergences were rigidified to decide on who was to stay and who was to leave are rarely recounted. When they are raised, it is mostly through speculation on the genealogy: Whether those in Greece converted to Christianity from Islam or locals converted to Islam from Christianity.

### *Preservation of Romeika*

Along this narrative of change, the most significant aspect of the Islamisation of these isolated valleys is their preservation of pre-Islamic linguistic features. Although, over time, Turkish has replaced other languages for new Muslim communities in Anatolia, these secluded rural communities clung to their (non-hegemonic) language, which has survived in these valley systems up until today. Similar to *Hemşin* (Hemshin) and *Laz* (Lazi) communities in Rize and Artvin, *Rumca* (Greek) has survived among communities of a number of valley systems, even when the whole area has been completely Islamicised. Vakfikebir-Tonya Valley system in the west, some sections of Maçka and Sürmene, and Of Valley system in the east can be counted as sites where local Greek variants reached up to this day in different levels of archaism and for different reasons.<sup>187</sup>

This archaic state should be noted as a distinguishing feature between languages used by Greek-speaking Muslim communities and now non-existent Greek-speaking Orthodox communities of Trabzon. The latter have generally been

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<sup>187</sup> Some of these settlements are home to Romeika speaking inhabitants due to the resettlement arrangements following a series of floods and landslides in Romeika-speaking valleys. Because of life-threatening geographical conditions, various villages have been offered resettlement in different parts of Turkey. In the Of Valley, too, there have been a number of instances, after a series of devastating floods in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, through which volunteering families have been able to resettle in Hatay (Kırıkhan), Van, Maçka, and Gökçeada. Especially the latest case is intriguing, as Gökçeada has a significant local Greek Orthodox population and Valley inhabitants address the island with its Greek name, Imbros, more frequently than its Turkish name, Gökçeada.



affected by the modernisation and standardisation attempts through education since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Orthodox Christian communities of the area, however, were forced to leave their homeland due to the *mübadele*<sup>188</sup> in 1923 - 1924, which implanted them in different parts of Greece where their distinct dialect has been studied by a number of scholars under the term *Pontiaka*.<sup>189</sup> In comparison to Christian communities, the language Muslim communities use, Romeika, experienced a different path since these communities have been relatively isolated from any major influence from the outside world for centuries, thanks to the steep mountain range.<sup>190</sup>

## II. Contemporary Site

Although historically a part of Of, Çaykara emerged as an administrative district (*ilçe*) in 1948. Stretching from Dernekpazarı in the north to the provincial borders between Trabzon and Bayburt in the south, Çaykara currently has 28 villages and a number of pastures that have been frequented by the local population for centuries. Officially listed population of the district is around 13.000, although the numbers are dwindling because of the migration to cities. This number, it should be noted, includes locals who generally live in cities and towns but are still registered in the area for different reasons. (See, Table I) A small proportion of the population, around 1000-1500, lives in the town centre while the rest inhabits in villages.

Years	Trabzon	Çaykara		Çaykara Total
		Men	Women	
1980				34,697
1990				21,660
2000				35,435
2007	740,569	6,907	7,111	14,018
2009	765,127	9,079	9,013	18,092
2011	757,353	7,065	7,189	14,254
2013	758,237	7,168	7,216	14,384
2015	768,417	6,321	6,553	12,874

Table I: Population statistics of the province of Trabzon in general and of Çaykara with the latter's depopulation. (Sources: TUIK, 2016)

<sup>188</sup> Population exchange agreement between Greek and Turkish governments in 1922 envisioned the displacement of Muslims from Greece and Orthodox Christians from Turkey.

<sup>189</sup> It is important to note that scholars have devised *Pontiaka* as a term and speakers normally would not call their language *Pontiaka*.

<sup>190</sup> Özkan, "The Pontic Greek," p. 133.

The Valley has witnessed a significant reduction in its population, as significant numbers of locals now live outside the valley due to resettlements and economic immigration. As the geography of the Valley causes many natural disasters, such as landslides and floods, the state encouraged, possibly due to staunch nationalism and Islamic conservatism of locals, their re-settlement to other parts of the country and beyond, including but not limited to Gökçeada among the local Greek Orthodox population, Cyprus to populate the island after 1974, Hatay Kırıkhan among a predominantly Arab-speaking community, and Van among Kurdish-speaking communities. The remaining population, which is the subject of this research, continues using Romeika in their day-to-day intra-communal interactions to a great extent, although in diverse levels of frequency and fluency as indicated above.

### *Settlements*

Communities in the Valley display transhumance as they seasonally move across three levels of the Valley geography: villages (*köy*), excursion/holiday spots (*köm* or *mezire*), and pastures (*yayla*). Dwelling in villages from September/October till May, communities (used to) move to *mezire* for around a month's stay and then head up to much higher pastures to spend the summer. The movement is reversed in September to take the family and the flock back down to villages to avoid the harsh winter conditions in elevated pastures.

The first level, the village, consists of settlements that are overall situated below the forest belt, with a few notable exceptions, as in Yente or Haldizen. Fields in villages are used to grow a narrow range of agricultural products, such as *karalahana* [kale], maize, squash, beans, potato, peas and so forth. These fields are already quite small in the surface area and located at steep mountain slopes, which are prone to floods and landslides in addition to usual erosion of soil through wind and frequent torrential precipitation. Every other year, locals carry the eroded soil from the bottom of the slope back up to preserve the field, called *toprak kaldırma* [lifting the soil], which otherwise would have disappeared long

ago. Also aggravated by the lack of sunlight, which leaves tomatoes mostly green, agricultural endeavours in the Valley are quite labourious and not so fruitful.

Houses are generally scattered across a mountain slope with notable distance between groups of settlements, the proximity of which generally, but not always, indicates (paternal) kinship ties. Settlements are occasionally clustered around a rare plain field, as in Şinek and Şerah, and accessed traditionally by a path and by a road in recent decades. For this reason, these village spaces were, until recently, thoroughly secluded since they were extremely hard to reach. Unless accompanied by a local, outsiders' presence in these village spaces were both improbable and needed to be accounted for. As secluded places that outsiders cannot wander into, villages and clusters of houses emerge to be private spaces within which one's presence should be substantiated through genealogy or hospitality.

The second level, *kom* or *mezire*, is situated at the upper limits of the forest line where grasslands begin. Each village, and occasionally some neighbourhoods, has a particular *mezire* that consists of small and simpler houses that the family resides in during their stay in spring and fall. *Mezires* are generally a few hours of walking distance from villages and lost their significance overall, as the seasonal movement is currently more or less limited to trips between villages and pastures. Yet, they still preserve their appeal as sites to visit since they offer beautiful scenery, as they are located almost at the top of Valley walls. Traditionally accessed via pathways through old forests, they are generally reached via more conventional roads these days since the old forest trails are covered by the forest or dangerous due to wildlife, e.g. bears.

The third level of settlements, the pastures, cover the immense plain on top of the mountain range that lies to the south of the Valley. These settlements can be quite far from villages, requiring families to walk up to a day across forest trails to reach them. During the olden days, there were several inns (*han*) at the higher sections of the Valley, as in Hadi, where communities coming from villages in the lower Valley used to sleep over to continue their journey the following day.

Families move up to pastures after spring, in late May or early June, when it is warm enough, and they descend back around late August or early September once it gets cold. These movements, though, are less timely nowadays since pastures are both easily reachable via roads and locals frequent between villages and pastures more often than not they did in the past.

Every village, and some neighbourhoods/families, have historically recognised pastures to their name, which are open to use only by these specifically designated communities. Even though being legally public lands, except for one pasture of Şur, they are specifically handled and recognised as exclusively assigned to village communities. Locals adore their own pastures and never miss an opportunity to visit them. These visits are used to enjoy the scenery and to reconnect with neighbours and relatives.

The aforementioned forests covering the Valley are said to be quite old sheltering many wild animals such as brown bears, boars, wolves, jackals, and deers. Communities across the Valley respectfully preserve their forests, which are in some cases informally owned by families who display a genuine concern toward them, which is not so common in the Turkish countryside. These forests grow and expand easily thanks to the rainy and humid climate of the littoral. In cases of neglect, forests claim many *mezires* and houses, cover up trails and fields, growing into designated village spaces. They also shelter wild animals, such as boars, that frequently destroy fields and beehives.

The contemporary Valley is inhabited by an overall elderly population in the Turkish context, which can be characterised as those who are fifty and older. As contemporary Valley life does not appeal to the younger generation, they generally leave the area for bigger cities to study or work. Only after their retirements do older men and women come back to the Valley where they can safely rely on their pensions.

Even though the area seems to have a limited amount of resources to sustain the local population through agriculture, this geographical limitation seems to have

pushed locals to search for other means, e.g. commerce, bureaucracy, scholarship. Communities have historically been mobile and engaged in activities that took them well beyond the limits of Kadahor. They have engaged in crafts, such as tinsmithery or carpentry, or sold merchandise across villages in Anatolia in addition to working as imams. Locals also have a reputation of academic and entrepreneurial success across the province and can be said to have a relatively high level of wealth for a small rural settlement. Reflecting this relatively high standard of income, one can note the difference between wages and prices, which are higher in Kadahor than in other parts of Trabzon—which might also be related to the steady cash flow into the Valley through recently popularised green tourism among Arab tourists.

With regards to employment, one can count a number of economic engagements. Bureaucracy, especially for those in the Valley, constitutes one of the primary attractions. Many locals have relatives and family members in bureaucratic cadres, ranging from high-level officials (such as governors, district governors, ministerial undersecretaries, or rectors) to clerks in banks or public offices.<sup>191</sup> Small shops are also prevalent—supermarkets, coffeehouses, restaurants, hardware shops being the most common forms. Tourism also emerges as another form of engagement. Local craftsmanship can also be counted as a domain that includes drivers, barbers, tailors, tradesmen, mechanics, electricians, blacksmiths, carpenters.

Contemporary Valley displays a socially conservative and nationalist outlook that is reflected not only in locals' narratives about the community but also in the way social life is organised along with local political preferences. Various communities across the Valley construct a mosque in their neighbourhoods, even though they remain empty during the year. Alcohol sale and consumption is also inconspicuous with only two shops selling alcoholic beverages in the town centre. One of these shops remains completely discreet, even though being situated right at the centre, and immensely hard for an outsider to notice. The other one is situated a bit outside the centre, by the main road leading to the

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<sup>191</sup> Çelik, *Trabzon Çaykara Halk Kültürü*, p. 7.

touristic area higher up in the Valley. Even in this touristic section of the Valley with numerous hotels and restaurants, alcohol is served only in one establishment. Communities in the Valley overwhelmingly vote for centre-right or nationalist-right parties, ranging from True Path Party and Motherland Party of the 1980s and 90s to Justice and Development Party and Nationalist Movement Party after 2002, when the political spectrum of the country was altered by the dominance of centre-right JDP. (Please see Table II)

Years	JDP	RPP	NMP	DP	TPP	MP
1991	-	-	-	7.6	16.1	31.3
1995	-	5.1	7.8	6	17.5	21.5
1999	-	3.8	25.2	10.5	11.4	16.6
2002	53.9	10.9	6.3	1.4	6	3.6
2007	66.9	8.9	9.6	-	-	-
2011	69.8	11.6	10.3	0.1	0.2	-
2015	78.4	10	7.4	-	-	-

Table II: Distribution of votes in parliamentary elections since 1991. All political parties marked with light blue is centre-right, while RPP, marked with red, can be considered centre(-left). The distribution clearly displays a strong centre-right political alignment and a quite weak centrist tendency.<sup>192</sup>

### III. Citizenship and Nationalism in the Turkish Context: Trajectories

Since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, the Turkish state has embarked on a radical modernisation project to produce a homogenous nation.<sup>193</sup> The new regime embraced a radically modernist agenda, changing the whole socio-cultural and politico-economic field to create a “national state for Turks.”<sup>194</sup> After abolishing both the monarchy and caliphate in 1922 and 1924 respectively, various structural reforms were implemented to re-orient the country in line

<sup>192</sup> Political Parties: JDP, Justice and Development Party (associated with President Erdoğan, conservative-nationalist); RPP, Republican People’s Party (associated with Kemalism, secularist-nationalist); NMP, Nationalist Movement Party (nationalist); DP, Democrat Party (now defunct, economically liberal, socially conservative); TPP, True Path Party (now defunct, nationalist with liberal economic policy); MP, Motherland Party (now defunct, nationalist and economically liberal). *General Election of Representatives: Province and District Results 2011, 2007, 2002, 1999, 1995, 1991*, Turkish Statistical Institute: Ankara, 2012, p. 126.

<sup>193</sup> Reşat Kasaba, “Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 1997, p. 17. Saktanber, *Living Islam*, p. 121.

<sup>194</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2000, p. 1. For a detailed overview of the reform process in early Republican period, please see: Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, I. B. Tauris: New York and London, 2004 [1993]. Especially Chapters 10 – 12.

with a modernist worldview.<sup>195</sup> Affected deeply by experiences of the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the Republican administration crafted a frame of citizenship within which all socio-cultural distinctions had to be “bracketed” for equality as Turkish citizens.<sup>196</sup> This strong adherence to a “new”<sup>197</sup> and secular public structure reflects a strong Republican desire to overcome both the perceived fragility of the faith-based societal organisation of the Empire<sup>198</sup> and the backwardness that religion in general represents for the military-bureaucratic cadres of the Republic adhering to the Enlightenment.<sup>199</sup>

Although the Republic was influenced by the French *laïcité*,<sup>200</sup> it also heavily relied on a modernist interpretation of the Turkish-Islamic heritage.<sup>201</sup> The Republican project, thus, had a “paradoxical nature” as it attempted to integrate both French assimilationist universalism and German culture-based ethnicism.<sup>202</sup> Straight from the start, the Turkish-Sunni aspect grew to be the

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<sup>195</sup> Michael E. Meeker, “Once There was, Once There wasn’t: National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, p. 168.

<sup>196</sup> Saktanber, *Living Islam*, p. 134.

Although egalitarian in theory, this articulation of Turkishness through a legal definition assumed discrepancy between citizenship and ethnicity, as in the case of minorities. Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?*, Routledge: London and New York, 2006, p. 15.

Şerif Mardin, “Projects as Methodology: Some Thoughts on Modern Turkish Social Science,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, p. 71.

Seyla Benhabib, “Turkey’s Constitutional Zigzags,” *Dissent*, Vol. 56, No. 1, Winter 2009, p. 25.

<sup>197</sup> Meltem Ahıska, “Arşiv Korkusu ve Karakaplı Nizami Bey: Türkiye’de Tarih, Hafıza ve İktidar,” in *Türkiye’de İktidarı Yeniden Düşünmek*, K. Murat Güney (ed.), Varlık: İstanbul, 2008, p. 2.

<sup>198</sup> As indicated by Davison, “the Ottoman-Turkish concept for nation, *millet*, had previously indicated one’s religious community affiliation in Ottoman social and political life [...] If one were asked to what millet he or she belonged, one would say Muslim, Christian, or Jew (and so on). After the rise of nationalism, the Turkists would have another answer: ‘I am a Turk.’” Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1998, p. 115.

<sup>199</sup> Kasaba, “Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities,” p. 17.

<sup>200</sup> Murat Akan, “Laïcité and Multiculturalism: The Stasi Report in Context,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 60 – 2, 2009, p. 238.

Şerif Mardin, “European Culture and the Development of Modern Turkey,” in *Turkey and the European Community*, Ahmet Evin and Geoffrey Denton Jeske (eds.), Budrich: Opladen, 1990, p. 21. Quoted by Ayşe Kadioğlu, “The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity,” in *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, Sylvia Kedourie (ed.), Frank Cass: London and Portland, 1998, p. 188.

Şule Toktaş, “Citizenship and Minorities: A Historical Overview of Turkey’s Jewish Minority,” p. 399.

<sup>201</sup> Mesut Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” p. 55.

Nilüfer Göle, “The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 10, 1997, p. 64 – 65. Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2009, p. 38.

<sup>202</sup> Kadioğlu, “Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey,” p. 5.

sole basis upon which the public performance could be conducted. This structurally central paradox has inherently produced its antagonists, as in the case of Kurds, and started to dismantle when a convergence of global and local dynamics have rendered its reproductive means—namely the discriminatory juridico-political structure and a control over oppressive state apparatuses—unsustainable since the 1980s.

During the early phases of nation building, in order to homogenise the population socio-culturally and to consolidate the Turkishness of the country, Turkish was designated as the sole official language, a status that has been enshrined in successive constitutions since 1924. With the *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş* (Citizen[s], Speak [in] Turkish) campaign of 1928, Turkish was also marked as the sole means of communication in public, targeting mainly non-Muslim communities who traditionally spoke Ladino, French, Greek, or Armenian.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, Turkish was also endorsed as the medium of instruction in schools, aiming at establishing a cultural hegemony over Muslim minorities, such as Kurds. These policies also established Turkish as the sole and exclusive means of public signification, performance, interaction, and representation.<sup>204</sup>

To consolidate a sense of Turkishness upon the country, a new modality of being and belonging was constructed. In contrast to the Ottoman plurality and faith-centred social structure,<sup>205</sup> the Republic envisioned a *laik* (*laic*, secular) society with a uniform public with national affiliations. Thus, the public sphere was constructed as a domain that is devoid of all socio-cultural, religious, or communal/individual distinctions.<sup>206</sup> Within this structure of citizenship and identity, the Turkish Republican project produced a strong separation between the public and the private, secluding non-conforming socio-cultural elements into the latter while the former is designated as the realm where all subjects

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<sup>203</sup> Toktaş, "Citizenship and Minorities," p. 400.

Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism*, p. 25.

<sup>204</sup> "Those who speak in a language other than Turkish outside their home or in public places shall be considered as traitors to Turkish national unity. " "Kanunsuz Olmaz! [Not without the Law!]," *Cumhuriyet*, December 22, 1936.

<sup>205</sup> Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914-1923*, Routledge: London and New York, 2001, p. 29.

<sup>206</sup> Göle, "The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere," p. 64.



“bracket”<sup>207</sup> their differences in favour of this abstract equality on the basis of Turkish citizenship.

*Inclusion and Exclusion: Paths to Turkishness*

As Üngör highlights, “the new memory of the nation did not permit cracks, nuances, shades, or any difference for that matter. Like the new identity, it was total, absolute, and unitary.”<sup>208</sup> In the face of homogenising state policies, “nonconforming” segments of Turkish society had a number of paths, depending on their socio-cultural and religious affiliations. Even though secularism was important for the Republic, the possibility of a complete assimilation relied heavily on religion, producing systemic discrimination towards non-Muslim communities.<sup>209</sup> Consequently, non-Muslim communities, even though legally equal to Muslim nationals, were forced either to leave the country or to keep a low profile with their distinctions secluded into the private realm.<sup>210</sup> In parallel, Muslim communities with socio-cultural distinctions also had two paths to follow: assimilation or resistance. The former path was pursued by the Lazi, and a significant section of Alevis along with others including the Romeika-speaking communities, Circassians, Georgians, some Kurdish groups, Arabs, *Balkan muhacirleri* [immigrants from the Balkans]. This integration into Turkishness occurred through either relinquishing socio-cultural and religious distinctions or secluding these distinctions into the private realm.<sup>211</sup> The gradual disappearance of various languages, dialects, and customs can be understood through this strict assimilationist policy of the Republic. Kurds undertook the latter path, envisioning a resistance to the state, for a number of reasons that fall outside the confines of this thesis. Challenging the limits of citizenship and the public sphere,

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<sup>207</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, No. 25/26, 1990, p. 59.

<sup>208</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2011, p. 224.

<sup>209</sup> Yeğen, “Citizenship and Ethnicity in Turkey,” p. 58.

<sup>210</sup> Marcy Brink-Danan, *Jewish Life in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2012, p. 60, 88, and 92.

<sup>211</sup> Kadioğlu, “Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey,” p. 3.

Kurdish movements' demands produced a decades-long unrest, recurring continuously up to our day.<sup>212</sup>

### *Post-1980s: Rendering Distinctions Visible*

In the post-1980 period, this strict imposition of a uniform public sphere has been relaxed because of a number of factors. To begin with, it should be stated that, with the intensification of globalisation, nation-states' ability to control and hegemonise their socio-political space has been eroded significantly,<sup>213</sup> undermining national identities as the ultimate references of social belonging and producing a new public sphere within which diverse sets of ethno-religious affiliations could become visible.<sup>214</sup> This erosion of the hegemony of national(ist) affiliation also was the result of a new discourse, which reconfigured socio-cultural and ethno-religious distinctions as richness, in line with "the positive valuation of difference."<sup>215</sup> Emerging both as a reaction to assimilationist and oppressive policies and as a result of the void produced by the decline in the capabilities of nation-states, these interventions triggered a transition towards a more pluralist rhetoric.<sup>216</sup>

Intensifying further in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, legal restrictions on Kurdish community and culture were relaxed, as in the case of the introduction of Kurdish education in schools or decriminalisation of Kurdish in public, and eventually Kurdish socio-political rights were widely discussed. In 2010, the government initiated a reconciliatory process, named *Demokratik Açılım* (Democratic Initiative), with Kurdish groups to resolve the decades-old conflict through negotiations. To galvanise popular support for the process, a group of

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<sup>212</sup> Ahmet İçduygu, Yılmaz Çolak, and Nalan Soyarı, "What is the Matter with Citizenship? A Turkish Debate," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1999, p. 197 – 198.

<sup>213</sup> Kadioğlu, "Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey," p. 3.

<sup>214</sup> Ferhat Kentel, Meltem Ahıska, and Fırat Genç, "*Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü: Demokratikleşme Sürecinde Parçalayan Milliyetçilik(ler)*, TESEV: İstanbul, 2009, p. 61.

<sup>215</sup> E. Schocket, "The Veil and the Vision: Seeing Class in American Literature," Paper presented at *Marxism 2000 Conference*, 21-24 September, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2000, p. 4.

Quoted by, Ceren Özselçuk, "Mourning, Melancholy, and the Politics of Class Transformation," *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2006 p. 228.

Kentel, Ahıska, and Genç, "*Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü*." p. 66.

Akan, "Laïcité and Multiculturalism," p. 240.

<sup>216</sup> Kadioğlu, "Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey," p. 2 – 3.

notables, *Akil İnsanlar Heyeti* (Wise People Commission), consulted with people in all regions of the country.

The same period also witnessed an unprecedented visibility for the Armenian community, the only case of a vocally active non-Muslim minority. Beginning with the *Agos* Newspaper and Hrant Dink, the visibility of the Armenian community was further enhanced by discussions around the ancestry of Sabiha Gökçen, the adopted daughter of Atatürk, and Fethiye Çetin's book, *Anneannem*, which was published in 2004. In 2005, three universities in İstanbul organised a conference to discuss the genocide. The government also initiated diplomatic liaison with Armenia and signed Protocols in 2009 to open the border and enhance cooperation between countries. Especially in the aftermath of the assassination of Hrant Dink, many prominent commentators and political figures emerged from the community, e.g. Etyen Mahçupyan, Markar Esayan, Garo Palyan, Selina Doğan, and Hayko Bağdat.

In addition to these unprecedented steps with regards to the status of Kurdish and Armenian heritages, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan apologised in 2011 for the Dersim Massacre. In the last two years, the government has also issued declarations of condolence for the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The government also began and completed plans to memorialise the sites of past atrocities, as in the case of Madımak Hotel and the infamous prisons of Diyarbakır and Ulucanlar.

Similarly, a peaceful and cooperative epoch in Greco-Turkish relations was witnessed with many immigrants from the Balkans and Greece visiting their ancestral villages. Socio-culturally, too, such contacts gave rise to new cultural forms. Many musicians produced songs about the shared heritage and culture, as in joint concerts by Zülfü Livaneli and Maria Farandouri, and TV series dealing with Greek-Turkish couples/lovers, as in *Yabancı Damat* (The Foreign Groom), became quite popular in both countries.

## *Backlash*

In the middle of this radical restructuring of the public sphere and the emergence of identity politics and memory, we have also witnessed a reactionary Turkish nationalism that countered the implications of this transformation by insisting on the continuation of a uniform public sphere and citizenship structure.<sup>217</sup> In clear contrast to the resurgence of identity and memory, this reactionary nationalism generally did not utilise memory and identity politics. Communities who also happen to have distinct heritages in the eastern Black Sea Region (Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, Hemshinlis of Rize, and the Laz of Rize and Artvin), for instance, have been strictly aligning with Turkish nationalist groups to oppose Kurdish and Armenian demands for recognition and socio-cultural and political rights. Rather than raising similar demands, these communities upheld a uniform public sphere and Turkishness as the sole form of public representation.

## **IV. Memory in the Turkish Context: How to Relate to the Past?**

*“The new Turkey has absolutely no relation with the old Turkey.”<sup>218</sup>*

In line with Kemalist ideals around progress and homogeneity, the policy to endorse the use of Turkish as the sole official language in public should also be understood as an amnesiac turn<sup>219</sup> that radically re-constructs both identity and citizenship in its quest for modernity. In line with this objective, Turkish language reform, as the crystallisation of “linguistic engineering,” radically altered the Turkish language by eliminating words borrowed from other languages, especially from Arabic and Persian, while replacing them either with words from old Turkic languages or inventing completely new ones.<sup>220</sup> In

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<sup>217</sup> Tanıl Bora, “Nationalist Discourses in Turkey,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 102, No. 2/3, 2003, p. 434 – 435.

<sup>218</sup> *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, N. Arsan (ed.), Türk Tarih Kurumu: Ankara, Vol. III, 1959 – 1964, p. 50 – 51. Quoted by Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 224.

<sup>219</sup> Esra Özyürek. “Introduction: The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey,” in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, Esra Özyürek (ed.), Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>220</sup> Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*, Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 1999, p. 1 – 2.

addition, the Latin alphabet replaced the Ottoman-Arabic script, producing a new form through which cultural production is conducted. Thus, in addition to the imposition of Turkish upon non-Turkish communities, the language reform also produced a significant rupture through which both the form and the content of the cultural production were radically restructured for both hegemonic and non-hegemonic groups.<sup>221</sup> This endorsement of (new) Turkish, *Çağdaş Türkiye Türkçesi* (Modern Turkish of Turkey), produced a new sense that is ultimately based on the negation of old modes of being and belonging. Sweeping away all differences in favour of homogeneity, the Republican policy to encourage the use of Turkish radically changed the daily lives and perceptions of the considerable sections of society.

Introducing a thoroughly *new* mode of being and belonging to construct a nation<sup>222</sup> over the remnants of a multi-religious and multi-ethnic Empire, these reforms aimed at breaking the continuity in an attempt to construct a new temporality<sup>223</sup> (as in the negation of the Ottoman past in favour of the new Republican present), a new space (as crystallised in the new capital Ankara), and subjectivity (as in the example of the unveiled modern woman as citizen). This claim of a historical rupture and newness, especially from its immediate predecessors,<sup>224</sup> can be considered as a conscious withdrawal from the ruins of a defunct and defeated past—a loss that was conceived to be a direct result of the very way the Empire was organised around religious diversity. This rejection of the affiliation with the ruins of the immediate past, then, constitutes one of the pillars upon which the Republican ideology is constructed. Immediate past of the Republic, in this sense, emerges as a memory which should be negated and non-remembered for the sake of a fresh start.

Emphasis on the Turkic history of Central Asia and relevant myths around an interrupted Turkish sovereign tradition, such as the sixteen stars of the

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<sup>221</sup> Özyürek. "Introduction," p. 5.

<sup>222</sup> Michael Lambek and Paul Antze, "Introduction: Forecasting Memory," in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (eds.), Routledge: New York and London, 1996, p. XX – XXI.

<sup>223</sup> Özyürek. "Introduction," p. 5.

<sup>224</sup> Özyürek. "Introduction," p. 2 – 3, 4.  
Kasaba, "Kemalist Certainties," p. 15.

presidential insigne, should be read in this regard as auxiliary sources of legitimation for Turkish nationalism, re-affirming the constitutive absence for the Republic and leaping over this immediate void to reach for other sources of historicity. It is illustrative that while the educational curriculum highlights Ottoman history until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the narrative gets quite vague and sporadic for later periods, indicating a problematic relation with its immediate past.

This peculiar mode of remembrance, though, does not seem to be limited to the way history is taught. While discussing the implications of the absence of a proper archival tradition and organisation in modern Turkey, Meltem Ahıska touches upon a striking discontinuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic: “National historians usually share the commonsensical knowledge that Turkish *national* archives do not really provide rich sources for historiography.”<sup>225</sup> As Ahıska pertinently highlighted through her observation, archives in Turkey are generally not kept properly and are left in a form of deliberate neglect and destruction through which the past is always subjected to ambiguity and oblivion. Producing an empty archival space for the Republican period in clear contrast to voluminous and detailed archives of the Empire, traces of the Republican past are destroyed regularly—which indicates a particular pattern of remembrance for contemporary Turkey.

Yet, rather than simply destroying the past and creating a substantial void, this absence produces a specific form of historicity and mode of remembrance, reconfiguring what to remember and what to render un-rememberable. Ümit Üngör, for instance, talks about how the Republic adapted “policies of effacing physical traces of Armenian existence” in the East for the total elimination of “the Other’s memory.”<sup>226</sup> Yet, I argue that this erasure does not solely occur with regards to “others” of Turkishness, but it also relates to the way the past is remembered. Ahıska directs our attention to the central role played by this absence in contemporary socio-political structure in Turkey:

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<sup>225</sup> Meltem Ahıska, “Occidentalism and Registers of Truth: The Politics of Archives in Turkey,” *New Perspectives in Turkey*, Vol. 34, 2006, p. 14. Emphasis is original.

<sup>226</sup> Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 219 – 220.

[...] the ambiguous void with regards to the Republican archives might also be read as a fragment that sheds light on the history of extermination and destruction of Ottoman archives. For the Republican period, in other words, problems of how to inherit the Ottoman history, what to appropriate and what not to appropriate seem to form the *constitutive limits* of the national. The objective of preserving secrets, by bringing in the continuity of destruction, constitutes the logic of the sovereign power that seizes today.<sup>227</sup>

It appears that the contemporary Turkish socio-political structure includes a constitutive void of remembrance, structurally left out of the realm of recollection and not integrated into the present. Non-remembrance, in this sense, emerges to be one of the key features of Turkishness.

The case of continuous archival destruction in Turkey, however, does not appear odd when one considers the striking absence of narratives about the past sufferings Turkish communities went through: *Mübadele*, continuous wars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a general lack of interest around family genealogies, disasters (most remarkably the 1999 Earthquake), economic crises, the Cyprus War, military service casualties (*şehitler*), immigrants from the Balkans, and internal conflicts as in the armed conflict between the PKK and Turkish armed forces and subsequent displacements. Almost none of these important events could find a place in Turkish narratives even though they radically altered the society, economy, and politics. Moreover, even when the impacts of these events are clearly visible in daily life—e.g. loss of human life to dislocation and systemic violence—a pervasive and determined neglect seems to be operative, incessantly hindering both their representation in public arena and the integration of these experiences into narratives and identity. Even when such memories are embedded in materialities that are right in the middle of life, just like the ruins or other buildings in cities, they are generally rendered invisible and neglected.

Even though many tragic stories emerged about the suffering of Armenian communities at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>228</sup> or the oppression of Kurdish communities since the early years of the Republic, general Turkish commitment

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<sup>227</sup> Ahıska, "Arşiv Korkusu," p. 5. Emphases are original. My translation.

<sup>228</sup> Cihan Tuğal, "Memories of Violence, Memoirs of Nation," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, Esra Özyürek (ed.), Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 2007, p. 148.

to the uniformity of the public space, citizenship, and subjectivities were not radically altered. The primary reaction of the Turkish public to these memories could generally be characterised as a deliberate neglect through which (Turkish) subjects not only refused to reconcile with the suffering of these subaltern groups but also *dismissed* the significance of memory/past in the constitution of the subject. Recently, after the bloody coup attempt of July 2016, a businessman, for instance, asserted, with regards to the incidents of July 15, “we have to forget it, not even talk about it and look to our future... It’s a dark day of our history now.”<sup>229</sup> Within this context, I claim that there is a striking absence of memory in contemporary Turkish society, a statement that is especially applicable to those who adamantly sustain and circulate Turkish nationalist discourses and uphold its values. In other words, in contemporary Turkey, non-hegemonic/minoritised groups pervasively utilise memories, while the position of the hegemonic Turkish subjectivity seems to be determined not to remember and, indeed, also to demand from others to follow this “normalcy.”

While analysing post-1980 tensions in Turkey, Kentel, Ahıska, and Genç also face this determination not to remember, as reflected in several excerpts from interviews they conducted, one of which I want to quote at length since it clearly reflects a particular attitude toward remembrance that is pervasive for those who take the side of Turkish nationalism:

Let us accept things this way. For us, there is no such thing as the Armenian massacre, Muslim massacre, or Christian massacre. We do not see such a thing. [...] Massacres happen during wars. Saddam [Hussein] has buried I-do-not-know-how-many-thousand Alevis alive into holes. He is being tried [in courts]. What will happen? Nothing. What would happen if [they] killed [him]? Indeed, we should not dig up [dirt]. There would be enmity if we do. [...] If we see people as human beings, then *we should not go [back] to the past*. [...] I am not saying that Armenians were not massacred. I mean, the more you dig up [the past], the more things would emerge. That is why we do not like this here. Something has happened. We should not dig up [these]. [...] Let it remain where it is sleeping. Do not wake the lion up. (On discussions around the Armenian Genocide)<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Robert Fisk, “Walking the Streets of Istanbul, Erdogan’s Crackdown Lingers Heavy in the Air,” *Independent*, October 6, 2016. Available online at: [goo.gl/x9eyWm](http://goo.gl/x9eyWm) (Accessed last on October 7, 2016)

<sup>230</sup> Kentel et al., “*Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü*,” p. 157. My translation.



As can be observed, this pervasive and deliberate determination not to remember seems to be the key element of (the hegemonic sections of) Turkey's relationship to the past. Violent experiences of the past, e.g. genocide, constitute widely known cornerstones of the socio-cultural psyche, yet the determination not to remember and not articulate them in public seem to be pervasive. Yet, forgetting is also "not possible," producing a new space within which the past is preserved with regards to its affective implications on subjects without articulation and signification.

Thus, the most important thing within this peculiar relationship to the past emerges to be the fact that both for the state and those who align with it, (wounds of) the past must always be left behind and be invisible in order (for all) to have "peace" in the present.<sup>231</sup> Thus, they constitute a part of memory that appears to be a "public secret" and intermittently articulated in public at the same time. The structure of remembrance then compels Turkish subjects to act in such a manner that the present is constantly re-structured on the exclusion of the wounds of the past. Even when they are sporadically and partially remembered, this remembrance is to affirm the need to not remember, as it will either be blunted by cynicism ("What will happen? Nothing.") or disrupt the peace at present ("It is not better to talk about it, either. Then, wounds would start bleeding."). Relying on this structural barring, the past emerges as an already ambiguous and fading source of reminiscence, through which no wound or loss can leak into the present. Constitutively left out, they cannot be represented within this regime of remembrance, because their legibility is not possible.

The asymmetry posed by these two structurally differing modes of being and remembering, the one that relies on memory and the other that refuses to remember, should be taken into account while attempting to understand the dynamics of contemporary Turkey. While the 1990s witnessed the resurgence of memory and identity politics in the Turkish context, led by Kurdish and Armenian communities, the same period also witnessed the persistence of a

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<sup>231</sup> Kentel et al., "*Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü*," p. 157.

modality of Turkishness, structured around a systemic forgetting, or non-remembering, of the past.

Many research participants in the Valley also indicated similar patterns of this active disengagement with the past, an alignment that seems to have a crucial role in the constitution and reproduction of local subjects. Romeika, for instance, is preserved through a mechanism that keeps it alive and close while barring it from public articulation and representation. As also reflected in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, this staunch defence of Turkish nationalism and its implications on memory emerge to be one of the intriguing and starting points of this research.

## CHAPTER V

### ROMEIKA IN THE VALLEY: PREVALENCE, TOPONYMES, AND THE FUTURE

Romeika has been sporadically mentioned in a number of scholarly quests, as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and more recently by a number of scholars starting with Peter Mackridge, whose research has since been followed by works by Pietro Bortone, Hakan Özkan, and Ioanna Sitaridou.<sup>232</sup> Yet, these studies overall belonged to a linguistic domain, and an anthropological inquiry to analyse complex dynamics of memory, language, and socio-cultural affiliations within these communities remains significantly absent in the literature.

#### I. Romeika and the Valley: Heterogeneous Prevalence

In the 1965 Census, 4565 citizens reported to be speaking Romeika natively in Trabzon.<sup>233</sup> Although this number seems to be disproportionately small in comparison to the actual number of speakers across the valley systems of the province, over the course of decades, Romeika has gradually become more and more silent and veiled in public consciousness.<sup>234</sup> Even in the post-1980 period, it rarely became an issue that the public debated or recognised, as if it had been forgotten, or non-existent altogether, by outsiders and by locals.<sup>235</sup> A book published by locals in İstanbul to detail the culture and history of the Valley in

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<sup>232</sup> Pietro Bortone, "Greek with No Models, History or Standard: Muslim Pontic Greek," in *Standard Languages and Language Standards: Greek, Past and Present*, Alexandra Georgakopoulou and Michael Silk (eds.), Ashgate: Surrey, 2009.

Hakan Özkan, "The Pontic Greek Spoken by Muslims in the Villages of Beşkøy in the Province of Present-Day Trabzon," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013.

Ömer Asan also provides a syntax, grammar, and lexicon at the end of his (amateur) study of Çoruk village in the Valley: Ömer Asan, *Pontos Kültürü*, Belge: İstanbul, 2000 [1996].

<sup>233</sup> Özkan, "The Pontic Greek Spoken by Muslims," p. 131.

<sup>234</sup> No census since 1985 included questions with regards to citizens' mother tongues. For a discussion of minority languages, Turkish nationalism, and assimilation, please see: Fuat Dündar, "Measuring Assimilation: 'Mother Tongue' Question in Turkish Censuses and Nationalist Policy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2014.

<sup>235</sup> The same claim can be said to be valid, to a degree, for Laz and Hemshin communities, as well. Yet, because of the increased visibility of Laz musicians, such as Kazım Koyuncu, and thanks to its already quite pervasive (wrongly used) familiarity for the general Turkish public, the Lazi community emerged to be the most active among eastern Black Sea communities vis-à-vis Hemshin and Romeika-speaking communities of the same area. As an exemplary research and discussion on the contemporary public visibility of the Laz community, please see: Nilüfer Taşkın, *Representing and Performing Laz Identity: "This is not a Rebel Song!"* Unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University (Sociology), 2011.

2005, for instance, does not mention Romeika at all and provides only scant references to Romeika names of settlements as “older names.”

The word used for the language in Turkish, *Rumca*, is derived from the word *Rum*, which historically means Roman. (The term Byzantine was recently created retroactively, which reigned from 4<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century and referred to itself as the (Eastern) Roman Empire while its citizens were called Roman even though the majority of its subjects were Hellenic speakers.) In the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, the term *Rum* was used for lands that were under the Roman/Byzantine rule and subsequently came under the Turkish rule. Contemporarily, the Thrace region is still called *Rumeli* in Modern Turkish, a naming practice that is a reminiscent of this history and means the “Roman land.”

Romaika displays similar naming practices as well. Romeika as the autoglossonym means the language of Romans in reference to the historical trajectory of the region.<sup>236</sup> The Turkish word, *Rum*, was the historical term applied to the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire and is still used to differentiate the Greek-speaking communities of Turkey from the Greeks of Greece, who are addressed as *Yunan* in Modern Turkish.<sup>237</sup> Yet, the proximity between these terms is evident for everyone as both terms apply to Orthodox Christian populations who speak Greek. The same differentiation in naming can also be traced in Modern Greek as well: Greece (*Ελλάδα* [Elláda]), the Greek language (*Ελληνικά* [Elliniká]), Greek (*Έλληνας* [Éllinas] or *Ελληνίδα* [Ellinída]), Romeika (*Ρωμείκα* [Roméika]), Rum (*Ρωμιός* [Romiós]). The last two terms, *Ρωμείκα* (Roméika) and *Ρωμιός* (Romiós), similar to naming practices and etymology in Turkish and Romeika, are derivatives of the Greek word for Rome (*Ρώμη* [Rómi]).<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> The pronunciation of the language is, easily interchangeable with Romeyika in Turkish.

<sup>237</sup> Interestingly, though, Greek-speaking communities of Cyprus are still included in the category of Rum.

<sup>238</sup> I am grateful to Marita Vyrgioti for helping me with Greek lexicon. Herzfeld also notes this naming practice and connects the official preference for *Ellines*, rather than *Romii* to Greek aspirations to be associated with ancient Greek civilisation. Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, p. 16 and 227.

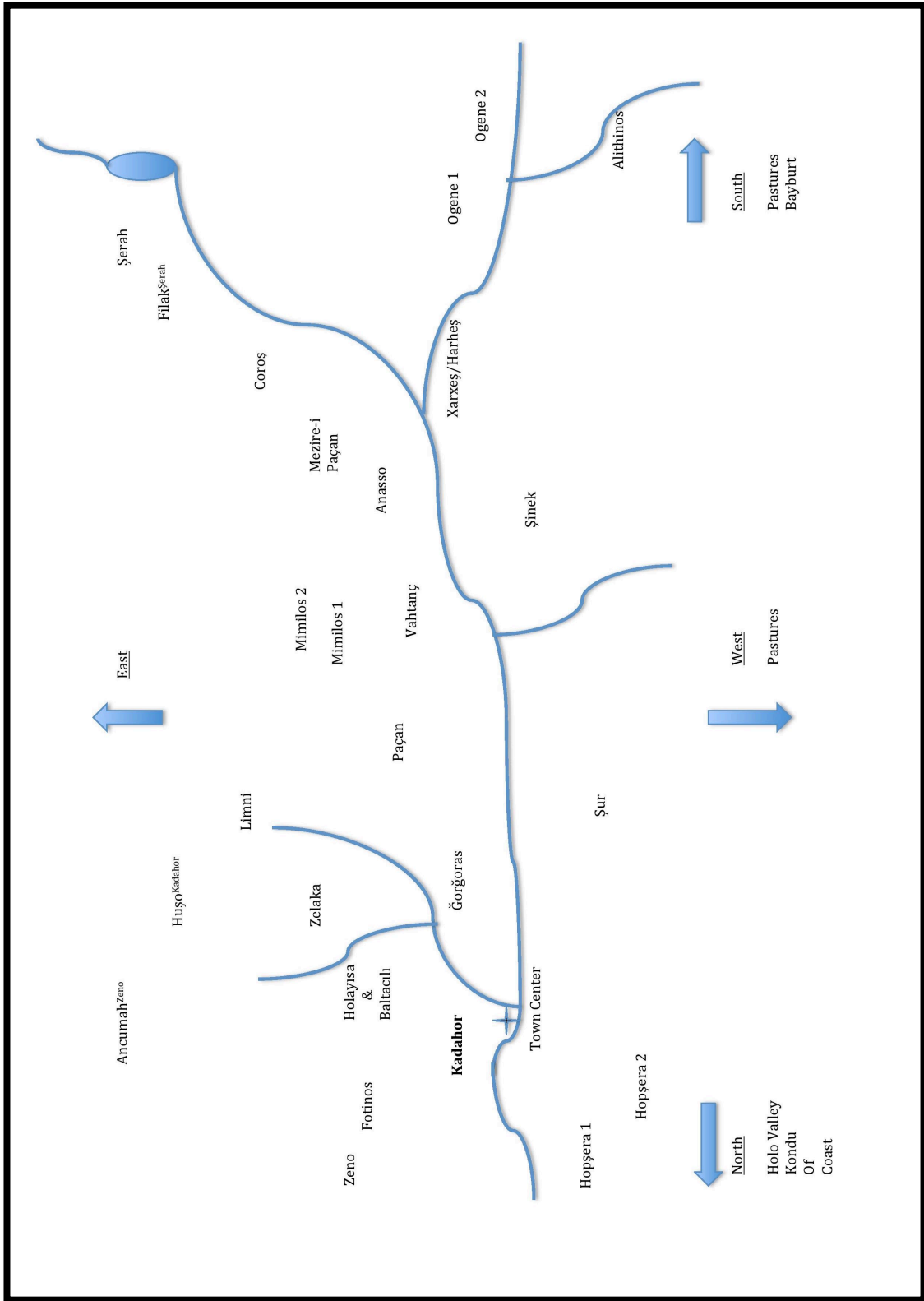


Figure I: Sketch of the Valley, indicating settlements across the main structure of the Valley.

Today, Romeika is still spoken in higher sections of the Of Valley, stretching from the coast to pastures of the mountain range in the south alongside Solaklı River including the contemporary administrative districts of Of, Dernekpazarı, and Çaykara. Today, Dernekpazarı (Kondu) and Çaykara (Kadahor) cover this highly elevated upper section of the Valley as the two administrative districts with relatively smaller populations. In historical records, the area seems to have been inhabited for centuries with certain villages preserving their older names and borders intact, such as Şur and Ogene, for a considerable period of time. The contemporary town centre of Çaykara, which constitutes the core of my field research, is composed of three pieces around the intersection of Solaklı and Holayısa Rivers and lies beneath the old village of Kadahor. Although Kondu and Kadahor are administratively separated, both districts are still socio-culturally close as they share the continued use of Romeika, which also connects locals to other Romeika-speaking communities in Beşköy<sup>239</sup> of Sürmene, Maçka, and Tonya.

Villages in Kondu and Kadahor have diverse degrees of Romeika proficiency, with certain villages being pervasively proficient while others have more fragmented, family-based fluency, or none at all. For research purposes, I will focus on Kadahor, as most of my respondents were from the area, even though I also met a number of people from Holo Valley villages where Romeika is still remarkably alive. (See Figure I)

In the higher parts of the Valley, where Şerah/Saraxo<sup>240</sup>, Ogene/Oçena villages and Alithinos are located, Romeika is spoken extensively by all segments of the communities. Especially in Ogene, a peculiar variant of Romeika is spoken, which the locals from other settlements in the Valley describe as archaic and pompous, comparing it to Old (Ottoman) Turkish. These sections, stretching from Şerah to Alithinos, cover the southernmost and most elevated sections of the Valley,

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<sup>239</sup> Hakan Özkan indicates that, as also supported by local customs and affirmations, inhabitants of Beşköy were originally from the Holo Valley in Kondu. Özkan, "The Pontic Greek Spoken by Muslims," p. 139 – 140.

<sup>240</sup> There seems to be a difference between Romeika of Ogene and other parts. The second versions of names indicate Ogene variants and generally are described by locals as older names, as in *Şerah* and *Saraxo*.

expanding from Şinek and Coroş on the north to the pastures on top of the mountain range in the south. Ogene is divided into two administrative units of villages today: Karaçam, which is called *Yukarı* (“upper” in Turkish) Ogene, and Köknar, which is called *Aşağı* (“lower” in Turkish) Ogene.<sup>241</sup>

All these three isolated settlements are scattered across a number of smaller valley systems in this high elevation, the access to which is still rendered difficult especially in winter by adverse geographical and meteorological patterns. Until very recently, steep valley walls made it almost impossible to construct any road to reach these remote communities, intensifying their isolation further and forcing locals to use trails to reach the nearest road on foot. Considering the fact that even the lower valley had, until 20 years ago or so, only a single-lane unpaved road, which had originally been constructed by the occupying Russian Army during the tsarist invasion of the province in World War I, it would not be hard to imagine the extent of seclusion these communities experienced in these much more elevated parts of the Valley. This mountainous geography seems to have provided a shelter for Romeika to survive up to this day. Recently, though, especially in the case of Şerah, there have been a number of infrastructure developments to connect these remote settlements to the town centre and to the coastal highway as the lake in Şerah, *Uzungöl* (the Long Lake), has become a major tourist attraction with over a million tourists flocking to the Valley and surrounding mountains and pastures in summer.

In addition to these three settlements, Romeika is spoken by a significant majority of inhabitants in other villages in the Valley toward the north, too, yet in diverse variants: Paçan, Ğorğoras, Zelaka, Holayısa, villages of Hopşera, Coroş, villages of Mimilos, Vahtanç, Limni, Mezire-i Paçan and Zeno. Especially in comparison to the Ogene variant, inhabitants of these villages in the lower sections of the Valley claim to speak a less archaic version of Romeika with less fluency and a more restricted vocabulary. Among these aforementioned

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<sup>241</sup> Karaçam was registered as *Ogene-i Ulya* while Köknar was designated as *Ogene-i Sufla* in Ottoman cadastral records. S. Ayan, H. Husnu Durgun, I. Sarı, “İdari Birimler – Çaykara [Administrative Units],” in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Çaykara Dernekpazarı* [From the Past to the Future Çaykara Dernekpazarı], p. 209 and 229.

settlements, Hopşera can be considered as a sub-group because of its relative spatial detachment from other villages as it is situated in the western wall of the Valley and its geographical and cultural proximity to Holo Valley as well. Similarly, Holayısa, Zelaka, Limni, and Ğorğoras can be considered as a separate sub-category due to their situatedness in Holayısa/Baltacılı River Valley, producing proximity both in terms of geography and culture, as they all speak Romeika fluently and use a common route that leads to settlements across these villages, including Huşo. It must be noted that these villages have been historically related to one another, as they all once had been parts of Holayısa until their separation as distinct villages. Moreover, as these villages are conveniently located close to the town centre, which they access through the road alongside Holayısa/Baltacılı River, it is a much more frequent pattern for them to come down to the town centre during the week, especially in comparison to those who reside in the higher southern sections of the Valley, as in Ogene and Alithinos. In parallel, it is also possible to group Paçan, the villages of Mimilos, Vahtañç, Mezire-i Paçan, and partially Coroş together because of their proximity and similarity along the eastern wall of the Valley toward the junction of Şerah and Ogene valleys.

The villages of Şur/Siro, Kadahor, Şinek, Baltacılı, and Fotinos constitute a more complicated set as they have more fragmented patterns in terms of Romeika's presence. These villages produce an intriguing picture in terms of my analysis, since they are not geographically or culturally distinct from other villages where Romeika is natively and pervasively spoken. Within this group, Fotinos also emerges as a perplexing case, where Romeika is not spoken extensively even though the village is situated right in between Zeno and Holayısa, both Romeika-speaking settlements. Commonly, locals indicated that Fotinos was previously an Armenian<sup>242</sup> village, inhabitants of which had been attacked and dispersed across the Valley by a specific İslamoğlu Bey, to account for the absence of Romeika there. Similarly, Kadahor also presents a particular case, as it was one of the oldest settlements in this upper section of the Valley to the south. Here, the

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<sup>242</sup> I am not able to verify this claim, though, as one needs to go through an extensive archival work, which requires further training and skills, to comprehend the historicity of the Valley better.



older generation of men generally are able to understand and speak Romeika to a degree. Considerably limited knowledge of the younger generation, though, might be linked to the position of the settlement as the administrative centre of the district, directly exposing it to the gaze and enactments of the state institutions. Şur and Şinek, as two grand and old settlements stretched along the western valley wall from Hopşera to Ogene, present a similar pattern where the elderly know Romeika in diverse levels, though to a lesser extent than the ones in the aforementioned settlements, but it seems to be almost completely absent among the younger generation. In general, the older generations in these latter settlements have relatively adequate command of Romeika while the younger generations only seem to have a quite limited vocabulary.

In the case of Baltacılı, which has only a Turkish name without a Romeika counterpart (derived from the word *balta* [axe]) unlike others, this absence of a Romeika heritage is especially hard to comprehend, as the village is fragmentally intertwined with (*içiçe geçmiş*) the pervasively and natively Romeika-speaking village of Holayısa. Holayısa and Baltacılı are spatially inseparable, with fragments nested in each other, and yet they are administered by two separate *muhtarlıks* (Office of the *muhtar*, the village's administrative headman).<sup>243</sup> Thus, this intermingling produces a settlement structure where one house is native in Romeika and is administered by the office of Holayısa, while the neighbours are unable to speak the language—other than a few words and expressions that they have learnt through their social interactions with others in the Valley—and are registered in Baltacılı.

Locals describe the situation as that of *mahlut*, a special term with special uses in Ottoman bureaucracy, which are clearly different from what locals claim, and as they indicate that it was initiated to produce military service exemptions through inter-village marriages.<sup>244</sup> The book by Çaykara Dernekpazarı

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<sup>243</sup> This intermingled structure of two villages, Holayısa and Baltacılı, are also mentioned in, Ayan, Durgun, and Sarı, "İdari Birimler – Çaykara," p. 219 and 240.

<sup>244</sup> *Mahlut* as an Ottoman word, derived from Arabic, means blended, adulterated, mixed. Although locals claim that this separation of *muhtarlıks* of these two villages happened because of the locals' desire to be exempt from lengthy military service in the Ottoman Empire, relying on a rule that allegedly permitted those men who married a woman outside their village to be

Association in İstanbul, *Geçmişten Geleceğe Çaykara Dernekpazarı* (From the Past to the Future Çaykara Dernekpazarı), also repeats this account, though, in a more specific temporal phase:

Especially in the aftermath of losing almost two hundred of their youth as martyrs in the Siege [sic] of Sarıkamış, the notables of Holayısa village considered dividing the village into two *muhtarlıks* in order not to send their children to military service—those who were married to someone from another village were exempt from military service—as a solution. In the records of the Ministry of Interior from the year 1915, [the village] is mentioned as Baltacılı.<sup>245</sup>

Although locals generally recount the same narrative without temporally locating the incident, this explanation in the book seems a bit far fetched given the fact that the Sarıkamış Campaign took place in the late 1914 and early 1915, when the archives are claimed to have already mentioned Baltacılı. My own efforts to trace such exemptions through inter-village marriages were also futile as no scholar noted such patterns in conscription procedures of the Empire.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, as I further inquired, I learnt that *mahlut* had been used as a bureaucratic category of the Empire to specify settlements where, covertly or explicitly, Muslims and non-Muslim communities reside together, thus constituting an amalgam. This survival of the term in the area, even though possibly—deliberately or not—in a distorted sense, might be pointing to one of the historical factors through which one can explain the presence and absence of Romeika in these spatially intermingled settlements. As a side note, I should state that this historical aspect of intermingled and yet distinct socio-cultural trajectories of Holayısa and Baltacılı needs to be accounted for through a separate historical/archival inquiry, which goes beyond the scope of this research.

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excused from military service obligations. Yet, I have been unable to verify this claim, which assumed a military service exemption for marriages outside the village (that the bride is from a family which is registered in another village) in any regulation of the Empire with regards to conscription and marriage.

<sup>245</sup> Original in Turkish: "Özellikle Sarıkamış kuşatmasında iki yüze yakın gencini şehit veren Holayısa köyünün ileri gelenleri, çocuklarını askere göndermemek için köyü iki muhtarlığa ayırmayı (Başka köyden evli olan askere alınmıyordu.) bir çözüm olarak düşünmüşlerdir. 1915 tarihli İçişleri Bakanlığının kayıtlarında adı Baltacılı olarak geçmektedir." Ayan et al., "İdari Birimler - Çaykara," p. 219.

<sup>246</sup> I am grateful to historian Zeynep Türkyılmaz who clarified the issue and highlighted the pervasive use of the term to indicate religious mixture in settlements. (Personal communication).

Overall, though, I should underline that almost everyone in the Valley has a common lexicon that includes many Romeika words. Even when they are not fluent in Romeika, almost everyone in the valley would casually use and understand these words while Turkish and Romeika words and suffixes are interchangeably used or mixed together to form local expressions. This shared vocabulary of the Valley generally consists of swear words, such as *pisoli* (dick), *ramabul* (*anasını siktiğim*, similar to “son of a bitch”), or *kundema* (fuck, to fuck); the names of animals, such as *gogli/kohli/kohlidi* (snail), *kunkuna* (weasel? raccoon?); the names of plants, such as *ifteri* (fern), *likarba* (a local species of [huckle]berries), *tsifin* (a type of flower), *zaguda* (a local herb), or *hamucera* (wild strawberry); local dishes, such as *havits*, *pishi*, *tsumur*, or *males*; tools, such as *kudal/fderodi(ka)* (a wooden mixer); general/abstract expressions, such as *aboskal* (something to do, a duty to perform) or *emrodika* (the eldest child of the house); toponyms and estates, such as village names, geographical spots as in *kaban* (steep slope of a mountain) or *bizavira* (an uphill road that is not so steep), family holdings as in *Gargar*, *Kalençsi*, *Kunkuna*, *Similo*, *Rizi*, or *Vartanlı*, pastures as in *Garester*, *Mağlakambo*, *Manoşer*, *Ma’akambos*, *Staronar*, *Mavreyas*, or *Vartan*.<sup>247</sup>

## II. Toponyms and the Persistence of Geographical References

Toponyms constitute another aspect of the anthropological analysis of Romeika in the Valley. All settlements have a Turkish name that is assigned through the name-changing programmes of the state in 1960s with the cooperation of local notables. And yet, almost all villages have an old Romeika name, too, which has survived up to this day with universal prevalence among locals, who sometimes fail to remember the new Turkish names. This state policy to Turkify the geography was specifically focused and detailed in the area as most of the geography had Romeika names in the case of the Valley. The ministerial directive below, from March 1964, as addressed to the Governorate of Trabzon,

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<sup>247</sup> İsmail Çolak, “Coğrafi Yapı [Geography],” in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Çaykara Dernekpazarı*, p. 190 – 191.

exemplifies the significance of the Romeika toponyms and their perception by the state:

1- All names of villages, which are included in the administrative division of your province, in reference to village names notes that were sent in this regard, were examined by the expertise commissions that had been formed within the Ministry, [and] names of those villages that bear a *foreign* name were changed.

[...]

2- This list, consisting of 36 pages and includes Turkified [*Türkçeleştirilen*] new names of *foreign* and *ambiguity-producing* [*iltibasa yer veren*] village [and] neighbourhood names; [while those] old neighbourhood names that were preserved as they are Turkish, in the province of Trabzon, was approved by the Ministerial Office in 3/3/1964.<sup>248</sup>

One should not be surprised to see “foreign” (*yabancı*) as an adjective in the bureaucratic descriptions of local toponyms that inhabitants of these valley systems have been using for centuries. As the state has gradually renamed all non-Turkish geographical features through decades-long efforts, intensifying in the east and southeast, where Armenian and Kurdish names dominate the landscape, and the northeast where Lazi, Hemshin, and Romeika names are pervasively used to designate physical surroundings including rivers, mountains, pastures, villages, crossings, and others. “The Southeast, and to a lesser extent the East, with a prevalent Kurdish population and a strong Armenian heritage were the [Expert] Commission [for Name Change]’s priority target,” claims Kerem Öktem in his analysis of changes of toponyms in the Turkish context, “followed by the Black Sea region with its significant communities of Armenian-

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<sup>248</sup> Ministry of Interior Directive, dating 1964, numbered 22105/7304. Emphases are mine. In Turkish:

Trabzon Valiliğine

31/10/1941, 29/12/1956 gün ve Daimi Encümen Kalemî 100/4709; Yazı İşleri Kalemî 4554/278 sayılı yazılarınızın karşılığıdır:

1 - Vilayetiniz idari taksimatına dahil bütün köylerin adları, bu hususta gönderilen köy esami fişleri de nazara alınarak, Vekaletimizde teşkil edilmiş bulunan ihtisas komisyonunca tetkik edilmiş olup, bunlardan yabancı ad taşıyan köylerin adları değiştirilmiştir.

Bu maksatla ve Vilayetin idari taksimatına göre hazırlanan köy esame listeleri, her sahife mühürlenmek suretile, (31) sahifeden ibaret olarak, mahsus bir dosya içerisinde gönderilmiştir.

2 - Trabzon ilinin, yabancı olan ve iltibasa yer veren köyü mahalleleri adlarının Türkçeleştirilen yeni adlarını ve Türkçe olduğu için alakanan eski mahalle adlarını ihtiva eden ve (36) sayfadan ibaret olan işbu liste 3/3/1964 tarihinde Bakanlık Makamınca onanmıştır.

Asan, *Pontos Kültürü*, p. 33. Reproduced from Altay Yiğit, *Çaykara Folkloru*, Kent: Ankara, 1981.

As a note, *iltibas* is defined as the confusion between two things that resemble each other significantly by a number of dictionaries. Nişanyan Dictionary gives the meaning of the word as *bulaşma*, *bulanıklık* (turbidity, blurriness, contagion, ambiguity) while TDK Dictionary indicates *andırışma* [reflexive resemblance between two things].

(*Hemşin*), Lazuri- and Greek-speaking communities.”<sup>249</sup> Almost three quarters of all toponyms, around 72%, in Trabzon were changed in the decades-long Turkification of the geography by the state, which emerges as one of the greatest concentrations in the country and the highest in the Black Sea region, followed loosely by other provinces of the littoral: Artvin with 39%, Giresun with 34%, and Rize with 33%.<sup>250</sup>

As they produce ambiguity and confusion with regards to Turkishness of not only geography but also its locals, “*iltisaba yer veren*” as the directive asserted, these old names were changed over the course of years, producing and implanting a Turkified geography above a local one, sometimes producing a two-dimensional socio-cultural geography within which local and official references would not easily match, as I discuss further in Chapter VII. Based on my field work in the Valley, it must be highlighted that locals mostly keep using these old names and generally struggle with the new ones, especially those of villages, as these Turkish names are rarely a part of non-official interactions. Settlements overall preserve their old toponyms albeit in variant forms as in the differentiation between local variants of Romeika, as in Şerah and Saraxo. Especially the elderly locals generally have difficulty in correctly identifying new Turkish names of villages and pastures, as they are accustomed to the old Romeika names of these settlements, with the exception of the district centre, Çaykara, and the Lake, Uzungöl, to which they are heavily exposed through their interactions with state institutions and tourism, as I discuss in Chapter VIII. This confusion around new names, while old names are stable and well established for locals, needs to be highlighted specifically as an indication of the organic prevalence of Romeika toponyms for inhabitants of the Valley while new names need to be mediated, and are harder to recall.

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<sup>249</sup> Kerem Öktem, “The Nation’s Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponymes in Republican Turkey,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 7, 2008, Paragraph 44.

<sup>250</sup> Öktem, “The Nation’s Imprint,” Table 3.  
Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 243.

### III. Future of the Language

Those who live outside the Valley generally retain their cultural and linguistic heritage and connection to their *hemşehris* and neighbours from the Valley; yet they generally fail at transmitting the language to younger generations, and their children. A number of respondents who live outside the Valley, in Turkey and abroad, indicated that they taught only Turkish to their children highlighting the threat of extinction for the language,<sup>251</sup> a tendency that is especially strong in the case of communities living outside the Valley.

Children in the Valley grow more accustomed to Romeika, though their vocabulary and proficiency lag behind their parents and grandparents because of a number of factors, which might include growing exposure to Turkish through television and radio broadcasts, the significant extension of compulsory education in Turkish in village and district settings, the potential socio-political implications of using Romeika in public which limit its use and transmission, and the diminishing impact of the seclusion of villages where Romeika is casually and natively spoken owing to immigration and modernisation. Thus, Romeika is used extensively by older generations, in its most fluent form, by men and women alike, although children raised in the Valley have a more limited vocabulary and fluency. Yet, when considered together with the incessant outflow of population from the Valley because of economic and socio-cultural reasons, especially for the younger generation, the future of Romeika seems uncertain as those who could fluently speak the language decrease day by day.

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<sup>251</sup> UNESCO denotes Romeika as “definitely endangered.”

## CHAPTER VI

### ROMEIKA AND SOCIALITIES: GENDERED DIFFERENCES, CONNOTATIONS, AND COMMUNAL PRIVACY

Romeika emerges as the first of three focal points of this research, alongside masculinities and religiosities, through which I explore different modalities of subject formation in the Turkish context. This analysis might be productive not only because Romeika is an anthropologically unique and unstudied heritage of the Valley but also it affects local subjectivities and socialities in an intriguing manner. This chapter explores how local patterns of using Romeika present us with different modalities of subjectivation that emerge through locals' moves between Romeika and Turkish (variants) within the contours of Turkish nationalism.

I first discuss how Romeika emerges as an “uncanny” element of local subjectivity and socialities because of undesired associations. Following this brief description of the context, I trace a number of characteristics of Romeika as a part of local socialities and culture. I first describe how men and women from different walks of life use Romeika differently. This depiction, I believe, leads us to conceive how the gendered interplay between visibility and invisibility emerges as one of the key aspects of local socialities and subjectivities in the context of Turkish nationalism and citizenship. Subsequently, I touch upon the privacy of Romeika for locals, marking the limits of community out of which intimacy and proximity arise. Then, I discuss the peculiar form Romeika takes in public and various mechanisms that render Romeika a “discreet”<sup>252</sup> sociality. Finally, I point to a number of historical and socio-political elements that render Romeika “discreet” through its contemporary connotations, which should be thought alongside locals' nationalist investment and alignments.

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<sup>252</sup> In line with Lilith Mahmud's argument, discretion as I use here “mean[s] a set of embodied practices that conceal and reveal potentially significant information and performatively establish a subject's positionality within a specific community of practice.” Lilith Mahmud, “The World is a Forest of Symbols’: Italian Masonry and the Practice of Discretion,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39, No. 2, May 2012, p. 429.

## *(In)Visibility*

Visibility and invisibility, within the scope of this analysis, should be comprehended as scales of both the proper invocation/naming of socio-cultural phenomena and their representation, and should not be reduced to their literal meanings as qualities pertaining to sight. Invisibility in this sense, might involve both a practice of discretion (as in abstaining from speaking it in the presence of outsiders or misnaming the practice, e.g. calling the language spoken in the area as *Lazca* or Latin) or the very absence of such significations altogether (as in denials or un-communicated practices that are deemed taboo, e.g. sexuality). Thus, my arguments around visibility should be considered alongside the continuities and discontinuities between practices and naming of these practices in private and public through which socio-cultural phenomena are signified. Rather than registering its linguistic qualities, I trace how Romeika is situated in public and private to account for its effects on subjectivities. By interplays of visibility and invisibility, I refer to the processes through which these social phenomena are accounted for and communicated in the public sphere, and to designate their public presences and absences.

### **I. Unwanted Connotations and the Uncanny Character of Romeika**

While recounting how she learnt Romeika as a child in her maternal village, Ogene, Sunay, a local woman in her fifties with roots in Ogene and Şur, produced an intriguing narrative through which Romeika and Greek were used interchangeably:

We got accustomed [to Romeika]. When we were kids, we used to go to Ogene regularly. We used to go to my [maternal] grandmother's place. My grandmother used to come [to our house in Şur]. They used to speak *Yunanca* [Greek (of Greece)]. But, we did not use to speak *Rumca* [Romeika] outside. *Eski Yunanca* [Ancient Greek].<sup>253</sup>

While Sunay's account illustrates the seclusion of Romeika into the private domain, which I discuss further below, it is important to highlight how *Yunanca*

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<sup>253</sup> Sunay; May 7, 2015. In Turkish: "Kulaklarımız doldu. Biz Ogene'ye giderdik sürekli çocukken. Anneannemin yanına giderdik. Anneannem gelirdi. Onlar Yunanca konuşurdu. Ama biz Rumca konuşmazdık dışarda. Eski Yunanca."



and *Rumca* are used interchangeably. This sliding from from Romeika to Greek and from Romeika to the Ancient Greek, and the need to correct it emerge to be the reasons why Romeika was secluded into the private domain throughout the Republican period, when nationalist affiliation was upheld as the ultimate site of subjectivation and allegiance. Although it is really rare for locals to use *Yunanca* as a term to denote the language they speak, which I never witnessed apart from this slip, they are also quite aware of the affinity between these two languages, Romeika and Greek.<sup>254</sup> Locals frequently recount stories of how they could easily communicate with visiting *Yunan* (Greek) tourists or comprehend the gist of Greek music or TV programmes, confirming the fact that they are fully aware, especially in men's case, of the connection.

Highlighting anxieties arising from this (presumed) fissure between locals' alignments with Turkish nationalism and their socio-cultural heritage, various villages across the Valley banned the use of Romeika in public in the middle of the last century, as recounted by locals in Şinek, where the ban was allegedly first implemented. Furthermore, Romeika produces unsettling connotations, as in powerful conspiracies around Pontic revivalists (*Pontuşçu*),<sup>255</sup> through which locals' Turkishness and allegiance to the national ethos are contested and potentially foreclosed. Mustafa, for instance, reminisced stories of his military service, in the mid-1970s, when other soldiers excluded and were hostile to him solely because he was from Trabzon and could speak Romeika.<sup>256</sup> He indicated that he was harassed and beaten by other privates who insulted him as "Greek (*Rum*)", resonating closely with Fenerbahçe fans' chanting of "bastards of Pontos." Reflecting the same pattern, others also seem to be reluctant to be too close to the language as such proximity would produce associations with Greece and generate discussions around heritage and conversion. This dissociation with Romeika should be contextualised within the historical trajectory through which Turkish subjectivity is articulated in antagonism to others (Greek, Christian,

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<sup>254</sup> Hakan Özkan also claims the same pattern for Romeika speakers in Beşköy, "The Pontic Greek Spoken by Muslims," p. 131.

<sup>255</sup> Vahit Tursun talks about his experiences of such suspicion in his brief and personal account: Vahit Tursun, "Pontus Paranoyası [Paranoia of Pontos]," *Birikim*, May 27, 2010.

<sup>256</sup> Fortunately for him, though, there was an officer who also could speak Greek, and he protected Hasan O for the rest of his military service.

Armenian, Kurdish). Romeika, then, emerges as a sign of heterogeneity and incoherence through blending Turkishness with Greekness, which “occasions a convergence and disorganization of the rules that govern” nationalist ideology and identities.<sup>257</sup>

Yet, the anxiety appears to be so pervasive that one of the locals from the Valley even published a book to challenge such insinuations, to disprove such claims, and demonstrate the Turkishness of communities across the Valley with a title that blatantly met the issue head on: *Dede “Biz” Rum muyuz?* (Grandpa, Are “We” Greek?) The book deals directly with Romeika heritage that, as the author also indicates, confuses many young people about their ancestry.<sup>258</sup> The author also claims a historical genealogy for the local population, which, unsurprisingly, connects local communities to Turkic tribes of the Central Asia, the ancient homeland of Turks.

Similarly, such anxieties and ambiguities induced by the persistence of Romeika seem to be used to strengthen and fasten homogenisation by others who advocate its erasure from the social life. One of the locals, for instance, recited a short piece of a poem from a well-known figure, who paradoxically used these unwanted connotations to enhance the Turkish nationalist call for uniformity:

<i>Çaykaralı dedi mi</i>	When [one] says <i>Çaykaralı</i>
<i>Aslı nesli yücedir.</i>	[His] Origin/essence [and] lineage is exalted.
<i>Yakışır mı ağzına,</i>	Does [it] suit your mouth,
<i>Yunanlının posası</i> <sup>259</sup>	[The] dreg of [the] Greek?

As a residue of a past that goes against the imaginary of national identity, which is “directly predicated on resemblance”<sup>260</sup>, Romeika emerges to be an “uncanny”

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<sup>257</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 31.

<sup>258</sup> Hasan Tiryakioğlu, *Dede ‘Biz’ Rum muyuz? Trabzon’un Türklüğü ve Atatürk* [Grandpa, Are ‘We’ Greek? The Turkishness of Trabzon and Atatürk], Berikan Yayınevi: Ankara, 2014. The author’s response and arguments indicate that Turkish tribes indeed inhabited the area for thousands of years. The book claims that the Byzantine and Pontic Greek Empires later Hellenised these original Turkic settlers over the course of centuries, which the author then connects to locals’ contemporary use of the language. After “proving” the Turkishness of inhabitants, the author details an extensive amount of anecdotes about Atatürk’s love for the city.

<sup>259</sup> Book III, p. 8R. Recounted in reference to Hasan Umur (1880-1977), a notable figure from the Of Valley who studied in local academies and became a religious instructor. Later, Umur took part in the Republican administration and also engaged in business in other cities, including İstanbul.

<sup>260</sup> Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, p. 28.

element of local culture, going against the uniformism of the Turkish nationalist view.<sup>261</sup> Located right at the centre of local culture and socialities, carrying collective history and culture and establishing proximity and intimacy among locals, Romeika also stands as a spectral element of local subjectivities that can be alienable and used against them, challenging their Turkish identity if one views Turkishness strictly as ethnicity, reflected in one's mother tongue. It bears connotations that go right against locals' nationalist alignments and reminds us of the fragility of the local position.

Although the Turkish public sphere witnessed the resurgence of various socio-cultural distinctions in the post-1980 period, Romeika has rarely become an object of attention for the wider Turkish public. It should be stated that there has been relative increase in its visibility in the last decade in a number of ways. One can mention the sporadic coverage in national media around the archaic characteristics of the language.<sup>262</sup> Unprecedentedly, Apolas Lermi, a singer from Tonya, Trabzon, produced his music in Romeika with considerable coverage in national media. His latest release, *Romeika*, was released simultaneously in Turkey and Greece in 2016. Yet, even with these recent developments, Romeika still preserves its ephemeral presence and cannot be concretely located in a geography and community for the wider Turkish public.

## **II. Gendered Moves across Languages and Variants**

How men and women in the Valley use Romeika differently emerges as the first step of my analysis of the social status of Romeika and the way it affects socialities and subjectivities. Various factors seem to affect the medium that local men or women use to express themselves and produce further gender differentiation as they move across these languages. Three linguistic media

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<sup>261</sup> Freudian "uncanny" indicates the simultaneity of feelings of familiarity and strangeness. In Freud's original text, "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old," producing, in the footsteps of Schelling, "something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light." Sigmund Freud, *The "Uncanny"*, 2003 [1919], p. 12 – 13.

<sup>262</sup> "Trabzon Köylüsü Sokrat ve Platon'un Dilini Konuşuyor [Peasants of Trabzon Speak the Language of Socrates and Platon]," *Sabah*, January 4, 2011.

should be noted as the means of communication in the Valley: standard Turkish (generally associated with, but not, Istanbul Turkish), the local Turkish variant (*Doğu Karadeniz/Trabzon ağzı/şivesi* [Eastern Black Sea/Trabzon Dialect]),<sup>263</sup> and Romeika.

### **Men**

How men move across languages present a complicated picture, which is, first and foremost, dependent on subjects' knowledge of Romeika. When locals are proficient in Romeika, these patterns, nevertheless, are also informed by a complex amalgam of the subject matter of the conversation, socio-economic status of the speaker, the interlocutors, and the context/space within which the interaction takes place. I shall recount a number of cases that might help the reader to grasp this heterogeneity.

Mustafa, a retired truck driver from Holayısa in his mid-sixties, spoke Romeika fluently. He generally talked to me in a well-articulated standard Turkish and addressed me as Erol *Bey* (Mr. Erol), using the formal “*siz*” (as in French *vous*) rather than informal second-person singular pronoun, “*sen*” (as in French *tu*). He would generally comment on politics and economics in Turkish, a mix of standard and local variants, as Romeika apparently provided a limited vocabulary about modern life, the prime example being the absence of Romeika words for numbers greater than four.<sup>264</sup> He would easily shift to Romeika when he talked to fellow men and women of the Valley, especially if they were from Holayısa as well with conversations generally involving matters around village folks and local developments (as in funerals, conflicts, or marriages). He also used local colloquial Turkish while talking to others in coffeehouses. These shifts

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<sup>263</sup> For an analysis of local Turkish in Trabzon, please see: Bernt Brandemoen, *The Turkish Dialects of Trabzon: Their Phonology and Historical Development*, Harrsowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2002.

<sup>264</sup> Locals, even those in Ogene, highlight this fact that locals can count only up to four in Romeika, after which they use Turkish words. Ömer Asan also talks about this limited vocabulary of Romeika with regards to numbers: “Çoruk Rumcasında bilinen sayılar azdır. Bir Çoruklu, Rumca dörde kadar sayabilmektedir. [There is a few numbers known in Çoruk Romeika. A *Çoruklu* (one from Çoruk) can count up to four.” He lists these numbers respectively as: *ena, dio, triya, tesera*. Asan, *Pontos Kültürü*, p. 241.

among the variants of Turkish and Romeika were apparently affected not only by the subject matter but also by his perception of his interlocutors.

Kemal, on the other hand, a retired senior engineer from Kadahor, would use only standard Turkish in his interactions with me and with others, rarely using local dialect; even though he revealed that he could also speak Romeika, but not fluently, after a few months. His moves across languages were deeply affected by his personality and socio-cultural standing as an educated man and a Turkish nationalist. Similarly, Hakan, a staunch Turkish nationalist even by the standards of the Valley, was a college-educated professional in his early thirties from Ogene. He used only standard Turkish and (Ogene) Romeika, with the latter secluded to his engagements with his family and folks in the village while he used standard Turkish both in his work and daily life in the town centre. Yusuf, a construction foreman from Hopşera in his late twenties, could speak Romeika fluently as many others in his village. He would use standard Turkish in more formal settings as in government offices or hospitals, a local Turkish variant (with a number of Romeika idioms/words scattered around) in his dealings with me and others in the town centre, Romeika with people from the village and family. He commented on politics and national matters in Turkish, although he used Romeika words in these instances—mostly for swearing—as well.

These shifts between languages and variants seem to be dependent on men's socio-economic status (education, income, position etc.), perceptions of their interlocutor, and the context of the interaction. In addition, the location of these encounters also seems to play an important role in the configuration of men's moves. Public offices, schools, banks, hospitals, or courthouses all operate with standard Turkish, the sole official language of the country, thus generating associations between Turkish and public/state. No local, as far as I could see, would attempt to conduct his dealings with bureaucratic institutions in Romeika or demand such facilitation. As Turkish exclusively dominates public spaces and institutions, villages and homes appear to be more accommodating of Romeika, thus configuring it as the language of family, community, and the village. Yet, we

should keep in mind that these spatial arrangements are relational and always subject to change.

These manoeuvres across languages should be conceived with regards to intersubjective encounters and local customs, as their relational impact further affects the way communication is conducted. For instance, in coffeehouses men would use all these different forms interchangeably, standard or local Turkish in their dealings with me and Romeika with fellow locals, highlighting the heterogeneity of linguistic practices in the Valley. We should note that in all these cases, nevertheless, the local Turkish dialect and Romeika emerge as more intimate and familiar media of communication since the insistence on standard Turkish might insinuate a sense of aloofness and arrogance. Many men in the Valley, upon learning the fact that I am also a *Trabzonlu*, posed questions about why I spoke the way I did (like an *Istanbullu*) rather than the local dialect, which was somehow reconciled with my educational background and socio-cultural status. Nevertheless, locals generally associated the absence of the local Turkish variant with a sense of socio-cultural distance, formality, pretentiousness, and aspiration to look modern/urban.

Being from Trabzon and yet not speaking with the local dialect might mark a subject as arrogant or insincere, as someone who pretends to be something at the expense of his heritage, which seems to contrast to the fundamental masculine ideal: Men are supposed to be honest and genuine and not aspire to be something else (*özü sözü bir, neyse o*). Standard Turkish, hence, might mark the speaker as pretentious, feminine, and as someone who lost his masculine essence to be something else.<sup>265</sup> Possibly related to the way the local Turkish

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<sup>265</sup> This micro pattern of masculinities in the Valley can be observed in overall Turkish masculine attitudes toward Westernisation as well, illustrating the tension between an appeal to emulate the West and “enjoy” while resistance to remain the same, preserve the wholeness, and retain difference is also strong. Umut Tümay Arslan, for instance, discusses this tension and ambiguity as the “agony swing of Turkishness” and traces this constitutive in-betweenness back to a masculine stance of Turkishness that conceives Westernisation as a loss of his masculine wholeness through literary and cinematic texts. In clear connection, womanhood is associated with a desire to be something else, a desire to be desired, degeneration, and loss of the essence of the self. For a brief discussion, please see: Umut Tümay Arslan, “Türklüğün İstirap Salıncağı,” in *Cinsiyet Halleri: Türkiye’de Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Kesişim Sınırları*, Varlık: İstanbul, 2008, p. 141 – 143.

variant is associated with genuineness, the younger men retain their local accent although they are schooled in standard Turkish and exposed to it in the Internet and media, in a pattern that contrasts the experiences of women of their age, who embrace standard Turkish more pervasively.<sup>266</sup> Local men's use of local Turkish dialect should also be considered alongside this performance of genuineness as a masculine ideal, attached strictly to locally embedded languages.<sup>267</sup>

It should be stated that almost all male interlocutors recounted a problematic relation to their Romeika heritage, with some even hating the fact that they could speak Romeika and refusing to speak the language for a while in their lives. Mustafa, for instance, recounted how he used to refuse to speak Romeika when he was a teenager, as it was against his Turkishness. Yusuf, similarly, declined my request to record our meeting if we were to talk about Romeika as he did not want any such association between him and the language. What I experienced as an initial denial of the knowledge of Romeika, then, seems to be related to this prevalent unwillingness to be associated with Romeika in the case of men.

### **Women**

Similar to men, women seem to move between these languages and dialects depending on contexts and their socio-cultural status. Most educated local women, working as professionals in the Valley, prefer using standard Turkish in public spaces, while women in village spaces use Romeika and the local Turkish variant. College-educated Hayriye, for instance, a college-educated woman in her

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<sup>266</sup> Please see: Birgül Yılmaz, *Learning 'my' Language: Moments of languages and identities among Kurds in the UK*, 2015, Unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS, University of London.

<sup>267</sup> Joan Pujolar i Cos also makes a similar claim in the Catalan case with regards to Andalusian accent and its socio-cultural implications for masculine subjectivities:

In Catalonia, an Andalusian accent is usually associated with peasant or lower-working-class groups, and conveys a certain world view: that of the 'common people' who, in their simplicity, can claim authenticity and direct access to *simple* truths (an expressive resource usually exploited in theatre and comedy).

This 'simplicity' was a key element in the way the Ramblers men organized their displays of self. For example, these men distanced themselves quite visibly from formal types of talk [...] they teased members who spoke too elegantly, and took pleasure in integrating their own forms of (dirty) language [...].

Joan Pujolar i Cos, "Masculinities in a Multilingual Setting," in *Language and Masculinity*, Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof (eds.), Blackwell: Oxford and Cambridge, 1997, p. 96.

fifties and originally of Ğorğoras, would use a careful and standard Turkish in her dealings with others in public as she did with me. Yet, Hayriye was also fluent in Romeika, which, in her case, was reserved for her interactions with the elders of the community in village settings. She could also revert to the local dialect, but only sporadically and in specific circumstances, as in her interactions with locals. Similar to the perception of the local Turkish variant among men, she used the local variant in her interactions with locals probably as a sign of humility and decency, which she had to reiterate as an educated woman who returned to the Valley after decades of professional work in cities. This retention of the local Turkish variant and Romeika inscribes her as a decent and not-aloof subject within the community through which her moral standing is affirmed. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that she did not teach Romeika to her children and communicates to them in a clear standard Turkish.

Similarly, Kadriye, a professional local woman in her late forties, would generally use a clear standard Turkish in her public encounters even though she could also switch to Romeika and the local Turkish variant. Her daily dealings were mostly conducted in standard Turkish. Emine, on the other hand, a housewife in her forties who settled in Şur through her marriage and completed only elementary school, had a good command of Romeika and moved only between the local Turkish variant and Romeika. As she spent most of her time in her house and village, working in the field and herding cattle, her need to use standard Turkish was significantly limited. Intriguingly, only through Emine's case, I could decipher the intimacy generated through the use of Romeika as she would tell jokes containing various slang words in Romeika, as in *pussy* or *dick*, utterance of which is utterly banned from mixed gender settings in the case of Turkish. Romeika, in these particular settings, as also indicated by many others, seems to provide a relative ease and proximity within which these taboo words can be uttered in mixed gender contexts, which, as Osman indicated, seems impossible to be replicated in Turkish.

Women constitute a much smaller fraction of my interlocutors in the Valley and my depictions reflect those women with whom I could engage. It should be kept



in mind that there might be other modalities in women's movements across these languages, especially in communities that live in more secluded settlements. I do not, in this sense, claim to cover all possible combinations in the case of women, but rather my objective here remains to highlight differences between these women in line with my analysis with men. I depicted how their linguistic preferences depend on their socio-economic status, the perceived position of their interlocutors, the context of the encounter as well as the level of their public participation (primarily through work), which emerges as an additional factor in women's case.

### ***Subject Matter beyond Gender: Politics and Sexuality***

In addition to these gendered patterns, two subject matters generate a configuration within which both genders act similarly. The theme of the conversation, in this sense, also affects the medium of the communication. In contrast to village-related or local issues (as in kinship, local incidents and events, or casual dialogues), which are communicated in Romeika or in the local variant of Turkish, political and national discussions are conducted in Turkish. Local men and women use (a relatively clear, and somehow standard) Turkish in public to discuss matters pertaining to national issues, as in the state affairs or politics. Hence, Turkish emerges as the language of the political and the national.

On the other hand, sexuality-related issues in heteronormative settings are generally communicated through Romeika. Although sexual matters can also be conveyed in variants of Turkish or Romeika in homosocial<sup>268</sup> contexts, Romeika emerges as the only medium through which these matters can be raised in settings where both men and women are present. Osman, for instance, indicated that men, including himself, would not use sexual words, such as dick/fuck, in Turkish when women are present, although he was comfortable with using these words in his encounters with women in Romeika. Romeika, for him, provided the proximity and intimacy through which socio-linguistic conventions around the

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<sup>268</sup> The term homosocial is used in reference to Sedgwick's influential work. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1985.

regulation of relations between genders are amended. This implication of Romeika seems to be in tandem with the local tradition of mixed gatherings (as in weddings and *kalandar*) in communal spaces, where men and women would dance and entertain themselves together, e.g. *horon*.<sup>269</sup> The contemporary Valley, though, places a relatively greater emphasis on separation of genders, although this separation is also always subject to alterations and exceptions. Similarly, then, Emine's apparent ease at using swear words in Romeika in the presence of non-family men should be thought alongside this exclusive domain of Romeika. Thus, in clear contrast to Turkish, Romeika emerges as the medium through which sexuality is communicated in mixed gender settings.

These observations on differentiations in the way men and women move across languages and variants provides us with two patterns that I claim also affect the way Romeika is implicated in subject formations.

### ***Turkish in Public: Approximating an Ideal and Distancing from Romeika***

Turkish seems to be embedded in contexts where the matter of the conversation is geared toward the public/state, as in locals' official dealings with bureaucracy (including all aspects of administration, judiciary, police, schools, and hospitals) or formal institutions, such as banks, since such official processes can legally be conducted solely in Turkish by properly trained bureaucrats or clerks who are to speak standard Turkish, excluding Romeika both juridically and socio-culturally.<sup>270</sup> Further strengthened by the sole use of Turkish by local and national media, the public arena seems to be foreclosed for Romeika (and to a certain extent to local Turkish variants), which is in return secluded to more private domains, as in intra-familial and intra-community encounters in villages and homes.

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<sup>269</sup> *Horon* is a fast-paced and collective dance that is specific to the Eastern Black Sea littoral. It is generally danced with the company of *kaval* (pipe), *kemençe* (a stringed local musical instrument), and/or *tulum* (another local instrument very similar to gaida). Especially *kaval* and *kemençe* are the most common musical instruments in the Valley and loved by almost all locals. *Kaval's* eminence, though, seems to be fading currently, while *kemençe* still remains popular.

<sup>270</sup> It is an imperative to highlight the fact that uses of non-standard forms generally are subjected to ridicule and exclusion in the Turkish context, marking the subject as uneducated and un-urban while inducing degrees of naiveté and ignorance.

Furthermore, men specifically prefer to speak in Turkish in public even when they are addressed in Romeika. It was not uncommon to see women addressing men in Romeika in shops and restaurants with men responding in Turkish. While women seem to keep using Romeika both in public and private more casually, men seem to be more invested and comfortable with Turkish especially in public. This figuration of the public and Romeika's intriguing relationality to it, I argue, paved the way for Turkish to emerge as the language of the public, power/state, the formal, the national, and the non-local in the case of men. Using Turkish, in this context, seems to be a sign of one's proximity to the state, embeddedness in public and politics, one's involvement in the national (affairs and discussions), and a reiteration of masculinity vis-à-vis uses of Romeika, which seem to be associated with the village space, privacy, communality, locality, femininity, and difference. Aggravated further through specific configurations of the citizenship and the public sphere in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as I discussed in Chapter III, Turkish emerges as the marker of the public with masculine connotations, while Romeika is secluded to private domains and ascribed feminine marks via its banishment from the public/formal entanglements. It seems that men's relation to Romeika is plagued by nationalist and statist discourses that they adamantly circulate and participate in.

Through their proximity to the state institutions and discourses, masculine subjects might have been alienated from Romeika, which emerges as a hindrance to the attainment of Turkishness, imagined as a homogeneous and coherent identity with no designated site for heterogeneity or incoherence in one's identity. As Romeika would imply a certain sense of difference and heterogeneity, which might lead to a minority position that falls outside the contours of Turkishness (alongside other linguistic minorities, such as Kurds), men of the Valley, as subjects who align with and participate in the national(ist) ethos of the state and its discourses, might have come to view Romeika as an element of their heritage that needs to be secluded or left behind in their quests to be more proximate to Turkishness, the public, and the state. Especially with regards to the fact that many families in the Valley have entrenched interests in

bureaucratic echelons, it would not be surprising that public visibility of Romeika might be seen as an element that potentially undermines their embeddedness in the nationalist ideology, which views all socio-cultural distinctions with suspicion. In order to exist as equals in public, to succeed in economic and political life, and not to be marginalised as a minority within the country, Turkish is embraced while Romeika is to be distanced and rendered invisible in public. Locals' staunch opposition to Kurdish demands for education in mother tongue alongside their strong rejection of allusions that imply a Greek heritage or minority position might be related to such connotations of Romeika for men.

Hence, as it bore unsettling connotations for locals, articulations around Romeika emerge as an "uncanny" element of local identity and seem to be strikingly absent from the public. The uncanny configuration of Romeika, I should underline, occurs within a particular socio-historical context where national identities are imagined to be mutually exclusive. Romeika is "uncanny," in this sense, not because of its innate characteristics as an archaic remnant of something that has long been thought to be extinct but continues to exist in "discreet" forms. It is "uncanny" because it is a central aspect of local subjectivity and socialities as well as a socio-historically alienated feature (of local selves as Turkish subjects) since it hinders local's Turkishness through generating socio-cultural connotations around genealogy, i.e., it is imagined to be a reflection of an "innate" Greekness. Romeika as an "uncanny" element of local socialities disfigures and blurs the nationalist imaginary by bringing two supposedly antagonistic categories, Turkishness and Greekness, together.

An intriguing inter-relationality between subjects, then, appears to be the cause of these manoeuvres among Romeika and different variants of Turkish. Turkish, especially in its standard form, seems to be strictly associated with modernity, Turkishness as a national ideal and identity to attain, politics, higher social status, educational attainment, the public, town/city, being in harmony with national ideals, and proximity to power structures. Romeika, on the other hand, is associated with village space, the private, intimate relations, community,

locality, lower social status, and local distinctions that are at odds with the national ideal of homogeneity.

Thus, I argue that only through such distancing from Romeika could men be inducted as subjects of the Turkish nationalist ideology. The prerequisite for local men to emerge as subjects in public is to sever their links to Romeika. The cost of this configuration, in return, is the spectral presence of Romeika in public, where it cannot be named and can only exist in “discreet” forms, as I discuss in the succeeding chapter. Turkish subjectivity in the case of men, in this sense, emerges and is shaped by such manoeuvres through which they are interpellated to re-configure themselves as Turkish subjects in a public that is constructed and infused by the (statist-nationalist) ideology. This intriguing relation to Romeika, I believe, generates different paths for men and women to emerge as subjects (in line with Turkish nationalism) within the Turkish public.

### ***Women and Romeika: Heimlich and Immediate Links***

In comparison to this constitutive tension generated by Romeika in the case of men, the relationality of women is not as problematic as that of men since women’s participation in public is configured in a different manner.<sup>271</sup> The exclusion of women from the public, where political discourses are circulated, as a result, did not bring in a similar investment in (forms of) Turkish and might have resulted in women having a more immediate relationship to Romeika, since even educated women did not mention any internal struggle with or resentment toward Romeika. Even those who hold bureaucratic positions were also more relaxed and less anxious to admit immediately that they spoke Romeika without necessitating prolonged contact or familiarisation. Eventually, the figuration of Romeika as an impediment in masculine subjects’ contiguity with the state and nationalist ideology appears to be absent for the majority of women, who, by virtue of strong patriarchal characteristics of the state and juridico-bureaucratic structures, have never been interpellated in the same way as men have and

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<sup>271</sup> Ayşe Parla, “The ‘Honor’ of the State: Virginity Examinations in Turkey,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2001, p. 72 – 74.

besides that, they have been politically inducted by different means, as is especially evident in the case of uneducated women embedded in villages that are far from the gaze of state.<sup>272</sup>

So far I have analysed how Romeika and Turkishness are accommodated through a range of local manoeuvres, which generate gendered subjectivities in the Valley. As I trace Romeika across gendered socialities through its presence and absences, though, a pattern through which its use is secluded into a private domain emerges. In the following section, I will analyse this privatised status of Romeika.

### **III. Discreet Presence of Romeika: Communal Privacy**

Romeika, then, permeates local culture and emerges as one of the key elements of socialities across the Valley both through inclusion and exclusion. Although it is not a secret, its relatively unknown status for the wider Turkish public requires us to be attentive to its peculiar state that emerges as a private and elusive phenomenon, as illustrated by the following vignette.

#### *Intricacies of Visibility: Where and When to Name it?*

As my field research coincided with the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2015, daily interactions and discourses provided valuable insights with regards to how intensified (Turkish) nationalist discourses could be accommodated within a community that preserves Romeika. Approaching parliamentary elections of June 2015, political discussions increasingly found their way into my interactions and participation in the Valley. Locals discussed almost all issues openly, touching legality, justice, minorities, Kurdish demands, Armenians and their experiences, Greeks and their shared past, LGBTQ movements and their statuses, sexuality, government policies, and promises by political parties. Visits by numerous candidates, who ran for six parliamentary seats of the city, were also a part of the process. I was invited to a number of meetings, both as a researcher and as a friend of those party affiliates, attending

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<sup>272</sup> Parla discusses how Turkish women were incorporated into the public as heroic, selfless, asexualised subjects to embody modernisation while preserving their motherly and altruistic composition as a supplement to men, who emerge as the agents of the national progress. Parla, "The 'Honor' of the State," p. 74 – 75.

gatherings of political parties from centre to ultra (nationalist) left and right.

In early May, I was invited to a gathering in the bureau of a major political party, where a number of candidates presented their agenda and answered locals' questions. Although mostly older men were present as audience in the bureau, there were also some younger men and a few women in this specific gathering. The political party, even though generally considered centre-left, is closely associated with a modernist Turkish nationalism, which was further exacerbated in this local context as candidates wanted to appeal to locals, who are widely known for their nationalism. The first three candidates, all professional men in their forties and fifties, had a lot to say on the contemporary state of the country. The underlying tone of all was their firm (and conspiratorial) conviction that foreign powers were complicit in the current impasse Turkey faced and that the country was on the verge of collapse and division for a number of reasons, all caused by the absence of nationalist unity. Yet, the last one, the speech by Hasan, a considerably younger candidate from Tonya, included a twist. Mustafa began his speech by indicating that he was from Tonya İskenderli, a western district of Trabzon, and similar to his "brethren in Çaykara" he could also speak *Rumca* (Romeika). Apparently, he indicated that he had attended Modern Greek courses and could speak *Yunanca* (Greek), too, but could not add it in his résumé, as certain others would "misunderstand." Other candidates were a bit irritated. I was intrigued. After a quick and awkward silence, the chief of the local party organisation, Kenan, uttered some words in Romeika, to which the candidate and the majority of the audience responded with laughter. The tension faded away while Mustafa delivered the rest of his speech in Turkish.<sup>273</sup>

Hasan disclosed his ability to speak Romeika in a particular context and highlighted that he concealed it from a much wider audience. It was specifically in Çaykara, where Romeika was also natively spoken, he chose to voice the fact that he could speak Romeika, not in any other town. What did this brief glimpse by Hasan tell us then? Is Romeika a secret that is withheld from the wider public? And, why couldn't Hasan indicate publicly in his CV that he was fluent in Romeika and Greek? How shall we comprehend this tendency of outsiders to "misunderstand" Romeika?

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<sup>273</sup> The young candidate apparently procured sympathy off locals, as they seemed to have voted overwhelmingly in his favour, putting him in the local list right after another candidate with roots directly from the Valley. He also happened to find a place in the final list for parliamentary seats for the province.

### III.I. Elusiveness of Romeika

As men across villages proudly define themselves as Turkish nationalists—subjects that are “loyal” to their motherland and state—this particular relation, I argue, necessitates the manoeuvres through which Romeika is configured as a “private” aspect of local society and culture while men could publicly perform Turkish nationalism. This specific position Romeika takes with regards to local alignments with Turkish nationalism, then, I argue, emerges as one of the major elements through which local subjectivities are moulded and enacted.

I had experienced difficulties at the beginning of my research that resonated deeply with the way Hasan did not “reveal” the fact that he spoke Romeika to the wider public. When I had arrived in the Valley for my MA research in late 2011, it was hard for me to find locals who replied positively to my question: “Can you speak Romeika?” Many of them had quickly said no and denied any relation to the language. Romeika was nowhere to be found even in places where others indicated that it existed. It eluded me as a spectral object; said to be there but could not be concretely located. People and places were both associated and disassociated with the language; it was glimpsed only to disappear swiftly. Over the course of the research, though, I realised that locals revealed such information to outsiders in particular forms, through which the possibility of “misunderstanding” is eliminated. Those who denied any knowledge of the language in our initial encounters, such as Kemal or Musa Hoca, began expressing that they indeed knew Romeika, in varying degrees that ranged from fluency to knowing basic words and idioms. Locals were careful in their revelation, in this sense, managing its visibility carefully.

That invisible and inarticulate status of the language, especially in public, emerged to be quite illustrative during the research process. During interviews, even close friends displayed a thorough anxiety and aversion toward explicitly reflecting on the language, especially in case the voice recorder was on. Although Romeika was an integral and omnipresent part of local life, its public representation was obscured drastically, producing a heritage with almost no



possibility of representation in public without producing anxiety and discomfort (in the case of men).

Locals' reluctance to profess that they speak Romeika, no doubt, is related to the name of the language in Turkish, *Rumca*, which I discussed above. This elusiveness of Romeika for outsiders, then, should be read as a privatisation of the language owing to its socio-political connotations, which go against the fundamental logic of Turkishness as a homogeneous national identity. As such heterogeneities cannot be accommodated within nationalist ideologies, the only way for this distinct local heritage to continue its presence emerges as its muted and private status.

### III.II. Romeika: Communal Privacy and Un-public Presence?

It should be underlined that Romeika is predominantly secluded to intra-communal encounters, marking it as a private element of local socialities. Vahit Tursun, a local of the Valley who now lives in Athens, writes about this privacy of the language, through which Romeika is strictly secluded into the communally private domain.<sup>274</sup> Similarly, Sunay recounted how as children they were starkly warned not to utter any Romeika words when they had guests from Ankara. She recalled how her mother and aunts discouraged kids from speaking Romeika in the presence of outsiders despite the fact they themselves struggled in speaking Turkish.

Many elders indicated that they learnt Turkish when they started schooling, a trend that is hardly true for today as almost all children are exposed to Turkish via television and the internet. Yet, this historicity within which local men and women used to come into contact with Turkish through their integration into state institutions, education or military service, needs to be underlined. Within this configuration, the entry into the domain of Turkish also acted as the integration of the self to the national-modernist project through the sole

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<sup>274</sup> Vahit Tursun, "Sancılı Geçmişten Sessiz Sona," in *Karardı Karadeniz*, Uğur Biryol (ed.), İletişim: İstanbul, 2012, p. 40.

utilisation of Turkish for all public dealings while secluding Romeika into communal relations and spaces. Turkish, thus, became the language of the public and national while Romeika is figured as the language of the private and communal/familial.

In his analysis of Minangkabau communities in Indonesia, Gregory Simon notes a differentiation between linguistic preferences across different domains of socio-cultural life. “Minang, as the first language of most people in West Sumatra,” Simon argues, “is most closely associated with people’s family life, their close friendship, and their most salient emotions while Indonesian is more tightly linked to formal public interactions and the mass media”,<sup>275</sup> although both languages are “close enough, and mixed enough”.<sup>276</sup> In parallel to Minangkabau community’s preference for the Minang language for private use, I argue that Romeika emerges as a marker of communal privacy, while locals prefer Turkish in public, which cannot accommodate Romeika because of its nationalist and homogenising configurations.

Thus, I would argue that Romeika emerges as a social phenomenon that is secluded into the communally private domain in the Valley. This privacy, I argue, is not fixed and spatial, but rather relational and indexical through which communal boundaries are established with a sense of intimacy, as exemplified better in the exclusive use of Romeika for sexual conversations in mixed gender settings. I argue that this “privatisation”<sup>277</sup> of the language for the community is rooted in the very historicity of Turkish citizenship and the way it configures the public and the political as I discussed in Chapter III, generating subjectivities in line with the imperatives of the nationalist ideology.

This public/private dynamic, however, does not envision a clear-cut separation

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<sup>275</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 13.

<sup>276</sup> Gregory M. Simon, *Caged in on the Outside: Identity, Morality, and Self in an Indonesian Islamic Community*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2007, p. 61 – 62.

<sup>277</sup> Darıcı’s work on the struggles of Kurdish youth in Turkey also presents a substantiated articulation of such assumed distinctions by deciphering how these youth groups, in the middle of gendered spatial differentiation and state oppression, privatise public spaces. For further information, please see: Haydar Darıcı, “Politics of Privacy: Forced Migration and the Spatial Struggle of the Kurdish Youth,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2011.

between “community vs. individual”.<sup>278</sup> I do not conceive private as a domain of the individual and family, as it is conventionally understood in Habermasian articulations. It extends well beyond the contours of the individual/family, incorporating communal socialities.<sup>279</sup> Similarly, public does not simply correspond to a zone beyond family/individual, but emerges relationally across spaces (including homes which are conventionally articulated as private) and encounters. Privacy, in this sense, is intricately tied to the generation of a sense of (communal) intimacy in relation to “an outside observer whose disapproval matters” and “whose judgment can be predicted”.<sup>280</sup> Intimacy, however, “does not ‘flow’ out of a familial space, but is perceived against a backdrop that accentuates the experience of difference (in and beyond domestic spaces) and orients that experience” in relation to this outside.<sup>281</sup>

Moreover, Habermasian articulations assume a distance between politics and the private, while failing to grasp the dynamic interplay, transitivity, and indexicality of these categories.<sup>282</sup> As also further complicated by gendered performances, alongside other socio-cultural and politico-economic factors, reducing public-private discussion to a binary is unable to account for the dynamism and multiplicity of subjects’ ever-changing alignments. In opposition to this holistic and mutually exclusive articulation, conceiving them as “indexical signs,” following Gal’s theorisations, helps us to grasp how they are relationally and contextually adjusted in a dynamic manner, sticking to “spaces, institutions, bodies, groups, activities, interactions, [and] relations.”<sup>283</sup> Since public and private are “co-constitutive categories,” our articulations of them must accommodate multiplicities and heterogeneities that structurally hinder any coherent or holistic conceptualisation along a “single dichotomy.”<sup>284</sup> Highlighting the reiterative process through which these indexicalities are experienced, this

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<sup>278</sup> Susan Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Spring 2002, p. 77 – 78.

<sup>279</sup> Andrew Shryock, “Other Concious/Self Aware: First Thoughts on Cultural Intimacy and Mass Mediation,” in *Off Stage On Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture*, Andrew Shryock (ed.), Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>280</sup> Shryock, “Other Concious/Self Aware,” p. 10.

<sup>281</sup> Shryock, “Other Concious/Self Aware,” p. 11.

<sup>282</sup> Gal, “the Public/Private Distinction,” p. 80 – 81, 85.

<sup>283</sup> Gal, “the Public/Private Distinction,” p. 80 – 81.

<sup>284</sup> Gal, p. 80 – 82.

specific conceptualisation allows us to include evanescent, nested, liminal, “fractal,” and transient relationalities alongside the more “lasting and coercive” ones, as in the case of legal institutions.<sup>285</sup>

Thus, as also hinted in vignettes above, Romeika emerges as an element of local socialities that crosscut these boundaries to produce intimate and communally private relationalities even in settings that are conventionally deemed public, e.g. town square and coffeehouses. Although locals prefer to use Turkish in the presence of outsiders, they would also use Romeika in coffeehouses, producing relationalities that are prone to alterations. Similarly, in houses, even though they are conventionally thought of as private spaces, the presence of outsiders generates different degrees of publicness and privacy, rendering them semi-public, or non-private.<sup>286</sup> They constitute a grey zone between what is public (exemplified by the town square) and private (e.g. the house), both blurring the boundary between the two and highlighting the relational, indexical and ever-changing composition of both.

Publicly silent and unarticulated, then, Romeika exists in its *privatised* state among members of the Valley communities, for whom its utilisation, albeit in concealed forms, marks the boundaries of the community by generating intimacy, proximity, and affinity. As Romeika appears to be “conspicuously inconspicuous”<sup>287</sup> in its representational form, that is, it infuses local socialities but is not named in public, its intra-communal use emerges to be the sole site of its existence and transmission of the local heritage with no signification in the public arena.

Yet, this privatised status of the language should not mislead us to conceive Romeika as a meticulously concealed social heritage that only insiders are aware of. On the contrary, as all these local accounts also tell us, Romeika’s presence can be characterised by the discretion that it is communicated to outsiders,

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<sup>285</sup> Gal, p. 85.

Lilith Mahmud, *The Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters: Gender, Secrecy, and Fraternity in Italian Masonic Lodges*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2014, p. 43.

<sup>286</sup> Shryock, “Other Concious/Self Aware,” p. 12.

<sup>287</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 30.

albeit in fragmented forms, and “a correctly conjured public would be able to know and to recognize” its prevalence in the social life of the Valley communities.<sup>288</sup> Even in this privatised form, though, its existence is constantly signalled via a number of fragments, even when it is to be played down, allowing locals to manoeuvre in the social terrain depending on their perceptions of interlocutors. This privacy, in this sense, allows them to dodge nationalist suspicions around ancestry and conversion by armouring them with the ability to flexibly admit the heritage, thrust it away from themselves, or deny the affiliation altogether, depending on the context.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I dealt with the way local men and women move across variants of Turkish and Romeika in relation to gendered approximations of Turkishness. I explored differences in how men and women engage with the languages. I discussed these differences alongside the way the public and Turkishness are organised and function to highlight the uneasy relation men seem to have with Romeika. Then, I discussed how the language emerges as an elusive socio-cultural phenomenon and constitutes a (communally) private aspect of local life. I underline how only through such seclusion could local men approximate Turkishness as Romeika goes against the fundamental premises of nationalist imaginaries and brings supposedly irreconcilable categories together. Its continued presence in the Valley signals the “convergence and disorganization of the [very] rules that govern”<sup>289</sup> national(ist) identity and subjectivities, highlighting the possibility of other modalities of being and belonging. The privatised form of Romeika, in this sense, produces different paths of subject formation for men and women of the Valley. Within this particular setting, local men approximate Turkishness through their preference and utilisation of Turkish in public spaces and for political/national matters. Their distance from Romeika, in this sense, spatially and relationally constitutes them as Turkish subjects of the nation-state through their incessant moves across variants and

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<sup>288</sup> Mahmud, *The Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters*, p. 44.

<sup>289</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 31.

languages. These manoeuvres could be read as reiterations that generate Turkish subjectivities in the Valley.

How men and women in the Valley use Romeika, in this sense, demonstrates two important aspects of local socio-cultural life. It firstly illustrates everyday engagements with Romeika alongside variants of Turkish, a socio-cultural pattern that has never been analysed before. It also presents us with a gendered path of attaining Turkishness and how local distinctions are accommodated within such processes. By tracing Romeika in its communally private state, I highlighted its discreet status in Turkish public, which leads us to the succeeding chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### “CAN’T YOU SEE?”: DISCRETION, PLACES, AND TREASURE HUNTS

Following the analysis of the private status of Romeika and its gendered uses in the Valley, this chapter explores the implications of Romeika’s (in)visibility in public on subjectivities. In two sections, I pursue Romeika and its implications for socialities to account for its discreet status and how this discretion could be traced through local practices. I begin the analysis with a brief theoretical discussion on secrecy and discretion. Afterwards, I discuss local manoeuvres that configure the discreet status of the language, which enchants the local landscape as the depository of the collective memory of the communities in the Valley. I discuss local relationships with the landscape within the context of treasure hunts—locals’ quests for buried troves—which, I argue, should be conceived as a mode of engagement with the past and in relation to local alignments with Turkish nationalism, through which locals engage with their (collective) memory through their corporeal quests and narratives.

#### Secrecy and Discretion: Regulating Visibility

In his famous analysis of secrecy, Georg Simmel underlines the significance of concealment for social relations: “For even where one of the two [parties of social interaction] does not notice the existence of a secret,” Simmel writes, “the behaviour of the concealer, and hence the whole relationship, is certainly modified by it.”<sup>290</sup> Although Simmel’s account has its shortcomings, his contribution is still worth mentioning in view of his emphasis on the implications of secrecy, or concealment, for social relations. Secrecy, for Simmel, transforms interactions alongside the concealment, making and unmaking boundaries. These boundaries, however, should be conceived not as impervious or opaque limits that produce a clear-cut separation between inside and outside. On the contrary, they change temporally and spatially, differentiating the content, producing a bounding effect, and constituting a conductive limit that

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<sup>290</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Secret and the Secret Society,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), The Free Press: New York and London, 1950, p. 330.

allows and manages the communication that “constantly receives and releases contents.”<sup>291</sup> Although it might look contradictory to the logic of secrecy, Simmel underlines this inherent tension which one can observe between its two supposedly antagonistic drives, concealment and disclosure:

For this reason, the secret is surrounded by the possibility and temptation of betrayal; and the external danger of being discovered is interwoven with the *internal danger*, which is like the fascination of an abyss, of *giving oneself away*. The secret puts a barrier between men but, at the same time, it creates the tempting challenge to *break through it*, by gossip or confession, and this challenge accompanies its psychology like a constant overtone.<sup>292</sup>

Then, one can claim, that secrecy as a social process carries an inherent tendency towards disclosure,<sup>293</sup> a tendency that should be conceived in relation to its already ambiguous and ever-changing boundaries. It should be added that such exposure also bears the potential of creating new secrets rather than an absolute annihilation for the concealed information, producing other domains of charged knowledge with “a permanent in- and out-flow of content, in which what is originally open becomes secret, and what was originally concealed throws off its mystery.”<sup>294</sup>

Secrecy, in this sense, does not envision full opacity that is jealously kept away from others. On the contrary, it entails a different modality of communication and information management that “give[s] a charged status to information”<sup>295</sup> and circulates this knowledge in a specific manner. Socialities of secrecy, as Silvia Posocco writes in dialogue with Simmel, are “not always rendered through prohibition or foreclosure” but are “often based on disclosure.”<sup>296</sup> For this reason, beyond the façade of secrecy, where one is tempted to see comprehensive concealment and threat of exposure, lie two more subtle functions: a different modality of communication and a process of marking of the content.

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<sup>291</sup> Simmel, “The Secret and the Secret Society,” p. 335.

<sup>292</sup> Simmel, “The Secret and the Secret Society,” p. 334. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>293</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 83.

<sup>294</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1906, p. 467 – 468.

<sup>295</sup> Luise White, “Telling More: Lies, Secrets, and History,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 39, 2000, p. 22.

<sup>296</sup> Posocco, *Secrecy and Insurgency*, p. 105.



How should we understand the tacit forms of sociality that involve non-articulated forms of information, as in secrets, which are still known to most, if not all? How do “public secrets,” which Michael Taussig defines “as that which [are] generally known, but cannot be articulated,” operate socially?<sup>297</sup> Echoing Simmel’s account, Taussig also posits a number of questions extending the scope of secrecy and concealment to a much wider discussion on the organisation of our social world around scales and socialities of (un)knowing:

Yet what if the truth is not so much a secret as a *public* secret, as is the case with most important social knowledge, *knowing what not to know*? [...] For are not shared secrets the basis of our social institutions, the workplace, the family, and the state? Is not such public secrecy the most interesting, the most powerful, the most mischievous and ubiquitous form of socially active knowledge there is?<sup>298</sup>

For Taussig, public secrets require a form of “active not knowing,”<sup>299</sup> generating a particular information that is not only known by the holders of the secret, but also by those who are (supposed to be) external to it, rendering it “something [that is] privately known but collectively denied.”<sup>300</sup> I believe this attitude of “knowing what not to know” or what not to articulate publicly constitutes a crucially pertinent element of socialities in the Valley where Romeika is kept alive, albeit in a muted form. Considering the scope and aim of my analysis, I consider this specific articulation of (public) secrecy to be helpful to comprehend the position of Romeika as a public secret that is known but not articulated openly or as a mode of knowing that is based on public not knowing.

One can talk about the interplay and an ambiguity surrounding this transitionality of secrecy, glimpsing an aspect of socialities that is produced out of knowing what not to know publicly. Taussig highlights the ambiguity arising from this configuration and the possibility of public secrets producing socialities ridden with anxiety: Do they really not know or just act as if they do not know? I argue that secrets and their implications on subjectivities and socialities, which are plagued by this constitutive ambiguity, are crucial to understanding how

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<sup>297</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 5.

<sup>298</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 2 – 3. Emphases are original.

<sup>299</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 7.

<sup>300</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 170.

communities are structured and performed across the borders of knowing. Even though a public secret is not articulated explicitly, its implications and the anxiety/ambiguity it induces are profoundly inscribed in the way relationalities are forged. Through this intersubjective dimension, public secrets emerge as ambiguous yet significant elements of social relations, affecting subjectivities and changing the way subjects relate to each other through blurring the borders between the inside and the outside.

Although Romeika, as indicated before, is not strictly concealed but communicated in a specific manner depending on the context and interlocutors, its public signification is strikingly absent. Alongside mechanisms that obscure its public invocation, there still seems to be a widespread yet elusive and muted knowledge about its persistence, both inside and outside the Valley, producing ambiguities for local subjects to navigate and manoeuvre. Yet, how can we explain this socially permeating element that is still invisible? I believe, alongside the public secret as a concept, it is also useful to utilise the concept of “discretion” to reflect on configurations that regulate Romeika’s visibility.

In her ethnographic analysis of women’s masonic organisations in Italy, Lilith Mahmud proposes that the notion of discretion offers a useful framework for understanding the veiled publicness of certain socialities. Highlighting their ever-changing and indexical patterns, she indicates that “‘spaces of discretion’ are liminal sites reconfigured” with regards to subjects’ orientations.<sup>301</sup> These spaces, Mahmud underlines,

[...] are ostensibly public places, such as coffee houses or rented-out convention halls, or perhaps even lodges temporarily open to profane guests, but in which *only a correctly conjured* public would be able to know and to recognize [...] [supposedly secret] activities. They are therefore simultaneously in plain sight and yet invisible to most, and they are rendered meaningful by the practices of discretion of those who pass through them.<sup>302</sup>

Mahmud, then, argues a different modality of visibility that requires a conjuring to see what is present and yet eludes recognition.

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<sup>301</sup> Mahmud, *The Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters*, p. 43.

<sup>302</sup> Mahmud, *The Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters*, p. 43 – 44. Emphasis is mine.

Different modalities of everyday secrecy and discretion, then, might illustrate how socialities of secrecy and discretion instantiate and configure subjectivities. My research on Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, in this sense, both deals with these discreet socialities and how they are experienced in peculiar forms in the Valley. As I indicated in the preceding chapter, Romeika is pervasively present in public yet this presence is intriguingly and constitutively elusive, evading outsiders' recognition. One needs familiarity with the local culture and heritage to perceive it even when it is right in front of one's eyes. Thus, I believe, discretion as a category might help us to conceive the status of Romeika through which the privacy of the language and its public (in)visibility could be articulated.

## I. (In)Visibility of Romeika in the Valley

### *Two Tailors in Paris: (In)Visibility and Ambiguities*

Contrary to my presumptions around a strict gender division, I befriended Sunay, a woman in her fifties who grew up in the Valley. A fluent speaker of Romeika, she spent her annual leave in Şur, far from where she normally resided and worked. I spent quite a lot of time at Sunay's place, as she frequently invited me over for breakfast or dinner and I helped her with errands around the house. During one of our meetings, she recounted the story of her uncle-in-law, *Enişte* in Turkish, who had worked in Istanbul as a tailor and migrated to France with a close friend, *Maçkalı Ahmet* (Ahmet of Maçka), in the 1960s.<sup>303</sup>

Arriving in Paris with a low budget and no contacts to turn to, *Enişte* and *Maçkalı Ahmet* somehow ended up in Cadet with numerous Greek tailors. Using Romeika, *Enişte* explained his situation to these Greek tailors and asked for help. Unaware of all that was happening around him, *Maçkalı Ahmet* kept his silence. Eventually, *Enişte* succeeded in his engagement with Greek tailors and landed a job. When they left the shop, *Maçkalı Ahmet*, unable to hide his amazement with his friend's linguistic capability, broke his silence: "How smart are you! When/How did you learn French [so quickly]?" *Enişte* replied, "I learn quite fast. [*Ben çok hızlı öğrenirim.*]"

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<sup>303</sup> Maçka is another district of Trabzon situated in the south of the city centre. The district hosts a number of village communities where Romeika is spoken.

I asked Sunay, if Maçkalı Ahmet really meant it, as he was also from Maçka, Trabzon and possibly knew that Romeika was spoken in Çaykara. She said, maybe he knew but pretended he did not. We both laughed at the end of the story anyway as it bizarrely reminded me of typologies of these Black Sea jokes (*Karadeniz fıkraları*), where there is a confusing proximity and ambivalence between stupid and genius personas as the audience cannot fully comprehend whether Temel, the archetypal figure of these jokes/stories, is truly naïve or incredibly smart.

In parallel with this ambiguity, I was intrigued by how this supposed secrecy around Romeika is managed. Was Maçkalı Ahmet really unaware of the persistence of Romeika and that his friend, with whom he went all the way to Paris, was a Romeika speaker? If not, why did Enişte still choose to continue with a misnomer, that he did not speak Romeika but quickly learnt French? How can we understand this silent communication around the existence of a heritage that is not represented in public, i.e. its name is not uttered? More centrally, what does it mean to not reveal, or name, your mother tongue among close friends? Or, if both Maçkalı Ahmet and Enişte knew the reality, which seems more reasonable, how did this tacit agreement not to openly communicate the truth about Romeika affect the subjectivities of both men?

Thinking about it afterwards, however, made me realize the discreet status of Romeika and how it was carefully managed within this reclusive communal setting: Romeika was neither explicitly disclosed nor comprehensively concealed; its status could be characterised generally as that of a silence rather than of a suppression. As in the case of a public secret, or of a monument,<sup>304</sup> I contemplated the glimpsing and elusive existence of Romeika: How does Romeika permeate socialities in the Valley, and yet, stay invisible?

In 2009, Yeliz Karakütük directed a documentary, *Romeyika'nın Türküsü* (The Song of Romeika), to investigate the scope of this unique cultural heritage and to introduce Romeika to the wider Turkish audience. During her interviews with a

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<sup>304</sup> Taussig, *Defacement*, p. 51 – 52.

number of locals in Ogene, a scene stands out as she records the interaction between a local woman and her son in a seemingly accidental scene. While the woman initially talks to her son in Romeika, she swiftly shifts to Turkish after registering the presence of the film crew and cameras. In the following scene, the son explains: “When a *stranger* is present, they would switch to Turkish. Among *ourselves*, be it chats in the coffeehouse or festivities, or conversations within the family, all [is in] Greek [*Rumca*]; the language *that is called* Romeika.”<sup>305</sup> Although his words imply a distance and difference between the narrator and Romeika-speaking subjects, even though he himself is a speaker, and underline the private status of the language for the community, they are still significant in terms of highlighting the discreet status of Romeika within communities of the Valley. Also supported by my observations in the field, there seems to be a certain degree of invisibility regulating the public presence of Romeika within the wider Turkish society, which I discussed partially in the preceding chapter as the privacy of the language. Even though this seclusion of Romeika for intra-communal interactions does not envision complete secrecy, its visibility and acknowledgement still require prolonged exposure to and embeddedness in local socialities.

### I.I. Paths of Invisibility

This specific configuration of Romeika as a discreet and elusive social phenomenon was evident during some friends’ visit to the Valley.

A few months after my arrival, some friends came to the area. As we seated ourselves in the local coffeehouse with scenic views in Ogene, a number of local men in their fifties were nonchalantly having a conversation right next to us. Chatting with friends and drinking tea, I also eavesdropped on the casual and not so loud conversation locals had in Romeika, with only fragments recognised. After a while, though, one of my friends leaned over and whispered: “Why are they not speaking Romeika?” I was perplexed and mesmerised at the same time and indicated that they indeed did: “Can’t you see?” She just shrugged her shoulders. I was filled with doubt. Given friends’ non-recognition of this

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<sup>305</sup> In Turkish: “*Yabancı* filan geldiği zaman hemen Türkçeye dönerler. *Kendi aramızda* işte, kahvede sohbetler olsun, eğlenceler olsun, aile içi konuşmalar, her şey Rumca. Yani Romeyika *denilen* dil.” Original subtitles in English of the documentary: “They will immediately turn back to Turkish when a foreigner comes. The chats in the village coffeehouse or the talks within the family are always in Greek, the language what we call Romeika.”

completely different language, an unsettling thought overwhelmed me: Was the conversation veiled by the strong local accent for her or had I just imagined this unmarked floating of elusive Romeika fragments? Fortunately, right after this moment of self-doubt, one of the local men approached us and initiated a conversation. Upon learning that I lived in the Valley for my research, he asked if I knew *Latince* (Latin) since it, as he indicated, was the name of the language they were just speaking. It was there all along, filling the air discreetly. Permeating the social texture all around, the language was yet to be discovered by outsiders.

Then, it can be said that Romeika's visibility is carefully managed via a number of mechanisms that neither completely conceal nor fully disclose its presence. The first of these mechanisms relates to locals' selective use of the language, which takes the form of incessant shifts between (variants of) Turkish and Romeika depending on the presence and perception of outsiders, as detailed in the preceding chapter. In the presence of strangers, locals switch to Turkish, which locals substantiate with the fact that Romeika is only spoken by a small number of communities across a few valley systems in Trabzon. (It should also be noted that even in cases of non-seclusion, Romeika is still easily overlooked, as outsiders would generally fail to register Romeika and mistake it as the local Turkish accent, which is quite hard to comprehend for unaccustomed outsiders.)

The second socio-cultural mechanism relates to misnomers—local practices around naming Romeika. In case they get “caught”<sup>306</sup> and are asked about the language, locals generally name the language as *Lazca*, even though *Lazca* is a Kartvelian/South Caucasian language and completely distinct from Romeika, spoken by the Laz community who live in a number of districts in Rize and Artvin.<sup>307</sup> Relatedly, one should note that the demonym Laz is widely used for those who hail from the Eastern Black Sea Region, including myself.<sup>308</sup> The majority of the Turkish population would erroneously follow this naming practice and would consider everyone from Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin as Laz. The local Turkish dialect, for this very reason, is generally known as *Lazca*. The category of Laz, then, carries a certain degree of ambiguity which is more

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<sup>306</sup> Vahit Tursun, “Sancılı Geçmişten Sessiz Sona,” p. 40.

<sup>307</sup> Nilüfer Taşkın, *Representing and Performing Laz Identity*, p. 11.

<sup>308</sup> Meeker, p. 337.

Taşkın, *Representing and Performing Laz Identity*, p. 10.

understood to be a regional affiliation/provenance by the wider Turkish public while its (ethno-)linguistic distinction is not known as much, rendering the Laz persona sympathetic and non-threatening for Turkish nationalism.<sup>309</sup> Thus, in these encounters, the ambiguity of the term Laz produces a secure discretion, relieving Romeika speakers from the obligation to reveal their socio-linguistic distinctions, as the name of the language, *Rumca*, would suggest potential socio-cultural links to Greece and Greek identity.

There is another set of naming practices that also eliminates the undesired allusions produced by the name *Rumca*. Since the autoglossonym—Romeika—itsself, means “language of Romans,” or the language of (the) Roman—*Romanish*, a number of locals in the Valley have specifically termed the language *Latince* (Latin) or *Romaca* (Rome-ish)<sup>310</sup> and stressed that “it is not actually Greek (*Aslında Rumca değil*).” This moving away from the name of the language, reflects the anxiety around its allusions to Greek and Greece in the current socio-political atmosphere.

The third local tactic relates to diverse degrees of denial and distancing, or pushing away the language toward others, which locals undertake in reaction to outsiders’ inquiries around Romeika. A pattern that I have experienced as well in initial encounters, locals would generally deny their ability to speak and would designate others, or other villages, as the bearers of that heritage. Only through extended interactions is this information corrected and the fact that they, too, could speak the language is disclosed to outsiders. Closely related the strength of Turkish nationalism in the Valley, this initial denial and distancing away from Romeika render it elusive and invisible for outsiders. Locals dodge any direct links between themselves and the language, rendering Romeika quite difficult to locate Romeika within the Valley.

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<sup>309</sup> This accommodation is also rendered possible by the absence of a neighbouring country that is predominantly Laz, a crucial aspect especially in comparison to the allusions Romeika produces.

<sup>310</sup> Suffix “-ca/-ce,” roughly corresponding to English suffix “-ish,” is added at the end of a noun/adjective to produce the linguistic term, as in *Fransız-ca* (French[subject/nationality, noun and adjective]+ish) or *Alman-ca* (German+ish).

Yet, I should also underline that these manoeuvres of discretion do not involve a complete concealment through which the presence of Romeika is strictly secluded to intra-communal socialities and denied in public. As I indicated before, Romeika incessantly generates different modes of communication and practices of disclosure that require a certain degree of proximity and familiarity in the local life. Rather than designating Romeika as a secret that has been shielded from outsiders for centuries, I suggest articulating interactions around Romeika as discreet socialities through which a public secret—that Romeika is still spoken by communities across the Valley—is fragmentally and transiently disclosed, communicated, and negotiated. As both academic circles and other communities neighbouring these valley systems have indeed known that Romeika is still spoken among Valley communities, it would be misleading to simply designate its presence as that of a complete secret.

### I.II. Public (In)Visibility and Discretion: Ways to See

Knowing where to look and how to listen seem to be crucial to finding your way among socialities that are infused with discreet elements, which was definitely the case for Valley communities as Romeika emerges as an elusive socio-cultural practice. Over the course of the months I spent in the Valley, I grew accustomed to ways of seeing and listening that glimpsed Romeika in local encounters. My inability to detect Romeika in my initial encounters—which might be explained by local reluctance to speak Romeika in my presence —gradually turned into a growing awareness that Romeika permeates all aspects of everyday life. In time, I came to recognise conversations in Romeika, detect Romeika words scattered across dialogues in Turkish, learn Romeika words and idioms, and acquire Romeika names of geographical spots. As if, through a process of sedimentation and familiarisation within the community, I was bestowed with a different sense of seeing and listening, allowing me to see what was already there to be disclosed through a particular modality of seeing.

Rather than a secret, Romeika occupies a more idiosyncratic position within the Valley that discreetly comprises intricate and extensive links to local heritage. In



its prevalent existence in almost all aspects of local social life, it still embodies an elusive, discreet, and spectral presence that incessantly evades outsiders' gaze unless they are equipped with another modality of seeing that would disclose the saturation of local socialities and spaces with Romeika. As socialities in the Valley are deeply infused by this discreet heritage, "something so secret [can intriguingly] exist in a space so public and mundane"<sup>311</sup> and still go unregistered since "only a correctly conjured public would be able to know and recognize"<sup>312</sup> its all-encompassing presence.

This (in)ability to perceive Romeika in public (for outsiders) seems to be one of the most crucial features of the language, which further enshrines its private and intimate status for local communities, as keys to its visibility and recognition bring forward a proximity, common heritage, and a shared meaning-making process. Nurtured by centuries-long seclusion in this geography and persevering the erasures of modernisation, Romeika then embodies local heritage and emerges as a crucial element of local relations. It provides locals with a unique meaning-system in which materialities and memories are comprehended. It affects the way subjects relate to each other, make sense of signs, relate to the past and the present, and conceive their space. Hence, not only does it re-configure ways of knowing the self and others, but it also alters how the physical matter and places surrounding the subjects are perceived, related, and deeply enmeshed in local culture.

### I.III. How Places are Called

As indicated before, places across the Valley are all *conjured* in Romeika. Villages, pastures, *mezires*, trees and plants, animals, paths, houses, slopes, rocks, neighbourhoods, estates, crossings, clearings, spots, hills, caves, woods, and streams are all still embedded in a different register that only locals know of and navigate across. Then, there seem to be two dimensions of each of these geographical marks. Turkish ones are distant, generic, and arrived recently,

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<sup>311</sup> Mahmud, p. 43.

<sup>312</sup> Mahmud, p. 44.

while Romeika ones are embedded in the collective memory, bare yet veiled, enchanting, and timeless. Only if one knows the *real* name of a place, as in the case of Le Guin's *Earth Sea*, one can see this other dimension, enchanting the Valley the utilisation of the Romeika lexicon and generating an invisible space that is placed on top of the visible one. This discreet ability to name things in Romeika, I believe, both reiteratively resuscitates the language from its seemingly dead and silent presence and enchants the landscape as the depository of this un-signified and un-public heritage.

I would like to briefly touch upon this intriguing quality of local engagements with the landscape, which I believe is fundamentally tied to the way Romeika operates in the Valley as a public secret, in the footsteps of Taussig, "as that which is generally known but cannot be spoken."<sup>313</sup>

## **II. Landscapes and Treasure Hunts: Ways to See the Past and the Present**

During the initial weeks of my stay in the Valley, Cafer, a man in his mid-seventies from Kadahor, advised me to visit the castle that is located not so far from the town centre. The castle, he specified, stood right in front of Zelaka at the intersection of Holayisa River with another stream separating Zelaka from Gorgoras. Others described the castle as a Genoese relic, a military-commercial outpost of the sea-faring Republic that, locals alleged, oversaw the trade route that ran across the Valley, connecting the coast to the inner plateau, to Iran, and further to the East. Furthermore, Cafer described the castle in detail, depicting rooms, the height of walls, different levels, and staircases leading down to the riverbed, which ran approximately 10-15 meters below the ground level. Reaching the "castle" after a short walk, I could not observe these details myself as the place was nothing similar to what Cafer described so vividly. It was now in ruins with a few erect walls remaining; the staircase was nowhere to be found. (See Photo I)

Although Cafer's narrative seemed compatible with the overall history of the region, the fact that he could provide such details was intriguing since the Genoese colony he referred to was of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (located in the old city) and the Ottoman rule was sound in the province for the second half of the

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<sup>313</sup> Taussig, p. 50.

millennium.<sup>314</sup> Making matters more complicated, many locals inquired if I were looking for treasure upon my further visits to the ruins. The puzzling effect of this materiality “forced me to think”<sup>315</sup> about the ways in which locals could present a vivid description of a structure that is now physically in ruins and how others assumed a buried trove in this seemingly familiar and yet alien location.



Photo I: Ruins of the Castle. (Photo Credit: romeika.com)

How are different temporalities bridged through this Castle in its ruinous presence? How is the historicity of the place, either in the form of ruins of castles, churches, or graves, implicated in the present of the Valley and the subjectivities of those dwelling in it?

### II.I. Local “Senses of Place”

Both locals’ relation to the place they live in and the particular forms these relations take, I argue, are implicated deeply in the way subjectivities are formed. As indicated before, locals revert to Romeika to orient themselves in the Valley,

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<sup>314</sup> Miller, *Trebizond*, p. 19.

<sup>315</sup> Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 24.

using old names for geographical marks to navigate. However, locals' relation to places they dwell in is not solely limited to this naming practice. There also seem to be intriguingly intense levels of care toward the landscape. They, for instance, enviously preserve local forests, in clear contrast to widespread destruction thereof in the Turkish countryside, as forests are closely associated with family estates with many families claiming the ownership of a specific section of them. This care towards the place can also be observed in locals' preservation of agricultural fields that are relatively small and infertile. As the Valley walls are steep, the slopes of these fields render them susceptible to erosion, which gets aggravated by constant rain, occasional floods, and landslides. Local men and women, hence, have to carry the eroded soil from the bottom of the hill back up on their backs (*toprak kaldırma*) (See Photo II) biennially to preserve the field and incessantly labour to keep their fields fertile.

Furthermore, almost all locals display an unending fascination with the scenery in the Valley as they ceaselessly express their unlimited love and excitement to go to chilly pastures in spring and summer. Many local men were, for instance, convinced that I would never leave the Valley even after my research, as I must have already fallen in love with the place as they did. Similarly, those who live outside the Valley religiously undertake annual trips to be in their villages and pastures. Many locals name such voyages as pilgrimages since the Valley is addressed as *belde-i mübareke* (the sacred town) by many.<sup>316</sup>

Although incessantly cared for and adored by locals, the landscape is tough and demands labourious commitment. Fields, unless cared for ceaselessly, are eroded, reclaimed by the forest, or wrecked by a boar wandering and digging carelessly at night. The forest overgrows and swallows houses and fields, unless locals keep a tight rein on its limits. Many houses, orchards, fields, and shacks in *mezires* fell victim to its incessant expansion. This seemingly ceaseless ability of places to respond and their capacity to make and un-make what human subjects produce, animate nature, turning it into an entity that can, did and will, change

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<sup>316</sup> This naming of the Valley as *belde-i mübareke*, which seems to have been conjured up by locals using an Arabic-Ottoman linguistic structure, is widely used by locals and might be in reference to the central role played by religious seminaries of the Valley.

the course of people's fate. It emerges as an active element of local life and culture, rather than an inanimate décor of socialities.



Photo II: Toprak kaldırma (Credit: Sami Ayan)

And yet, there seems to be something more in this animation of landscapes, especially when it is thought in tandem with the silenced and unrepresented elements of local culture, as in Romeika, and the past. One of the implications of this peculiar configuration of landscapes in the Valley, I argue, is related to a peculiar practice: the treasure hunts.

## II.II. Treasure Hunts: Looking for *It*

Various men in the Valley attended treasure hunts (*definecilik*) in search of (imaginary or real) troves left behind, hidden or buried, by communities who had previously inhabited the Valley and the wider region, including but not limited to Greeks, Armenians, Genoese, and other mythical ones, e.g. the rumours about a kingdom based in Ancumah. Kerim was one of them, a man in his mid-forties, working as an accountant during the day and hunting for treasures in his free time. He enjoyed recounting his experiences with a pertinent caution, as the activity is illegal in the country. Even though he spent years in these hunts, he

was not rich at all, living in a humble house with his wider family at the edge of the forest in Coroş.

Kerim recounted his quests with Greeks and Armenians,<sup>317</sup> who shared his passion and helped him “translate” symbols to pin down the buried, or concealed, riches. Upon my questions he listed how different figures of swords, squares, birds symbolized troves of kings, pirates/bandits, merchants, Armenians, or Greeks.<sup>318</sup> One of these signs, enigmatically and enchantingly located quite close to his house in Coroş, was described as a chase on a rock that was big enough to put a hand in. Kerim was sure that it was put there by an unknown “someone” to mark a trove buried nearby. When he showed me the sign afterwards, though, my confusion just got amplified: It was a plain, shallow, and quite rough erosion on a big rock, which did not give away any coherent figure, let alone a sign of the exact location of a treasure. Yet, he, alongside others, was sure that it was indeed a sign left there for the descendants of those who buried the trove. It was probably my turn to be asked the question, which I had posed to my friends with regards to Romeika, as the sign was supposed to be right in front of my eyes: “Can’t you see?” I simply could not.

Others in the Valley recounted stories about their own quests: Ahmet had attended a number of hunts with his brother-in-law but was more cautious as they had given him visions of *cins*<sup>319</sup> as the trove they were after was possessed (*sahipli*) by these beings. Yusuf was mesmerised by the possibility of troves in the ruins of monastery in a forest nearby and eager to join others. Mustafa had attended many such quests, in and outside the Valley, over the course of decades. Mehmet mentioned his own experiences and how he got so close to finding it.

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<sup>317</sup> He indeed had a number of cryptic telephone conversations with people who, he claimed, were priests in İstanbul or Pontic Greeks living in Georgia.

<sup>318</sup> I could not help but ask as I was intrigued by a spectacular absence in the progression of symbols: “What about Turks? What is their symbol?” Laughing, Mehmet shrugged his shoulders and cynically said: “Turks?” They, he indicated, had no signs! I was a member of an *unsigned* community, I thus learnt, while a sign marked *others*. Or they left some signs on nature.

<sup>319</sup> Supernatural beings/demons that are made of fire in (Islamic) theology/mythology. Although Islamic teaching strictly bans any dealings with *cins*, it is not uncommon for people to ‘resort to’ *cins* to accomplish anything they desire. Intriguingly, Gaston Gordillo also reports similar trends in Latin America where locals think that troves are buried beneath ruins and that these treasures are “protected by jealous guardian spirits described as ghosts or devils (*diablos*).” Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 37.

And yet, intriguingly, a frustrating finale always found their way into these stories. Even when hunters locate the treasure, they cannot lay their hands on it. It is rendered invisible; it either disappears or appears deceptively as rocks or ashes. Locals claimed that most of these troves were indeed possessed by *cins*, hence deceiving and eluding hunters. Locals needed a key for these cryptic troves, a key that could render what was right in front of one's eyes, like the purloined letter of Poe,<sup>320</sup> visible. These troves evaded locals, not revealing themselves, as one needed a particular knowledge to see them, and hence Kerim was working with Greeks and Armenians.<sup>321</sup> It required an act of conjuring up to unveil what is already there, albeit invisibly. "A bunch of gold coins looks like ashes right in front of you," Mehmet claimed.<sup>322</sup> They were sure that it was right there, even if they could not see it. A sign carved on a rock or a bunch of gold... It must have been there! Probably, this was the locals' turn to be asked, as it was supposed to be right in front of their eyes but they were unable to pinpoint it: "Can't you see?"

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<sup>320</sup> Lacan also dealt with the theme to comprehend subjectivities produced through this relationality to see what is visible and at the same time invisible as in the case of the King "that sees nothing," the Queen "which sees that the first sees nothing and deceives itself into thereby believing to be covered what it hides," and the Minister or Dupin who sees "that the first two glances leave what must be hidden uncovered to whoever would seize it". Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on the 'Purloined Letter'," in *Ecrits*, Bruce Fink (trans.), W.W. Norton & Co.: New York and London, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>321</sup> Again, Gordillo reports a particular conjuring up through which these troves are rendered visible: "You can only find a *tapado* [trove], they say, if the guardian spirit grants you access to it." (p. 37)

<sup>322</sup> Interestingly, in her forthcoming article on treasure hunts among Kurdish communities of Muş, Alice von Bieberstein also reports similar incidents and narratives:

[...] the gold is marked by an intrinsic evasiveness. Whatever is caught is seldom there to last, rarely translating into actual riches, always emerging only to disappear into the hands of relatives or friends that fail to honour an agreement, or into the hands of the police of other government officials. Treasures can also evaporate into dust or ladybugs in the absence of the right spell-break.

Alice von Bieberstein, "Debt of the Dead: Hunting for 'Armenian' Treasures in Post-Genocidal Turkey," *Subjectivity*, (forthcoming 2017), p. 23 - 24.

My objection here, unsurprisingly, would be the fact that it is indeed really rare, if not non-existent as I have never met any, that someone actually found some gold, especially with regards to my encounters in Trabzon. The evasiveness of the trove, thus, might not relate to its post-discovery use but its initial discovery, that one cannot really lay his or her hands on it, as it evades the very initial contact, concealing itself incessantly in different forms. Thus, rather than a curse, I would emphasise the call of a non-existent thing that ensures the subject that it exists, producing a pure yet cryptic voice coming out of nothingness, a non-existent object, a ghost.



Throughout my stay, I heard the same story many more times in different settings, all stating that a trove was buried (*gömülü*), or hidden (*saklı*), somewhere. Sunay, for instance, was sure that there was something buried in the old and derelict house of her father-in-law in Şur. This overlap with home, this dangerous proximity of the enigmatic and “haunting”<sup>323</sup> residue, did not seem to bother her. Others also recounted similar stories, indicating that a cemetery in the middle of woods, the church or monastery ruins on top of a hill, the remnants of a castle by their village, old wooden houses scattered around the forest all signified the existence of a treasure *left behind* by an enigmatic subject. All so close to home and all undecipherable, these ruins emerge as signs for locals, left behind by a nameless and faceless someone. If only they could read these cryptic signs! Some men excitedly brought me some documents and sketchily hand-drawn maps to have a look at, probably hoping that someone working with words could *read* and decipher the cryptic truth.<sup>324</sup> Most, I think, were fraudulent, or evidently unreal as some mentioned 70 tons of buried gold (See Photo III), but it did not matter. Local men seemed to be quite convinced: Something was buried or hidden. Something was left behind, still pulsating and appealing to locals.

Eventually, I realized that where I saw a natural formation, locals saw a trace of those who (are have or imagined to have) lived there before. Where I saw a natural absence and regularity, they sensed excess and irregularity, a bulge. Places appeared to be saturated with signs, haunted by the spectres appearing in enigmatic forms. The Valley, in this sense, emerges to be a “ghostly”<sup>325</sup> space that

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<sup>323</sup> Avery F. Gordon describes hauntings as follows, which I believe has resonances with the case I describe:

I used the term haunting to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what’s been in your blind spot comes into view. Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. (Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Hauntings and the Sociological Imagination*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis and London, 2008, p. XVI.)

<sup>324</sup> Bieberstein also discusses this attempt by locals to ask for help from outsider/educated subjects, “the Western expert,” who might know the truth of the object. von Bieberstein, “Debt of the Dead,” p. 12.

<sup>325</sup> Rosalind C. Morris, “Giving up Ghosts: Notes on Trauma and the Possibility of the Political from Southeast Asia,” *Positions*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2008, p. 230. Referred by Eray Çaylı, “‘Accidental’



marks objects with signs that are invisible to outsiders but happen to be alluring to locals. Within this haunted presence, I argue, not only does the landscape get enchanted with such signs but also the place is configured in a peculiar manner to accommodate the spectres of the past. Through these narratives, for instance, Greeks and Armenians are spectrally situated within the Valley even though official historiography constitutively excludes their presence from narratives. The very proximity of the cryptic sign to one's home, whether it is the actual home or the village space, similarly, undertakes a different modality of subjectivation that goes against these official conceptions, amalgamating the other with the self and blurring these distinctions in a circular historicity. Even when locals cannot make sense of these signs, let alone decipher their meanings, they seem to be unequivocally convinced that these are indeed clues left behind by someone(s).

Places, I argue, emerge as depositories of local culture and collective memory, "incorporating"<sup>326</sup> a silenced and un-representable memory, while penetrating and distorting the texture of the representable through haunting. What is shrouded in the Valley, what is (and cannot be) integrated into the "appropriate" scheme of Turkishness, seems to be buried (alive) in materialities and places, hosted in the "natural" features of the space that are familiar and proximate, albeit cryptic and undecipherable. Spectres, embodied in landscape, constantly allure and confuse locals in an enigmatic form, marking places and materialities with cryptic signs as well as un-familiarising the home by haunting it.<sup>327</sup> This augmentation and the enchantment of the landscape with the signs that promise a treasure, I argue, are produced through the incorporation of the banished memory into the landscape, constituting a bulge on the supposedly plain physical space.

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Encounters with the Ottoman Armenians in Contemporary Turkey," *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines*, Vol. 6, 2016, p. 260.

<sup>326</sup> In Abraham and Torok's analysis, "incorporation" denotes psychic processes that preserve the lost object by burying it alive inside a crypt, albeit in a muted form, within the self without dissolving its otherness and extending the limits of the ego. For further information, please see: Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1986.

<sup>327</sup> Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, p. XVI.

## ORTA ANADOLU KUÇUK ASYA

20 Saat menzili içinde olan bölgede ANTA dağı, Salanır, ve Tevil dağ da denir Bu merkezde 29 sen. II Ay 29 Gün 10 saat Eskiyalık ve büyük soygunlar yaptık Korsan çetebası TIMORYANI-POP KAPTAN VOYVODA VOGAN idi. Bu çetebası tam 7 imza, yani 7 isim taşıdı. 1-TIMORYANI, 2-POP KAPTAN, 3-Voyvoda volçan, 4-Kapı 2 Kapa, 5-Kurt Kaya, 6-Hudret Kaya, 7-Catal Kaya? Bunlar İbraniceden Türkçeye çevrilmiştir. Aynı sene 29.3.1810 NİHALİSENE 12.6.1798 de Hıristiyan azıllı baş çete başları ile 3.cü SELİM gününde yeniçerilerin isyanı ile Çetebağlar 22 kişi 284 kişi mahiyetimizle 1-TIMORYANI, İtalyandır. 2-Ermeni Manok bey. 3-Rum Andria kaptan 4-Lefter 5-Avrar paşa 6-Mihail kaptan-rum 7-Sarraf yako Dudaklılı Veli Efe 8-Kirmaslı Sarı Ahmet 9-Selanikli Kara Şerif 10-Gemlik Koca İstim. 11-Adirnaslı İsmail Bey. 12-Midillili Apostol 13-Bursalı Çolak Manol 14-İzmitli koca Yorgi 15-Gerveli Alanos Paşa 20-Saruhanlı Katırcı Yan bey. 24-Ermeni Agop 25-Bandırnalı Niko 26-Adapazarlı Katırcı Manok Bey. 27-Kayserili Todori 28-İzmitli Lefter. 29-Armutlulu Arıbey. 30-Karahasan Köyünde Karahasana Paşa 31-Karaca Simikon Mikail Bey. 32-Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Bıyıklı Tukarida İsmi geçen çete başları Osmanlı hükümetini Zayıf düşürüp parçalamak için özel olarak seçilmiş illegal devlet olarak OSMANLI hükümetinde çok düzeyde görevlerde bulunmuştur. Gayeleri Osmanlıyı içten yakabilmektir. Malesef görevlerini basarmışlardır.

Deniz korsanı Timoryani ve çetebası mahiyeti ile PREPOTIS-MARMARA deni sahilinde EMENE(EMENE) reis burnu civarında içinde deniz girintisi kıvrıntı yaptığı EMENE mağra yakınlarında 4 adacıklar karşısından bir yola çıkarak yürüdüük, ileride altından acı su geçen mermer ayaklı kemerli, halkalı EMENE köprüsünü geçerek 4-4,5 saat ileride oldukça sivri ve yüksek EMENE tepeye vardık. Kara tepeye çıkarken de bir yerli anatas üzerine kabartma EMENE resmi tam takım olarak yaptık kantarmasınada katlanmışca vaziyette EMENE resmi üst kısıma taktık. EMENE eğerin ön kasında tek bir altın vardır. Eğerin bez iki EMENE gürün altında birer beybe altın konmuştur. Eğerin altına EMENE resmi yazılmış ve sıvanıp 10 okka mücevverhat yerleştirilmiştir. Bu civarda 2 kaynak vardır EMENE tepenin eteğidir. Zirveye çıktığımızda 2 renkli mermerden oldukça büyük boyu 2 kulaç 1.5cm. eni 1 kulaç 1.5cm. olan bir tekneyi ana taş kurnazlık yaptık ve bir köşesini kasten kırdık. EMENE ya gelen köşesinin kırık kısmında teknenin sağ önüne gelen bir yerinde ve tam 7 arşin önünde tepre gömdük. 70 okka altın bu taşın altına yerleştirdik. Bu teknenin sağ ön tarafına Rusca yazılar yazılmıştır, görünmez kapalıdır. EMENE resmi yazılmıştır. Bu tekneye çok yakın domuz kotrası vardır, önünde Güneyinde 16 arşin. Bu kotraya 18 basamakla demir ızgaralarla kapalı mahzene girilir. Bu tekneye kuzeyden güneye gelirken Kaldırım bir yol dereye iner. Yolun bitiminde iki kaya bunlar PEHLIVAN kayalardır. Burada 2000 iki bin okka olan altın mahzene yerleştirildi. Bu kayanın birinde PEHLIVAN resmi vardır. Legenin kendisinde horasanla sıvanmış bir miktar altın konmuştur. Buraya yakın bir tasta 9 lokmalı zincir resminin bitiminde yerde bir bakraç mahmudiye altına konmuştur. Kara tepenin doğusunda büyük bir mezarlık çok tarihidir. Kara tepenin üzerine bir mezar mevcuttur. Bu yatır kuyudur. Bu kuyudan Bizanslardan kalma odalara girilir. Çok tarihi varlık mevcuttur. Tepenin Batı kuzeyinde bir tas yağının altında kapalı bir EMENE nin altında bir mahzen dolusu kaymetli varlık vardır. Kara tepenin üzerinde bir kayada EMENE zincir bunun yanında kapalı bir mağranın sağ tarafında kuru duvarın ortasından kapısı açılan büyük mahzene girilir. Burada 70 ton altın mevcuttur. Kara tepedeki işlerimizi bitirdikten sonra EMENE tepeye vardık. Tam zirvede etrafı kaldırım taş döseli 22 adım boyunda bir EMENE mezarı yaptık. 3 metre derinlikte büyük mahzen vardır. Bu tepede 4 köşe bir tasta çıplak sol ayak resminin altına bir kazan altın yerleştirilmiştir. Burada kayada yay, ok resmi vardır. Tepede bir taşın üzerinde bir tabanca resminin altında bir kazan altın koyduk. EMENE tepeden güneye dönersek bir köy, bir vezir köprü vade mandıra yerleri görünür. EMENE tepenin poyrazında 1,2 dönüm kadar büyüklüğünde bir EMENE göl vardır. Bu gölün ortasında adacık halinde bir kara tasta iki adet EMENE resmi yaptık. Biri yelaktan su içer diğeri su içmiş havaya bakıyor. Bu tas aslında bir cesmenin yalak taşıdır. Bu tasta 6 okka altın vardır. Bu göle sıkıştık ve 145 terba al-

Photo III: A document presented to me by a local, detailing a number of treasures, buried in the Western Anatolia, near Bursa. The first section lists "traitors," mostly with Greek and Armenian names, who collaborated with the enemy to weaken and destroy the Ottoman Empire. The second section details a number of troves across a wide geography in a magical sense and seemingly unrealistic quantities e.g. 70 tonnes of gold in a vault. The text mentions a number of figures inscribed on natural formations e.g. a pitcher painted on one of the *Pehlivan* Rocks, while pictures of a "naked left foot," a gun, a pair of bow and arrow, and a pair of doves were on other rocks with all, according to the author, marking buried troves in their vicinity.

### II.III. Remembering through Places?

An ambivalence, then, is revealed by these treasure hunts as they present an intriguing counter narrative that reflect the ambiguity of other local accounts of the past. For instance, the local insistence on Turkish ancestry (from Central Asia) is tightly entangled with their pervasive claims around the language: Romeika is a *remnant*, a *relic*, of their co-existence with the Rums of the Valley. This local account establishes a discontinuity between the past and the present, affirms locals as Turks, and distances them from the Rum heritage and from potential ethnicist inferences. And yet, the same locals would also argue that the population exchange of 1922 (*mübadele*) did not have much effect on this upper section of the Valley, above Taşhan, indicating that almost no-one left then. This narrative, hence, establishes a continuity between the past and the present. The ambivalence<sup>328</sup> that comes out of the seemingly pervasive co-existence of both narratives—one that differentiates the contemporary Turkish community from the past and the other one establishing a contiguity between the two—however, does not produce a radical break up in local identities and subjectivities thanks to the discretion of Romeika in public. Locals, in this sense, could manoeuvre between these two accounts, which, even though contradictory, reiterates locals as Muslim and Turkish subjects.

The ambivalence between these two accounts is further crystallised in the case of treasure hunts. As these hunts work through the tension between these two narratives in a corporeal manner, they both distance the subject from the spectral owner of the trove, namely Greeks or Armenians, and reiterate the hunter's Turkishness. Local men, through these quests, ingeminate their difference from these past communities and induct themselves as Turkish subjects in pursuit of (foreign and spectral) objects of others. And yet, simultaneously, it can also be said that these quests incorporate these spectral others since these troves are said to be located right at one's home, in the village, or the forest, eliminating any secure distance and establishing a continuity in the

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<sup>328</sup> Gordillo talks about the ambivalence these physical remnants produce. He claims that the Indian heritage emerges both as an external and internal element of local subjectivities. (p. 34 – 35)

narrator's genealogy. Treasure hunts, in this sense, directly deal with a local problem—a problem within the contours of nationalist ideology: genealogical continuity in the Valley. Locals both affirm their Turkishness through these quests while simultaneously engaging in practices that go against the narrative of national-official history, i.e. treasure hunts which locate Greeks and Armenians at home.

Engaging with this discursive tension through these quests, then, treasure hunts illustrate different modalities of remembering. How locals relate to the places they dwell in seemingly highlight what role materialities play in this configuration, as well. Places emerge not solely as inanimate backgrounds of human encounters but as active actors that are implicated in these interactions. They are always social<sup>329</sup> and closely related to collective and individual memories through which subjects are configured.<sup>330</sup>

In his analysis of graves and ruins in post-colonial African encounters, Joost Fontein, for instance, argues that these “materialities of belonging,”<sup>331</sup> as crystallised in the case of graves and ruins, help us to comprehend the role played by the landscape in the processes of subjectivation and how they “continue to be ‘active’ in the way that they enable, constrain, and structure contests of belonging, entitlement, and authority.”<sup>332</sup> Similarly, in his analysis of “how men and women dwell”<sup>333</sup> in places through the case of how Western Apaches relate to and name the landscape, Keith H. Basso indicates that, “[a]s places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places.”<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Moore, *Subject of Anthropology*, p. 34.

<sup>330</sup> Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in *Senses of Place*, Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), School of American Research Press: Santa Fe, 1996, p. 25.

Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, “Introduction,” in *Senses of Place*, Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), School of American Research Press: Santa Fe, 1996, p. 6.

<sup>331</sup> Joost Fontein, “Graves, Ruins, and Belonging: Towards and Anthropology of Proximity,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 17, 2011, p. 713.

<sup>332</sup> Fontein, “Graves, Ruins, and Belonging,” p. 715.

<sup>333</sup> Keith H. Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places,” in *Senses of Place*, Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), School of American Research Press: Santa Fe, 1996, p. 54.

<sup>334</sup> Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places,” p. 55.

Especially relevant with regards to both remembrance and subjectivation, Yael Navaro-Yashin discusses how materialities generate to a specific subjectivity through her ethnographic analysis of Turkish-Cypriot post-conflict space. Following Latour's articulations around how "'non-human entities' too may be interpreted as effecting 'agency,'"<sup>335</sup> she highlights the way uncanny materiality and the landscape continuously induce memory upon objects and spaces to produce affects.<sup>336</sup> "Places stimulate not only memory but dreams and fantasies,"<sup>337</sup> as Said says, and this intriguing and productive quality constitutes one of the key elements of my understanding of how locals in the Valley engage with places. Subjects' relationship to the landscape also tells us a lot about how the past is engaged with and how collective memories are accounted for in the present. Landscapes, then, can be considered as depositories of elements of collective memory, which are banished from the domain of (national) history, generating another modality of remembrance in different forms. The tension and incommensurability between what local memories and knowledge bring forward and what nationalist historiography and ideology preach for, in this sense, might be interlinked to the way in which an unaccounted set of memories is retained and engaged in different mode as in the case of. the (communal) privacy and discretion of Romeika.

In the Turkish context, for instance, Eray Çaylı mentions the possibility of embodiment of memory in nature, generating a form of testimony that bears a fragment of (historical) truth. It should be noted that Çaylı mainly focuses on how nature emerges as the bearer of a "repressed"<sup>338</sup> memory and confronts inhabitants, the Kurds of Eastern Anatolia as "forceful actors" in the form of "'natural' events or disasters, such as landslides, floods, and subsidence."<sup>339</sup> Thus,

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<sup>335</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, "Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 15, 2009, p. 8.

<sup>336</sup> Navaro-Yashin, "Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects," p. 16.

<sup>337</sup> Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," in *Landscape and Power*, W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2002 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 247.

<sup>338</sup> For Freud, repression relates to psychic processes when "the affect from which the ego has suffered remains as it was before, unaltered and undiminished, the only difference being that the incompatible idea is kept down and shut out from recollection." Sigmund Freud, "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey (ed.), Volume III, Hogarth: London, 1962 [1894], p. 54.

<sup>339</sup> Çaylı, "'Accidental' Encounters," p. 7.

for local Kurds inhabiting the land, an unrepresented memory of the violent annihilation of the local Armenian population in early 20<sup>th</sup> century is embodied in landscapes, acting as a rem(a)inder of what happened and not letting it be erased completely. What we sense as objective/natural phenomena then, Çaylı claims, emerge as radically social, bursting unaccounted memories into the present and defying the linearity of historiographical temporality.

Along similar lines, in her article on treasure hunts among the Kurdish population of Muş, Alice von Bieberstein argues that treasure hunts, materially fruitless overall, can be read as a particular relation to the past, which both acknowledges what is banished from the historiography through these quests, and simultaneously denies it, as treasures are received as “gifts” “coming from the future” erasing its historicity.<sup>340</sup>

These contributions are helpful to think through, considering the paucity of scholarly discussions on treasure hunts. The fruitlessness of treasure hunts, however, might be much more closely related to a reification of a distant-and-yet-close other (as in the case of Greek troves in one’s village), to a ghostly space that incessantly reminds the past—there were *Rums* in the Valley,<sup>341</sup> and to an indecipherable sign that marks the place with a banished memory. As the trove is almost never to be found, incessantly evading the subject by donning different illusory appearances, the importance of these hunts might lie in this very possibility of engaging with the unaccounted collective memory.

Constructed around a spectral and elusive object, treasure hunts produce a fragmented, corporeal, silent, and implicit acknowledgement of local memories

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<sup>340</sup> Alice von Bieberstein, “Debt of the Dead,” p. 21 (Draft). She claims that the “acknowledgement is displaced by denial” within the process as the Armenian presence in the area prior to the genocide is not articulated in narratives produced by such quests even though it is materially and corporeally enacted. (p. 6). Hunts, for Bieberstein, just uphold the spectral existence of a giver who promises a gift but never gives one. It is intriguing, once again, that if one is to conceive treasure hunts as processes of gift(ing), the articulation almost inescapably leads to a particular reification of a gifter by the supposed-to-be receiver who does ceaselessly quest for the promised gift but never receives one. Then, the treasure hunter, *defineci*, emerges as the one who does not receive a gift but incessantly reifies a spectral giver, who enigmatically promises an ephemeral gift without completing the transaction.

<sup>341</sup> Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 26 and 36.

that go against the history<sup>342</sup> of the nation. Through these hunts, Armenians or Greeks, are situated within the Valley and their presence/absence is engaged as if they “have an ongoing presence among” locals.<sup>343</sup> Although nominally upholding conventional forms of history, as local men widely circulate officially-sanctioned narratives around the past and genealogy in line with Turkish nationalism, they might also be seen as enactments of and engagement with a banished, inarticulate, and un-representable memory. Corporeally and performatively bracketing Turkish nationalist hegemony, these hunts render it possible for locals to retain and account for locally distinct memories in these privatised and veiled forms.

These quests in corporeal/narrative forms, then, point out exactly what is *not* said through their presumed objectives and manifest narratives. A monastery in a staunchly Muslim Valley, a Greek house in a neighbourhood that is claimed to have always been inhabited by Turks, a grave with a cross or a church in a village that is claimed to have always been Muslim, a trove buried right inside one’s house, or a statue of a saint in an unmarked cave... As Stephen Frosh argues, “what is left unresolved in history works its way into the present as a traumatic haunting that is profoundly social,” reflecting itself in the way subjectivities are formed.<sup>344</sup> As parts of local socio-cultural experience, this banished memory emerges as “something [...] let through but also denied, [which] cannot [thus] be symbolised but only experienced as a concrete reality that comes from outside,” paving the way for its emergence as a conjured up materiality.<sup>345</sup> Although nominally upholding the hegemonic narratives of national history, these treasure hunts, as thoroughly unending and materially unrewarding expeditions, maybe, should not be conceived as a multiplicity of separate and unrelated quests that

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<sup>342</sup> I want to highlight here how the historiography conceives the history as universal, “objective,” national, un-subjective vis-à-vis how collective memories are infused with personal, subjective, local, concrete, and mythical remembrances. For a discussion of memory and history, please see: Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations*, Vol. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, 1989.

<sup>343</sup> Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 36.

<sup>344</sup> Frosh, *Hauntings*, p. 44.

<sup>345</sup> Frosh, *Hauntings*, p. 39.



are motivated by a lust for material gains, but as one fragmented “acting-out”<sup>346</sup> that is compelled by the impossibility of integrating and accounting for local distinctions within the contours of nationalist imaginaries and discourses.<sup>347</sup>

Although they are fruitless with regards to their material promises, these quests can be regarded as productive in respect to their implications on local subjectivities. Intricately related to the way Romeika is configured as a private and discreet phenomenon, treasure hunts are involved in the formation of subjectivities that could accommodate both subjects’ alignments with hegemonic Turkish nationalism and distinct local heritage along with memories (as in Romeika and family genealogies) that go against these alignments. They could be comprehended as a different modality of remembrance and relationality to the past, as well, through which these banished memories return to the public in the form of mystical and elusive fragments of landscapes. Words and stories that are not admitted to the domain of representation, thus, come back as spectres inhabiting the space and objects across the Valley to recite their untold stories.

### III. Conclusion

This chapter first detailed strategies of discretion through which communities enshroud Romeika in public. With regards to the public secret status of Romeika, I claimed that any attempt to publicly articulate it, which would not only produce associations with Greece but also create a socio-cultural equivalence with other minority groups (such as Kurds), is harshly opposed by the locals who seem to have succeeded in upholding Turkish nationalist allegiances while preserving Romeika in a “privatised” and discreet form. This idiosyncratic amalgam of Turkish nationalism and Romeika heritage, one can claim, is built on the very

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<sup>346</sup> In his discussion of forgetting and remembering, Freud mentions certain cases where “the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it.” Sigmund Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II),” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey (ed.), Volume XII, Hogarth: London, 1995 [1914], p. 150. Emphases are original.

<sup>347</sup> Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 248.



public secret status of the language as that which is known by all but not articulated, or not owned, publicly.

Following this discussion of the public (in)visibility of the language, I moved on to an analysis of how places are related and engaged in the Valley, which, I argued, might be implicated in their emergence as the depository of this discreet heritage and memory. From the prevalent case of treasure hunts, I claim that these narratives and quests might be seen as particular modes of subject formation and engagement with an unaccounted memory. As the local landscape is augmented, the heritage could be kept intact in a muted form, buried alive in the landscape, allowing locals to bridge between the past and the present without having to radically re-position themselves vis-à-vis the nationalist ideology. This chapter illustrates how Turkishness is constituted out of these multiple and heterogeneous experiences, which are to be moulded and re-configured to produce a presumably coherent public appearance. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates how collective and local memories continue to play a crucial role, albeit in different forms, e.g. treasure hunts.

As both this chapter and the preceding one are based on my interactions and observations in the case of local men, I would like to orient the analysis to include how masculinities are produced and enacted within this setting and how they dwell and manoeuvre within the Valley. This move into the production of gendered bodies in the Valley takes us to the second aspect of my analysis of local subjectivities in terms of showing gendered modalities of subjectivation through the case of local men and how they move across spaces and enact, both discursively and corporeally, a sense of publicness and politics.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPACES AND MOVEMENTS: CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITIES IN THE VALLEY

Women's bodies have always been at the forefront of politics in Turkey. In recent years, discussions around their public visibility, as in the case of *başörtüsü* (headscarf) controversies since 1990s,<sup>348</sup> provided confronting groups with an iconography of struggle and legitimacy. While Republican secularists heralded the advent of the modern and unveiled Turkish woman,<sup>349</sup> Islamists circulated images of veiled women who were denied access to universities.<sup>350</sup> Kurdish groups, similarly, circulate images of brave, unveiled, and "liberated" women, who stuff their cadres to fight against the Daesh, which forces women into veil, in Syria and Iraq. Alarming levels of violence against women in contemporary Turkey rightfully force all to think about the way women are positioned and related. Abortion rights and women's bodily control, too, continuously occupy a significant portion of public discussion, not only in Turkey but elsewhere as well, as we are currently witnessing in Poland and the US.

In the Turkish context, "[a]lthough the effects of Kemalist reforms on women's identities have received some attention," Deniz Kandiyoti notes, "the masculine ideals of Turkish nationalism have remained somewhat more nebulous."<sup>351</sup> While the situation of women—mostly as victims of state policies or violence by men—is widely discussed, the perpetrators or enactors of that patriarchal violence and how they are constantly reproduced and co-opted hardly become a matter of analysis. In a society that is thoroughly affected by patriarchal relations and control, masculinities have entered into academic literature relatively recently thanks to the path opened by feminist critiques and activism.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> For a brief discussion of the controversy in reference to wider discussions around secularism and Islam's public visibility, please see: Seyla Benhabib, "Turkey's Constitutional Zigzags," *Dissent*, Vol. 56, No. 1, Winter 2009.

<sup>349</sup> Parla, "The 'Honor' of the State," p. 70.

<sup>350</sup> One needs to remember the lax definition of the term public (*kamusal*) during the presidency of Sezer.

<sup>351</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1997, p. 122.

<sup>352</sup> Please see, Cenk Özbay, Osman Özarıslan, Yeşim Sünbuloğlu, *Masculinities Journal*, Mehmet Bozok etc.

Within this context, this chapter aims to provide ethnographic observation and analysis and make a contribution towards a discussion on masculinities in the Turkish context. Although gender was not a part of the original trajectory of this research, it inevitably found its way into the analysis as the way masculinities are enacted presented an intriguing aspect of socialities and subjectivities in the Valley. This chapter will explore how nationalist and statist discourses produce and configure gendered subjects in everyday encounters. I will first trace the emergence of the new town centre in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the seat of the state in the Valley. I then depict the indexical marking of spaces through gendered movements within which politics and public are constituted and occupied primarily by masculine bodies. This differentiation, I believe, is strictly related to how the Turkish public is organised to generate masculine subjectivities. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of spatial and socio-political construction of masculine subjectivities in the Valley.

### Masculinities: Theoretical Frame

In her analysis of masculinities, Connell argues that “[m]asculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.”<sup>353</sup> These particular settings reflect different contexts within which we can find customs and rules with “the intimate inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangements between the genders.”<sup>354</sup> How contemporary state practices and socio-economic developments shape masculinities, in this sense, emerges as my starting point.

Gender plays a crucial role in the way the state functions and how nations are imagined and represented.<sup>355</sup> As various scholars have highlighted, the state is

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<sup>353</sup> R. W. Connell, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6, December 2005, p. 836.

<sup>354</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1988, p. 275.

<sup>355</sup> R. W. Connell, “The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics: Theory and Appraisal,” *Theory and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 5, October 1990, p. 520.

actively involved in the production and maintenance of gender relations through which subjectivities are configured and aligned.<sup>356</sup> Effects of the state and nationalist ideologies are mostly analysed through the ways in which women's bodies are articulated<sup>357</sup> and how women "are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation's identity and honour."<sup>358</sup> How female bodies come to embody the nation while being also disciplined and violated has been widely discussed in academic and feminist literature.<sup>359</sup> In her analysis of women and subjectivities in Northern Irish prisons, Begoña Aretxaga, for instance, analysed this differentiation between masculine and feminine experiences of political subjectivity and oppression.<sup>360</sup> Similarly, Veena Das highlights the violence women went through during the partition and how "the project of nationalism in India came to include the appropriation of bodies of women as objects on which the desire for nationalism could be brutally inscribed and a memory for the future made."<sup>361</sup> Pointing out this gendered aspect of nation-states and in close relation to the configuration and control of women's bodies, she further claims that "men emerged from colonial subjugation as autonomous citizens of an

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Yeşim Arat, "Nation Building and Feminism in Early Republican Turkey," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, C. Kerlake, K. Öktem, and P. Robins (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan: London and New York, 2010, p. 38 – 39.

<sup>356</sup> Connell, "The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics," p. 515 and 535.

Nira Yuval-Davis, "Nationalist Projects and Gender Relations," *Narodna Umjetnost: Croatian Journal of Ethnology and Folklore Research*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2003, p. 17.

Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," p. 275.

<sup>357</sup> Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1998, p. 243.

Aktürk, "Female Cousins and Wounded Masculinity," p. 46 – 47.

Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Moustaches and Men without Beards*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2005, p. 2.

In the Turkish context, various scholars, including but not limited to Deniz Kandiyoti (1987), Yeşim Arat (1989, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1997) Ayşe Parla (2001), and Nükhet Sirman (1990, 2002, 2006), extensively worked on the interrelationship between the Republican project and women.

<sup>358</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, "Nationalist Projects and Gender Relations," p. 17.

<sup>359</sup> Nazan Üstündağ, "Pornografik Devlet-Erotik Direniş: Kürt Erkek Bedenlerinin Genel Ekonomisi," in *Erkek Millet Asker Millet: Türkiye'de Militarizm, Milliyetçilik, Erkek(lik)ler*, Nurseli Yeşim Sünbuloğlu (ed.), İletişim: İstanbul, 2013, p. 1.

Nükhet Sirman, "Kadınların Milliyeti," *Milliyetçilik: Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Tanıl Bora (ed.), İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, 2002.

Aslı Zengin, *İktidarın Mahremiyeti: İstanbul'da Hayat Kadınları, Seks İşçiliği ve Şiddet*, Metis: İstanbul, 2011.

<sup>360</sup> Begoña Aretxaga, "The Sexual Games of the Body Politic: Fantasy and State Violence in Northern Ireland," *Culture Medicine and Psychiatry*, Vol. 25, 2001, p. 7.

<sup>361</sup> Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transaction in the Construction of Pain," *Daedalus*, Vol. 125, No. 1, Social Suffering Winter 1996, p. 68.

independent nation”<sup>362</sup> while women are associated with the nation and motherland.

In the Turkish context, too, gender played an important part in the production of both the Turkish nation-state and nationalism through providing it with images of modernity and difference. Yeşim Arat highlights how the Turkish modernisation constructed a particular image of the female citizen through which unveiled women ended up as the visible and public markers of modernity for the nation.<sup>363</sup> In a similar manner, Dicle Koğacıoğlu highlights the centrality of women’s bodies for Turkish modernisation and nationalism for which “[t]he unveiled, educated, and ‘modern’ woman of the Republic was the marker of this transition from an imagined ‘backwards’ and ‘traditional’ past to a fresh and ‘modern’ future.”<sup>364</sup> Although masculinities played a crucial role in the way Republican experience is shaped and enacted, only recently has a growing scholarly focus began to study masculinities and the way they are reflected and enacted in different aspects of life.<sup>365</sup> Touching upon this long-neglected interrelationship between masculine bodies and the state, for instance, Nazan Üstündağ lately discusses how bodies of Kurdish men are produced through a series of lethal encounters with the Turkish state to account for the new forms of subjectivity and statehood.<sup>366</sup>

Keeping this socio-political historicity of gendered subjectivities in mind, I should stress that masculinities, within the scope of this analysis, should not be conceived as “substantive”<sup>367</sup> and homogeneous entities with perennial and stable essences. On the contrary, they should be seen as a set of reiterative

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<sup>362</sup> Das, “Language and Body,” p. 86. Quite pertinently, Das later on claims, with regards to the abducted women and possible repercussions they would face at home, that “it was assumed that once the nation had claimed back its women, its honor would have been restored.” (p. 87)

<sup>363</sup> Yeşim Arat “The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1997, p. 98 – 100.

<sup>364</sup> Dicle Koğacıoğlu, “The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer 2004, p. 127.

<sup>365</sup> Various scholars traced masculinities through their violent nationalist sensitivities and reactions (Yeşim Sünbuloğlu, 2009, 2013) activities in nightlife and political economy (Osman Özarlan, 2016), spatial presences (Cenk Özbay, 2004, 2015) home, sex work (Cenk Özbay, 2012, 2015), or local identities (Mehmet Bozok 2013).

<sup>366</sup> Üstündağ, “Pornografik Devlet-Erotik Direniş.”

<sup>367</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 25.

practices that attempt to approximate and enact a number of socio-cultural ideals and norms within a given gender order.<sup>368</sup> They are sites of multiple, heterogeneous, and incessantly changing enactments. Rather than ascribing any form of innateness or biological determination,<sup>369</sup> it is important to highlight that masculinities are heterogeneous, reliant on reiterations, and subject to incessant failures and alterations.<sup>370</sup> These reiterative practices are shaped thoroughly by the socio-political context they are situated in.

Within this context, my analysis of masculinities across the Valley highlight similar patterns within which they are informed and shaped by ideologies (as in nationalism), local patriarchal configurations, state practices and institutions, economic constraints, political dynamics, and socio-cultural distinctions (as in Romeika). Relying upon local forms of convergences, spatialities, and enunciations, I argue that masculinities are produced out of seemingly mundane everyday activities, ranging from local men's daily descent from villages to the town centre to their gatherings in coffeehouses.

The masculinities I explore are also structurally open for resignification and alteration. For instance, even though patriarchal structures are evidently strong in the Valley, it is necessary to note that numerous differences and further heterogeneities are also accommodated,<sup>371</sup> as in the case of the *Fadime Hala* (Aunt Fadime) persona. As a local celebrity of the Valley, a local man from Hopşera performs Fadime Hala, a transvestite TV presenter and singer. He<sup>372</sup> dresses in local women's attire and is revered and adored by local men and women alike for his witty performance and folkloric repertoire. Intriguingly, he is also able to extend his transvestite practice in daily life, as well, walking in the

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<sup>368</sup> Connell, "Hegemonic Masculinity," p. 832.

Cenk Özbay and İlkay Baliç, "Erkekliğin Ev Halleri!," *Toplum ve Bilim*, Vol. 101, Fall 2004, p. 92.

<sup>369</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 30, 177, and 185.

<sup>370</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 185.

Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 24 and 49.

<sup>371</sup> Yeşim Sünbuloğlu, "Beyaz Bereler, 'Karadeniz Güzellemesi', 'Av Hatırası': Hrant Dink Cinayeti Sonrasında Ortaya Çıkan Milliyetçi Tepkiler, Hegemonik Erkeklik ve Medya," in *Medya, Milliyetçilik, Şiddet*, Barış Çoban (ed.), Su Yayınları: İstanbul, 2009, p. 115 - 116.

<sup>372</sup> I did not have a chance to talk to Fadime Hala with regards to his/her preference of pronouns, which easily gets covered by the singular, and gender-neutral, third person singular pronoun, "o" [he/she], in Turkish. Yet, *he* seems to be a much better choice as he himself also signs his blog posts with his official male name.

centre combining modern menswear with polished nails and make up without any visible backlash.<sup>373</sup> The case of Fadime Hala, then, reminds us both the performative foundations of gender in general and masculinity in particular, while also highlighting its fragility and contingency that can ultimately be altered and “resignified.”

Thus, masculinities should be thought as contingent, contradictory, ambiguous, relational, diverse, socially determined, non-biological, and non-universal sets of practices that affect how gendered subjects produce, enact, and define themselves within a particular socio-cultural structure (and in relation to what is considered feminine/women).<sup>374</sup> They are produced through spatial and patriarchal arrangements across the Valley in close connection to the state and should not be conceived along rigid hetero-normative principles or a biological determinism.

## **I. Stately Spaces and Proximity: the Town Centre**

In his analysis of the transformation of the community of Of through the centralisation and modernisation policies of the Empire, Michael Meeker emphasises historical processes through which local men were integrated into the religious and military-bureaucratic establishments. With limited economic potential of the local geography, Meeker writes that locals had to find other forms of subsistence and “joined the ranks of soldiers and preachers. Sometimes employed, sometimes unemployed, tens of thousands of individuals came to identify themselves with the imperial system.”<sup>375</sup> This integration was expanded by the advancement of the state and capitalist systems into peripheral geographies, peaking during the Republican period, when the centralised state asserted its unifying policies in a radical manner not only to have a firm grip on

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<sup>373</sup> Yet, in his blog post, summarising his life-story, signed as Ahmet Yıldırım, he indicates that even though he has immensely strong ties to his family, he lost touch with his [paternal] uncles as they acted negatively toward him with regards to his professional engagements.

<sup>374</sup> Özbay and Balıç, “Erkekliğin Ev Halleri!,” p. 92.

Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne, “Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology,” in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, Routledge: London and New York, 1994, p. 18.

<sup>375</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 104.

the geography and population but also to produce new subjects alongside nationalist ideals.

The town centre of the administrative district of Çaykara is a recent development in the centuries-long history of the Valley and can only be traced back to the 1930s and 1940s. The setting emerged from the Republican interventions that aimed to introduce state institutions into every remote corner of the country in line with modernisation and homogenisation attempts of the nation-state, within which national space was subjected to the control and management of the state.<sup>376</sup> As the state tightened its grip upon the geography in a number of ways, ranging from the cadastre to Turkification of geographical names, bureaucratic re-ordering of the administration brought the state institutions into every corner of the country.

The governorate and district governorate (*Valilik* and *Kaymakamlık*, respectively) were constructed in each of these administrative centres to produce carefully circumscribed public spheres (*meydan*) of the new nation, reorienting the nation toward a new modernist future and away from the centrality of mosques.<sup>377</sup> Schools were to teach the national(ist) curriculum in Turkish; offices to conduct the bureaucratic operations of the state, police and gendarmerie to enforce the new law, and courthouses and prisons to punish accompanied this new spatial regime. This new configuration of places, alongside the state-backed supremacy of nationalist affiliation and the emergence of new communication channels (newspapers, radio, and TV), aimed to produce a national space, connecting all citizens to a national body, moving together in an “empty time” and space.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, “Introduction: States of Imagination,” in *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat (eds.), Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2001, p. 8.

James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1998, p. 2 – 3.

<sup>377</sup> For a discussion of architectural aspects of the Republican modernisation project, please see: Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 2001.

<sup>378</sup> Benedict Anderson underlines this parallel moving of subjects of the imagined nation in a specific geography, giving rise to the idea of nation as a community. Anderson, “Chapter 2: Cultural Roots,” in *Imagined Communities*.



Within this context, Çaykara emerged *qua* town centre and is currently the seat of the administrative unit stretching from Holo Valley in the north to the highland pastures in the south. The main bulk of the centre historically consisted of a triangular area, the edges of which roughly correspond to two rivers on the eastern and western sides with a confluence in the north and a hill rise in the south. In time, however, the town centre expanded significantly beyond this small track of land, with buildings and shops spreading across riverbanks, yet most public buildings are still located in this small plot at the centre. Across its streets, there are numerous houses, workshops, restaurants, coffeehouses, and shops where locals come together for different purposes. Although a significant number of locals now permanently reside there, the centre gets more crowded when folks from villages come down for the market day (*çarşı günü, çarşısı*) on Tuesdays, and in summer when those from outside the Valley come back to visit their villages, pastures, and relatives.

### I.I. Saturating Spaces: Stately Presence

Located at the junction of Solaklı and Holayisa Rivers, this previously uninhabited riverbed has been transformed over the course of decades into the seat of public administration through the introduction of state offices in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Hükümet Konağı* (Governor's Office), courthouse, prison, schools, military barracks, forestry administration, police station, mufti's office, and municipal offices. (See Figure II) *Belediye* (The Municipality), for instance, is right at the centre beside the main mosque, directly overlooking what used to be a park/square. *Hükümet Konağı*, similarly, is situated at the top of the high street with a small square in front. *Adliye* (Courthouse) and other state offices, such as *Nüfus Müdürlüğü* (Civil Registry) or *Tapu Kadastro* (Land Registry and Cadastre), are also housed in the same building. Educational administration is right at the centre, as well, not far from the Municipality. *Orman Müdürlüğü* (Forestry) is located at the High Street. Gendarmerie, charged with security matters outside the centre, is located at the northern edge of the town, while the police station is at the opposite pole, both ensuring the state's

rule over space and the population. All these institutions, it should be noted, are remarkably close to each other and easily reachable within walking distance. In addition to these offices and buildings listed above, the post office, mufti's office, various schools and dormitories, administrative offices, and political party bureaux are scattered all across streets among houses and shops, infusing the small space with a sense of stately presence. Constricted between mountains, the town centre, in this sense, emerges as a space where the materiality of the state in the form of "a set of institutions" is concentrated.<sup>379</sup>

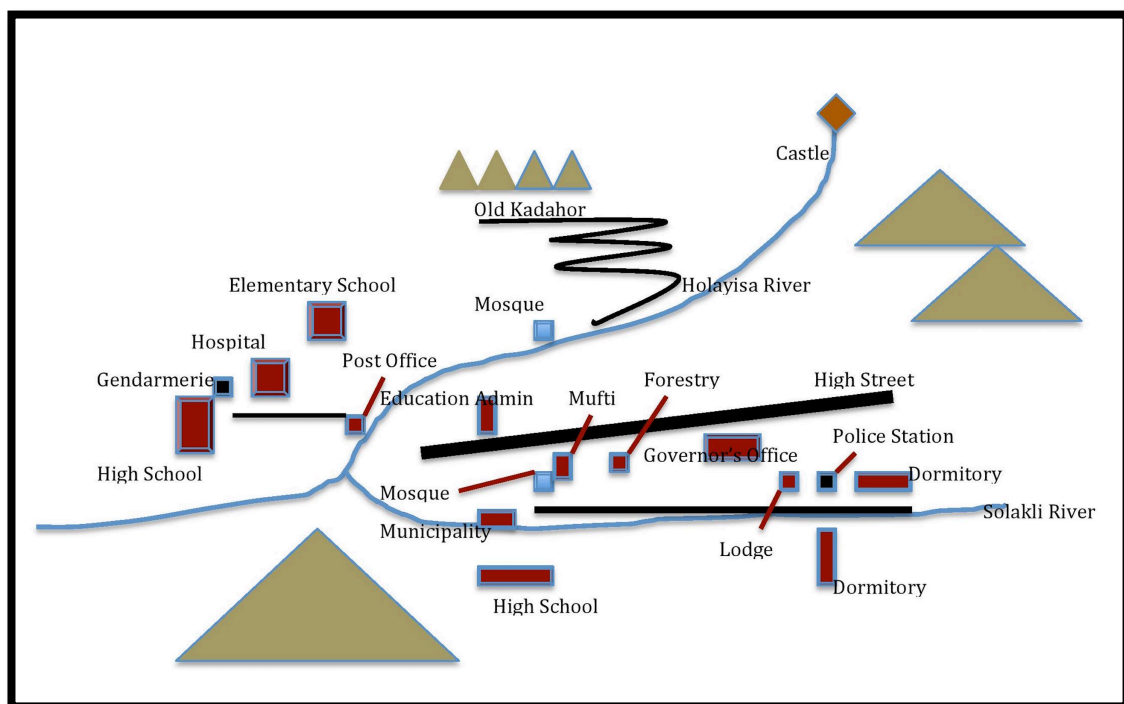


Figure II: Sketch of the town centre with public institutions indicated

In clear contrast to this contemporary saturation, though, it should be remembered that the Valley was thoroughly secluded prior to the establishment of these institutions. Although the Ottoman Empire had a bureaucratic machinery to chart the population and the geography, its scope was still limited, especially in the countryside, where adverse geographical features and the limited sources of the Empire hindered the extent of its modernising policies.<sup>380</sup>

<sup>379</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, "Introduction," p. 5.

<sup>380</sup> Late Ottoman modernisation involved in censuses, cadastre, universal conscription, efficient taxation, the spread of a standardised westernised education, extending transportation links, centralisation and bureaucratisation, and legal and political reform that aimed to get a better

Integration into the modern state/market systems, hence, might be thought as a radical restructuring of the Valley both spatially and socially: The state, which rarely intruded into the everyday life of local communities for centuries, could not be associated merely with a set of persons and institutions in a distant locality (e.g. imperial Istanbul or republican Ankara) any longer, but took a concrete form.

In the contemporary Valley, locals face the state incessantly in different forms: population registrations, cadastre, police and gendarmerie measures, identity cards, court decisions, land deeds, employment, hospital services, marriage certification, shop licences, banking, housing, elections, examinations, and schools. These “mundane practices of authorisation and recognition carried out by the state” reifies it in the Valley by “literally implanting it in people’s lives.”<sup>381</sup> The state, in this sense, emerges not only as a radical re-organisation of spaces and socialities, but also as a re-structuring of the everyday through which people’s lives are managed.<sup>382</sup>

### I.II. Displacing Kadahor: Aspirations for Homogeneity in the Republican Period

Kadahor overlooks the current town centre from the slopes of the hill. Its old wooden mosque, converted from a church but preserving its form and decorations, had stood there for centuries till the last decade when it was torn down and replaced by a new mosque.<sup>383</sup> Although now overshadowed by

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grasp of both the population and the geography of the Empire, starting with the reign of Mahmud II in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meeker, p. 161 – 165.

The pervasiveness of bandit (*eşkiya*) stories, narrating the plunder of the local population in the late Ottoman period highlights the inefficacy of the state rule in the area. For a useful discussion on banditry in the late Ottoman Empire, please see: Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1994. In a personal account published in a local newspaper as well, it is stated that locals were forced to choose between different factions of banditry, as in *Beşler* and *Yirmibeşler*, for protection in the face of the absence of security and the enforcement of the law by the state.

<sup>381</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction,” p. 21.

<sup>382</sup> Veena Das and Deborah Poole, “State and Its Margins: Comparative Ethnographies,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, Veena Das and Deborah Poole (eds.), School of American Research: Santa Fe, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>383</sup> The young imam appointed to the mosque showed me how he destroyed the hexagrams on tiles decorating the current mosque, indicating that they were part of a Jewish conspiracy to desecrate mosques, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the symbol was widely used in Islamic

Çaykara, Kadahor used to be one of the oldest settlements of the upper section of the Valley. And yet, the neighbourhood is currently a part of the town centre with the name used only to denote the old historic neighbourhood higher up on the hill or to specify one's village roots (*Kadahorlu*, from Kadahor).

Intriguingly, Çaykara not only physically displaced Kadahor as the epicentre of this upper section of the Valley, but also produced one of the two unique examples from the Valley with regards to the prevalence of a Turkish toponym at the expense of a Romeika one.<sup>384</sup> Although Romeika toponyms are much more common overall as I discussed before, the unusual prevalence of this new Turkish name, Çaykara, forged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seems to highlight the effect of an enduring contact with the state. In contrast to other Turkish names that were not integrated into the local lexicon vis-à-vis thoroughly embedded older Romeika names, Çaykara enjoys a sense of acceptance among almost all inhabitants of the Valley despite its physical and toponymic newness. Although traditionally the Valley has no central spot but is grounded in a multiplicity of settlements, , locals are brought together under the title of *Çaykaralı* (of Çaykara). Republican interventions, in this sense, both produced the spatiality and amended the symbolic domain through which one's belonging is articulated.

### I.III. New Town Centre as the Setting of Turkishness

Since space cannot merely be conceived as an empty physical stage<sup>385</sup> that is devoid of agency, as I discussed earlier in Chapter VII, it should be thought as a domain that both embodies and informs socio-symbolic elements. The pervasiveness of the relatively new Turkish toponym, Çaykara, in this sense, highlights how this stately presence supplements the symbolic transformation

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and Ottoman architecture and decoration, also finding its way into the detailed wood carvings of the old mosques in the Valley.

<sup>384</sup> The other notable exception would be the Lake area, which is also widely called in Turkish, possibly because of its growing touristic value and visibility. Yet, the old name for the settlement around the Lake is still called with the Romeika name, Şerah or Saraxo.

<sup>385</sup> Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, Peter van Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1999, p. 181.

toward a modern-nationalist identity, where Turkish emerges as the sole medium of public interactions. The new town centre, hence, generates new modes of being, belonging, and remembering alongside the state ideology.

Republican elites had moved the capital from Istanbul to Ankara as an illustration of the new Turkish identity, within which heterogeneity, cosmopolitanism, and memories of the old imperial capital was to be replaced with the homogeneity, nationalism, and future of the Republican project.<sup>386</sup> Çaykara, similarly, seems to have displaced Kadahor in terms of both its geographical location and its socio-historical connotation. The former comes to embody a fresh start with no historical connotation, not only because it is literally a new and tangible product of the Republican modernisation, but also owing to the fact that it installed a new sense of being and belonging—Turkishness as national identification—whose ties to the past are severed alongside the general pastlessness of the Republican regime.<sup>387</sup> Memories, heterogeneities, and rural isolation that Kadahor evoked were pushed to the edges, both literally and figuratively, via the introduction of the town centre, which symbolises uniformity, the advent of modernity, and the triumph of national history. As in the replacement of the old wooden mosque/church of Kadahor with a new concrete mosque, Çaykara replaces the ambivalent standing of Kadahor with a supposedly homogeneous new form, both in its physicality and socio-cultural structure.

What is accommodated within these new national spaces reflected similar uniformist aspirations, as well. Turkishness as a modern national identity, within this context, bars the very possibility of Romeika as the latter amalgamates two presumably coherent and mutually exclusive categories, Turkish and Greek, as I discussed in Chapter VI. Turkishness, as reflected in the way citizenship and public sphere are configured, hence, envisions the absence of such

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<sup>386</sup> The Republic, in its quest for modernity and progress, embraced the new capital to reflect its vision of order and uniformity vis-à-vis the past and cosmopolitanism of İstanbul. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building*, p. 67.

Kyle T. Evered, "Symbolizing a Modern Anatolia: Ankara as Capital in Turkey's Early Republican Landscape," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2008.

<sup>387</sup> Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 224.

heterogeneities. A product of nationalist ideology, then, Çaykara symbolises the new and presumably homogeneous forms of being and belonging, as reflected in the case of Turkish citizenship as what Kadahor represents was rendered incompatible with the very definition of new Turkish identity and public.

Many locals, for instance, recounted experiences of how as children they were forbidden to speak in Romeika by their teachers in schools in previous decades to enhance Turkish as the sole language in public.<sup>388</sup> In tandem with these socio-symbolic ruptures, as in the Republic's suturing of Turkishness solely to the Turkish language and enforcing it through its public institutions, the new town emerges as a geographical and toponymic intervention within the Valley. Within this configuration, heterogeneous socialities (must) wither away, with distinctions either renounced/forgotten altogether<sup>389</sup> or secluded into the private sphere, for homogeneity, since such distinctions ran contrary to the nationalist imaginary.

After discussing the implications of the emergence of the town centre as a space of the state and Turkish(ness), I want to discuss how this particular configuration of spaces and relationalities occurs in a gendered manner as mostly it is the men who occupy these spaces.

## **II. Men in Public: Masculine Commute and Coffeehouses**

One peculiar aspect of the everyday life in the Valley is the fact that local men move down from their villages to *çarşı* (the town centre) in a recurring manner even when they have nothing to do there. Starting in the morning, men begin coming to the town centre only to reverse their morning descent to climb back to their homes in villages higher up in mountains. Mustafa, for instance, met me every day at the town centre, never tired of walking up and down the Valley

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<sup>388</sup> Tursun, "Sancılı Geçmişten Sessiz Sona," p. 36.

<sup>389</sup> As an example of such assimilation, one must note the case and appeal of Munis Tekin Alp to the Turkish-Jewish community to Turkify their names, to forget community's traditional language, Ladino, and to speak only Turkish both in public and private. Mehmet Özden, "A'râfda Bir Kemalizm: Tekin Alp ve Kemalizm (1936)," *Bilig*, Vol. 34, 2005, p. 47.  
Rıfat N. Bali, *The Silent Minority in Turkey: Turkish Jews*, Libra: Istanbul, 2013, p. 97 - 98.

every morning and evening even though he was in his mid sixties. His sons, Emin and Veli, in their early forties, as well, came down to the centre from Holayısa even though they are chronically unemployed. Similarly, Kemal descends from and climbs back to his old house in Kadahor, an exhausting journey with steep slopes, even though he is in the middle of his seventies. Uncle Salih, also in his seventies, takes a longer route by bus and comes down to the centre from his house in Şerah. Kerim similarly comes down after his work in Şinek. Abdullah makes his move from his village in Holo Valley and comes to the *çarşı* either for work or to hang out in a *kahvehane* (coffeehouse) with his friends. If they live in the centre, such as Davut, Rahim, Ahmet, or Mehmet did, they would desert their houses in the morning only to return late at night. Yusuf, for instance, leaves his house across the river and spends his day and evenings around the centre and returns home only late in the evening. It seems, men in the Valley move incessantly between their houses (in villages) and the *çarşı*, with the latter including but not limited to the High Street and coffeehouses across the centre.<sup>390</sup>

When men failed to show up in the centre, this nonappearance was automatically assumed to be abnormal, triggering other men to speculate about where the absent one might have been. Similarly, after a few weeks of socialisation in the Valley, if I did not see some particular man around the centre on a particular day, I was also accustomed to inquiring if everything were all right the next time I saw him. When, for instance, Mustafa was absent for a day, I impulsively asked where he had been the previous day. Although I was puzzled by my own discourteous intrusion, Mustafa was not bothered and casually explained how he had to do some errands around his house in Holayısa. His absence, in this sense, came with a responsibility to explain his no show as he was expected in the centre: He must have been sick, or had to do something somewhere else or go to Trabzon to attend to a business. In close connection to the configuration of the

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<sup>390</sup> If they do not come down to the town centre, they would converge in coffeehouses in villages, if their villages have a centrally located one. Relatively bigger settlements generally tend to have a central space where a number of coffeehouses and restaurants are located. Both Upper and Lower Ogene settlements, Şinek, and Şerah have such central spaces where men could gather.

town centre as I discussed above, then, how should we make sense of this seemingly mundane convergence of masculine bodies in the centre?

Men's presence in public, I claim, was the default mode of masculine socialities in the Valley. They were supposed to depart their houses before noon, be in the centre, socialise in coffeehouses,<sup>391</sup> discuss matters (sports, politics, economy) debate, work, engage in commercial transactions, or simply spend their time there sitting in coffeehouses and sipping tea in small glasses while watching TV—usually a station broadcasting news as they would refrain from publicly watching other daytime programmes that mostly address housewives, e.g. matchmaking or cooking/handicraft shows.<sup>392</sup> Sticking mostly to news, sports, or programmes with informative content (e.g. documentaries) in coffeehouses either on TV or reading newspapers, they will endlessly discuss national matters, ranging from criminal/terror incidents (as in hostage crisis or bombings) to political crises (as in corruption scandals), or from international developments (as in the Syrian War, the refugee crisis, the US foreign policy) to economic policies. Similarly, grand public projects, such as the new airport in Istanbul or the new bridge across the Bosphorus, or political debates, as in during the elections the government's stance toward Kurds' juridico-political situation in the country, were engaged by all men in these coffeehouses, sometimes leading to heated confrontations. National emergencies initiate fresh waves of interaction, as I could observe explicitly in the cases of military aircraft crashes in Malatya in February<sup>393</sup> and the murder of the Prosecutor Kiraz in İstanbul in March.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 77.

<sup>392</sup> It should be noted that this avoidance to watch these feminine programmes do not necessarily mean that men are completely uninterested in such shows, as they seem to be quite knowledgeable about them, but masculinity requires them to distance themselves from such endeavours in public.

<sup>393</sup> Two military aircraft collided during a training flight session on February 24, 2015. Official sources indicated that four military personnel lost their lives in the incident. Although the Minister of Internal Affairs declared that, probably because of the prevalence of conspiratorial narratives, the incident occurred possibly owing to an accident or a mistake rather than a political intervention. Yet, many local men in coffeehouses were almost sure that the incident was caused by foreign powers in their endless attempts to undermine the Turkish might.

<sup>394</sup> Prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz, was taken hostage by militants of DHKP-C, a far-left terrorist organisation, in İstanbul on March 31, 2015. The crisis ended with the death of Kiraz.



Similarly, during the period running up to the parliamentary elections, numerous candidates from political parties visited the town centre, ensuring to meet locals in coffeehouses and streets. Politicians frequently organised meetings to hear about local problems and demands. As the town centre is small both in terms of population and physical space, this seemingly mundane and trivial political process emerges as an occasion for locals to directly engage with future deputies and ministers first hand, which is quite rare in urban contexts, to raise their demands, e.g. the legal ownership of forests and pastures.<sup>395</sup> In one of such encounters in May, for instance, locals raised their particular demands about hydro-electrical dams across the Valley and tourism incentives to a leading candidate from the ruling party and intriguingly addressed him as Mr. Minister (*Sayın Bakanım*). What I could not make sense of and branded as the obsequiousness of a number of local men, however, turned out to be insightful as the candidate not only won a seat in the Parliament but also became the minister of interior. Such gatherings, then, acted not solely as an occasion to convey local demands to state officials but also a way to disseminate information—that the candidate was tipped to hold a cabinet position—in these convergences.

### II.I. Coffeehouses: Convergences of Masculine Bodies

Coffeehouses play a major role in the way masculinities are enacted in the Valley as settings where men can converge to deliberate about a wide range of issues. Ranging in size and capacity, these are scattered across the town centre, numbering in dozens. As settings of masculine socialities, men converge in coffeehouses across the town centre to see other men, have some tea, discuss matters, update each other about recent developments, narrate their personal experiences, play cards or board games (such as, backgammon or *okey*),<sup>396</sup> read newspapers, and watch TV (usually news or sports programmes). Men frequenting these coffeehouses come to know each other quite well as they spend considerable time together. Although every man generally frequents a

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<sup>395</sup> Recent legal changes strengthened the public ownership of forestlands, even if they had been registered or used by private persons for centuries. Similarly, pastures were also deemed public under the ownership of the state.

<sup>396</sup> *Okey* is a multiplayer game similar to rummikub and quite popular across the country.

particular coffeehouse that he spends most of his time in, it is also customary that he stops by others as well to mingle with the crowd of these establishments and to keep himself up-to-date. Coffeehouses, in this sense, emerge as spaces where men socialise and information about different aspects of life (politics, economy, personal issues, social affairs, or future plans) is disseminated to the wider community.

Two categories of people, notably, are generally excluded from coffeehouses. Children constitute the first category as their presence in coffeehouses can be tolerated but discouraged. They can come in for a specific period of time if it is necessary (waiting for their fathers etc.). For boys, hence, normalisation of their presence in coffeehouses symbolises their transition into adulthood as (members of the community of) men. Children's presence is, however, much more loosely regulated in comparison to that of women, who are traditionally and strictly excluded.<sup>397</sup> Although more relaxed these days in urban contexts, this exclusion of women from coffeehouses is still observed, as local women in the Valley, as far as I could see, never go inside these coffeehouses. In case a woman needs to find someone, e.g. her husband or a kin, she would wait outside and ask a man's help to go in and find the person on her behalf. Yakup's wife, for instance, a woman of Kadahor in her sixties, would wait in front of the glass display and make a subtle gesture to tell Yakup to come out. A woman's presence in these coffeehouses would generally cause a silence, as swearing and words around sexuality are supposed to be secluded to homosocial/masculine relationalities, as discussed before.<sup>398</sup>

As I occasionally worked in one of these establishments, the one owned and operated by Yakup, it helped me greatly to keep in touch with local men, to be

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<sup>397</sup> Not only the inside but also the vicinity of coffeehouses was conceived as spaces that women should not be present, thus rendering passing in front of coffeehouses an indecent act for women.

<sup>398</sup> Importantly, these presences also raise doubts about the masculine credentials of the related man, since such intrusions signal either the indecency of the intruding woman or the related man's incapacity to have authority over her to control her movements in public. Another possibility, which I could not observe in the Valley but is prevalent in urban lower class communities, is that the intruding woman is a hardworking, honourable, and decent subject who intervenes in her husband's gambling addiction. In these encounters, her intervention and presence in a coffeehouse is still frowned upon but accommodated without affecting her honour and decency.

up-to-date with the incidents in the community (visits by notables/politicians, funerals, accidents, weddings, gatherings, suicides, or personal grievances), and enhance my familiarisation within the community. Those who did not know me would immediately ask how I was related to Yakup (*Nesi oluyorsun?*) and, upon learning that I was not one of his kin, inquired which village I was from (*Hangi köydensin?*), reflecting the communal privacy these establishments produce in seemingly public spaces. Coffeehouses, in this sense, highlight how masculine bodies “privatise”<sup>399</sup> these spaces through their established contacts and relations to other subjects.

## II.II. Separation from the Village/Private: Conditions of Masculine Movements

It should be noted that men’s presence in the town centre is rendered possible only through a process by which local women are left behind in villages and burdened with physical labour. Labour that women have to undertake daily ranges from agricultural activities (such as, sowing or cultivating the soil) to the herding of the cattle, or from daily errands (such as, gathering wood) to household activities and obligations (such as, childcare and cooking). In this sense, daily commute of men to the town centre delegates the burden of the daily and seasonal errands to women, freeing the men to pursue socio-political and economic endeavours in the *çarşı*.

It is not uncommon in the Valley to see women carrying huge stacks of wood or agricultural products, such as maize or mowed grass for their cattle, on their backs across steep trails while men walk nonchalantly a few meters apart without helping them. It seems that the physical labour is completely feminised through the process and positioned in opposition to masculinity, through which

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<sup>399</sup> In his analysis of gendered relationalities to space, Haydar Darıcı claims that young Kurdish men and women utilise and appropriate spaces differently. For young men, for instance, he argues that seemingly public places, such as the streets or parks, come to be appropriated as privatised spaces as these young men are expelled from seemingly feminine/private homes. Contrarily, by working as housemaids and cleaners in middle-class Turkish homes, young women come to re-index these seemingly places as public domains where they evade the patriarchal control of their parents. Thus, Darıcı claims that young men ‘privatise’ public spaces while young women ‘publicise’ private ones. For further information, please see: Haydar Darıcı, “Politics of Privacy: Forced Migration and the Spatial Struggle of the Kurdish Youth,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4.

men are freed from labourious tasks to discuss political or other matters in coffeehouses in the town centre. Delegation of the physical labour to women, and thus to the village sphere, then, further enshrines the civic integration of men as citizens, or as political subjects.<sup>400</sup> Through this gendered division of labour, as also indicated by Meeker, frees men from such obligations and offers them the possibility of political integration through marking physical labour around subsistence as emasculating. They can descend to the town centre to discuss (political and stately) matters with other men, giving rise to a sense of being part of the national body through their deliberations on national developments that they are exposed to via TV, radios, and newspapers.

However, it should be noted that although Meeker pertinently situates this gendered division of labour in a historicity beginning in late-Ottoman centralisation reforms to the Republican era through the case of Of, the sweeping reforms of the Republican regime should be specifically noted for their radical introduction of new spatial formations. This is exemplified in the town square and uniformist/homogenising policies that render heterogeneities illegible in the public sphere through the state enforcement of homogeneity, as in the sole use of Turkish, in public. This configuration of men's position in public, however, is augmented in what temporally overlaps with the emergence of a new public in this part of the Valley, both physically and socio-politically.

### **III. Inducting Men as Citizens**

In the light of masculine commute to the town centre and their convergence in coffeehouses, a number of claims can be made with regards to the construction of masculine subjectivities in the Valley.

Firstly, the state's strict adherence to modernisation and Turkification of the whole landscape, in this sense, not only exacerbated this division across gender lines, but also introduced the seclusion of certain local socio-cultural distinctions

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<sup>400</sup> Meeker also touches upon this gendered division of labour through his analysis of the gradual integration of Trabzon into the late Ottoman imperial structure, as a result of which political integration for men was rendered possible. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 104 – 106.

into private/village spheres, as in the case of Romeika. In addition to producing new spaces within the Valley, e.g. the town centre, these interventions in the Republican period further designated this village sphere as the depository of the local heritage. Thus, men's participation is now marked not only through their "freedom" from the physical labour of the village/household, but also by their distance, or ability to distance themselves, from this heritage (of Romeika) to attain Turkishness through the use of Turkish in public. Extending Meeker's claims, then, I argue that what has been delegated to women and villages involves not only physical labour but also local distinctions, such as Romeika, since these heterogeneities go against local men's reiterations of Turkishness in public. Evident when thought alongside the men's preference for Turkish and their reluctance to use Romeika in public, women emerge as the primary bearers of this unique heritage.<sup>401</sup>

Secondly, coffeehouses as sites emerge to be intricately related to the production of masculine subjects of the state/nation. In his analysis of subjectivity in the case of Minangkabau communities in Indonesia, Gregory Simon observes a similar trend among men, which he highlights as a "powerful demand for men simply to appear publicly."<sup>402</sup> Being in these coffeehouses, Simon claims, is essentially linked to a masculine imperative to socialise with other men in public.<sup>403</sup> In a similar vein and alongside the configuration of the town centre as the site where Turkishness is diffused into a geography and socialities, coffeehouses emerge as sites where men are interpellated into particular subject positions by (Turkish nationalist) ideology, through which they are inducted as citizens of the state and subjects of the nation. Their constant engagements with and exposure to (national) news and politics (including but not limited to TV broadcasts, newspapers, and their personal political encounters) particularly should be considered alongside this mundane sedimentation of the national geography and state into local (masculine) selves as these recurring

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<sup>401</sup> The linguistic study of Ioanna Sitaridou around Romeika, for instance, highlight how Romeika is overall kept alive and transmitted by women in villages rather than men. Most of her respondents consist of women and the preservation of the language, as I also discussed earlier, is ensured by their relative isolation in the privacy of villages.

<sup>402</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 67.

<sup>403</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 65.

engagements instantiate a national space and temporality by cohering diverse parts of the country in a single narrative. Integrated into the conception of the public and citizenry by the Republic in this new geographical topography, local (masculine) subjectivities should be read with regards to these geographical, toponymic, symbolic, and political injections that formed the Valley of today.

Another implication of masculine presence in the town centre relates to the most visible aspect of this movement through which masculine bodies are assembled in the town centre during daytime. Establishing a gendered differentiation through which men are physically separated from women and children, this compulsive commute to the town centre reiterates these moving bodies as men through the exclusion of others, that of women and children, generating the (adult) masculine subject in public.

It should also be indicated that this spatial arrangement and separation acts as a marker of spaces along the temporal and relational dynamics to differentiate between public and private spaces. Although further fragmented in each sphere into diverse “nestings,”<sup>404</sup> especially when considered alongside arrangements around the uses of Romeika, this convergence of masculine bodies in the town centre marks villages, deserted by men during daytime, as feminine and private, while the town centre emerges as masculine and public.<sup>405</sup> Sunay, for instance, reminisced about her childhood by indicating how passing through the *çarşı* was a shame-inducing process as women were not supposed to be in this public space, strolling in front of men sitting by coffeehouses. Her discomfort and the general consensus on the inappropriateness of women’s presence in the town

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<sup>404</sup> Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” p. 85.

<sup>405</sup> Following the Tunisian author Boudhiba’s childhood accounts around his access to women’s hammam that went on till he reached puberty, Kandiyoti pertinently highlights how bodies and spaces are arranged with regards to masculinity and femininity. In Arab-Muslim societies, a male child accompanies his mother to the women’s hammam where he is conveniently accommodated. After adolescence, though, he is assigned to men’s hammam. Deniz Kandiyoti, “The Paradoxes of Masculinity: Some Thoughts on Segregated Societies,” in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, Routledge: London and New York, 1994, p. 203.

Mübeccel B. Kiray, “The Women of Small Towns,” in *Women in Turkish Society*, Nermin Abadan Unat (ed.), E. J. Brill: Leiden, 1981, p. 268.

centre, then, highlight this separation between public and private alongside gender.<sup>406</sup>

While men are integrated into the Republican juridico-political structure as citizens who reproduce the nation and the state, women seem to be excluded from the public, especially in rural contexts, where the spatial distance of the town centre further complicated their participation and visibility. Thus, gendered spaces across the Valley also destabilise the conventional claims around Turkish modernisation and its relationship to women—that women are rendered equal and brought into the public.<sup>407</sup> Embodying a space for masculine gathering and dialogue, the town centre emerges as a public sphere where men converge to form a community of citizens. It is also to be seen as a zone women’s presence is managed carefully. Clearly illustrating the symbiosis between the Turkish modernisation and the patriarchal forms and challenging the conventional articulations of Turkish modernisation, as highlighted by feminist scholars,<sup>408</sup> the gendered movements and spatial separation in the Valley present a case within which men assume their (political and gendered)

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<sup>406</sup> In their analysis of upper-middle class men’s status at home in Turkey, Özbay and Baliç touch upon this marking of spaces through which women appropriate home, making men feel uncomfortable in the “private” sphere. They claim that men in such domestic spaces face the threat of emasculation which forces them to either leave the home for public spaces or to find nestings for their masculine endeavours. (Özbay and Baliç, “Erkekliğin Ev Halleri!,” p. 99.)

<sup>407</sup> Dicle Koğacıoğlu highlights this passive aspect of the language through which women in Turkey are claimed to be liberated by the Republican reforms:

However—and this is crucial—the prevailing conception was that these rights were “grants to women” by the state as the conditions for modernity and for the well-being of the nation. The legal rights that promised substantial improvements in women’s lives thus went hand in hand with the disbanding of the women’s movements that had demanded those rights (see Zihnioğlu and Sirman, “Feminism”). The state was neither to negotiate these rights with women nor to deliver them in response to demand. Women’s rights and reforms towards gender equality were, rather, a primary way of exerting a new national identity that was in opposition to the Ottoman Empire and its Islamic identity. [...] Women were supposed to be grateful for this change and for the rights they gained. (p. 127)

<sup>408</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti also touches upon this gendered differentiation and claims that, “femininity was incompatible with a public presence” in the Turkish context. Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1997, p. 126.

Similarly, Nükhet Sirman, through her study in Western Turkey, records mechanisms of differentiation in terms of men and women’s appropriate presences in certain spaces by indicating that, “women are rendered visible in certain areas of the village, areas which can be designated as ‘public.’” Nükhet Sirman, “State, Village and Gender in Western Turkey,” *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sirman (eds.), Routledge: New York and London, 1990, p. 47.

subjectivity through their departure from village spaces and at the expense of women. Although the Republican reforms emphasised the public presence and visibility of docile women and were heralded as the “emancipation” of women in Turkey,<sup>409</sup> even this symbolic and carefully controlled visibility is relatively absent in the rural context of the Valley. In her analysis of law and patriarchy, Dicle Koğacıoğlu makes a relevant claim and underlines how the Turkish modernisation’s widespread image as the liberator rather involved a “masculine public comprised of heads of nuclear families.”<sup>410</sup> Although urban and middle-class women were brought into public in order to be the “modern” face of the “new” Turkey, rural women, as also indicated by Kandiyoti, seem to be substantially absent from the interplay, highlighting the limits of Kemalist modernisation.<sup>411</sup>

Yet, as I suggested before as well, this indexical marking of spaces, bodies, and relationalities as public and private should not be conceived as homogeneous and permanent arrangements within which men and women are confined to different and non-interacting spaces. On the contrary, they are contextually and relationally determined, altered, and fragmented. They give way to multiple, evanescent, and heterogeneous entities nested within one another.<sup>412</sup> Thus, rather than embedding all men in the public, this arrangement envisions incessant conversion of masculine publics into more private and intimate relationalities depending on the context. Within coffeehouses and shops, it is not unusual to witness intimate and quite private conversations among men, which are conventionally assumed to belong to the private sphere. Similarly, my presence as a young unmarried man in a house would also radically alter the space and relationalities, generally confining me to the guest room (*selamlık*)

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<sup>409</sup> Koğacıoğlu, “The Tradition Effect,” p. 128. Kandiyoti also states: “Among the countries of the Middle East [read as Islamic], Turkey may be singled out as a republic that has addressed the question of women’s emancipation early, explicitly, and extensively.” Deniz Kandiyoti, “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1987, p. 320.

<sup>410</sup> Koğacıoğlu, “The Tradition Effect,” p. 127.

<sup>411</sup> Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern,” p. 125.

<sup>412</sup> Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” p. 85.



with the exclusion of non-elderly women's presence.<sup>413</sup> When I was at Kerim's house in Coroş, for instance, only Kerim's mother, in her late sixties, remained in the room along with the men of the house while younger women left the room, which was marked non-private through my presence.<sup>414</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

In this chapter I started the analysis with the peculiarities of the town centre as particular socio-cultural characteristics, geographical limitations, and socio-political transformations constitute the very ground upon which local socialities and subjectivities could be thought. Within this context, I argued that the town centre is a stately space within which a homogeneous and coherent national identity is generated through the exclusive utilisation of Turkish. Through tracing masculine commutes into the town centre, I explored how the public sphere in the Valley occurs in a gendered manner within which men are interpellated and constituted as subjects. Especially heightened in coffeehouses, where an incessant deliberation of politics, the economy, and conspiracies take place, this convergence of masculine bodies and the proximity of the "state," I claimed, pave the way for the production of men as political subjects, citizens, and agents. This deliberative/rhetorical participation in national affairs seems to produce a sense of belonging through which a possibility of inclusion into the

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<sup>413</sup> *Selamlık* historically denotes the public section of the imperial palace and mansions that is reserved for the male subjects of the household. In opposition to harem, which is spared for woman and household activities as well as bedrooms, *selamlık* emerges as the section of the house where male guests are received. Although it is quite rare in contemporary urban contexts, possibly related both to the erosion of traditional segregation of genders and limitedness of physical spaces, I was surprised that some households in the Valley still include these rooms, which are separately accessible from outside and reserved for male guests. Yet, even if they do not exist as a separate space, the living/reception room of the house would still function in the same manner. Michael Meeker also mentions this phenomenon in his analysis of Of.

For further information on how *selamlık* evolved into a more gender-mixed reception room/salon, where male and female subjects could be accommodated together, throughout the Republican period and modernisation, please see: Ferhunde Özbay, "Gendered Space: A New Look at Turkish Modernisation," *Gender and History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, November 1999.

<sup>414</sup> Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," p. 279.

Haydar Darıcı also touches upon this gendered differentiation in his analysis of Kurdish youth in southern Turkey through which young men, expelled from the house which is marked as feminine, appropriate the public space to produce their own private sphere through both violent clashes with the police and the use of drugs. Darıcı, "Politics of Privacy," p. 466 - 467.

national (Turkishness) for these masculine subjects is actualised, marking them as political subjects of the nation and the state.

Masculine socialities in the town centre, then, demonstrate how local men are interpellated into a state system within which they emerge as citizens and subjects through their reiterative practices, presences, and convergences in what are deemed to be public sites. Through these mundane and repetitive conducts and presences, they face and interact with state institutions and officials, both generating themselves as citizens and reifying the state. This incessant interaction and exposure to enactments, policies, discourses, and images of the state, in this sense, constitutes one of the most trivial and yet crucial elements of processes through which subjects, spaces, and relationalities get to be sutured with the state ideology. Tracing masculine commutes across the Valley space toward the town centre presents us with ideological “interpellations” that “hail” locals into new positions and thus constituting them as subjects. The material operations of the state within the Valley and its accompanying ideological structure, in this sense, provide the ground upon which these men are inducted as subjects of the Turkish nation-state. This hailing and subsequent arrangement of masculine bodies to issue forth subjectivities, in turn, also highlight how masculinities emerge as corporealities and reiterations that need to be recited continuously for the normalisation and maintenance of gendered bodies.

## CHAPTER IX

### MASCULINITIES, THE STATE, AND CONSPIRACIES: LIKE THE STATE, LIKE THE CITIZEN?

In the opening lines of this dissertation, I mentioned that in January 2007, a young ultra-nationalist man assassinated Hrant Dink in İstanbul. As the assassin, Oğün Samast, was caught on his way to Trabzon, those policemen who interrogated Samast, gave the assailant a Turkish flag and took photos with him as if he had accomplished a heroic deed.<sup>415</sup> In addition to the sudden emergence of the national symbol to sacralise the murder,<sup>416</sup> this violent encounter and the tacit approval Samast received from public officials, I argue, should also be read in relation to the extent of nationalist violence in the country. Ranging from nationalist outbursts to daily death toll of workers, or from the contemporary epidemic of violence against women to the clashes in football stadiums, the emergence of the masculine body as the enactor of a permissible violence, I believe, needs to be analysed to comprehend how the state functions in contemporary Turkey.



Photo IV: Oğün Samast with police officers right after his arrest in the police station.

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<sup>415</sup> This specific police officer, who took the photo with Samast, was promoted to be the deputy police constable of Malatya.

<sup>416</sup> Other appearances of the flag in masculine journeys should be noted: circumcision and military service farewell ceremonies.

Following the discussion of gendered spaces and masculinities, I discuss other trajectories to approach the state as an analytic category since contemporary Turkey demonstrates socio-political patterns that are hard to fit into classical Weberian formulations. Tracing ethnographic examples around men's utilisation of conspiratorial narratives for a variety of issues, I will analyse how men are produced and the state is enacted through following a pervasive form of narratives among men in the Valley, namely conspiracy theories—narratives that seek to decipher “an occult force operating behind the seemingly real, outward forms.”<sup>417</sup> Through this discussion, I argue that local masculinities are produced through conspiratorial enunciations and embodiment of the state.

### Theoretical Framework: How to Conceive the State?

Weber defined the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”<sup>418</sup> All the eruptions of violence the country has witnessed in recent decades, though, present a radically different picture. What does contemporary Turkey tell us, then?<sup>419</sup> Is this a “failure,” on the state's side, to monopolise the legitimate violence?<sup>420</sup> If we continue thinking the state along the lines of (legitimate) violence, we might as well invert the question: Is it possible that the state is not always undermined but legitimised and endorsed by instances of non-state violence?

### *State as an Illusory Coherence?*

Rather than conceptualising the state as a fully independent actor “in its own

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<sup>417</sup> Jovan Byford, *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction*, Palgrave MacMillan: NYC, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>418</sup> Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” p. 1. Similarly, Benjamin also underlines how non-state violence is articulated in opposition to the legal system and order. Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” p. 280 – 281.

<sup>419</sup> Zeynep Gambetti, “‘I’m no Terrorist, I’m a Kurd’: Societal Violence, the State, and the Neoliberal Order,” in *Rhetorics of Insecurity: Belonging and Violence in the Neoliberal Era*, Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anativia (eds.), New York University Press: New York and London, 2013, p. 135.

<sup>420</sup> Stacey Hunt, “Language of Stateness: A study of Space and El Pueblo in the Colombian State,” *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2006, p. 89.

right,”<sup>421</sup> I follow theorisations of Philip Abrams, Michael Taussig, and Timothy Mitchell and claim that the state as a coherent and unified agency does not exist.<sup>422</sup> I refer to the state as an analytic category and a politico-ideological pulse that is reified and enacted in diverse modes, ranging from the exertion of physical force by security apparatuses to common sense utterances of the word “the state” as if it were a tangible and coherent entity.<sup>423</sup> Rather heterogeneous, dysfunctional, and fragmented, the idea of the state is produced as a convergence of enactments, discourses, and representations by the subjects and institutions to “mis-represent political and economic domination in ways that legitimate *subjection*.”<sup>424</sup>

This misrepresentation should be thought alongside the multiplicity of practices that veil the disfiguration of political institutions. The state, for Abrams, emerges as a mystical and mystifying element that produces the illusion that there is something unseen behind its visible entanglements. However, “[t]he state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice,” Abrams writes, “it is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is.”<sup>425</sup> In parallel, Jean and John Comaroff also affirm that the state is “at once an illusion, a potent claim to authority, a cultural artifact, a present absence and an absent presence, a principle of unity masking institutional disarticulation.”<sup>426</sup> The state, in this sense, emerges to be a “disunity” of enactments of institutions and subjects and can only be pursued through its effects in socio-political life.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction,” p. 1.

<sup>422</sup> Hunt, “Language of Stateness,” p. 90.

<sup>423</sup> Abrams points out the “skeleton of the state stripped of all misleading ideologies”: “[a]rmies and prisons, the Special Patrol and the deportation orders as well as the whole process of fiscal exaction.” Philip Abrams, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1988, p. 77.

<sup>424</sup> Abrams, “Notes,” p. 76. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>425</sup> Abrams, “Notes,” p. 82.

<sup>426</sup> Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2000, p. 323.

<sup>427</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction,” p. 2.

In addition to these articulations, a psychosocial/psychic element through which citizens are interpellated by the states into subjection in its dual sense (being a subject and being subjected), should be highlighted as necessitated by the persistent strength of nationalist ideologies. In the footsteps of Taussig and Yael Navaro-Yashin, this aspect of states entails how subjects are both constructed and become agents involved in the reification of the state through (social) fantasies.<sup>428</sup> Going beyond the hollowness of the state and glimpsing its psychic implications, Michael Taussig asks a crucial question: “Might it turn out, then, that not the basic truths, not the Being nor the ideologies of the center, but the fantasies of the marginated concerning the secret of the center are what is most politically important to the State idea and hence State fetishism?”<sup>429</sup> Taussig, hence, invites us to be attentive to the “self-fulfilling fantasy of power [that is] projected into an imagined center.”<sup>430</sup> Similarly, Navaro-Yashin also touches upon the crucial role played by fantasies in the reification and reproduction of (the Turkish) state in daily life even in the face of malfunctioning. She claims that “the state is an object of psychic desire” and adds that “[f]antasy does everyday maintenance work for the state.”<sup>431</sup> States, in this sense, not only offer “hope and fear” to their subjects,<sup>432</sup> but also produce psychosocial attachment through which the subject is produced and positioned within a given socio-political network. Through this hailing, “elements of civil society, [...] take initiative and (actively) resubjugate themselves to ‘the state’.”<sup>433</sup>

*State and Civil Society: Dawn of New Subjectivities?*

The interrelationship between the state and civil society (and whether states rolled back as a result of the advent of globalisation, neoliberalism, and other

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<sup>428</sup> Taussig, “Maleficium,” p. 132.

Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction,” p. 18.

<sup>429</sup> Taussig, “Maleficium,” p. 132.

<sup>430</sup> Taussig, “Maleficium,” p. 133.

<sup>431</sup> Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, p. 4.

<sup>432</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996, p. 8.

<sup>433</sup> Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, p. 120.

transnational factors) also needs to be mentioned.<sup>434</sup> Going beyond a conventional antagonism between the state and civil society, various scholars highlighted how these two domains also maintain and reproduce each other in different forms.<sup>435</sup> Begoña Aretxaga, for instance, indicates that “there is not a deficit of state but an excess of statehood practices” in the contemporary world.<sup>436</sup> Various others have underlined the need to comprehend how states construct, in the face of these structural destabilisations, new ways and rituals “both to produce state power and national unity” within their borders.<sup>437</sup> Jean and John Comaroff point out the advent of occult economies, magicalities, and fetishes through which states produce coherence and legitimacy in the unstable era of “millennial capitalism.”<sup>438</sup> In a parallel manner, Navaro-Yashin emphasises the “mundanity” of the reproduction of the state that is structurally dependent on “everyday life practices of people outside the centers of official power,” such as the nationalist rituals and vigilantism in Turkey.<sup>439</sup> Thus, the relationality between the two can also be thought as a symbiosis and delegation, rather than a contestation, through which non-state actors “enhance and normalize, rather than challenge, the [...] state.”<sup>440</sup> I also explore this interrelationality with regards to how certain non-state actors take over duties that are usually associated with the modern state (as in education,<sup>441</sup> healthcare,<sup>442</sup> and

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<sup>434</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction,” p. 1 – 2.

John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, “Law and Disorder in the Postcolony: An Introduction,” in *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff (eds.), The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2006, p. 3 – 5.

<sup>435</sup> Hunt, “Language of Stateness,” p. 91.

<sup>436</sup> Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” p. 396.

<sup>437</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism,” 2000, p. 328.

Achille Mbembe also traces new modalities of statehood in postcolonial settings in Africa. Achille Mbembe, “The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 1992.

<sup>438</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism,” 326 – 327.

<sup>439</sup> Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, p. 134 and 135.

<sup>440</sup> Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, p. 135

<sup>441</sup> Yasemin İpek Can’s research on TEGV also highlights a new individualist rhetoric that emphasises self-empowerment even in the face of structural limitations and instability. By both supplementing the state’s failings in educational services and upholding a nationalist-modernist discourse, these institutions cover up the shortcomings of the state services. For further information, please see: Yasemin İpek Can, “Securing ‘Security’ amid Neoliberal Restructuring Civil Society and Volunteerism in post-1990 Turkey,” in *Rhetorics of Insecurity: Belonging and Violence in the Neoliberal Era*, Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anatavia (eds.), New York University Press: New York and London, 2013.

<sup>442</sup> Emergence and spread of private health institutions in Turkey should be put forward as an example of this evolving regime. In Turkish context, the state charts protocols to integrate these private institutions to the general health care system and encourages the spread of these

security<sup>443</sup>) rather than conceiving the process as the “withering away” of the state.<sup>444</sup> I trace practices that are enacted by non-state actors, as in flag campaigns or lynching of Kurdish bodies, both blurring the conventional limits of the state and producing the state effects through taking over the state duties when it “rolls back” in its service provision.<sup>445</sup>

How states are reproduced through mundane everyday endeavours, in this sense, constitutes one of the most important aspects of analyses of the state since “stateness does not solely grow out of official, or ‘stately,’ strategies of government.”<sup>446</sup> How gendered enactments produce both the state effects and subjectivities through everyday profanities, in this sense, needs to be demonstrated, especially in the Turkish context, since various scholarly analyses either depict the state as a coherent centre of power that acts in a rational manner or conceive it as a negative element that represses (liberties of) social actors. Highlighting productive aspects of contemporary power, my analysis of conspiracies might offer an account of how states function in concrete settings and how their peculiar configurations engender masculine subjectivities that emulate the state *per se*.

## **I. Conspiracies in the Valley: Masculinities at Play**

Mustafa, a retired man from Holayisa in his sixties, was fluent in Romeika. His fluency in Romeika, though, he told, was the cause of the violent discrimination he faced from other soldiers, who scorned him as *Rum*, during his military service in 1970s. He recounted how he eventually secured a post in the military intelligence unit thanks to his

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institutions. This transition, no doubt, is also facilitated by the inadequacy of health care provisions in the country.

<sup>443</sup> Blackwater USA, for instance, have taken part in the Iraqi war as a private military force, contracted by the US government.

<sup>444</sup> Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” p. 394 – 395.

Comaroff and Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism,” p. 320 – 321.

Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anatívia, “Introduction: States of (In)security: Coming to Terms with an Erratic Terrain,” in *Rhetorics of Insecurity: Belonging and Violence in the Neoliberal Era*, Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anatívia (eds.), New York University Press: New York and London, 2013, p. 8.

Gambetti, “I’m no Terrorist, I’m a Kurd,” p. 146.

<sup>445</sup> C. Hood, A. Dunshire, L. Thomson, “Rolling Back the State: Thatcherism, Fraserism and Bureaucracy,” *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1988.

<sup>446</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction,” p. 9.



comprehension of Greek. Although he indicated that he had hated the fact that he could speak Romeika and refused to speak it for a while during his youth, he eventually realised that it could be useful for *vatan* (the motherland) and national interests in intelligence missions he participated in subsequently to counter Greek intelligence activities in Western Turkey.

Through his encounters in decades of working abroad, Mustafa came to meet people from different countries. As he was fluent in Romeika, it was easy to initiate and establish contacts with Greeks, some of who kept in touch and visited him in the Valley. These visits produced enduring friendships and he became one of the key contacts for visiting Greek groups, even though he frequently indicated, “infidels cannot be true friends of ours (*Gavurdan bize dost olmaz*).” Intriguingly, he allegedly pretended to be “one of them” while interacting with these Greek visitors, telling them that his “real” family name was Antoniyadis—a *Rum* name. These narratives allegedly helped him to be accepted easily by these Greek visitors. With some of these Greek visitors, he went to a few treasure hunts across the littoral. Most of these were fruitless, yet his participation, he alleged, demonstrated that they put their trust in him. Although Mustafa was also interested in these quests, his main objective, though, as he underlined, was to find out their true intentions and watch over them as they wandered the region without revealing his true self—that his ancestors were not Greek indeed, but Chechen and Uzbek, thus Muslim and Turkic!

Mustafa’s story clearly reflects the strength of national sentiments among local men. What starts as an exclusion from Turkishness because of local distinctions (Romeika and alleged Greekness) is inverted to reveal a Turkish nationalist subject who counters Greek efforts through this very distinction. Yet, the conspiratorial tone of the narrative through which Mustafa both called attention to threats and took arms to defend the country was far from being a unique case in the Valley, as almost every dialogue was plagued with similar logics and narratives.

Discourses that pinpointed the US and occasionally Israel as foreign powers with hostile objectives were prevalent among local men. Interventions by these “sinister” external forces, for locals, would range from manipulations of the economy to smear campaigns in politics, or from alterations in the genetics of people and plants to air pollution or infertility of soil. Especially in regard to supposed genetic modifications of seeds, local asserted that these alterations affected both their *erkeklik* (masculinity/virility) and *kadınlık*

(femininity/muliebrity), thus not only being a national/stately matter, but also having an impact on their bodies in turn. They were not as strong as they used to be, many indicated, giving examples of how they used to carry big watermill stones on their shoulders back then, which they could not repeat today.

Not so rarely, for instance, would locals refer to foreign spies visiting the area both to gather information about the Valley and to collect samples of local species of plants and animals. Israeli spies, they asserted confidently, came as tourists pretending to be just sightseeing, whereas for locals their “true” objective was clear: to steal the seeds of endemic species and have a monopolistic control over them. After a number of such “visits” by Israeli tourists, both locals and security agencies intervened, I was told, forcing Israeli spies to find imaginative ways to continue their mission. They insisted that spies pretended to be wandering around in their shorts while their specially-designed sticky socks collected seeds, easily bypassing security checks at customs afterwards. Locals urged each other to be vigilant as patriotic citizens to protect the natural wealth of the country. Landscapes, once again, emerged as an organic extension of the community/nation,<sup>447</sup> while loyal citizens of the Valley apparently took it as their duty to confront others directly in encounters where a theft from the national body was imminent.

Going beyond this pervasive suspicion, conspiracies were also utilised to account for social or political problems or international relations. Mustafa, for instance, discussed how some states, including the US, Russia, and Israel, utilise *cins* (jinns, or spirits) for their agenda. He added that all other states probably used *cins*, too, with the exception of Turkey, as we were not believers, pinpointing the history of secularist hegemony in the country as the source of incapacity. Similarly, Emin Hoca, for instance, alongside Davut and Rahim, was content when he “learnt” about the conversion of Vladimir Putin into Islam. As Putin and Erdoğan were allies at the time, he connected Putin’s alleged conversion to both presidents’

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<sup>447</sup> In his influential work on the Venezuelan state, Fernando Coronil also claims that natural resources, such as oil, emerge as an integral part of the idea of the nation and nation’s wealth. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1997.

opposition to western policies and indicated that it was not surprising for a smart man like Putin to find the right path. Even when confronted with the fact that the news he referred to was from a satirical website, all three were still quite confident that the news was true. They speculated that the Russian president could not publicly announce his conversion because of a possible backlash from the Russian population and the West, stressing that Putin was an “upright man (*adam gibi adam* literally, a man like [the] man).” The proof against the claim, grippingly, seemed to further strengthen it.

In a similar vein, Mustafa decisively argued that homosexuality is pervasively common in Arabic societies, a phenomenon he could observe first hand for years as he worked in Saudi Arabia and Libya, and this decadence was strictly related to the colonial rule of Western powers over these countries. The West injected homosexuality into these societies, he hinted, both to weaken religious integrity in line with what they allegedly also tried currently in Turkey through the introduction of genetically modified products. He indicated that by supplying the country with these genetically modified seeds, foreign powers wanted to eradicate, or at least weaken, masculinity and sexual prowess.

In the event of a nation-wide power cut in late March, Rahim and Mehmet claimed that it was foreign powers’ manipulation to destabilise the country right before the parliamentary elections and to hinder the popular support for President Erdoğan. Although the Ministry later dismissed such claims and clearly stated that the power cut was caused by a technical fault, not much changed for Rahim and Mehmet. When two military aircrafts crashed in Malatya during a training flight in February, too, Mustafa did not hesitate to assert, in an unsurprisingly confident manner, that the crash was the work of American and Israeli militaries to send a message to Turkey. The statements from the official bodies did not seem to matter, as they did not for Rahim and Mehmet. On the contrary, when the Minister made a quick assessment after the incident, that the initial signs indicated an accident, Mustafa dismissed it by questioning how the Minister could know it so quickly and asked if the Minister was secretly working for these foreign forces (*Bu da onların adamı mı? – Is he also their man?*). The

crash, for him, had been caused by these foreign powers; the rest was either a plain lie or a cover up.

These suspicions, unfortunately, were not confined to these imaginative cases that saw the “big picture” or the “hidden truth” in these everyday dealings. Casually present in almost all forms of encounters, conspiracies were easily adapted to provide an explanation for each ambiguous situation locals faced. As a semi-outsider and semi-insider, I was regularly, often laughingly, hinted to be an English/American spy, who would decipher important local information and pass them on to the relevant English/American authorities, or an undercover treasure hunter looking for a *define* that is buried/concealed in the Valley, as I discussed in Chapter VII.

These narratives did not specifically target me, though, as they were circulated about locals as well. Mustafa, for instance, was sure that Fahri was a Greek Orthodox missionary working for both the Orthodox Church and the Greek intelligence agency. Fahri, on the other hand, did his best to actively “defend the motherland” through his personal and political engagements against these very same Greek institutions in Thrace and Greece and accused others of being passive. Interestingly, others were also warning about Mustafa as, for them, he was too close to Greeks. Everyone seemed to be suspicious of one another; no one was to be trusted fully.

#### 1.1. Conspiracy Theories: “Too Much Meaning and a Certain Meaninglessness”<sup>448</sup>

In light of this pervasiveness of conspiratorial narratives and local men’s willingness to circulate them, I argue that these narratives constitute a defining element of how men relate both to themselves and to the assumingly singular and coherent political organisation, the state. They underline how local socialities are radically infused with suspicion, as in the case of the reciprocal

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<sup>448</sup> I borrowed the line from Homi Bhaba, where he discusses the rumours in relation to Indian mutiny and its reverberations. Homi Bhaba, “By Bread Alone: Songs of Violence in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge: London and New York, 2004, p. 572. (ibook)

accusations of Fahri and Mustafa. They also seem to be intricately related to political and international developments (as in regional alliances and political crises), presenting captivatingly easy answers to complex questions—a conventional feature of conspiracies in general.<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, these conspiracies seem to be refutation-proof, almost completely disregarding truth for the sake of the narrative.<sup>450</sup> Finally, conspiracies seem to produce a sense of “we,” as in Turkey and the Turkish nation, to which the narrator gets integrated in the face of manipulations by external-sinister powers (such as the West or the US).<sup>451</sup>

Besides these conventional effects of the circulation of conspiracy theories, I want to highlight other aspects of these enunciations through which, I argue, local masculine subjectivities are configured. These seemingly evident and conventional implications of conspiracies, in this sense, do not explain how enunciations of these narratives take particular forms in this local context and what they accomplish through this incessant masculine circulation. I argue that they seem to be operative in an endless labour of concealment, reification, and augmentation of local selves and the state through which local masculine subjects are generated. Resonating with treasure hunts, these conspiracies seem to reify and augment what is evidently fictive and mundane through which heterogeneous, malfunctioning, and generic experiences are overridden by imaginations of a coherent, functioning, and potent body. That aspect of conspiracies, I believe, produces one of the pillars of both local masculine subjectivities and the state in this peripheral locality.

I will highlight three consequences of the way conspiracy theories operate in the Valley through which men come to occupy different subject positions: enunciative, extensive with regards to corporeality of the narrator, and state-

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<sup>449</sup> Leslie Butt, “‘Lipstick Girls’ and ‘Fallen Women’: AIDS and Conspiratorial Thinking in Papua, Indonesia,” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2005, p. 418.

Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis and London, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>450</sup> Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, “Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2009, p. 207, 210.

<sup>451</sup> Butt, “‘Lipstick Girls’ and ‘Fallen Women,’” p. 428 – 429.

embodiment. First I will trace the first two aspects before presenting a new set of ethnographic data before turning to the state-embodiment.

*Enunciation: the Subject Who Speaks and Claims to Know*

Narratives in the Valley have a distinctive characteristic that sets them apart from conventional conspiracy theories that promise “the revelation of ‘the shocking truth.’”<sup>452</sup> On the contrary, as stated above, conspiracy theories in the Valley have an ever-changing content, which seemingly carries little weight vis-à-vis its enunciative aspect.<sup>453</sup> Hence, as is the case with the social functioning of rumours, conspiracy theories seem to be operational through their utterance and transmission without necessitating any form of validity or coherence.<sup>454</sup> In my encounters with locals, even the most blatant evidential refutation of claims does not seem to have any significant effect on the narrative or the narrator’s investment in the storyline since they seem to be structurally independent of the truthfulness of their content.

As the content of these conspiratorial narratives are transient and have no stability, the content they circulate is altered incessantly in tandem with the narrator’s momentary personal interactions and situatedness with regards to wider socio-political developments. Narratives around Putin and his “expected” conversion to Islam, for instance, were uttered in a political context within which President Erdoğan, whom locals revere greatly, was on good terms with the Russian President. Expectedly, when relations between Erdoğan and Putin soured, resulting in the downing of a Russian aircraft in late 2015, however, this positive image of Putin was immediately reversed. Davut, as far as I could follow through his social media, re-branded Putin as the “red-crusader arm of the West,” combining the crusader heritage with communism.<sup>455</sup> Thus, contents of

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<sup>452</sup> Susan Harding and Kathleen Stewart, “Anxieties of Influence: Conspiracy Theory and Therapeutic Culture in Millennial America,” *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order*, Todd Sander and Harry G. West (eds.), 2003, p. 259.

<sup>453</sup> Bhaba, “By Bread Alone,” p. 568.

<sup>454</sup> Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, University of California Press: Berkeley and London, 2007, p. 188.

<sup>455</sup> He shared many posts that indicated the complicity of the Russian administration in international injustice. One such post, for instance, was attributed to the late leader of the

these narratives seem to be in flux, changing incessantly in relation to the narrator's alignments in the socio-political realm.

Locals' disregard for truth and refutation should be considered, however, not as a reflection of their inability to grasp a changing world or simply as false consciousness. On the contrary, these conspiratorial enunciations and their blatant disregard for facticity should be thought alongside an aesthetic of socialities that uphold relationalities among men through constituting instances of agency and subjectivity. Hence, this evident disregard for truth highlights that the function and effectiveness of conspiracies rely on their aesthetic aspect within which what matters most is to be (seen) enunciating a narrative and the socialities they induce among the enunciating subjects and the audience. The act of narration both produces a *masculine subject who speaks (in public)*, in this sense, and positions the subject within a network of autonomous and knowledgeable men without having a substantial dependence on the truth of the uttered content. They should be conceptualised as the occasions of subjectivation through which masculine subjects are instantiated in public, in the presence of others, e.g. in coffeehouses. These utterances should not be traced through the truth they approximate, in this sense, but through how these enunciations generate a speaking subject that embodies agency in public as a man who knows. This "knowing" should be thought as a masculine claim, which inducts the enunciator as a man and is reiterated through the subject's enunciation of a conspiratorial narrative. By narrating conspiracies, in this sense, men produce and occupy positions of masculine subjectivity, which are intricately linked to a claim to know without really necessitating truthfulness or coherence. It also allows men to hold a position among other men in public as equals who can talk about stately matters.

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Islamist Milli Görüş (National View/Perspective) leader Necmettin Erbakan and claimed: "The monster of exploitation that suppresses the world has Zionism as its brain, Crusader Europe as its heart, America as its right arm, and Russia as its left arm."

### *Corporeal Extension to the Limits of the Nation*

In addition to constituting the subject through enunciation, conspiracies reproduce a paranoid account that is derived from the differentiation of a national “us” from the enemy/other “them,” while integrating the narrator into the nation. They maintain the nationalist imagination and assume a coherent national body that is separated from and threatened by others.<sup>456</sup> In this way, locals also seem to demonstrate their allegiance to the national cause, reproducing an us vs. them dichotomy,<sup>457</sup> and induct themselves as Turkish subjects.

Yet, in addition to locating the subject within the national body, these enunciations situate men in a glorious national quest as Turkish subjects and heighten the self-image of the narrator as someone who is part of something bigger, that is, the nation. Especially striking when thought alongside locals’ visible fascination with grand public projects, such as Ahmet’s joy with the construction of a tube pass across the Bosphorus in İstanbul, these men seem to embody the state, emerging as subjects that act and feel on behalf of it. This constitutes another function of conspiratorial circulations through which Turkey emerges as a unique actor in global encounters with an almost divine potency to face the (Western) hegemony. This emulation of the state by local men, though, is especially evident in encounters with “subversive” others, e.g. Israeli spies or terrorist-sympathisers. The subject, then, overgrows his corporeality and extends his capability to the national level with the surface of the body becoming the surface of the state. One simply becomes the state in these imaginary or real encounters with others, be it Israeli tourists or Greek visitors.

Narratives around how local seeds were genetically modified to undermine locals’ virility or the injection of homosexuality to colonised Arab societies, for instance, present a parallel logic about the way locals conceive their bodily extents. As locals were almost sure that foreigners would target corporealities to

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<sup>456</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books: New York, 2001, p. 43.

<sup>457</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p. 44.



undermine locals' masculinity/virility and femininity/mulibriety, which in turn would undermine the state's capacity, conspiracies emerge as narrative means to bridge the gap between the state and the narrating individual by bringing the state and local bodies together as targets of foreign activities. Local concerns and narratives about the potential loss of *erkeklik* (masculinity/virility) of local men and *kadınlık* (femininity/mulibreity) of local women, in this sense, might reflect how one's body might be the very surface and front upon which states, for locals, confront each other in covert ways. What enemy targets, then, happens to be the body of both the subject and the state, producing equivalence between the two, overlapping at local corporealities. What is produced through this process of vigilantism, reification, and augmentation, in this sense, is an account that is not solely confined to the limits of the individual narrator—it should rather be understood as a performative extension of his corporeal limits.

This equivalence between the state and the narrator's body illustrates how locals overgrow corporeally to embody the state and acquire a sense of potency. Hence, the subject circulating conspiratorial narratives is no longer a mere individual; he becomes an extension of the omniscient and omnipotent state, generating local masculinities *qua* potent subjects. In their endless vigilance against potential theft of national treasures or in their willingness to defend the motherland, local men become a part of the Turkish nation and acquire a stately potency against what attempts to undermine both their bodily capacities and national riches.

## **II. Embodying the State: Approximating Potency and Knowledge**

Conspiratorial narratives in the Valley also present us with a particular stream of thought and action that sets them apart from conventional effects of conspiracies. In close connection to this extension of the narrator's body, I argue that the utterance of conspiracies is structurally related to the way the states are conceived and operate, leading to the embodiment of the state by narrators. I shall recount Fahri's story to set out both the particularities of conspiracies in

the Valley and to clarify what I mean with the embodiment of the state by the narrating subject.

*Fahri and His National Quests: Being the Sovereign or Tentacles of the State?*

A local man in his early fifties, Fahri, was one of my closest friends in the Valley. After completing his degree in economics, he worked in a number of organisations in Ankara for a decade. Following the economic crisis in 2001, he moved to Athens, the reasons and procedures of which are still unknown to me. There, he learnt Greek and worked in different sectors. After a decade in Athens he returned to Turkey as a pensioner and settled in his ancestral home in the Valley while retaining his contact with his Greek friends. Enigmatically, though, Fahri also upheld extremely Turkish nationalist views and endorsed political parties whose discourses included racism and conspiracies.<sup>458</sup>

While in Greece, He had compiled an inventory of all Turkish Islamic heritage sites and buildings in Athens and presented the list to Greek and Turkish prime ministers to protect the Ottoman heritage in the country. The zenith of his nationalist endeavours in Greece was, however, related to his discovery of the PKK headquarters in Athens. Back then, in Athens, while he worked for an EU funds allocation agency, he saw an association with “North Anatolian” in its name. Moved by the affection he felt, he decided to call this agency to inform them about possibilities of acquiring EU funds. When he called, the phone was answered by a Greek man, yet, he managed to talk to a person in Turkish after an explanation. Interestingly, he underlined, this man he spoke to in Turkish had an eastern accent, implying that he was possibly Kurdish. Even though intrigued by this twist, Fahri wanted to visit the NGO to counsel them about funding opportunities, as they were his fellow countrymen. The man gave Fahri directions to their office and told him that they would pick him up from there. Fahri was already puzzled and suspicious as the directions the man gave were not compatible with the address listed in the document. He was picked up from the location as indicated and brought to the office, which was “full of PKK and Apo<sup>459</sup> posters.” Realising that this was a Kurdish organisation, he sat down by the wall so no one could take his photos with these posters. They talked about their lives in Athens, and yet he allegedly lied not to reveal too much about himself. At the first opportunity, he ditched them and without wasting much time contacted the Turkish Embassy in Athens, asking them to

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<sup>458</sup> The party he supported was *Vatan Partisi* (Patria Party) that emerged out of the re-organisation of the Labour Party. Although the party is insignificant in terms of votes it receives, its extremely nationalist and paranoid accounts and activities, ranging from denying Armenian Genocide in Switzerland to filing lawsuits against intellectuals, are known widely. The party is known to bring together a weird and fading form of leftist legacy with an intense and conspiratorial nationalism.

<sup>459</sup> Apo refers to the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan.

conduct an operation (*nokta operasyonu*) to eliminate this PKK nesting. After a while, the Embassy contacted him and stated that they cleansed the area and chased these PKK sympathisers to outer parts of Athens. His mission was accomplished.

Fahri's national quests, however, did not end there. At the beginning of April, I was invited to a casual dinner with some other locals. Through the night, Fahri talked about a number of issues ranging from politics to local affairs, while playing Greek songs on his laptop. As the night progressed, he turned to me and said that it was Easter in Greece then and he had been planning to be there. We talked some more about how he sometimes missed Greece and his friends there.

Toward midnight, though, his attitude was inverted completely. There was a minutes-long commercial on TV, which advertised plots in the Thrace region, close to the Turkish-Greek border. As they are generally dodgy, I did not pay that much attention to the ad, other than a few occasional glances. Intriguingly though, Fahri indicated that he and a few of his friends planned to buy some plots in Thrace. When I asked why, he explained: Greeks bought land in Thrace region en masse and aimed at annexing the Thrace into Greece, acting as agents of an irredentist policy. By buying plots in the region as a group, they were planning to create a bloc that would effectively stop any annexation plans of Greek buyers!

Although I could not confirm Fahri's claims, these narratives nevertheless ascribed a particular form of subjectivity and agency. I was particularly intrigued by the way Fahri aligned himself with (the Turkish) state and shouldered stately responsibilities with regards to any enemy, which intriguingly happens to be Greece in his case.

As in Fahri's quests, another such narrative from the Valley illustrated this embodiment of the state by locals clearly. Apparently, a decade ago or so, there were rumours that some "PKK terrorists" found their way into the Valley, which, according to locals, was part of terrorists' greater scheme to expand into the Black Sea region. Eventually, terrorists attacked a local businessman in Şerah. Motivated by their strong nationalist sentiments, almost all men in the Valley spontaneously armed themselves and organised hunts for the assailant(s) even before the arrival of the gendarmerie. When the security forces arrived, the commander allegedly just stationed his troops nearby and allegedly told them that he would not intervene in any of their dealings, as he knew that locals, as loyal and nationalist citizens, would "handle" the situation—he trusted locals

and their fierce nationalism so much that he would let them hunt for the terrorists. Locals took it as their duty and right to initiate these armed hunts and gunfire exchange with terrorists to such an extent that they defined Trabzon, in one such encounter in July 2016, as the place where you could hear such expressions as, “terrorists are shooting, keep the police away.”<sup>460</sup>

All narrators of this specific story were full of pride while recounting in more or less the same form. What mattered, at least for them, was the fact that the state trusted them to such an extent that it delegated its mission. What intrigued me, however, was locals’ willingness to take over the duties and capacities of the state, hence, the way they uphold the law while simultaneously breaching it. Similar to Fahri’s self-commissioned intelligence duties, locals also collectively acted as auxiliaries of the state, by forming a spontaneous *extra-legal* paramilitary force to confront the *illegal* threat they encountered. The difference between these two categories, undeniably, is reflected in the commander’s not-so-tacit approval of pervasive and widely known illegal/unregistered <sup>461</sup> possession of firearms by locals thanks to their ardent nationalist allegiance.

## II.I. Embodying the State

How should we comprehend this willingness of narrators to act as the state in their dealings with tangible or figurative enemies? How are we to understand

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<sup>460</sup> In late 2016, when a number of militants were spotted in the city, local men initiated a gunfire exchange with the suspects without waiting for the arrival of security forces. In one of the social media pages of the Valley, this expression was uttered as a proof of the strength of local nationalist sentiments and their willingness to take matters into their hands, especially with regards to national security. Original in Turkish: “Siz hiç bir yerde ‘teröristler ateş ediyor, polisleri uzaklaştırın’ diye birşey duydunuz mu? Eğer duyarsanız bilin ki orası Trabzon’dur, ya da bunu diyen bir Trabzonludur.” (Have you ever, in anywhere, heard something like ‘terrorists are opening fire, take the police away’? If you ever did, know that [this] place is Trabzon, or the one who says that is from Trabzon.) (July 2016) Another social media page shared similar posts where almost exactly the same pattern could be observed: *Maçkadaki çatışmadan* (From the skirmish in Macka) / *Yapılan telsiz konuşması:* ([Gendarmerie] Radio Communication) / *Ek destek yolluyoruz orda durumlar nedir?* (We are sending backup, how is the situation there?) / *Jandarma: Trabzon halkıyla beraberiz burda inanılmaz bir destek var bize. Siz olduğunuz yeri koruyun burda size ihtiyaç yok.* (Gendarmerie: We are with the people of Trabzon here, there is an incredible support for us. Just do protect where you are, there is no need [for you] here.) (July 2016)

<sup>461</sup> In Turkey, one needs to acquire a license from the state to own and carry a firearm. However, it is not that uncommon to have an unregistered gun/rifle at home, a phenomenon that is especially prevalent in the countryside of the Black Sea littoral.

this individual shouldering of state's responsibilities? This embodiment of the sovereign position, that of the state, needs to be underlined, as it constitutes the culmination of the masculine reification and enactment of the state in this peripheral geography of the country. These engagements of local men also provide us with hints about how local masculine subjects strive to be sovereign actors, similar to states, unwounded and omnipotent, through which they position themselves as knowing and potent bodies in opposition to subjugated and passive positions.

It should also be stated that secrecy, knowing the "truth" that the others do not, is conceived to be an integral element of statehood that the subjects strive to approximate. What (the Turkish) state is imagined to be, an omnipotent and omniscient entity that fully controls the geography,<sup>462</sup> is strictly related to this understanding of the "truth" of conspiratorial narratives, highlighting the connection between the state enactments and the subjectivities produced through conspiracies. By claiming to know a secretive truth that is not readily visible to all, these narratives assert proximity between the state, assumed to be omnipotent and omniscient, and the masculine narrator, elevating them above the audience they address and enhancing their claim for power and potency.

Needless to say, these claims either generally border on the absurd or state the obvious, as Abrams pertinently underlined.<sup>463</sup> Through this claim for knowing, however, narrators construct and represent themselves as subjects that are on a par with the state with regards to their supposedly exclusive access to secret information, approximating omniscience. In this embodiment of the state and enactment thereof, the narrating subject's life gets augmented and empowered to such levels that he can claim authority, as states do, vis-à-vis others, as in local armed quests against "terrorists" in the Valley, since they claim to uphold the law through their absolved breach of it. Thus, I argue, the circulation of conspiratorial narratives also produces subjects that embody the state with regards to its capabilities and potency.

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<sup>462</sup> Hansen and Stepputat, "Introduction," p. 7.

<sup>463</sup> Abrams, "Notes," p. 62.

Hence, although conventional conspiracies position the subject in opposition to (imagined) persecutory centres of power,<sup>464</sup> local conspiracies align and unite the subject with the state rather than producing an antagonism.<sup>465</sup> Harding and Stewart, for instance, argue that conspiratorial narratives in the West aim at deciphering sinister mechanisms that undermine one's "free, autonomous, self-controlling"<sup>466</sup> standing. In contrast, conspiracies in the Valley elevate the subject to the level of omnipotence and omniscience through establishing proximity between the (publicly) speaking subject and the power. Circulation of conspiracies, then, produces a subject whose body is the body of the state. Thus, in a double act, conspiratorial enunciations disintegrate the self as local men dilute themselves within the existence of the state while simultaneously strengthening it as the one whose devoted body becomes the body of the state and is fantasised to be potent and inviolable. This fusion between the subject and the state renders both "ghostly and persecutory, giving rise to forms of paranoiac acting from the state as much as from the subjects" through which the narrator "acts like the permanent body of the state."<sup>467</sup> Local men, hence, reproduce, identify with, and embody the state and become sovereign subjects.

These conspiracies, then, might be seen as reflection of local men's willingness to be swallowed by the state, to be a part of it, to be an auxiliary of the imagined-to-be-unitary, inviolate, omniscient, and omnipotent state. He, who enunciates these narratives, is not the one who complains about the surveillance and control

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<sup>464</sup> Steve Clarke, "Conspiracy Theories and Conspiracy Theorizing," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2002, p. 134.

For instance, in his 'analysis' on the pervasiveness of conspiracies in the Middle East, Roger Cohen illustrates this perception vividly: "Such minds resort to conspiracy theory because it is the ultimate refuge of the powerless. If you cannot change your own life, it must be that some greater force controls the world." Roger Cohen, "The Captive Arab Mind," *The New York Times*, December 20, 2010.

<sup>465</sup> Todd Sander and Harry G. West, "Introduction: Power Revealed and Concealed in the New World Order," *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order*, Todd Sander and Harry G. West (eds.), 2003, p. 7.

In her analysis of AIDS epidemic, sex industry, and conspiracy in Papua, Indonesia, Leslie Butt highlights this antagonism among local Papuans who think that the Indonesian state deliberately sends seductive women to the region to harm local population, producing a rift between the narrator of the conspiratorial narrative and the state. (p. 428).

<sup>466</sup> Harding and Stewart, "Anxieties of Influence," p. 262.

<sup>467</sup> Aretxaga, "Maddening States," p. 406.

by a powerful group or the state, but the one who desires to be the one that conducts these operations, as reflected in the adamant local support for the draconian anti-terror laws and state violence. The enunciator of these conspiratorial narratives in the Valley is not the one who gets wounded, but the one who wounds others in the name of the state, as crystallised in the case of Oğün Samast who “knew” the threatening other, an Armenian intellectual, and was “able” to act on this knowledge. In a similar vein, through her analysis of “societal violence in Turkey,” Gambetti stresses the emergence of citizens, as “the willing executioners of the state,” which “buttresses the state.”<sup>468</sup> How certain non-state actors are hailed to act in the name of the state, then, should be kept in mind while reading how local men in the Valley also take over certain state functions to reproduce not only the image of the state as a potent, coherent, and omnipresent agency, but also themselves as the potent and stately men.

### **III. Enacting the State and the Emergence of Stately, Potent, and Sovereign Men**

So far, I have discussed how conspiratorial enunciations generate masculine subjectivities that emulate and embody the state. These conspiratorial narratives and the nationalist missions they induce, I also argued, illustrate how gendered practices create diverse paths for subject formation, as in local men’s claims to know the truth or stately embodiment. As these men approximate stately qualities, such as omniscience and omnipotence, another important point emerges as can be seen in the local practices that emulate the state with regards to the legality and legitimacy of violence: sovereignty. Following Carl Schmitt, I conceive sovereignty as a capability to decide on the exception.<sup>469</sup> In the footsteps of Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben argues that “[t]he paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order.”<sup>470</sup> Following the trajectory of Schmitt and Agamben, I use the

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<sup>468</sup> Gambetti and Godoy-Anativia, “Introduction,” p. 15.

<sup>469</sup> Schmitt claims that “[s]overeign is he who decides on the exception.” Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2005, p. 106. (iBook)

<sup>470</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995, p. 15.

term sovereignty to denote operations (in the name) of the state through this ability to suspend the law via a series of decisions on the exception (the state of emergency [*olağanüstü hal*, in Turkish]). In these contexts, “what violates a rule and what conforms to it coincide without any remainder,”<sup>471</sup> exposing violence as the kernel of the law.<sup>472</sup> It entails suspensions through which the exception or breach is undertaken to uphold the law. In parallel, I assert that what has generally been associated with politico-juridical structure should also be traced in everyday instances in order to comprehend how “state effects”<sup>473</sup> and pervasive masculine (potential for) violence (and its subsequent impunity) can be read in relation to each other.

Thinking about this emulation of the state by local men also allows us to think about how the state itself is not only complicit in this extra-legality but also reliant on it in order to function and project itself as a coherent and competent moral-political unity even when it is failing to organise itself in these domains formally (e.g. security, human rights, judiciary) and monopolise the legitimate violence. Contrary to conventional articulations around the state’s monopolistic relationship to violence, this epidemic of non-state violence indeed reproduces the state as these encounters occur in line with the ideological imperatives of the state and nationalist discourses.<sup>474</sup> These extra-legal endeavours by citizens indeed fill the void that is left by the state, ensuring order when the state fails to do so, thus producing the “police citizen.”<sup>475</sup>

Furthermore, I believe the concept of sovereignty, as a potential to suspend the norm to uphold it, might be helpful to understand how local subjectivities

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<sup>471</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 57.

<sup>472</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” p. 283 – 284. Benjamin underlines two fundamental functions of violence, lawmaking and law-preserving, and claims that “[l]awmaking is power making, and, to that extent, an immediate manifestation of violence.” (p. 295)

<sup>473</sup> Timothy Mitchell, “Society, Economy, and the State Effect,” in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, G. Steinmetz (ed.), Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1990, p. 180.

<sup>474</sup> Gambetti, “I’m no Terrorist,” p. 129.  
Sünbuloğlu, “Beyaz Bereler,” p. 3.

<sup>475</sup> Zeynep Gambetti, “Linç Girişimleri, Neoliberalizm ve Güvenlik Devleti,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, Vol. 109, 2007, p. 3 – 4.



emulate and embody the state.<sup>476</sup> This approximation of stately qualities I argue endows local men with a potential to injure others (those who fall outside the limits of law, as in political activists or terrorists) and yet simultaneously marks them as devoid of such injurability alongside the general claims of unwoundedness of Turkish nationalist narrative. In her book, *Frames of War*, Judith Butler articulates on the sovereign subject as the one who denies a constitutive injurability and relates it to state violence as well:

State violence often articulates itself through the positing of the sovereign subject. The sovereign subject poses as precisely not the one who is impinged upon by others, precisely not the one whose permanent and irreversible injurability forms the condition and horizon of its actions. Such a sovereign position not only denies its own constitutive injurability but tries to relocate injurability in the other as an effect of doing injury to that other and exposing that other as, by definition, injurable.<sup>477</sup>

Thus, as Butler points out, sovereignty is an attempt to project the self's claim for potency, "plenitude,"<sup>478</sup> and unwoundedness in addition to its ability to transgress the law with no repercussions. In this sense, the very enactment and impunity of this transgression mark the subject as sovereign vis-à-vis the other (e.g. terrorists). The injurability of the sovereign is, hence, denied through this violent encounter that wounds the other, since "the violent act is, among other things, a way of relocating the capacity to be violated (always) elsewhere, it produces the appearance that the subject who enacts violence is impermeable to violence."<sup>479</sup> By inscribing the body of the sovereign subject with this impenetrability and "invulnerability,"<sup>480</sup> this transgressive and yet constitutive act produces an alignment and fusion between the concrete body of the subject and the spectral state that is also conceived to be devoid of wounds and injurability. The subject becomes an auxiliary element, or an agent, of the state within which the law coincides with force and the subject is deprived of its fragmentation, injurability, and impotence.

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<sup>476</sup> Gambetti, "I'm no Terrorist," p. 140.

<sup>477</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 178.

<sup>478</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 159.

<sup>479</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 178.

<sup>480</sup> Bonnie Mann, *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from the War on Terror*, Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2014, p. 147.

In her analysis of the prevalence of lynchings across Turkey, Zeynep Gambetti identifies a potential path for subjectivation within these instances of suspension of the norm, through which an extra-legality (e.g. lynching) is “exceptionally” undertaken to prevent others, such as Kurdish/political activists, from breaching the law (e.g. the accusations including but not limited to support for terrorism, burning flags, insulting Turkishness etc.). Gambetti sees “a mode of agency” glimpsing in these violent incidents and claims that,

They can be characterized as a state of agency vis-à-vis the status of victimhood for subjects who are oppressed by security forces, local power groups, economic inequality, and agricultural transformation. The transfer of the state’s function of protecting the order to the civil society might lead to a situation that can be characterized as the *étatisation* of the latter. While civil society (or individuals) gets to be aligned with ideological lines of the state, [they] become more statist than the state, [and] a type of “surplus state” occurs.<sup>481</sup>

These endeavours by “patriotic” citizens can be read as a site and moment of subjectivation through which these (masculine) agents are endowed with (a fraction of) sovereignty. They both enact the state and constitute themselves as potent subjects through which the state counters subversive bodies, as in the case of PKK militants that are marked by an exception and can be “hunted” with impunity, resonating clearly with *homo sacer*.<sup>482</sup> These configurations do not occur solely through physical actions, as in hunts, but also in conspiratorial enunciations, since the latter produces a socio-political culture within which men are configured as agents who perpetuate the presence of the state even where it, e.g. actual state institutions (police or judiciary), fails to assert its influence

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<sup>481</sup> Gambetti, “Linç Girişimleri,” p. 9 – 10. My translation. Emphasis is mine. Original in Turkish: Provokatif de olsa, linç girişimlerini bir sivil toplum insiyatifi veya bir tür faillik (agency) olarak görmek mümkündür. Kolluk güçleri, yerel güç odakları, ekonomik eşitsizlik ve tarımsal dönüşüm yüzünden baskı altında kalmış öznelerin, mağdur konumunda olmak yerine fail olma hali olarak nitelendirilebilirler (Godoy, 2004: 623). Devletin düzen koruma işlevinin sivil topluma intikalinin, berikinin devletleşmesi olarak nitelendirilebilecek bir gelişmeye yol açması sözkonusudur. Sivil toplum (veya bireyler) devletin ideolojik çizgileri boyunca hizalanırken, devletten çok devletçi oluyor, bir çeşit ‘artık devlet’ vuku buluyor. (9 - 10)

<sup>482</sup> In his tracing of the ancient category of *homo sacer* in contemporary socio-political structure, Agamben elaborates on “the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*”. He further argues that it was a category in the Roman law to denote “human life [that] is included in the juridical order [*ordinamento*] solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)”. (Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 8. Emphases are original) This exclusionary inclusion is significant as it includes the very significant premise that killing of *homo sacer* is not considered homicide and thus bringing no repercussions to the aggressor. (p. 71.)

(because of actual limits of its capabilities), by engaging in acts that the state cannot conduct (because of legal constraints), and by producing state effects.<sup>483</sup>

In the Valley, too, local men's conspiratorial narratives and their impunity, thus, produce them as stately and sovereign subjects who are devoid of injurability but capable of injuring others. The capability to suspend the law, in a strikingly Schmittean manner, dynamically re-configures the contours of local masculine subjectivity, infusing them with a sense of potency, immunity, and sovereignty. Rather than producing legal repercussions, their actions elevate them to the status of loyal citizens whose breach of law is necessitated and accommodated, tacitly or explicitly, to preserve and maintain the image of the state by enacting the state even more swiftly and enthusiastically than state institutions.

Gambetti reflects on the social implications of these suspensions of the law, through which a particular form of subjectivity is glimpsed, by indicating that in these encounters "[s]upra-legality and even illegality cease to be a fault, [and] get to be represented as service to the motherland, heroism, [and] sacrifice"<sup>484</sup> and hence get to be integrated into the normal functioning of the state. Therefore, rather than constituting an antagonistic engagement with the state's existence, if one were to follow classic articulations of Weber on the state and violence, these violent embodiments of state discourses reproduce the state, even in instances where the state's capacity is curtailed or limited, through their bodily presence and interventions.

Although Gambetti relates this process to the relatively calm period, which she locates in the ceasefire period of the early 2000s when the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish armed forces de-escalated to initiate a peace process, I believe it is an imperative to consider this delegation of the state duties to masculine bodies as a more permanent and more integral element of the functioning of state institutions in the Turkish context. Ranging from recently

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<sup>483</sup> Gambetti, "I'm no Terrorist," p. 136.

<sup>484</sup> Gambetti, "Linç Girişimleri," p. 7. My translation. Original in Turkish: "Yasa-üstülük ve hatta yasadışılık kusur olmaktan çıkar, vatana hizmet etme, kahramanlık, fedakarlık olarak temsil edilir."

eliminated legal provisions that consider the adultery of the wife as an extenuating circumstance in the case of honour killings, or the state's now evident engagement with mafia organisations,<sup>485</sup> or from the assassination/burning of the critics<sup>486</sup> to aforementioned lynchings, there seems to be nothing new about the way the masculine bodies are endowed with the right to inflict violence, or to breach the law, under the tolerant and the approving gaze of the state. On the contrary, it seems that the state delegates these entanglements to the always already willing subjects to both exert their sovereignty over others and identify themselves even more strongly with the state.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored how masculine subjectivities are produced out of conspiratorial enunciation and socialities through tracing the fragments of local men's endeavours which seem to be embedded right at the heart of the state functioning in Turkey. I argued that local men emulate the state and overgrow their bodily limits to approximate stately ideals, such as omniscience and omnipotence alongside a claim for uninjurability. This embodiment of the state, then, operates on two paths: (1) The circulation of a class of narratives that establish a proximity between the state and the narrator and (2) the enactment of the state by taking over state responsibilities and emerging as agents of the state who can breach the law, in a similar manner to (agents of) the sovereign, without repercussions. Local men of the Valley are accommodated in an extra-legal territory within which the norm is suspended in order to eliminate the threats (against the state), clearly resonating with Schmitt's articulations around

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<sup>485</sup> One needs to remember the Susurluk incident when a completely random traffic accident in Balıkesir in 1996 unveiled the close relationship between illegal/mafia organisations and the state officials. As the crash wrecked the luxury car, the long-wanted criminal leader Abdullah Çatlı was revealed to be travelling with the member of the parliament from the ruling party, Sedat Bucak. Although Çatlı died on the scene, Bucak survived. The accident brought what was already widely known to surface and caused protests and discussions across the country.

<sup>486</sup> Numerous examples, unfortunately, can be brought forward: Assassinations of Uğur Mumcu, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Bahriye Üçok, Çetin Emeç, Turan Dursun, Hrant Dink and the burning of Madımak Hotel (Sivas Massacre) during a local festival in Sivas (1993), which led to the death of thirty three intellectuals.

sovereignty.<sup>487</sup> Integrating the exception and breach into the very norm, then, this state enactment constitutes the masculine subject as an auxiliary agent of the state or a tentacle of the imagined state machinery, through which the state is maintained and reproduced contrary to the conventional understandings of the state and violence.

I shall finish the discussion with the recent epidemic of financial fraud in the country where numerous elderly citizens are tricked daily into handing in significant amounts of money, usually thousands and sometimes even millions, to impostors who act as if they were security or judicial officers soliciting patriotic citizens' assistance in the fight against terrorist organisations.<sup>488</sup> One famous medical professor, for instance, who lost more than fifty-five thousands USD in one of the fraud schemes, tragically details how she got "excited as she was carrying out a secret operation with the state" (*Devletle gizli bir operasyon yaptığım için heyecanlandım*), and carefully complied with the caller's instructions to leave thousands of dollars of cash she withdrew from the bank in different locations of the city.<sup>489</sup> This excitement citizens feel and the eye sparkling moment when the state acts through the subject, I believe, constitute one of the most significant aspects of how (masculine) subjects are produced as sovereign and potent agents. It also explains how the state survives all major difficulties, be it the profound economic crises (as in 2001) or security/provision

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<sup>487</sup> It might be helpful to remember, once again, what Schmitt said: "He decides whether there is an extreme emergency as well as what must be done to eliminate it." Schmitt, *Political Theology*, p. 109. (ibook)

<sup>488</sup> Especially targeting older people, these fraud cases generally start with a phone call to the target person indicating that the target's bank accounts were hacked by terrorist groups, generally the PKK, and that terrorists used their (victim's) money to finance their illegal operations. The caller generally identifies himself either as a member of the police counter-terrorism squads or as a prosecutor. The target is then tricked into withdrawing huge amounts of money from his/her bank account, and afterwards put it into a designated location so that the 'state authorities' could spot and catch terrorists who would supposedly pick it up. When the victim completes what she/he is instructed to do, it becomes evident that he/she became another victim of this excessively common fraud technique. Needless to say, none of the claims made by the callers are true, nor could they, as it is repeatedly emphasised by public authorities and banks that security agencies do not engage with such operations. Yet, fraud cases still emerge, although not as frequently as it was in the past years.

<sup>489</sup> Professor Karatay indicates that she was phoned and told that her bank account was hacked by the terrorist organisation and that there were constant transactions to Diyarbakır from her account. (*Beni telefonla aradılar. Banka hesabımın terör örgütü tarafından ele geçirildiğini, hesabımdan sürekli Diyarbakır'a EFT yapıldığını söylediler.*) It cannot be a coincidence that Diyarbakır, the centre of Kurdish political movement, is duly added into the interaction. "Canan Karatay Dolandırıldı, (Got Defrauded)" *NTV News* website, October 31, 2013.

challenges (as in the inadequacies after earthquakes or the epidemic of bomb attacks all around the country) without any major resentment or upheaval from citizens.

The significance of this chapter, in this sense, lies in the way it explores mundane everyday practices through which the state is enacted alongside the configuration of subjectivities. As violence and states' inability to monopolise violence are generally regarded as the collapse of socialities or as a corrosion of existing normativity,<sup>490</sup> my observation in the Valley invites us to be attentive to local alignments through which such practices might indeed consolidate the existing order even in turbulent times and reproduce socialities and subjectivities by marking them as potent agents of the state. Rather than situating these subjectivities and socialities at the margins of normality then, my analysis highlights their embeddedness in state structures through tracing convergences and approximations.

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<sup>490</sup> Martin Fotta, "'They Say He is a Man Now': A Tale of Fathers and Sons," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2016, p. 203.

## CHAPTER X

### RELIGIOSITIES IN THE VALLEY: HISTORICITIES, PRACTICES, AND NORMS

In his illuminating article, “Religion in Modern Turkey,” Şerif Mardin, the leading figure in sociology in Turkey, notes that “the study of religion has been focused primarily on the issues of secularism and secularization” in the Turkish context.<sup>491</sup> Islam has been generally discussed either through a *kulturkampf* between religious and secular forces, or through the nestings of religious congregations or communities that survived secularist policies since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>492</sup> How religion is enacted on a daily basis in particular socio-historical settings, though, still needs to be accounted for.<sup>493</sup>

Prior to my field research, religiosities were not a part of this project; and yet Islamic practices emerged as an important aspect of everyday life in the Valley. Dismantling my presuppositions around religiosities and ethics, local pieties produced a complicated picture that went well beyond conventional dichotomies (as in secularism v. religion). In relation to contemporary political and social discussions around conservatism and the role of Islam in public,<sup>494</sup> this chapter pursues the ways in which Islam is engaged in the Valley to contribute to the comprehension of religiosities in Turkey without limiting the scope of the discussion to a secularism/religion binary. The analysis explores how religious engagements of local men in the Valley generate peculiar modalities of subjectivities that are different from what is asserted through the recent studies of contemporary piety in different contexts. I will also demonstrate how religiosities are related to the discreet status of Romeika, local historicities, and state practices.

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<sup>491</sup> Şerif Mardin, “Religion in Modern Turkey,” in *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey*, Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 2006 [1977], p. 226.

<sup>492</sup> Analysis of orders (*tarikats*) and Alevism can be highlighted within this domain.

<sup>493</sup> Cihan Tuğal’s book, *Passive Revolution* (2009), can be noted as an example of recent engagements through which daily encounters and socialities in the case of Islam and the state are analysed in contemporary Turkey.

<sup>494</sup> Contemporary political atmosphere in Turkey and the unprecedented visibility of Islamic practices and affiliations in public should be noted here. As religious affiliations have become much more visible elements of political argumentation and contestations, one can also talk about publicisation and profanation/mundanisation of religiosities that were previously thought to be private/individual and sublime.

I will first trace distinctions of Islam in the Turkish context through discussing socio-historical factors at national and local levels that inform the contemporary culture of religion. Following this account, I will detail socio-historical peculiarities of the Valley through the memory of conversion and tradition of religious scholarship to provide the reader with a local context. I will then explore local religious practices to account for the significance of aesthetic reiterations for the production of pious subjects. I will argue that aesthetic and practical aspect of these endeavours, rather than their engagement with religious norms, emerges as the ultimate site of piety for local subjects and socialities.

### **Scope**

I should first highlight the limits and objectives of the analysis. I focus on masculine subjects as modalities of female religious practice were inaccessible to me because of gendered relationalities and customs, which heightened further in religious settings. The reader should note this focus on masculine religiosities, which might radically differ from those of women with regards to how they relate to Islamic practices and norms.

Secondly, although Islam is an important aspect of local life, locals' multi-dimensional engagements in life cannot be simply "reduced to their Islamicness"<sup>495</sup> even for staunchly pious subjects. As everyday Islam is a "product of active negotiation," it interacts with other aspects of life and is amended accordingly.<sup>496</sup> Thus, with regards to contemporary discussions around the "genuineness" and (public) visibility of Islam, I underline that, as Asad argued, "[t]he real motives of Islamists, of whether or not individuals are using religion for political ends, is not a relevant question," as "[t]he real motives of political

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<sup>495</sup> Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life," *Working Papers*, No. 2, 2010, p. 5.

Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 3.

<sup>496</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 3.



actors are usually plural and often fluctuating.”<sup>497</sup> Subjects involved in this analysis range from those who claim to be pious to others who are sceptical of religion’s public visibility. This multiplicity might be much needed especially with regards to the growing anthropological focus on pious Islamic subjects.<sup>498</sup>

Seemingly contradictory engagements of local men, hence, should be articulated as reflections of the fluidity of subjects in line with their much wider engagements.<sup>499</sup> Expecting subjects to occupy homogenous, coherent, and stagnant positions totalizes all differences and heterogeneity and hinders the full potential of the analysis.<sup>500</sup> Rather, it is more productive to ask questions around how religious engagements inform socialities and subjectivities and interrelate to other aspects of life, such as politics, economy, and gender. The main objective of this analysis is not to determine the sincerity of local religiosities, then, but to comprehend how subjects and socialities are constituted through everyday engagements with Islam.

## **Religion and Religious Practice**

In his analysis of religion and secularism in the contemporary world, Talal Asad states, “religion consists of particular ideas, sentiments, practices, institutions, traditions—as well as followers who instantiate, maintain, or alter them.”<sup>501</sup> In a similar vein, I also take religion, both popular and orthodox,<sup>502</sup> as a domain that is composed of (sacred) founding principles aiming to establish and differentiate the truth<sup>503</sup> and diverse sets of practices and discourses that followers uphold and circulate. I also underline the dynamism of these engagements, as Asad did,

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<sup>497</sup> Talal Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1999, p. 190 – 191.

<sup>498</sup> Schielke, “Second Thoughts,” p. 2.

<sup>499</sup> Jennifer Peterson, “Going to the Mulid: Street-smart Spirituality in Egypt,” in *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion*, Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec (eds.), Berghahn Books: New York and Oxford, 2012, p. 114.

<sup>500</sup> Talal Asad, “The Idea of An Anthropology of Islam,” p. 16. Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, March 1986.

<sup>501</sup> Talal Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” p. 187.

<sup>502</sup> Nancy Tapper and Richard Tapper, “The Birth of the Prophet: Ritual and Gender in Turkish Islam,” *Man, New Series*, Vol. 22, No. 1, March 1987, p. 70.

<sup>503</sup> Gregory M. Simon, “Conviction without Being Convicted: Maintaining Islamic Certainty in Minangkabau, Indonesia,” *Ethos*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2012, p. 238.

since it constitutes one of the most important elements of religions despite their presumed rigidity, as in the “unchangeable” commands of sacred texts.<sup>504</sup> In addition to this theological aspect, religion is also to be understood as an element of social and cultural identity through which the self is constructed and situated within a given sociality,<sup>505</sup> as in Turkish association with Islam vis-à-vis “Christian Europe.”

Accordingly, religious engagements include all ritual acts (as in *namaz*<sup>506</sup> or fasting), engagements with texts and doctrines (as in reciting of the Quran or attending religious lectures), or bodily/spatial presences and arrangements (as in veiling, going to the mosque, or growing a beard).<sup>507</sup> They encompass materialities (such as the construction of mosques or *Kuran kursları* [Quran courses]) and spatial-material arrangements (such as Arabic inscriptions on houses/shops, decorative tiles, chandeliers, or wooden carvings in mosques). They can also take other forms, ranging from transactions (such as volunteering or donating money for mosque projects as charity) to national(ist) imperatives (as in being a martyr), intermingling with other economic/material and political/ideological domains of life.<sup>508</sup> These “improvised and situational” engagements reflect “how men and women appropriate for themselves the

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<sup>504</sup> A number of discussions and practices can be mentioned with regards to this dynamism of “unchanging” fundamentals. Interests (*faiz*, in Turkish), as an example, is banned by Islam but is practiced widely. Similarly, *namaz*, prayers that faithful Muslims must practice five times a day, is mostly not observed (except for the elderly), especially in the Turkish context and in the Valley, with most men attending only Friday prayers once a week.

<sup>505</sup> Suhraiya Jivraj, *The Religion of Law: Race, Citizenship and Children's Belonging*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2013, p. 8.

Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*, p. 15.

<sup>506</sup> *Namaz*: Salat/shalat, prayers, involving bodily movements and prescribed supplications, are compulsory (*farz*, in Turkish) for each and every adult Muslim five times a day. Men are also supposed to attend communal Friday prayers (*cuma namazı*, in Turkish) once a week.

<sup>507</sup> Johan Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: The Morality of Experience*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 2011, p. 33. Trimmed moustaches can be another example of such outwardly masculine forms that reflect the subject's piety in contemporary Turkey. They seem to have been popularised by the President Erdoğan.

In her account of piety in Lebanon, Lara Deeb also discusses how residents of al-Dahiyya in Beirut set themselves apart through “a sense of publicly displayed and claimed piety”: the prevalence of veiled women and “portraits of orphans, religious leaders, and martyrs.” Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2006, p. 51.

<sup>508</sup> Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, p. 29.

dominant religious idioms of their cultures.”<sup>509</sup> In parallel, normativity refers to discourses that produce a regime of truth through the differentiation of the true from the false, the good from the evil, and the moral from the immoral.<sup>510</sup> As indicated by Asad, the “founding texts,”<sup>511</sup> the Quran and the *Hadis*,<sup>512</sup> both prescribe a set of norms, according to which socialities are supposed to be organised, and induce individual orientations via their imperatives, as in “do not steal,” and virtues, as in honesty.<sup>513</sup>

## I. Tracing Islamic Practices and Integrating the Particular

In his seminal essay, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” Asad touches upon the fundamental discussions surrounding the study of Islam and proposes a peculiar articulation. He writes:

If one wants to write an anthropology of Islam one should begin [...] from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur’an and the Hadith. Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition.<sup>514</sup>

Then, Asad conceives the overarching theme connecting all Islamic communities to be a “discursive tradition” that is structured around “‘the correct model’ to which an instituted practice—including ritual—ought to conform.”<sup>515</sup> This “tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners

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<sup>509</sup> Robert A. Orsi, “Afterword: Everyday Religion and the Contemporary World: The Un-Modern or What Was Supposed to Have Disappeared But Did Not,” in *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion*, Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec (eds.), Berghahn Books: New York and Oxford, 2012, p. 150 – 151. Yet, it should be stated these are generally ‘private’ engagements, as they are not conducted in public where they might be contested with regards to their conformity with the orthodoxy of Sunni Islam as sanctioned and regulated by the Diyanet in a particular manner. This privacy of these practices should be kept in mind. Relatedly, for instance, in his analysis of *tawassul* practices in Indonesia, which are the supplications that recite the names of saints and notables to ask for favours from God, Julian Millie suggests that recitations change their form, with regards to their inclusivity of deities from other religious/spiritual domains, as they go public. Julian Millie, “Supplicating, Naming, Offering: *Tawassul* in West Java,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2008, p. 118.

<sup>510</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1989, p. 4, 27. Quoted by, Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, p.11.

<sup>511</sup> Asad, “The Idea of An Anthropology of Islam,” p. 14.

<sup>512</sup> The Hadith: Statements attributed to Mohammed, the Islamic prophet.

<sup>513</sup> In his analysis of Islam in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Rasanayagam defines morality and ethics along a Foucauldian trajectory: “[M]orality refers to prescriptive rules and codes for living, whereas ethics encompasses the operations individuals perform upon themselves, the disciplines and technologies of the self that produce a desired state of being.” (p. 9)

<sup>514</sup> Asad, “The Idea of An Anthropology of Islam,” p. 14.

<sup>515</sup> Asad, p. 15.

regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history.”<sup>516</sup> He further claims that “[f]or the anthropologist of Islam, the proper theoretical beginning is therefore an instituted practice (set in a particular context, and having a particular history) into which Muslims are inducted *as* Muslims.”<sup>517</sup> In line with these thoughts, Asad opposes the idea “that it is *orthopraxy* and not *orthodoxy*, ritual and not doctrine, that matters in Islam.”<sup>518</sup>

Even though Asad pertinently repudiates the pervasive presupposition “that Islam is a distinctive historical totality which organises various aspects of social life,”<sup>519</sup> his articulations also fail to account for different modes of engagement with central theological scriptures. Although these texts are revered by the faithful across the Islamic geography, there is still an immense diversity in the way they are related and their imperatives are enacted. Asad’s argument, for instance, presents a conceptualisation that already renders significant distinctions within the Islamic tradition, such as Alevis, illegible and invisible. As my ethnographic observations from the Valley also present significantly different modes of engagement, I believe a number of socio-historical factors must be highlighted to contextualise how Islam is experienced and lived in local contexts.

### I.I. Turkish Experience in Islam: Divergences

As a beginning, it should be noted that Turkish society has been deeply affected by centralised and modernising administrations of the Empire and the Republic without experiencing direct forms of colonial domination.<sup>520</sup> Thus, the Turkish case should be contextualised vis-à-vis other non-European settings where “the modernizing state [...] was put in place by Westernizing power—a state directed

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<sup>516</sup> Asad, p. 14.

<sup>517</sup> Asad, p. 15. Emphasis is original.

<sup>518</sup> Asad, p. 15. Emphasis is original.

<sup>519</sup> Asad, p. 1. This articulation refers to: Ernest Gellner. *Muslim Society*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1981.

<sup>520</sup> Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey*, Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2006, p. 12 – 13.

Deniz Kandiyoti, “Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflection on the Turkish Case,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Summer 1987, p. 322.

at the unceasing material and moral transformation of entire populations only recently organized as "societies."<sup>521</sup> Hence Turkish experience of Islam, especially with regards to its staunch secularism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is different from those of other Muslim communities that either did not go through such processes or experienced it as an external imposition, as in colonisation, from which religion provided an "indigenous" refuge.<sup>522</sup> In the Turkish context, the study of Islam should include these socio-historical distinctions within which state-religion relations are overwhelmingly dominated by the former.<sup>523</sup> Relatedly, this subordination, or supplementary role, of religion to the national/political project and its subsequent implications on society might be fuelling the image of the country as "somewhat not fully living Islam" by other Islamic communities and analysts.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," p. 190.

Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 12.

Moreover, as Samuli Schielke indicates in the context of Islamic Revival in Egypt, failures of autocratic Arab states to cultivate legitimacy, especially in the aftermath of their successive defeats by Israel, have aggravated such alienation. Samuli Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitment: Troubles of Morality, Religiosity and Aspiration among Young Egyptians," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 39, 2009, p. 177.

Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, p. 20.

<sup>522</sup> Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated?," p. 320 – 322.

Ernest Gellner, "The Turkish Option in Comparative Perspective," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 1997, p. 239.

Afsaneh Najmabadi also touches upon this radical break from Islamic tradition in the Turkish context. Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," in *Women, Islam and the State*, Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), Macmillan: Basingstoke and London, 1991, p. 55.

<sup>523</sup> Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, E. J. Brill: Leiden, 1981, p. 2.

Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 13.

In reference to Binnaz Toprak, Davison claims that through the Republican secularism, "the state may have been freed from religion, but the reverse was not true." Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*, p. 135.

Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction," in *Women, Islam and the State*, Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), Macmillan: Basingstoke and London, 1991, p. 5.

Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, p. 47.

Readers, however, should keep in mind that the tension between religion and political/national affiliations is present in other contexts, as well, albeit in different levels of severity.

<sup>524</sup> Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, p. 24.

Then there are the scholars of Islam in the contemporary world, often working on the Arab world, Iran, and South or Southeast Asia, who fail to consider the Turkish case in its historical context (about which they are evidently poorly informed) and effectively write the country off as unlikely to be fertile ground for a serious analysis of Islam and modernity due to its alleged total abandonment of living Islamic traditions. It is as if the 70 million Muslims in Turkey are somehow not fully living Islam and not truly a part of the Muslim world; those societies to the north and west of Turkey, of course, chastise them for the opposite reasons.

Similarly, one Islamic State militant interviewed, for instance, finds "foreigners, including British,

Furthermore, as Asad speaks of a tradition through Arabic-speaking communities across a wide spectrum, a linguistic feature of these socialities—that Arabic-speaking Muslims could directly relate to the “sacred” language of these founding texts—should not be disregarded.<sup>525</sup> This immediacy, I believe, might be facilitating the diffusion of religious doctrines in social life.<sup>526</sup> The particular form the Islamic Revival<sup>527</sup> takes in Arab contexts can also be considered alongside what is rendered possible by such linguistic accessibility as well as distinctive socio-historical entanglements (See Mahmood, 2005; Hirschkind, 2006).<sup>528</sup> (As an example, it is useful to note Mahmood’s analysis the way pious Egyptian women contemplate upon the scripture to decipher its meanings and implications.)

In contrast, in his analysis of religious orders in Turkey, Brian Silverstein, touches upon this linguistic gap. “As the Turkish language is not closely related to Arabic, but has many Arabic loan words,” Silverstein argues, “the semantic extension and subtleties of meaning and association among words derived from

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French and Turkish volunteers, surprisingly ignorant of Islam and local customs, often impelled by unhappy home lives or boredom, and only useful for propaganda and suicide attacks.” It is quite striking to see a Muslim-majority country listed alongside non-Muslim ones with regards to its attainment of “Islamic” culture, as perceived by the Islamic State militant. Patrick Cockburn, “Isis Fighter Reveals Group’s Plan to Spread Even After Defeat in Iraq and Syria and Claims Collusion with Turkey,” *Independent*, September 10, 2016.

<sup>525</sup> Mardin highlights a general trend in studies of Islam to focus on Arab or Salafist communities and neglect non-Arab contexts. Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism,” p. 148.

<sup>526</sup> Schielke’s ethnographic research in Egypt, for instance, highlights a general diffusion of Islamic affiliation even when the protagonists are not strictly pious.

Hirschkind argues that “many in Egypt from across the class spectrum, and particularly younger people, have increasingly found it important to deepen their knowledge of the Quran and the multiple disciplines it mediates, to participate in mosque study groups, [...] and, more generally, to abide by the dictates of what they consider to be virtuous Muslim conduct in both their religious and nonreligious activities.” Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, Columbia University Press: New York, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>527</sup> The Islamic Revival can be described as “a shift towards greater ritual observance, public piety and, for many, a commitment to social and political transformation, and these shifts spread not only in mosques, schools and state religious institutions but also through popular media.” Aaron Rock-Singer, “A Pious Public: Islamic Magazines and Revival in Egypt, 1976-1981,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2015, p. 427.

<sup>528</sup> One of the participants, Amal, in Mahmood’s analysis, for instance, gives a detailed account of a specific section of a single verse, strikingly focusing on implications of a specific conjugation of a word. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 156.

In parallel, Hirschkind claims that this intense engagement with Islam in the country “gives direction to a normative ethical project.” Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*, p. 5.

the same root in Arabic are lost to most Turkish speakers.”<sup>529</sup> In parallel, I assert that differences in faithful subjects’ relationships to these central elements of Islam should be foregrounded to account for other modes of engagement.

In the Turkish context, immediacy between the religious text and the faithful subject is evidently absent. It should be specified that prayers are all, without exception, recited and performed in (Quranic/Classical) Arabic<sup>530</sup> with a conspicuous focus on the aesthetic recitation (*tecvîd*)<sup>531</sup> and a striking disregard for the content. People learn only how to recite the Quran in its Arabic inscriptions without engaging with their meaning. Combined with the prevalent Turkish reverence for the Quran, which generally takes the form of preserving it in a protective cover and placing it in a higher spot at homes, these recitations essentially produce an aesthetic and rhythmic chant in Arabic. These endeavours, I claim, underscore the aesthetic engagement (*tecvîdli* recitation) with this undecipherable form (the text in Classical Arabic) as worship. Even when aesthetics is disregarded, it is to facilitate the practice, rather than to engage with its normative content. When Ahmet led *namaz* in the Lodge, it was impossible for me to keep up with his pace, as the interval for each posture was excessively short to complete even the shortest *sure*,<sup>532</sup> highlighting the incredible speed of his recitation.<sup>533</sup>

Similarly, Quranic courses present a similar case as these courses literally teach how to recite the Quran from its Arabic script with a focus on pronunciation.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, p. 125.

<sup>530</sup> Carol Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1991, p. 290

<sup>531</sup> *Tecvîd* refers to a prescribed recitation of Quranic verses with specifically designated extension and intonations. In the Turkish context, it is specially regarded important as religious gatherings are solely composed of a recitation of the Quran in an enchanting manner with many in the audience crying or feeling ecstatic.

<sup>532</sup> *Sure*: Surah, any of the 114 chapters in the Quran.

<sup>533</sup> It is not surprising to witness occasional news reports about “jet imams” that lead *namaz* immensely fast—generally not to miss a favourite TV show.

<sup>534</sup> That the Turkish reciters of the Quran seem to be contested by Arabs, increasingly present in the country either as tourists from the Gulf or as refugees (Syrians), needs to be highlighted. Apparently, Arabs find Turkish obsession with the aesthetic and thoroughly formalistic engagement with the Quran an unjust invention (*bidat*) that is not integral to the original Islamic theology. I owe gratitude to Sertaç Sehlíkoglu for highlighting this point.

The pervasive opposition to *ezan* in Turkish, a practice initiated in the early Republican period and abolished subsequently, can also be mentioned as an illustration of this insistence on the

Thus, engagements with the Quran in the Turkish context emerge as a thoroughly ritualised and aesthetic practice within which the reiteration is the only site and modality of piety. Pious endeavours in Turkey, in this sense, constitute a peculiar example where one can clearly note the significance of the aesthetic reiteration at the expense of the normative content that the founding text preaches.<sup>535</sup>

Thus, Asad's articulation of Islam as a discursive tradition through which the correct practice is comprehended fails to account for the distinct modalities of engagement through which these texts are related. The Turkish context and the way Islam is practiced present a challenge to this articulation by and in which the aesthetic reiteration, rather than an engagement with the norms, takes precedence in close connection to the political and cultural distinctions of the country.

### III. Local Histories: Spectres of Conversion and Tradition of Academies

Although socio-political and cultural distinctions of Turkish society already complicate modalities of piety, I believe, local customs and traditions in the Valley should also be noted. I want to start with a short vignette that exemplifies how the spectres of conversion continue to inform subjectivities and socialities in the Valley.

As I helped Ahmet to construct a wooden staircase for Zafer in Kadhahor, Zafer stopped by to check our progress and have a quick chat over tea. He knew me for some time then and asked how my research was going. I explained that I had been in Kadhahor the previous week and visited the

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(original Quranic Arabic) form of religious practice, vis-à-vis its normative dimension, highlighting a primacy of the form.

<sup>535</sup> Interestingly and ironically, although the early Republican regime attempted to completely Turkify the religion by forbidding religious practices and sermons in Arabic, including the Quran and prayer calls, it was religious groups who insisted on the sanctity of the original inscription and utterance.

It should be also indicated here that certain other non-Arab Islamic communities display similar patterns of reverence for the original form. In her article on Islamic practices in Indonesia, Anna Gade refers to Quran recitation competitions in Indonesia as reflections of Islamic Awakening. Anna M. Gade, "Motivating Qur'anic Practice in Indonesia by 'Competing in Goodness,'" in *Contesting Rituals: Islam and Practices of Identity Making*, Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathem (eds.), Carolina Academic Press: Durham, 2005, p. 42.



local mosque there, which was recently re-constructed over the old one. Locals had unanimously affirmed that the old mosque had been converted from a church and preserved its original form with some minor alterations. Upon hearing the fact that I was in Kadahor, he started talking about how “different” some people of Kadahor were. When I asked what he meant, he told a story that highlighted the complicated past of religion in the Valley: A decade or so ago, while the municipality was constructing the road from the town centre to Kadahor, they found a grave on their way. Almost all locals claimed kinship to the deceased; some indicated that the grave was of their great uncle; others assured officials that it was of their grandparents, while a number of others also claimed some sort of descent. Unable to sort out the situation in the middle of all these claims, officials decided to open the grave to look for some clues. When they opened the grave, though, they found something that altered the story completely: A coffin with a cross! All locals who claimed kinship to the deceased immediately dispersed without uttering any more word. The construction went ahead and destroyed the grave, erasing an uncanny memory that seemed to erupt in the most unexpected way. I asked Zafer what he thought of the story since it related to him as well as a local man from Kadahor. He apparently thought it was sufficient to state that his family had arrived in the Valley after the conquest of the region by Ottoman forces. I asked where his family hailed from originally to which he replied: “I forgot now (*Unuttum şimdi*).”

As indicated before, settlements in the Valley emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the aftermath of the Ottoman takeover of Trabzon, as Orthodox Christian villages, which have been Islamised only by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, much later than other parts of Anatolia.<sup>536</sup> The contemporary Valley is almost completely Muslim since Orthodox Christian communities were forced to leave in 1923 in line with the population exchange agreement, between Turkey and Greece. Locals claim, somehow proudly, that the exchange did not have a drastic effect on the upper segments of the Valley, in the south of Taşhan, as most were already Muslim by then, implying that communities of Kadahor and Kondu have been Muslim since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>536</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 90, 161.

How and why this conversion took place requires a separate inquiry into the archival records of the Valley. Yet, it should be stated that various socio-cultural, such as status and social mobility, and politico-economic factors, such as tax, were implicated in these processes through which the hegemonic Ottoman-Muslim identity could appeal to its subjects, especially at the zenith of its power in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Radushev, “The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans,” p. 364. Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kisve Bahası Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670 – 1730*, Brill: London and Boston, 2004, p. 6 – 7, 21 – 22, 26 – 27.

Yet, numerous families in villages across the Valley seem to have familial links with distant Christian kin living in Greece. Some locals established contacts with their relatives who visited the Valley from Greece or found them during their visits to the country. Families on both sides, it should be noted, preserve their Romeika autonyms, as in Alexo and Yerhantes even though families in the Valley also have their Turkified versions. These contacts inevitably generate questions around conversion, whether from Islam to Christianity (*irtidat*, apostasy) in the post-Tanzimat period or from Christianity to Islam in the 1920s (*ihtida*).<sup>537</sup> Furthermore, the presence of the term *mahlut* (amalgam), which I discussed with regards to Romeika in Chapter V, must also be noted as it hints at the possibility of the historical existence of (religiously) mixed communities till the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>538</sup> even though locals uphold a more linear narrative, that is, the Islamisation was completed centuries ago.

Additionally, pre-Islamic customs are still alive in the socio-cultural life of the Valley. Locals celebrate *kalandar*, a seemingly archaic tradition with people putting on costumes and visiting/scaring each other, in every January.<sup>539</sup> Intriguingly and uniquely, again, the snail stew is still a traditional dish in the Valley even though snail is widely construed as a non-Muslim food.<sup>540</sup> The persistence of these customs, which mark a distinct past alongside material remnants (churches, monasteries, or crosses on graves and in old houses) can be referred to with regards to the complexity of conversion processes and their continued presence in local culture in different forms. Conversion might be

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<sup>537</sup> Differentiation between two terms should be highlighted in order to grasp socio-cultural and juridico-political implications of both processes. While *ihtida* specifically and positively underlines one's conversion to Islam, which was encouraged by socio-political structure systematically, *irtidat* (apostasy), as a pejorative religious-judicial process, was banned and punishable by death till the promulgation of imperial edicts in 1839 and 1856. Türkyılmaz, *Anxieties of Conversion*, p. 21 – 22. For a focused discussion of conversion in the late Ottoman period, please see: Selim Deringil, "Conversion and Apostasy in the late Ottoman Empire," in *Economy and Society on Both Shores of the Aegean*, Lorans Tanatar Baruh and Vangelis Kechriotis (eds.), Alpha Bank Historical Archives: Athens, 2010.

<sup>538</sup> Meeker highlights the possibility of conversion of Turkic pastoral tribes into Christianity through their settlement in the Valley and interaction with the local population. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 93 and 162.

<sup>539</sup> Kalandar is generally used around January 13, and also means January in Romeika. Ömer Asan, *Pontos Kültürü*, p. 181. Mackridge, "Prolegomena," p. 136.

<sup>540</sup> A widely known idiom in Turkey highlights the futility and uselessness of an endeavour: *Müslüman mahallesinde salyangoz satmak* [Selling snails in the Muslim neighbourhood].

comprehended better if conceived not as a unilinear and final act but as continuous and multi-dimensional processes that amalgamate both Islam and Christianity, retaining particular features from each.<sup>541</sup>

Many in the Valley suggested that local genealogies were ambiguous—that they could not decisively locate who converted to what and when. The anxiety arising from this ambiguity can also be observed with outsiders' common use of the insult, "bastards of Pontos", which also implies a Christian past. For instance,

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<sup>541</sup> British Consul in the city at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also highlights this amalgam of religions among the communities to the east of the city:

[...] with all their [Islamic] fanaticism they still stick to Christian Customs and traditions, and that the families that furnished Christian priests in bygone time, are those in which the greater number of mollahs [hodjas] are to be found.

They preserve with reverence their sacred books, the sacerdotal vestments and emblems of their forefathers and put the greatest faith in their healing power. [...] Pilgrimages with offerings in a renowned Byzantine monastery, that of Soumela, at 8 hours distance from Trebizond, dedicated to the Virgin, are not unknown occurrences.

Alfred P. Biliotti, "Report on the Schools in the Vilayet of Trebizond," Public Record Office, Foreign Office 195 / 1521, May 1885. Quoted by Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 266. Zeynep Türkyilmaz's research on Kurumlu communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Trabzon also highlights such amalgamations of Islam and Christianity.

Yorgos Tzedopoulos, "Public Secrets: Crypto-Christianity in the Pontos," *Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies*, Vol. XVI, 2009, p. 168.

The issue of conversion, expectedly, generates questions with regards to secrecy and identity. I have to highlight that my analysis is specifically interested in deciphering modalities of subject formation through the case of Romeika-speaking communities and how different engagements of locals generate diverse practices and attitudes in different domains of life, but not the "truth" of their claims. Secondly, the issue of conversion should not solely be thought alongside a movement between Islam and Christianity. That is why I claim that conversion should not be conceived as a final act through which the subject leaves one domain of faith for another and rejects all preceding beliefs and customs for a new one. On the contrary, my observations from the field demonstrate that conversion should also be thought as a dynamic and continuous process through which customs and beliefs are amalgamated to generate idiosyncratic forms and practices. Failing to comprehend this leads to an articulation of conversion, which Baer associates with a rejection or denunciation of former beliefs and practices (Honored by the Glory of Islam, p. 13), which cannot accommodate experiences of different communities. A research I extensively used throughout my research, Zeynep Türkyilmaz's study on Kurumlus, illustrate this brilliantly and invites us to rethink how these heterodoxies cannot simply be explained away with crypto-faith or insincerity. Baer's articulations on the Donme community of Istanbul and on conversion in the Balkans, hence, fail to account for heterodoxies displayed by communities of the region, even though they study almost the same phenomenon. I believe, the memory of conversion has a degree of effect in contemporary Trabzon, which misleadingly questions the sincerity of their faith, but this effect should not necessarily lead us to conclude that conversion emerges to be the ultimate cause of local anxieties. On the contrary, locals both enjoy a reputation as Islamic scholars across the country and happen to be more invested in Turkish nationalism, as is the case across the country. A study of conversion in the Valley requires extensive historical work in the archives, which goes beyond the scope of my research and my technical abilities (a working knowledge of Ottoman Turkish and Arabic and archival work). Moreover, as conversion would not happen to be a universal phenomenon in the Valley (since certain families immigrated/settled in the area from other parts of the Empire through centuries), conversion would fail to account for local identities in general.

when I learnt the fact that the snail stew is a common dish, locals claimed it to be Islamic, even though I did not pose any question about its conformity to Islamic tradition. Mustafa, for instance, recounted how he witnessed Arabs eating snails as snacks in Saudi Arabia.<sup>542</sup> This historical ambiguity, I believe, might have a drastic effect on local religious affiliations since these socio-cultural distinctions might compel locals to re-assert their Turkish-Islamic identity. This spectre of conversion destabilises a supposedly organic alignment between Turkishness and Islam—that the hegemonic Turkish subject *was* and *is* always already Muslim—through highlighting the historical contingency by which they were aligned through interventions.<sup>543</sup> Aggravated further by the persistence of Romeika—the “dreg of the (Christian) Greek,”—this spectre of conversion also reflects the need to reiterate these commitments in the face of unconvinced others, who do not hesitate to insult locals as “bastards of Pontos” or “Greek seeds” whenever they divert from conventional narratives or practices. Locals, in this sense, “must assure themselves that they are not living as compromised (or compromising) Muslims” through their engagements with Islam, an endeavour that might be explored in their famous Islamic scholarship.<sup>544</sup>

### *Academies: Local Tradition of Religious Training*

In his account of socialities in Of, Michael Meeker points out the adverse geographical characteristics<sup>545</sup> of the Upper Valley to account for the local engagement with “reading and writing,”<sup>546</sup> and the integration of local men into the wider political economy of the Empire. “[S]cores of religious academies (*medrese*), hundreds of professors (*müderri*), and thousands of students (*talebe*)

<sup>542</sup> Gregory M. Simon’s analysis of the Minangkabau presents similar tensions. The fact that traditionally Minang people, Simon claims, are matrilineal with inheritance running through the women of the family seem to go against the patriarchal rules of Islamic theology. And yet, the community claims that their customs (*adat*) are based on Islamic law and hence Islamic.

<sup>543</sup> Taxation regime, for instance, can be counted as one of the structural elements that facilitated conversions across the Empire as a special tax (*cizye*) was levied on its non-Muslim subjects. Radushev, “The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans,” p. 369.

<sup>544</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 172.

<sup>545</sup> N. Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, McGill University Press: Montreal, 1964, p. 142. Quoted by Bahattin Akşit, “Islamic Education in Turkey: Medrese Reform in Late Ottoman Times and Imam-Hatip Schools in the Republic,” in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, Richard Tapper (ed.), I.B. Tauris and Co: London and New York, 1991, p. 150.

<sup>546</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 57.

were officially listed in the district during the final years of the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>547</sup> These academies enjoyed a close relationship to the state. Since they were officially integrated into the religious establishment in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Valley emerged as one of the key propagators of the orthodoxy of Sunni Islam.<sup>548</sup> They seem to have played a significant role in the diffusion and consolidation of Sunni Islamic hegemony across the Anatolian plateau among peoples with immensely different customs and beliefs.<sup>549</sup>

The reclusive upper part of the Valley has been the site of religious academies, even though these institutions are generally known as *Of medreseleri* (madrasa/seminary).<sup>550</sup> These institutions functioned as theological seminaries in Islamic thought and practice with years-long curricula, also intriguingly using *Romeika* to instruct Islamic disciplines. This *medrese* tradition seems to have established a custom of religious training in the area as almost all the men I encountered had attended to religious courses to memorise at least a comprehensive scope of Quranic sections/prayers, if not the whole text. Ahmet and Yusuf, for instance, both memorised Quranic sections in Arabic in such courses. It is quite remarkable that even elders, such as Ekrem and Kudret with expectedly and excessively staunch Republican commitments, went through the same extensive training for at least a couple of years before continuing their secular education in public schools. This tradition possibly laid the foundations of contemporary engagement with (secular) education in the Valley as well.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 46.

In another article, Meeker also touches upon this *medrese* issue in a more specific way: “Nineteenth century Ottoman registers list about forty official academies (medrese) and eighty professors (muderris) in Of and over two thousand students.” Michael E. Meeker, “The Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background,” in *Social Practice and Political Culture in the Turkish Republic*, The Isis Press, İstanbul, 2004, p. 171.

<sup>548</sup> Meeker, *The Nation of Empire*, p. 59.

<sup>549</sup> Meeker, *The Nation of Empire*, p. 48. Meeker, “The Black Sea Turks,” p. 25 and 172.

<sup>550</sup> As Kadahor had been historically part of Of till the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it is not surprising to witness this misleading naming, considering the fact that most official documents of locals still state Of as their place of birth or of registry.

<sup>551</sup> Interestingly, Richard and Nancy Tapper also indicate a similar pattern of intense academic engagement in the case of Eğirdir, Isparta in western Anatolia, where seminaries of different religious orders were also established. Richard Tapper and Nancy Tapper, “Religion, Education and Continuity in a Provincial Town,” in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, Richard Tapper (ed.), I.B. Tauris and Co: London and New York, 1991, p. 59.

As the area rose in fame across Anatolia for its teaching, locals came to get employed as imams outside the Valley. Various respondents recounted how their forefathers worked as imams in different villages across Anatolia to sustain their families in the Valley and, in other cases, to finance their debauchery. Yusuf's grandfather, for instance, went to Kars as an imam and never came back after marrying a local woman there. Similarly, Ali Kemal, a local man in his sixties from Şinek, told how he barely saw his father during his childhood as the father worked as an imam in inner Anatolia. Upon my inquiry if his father had gone through training in any academies of the Valley, though, Ali Kemal responded negatively, saying that his father knew only basic prayers but still could keep up with the demands of the job. Many of these men used Romeika to cover up, I was told, as they spoke in Romeika while pretending that they were reciting prayers in Arabic. Numerous others told similar stories, where forefathers postured as imams and spent their *imamlık*<sup>552</sup> money on gambling, drinking, or mistresses. When modernist and secular reforms of the Republic were put in motion in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, these religious academies were banned and could operate only in secret.<sup>553</sup> Many locals indicated that they attended these illegal courses, which, in case of detection, might have brought serious legal repercussions.<sup>554</sup> They gradually lost their significance nationwide through the 20<sup>th</sup> century when religious teaching was absorbed into public education, as in the case of Quranic courses, *imam-hatip* schools,<sup>555</sup> and faculties of theology. Moreover, it got harder for these institutions to find disciples willing to go through such labourious process with no official recognition at the end as a result of migration. Today, Quranic courses in villages across the Valley seem to recruit dozens of young students mostly from Kurdish-speaking provinces of the east and southeast of Turkey. This religious training of the Kurdish youth by local institutions is seen as a national service by locals, implying a co-optation and taming of Kurdish

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<sup>552</sup> *İmamlık*: Imamate, being an imam, working as an imam.

<sup>553</sup> Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, p. 5.

<sup>554</sup> In the contemporary socio-political atmosphere, though, these institutions, especially Quranic courses, enjoy a state-facilitation and have multiplied everywhere.

<sup>555</sup> As one of the most contentious issues in Turkish social and political life along Islamism and secularism divide, these schools were originally devised to train imams and preachers for the mosques.

subjects through religion, constituting another example of local alignments with the Turkish nationalist ideology.<sup>556</sup>

Contemporary engagements with religion also seem to have taken new forms in the Valley. As the state regulation is much tighter and mosques are staffed by imams, appointed by the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs),<sup>557</sup> numerous locals are more than willing to join official cadres with stable financial and social security benefits. Not surprisingly, many imams of local mosques are from the Valley or Trabzon.<sup>558</sup>

The Valley, hence, has a long history of religious teaching through which local communities supplied the country with imams and scholars, in addition to forming a scholarly tradition that continues in locals' engagement with education and employment. This significant role played by these religious institutions paved the way for the emergence of a widely-known persona in Turkish socio-cultural sphere, which embodied the local subjectivity in terms of religious disposition and humour: Oflu Hoca.

#### *Oflu Hoca: Fanatic or Subversive?*

*Oflu Hoca* (the Hodja from Of) stories, similar to Temel ones, are popular in the Valley and are told by many as a sign of local astuteness. One of them, recounted by Emine, a local woman from Şur, brilliantly presents the ambiguity of local

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<sup>556</sup> Fabio Vicini also touches upon a similar strand of thinking among members of other Islamist groups through which they counter the PKK sympathisers and attempt to co-opt them by strengthening their religious sentiments and weakening their national(ist) affiliations. Fabio Vicini, "Post-Islamism or Veering Toward Political Modernity? State, Ideology and Islam in Turkey," *Sociology of Islam*, Vol. 4, 2016, p. 268 - 269.

<sup>557</sup> For a discussion on the historical trajectory of the Diyanet in relation to the relationship between Islam and secularism, please see: Doğan Gürpınar and Ceren Kenar, "The Nation and Its Sermons: Islam, Kemalism, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 2016.

<sup>558</sup> Moreover, it is not an uncommon sight for these paid imams to engage in other professions, too, as they have plenty of free time: One worked as an electrician in a shop in the town centre while another one was a beekeeper and spent most of his time in this extra dealing. It was not uncommon to see these imams in the town centre during daytime, far away from their remote village posts, chatting in a nonchalant manner, mostly to the resentment of others, who did not miss any opportunity to loath those imams who "get paid for doing nothing."

religiosities and how locals navigate different socio-economic contexts through a skilful use of Romeika:

An *Oflu* was on his way from the Valley to the inner Anatolian plateau to find some seasonal work when locals in Bayburt stopped him. As Of was famous for its *hocas*, locals demanded the *Oflu* to stay in their village as their imam, offering him twenty cows in return. Initially unwilling, he accepted to stay in the village, nevertheless—possibly tempted by the increase of the offer to forty cows!<sup>559</sup> As he had no knowledge of prayers or verses, he used Romeika as a cover, reciting phrases in Romeika with mundane and humorous meanings in Turkish in lieu of Arabic prayers, such as:

<i>Oftan çıktım yola</i>	(I departed from Of
<i>Bayburt'ta verdim mola</i>	Took a break at Bayburt
<i>Allahü ekber</i>	God is the greatest)

As he conveniently lead the community through his skilful use of Romeika, which locals mistook for Arabic, his stay in Bayburt was threatened when the Mufti showed up in the village for an inspection. Coincidentally and fortunately for the *Hoca*, the Mufti was also both from the Valley and a fluent speaker of Romeika.

The community formed lines behind the *Oflu* for *namaz* with the Mufti at the very back of the community. Startled a bit but still confident, *Oflu* repeated the above phrase in the first *rekat*,<sup>560</sup> only to the exhorting coughs of the Mufti. Aware of the imminent danger of exposure, *Oflu* swiftly amended the prayer in the second *rekat* to appease the Mufti:

<i>Oftan çıktım yola</i>	(I departed from Of
<i>Bayburt'ta verdim mola</i>	Took a break at Bayburt
<i>Kırk mal verdiler bana</i>	They gave me forty cows
<i>Yarısı sana</i>	Half for me
<i>Yarısı bana</i>	Half for you
<i>Allahü ekber</i>	God is the greatest)

Mufti made no comment this time. After the completion of the prayer with no problem, the community approached the Mufti, asking him what he thought of their new imam. The Mufti replied: “He stumbled (*tökezledi*) in the first *rekat* a bit, but made it up (*toparladi*) in the second one!”

Thanks to the socio-cultural tools provided by the unique historicity of the Valley, *Oflu Hoca*, then, presents an intriguing engagement with religion, intertwined with personal (as in sexual/love relations) and economic interests of the protagonist. He always skilfully and overall successfully moves across the religious imperatives and socio-cultural demands to satisfy his needs.

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<sup>559</sup> It should be noted that staffing of mosques by publicly funded imams is a noticeably new phenomenon that was strikingly absent in the Ottoman and early Republican periods. Such absence led communities all around to pay for semi-professionals, who were generally assumed to have been trained in religious academies, to be their imams in local mosques informally.

<sup>560</sup> *Rekat*: Subsections of the parts of *namaz*, corresponding to prayers and each prostration.



Although misleadingly assumed to be a fanatical figure by urbanites,<sup>561</sup> I argue that *Oflu Hoca* presents a much more complicated picture within the peculiar historicity of the Valley. Against the totalising depiction of religiosities, I argue that, rather than embodying a fanatical commitment to religious norms, *Oflu Hoca*, through his endless manoeuvres, highlights the distance between the ideal and everyday practices through which the deviation, or subversion, is structurally attached to the very norm it brings forward. In a humorous manner, he radically integrates a subversive aspect into the religious practice by incessantly amending all norms with regards to his practical needs.

As various heterogeneous and presumably contradictory practices stand right next to each other, understanding religious engagements in the footsteps of the witty Oflu Hoca might help us to decipher mechanisms through which religiosity itself emerges as a part of subjects' wider socio-economic situatedness with incessant amendments and twists.<sup>562</sup>

Thus, as the embodiment of a specific modality of religious affiliation, Oflu Hoca embodies how engagements with Islam take many peculiar forms and how it informs subjectivities in relation to with local historicities and Romeika. Across the Valley, for instance, Ramadan is revered as “a month of reflection”<sup>563</sup> and piety as well as a month of gambling. Those who claim to practice a highly regarded religious ritual—fasting, in this sense, might simultaneously breach another rule, the ban on gambling. What Oflu Hoca underlines, then, is the very heterogeneity and dynamism through which religion, mistakenly assumed to be essential, coherent and perennial, is incessantly amended into new forms to meet the tangible human needs and desires. Bringing (nominal and discursive) obedience and subversion together, it illustrates how religious ideals are both

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<sup>561</sup> Meeker writes: “As I was to learn later, the “hodja from Of” (*Oflu hoca*) represented a stereotype for educated urbanites everywhere in the Turkish Republic. He brought to mind a man with [...] a literal, if not erroneous, interpretation of the sacred law of Islam (*seriat*). A district that was little known by outsiders had somehow become notorious for its religious teachers.” Meeker, *The Nation of Empire*, p. 40 – 41.

<sup>562</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 209.

<sup>563</sup> Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, p. 64.

upheld and inverted through the peculiar reiterative form they take, as in the disguise of Romeika as Arabic.

## II. Delegation of Religiosity to Aesthetic Reiterations: Intercession by the Sheikh, Mosques, and Prayers in Arabic

In the light of both wider socio-political and cultural elements alongside the local particularities, I argue that there seem to be a number of patterns that inform how local religiosities are configured. In order to illustrate these points, I present two vignettes below to set the ground for the analysis of local modalities of piety and the subjectivities they induce. These vignettes relate to two religious gatherings, my initiation into the *Nakşibendi Tarikatı* (The *Nakşibendi* Order)<sup>564</sup> in the first and a religious lecture in the second.

### *Initiation, Repentance, and Blessing: Approximating Salvation*

One day in March, while Ahmet, Yusuf, and I were chatting and painting a dorm room when Ahmet invited us to attend a religious gathering, as the sheikh of the *Nakşibendi Tarikatı* was to arrive soon to meet his disciples. I readily accepted. So did Yusuf. That night at the *dergah* (dervish convent), a top floor flat by the airport, Ahmet introduced me to other disciples who, expectedly, commented that I might have been an American spy upon learning that I was a researcher. Yet, we engaged in a casual and quite humorous chat, with not so rare swearing. As we were talking, many others arrived and greeted me as *sofi*—a fellow disciple of the Order.

As we were waiting for the arrival of the sheikh, Ahmet stated that a *tövbe merasimi* (ritual of repentance) was to take place and if followed thoroughly, he claimed, all our sins could be forgiven “thanks to the sheikh” who “mediated” between the sinful and the God. Ahmet

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<sup>564</sup> As one of the most controversial religious elements, the *Nakşibendi* Order has left significant marks in the history of secularism and Islam in Turkey. For further information on the Order and the historical development of the movement in the Turkish context, please see: Şerif Mardin, “The *Nakşibendi* Order in Turkish History,” in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, Richard Tapper (ed.), I.B. Tauris and Co: London and New York, 1991, pp. 121 – 145. For a much wider discussion of the Order in different countries, please see: Itzhak Weissman, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition*, Routledge: London and New York, 2007. With regards to the Order’s intricate relation to the Turkish state, Weissman, for instance, argues that the order was influential in Ottoman imperial efforts to consolidate their power over Muslim subjects through providing “an orthodox alternative to the unruly dervish fraternities that had accompanied the conquest of Anatolia.” (p. 44)

emphasised that if I went through the ritual, I would be put in heaven in the afterlife, as the sheikh would intercede (*sefaat eder*) with the God on behalf of his disciples in the judgment day.<sup>565</sup> After a long wait, the sheikh, a man in his sixties with a long beard, entered the *dergah* and directly took his position to lead the *yatsı namazı*.<sup>566</sup> We all hastily formed lines.

Contrary to all other prayers I witnessed in the Valley, which generally took at most two minutes, this sheikh-led *namaz* (shalat) was considerably long and slow-paced with each posture taking few minutes. He recited quite long *sure*s in a plain manner without conforming to the much prevalent obsession around *tecvid*. As announced before, the sheikh finished his prayer after two *rekats*, as he was a *seferi* (expeditionary).<sup>567</sup> Although these two sheikh-led *rekats* had lasted around twenty minutes, the community completed the remaining two *rekats* at a staggering pace—almost within thirty or forty seconds—when not obliged to follow the sheikh’s lead any more. Being almost the last one to finish, I was appalled by the stark difference between two sections of the prayer.

Following the prayer, we were informed that the sheikh was to receive those who wished to go through the repentance and almost everyone was willing. We were supposed to enter the room on our knees only, as a reflection of reverence for the sheikh. I entered the room with three others and we lined our hands together in front of the sheikh, who was seated on a pillow by the window and looked quite bored. Without delay, he put his hand on ours and uttered a number of sentences (in Turkish) that we repeated, basically expressing our remorse and wish to be forgiven by God. Yet, the last sentence also indicated that we became his

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<sup>565</sup> As a term *sefaat* refers in the mainstream Islamic theology of the Prophet’s intercession in the Judgment Day to forgive all sins of his followers and praying to God to accept them into the Heaven. Two meanings of the term, both in English and in its Arabic original, should be noted: (1) To plead/pray on behalf of someone else and (2) to act as a mediator in a conflict, to attempt to reconcile differences between two groups. (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2016; and Collins English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2014)

Although these engagements in the form of demands raised through saintly figures are common in folk Islam, such mediation is strictly forbidden theologically as they reify humans as divinities on par with God, whose uniqueness is the founding principle of Islamic doctrine. In the Turkish context, too, it is quite customary to visit tombs of saints (*türbe*) and raise demands from God and from these saintly persons, ranging from success in exams to marriages/pregnancies whereas the orthodox teaching of the Diyanet discourages such practices clearly, with many of such sites displaying signs by the Directorate indicating that such engagements are un-Islamic and lead to *şirk* (polytheism). Still, these sites preserve their popularity and attract many visitors in different contexts. One of the most notable ones in İstanbul is *Oruç Baba Türbesi* (The Shrine/Tomb of the Fasting Father) which is visited by tens of thousands, especially in Ramadan. For a discussion of intercession and different theological perspectives on the practice in the case of Java, please see: Julian Millie, “Supplicating, Naming, Offering: *Tawassul* in West Java,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, February 2008.

<sup>566</sup> The last prayer/salaah of the day, consisting of 13 rekats. *Namaz – Salaat, Shalat*, prayer.

<sup>567</sup> Those who are on a journey, *seferis*, are either exempt from most religious obligations (such as fasting in Ramadan) or an easier/reduced option is provided. For instance, although *yatsı namazı* would consist of 4+4+2+3 (13 in total) rekats, a *seferi* would be required to do only two. This calculation is valid for the Sunni sect of Islam.

disciples—I simultaneously repented and was initiated into the Order. It was over in around forty seconds and we were hurried out of the room to give space to the incoming party. The deputy of the sheikh then gave us further instructions to complete with a number of recitations and prayers, listed in detail on paper.

The following day, Ahmet informed me that there would be a *teveccüh merasimi* (ceremony of blessing)<sup>568</sup> with the sheikh soon and invited me to join him, again. As I had been cleansed of my sins through the repentance, I was eligible to attend this ceremony through which the sheikh was to “instill” his splendour into the hearts of his disciples. On our way to the mosque to attend the ritual, though, my companions were talking about how *sofis*,<sup>569</sup> even though being brethren through their engagement in the Order, tricked each other repeatedly. Yusuf, who was especially resentful, had stopped going to gatherings in Kadahor for some time because of a financial dispute he had with a fellow disciple.

Upon our arrival, the same deputy informed us that the ritual was a *manevi ameliyat* (spiritual operation) as the sheikh treated his disciples. He gave further instructions about the ritual, including the appropriate sitting position and the repetition of certain words/phrases. He also strictly forbade anyone to open his eyes in any circumstances, as this was necessary to maintain the spiritual atmosphere of the ceremony. The central part of the ritual was that one by one the sheikh would approach each disciple and upon his contact the disciple was to raise his head up slightly and open his mouth. “To cleanse disciple’s soul and to share his blessed presence,” the sheikh, then, was to exhale into the disciple’s mouth and the disciple was supposed to inhale the sheikh’s breath. This inhalation was to be repeated up to three times. Upon his command, everyone closed their eyes and began repeating the specified words as instructed, waiting for the sheikh. Soon, a cassette record was turned on playing a series of religious poetry, in Kurdish and Arabic, from a tape recording. Apparently the sheikh had arrived.

As the sheikh walked around the mosque among the disciples without being seen, he began reciting poems aloud. Some *sofis* were weeping and shouting; others were lost in the moment with cycles of crying and delirium. After a period of time, which I assumed to be at least one hour, sheikh touched my both shoulders. I raised my head slightly and opened my mouth. He exhaled right into my mouth—I was supposed to inhale his breath. After the third time, the sheikh moved to the man sitting next to me, continuing his mission to “bless” his disciples. Lasting around two hours, the ceremony ended with the command of the deputy. When we opened our eyes, though, the sheikh was long gone.

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<sup>568</sup> Teveccüh is defined as “bir yana doğru yönelme, yüzünü çevirme” (orienting oneself, verging, facing) or “güler yüz gösterme, yakınlık duyma, hoşlanma, sevmeye” (displaying friendliness, feeling proximity/sympathy, relishing, loving) by the *TDK* (Turkish Language Institute).

<sup>569</sup> Members of the Order address each other as *sofi*.

As we had been sitting for two hours, we hurried to get out. While smoking, both Yusuf and Abdullah mocked those who wept loudly, mimicking the cries we heard throughout the ritual. We all laughed. Then, Yusuf and Ahmet asked me to bring some “chicks” from London or İstanbul. Completely disassociated from the ceremony that we had just gone through, they made even more sexual jokes, engaged in a conversation on business projects that they wanted to undertake in the Valley. The blessing and the sheikh had already fallen into oblivion. On the way back and in the following days, they rarely came up again.

Another religious gathering I participated in presents similar dynamics and clearly illustrates how the religious practice is temporally circumscribed with limited effects on everyday life and how its normative imperatives are both upheld and disregarded in paradoxical manner.

### *İlmihal: Decency and (In)decency*

In an April evening, Musa Hoca invited me to a religious gathering where the mufti of Kondu was to lead the lecture on everyday Islamic norms and appropriate practices. The gathering started when a dozen participants took their seats around the stove that night. The Mufti, reading excerpts from the book, lectured the group quite explicitly about *gusül* (ablution), emphasising that both men and women must have their genitals covered not only from the sight of the other sex but also from fellow men and women alike. He indicated that even in the bathroom, regardless of the presence of others, one has to be not completely naked, denouncing barracks and football locker rooms, where, “because of the western influence,” some men hanged out naked with their genitals uncovered. He staunchly opposed such indecencies and connected them to the absence of *haya* (shame, decency). No one asked questions as the lecture went on. After forty-five minutes, the Mufti checked the time and closed the book while Musa Hoca and Emre served tea and some cookies.

While having tea, upon learning that one of the participants, Emre, showed his penis to others to settle mocking rumours (“that he was uncircumcised”)<sup>570</sup> once and for all, the Mufti, following quite a long laughter by all including himself, began recounting a similar story, in order to tell Emre that there was nothing to be ashamed in what he did through yet another Oflu Hoca story: “A[n Oflu] Hoca was madly in love with a woman. The woman gave him three conditions to prove his love [as she was not that willing] before [accepting his proposal for] marriage:

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<sup>570</sup> Of course, these mocking expressions by others are not meant to be serious and constitute a thoroughly pervasive form of teasing, especially targeting the teenagers/young men.

(1) Play *bağlama*<sup>571</sup> in the mosque. (2) Show your dick to the *cemaat* (community). (3) [The Mufti] forgot [the third condition]. Because Hoca was madly in love, he had to do [all]. One day, [while he] was [preaching in the mosque] the sermon was [apparently] boring, [as] the whole community was half asleep. [Seizing the opportunity,] he just grabbed his *bağlama* and played some. [Awakening to the absurdity of the situation,] *cemaat* asked: “What is going on?” He replied: “When I am saying something about Islam, you are [all] sleeping, but when it is a satanic thing, you all wake up!” [The community was convinced.] After that, [to prove his love for the girl,] he had to show his dick [to the community, too]. He [addressed] the community: “I heard that there are rumours that some in the community think that I am uncircumcised. Let me show you that I am [circumcised], indeed.” [And thus, he accomplished the second step, too.]”<sup>572</sup> Without exception, everyone laughed out loud. No one seemed to be bothered by the sheer contradiction between what the Mufti had preached before and how he justified what Emre did.

As the Mufti forgot some parts, he urged others to look for the complete story on the Internet. Almost all grabbed their phones, but could not figure out what to type. The Mufti suggested the search term as *hoca'nın aleti* (hoca's tool/junk) to some more laughter from all. They all searched the phrase; images of one particularly famous preacher from Of, *Cüppeli* Ahmet Hoca, who is known for his humorous and blatant personality and sex scandals, emerged causing further laughter. They read a number of other funny anecdotes with swear words they stumbled across, but could not find the original story. Then, amid commotion, the Mufti suggested the phrase *hoca'nın malafatı* (hoca's schlong) to which the crowd laughed even more while continuing the quest. As it did not produce any fruitful results, the Mufti offered *hoca'nın maslahatı* (hoca's cock/business) this time. This did not produce the desired effect either, yet the process was, by far, the most intriguing religious conversation that I had ever imagined. The search continued with more humorous anecdotes and laughter, which lasted longer than the carefully-timed lecture. After the Mufti left, we talked more, mostly about politics.

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<sup>571</sup> *Bağlama* is a stringed musical instrument that is used commonly in folk music across the country.

<sup>572</sup> Field Notes. Book III, 25R – 26F. (April 13, 2015) The third condition that the Mufti forgot apparently requires the Hoca to have sex with the woman in front of her husband, which he also accomplishes through a quite smart trick: One day when the woman and her husband were working in their field, the Hoca climbs up to the minaret balcony and yells at the couple, “Aren't you ashamed of doing this in public in front of the community? You shameless (people)!” Confused by his accusations, the husband asks, “we are just working in the field, why are you mad?” Yet, the Hoca insists, “this (act) belongs to the bedroom, you should not have sex in public!” Confused even more, the husband tries to explain that they were just working in the field, but to no avail, as the Hoca says, “it does not look like that from here. Come see yourself, if you do not believe me!” The husband decides to go up to the balcony to check himself, while the Hoca quickly climbs down and meets the wife in the field and the two start having sex. Reaching the balcony, the husband finally gets a chance to look down on the field, only to see his wife having sex with the Hoca, and confirms what the Hoca claimed earlier: “It really does look so from here!”

Although it was thoroughly puzzling to go through these religious practices, the sudden appearance and disappearance of the Sheikh and the reversal of the normative imperative of the catechism from decency to indecency seemed to be good illustrations of religiosities in the Valley.

Then, what do these practices of piety tell us? How are we to understand this emergence of intermediary forms, e.g. sheikhly intercession and repentance, that take over religious duties on behalf of pious subjects, even though the very absence of clerical mediation and repentance are to differentiate Islam from (Catholic) Christianity? How is the normative imperative (as in decency) both upheld and disregarded? Ranging from the *tecvidli* recitation of the Quran in Arabic to the inhaling of the sheikh's breath, the prominence of aestheticised-ritualised reiterations within these practices of piety, I claim, might hold some answers.

Here, it should be noted that I do not trace the genuineness of local (religious) belief, conceived generally as an interior state that is reflected through practices,<sup>573</sup> but rather, I want to explore how religious practices are implicated in the constitution of subjectivities and socialities and how belief as the subject's "conviction" for the truthfulness of a normative order cannot be the sole criteria to trace piety.<sup>574</sup> In both cases, locals revered these "Islamic" practices by observing their rules and instructions and spoke highly of them. All attendees, for instance, admired the sheikh dearly and the ceremonies he led "felt" venerable. And yet, at the same time, these practices emerged to be clearly circumscribed, strictly confined to these spaces and temporalities with limited, if any, effect on everyday life. The promised fraternity within the Order, for instance, did not essentially produce any significant socialisation or solidarity that could go against their individual pursuits of economic profit within the

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<sup>573</sup> Deborah E. Tooker, "Identity System of Highland Burma: Belief, Akha Zan, and a Critique of Interiorized Notions of Ethno-Religious Identity," *Man*, Vol. 27, No. 4, December 1992, p. 808 and 816.

<sup>574</sup> Tooker, for instance, specifies this conventional articulation of belief as "a mental state or conviction in which a doctrine or proposition concerning one's world-view is affirmed as true as opposed to false." Tooker, "Identity System of Highland Burma," p. 808.

“capitalist ethic of contemporary Turkey.”<sup>575</sup> We did not see any of the sofis again either, except for this one man from whom I bought honey regularly.

### ***Temporal-Spatial Limits***

As the first point, I want to highlight how local practices of piety are carefully circumscribed. Rather than diffusing religious ethos into the daily life, these local patterns confine piety into particular spaces and temporalities, ranging from short episodes of prayers in mosques to rituals in the *dergah*, while their effects in everyday life remain particularly limited as can be seen in the example of the immediate annulment of the imperative for decency by the Mufti. *Namaz* as a practice, similarly, even though considered as the pillar of the Islamic faith, emerges as a temporally and spatially bounded ritual with excessively fast recitation and succession of bodily postures. It was not uncommon, for instance, for local men to disappear for one or two minutes during our encounters to perform *namaz* quickly and come back to continue our conversation. These engagements emerge, in this sense, as the nodal points through which religious identity is reiterated. Rather than being practices that infuse the life with piety, then, these practices should be regarded in their relative confinement through which they are reconfigured as ritualised and aestheticised reiterations of one’s identity and faith.

### ***Aestheticised and Ritualised Practices as Reiterations***

Ahmet and Yusuf’s eagerness was, in a sense, plausible since these rituals promised repentance and salvation through relatively a simple ritual. The sheikh, it should be noted, was believed to have divine powers and proximity that not only promised absolution, but also stipulated heaven through *sefaat* (intercession). By partaking in these rituals, in this sense, they enacted their acceptance of the authority of the sheikh, which, in return, attested salvation. Rituals of the Order, thus, seemed to provide a shortcut to piety and redemption, since the ritual re-inscribes the subject as a pious Muslim. The rest was left to the

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<sup>575</sup> Tapper and Tapper, “The Birth of the Prophet,” p. 83.



sheikh, who was supposed to handle all by himself, while the community continued their life as usual. The sheikh's piety and worship, in a way, were the piety and salvation of the community of disciples: He was to do it all on their behalf.

Relatedly, numerous mosques across the Valley illustrate a similar pattern. Almost every small neighbourhood of each village have a mosque, all staffed by imams and funded by the Diyanet, but have no community to serve at all. For instance, out of twelve mosques in Şinek, only four had a community, and even these communities were composed merely of a few old men who come for the noon and afternoon prayers, leaving mosques empty for the rest of the prayer times. Similarly, the majority of mosques in Şur have no community to serve at all. The same point was repeatedly raised for other villages. As materialities produced out of local donations and labour, they stand as a testimony to local Islamic identity, even though they remain empty most of the time. Their materialisation process and physical existence, then, emerge as worship and piety in different forms that include the proposition of the project, donations for the construction, volunteering, and its decoration with tiles and calligraphy. Their significance as sites of worship diminishes with the fact that they are either destined for emptiness or filled only on Fridays for weekly communal gatherings that induct men as the part of a Muslim community.

Similarly, how *namaz* is performed provides us with similar configurations. Ali Kemal, a local man in his sixties from Şinek, described how he occasionally found himself thinking about the daily matters while reciting Arabic supplications during *namaz*, which he connected to the very absence of meaning. Ahmet, on the other hand, displayed no such concern and did not bother to slow down even when I warned him that I could not keep up with his speed. The aesthetic and rhythmic recitation of the Quran, along the same lines, constitutes another example of such aestheticised practice of piety.

Thus, I want to underline the possibility of delegation of piety to aestheticised and ritualised reiterations, through which, not only is one inducted as Muslim

but they are also promised redemption irrespective of their moral standing. These aesthetic and ritualistic reiterations, I assert, generate a particular configuration of piety within which practice—an aggregate of aesthetic qualities, presences, materialities, corporealities, and utterances, rather than engagement with norms—emerges as the site of belief and piety vis-à-vis the normativity. Thus, religiosities in the Valley, I claim, rely on a delegation through which the aestheticised reiterations take over the duty of the pious subject to engage with and comprehend the ethical/normative imperatives of the texts. Rather than relating to the norms these texts preach, the reiteration of these practices inducts the performer as Muslim and instantiates piety.

### ***Disregarding the Norm***

Then, local men engage with temporally and spatially circumscribed rituals solely as reiterations of Islamic identity without having to conform to the normative imperatives. Or rather, along the same lines, we can claim that such practices do not necessarily produce changes in the ethical standing of the pious subject through the diffusion of a normative system. It is within this context that the Mufti could both preach decency and advocate indecency. Ranging from local men's fast-paced *namaz* to Ali Kemal's admission that he was generally filled with other thoughts while mechanically reciting Arabic supplications, this non-engagement with normativity seems to be the prevalent form of local religiosities.

While such practice frees the self from such textual engagements and normative adjustments, which are ought to re-align the subject with regards to his or her ethical orientation, it inducts the reiterating self as Muslim and the aestheticised reiteration as worship. This specific modality of religious engagements in the Valley, then, produces a pious (male) subject that is marked through his aestheticised and ritualised reiterations, which induct him as Muslim within a Muslim community and geography.<sup>576</sup> Recitations of the Quran, prayers

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<sup>576</sup> Deeb for instance talks about how *namaz* enhances "membership in a community of believers." Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, p. 105.

performed as a community, mosques across the Valley, *ezans* broadcasted from these mosques “to sacralise the space”,<sup>577</sup> lectures, and rituals (as in *teraviah* in Ramadan or funerals), in this sense, construct Muslim socialities as an aggregate of those individual endeavours and mark the space as Muslim.

### **III. Pious Subjects at Play: Religiosities, Subjectivities, and Socialities**

#### III.I. Exteriorised Piety

Religiosity in the Valley seems to revolve around its ritualistic and aestheticised reiterations, and has a drastically loose connection to normativity. Then, how shall we understand this discrepancy between the significance of Islam for both collective and individual identity, and the local non-engagement with its normative and ethical imperatives in everyday life? What does the Mufti’s disregard for the very norm he preaches for tell us? Tracing local pieties, I want to highlight a number of paths in which subjects’ engagement with normativity and their subsequent positions are constructed.

Recent scholarly analyses generally trace pious practices to study how moral selves are cultivated. Saba Mahmood’s work, investigating the women participating in the Egyptian mosque movement, for instance, explores how exterior pious endeavours of women, such as veiling and *namaz*, produce the moral and virtuous self as interiority. Mahmood’s work inverts the conventional causality between belief and worship, underlining that belief “is not the *antecedent* to, or cause of, moral action, but *its product*.”<sup>578</sup> In similar terms, tracing Shi’i Islamic practices in Lebanon, Lara Deeb emphasises pious practices as the site out of which moral-pious selves are generated.<sup>579</sup> These accounts from different contexts are useful to comprehend how practices of piety generate pious selves. However, they all conceive piety to be intricately tied to interiority, which either instigates or is constituted by the exteriority. The self within these accounts, in this sense, is an aggregate induced through this exterior endeavours

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<sup>577</sup> Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, p. 59.

<sup>578</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 126. Emphases are original.

<sup>579</sup> Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, p. 105 and 115.

and their interior projections. Through attending to the prominence of aesthetic and ritualised reiterations and the non-engagement with the normativity, I highlight how piety and belief can also be traced through exterior forms, rather than subjective-interior states.<sup>580</sup> The first point I want to raise about the particular configuration of religiosities, hence, relates to the exteriority of these practices, that is, the practices of piety are always oriented toward the matters and forms that are exterior to the pious self.

Mosques as physical and aestheticised entities, for instance, induct subjects, socialities, and spaces as Muslim through their material presences, taking over the duty of prayers. Their materialisation and presence in the Valley space, in this sense, produce a site of piety that is tangible and external to the self. Similarly, rather than a meditational practice by means of which the self cultivates his belief in God to approximate an Islamic ideal,<sup>581</sup> *namaz* emerges as an aggregate of corporeal and enunciative practices through which the Muslim subject is construed without necessitating an ethical cultivation or re-orientation.

This particular configuration of religious practice as an aesthetic reiteration, then, does not automatically affect the interiority of the self since normativity, as in virtues and ideals of the Islamic theology, remains un-engaged or disregarded simultaneously.<sup>582</sup> From the redemptive capacity of the sheikh to the *namaz* as a quick succession of supplications and postures, or from the *tevidli* recitation of the Quran in Arabic to the construction of mosques, these reiterations construct piety through subjects' engagements with exteriorities, which in a way, implies that "feelings and convictions can exist externally".<sup>583</sup> Complicating the relationship between practice and belief further and amending Blaise Pascal's

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<sup>580</sup> Following Žižekian articulations around interpassivity, Pfaller discusses how certain rituals stand for subjects' piety and religious identity as the case of "the delegation of Christian belief to a burning candle representing a Catholic." Pfaller, *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture*, p. 51. (iBook).

<sup>581</sup> Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, p. 104 – 105.

Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 181. Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil*, p. 292.

<sup>582</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 192.

<sup>583</sup> Robert Pfaller, *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture: Illusions without Owners*, Verso: London and New York, 2014, p. 52.

famous dictum, “kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe,”<sup>584</sup> local practices of piety, I assert, might highlight how piety and belief might be linked in other ways.

Local pieties, as I explored above, clearly illustrate how religiousities are reliant on ritualistic and aesthetic practices (*namaz*, fasting, or recitation), corporealities and presences (being and being seen in religious gatherings and mosques)<sup>585</sup>, and materialities (mosques or Quran courses). Belief or piety, in this context, should not be solely articulated as an interior source or effect of subjects’ pious practices since belief cannot be easily equated to the subject’s subsumption into a normative order, but it rather might correspond to a constellation of aestheticised practices that are exterior to the self.

What Gregory Simon underlines as the centrality of the *namaz* for the construction of moral Muslim subjects, for instance, depicts conventional articulations of *namaz* and how it is assumed to produce an interior moral self:

*Shalat* [namaz] can be understood as an act of total submission of the individual to a larger power—to God, but also to the community of believers and its conventional practices. In the practice of prayer, people must turn their bodies to the prescribed motions of the ritual and their attentions completely to their submission to God. [...] If not performed in the proper way, at the proper time, in the proper state of purity and the proper state of mind, the prayer is said to be invalid and the obligation to God unfulfilled.

[...] In order for prayers to be effective, and in order for them to be valid, they must represent genuine intentions and be offered in a state of *khusuak*, or total, sincere concentration on God.

God must completely saturate the consciousness of the person performing *shalat*. During the ritual a person must not think about what is on TV, what she wants from God, or whether he will be able to feed his children that night.<sup>586</sup>

Although Simon also indicates that many locals “fail” to live up to this idealised description of *namaz* with regards to the constitution of a moral self, they still uphold this version and problematise their “individual” inability to reach such

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<sup>584</sup> Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 25.

<sup>585</sup> Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, p. 105.

<sup>586</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 181, 185 – 186.

states of full submission to God.<sup>587</sup> This idealised account also seems to be prevalent in the Valley but the way it is enacted presents a thoroughly different case. Ali Kemal's admission and minor discomfort with his mind being full of other thoughts during the prayer, for instance, emerge as an exception among men who have no problem with their speedy prayers and recitations. *Namaz*, for many, is practiced as fast as they can, rarely taking longer than one or two minutes for each four *rekats*. Rather than its meditational ideal, which necessitates intentionality with a "proper set of mind" as well as the saturation of the self with the idea of God,<sup>588</sup> *namaz* for many is performed as a purely ritualised and mechanised practice that one must go through both to construct his Muslim identity and to attain salvation. Thus, *namaz* in the Valley might also be seen how piety and belief can be inhabited in exteriorised forms without producing radical alterations in subjects' moral alignments because of the peculiar forms they take in the Valley.

We should note, however, that I do not mean that locals do not believe yet pretend to be something they are not. On the contrary, not succumbing to the modern Christian-European modality of religion and belief as matters of individual interiority,<sup>589</sup> I invite the reader to attend to a possibly distinct modality of piety within which ritualised and aesthetic practice takes precedence over the norm and hence emerges as the sole site and form of worship and faith owing to local historicities and socio-cultural distinctions. Aestheticised practice in its exalted and yet distant forms, as in recitations in classical Arabic or mosques, hence, is not merely worship, but it also emerges as the site of belief even though it is exterior to the self. This point, in turn, leads us to the last aspect of the analysis through which I trace how local men relate to the normativity and ethics that are presumably implicated in these religious engagements.

### III.II. Subjectivities and Normativity: A Double Act

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<sup>587</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 172, 186.

<sup>588</sup> Delaney, *The Seed and the Soil*, p. 292.

<sup>589</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1993, p. 1 – 2.  
Simon, "Conviction without Being Convicted," p. 243.

Intrigued by the Mufti's blatant disregard for what he preached or locals' non-engagement with the normative imperative, I want to highlight how this peculiar configuration of piety induces different modalities of subjectivity in close relation to the way norms are engaged. I believe that deciphering these processes in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon would help us "explore other structures of [...] personhood,"<sup>590</sup> which are generally neglected in analyses as they generally focus on subversive and resistant instances of agency without accounting for how normativities are reproduced through everyday practices. This itinerary will also enhance our comprehension of subjectivities, especially for contexts where the way they are shaped opens up the possibility of a "re-signification" of normativity—but it is nevertheless upheld and reproduced.

In her analysis of pious women in Egypt, Saba Mahmood highlights the development of ethical selves and cultivation of virtues through "a specific set of procedures, techniques, and discourses".<sup>591</sup> Through an aggregate of practices and habituations, an ethical self is generated as a parallel interiority, where piety and belief are to be found.<sup>592</sup> This alignment between the practice and the norm, in this sense, reconfigures the subject's moral outlook, affecting her engagements even in the most mundane and intimate instances.

In a parallel manner, Mahmood objects to the articulations based on a binary between subversion and consolidation, which, she claims, fail to grasp how norms are also "performed, inhabited and experienced."<sup>593</sup> Going against the subtle tendency in anthropological analyses to equate agency/subjectivity to resistance, she urges us to reconsider agency not solely as "a synonym for resistance to relations of domination but [also] as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create."<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," p. 180.

<sup>591</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 28.

<sup>592</sup> Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," p. 192, 195. A clear example to illustrate: "[T]hat an act of prayer performed for its own sake, without adequate regard for how it contributes to the realization piety, is 'lost power'." (p. 128)

<sup>593</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 22.

<sup>594</sup> Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," p. 180.

I readily agree with the last aspect of Mahmood's critique of conventional articulations of subjectivity and agency. Both concepts are traced "primarily in terms of resistance to the regularizing impetus of structures of normativity,"<sup>595</sup> rendering other modalities of engagement with normative orders invisible and uncharted. In a similar vein, I explore local men's Islamic practices to demonstrate a completely different picture. These experiences I focus on cannot be simply characterised as resistance or subversion—even though definitely including subversive elements—since they still adamantly and nominally uphold the normative order. In line with Mahmood's objections, I claim that the consolidation of a norm does not occur in uniform manners and necessitates us to recognise how this binary between consolidation and resistance fails to account for the ways in which norms are engaged. Even though in certain contexts such consolidation is implicated in the formation of ethical/moral selves, in the context of the men of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, we witness a different relationality through which piety emerges chiefly as aestheticised and ritualised reiterations, carving out individual and social identities in close connection to their wider socio-cultural distinctions, historicities, and politico-economic aspirations and alignments.<sup>596</sup>

With regards to how practices of piety instigate moral interiorities, though, I want to present my objections. Mahmood's articulations, based on "small sets of individuals [who are] exceptionally devoted",<sup>597</sup> trace the emergence of ethical subjectivities without addressing potential "gaps between the ideology and the experience of practice."<sup>598</sup> Her theorisation of piety, I claim, also fails to account for what religiosity presents in the Valley, which both nominally uphold the norm and simultaneously disengage from its imperatives. I focus on the

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<sup>595</sup> Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, p. 23.

<sup>596</sup> Henrietta L. Moore, *Still Life: Hopes, Desires and Satisfaction*, Polity: Cambridge, 2011, p. 18, 21 – 22.

<sup>597</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 3.

<sup>598</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 189.

Mahmood's account touches upon only one such case of a woman who expresses her trouble in waking up for the morning prayers. (*Politics of Piety*, p. 124)



implications of this simultaneous consolidation and neglect on local subjectivities.

Local religiosities cannot be solely comprehended through a binary of consolidation and subversion as this fails to account for how local men relate to and experience these Islamic imperatives through a double act. Rather, in the case of the Valley, religious practice emerges as an affirmation that simultaneously hollows out the normativity it upholds. As the pious practice is performed solely in the form of aestheticised reiterations, the norm emerges as a nominal principle that is to be publicly consolidated. This consolidation, however, significantly vacates the norm as its imperatives are either negated or disregarded pervasively in favour of wider engagements of the self. While the normativity itself is hollowed out and detached through the supremacy of the aestheticized practice, the subject's ethical outlook is not amended to align the self with the norm. Hence, local pieties illustrate how consolidation might also incorporate, or inherently include, the subversion through which norms are hollowed out. Through this peculiar relationality to the normative content, I claim that local men in the Valley nominally and outwardly<sup>599</sup> consolidate the norm in different instances and induct themselves as Muslims within an Islamic community while simultaneously disengaging from these norms.

In addition to this double act, of consolidation and hollowing out, I want to highlight the socio-political position of pious subjects. The concept of agency is not solely tied to subjects' manoeuvres against subordination, but should also be traced through consolidation of normativity and reproduction of selves as hegemonic-sovereign subjects within relations of domination. I believe that religious practices in the Valley should be comprehended with regards to their hegemonic situatedness within the given socio-political field dominated by the patriarchal Turkish-Sunni normativity. Especially relevant here is the very ascendance of the public visibility of piety and its integration into the economic-political establishment. As discussed before, their participation and alignments with Turkish nationalist discourses and statist ideologies mark local men as

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<sup>599</sup> Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, p. 77 – 79.

sovereign subjects. The same pattern might be traced alongside the religious domain, as well, since local men emerge to be the preachers and upholders of the Sunni-Turkish orthodoxy. Almost constituting a mirror image of Mahmood's case, where subordinated subjects are produced by an explicit and ardent consolidation of normativity and inhabitancy of the norm, the sovereign masculine subjects are produced through the consolidation of norms that simultaneously rescind its content in the case of the Valley.

Thus, religious practices in the Valley do not bring an ethical turn that is supposed to re-construct the self in line with normative imperatives of the founding texts of Islam. As various supposedly antagonistic practices and norms are brought together, such as fasting and gambling or decency and indecency, the link between both the norm and the practice, on the one hand, and religion and daily life, on the other, are broken since the alignment between them (consistency and coherency) is not marked as a condition upon which the subject is constituted. Even when such alignments occur, they appear to be temporalised and elusive, fading away swiftly, and emerge to be mostly with regards to others' engagements rather than those of the self, marking religious engagements as social(/exterior) rather than individual(/interior) to regulate *belonging* rather than *being*. Locals' religious engagements then both situate them (as hegemonic subjects) in the Sunni-Turkish hegemony through their outward pieties and open up a space of freedom to manoeuvre through in other aspects of life, e.g. economy or politics.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I argued that engagements with religion become a site through which the tension between locals' contemporary engagements and their socio-historical background generates a particular modality of Islamic practice and sociality. Rather than producing a definitive, orthodox, and conventional practice around the Islamic identity, these engagements can be characterised as navigation across the conjunction of these historical trajectories and local men's

current engagements and aspirations through accommodating their distinct customs and heritage.

These engagements are in flux and expectedly take new forms in relation to wider socio-political changes, as we witness in contemporary Turkey. Religion's significance in individuals' life and how the public is organised differ in relation to these changes. Considering this fluidity, it should be remembered that subjectivities are far from being complete and stable, and they are incessantly altered in close connection to other aspects of life. It is also always fragmented and multi-dimensional, informed by subjects' multiple engagements, including but not limited to economy and politics. As Gregory Simon also indicates, "[s]ubjectivity is formed not within a single ideological line, in the practice of a single ritual [as in *namaz*]—other ideas, other ways of experiencing the self come into play as well."<sup>600</sup> Religion is not devoid of these influences that ultimately affect how subjects engage with its elements. Islamic practices of these men and pieties they induce, then, should be taken as a tangible way of weaving subjectivities through manoeuvring among different domains of life and the tension among them: peculiar forms Islam takes in the Turkish context, political developments, local customs and historicities of the Valley, socio-cultural heritage of the community, and contemporary engagements of local men with regards to their participation in the state project. Subjectivities, hence, emerge out of these ongoing reiterations that both situate local men within communities as faithful Muslim subjects and also instigate a domain of freedom within which subjects can manoeuvre in line with their wider engagements in life, highlighting the both the contingency and the resilience of the normative order.

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<sup>600</sup> Simon, *Caged in on the Outside*, p. 186.

## CHAPTER XI

### IN PURSUIT OF TURKISHNESS

This dissertation explored the case of the Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon to investigate the processes through which Turkish subjectivities are generated. Focusing on everyday encounters, practices, and narratives, I examined different registers of subject formation by which my interlocutors constructed, reiterated, and attained Turkishness and demonstrated different modalities of being, belonging, and remembering. The dissertation is the first ethnographic research into these Romeika-speaking communities. As Romeika is an endangered language that might be extinct in the foreseeable future, registering its situatedness in the socio-cultural life of my interlocutors proved to be a compelling mission.<sup>601</sup> Throughout the preceding chapters, I have tried to demonstrate how Romeika informed locals' relations to themselves, each other, the places they dwell in, and the past. Yet, rather than viewing Romeika as a reflection of locals' essential Greek identity, which I reject as a reasoning that is defined by nationalist imaginaries, I traced Romeika to comprehend how it is embedded in local socialities through continuities and discontinuities. Thus, Romeika emerged as the primary object of this analysis of Turkishness, which gradually led me to explore other aspects of local socialities and subjectivities to do justice to their diverse range.

This research and analysis aims to contribute to the wider understanding of contemporary Turkey. Firstly, it problematises the prevalent use of Turkish(ness) as a coherent and holistic identity and urges us to attend to the

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<sup>601</sup> I cannot help but self-critically note traces of what James Clifford pertinently criticises as "salvage ethnography" in my approach:

I question, too, the mode of scientific and moral authority associated with salvage, or redemptive, ethnography. It is assumed that the other society is weak and "needs" to be represented by an outsider (and that what matters in its life is its past, not present or future). The recorder and interpreter of fragile custom is custodian of an essence, unimpeachable witness to an authenticity. (Moreover, since the "true" culture has always vanished, the salvaged version cannot be easily refuted.) ("On Ethnographic Allegory," p. 112 - 113.)

What I want to accomplish, expectedly, is not such a colonising endeavour to preserve a fading culture, but offer a glimpse into the social implications of this relatively unstudied socio-cultural practice.

heterogeneous ways it is enacted in diverse socio-cultural settings. Informed by the intriguing absence of scholarly analyses of how Turkish subjectivities are constructed in concrete settings, in this sense, pursuing Turkishness in everyday encounters emerges both as a motivation for and object of this research. As a second point, I can underline the unique and relatively unexamined status of Romeika, which, prior to this research, had never been analysed in its socio-cultural dimensions. Overall absent from the literature, Romeika has been studied only in the last decade and solely through its linguistic characteristics by a handful of academics. Through providing an analysis of how Romeika is implicated in the socio-cultural composition of Turkish nationalist communities in Trabzon and engaging with this discreet element of local socialities, this research contributes to scholarly literature not only to get a better grasp of diverse ways in which Turkishness is constructed, but also to ethnographically explore how Romeika is situated in local social life.

Thirdly, this research offers insights with regards to how we might comprehend post-1980 Turkey, which produced divergent positions across socio-political fault lines, constituting both the setting and material of this analysis. Although the period witnessed the shattering of the Republican uniformist public sphere, the emergence and prevalence of memories were not experienced in the same manner and generated different implications across the society. While non-hegemonic groups, such as Kurds or Armenians, utilised past experiences to substantiate their contemporary socio-political paths, the Turkish response overall negated and/or neglected such endeavours. Moreover, as I discussed throughout this dissertation, new socio-political positions for the Turkish self were derived out of these discourses as the Turkish subject is configured as unwounded and sovereign. This research, therefore, also illustrates this intriguing way in which Turkish subjects engage with distinct collective memories while upholding the hegemony of Turkish nationalism and nationalist historiography.

In line with my primary objective to pursue processes of subject formation, these three issues were engaged with in successive analytic chapters. These chapters

primarily demonstrate multiple and different ways in which Turkishness as an identity is attained, while simultaneously exploring how Romeika is peculiarly implicated in socialities and deciphering other modalities of remembrance. A particular object of this analysis eventually turned out to be Turkish male Muslim subjects who embrace a nationalist-statist ideology and profess state-sanctioned (Sunni) Islam.

Chapter VI, as a beginning, dealt with how Romeika as a socio-cultural distinction is navigated by local men and women in relation to their alignment with Turkish nationalism and identity. There, I argued that only through a distancing from Romeika and embracing of Turkish could men attain Turkishness as an identity, which I traced through the (communal) privacy of Romeika. Relatedly, Chapter VII explored how the discreet status of Romeika generates treasure hunts as corporeal and narrative engagements with unaccounted collective memories without necessitating a public confrontation with the national(ist) history. These two chapters primarily traced Romeika across socialities to chart its socio-cultural implications for subjectivities. Additionally, though, they also demonstrated how Turkishness was forged out of such distinctions as a homogenous identity in public through different manoeuvres and illustrated other modalities of remembrance for subjects that align themselves with the nationalist-statist ideology.

Chapters VIII and IX then tracked Turkish subjectivities in their gendered forms with a focus on masculinities. Following local men in their daily commutes between villages and the town centre, I demonstrated how subjectivities are configured through spatialities, the state, and gendered reiterations. I also argued how their conspiratorial enunciations should be thought alongside state practices and discourses, since these practices and discourses required us to consider a multitude of socio-political factors in the constitution of subjectivities. Both chapters investigated how (masculine) Turkish subjectivities are constituted in relation to materialities of the state, masculine composition of the public, convergences, spaces, utterances, and narratives in seemingly mundane and everyday settings. They also traced how Romeika is situated in these

encounters, postulated as a masculine preference for Turkish (in public) at the expense of Romeika. Constituting the last pillar of the analysis, in Chapter X, I discussed how peculiarities of local religious engagements configure practices of piety and generate local Turkish subjects that belong to the hegemonic (Sunni) Islamic community. Informed deeply by the local tradition of religious seminaries and through engaging with the memories of conversion and Romeika in idiosyncratic ways, I claimed, these practices of piety both instantiate a new modality of remembrance and inform subjectivities.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that Turkishness as an identity should not be conceived as a homogeneous category within which state practices and discourses are uniformly applied and appropriated by different sections of the society. Rather, Turkishness emerges as a constellation of diverse experiences, discourses, reminiscences, disarticulation, tensions, materialities, rituals, corporealities, enunciations, and practices that take distinct forms in different settings. Each such local variant is constructed via multiple negotiations, alterations, and manoeuvres through which socio-cultural distinctions are managed and accommodated in different manners in close connection to local socio-cultural, politico-economic, and historical alignments. Going beyond state-centred analyses, then, this dissertation invites us to attend to how Turkishness is forged through diverse processes and takes peculiar forms in such different socio-cultural and politico-historical settings, which range from the invisibility of Romeika to treasure hunts, or from religious practices as aestheticized reiterations to conspiratorial enunciations, in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon.

## **Implications**

### *Turkishness*

As most scholarly analyses in Turkey focus on marginalised and subaltern communities, Turkish subjectivity has rarely been examined, leading to the articulation of Turkishness as an elusive and yet permeating phenomenon. Even

when it is studied, Turkishness is either traced as a national, overarching, homogeneous, and coherent entity or viewed solely through the enactments of the state as an autonomous thing-in-itself. Scholarship on Turkey, in this sense, has either engaged with a state-centred approach, which pertinently explored state practices to decipher the constructed nature of the “homogenous” nation or focused on margins and resistances that challenged these homogenising state policies. How Turkishness is reproduced through everyday encounters that include but are not limited to state technologies and policies, in this sense, was significantly lacking. Moreover, how certain communities developed local and ambivalent modalities of Turkishness was never addressed. How socio-cultural distinctions might not necessarily pave the way for resistance but indeed are accommodated within the contours of Turkishness in particular forms, similarly, was to be studied. As a contribution to the understanding of Turkish society, this dissertation explored different modalities of subject formation through the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon.

This thesis demonstrates that Turkishness should be articulated as a constellation of multiple, ever-changing, reiterative, and heterogeneous experiences that are forged alongside modern-nationalist imaginaries.<sup>602</sup> Rather than assuming one homogeneous and coherent category, Turkishness presents territorialised, local, porous, and culturally-distinct modalities of being, belonging, and remembering. Through attending to local histories and socio-cultural practices, I argued that these localised renderings of Turkishness are engendered as fragmented assemblages that attain the idealised version through reiterations in different domains of life, ranging from gender to nationalism, or from religion to state practices. I also paid particular attention to the way distinctions are treated in this configuration, since the analysis of Romeika illustrates how non-Turkish aspects of socio-cultural structure, “distinctions,” are accommodated in different forms and modes. Hence, rather than assuming the same pattern of Turkishness in different socio-cultural settings, this research

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<sup>602</sup> My argument here diverges from the one put forward by Navaro-Yashin, that is, “‘Turkish culture,’ as such, does not exist” (Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, p. 10.) as I explore the heterogeneity of experiences for those communities that identify with Turkishness.



underlines the importance of considering how these local distinctions are related and integrated into local forms of Turkishness (*Türklükler*).

Turkish nationalism posits uniformity and homogeneity across the national geography, within which Turkish communities are conceived solely through the absence of distinct characteristics that could set them apart from the idea of Turkishness. Turks, within this conception, emerge as those who form the majority of the population and are not marked by a difference, i.e. they do not speak Kurdish or Armenian, or they are not Christian. The analysis of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, however, presents us with encounters that go against such national(ist) claims for homogeneity, uniformity, or un-distinctness. Romeika emerges as a crystallisation of such heterogeneities through which supposedly exclusive categories, Turkishness and Greekness, are brought together to defy nationalist matrixes.<sup>603</sup> The perseverance of Romeika, then, produces two implications, one relating to the local setting and the other for the wider understanding of Turkishness. With regards to the local context, Romeika illustrates the complexity of socio-cultural and politico-historical trajectories through which contemporary selves and socialities are forged for communities that are aligned with Turkish nationalist-statist ideology. Romeika and what it stands for within the modern-nationalist matrix, in this sense, are deeply enmeshed in local socialities and subjectivities through inducing discretion, abjection, distancing, or anxieties.

With regards to the wider articulations of Turkishness, findings of this research underscore the very heterogeneity and fragmentation in local settings vis-à-vis the pretence of homogeneity and coherence of the nationalist ideology. The Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, in this sense, constitute an example through which Turkishness is not only forged out of diverse and heterogeneous experiences, but also it still co-exists with these experiences side by side, albeit in different forms. The strength of the uniform Turkish nationalistic outlook and discourses, hence, should not automatically lead us to conclude that all non-conforming elements were renounced or forgotten in favour of Turkishness. We

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<sup>603</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 31.

should attend to the ways in which Turkishness is reconciled with, and indeed generates, these other modalities of existence for non-conforming elements, as in the “discreet” status of Romeika and treasure hunts. Hence, Turkishness as an ideal identity should not lead us to assume a complete and homogeneous process.

### *Memory*

Another contribution of this dissertation was to point out other modalities of remembrance that are not articulated and represented in conventional terms. Even though post-1980 Turkey witnessed narratives about past sufferings of non-Turkish communities and subjects, Turkish subjects’ attitude to memories were, as I described earlier, characterised by disinterest and non-remembrance. Extending the argument further, I explore how this non-articulation of memories in narrative forms does not necessarily mean that collective memories are forgotten altogether for the sake of a homogenous history of the nation. Rather, as I traced in cases of Romeika, treasure hunts, and memories of conversion, the past is engaged with and accommodated in the present in different forms. Romeika, for instance, emerges as a “discreet” practice that infuses socialities across the Valley; hence, it can be highlighted as an aspect of collective memory that is preserved even though it cannot be accommodated within the matrix of nationalist identities. Similarly, I argued that treasure hunts could be traced as corporeal and narrative engagements with the past, through which local distinctions are kept alive in material and spatial forms. Memories of conversion, as well, can be pursued across family genealogies, buildings, and local socio-cultural practices that withstood the erasures of modernisation and homogenisation.

What I suggest through these explorations, in this sense, reminds us of the importance of attending to other modalities of remembrance in seemingly mundane and trivial practices and narratives. Moreover, as these practices might

also take discreet and elusive forms, as in Romeika, their detection and subsequent analysis require us to familiarise ourselves with the context to be able to see peculiar forms they take across practices and narratives, as I discussed through the case of treasure hunts. Both with regards to the public (in)visibility of Romeika and the enchantment of the places locals dwell in, paying close attention to the peculiar configuration of practices of remembrance, in this sense, might provide us with alternative forms memories can take.

### *Belief*

Analysis of local religiosities constitutes another aspect of the contribution of this research into the wider understanding of pious subjectivities and belief. Exploring the implications of religious practices primarily as aestheticised reiterations that induct the practitioner as a member of the community (of the faithful), subjects' relations to the norms, which these practices either emanate from or are supposed to induce, cannot be conceived solely through an automatic causality within which practices of piety re-align the self with the normative imperatives, thus fabricating moral-ethical selves. Rather, as I demonstrate in Chapter X, religiosities and practices they prescribe might also be understood as paths of subjectivation through which pious subjects are instantiated in relation to much wider socio-political trajectories, local customs, collective memories, cultural dispositions, gender, and economic possibilities. Thus, the convergence of such diverse factors should always be thought alongside pieties and ethics, while also remaining attuned to the possibility of a modality of piety that is un-linked from ethics-normativity.

Additionally, my analysis of local pieties also relates to conventional articulations of belief as a quality that is interior to the self. I argued that belief should not solely be conceptualised to be either the effect or instigator of practices of piety, but it can be tracked in materialities, spatialities, utterances, presences, corporealities, and transactions—all of the entities that are exterior to the pious subject. Neither belief nor worship, in this sense, necessarily and inevitably corresponds to engagements with the norms religions preach, but

they might act merely as paths for subjects to be generated and situated in communal networks as believers. These instances highlight the possibility of different modalities of engagement with norms and pieties, which can simultaneously consolidate and vacate normative imperatives, all without radically challenging the normative order.

### *State*

This research also demonstrates how the state and state practices materialise in concrete settings. Rather than tracing the state solely through its monopolisation of legitimate violence, I suggested that it is also important to pay attention to the mundane practices (such as commutes, producing documents, or watching the news), materialities (as in state offices and road networks), presences (gatherings in the town centre), and narratives (as in conspiratorial enunciations) to comprehend the new forms of state practices and the subjectivities they generate. In spite of its ephemeral and illusory composition, the state, in this sense, can also be traced in everyday encounters between subjects, to detect how new subjectivities that reify and embody the state are engendered. These new practices, ranging from lynching of “subversive” bodies to surveillance by civilians, illustrate how analyses of the state cannot be limited to a tracing of institutional policies and discourses, but should also attend to how they are co-constituted by non-state practices and narratives.

### **Reflections on Limits**

#### *Authorial Position*

Even though my goal since the beginning of this research has been to present an analysis of socialities in the Valley mainly through knowledge generated in and through local encounters, it is still necessary for me as a researcher to subjectively situate myself in the analysis and reflect on the way these

encounters are chosen, depicted, and analysed. The juxtaposition of certain local phenomena, as in the case of Romeika and treasure hunts, inherently reveals a subjective orientation within which I became involved in the way local socialities are collaged and interpreted. It is evident that locals, or any other reader for that matter, might not always agree with my way of bringing these aspects together and derive such conclusions from these juxtapositions. As Clifford rightly underlines, “ethnographers cannot fully control the meanings—readings—provoked by their accounts.”<sup>604</sup> This possibility of difference in the way we comprehend the social world further generates an interpretative challenge through which the research is burdened to find a delicate balance between merely presenting “facts” from the “field” and taking the risk of interpreting local socialities as an outsider. Rather than as two separate practices, the research process, I believe, always involves both of these endeavours as even what we experience as surprises or what we feel strange—what we think should not stand together—deeply informs our research design and analysis. Researchers, in this sense, through being the authors of analyses, are always implicated in the way socialities are presented and analysed.

My experiences since the beginning of this research have presented many such dilemmas, informing both the formulation of the research questions throughout the project and the analysis of the “inconsistencies” I observed. Through intensive discussion with supervisors and colleagues with whom I shared my preliminary analyses, I tried to find a balance to address this problem that is not only embedded in the particularity of anthropological endeavours (within which a researcher-outsider with a particular worldview embarks on a journey to write about communities and socialities that do not necessarily adhere to the same “regime of truth”), but also results from the very idiosyncrasy and complexity of the social life that I engaged with. My initial puzzlement with pieties in the Valley, for instance, constitutes a clear illustration of such complexities, comprehension of which necessitated a profound re-orientation of my own assumptions about piety, belief, agency, and ethics. As I failed to account for patterns I observed and participated in through conventional articulations of

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<sup>604</sup> Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” p. 110.

subjectivity, religiosity, and ethics, I was forced to adjust my perspective and stretch concepts to accommodate potentialities that were offered through these complexities. Through moving “back and forth” between different registers to grasp and represent the complexity of social experiences, I also rendered my own experiences, failures, and struggles part of this analysis. Although I attempted to present a coherent narrative in line with the academic requirements of universities as disciplining institutions,<sup>605</sup> this structural tension, ambiguity, and complexity of social phenomena are inevitably still present in the text, reflecting both the laborious process of grappling with the data and the incessant disruption of my attempts to produce a homogeneous account.

### *Gendered Limits*

Gender emerges as a second point to think through the limits of this research. Although the original research design was much more limited in scope as it did not envision any possibility of interaction with local women, the research process proved to be much more dynamic and open to negotiations. Although I met many local women from different walks of life in clear contrast to my initial expectations, women still constitute a minority of my interlocutors and hence of this analysis. As the research moves across different aspects of local socialities, masculinities preserve their position as the primary object of analysis for a number of reasons, ranging from the strength of patriarchal separation of sexes to my own gendered status as a young unmarried man within this setting. Even though I did my best to reach out to local women to include their voices and experiences in the analysis as well, this endeavour was hindered by a number of factors. Firstly, my initiatives to establish regular contact with local women with or without the supervision of others would always be frowned upon and cause distress to women with regards to the codes of honour and decency. Many of my encounters in mixed gender settings required discretion to avoid any negative repercussions for women. Moreover, because of the relative isolation and privacy of village settlements, estates and houses emerge as private spaces

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<sup>605</sup> Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” p. 109.

where women of the family do the menial work. This particular configuration of everyday life for women means that they are overall occupied by these duties during the day. Intrusions into such spaces where women work are also not welcomed as it goes against the honour and autonomy of the family and men of the house.

What emerged as a constrictive effect of patriarchal relations, though, turned into something productive as it allowed me to focus on masculinities and how certain local practices and discourses were configured in a peculiar manner across genders. Men's relations to Romeika appeared to be quite different from those of women, as I discussed in Chapter VI, for instance, in addition to their circulation of conspiratorial narratives or quests for treasures. This particular limitation and my subsequent focus on masculine subjectivities, in this sense, should not be seen solely as an absence of other social actors—women and children—from the analysis, but it might also be interpreted as an opportunity through which homo-social encounters among men are scrutinised much more closely. As masculinities in the Turkish context are widely neglected in favour of an abstract category of (Turkish) citizenship, this endeavour, in turn, contributes to the wider understanding of masculinities since it examines how masculine subjects are intimately and mundanely produced in everyday encounters. In line with my general objective to scrutinise non-subaltern subjects, as well, this focus on men produces an account of how sovereign and compliant subjects are generated through these trivial engagements.

### **What can be Explored Further?**

As my observations were overall limited to masculine socialities because of my gender and the strength of patriarchal principles, how women go through different subjectivation processes emerges as one of the primary areas that can be investigated further. As I also hinted in Chapter VI, women's relations to Romeika might present radically different experiences owing to the gendered differentiation of public and private practices and roles within Turkishness. The same point can be repeated with regards to their relations to statist-nationalist

discourses and conspiratorial narratives as well since they are mostly operationalised through male bodies. Thus, how women perceive, recount, participate in, and relate to these phenomena might produce other accounts through which we can comprehend processes of subject formation for women.

Conspiracies emerge as another aspect that I believe might be productive to pursue through other projects because of their prevalence and significance not only in contemporary Turkey but in other contexts as well. Rather than simply dismissing them as senseless accounts of those who fail to cope with the immense change they face in a global world, conspiracies might indeed offer us keys to comprehend how new forms of politics and socialities operate. Especially relevant to current discussions around whether we live in a “post-truth” epoch,<sup>606</sup> conspiracies might provide us with productive tracks to think of subjects, narratives, truth, and collectivities in a different manner.

In a similar vein, I would suggest that treasure hunts would be another productive theme to pursue academically as they might present us with previously unthought modalities of reminiscence through which banished collective memories are corporeally and narratively engaged and accounted for. Although they are generally dismissed as folk myths that destructively seek out material riches across landscapes, I believe the study of treasure hunts might be immensely productive if they are thought alongside the impasses and erasures of modern identities and what they fail to accommodate in the present, reminding us of the different forms the reminiscences might take.

As a last point, I raise the possibility of thinking Islamic religiosities in a modern world through aestheticised reiterations and exteriorised forms in everyday settings, not solely through the piety-secularism binary. Forcing us to attend to the particular ways norms are related, I urge future researchers to pay attention to materialities, presences, corporealities, movements, utterances, and transactions as sites of pieties within which religious selves are instantiated.

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<sup>606</sup> One such article to exemplify numerous others: William Davies, “The Age of Post-Truth Politics,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2016. “Post-truth” was also chosen to be the word of 2016 by Oxford Dictionaries.



This ambiguous amalgamation of the sacred and the profane, or of the routine and the particular, seems to have a potential that might have a lot to tell about the formation of pious selves.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As this analysis deciphers “intimate and inner workings of culturally and historically distinct”<sup>607</sup> aspects of Turkishness, I hope that it sheds some light on how Turkish subjectivities are constituted and reproduced in a context that is increasingly plagued by political and physical violence. Especially relevant with regards to the contemporary state of society, politics, reconciliation, truth, law, and peace not only in the Turkish context but in many other settings as well, this dissertation might offer some insights for a better and just organisation of our social lives by inviting the reader to attend to the ways in which non-subaltern subjectivities are generated, interpellated, and reproduced. Highlighting “the possibility of a radical rearticulation of the entire symbolic field by means of an act proper,”<sup>608</sup> the experiences of Romeika-speaking communities illustrate how subjects are hailed by ideologies and demonstrate that the very terms through which we conceive our modalities of being, belonging, and remembering are always contingent and inherently generate possibilities of change and subversion. An ethical and structural re-ordering of the way we conceive ourselves is, hence, both possible and much needed.

Failing to recognise these differences in the way communities and subjects attain Turkishness, relatedly, might be connected to the tragic failure of peace and reconciliation processes, in Turkey or elsewhere, which conventionally presume that revelations of truth are to instantiate a just re-organisation of societal structure. Testimonies, memorials, truth and reconciliation commissions are the products of such socio-political and theoretical leanings within which the truth is conceived to be a major catalyst for the emergence of a fairer and more peaceful social organisation. Although I also unreservedly view justice and truth as

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<sup>607</sup> Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” p. 275.

<sup>608</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “From ‘Passionate Attachments’ to Dis-Identification,” *Umbr(a)*, Vol. 1, 1998, p. 5.

precious and fair objectives to attain, this dissertation demonstrated how such attempts do not always produce their desired result as the truth might have other meanings and modes that do not necessarily overlap with what we conventionally conceive it to be, that is, the complicity of facts and claims, as we see in contemporary discussions around the (post-)truth. Similarly, conceptions of justice seem to have evolved to encompass new attributes, as older universalist conceptions are abandoned in favour of new understandings within which “winning is all that matters and who wins —by whatever means necessary— is ultimately right.”<sup>609</sup> Changing dynamics of political discourses in almost all corners of the world, I believe, necessitate the formulation of new tools to trace ethics, truth, and resistance—if one is still committed to a just and ethical life. One of the preconditions of this change, undoubtedly, is to first comprehend the ways in which these new forms are generated and operate. This research, I hope, will help us in this endeavour.

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<sup>609</sup> Achille Mbembe, “The Age of Humanism is Ending,” *Mail and Guardian*, December 22, 2016.

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## APPENDIX A – SSHP ETHICS REVIEW APPROVAL SHEET

Date of submission: 21.7.2014

Investigator: Erol Saglam

Reference: 2014-25

Title of Project: **'Dynamics of identity and subjectivity in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon'**

Dear Erol,

The School of Social Sciences History and Philosophy Ethics Committee has scrutinised this proposal and has given it ethical approval.

Please keep this message as official record of the approval for future reference. We will be happy to provide a formal letter of approval upon request.

The reviewer of the proposal had some further comments for transmission back to you – they are copied below, but are observations only, not requests for changes to the project.

Good luck with the research.

Regards,

Dan Alexander

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\* Cont. - (April 4-5)

(K) - He & I talked about how I ~~was~~ while working in the uni. flew to Ankara to tutor ~~me~~ for his exam on computer.

(Me) - In the next, ~~me~~ talked extensively on his travels in 1980s/1990s for conferences (environment conf. etc) He said, as soon as ~~me~~ he arrives, he'd wish for a stand ~~from~~ from the organizers and put all the local produces he brought with him, like hazelnuts and stuff. On the stand, he'd also put a flag and a portrait of Atatürk to stay there throughout the conference.

In one of them, in Portugal, he was staying in a tent with ~~left~~ nationals. He, even though there was no place within the tent, found a spot by the tree and put flag & Atatürk's portrait on the tree and strings of the tent.

(Ar) As soon as he put the flag and the portrait, Ar.m.s.,  
(N) Gr. Cypriots and Kurds were hostile to him. Then,  
(R) however, Macedonians, Bulgarians (?), Kosovans, Albanians etc. came around him & said they support him. They were always around him, especially 2 body building Macedonians, throughout the conference. They were like his bodyguards.

All these lobbies (of Ar.m.s., Gr.s, Kurds) were really hostile to him & stuff so he complained to the org committee & they told these lobbies to stay calm & stuff.

They had a really nice last ~~night~~ night ~~at the~~ that was themed "Turkish night" and with the help of these (Macedonians Albanians etc) it was really joyful and successful.

mv  
⑤ Another illustration of state fantasy. Plus, almost like they were my subjects enactment, - like the Ott. State. A personalized and relevant.

① - The man (of ) was telling me stories about her life in the village & used lots of R words which explained to me.

arpatrop - bear hole  
apathera - father stone/rock  
tadi - bride's maid.

She also recited a small line about Martin Dagi.  
"Her dağlar taşta olma / Kasabın kuyak olma." ②

- Then we went to Vatan Party, preliminary election to determine the candidate lists. as Refik was a member.

③ Listened chats of with others. One candidate, obviously the leading one was, was from

④ Chat btw a Machali. Machali was asking guests to " " & asked what he was doing. said he was "abroad" and new B & member. Then another asked "in Germany?" then ~~the other~~ Refik reluctantly said "Greece"

mv He didn't want to say it!

Machali uncle asked a number of questions and was a bit skeptical.





for something like that. " Upon hearing this, the Imam said " Even if you give 1000 (?) alman ag. " In the mosque.

(S)  
(Re) told this experience to others, one of which warned the Imam, and Imam again had an argument & even a physical fight with           . Then            complained to the Mifta and Mifta was repatriated towards the Imam yet (through his connections) the Imam managed to get Mifta exiled. Anyway, he returned a few years later.

(L) wants me to go to Sneh and visit Imams to expose them & their idleness.

(Me)  
(Re) I asked him ~~who~~ who gave him his name. He said his name was originally            (2) & when he was visiting somewhere (            ) he heard lots of             & decided to change his name. Plus, his family name was            but their surnames were            so he changed that too. He said both            &            are ~~the~~ names close to Alevis and he likes Alevis a lot and tell them: "I am not Alevi but Alevis are of me (benderdar)" meaning, in his words the relationship of the Prophet to Arabs:  "I am not Arab but Arabs are of me."

(Ax)  
(R)  
PPP  
9 9 B  
- Chat b/w Masqali,            &            talked about how G's ~~live~~ work & live while T's live to work & how the former enjoys his life & stuff. Then            asked: "Then, why don't we live like our ancestors?"            was silent and Masqali thought: "It's            as ancestors and said "our ancestors are the same, they also worked a lot" and stuff. But when



(Ax)  
(R)

said something again, ... said "why aren't we like  
like our ancestors?" And he turned to Masha and  
said "we're of 'Ru.s. (big . dan gelneyiz.) why  
aren't we like them now?" Masha was a bit  
surprised and didn't comment.

mv

Repeated assertion! The first time in public. I had  
said sth "our genes are ..." but not in pub.  
And it is also compromised with our presence at  
Vatan Party where a bookstand displayed books on  
Arm. Issue, Kurd. Issue, how America tried to do this  
and that. Werdent analgan ever?

I promised to call ... in a few days.

- Walked back to the bus. Stopped by Logoptu of.  
Caught 16.20 bus. to ... Picked the key of repair shop  
of ... as ... I had left his car there to be  
fixed, in of

On the way ... talked about local traditions.

(R)  
(Co)

Two tadis (bridesmaid), one from girl's & one from boy's  
side, guide the bride, as her face is covered with pe.  
From the girl's house, tadi of boy's side, steals sth and  
shows it off in front of the house. The same thing  
happens at boy's house too.

He talked about a bird that emerges in spring and  
with a sound - ku ku - to which people  
respond with tu dr.

After a while ... explained that as tadis guide  
the bride when she is blind and since no one  
saw (?) ku ku bird, tadis must be the