

**Between Central State and Local Society. The People's
Houses Institution and the Domestication of Reform in
Turkey (1932 - 1951)**

PROEFSCHRIF

ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. P.F. van der Heijden,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op woensdag 18 november 2009
klokke 13:45 uur

door

Alexandros Lamprou

geboren te Athene
In 1976

PROMOTIECOMMISSIE

Promotor: Prof. dr. Erik-Jan Zürcher

Overige Leden:

Prof. dr. François Georgeon (CNRS, Paris)

Prof. dr. Lex Heerma van Voss (International Institute of social
History, Amsterdam)

Prof. dr. Turaj Atabaki

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank the State Scholarship Foundation of Greece (IKY) for providing the financial means to conduct my doctoral research. I would also like to thank the Administration and personnel of the State Archives of the Turkish Republic in Ankara where the bulk of the research for this dissertation took place. Their assistance and professionalism deserve to be mentioned here. I would also like to thank the personnel of the library of the Turkish National Assembly and the Turkish National library in Ankara, the Beyazit and Atatürk libraries in Istanbul, as well as the libraries of the Leiden University and the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

I also feel the obligation and pleasure to thank my friends and colleagues in the Netherlands, Turkey and Greece. It was their support, hospitality and friendship that made the writing of this dissertation possible:

Ulus Baker (1960 - 2006),

İbrahim Oluklu, Yiannis Bonos, Özgür Gökmen, Yiannis Moutsis Süha Ünsal, Aydın Ayhan Özhan Önder, Nikos Sigalas, Umut Azak, Demet Varlı İsmail Hakkı Kadı, Evşen Yeşert Akçay, Tryfon Babilis, Leo Moiras, Nikos Christofis, Sertaç Erten, Ekrem Balıbek (Yeni Haber Gazetesi, Balıkesir), Anıl Çeçen, Mustafa Durak, Faruk Tuncay, Tansu Açık, Koutsoukos Vasilis, Özge Çelikaşlan, Zeki Özalay, Yakup Şahan, Mehmet Şahin, Yakup Özkül, Bülent Varlık, Tolis Papaioannou.

Yiannis Bonos, Özgür Gökmen, Yiannis Moutsis read and commented on some draft chapters. Aydın Ayhan provided me with rare newspaper clips from local newspapers of Balıkesir. Demet Varlı translated the summary to Dutch.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends Georgios Loukas, Lazaros Kazias, and Dimitris Kouklakis for providing me with the necessary financial assistance to cover the expenses of the PhD defense and ceremony.

Introduction

This thesis aspires to contribute to the study of change instigated by social engineering projects that were devised and executed by state elites upon targeted populations mainly through the state apparatus. These moments of social change flourished in the 19th and 20th centuries in non-western and (post)colonial environments under the catchwords of ‘progress’, ‘modernization’, nationalism and similar ideas, and have been heavily studied since the 1950s within the modernization paradigm and dependency theory. Focusing on the Turkish case of social engineering in the 1930s and 1940s, the ambition of this thesis is to study such moments of change from an alternative to and critical of the above frameworks perspective.

The need to study the ‘Turkish modernization’ from alternative perspectives has its origins in the growing dissatisfaction with the way this reform project has been viewed and studied hitherto. The bulk of the literature still chooses to study the Kemalist reform movement from a macro perspective, as a top-down project rather than a process of social change. This macro perspective is parallel to the literature’s dependency on dualisms such as state/society or centre/periphery, which conspicuously resemble the bipolar terms with which the ‘modernizing’ ruling elite chose to define and represent itself and its enemies. It has been a common critique in recent works that the literature on the ‘Turkish Revolution’ does not leave room for the study of the ‘everyday’, ‘micro aspects of social change’ or the ‘life-worlds’ of social subjects;¹ that it rarely takes into focus local social and cultural contexts, the “local specificities of modernity”, or reflects on issues related to the shaping of social identities, “the emergence of new identities and new forms of subjectivity”;² that it fails “to note those spaces where fact and fiction have met, where the project of modernity and those outside its walls have intersected and transformed one another.”³

The ambition of this thesis is to reply to these critiques and their request for alternative perspectives that would attempt to move beyond and problematize prevailing dualisms while studying such an instance of social change as a process that involved myriad moments of interplay between the reforms introduced by the ruling elite and their enactment and consumption by social subjects in concrete social settings, within local societies and power networks. My aim is to trace and situate the process of social change at the local level, within spaces where facts and fiction meet, and to study how social

¹ Şerif Mardin, “Projects as Methodology: Some Thoughts on Modern Turkish Social Science”, in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 72- 74.

² Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern. On Missing Dimensions in the Study of the Turkish Modernity”, in Bozdoğan and Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity*, pp. 113.

³ Joel S. Migdal, “Finding the Meeting Ground of Fact and Fiction. Some Reflections on Turkish Modernization”, in Bozdoğan and Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity*, p. 255.

actors made sense and use of the products of the project of social engineering. The broader context of this thesis can thus be defined as the social reform project written by the ruling elite, enforced and propagated mainly through the state and bureaucratic apparatus in the 1930s and 1940s in Turkey. The aim is not to assess the (extent of the) ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of such projects of social mechanics, but to study how actors ‘coped’ with change, how this ‘coping’ intersects and interrelates with power relations, local social and cultural contexts, and, ultimately, what this ‘coping’ entails in terms of the production of practices, discourses and representations by social agents, what it might mean in relation to the shaping of social identities, personal and collective, to the “emergence of new forms of subjectivity”.⁴

Within the limited framework of this thesis these issues are addressed by focusing on the People’s House, an institution that was created in 1932 with the direct aim to propagate the reforms to their targets, the population of Turkey, through the circulation, application and enactment of a variety of ‘modern’ practices, discourses and activities.

The study of the ‘Turkish Modernization’ and its discontents.

The political and social reform movement carried out in the early republican period has been extensively studied since the 1950s within the wider framework of modernization theory. Daniel Lerner’s *Passing of Traditional Society* and Bernard Lewis’ *Emergence of Modern Turkey* have been considered classic in that respect. Since then the modernization paradigm of the 1950s and 60s within which these two books emerged has attracted various critiques.⁵ These works have been extensively criticized for their institutional, legalistic and macro-level analysis and approach inherent in the modernization paradigm works on the study of Turkey. Similar arguments have been raised in relation to Marxist (or Marxisan) interpretations of the ‘Turkish revolution’, mostly current in the 1970s.⁶

With its emphasis on elites and institutional structures and change, the above literature tends to favor one actor of change, ‘the state’, and view the

⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern”, pp. 113.

⁵ For a critique of modernization theory see Dean Tipps, “Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 15, (March 1973). For a critique of Lewis’ book in relation to the literature on Turkey since its publication see Erik Jan Zürcher, “The rise and Fall of ‘Modern’ Turkey”, in <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/cimo/tulp/Research/Lewis.htm>.

⁶ Şerif Mardin, “Projects as Methodology: Some Thoughts on Modern Turkish Social Science”, in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 64. For a compact presentation of the two approaches/paradigms (modernization and dependency theory) see Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue, “State power and social forces: on political contention and accommodation in the Third World”, in Joel Migdal, Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue (eds), *State Power and Social Forces. Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 295 – 301. See also Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı. Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik* (İstanbul: Metis, 2005), p. 35.

social change only as a top-down process. In this sense, (a rather vague notion of) ‘society’ or (more concrete) social actors emerge solely as the recipients of change that can only accept or reject the prescribed order in its totality, being labeled as ‘Kemalist’ or ‘reactionary’, ‘modern’ or ‘backward’. This stance does not allow for human agency in interaction with the imposed order.

A corollary assumption is that of an uncritical and unproblematic view of a given, substantialised, a priori and omnipotent state in oppositional terms with a similarly undifferentiated, set, static and resistant society, with both parts engaged in a one-way, top-down relation between a purposeful subject with power to enforce its will, and a mute and occasionally resisting object. A clear-cut border is imagined dividing ‘the state’ from ‘society’, where the state stands for a unitary, monolithic apparatus or centre. This perspective results in an overestimation of the role, power and domination of an omniscient and omnipotent state over a passive society.

This standpoint is evident in studies within the ‘modernization paradigm’ but also in more recent works with a ‘statist’ inclination. Metin Heper’s viewing of state officials as a tight, homogenous and undifferentiated corpus of men with similar background is characteristic of this trend. The ‘state tradition’ stance claims that “the Turkish Republic seems to have inherited from the Ottoman Empire a strong state and a weak civil society”, and that there is “a tradition of a strong state and a weak periphery”. This approach differentiates between a strong “arbitrary” state and an “irresponsible” periphery or civil society.⁷ This ‘state tradition’ approach overemphasizes the state’s/center’s coherence, and impermeability to, or lack of ‘dialogue’ with, society in general, allowing only for the bureaucracy’s ‘arbitrariness’ towards society and the society’s ‘irresponsibility’ towards state and bureaucracy. Thus, it implies a rigid, tightly delineated border between state and society. This is reminiscent of Ottoman political theories of governance where the borders between social groups are tightly imagined and, in that sense, we can argue that this perspective takes the Ottoman state discourse and the survival of a similar deep rooted state discourse in the Turkish republic and within its bureaucracy at face value.

The assumptions inherent in studies of the ‘Turkish Revolution’ working within the modernization paradigm, although still present in the literature, have been criticized by many authors and from a variety of perspectives. Kasaba’s recent work on sedentarization, the relations of cities with the Ottoman central state, as well as the issue of ‘stasis’ in Ottoman texts lays emphasis on multiple and not necessarily homogenous logics of the Ottoman State over a variety of issues and reveals the multiplicity of state practices as well as the complexity of power relations.⁸ A similar critique has been recently directed towards the

⁷ Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Hull: Eothen Press, 1985), pp. 16, 149 – 50, and 154.

⁸ Reşat Kasaba, “A time and a place for the nonstate: social change in the Ottoman Empire during the “long nineteenth century”, in Joel Migdal, Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue (eds), *State Power and Social Forces*, pp. 207 – 231. Also Reşat Kasaba, “Do States Always Favor Stasis? The

literature on the Tanzimat reforms arguing that it has been studied and conceptualized solely as a top-down and rather unsuccessful reform movement that had minimal impact on the lives of the Ottoman subjects. Milen Petrov has attempted to study the “tangible impact of the Tanzimat reforms on the cognitive and epistemological world of the non-elite Ottoman subjects”, something “a large body of scholarly literature maintains that it did not exist”.⁹ Recent anthropological and sociological works on contemporary Turkey exploring the social actors’ understanding of such categories as ‘state’, ‘modern’, ‘secular’, and ‘Islamic’ move away from monolithic definitions and unproblematic dichotomies (secular –religious, state - society) highlighting the production of these categories by various social agents.¹⁰

My argument is that we need to employ similar perspectives to the study of the Turkish Modernization, perspectives that would try to address the ‘everyday’ or the ‘life-worlds’ of social subjects operating within local social contexts and would reflect on issues related to the shaping of social identities;¹¹ perspectives that would study the ‘subjects of change’, the real people and their responses to the change brought by state and regime, issues not usually addressed in the relevant literature. There the subjects of change are either conspicuously silent or even mute in regards to their understanding and performance, or, even worse, assumed to react either totally for or against the implemented reform program, tendency that runs quite parallel, one might say even identical, to the regime’s own discursive categories of “reactionaries” vs. “Kemalists”, of ‘modern’ vs. ‘traditional’. ‘Transitional’ stages are also devised for what does not fit into the neatly formed, unilinear movement from one end of the spectrum to the other, from ‘tradition’ to ‘modernity’. This happens when a process is conceived solely in terms of a project, which in turn

Changing Status of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire”, pp. 27 – 49 and Beatrice Hibou, “Conclusion”, in Joel Migdal (ed), *Boundaries and Belonging. States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁹ Milen Petrov, “Everyday forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864 -1868”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 46, No 4, (2004). For similar works that search for and introduce human agency into the study of the same period see Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “Eleni Hatun’un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. Yüzyılda Anadolu’da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, No 4, (Fall 2006); Cengiz Kırılı, “Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire”, in Dale Eickelman and Armando Salvatore (eds.), *Public Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 75-97; Elizabeth Thompson, “Ottoman Political Reform in the Provinces: The Damascus Advisory Council in 1844-45”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 25, No 3, (1993): 457-475; Ahmet Uzun, *Tanzimat ve Sosyal Direnişler* (İstanbul: Eren Yayınları, 2002); Huri İslamoğlu, “Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858”, in Roger Owen and Martin P. Bunton (eds.), *New Perspectives on Property and Land* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001): 3-61; Cengiz Kırılı, “Yolsuzluğun icadı: 1840 Ceza Kanunu, iktidar ve bürokrasi”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, No 4, (Fall 2006).

¹⁰ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern. Civilization and Veiling* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997). Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997). Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber, *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Mardin, “Projects as Methodology”, pp. 72- 74; Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern”, pp. 10, 113.

implies that the relation of the Turkish experiment in modernization is conceived as a 'copy' of a 'model'; the sense of failure to conform to the 'model' gives rise to notions of constant 'belatedness', as if trying to catch up with a moving train.¹²

This tendency obfuscates the capacity of the 'subjects of change' as social agents to react and respond, in numerous and various poetic, innovating and meaningful for them ways that go well beyond the 'modern' vs. 'backward' division of the modernizing discourse and its echo in the secondary literature, to the 'new' spaces, mentalities, discourse and practices inflicted upon them. Another corollary consequence of this awkward reproduction of the modernizing elite's discourse is to ignore the ability of social actors to experience in their own ways the meaning of such categories as 'modern' or 'reactionary'/'traditional', in various ways that might supersede or even challenge the official rhetoric and discourse.¹³ This inability and/or indifference to study the 'Turkish Modernization/Revolution' from alternative perspectives that has been observed and criticized¹⁴ in the literature cited above can be clearly witnessed in the works on the Halkevi institution.

The People's Houses in the literature

A conventional¹⁵ paper about a Halkevi would more or less have the following pattern: After an introduction over the Kemalist regime and the reforms, it would explain the reasons for the establishment of the Halkevi institution as well as its structure. It would then describe the establishment of the House and present its chairmen and Committee members, based on the House's own publication, articles from the local press, and, if available, the reports compiled by the House and sent to the General Secretariat, contained in the State Archive. The paper would then turn to the House's activities presenting them in different parts corresponding to its different Sections, just as the Halkevi publication used to present their activities, upon which, no doubt, the piece would be based. The paper would then resemble a list of activities (or perhaps 'achievements'). Like entries in a dictionary or a shopping list, numerous lectures, concerts, folklore studies, courses on several subjects, speeches on anniversaries, distribution of medicine, publications and

¹² Meltem Ahıska, "Occidentalism: The Historical fantasy of the Modern, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102, 2/3 (2003), pp. 351-379; Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı*, pp. 35 – 45.

¹³ These concepts are not fixed but contingent upon the meanings invested upon them and related to social contexts, power relationships, etc. Works on contemporary 'islamist' groups demonstrate how social actors in their interaction with such concepts/categories produce their own meanings that have to be conceived as authentic, not as facsimile editions of the meaning given to them by 'pure', 'modernist' or 'Islamist', discourses. Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern*.

¹⁴ See especially the papers in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Conventional in the sense of 'usual', 'expected', following the norm of numerous works on People's Houses.

distribution of brochures to villagers, village excursions, theatrical plays, *Karagöz* and *Orta Oyun* stages, collections of folk music, artefacts and proverbs, exhibitions of local products, fests and family gatherings, all registered in detailed, would pompously parade through the article's pages, making it all too difficult not to be almost convinced that "the Kayseri Halkevi" – to state one example – "worked for the integration of state and people, for the coming together of intellectuals and people, for the strengthening of social solidarity and cooperation."¹⁶ If we put the name of some other city, instead of Kayseri, and change the chairmen's names, the paper might even be surprisingly almost identical to a different article about a different House.¹⁷ The majority of the works on the Houses give the impression that the Halkevi activities were the same everywhere, and that they were carried out the same way and with the same results by all Houses. In a sense, the scholarly works on the Houses act as a reflection – or even reproduction – of the way the ruling elite of the time envisaged and wanted to present the Halkevi institution and its activities – achievements. There is a logical lapse in this treatment of the subject: the endless catalogues and figures of the recorded activities in a way function as a proof that those activities were actually efficient and had the intended impact on their targets, the population. This was actually the aim of the Party and Halkevleri publications, to prove their accomplishments, and exactly the same is silently reproduced in the secondary literature.

The existing literature on the People's Houses studies them as a part of a 'project', the reform movement of the early Republican period. The literature emphasizes the 'textbook' version of the Houses, studying their organizational structure, the regime's aims;¹⁸ situates them within the wider historical framework and the politics of the period before and during their establishment to explain the reasons behind their creation (1929 crisis, Free Party, reorganization of the Party and regime's turn towards more authoritarian policies after 1931,¹⁹ similarities to and influence from contemporary European

¹⁶ Şanal, Mustafa, "Türk Kültür tarihi içerisinde Kayseri Halkevi ve Faaliyetleri (1932 - 1950)", *Millî Eğitim Dergisi*, No 161, (Fall 2004). This paper follows the above pattern.

¹⁷ Consider the similarities of a number of works: Azcan, Ibrahim, *Trabzon Halkevi: Türk modernleşmesi sürecinde* (İstanbul: Serarder, 2003); Bilgin, Çelik, "Tek Parti döneminde Aydın'ın Sosyokültürel Yaşamında Halkevinin rolü", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol 11, No 66, (June 1999); Çolak, Melek, "Muğla Halkevi ve Çalışmaları", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol 13, No 73, (January 2000); Karadağ, Nurhan, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998); Özmen, Müze, *The activities of the People's House of Eminönü and its review: Yeni Türk* (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1995); Öztürk, Adil Adnan, "Cumhuriyet ideolojisini Halka Yayıma Girişimleri: Halkevleri ve Aydın Halkevi", *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol. 31, No. 182, (February, 1999); Yiğit, Resul, *Mersin Halkevi (1933 - 1951)*, (MA Thesis, Mersin University, 2001); Özacun, Orhan, *Halkevlerinin kuruluşu ve Atatürk'ün döneminde İstanbul Halkevlerinin faaliyetleri (1932 - 1938)*, (PhD Thesis, İstanbul University, 2002).

¹⁸ Anıl Çeçen, *Atatürk'ün kültür kurumu Halkevleri* (Ankara, 1990); Kemal Karpat, "The People's House of Turkey: establishment and growth", *Middle Eastern Journal*, 17, (1963); Ömer Türkoğlu, "Halkevlerin kuruluş amaçları, örgütsel yapısı ve bazı uygulamaları", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996).

¹⁹ Mete Tunçay, *T. C. 'nde tek-parti Yönetimin kurulması (1923-1931)*, (Ankara, 1981); Sefa Şimşek, *Bir ideolojik seferberlik deneyimi, Halkevleri 1932 - 1951* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002).

authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and similar institutions²⁰); places the Houses and some of their activities within the regime's and elites' policies and discourses²¹ (i.e. Popular education and preceding institutions such as the Turkish Hearths, Villagist discourse,²² evolution of folkloric studies,²³ theater,²⁴ regime's discourse through the study of the Houses' architecture²⁵ and the institution's propaganda functions²⁶). A number of works dwell on the publishing activities and the journals of the People's Houses.²⁷ These journals after all are the sources heavily used in all the existing literature and especially in works on various provincial Houses.²⁸

²⁰ Cennet Ünver, *Images and Perceptions of Fascism among the mainstream Kemalist elite in Turkey, 1931 – 1943* (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2001).

²¹ Hakkı Uyar, "Resmi ideoloji ya da Alternatif Resmi ideoloji Oluşturma Yönelik İki Dergi: Ülkü ve Kadro mecmuaların karşılaştırmalı içerik analizi", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 74, (1997).

²² Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses and the cult of the peasant in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No 4, (1998).

²³ Arzu Öztürkmen, "The role of the People's Houses in the making of national culture in Turkey", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 11, (Fall 1994); Arzu Öztürkmen, *Türkiye'de Folklor ve milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998).

²⁴ Eyal Ari, "The People's Houses and the Theatre in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No 4, (2004); Nurhan Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998); Nurhan Karadağ, "Halkevleri oyun dağarcığı (1932-1951)", *Erdem*, No 13, (1989);

²⁵ Neşe Gurallar Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri: ideoloji ve mimarlık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999).

²⁶ Işıl Çakal, *Konuşunuz Konuşturunuz. Tek Parti Döneminde Propagandanın Etkin Silahı: Söz* (İstanbul: Otopsi, 2004); Sefa Şimşek, *Bir ideolojik seferberlik deneyimi, Halkevleri 1932 – 1951* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002); Ceyhan Atuf Kansu, "Kemalizm'in Halk Okulları", in *Atatürk ve Halkevleri, Atatürkçü düşünce üzerine denemeler* (Ankara: Türk tarih kurumu basimevi, 1974); Hakkı Uyar, "İnkılap ve İstiklal Konferansları. Tek Parti Yönetiminin Halkevlerinde yürüttüğü propaganda işlerini anlamakta", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 3, No 17, (May 1995).

²⁷ Kemal Karpat, "The impact of People's Houses on the development of communication in Turkey 1931-1951", *Die Welt des Islams*, 15, (1974); Orhan Özacun, *CHP Bibliyografya denemesi* (İstanbul, 1993); Nurettin Güz, *Tek parti ideolojisinin yayın organları: Halkevleri dergileri 1932-1950* (Ankara, 1995); Mehmet Ölmez, "Ülkü ve Dil Yazıları", *Kebikeç*, Year 2, No 3, (1996); Orhan Özacun, *CHP Halkevleri yayınları bibliyografyası* (İstanbul, 2001); Müze Özmen, *The activities of the People's House of Eminönü and its review: Yeni Türk* (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1995); Mahmut H. Şakiroğlu, "Halkevi dergiler ve neşriyatı", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996); Bülent Varlık, "Yozgat Halkevi Dergisi bibliyografyası", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996); Bülent Varlık, "Devrimin sesi: Bilecik Halkevi dergisi bibliyografyası", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 3, No 6, (1998); Bülent Varlık, "Ülker, Niksar Halkevi Kültür dergisi", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 7, No 14, (2001); Ahmet Yüksel, "Merzifon Halkevi ve Taşan Dergisi", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996); Sabri Zengin, "Yeni Tokat. Bir Halkevi Dergisi", *Tarihi ve Toplum*, Vol. 39, No. 232, (April 2003); Galip Alçitepe, "Dranaz Sinop Halkevi dergisi bibliyografyası", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 6, No 12, (2001); İsmet Esra Berker, *Cumhuriyet dönemi halkevi dergiciliğine bir örnek: 19 Mayıs dergisi* (MA Thesis, İstanbul University, 2002); Funda Çalık, *Halkevi dergiciliğine bir örnek Kayseri Halkevi neşriyatı: Erciyes* (MA Thesis, İstanbul University, 2003); Melda Or, *Zonguldak halkeviden izlenimler Karaelmas dergisi* (MA Thesis, İstanbul University, 2002). Kenan Olgun, *Yöresel Kalkınmada Adapazarı Halkevi* (İstanbul: Değişim Yayınları, 2008).

²⁸ Orhan Özacun, *Halkevlerinin kuruluşu ve Atatürklü döneminde İstanbul Halkevlerinin faaliyetleri (1932 – 1938)*, (PhD Thesis, İstanbul University, 2002); Yiğit, Resul, *Mersin Halkevi (1933 - 1951)*, (MA Thesis, Mersin University, 2001); Mustafa Şanal, "Türk Kültür tarihi içerisinde Kayseri Halkevi ve Faaliyetleri (1932 - 1950)", *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, No 161, (Fall 2004); Adil Adnan Öztürk, "Cumhuriyet ideolojisini Halka Yayma Girişimleri: Halkevleri ve Aydın Halkevi", *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol. 31, No 182, (February, 1999); Melek Çolak, "Muğla Halkevi ve Çalışmaları", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol 13, No 73, (January 2000); Çelik Bilgin, "Tek Parti döneminde Aydın'ın Sosyokültürel Yaşamında Halkevinin rolü", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol 11, No 66, (June 1999); İbrahim Azcan, *Trabzon Halkevi: Türk modernleşmesi sürecinde* (İstanbul: Serarder,

Invaluable as they are in analyzing and describing in detail the structure and functions, the ideological roots of the Halkevleri, as well as the ruling elite's underlying ideology and discourses in relation to the People's Houses, these works do not attempt to view what the Houses and their activities meant for the people who staffed them and were engaged in the execution and reception of their activities. Without dwelling on whether this is due to a shortage of sources or vision, it is fair to argue that the secondary bibliography offers a top-down, elite-centered perspective over the Houses, viewing them in their formative and discursive quality, as a project rather than a part of a process and through the eyes and viewpoint of the people who imagined and established them as a part of a wider project of social reform.

The point made in this thesis is that, in order to have a broader picture of the process of social change that occurred in Turkey in the early republican period, we have to 'bring society back',²⁹ allow for these poetic,³⁰ innovating and meaningful ways of understanding and (re)employing, making sense as well as use of, the innovations brought upon their life to enter into our perspective and analysis in order to move away from the constraints of the above bipolarity and the literature's top-to-bottom, institutional perspective towards a more open to and inclusive of the voices of social actors point of inquiry.³¹

We thus need an approach that detects the limits of 'the state' in implementing laws, rules, and regulations as set by the interaction with and the responses of the people, as well as a framework of analysis that leaves room for the subjects' understanding, 'consuming', appropriating, or even resisting the imposed laws, discourses, policies and practices, and what these various acts and processes of interaction between social actors entail in terms of social identities.

2003); Süleyman İnan, "Denizli'deki Halkevleri ve Faaliyetleri (1932 - 1951)", Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, *Atatürk Yolu*, Vol. 7, No 25 – 26, (May – November 2000), pp. 135 – 157.

²⁹ Reşat Kasaba, "Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities," in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 30.

³⁰ "This 'making' ['making do'] of social actors with the products of a dominant order - a state, a company, an army, etc] is a poeisis" De Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), page xii. 'Meaning' here is used not in a static/given state, but rather as a social product, reproduced as well as created/crafted in situ by social actors interacting with each other and with systems of representations/meanings (with their own inconsistencies), one of them being what we may collectively and even slightly arbitrarily term 'high-modernist/Kemalist discourse'.

³¹ Oral history studies have the potential and in certain cases have tried to investigate into similar issues by focusing on specific, local social contexts and by assigning a major role in the narrative of social actors. See research note by Ayşe Durakbasa and Aynur İlyasogly, "Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women's Narratives as Transmitters of 'Her story' of Modernization", *Journal of Social History*, (Fall 2001); Esra Üstündağ – Selamoğlu, "Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması. Hereke'de Değişim", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 8, No 45, (September 1997). See also the local and oral history projects of the Türk Tarih Vakfı.

Our aim would be to have a clearer picture of (a) 'state and society relations' as a problematic, multidirectional and multidimensional relationship and (b) of the responses of the subjects of change and the ways these subjects consume, alter, appropriate, react, resist, avoid, manipulate, etc. the reforms introduced mainly through the state apparatus. In short we need to focus on the various, myriad ways the subjects of change interact with each other and with state actors and agencies, respond to the changes, and what these processes of interaction might entail for the formation of novel forms of subjectivities, for the (re)shaping of social, individual and collective identities. This thesis attempts to tackle these issues by focusing on the People's House, treating it as a privileged locus for the study of the responses of the 'subjects of change' to and their appropriation of the changes the ruling elite was initiating, a place wherein the 'new' practices and discourses were meeting their targets, a "meeting ground of fact and fiction".³² Placed within the above problematic and theoretical needs, our study is informed on the one hand by a corpus of recent works in anthropology and political science related to the study of the 'state', while on the other it borrows from De Certeau's work on the 'practices on everyday life' a number of concepts and analytical tools to be employed in our study of the ways the social actors 'use' the products imposed on them by a dominant order.

Anthropology of the state, state in society.

In their introduction to *The Anthropology of the State*, Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta argue that we must think of states as "cultural artifacts, as multilayered, contradictory, translocal ensembles of institutions, practices and people."³³ Following Mitchell and other scholars (Nugent,³⁴ Trouillot,³⁵ Abrams³⁶) who have "critically interrogated the assumption that 'the state' is an a priori conceptual and empirical object", Sharma and Gupta view states as "culturally embedded and discursively constructed ensembles", and call for the study of 'state construction', "how 'the state' comes into being, how 'it' is differentiated from other institutional forms, and what effect this has on the operation and diffusion of power throughout society." Moreover, the boundary between the state and (civil) society 'statist' approaches to the study of the

³² Migdal, "Finding the Meeting Ground of Fact and Fiction.", in Bozdoğan and Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity*, p. 255.

³³ Akhil Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State", in Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, *The Anthropology of the State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 211.

³⁴ David Nugent, "Building the State, Making the Nation: The Bases and Limits of State Centralization in "Modern" Peru", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 96, No 2, (1994).

³⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Anthropology of the State: Close Encounters of a Deceptive Kind", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 42, No 1, (2001).

³⁶ Philip Abrahams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1, (1988).

state have implicitly assumed is challenged. Mitchell has forcefully argued that the appearance of 'the state' as a discrete entity with an autonomous from society status is itself a reification and 'an effect of power'.³⁷ This argument leads many scholars "to conceptualize "the state" within other institutional forms through which social relations are lived, such as the family, civil society, and the economy", but also to study the 'construction of the state' and its 'border' with society (a) in the "everyday practices of its bureaucracies", its agencies and actors, and (b) in the representations of the state, "in the realm of representations where the explicit discourse of the state is produced."³⁸

In this thesis, we start with a broad definition of state that situates it within and not apart or in opposition to society, views it as a cultural artifact, and "state formation as a cultural revolution", to quote a work that is considered as pioneering in that aspect.³⁹ The state is not conceived in abstract or legalistic terms as a unitary, monolithic institution with an autonomous status standing away, independent of, or even in contrast to, society, as 'a machinery of intentions' or 'a subjective world of plans, programs, or ideas' that excludes social agency. Drawing on Joel Migdal's ideas and the 'state-in-society' approach,⁴⁰ we differentiate between what he terms the 'image of the state' and the 'actual practices of the state'.⁴¹ In his words what we call state is "a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounden by that territory, and the actual practices of its multiple parts". The image (discourse, representation) of the state projects "a dominant, integrated, autonomous entity that controls all rule making to make certain circumscribed rules". This image "posits an entity having two sorts of boundaries: territorial between states and social boundaries between state – its (public) actors and agencies – and those subject to its rules (private)". Routine performance of state actors and agencies, such as ceremonies, issuing of passports and visas, censuses, taxation, maintaining police and armies, tends to reinforce this image of the state.⁴² In a similar way Mitchell's conceptualizes the state as a structural effect, "a powerful, metaphysical effect of practices that

³⁷ Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No 1, (March 1991).

³⁸ Differentiation between 'practices' and 'representations' is of course analytical in nature as they are "deeply co-implicated and mutually constitutive", as Sharma and Gupta argue.

³⁹ Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great arch. English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

⁴⁰ Joel Migdal, *State in Society. Studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001). See also Joel Migdal, "The state in society: an approach to struggles for domination", in *State Power and Social Forces* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 1 – 30.

⁴¹ A distinction reminiscent of Migdal's is the one offered by Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley* (London: James Currey, 1992), pp. 5 and 11 – 39, where, commenting on the case of the colonial state of Kenya, they differentiate between 'state building' and 'state formation', the former defined as "a conscious effort at creating an apparatus of control", while the latter being "an historical process whose outcome is a largely unconscious and contradictory process of conflicts, negotiations and compromises between diverse groups whose self-serving actions and trade-offs constitute the 'vulgarization' of power."

⁴² Joel Migdal, *State in Society*, pp. 15 – 7.

make such structures appear to exist”.⁴³ The everyday practices of state bureaucracies with the population might also be contradictory to the discourse of the state.⁴⁴ It has thus been argued that there is a need to study ‘state formation’ in the everyday practices of bureaucracies, state agents and agencies in their interaction with social actors, as well as in the employment of the representations of the state by both bureaucrats and their clients.⁴⁵ The emphasis then should be laid on the spaces where this interaction takes place, on the ‘junctures of state and society’, on places where the policies and ideas of the central state are designed to reach society,⁴⁶ the citizens, social actors, and where these policies and images are enacted, practiced, negotiated, resisted or appropriated. In this thesis I chose to view the People’s House exactly as a ‘juncture of state and society’, a space within which the ‘fiction’ of the elite’s projects meets the ‘facts’ of concrete local settings and social actors.

Usage/consumption of products of a dominant order.

This move towards a different perspective over the “Turkish revolution” than the one provided by the ‘modernization paradigm’, entails a different level of contextualization than its ‘institutional and macro-level approach’, while on the other hand necessitates the employment of alternative theoretical tools and categories. More specifically, if we are to ‘move society back’ to the picture, on the one hand we need to zoom on local societies and actors, while on the other we have to draw our attention towards the actors’ use of the ‘new’ laws, habits, categories, ideas, practices, and discourses the centre strove to introduce in the Turkish society and people.

This thesis attempts to tackle these two issues. I address the first issue by favoring the micro level of analysis, directing our attention towards case studies of the Halkevi ‘juncture’ in local societies, and towards actors and processes in local societies. I deal with the second issue by laying emphasis on the various levels and ways of interaction between the discourses and practices coming from the state centre⁴⁷ and the responses, resistance, accommodation,

⁴³ Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State”, p. 94.

⁴⁴ See Gupta’s article on ‘corruption’ of Indian state. Akhil Gupta, “Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption”.

⁴⁵ See Michael Herzfeld, *The Social Production of Indifference. Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) for a similar critique and perspective in relation to an anthropological study of bureaucracy.

⁴⁶ Joel Migdal, *State in Society*, pp. 124 – 34.

⁴⁷ By centre/central state I refer to the top echelons of the ensemble of interconnected state (Ministries, State bureaucracy) and para-state (CHP Headquarters, Turkish Historical Society, Turkish Language Society) institutional organizations and structures mainly situated in the capital. I do not contend that what I term as centre, i.e. these core-state bureaucratic, educational, financial, military, judicial, ideological structures, possess the ideological and organizational integration, coherence and sophistication the ‘images of the state’ usually claim, or centre - periphery models (Shills) imply. In this thesis the term centre or central state is not equated with the ‘state’ – however conceptualized – nor is ontologically juxtaposed to an ‘exterior’ or to ‘society’, a juxtaposition that would imply a border separating these two entities, which is a perspective we have criticized above.

(re)appropriation, in short their ‘usage’/‘consumption’ by the actors in situ. “The presence and circulation of a representation (taught by preachers, educators, and popularizers as the key to socioeconomic advancement) tells us nothing about what it is for its users.”⁴⁸ De Certeau’s “investigation of the ways in which users – commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate” can offer an alternative theoretical/conceptual framework for our study of the ‘Turkish Revolution’. Consumption/usage then refers to what ‘consumers’/‘users’ make with the ‘products’ “imposed by a dominant economic order” and this ‘making’ is a production – a poiesis”. “Users make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and rules.”⁴⁹ My argument is that we need to turn our attention to this secondary ‘production’⁵⁰ of using/consuming, (re)appropriating the products of an imposed dominant order, in our case, the social changed initiated by the ‘Kemalist’ ruling elite.

I choose to study this ‘secondary production’ within the framework of the “technocratically constructed, written and functionalized space”⁵¹ of the People’s House. We have to keep in mind that this ‘usage’ does not take place in a social and political vacuum. “The procedures allowing the re-use of products are linked together in a kind of obligatory language, and their functioning is related to social situations and power relationships”. In order to study the practices associated with ‘consumption’ while at the same time address the obvious “power relationships” that “define the networks in which they are inscribed”, De Certeau moves from a ‘linguistic frame’ to a ‘polemological’ one by distinguishing between ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’. “Strategy refers to the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that become possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed.”⁵²

A tactic, on the other hand, “is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. [...] The space of the tactic is the space of the other. It must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage

⁴⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p. xiii.

⁴⁹ All above extracts from de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life*, pp. xv – xviii.

⁵⁰ “A rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called ‘consumption’ and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products but in an art of using those imposed on it.” De Certeau, *Practices*, p. 31.

⁵¹ De Certeau, *Practices*, p. xviii.

⁵² De Certeau, *Practices*, pp. 35 – 6.

of ‘opportunities’ and depends on them. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches on them. [It] is an art of the weak.”⁵³

The concepts developed by De Certeau are going to inform my reading of the material in relation to the Halkevi institution, through the study of which this thesis attempts to address the question of the ‘consumption’ by local actors of the state and regime’s policies of social reform, of the ways actors understand, (re/mis)use, (re)appropriate, interact with, resist to, and absorb the policies, discourses, and practices imposed on them, and the significance these ‘secondary productions’ have for the actors’ (self)positioning within a local context, for issues of ‘identity management’, and for the ‘emergence of new identities and new forms of subjectivity.’

Issues of resistance/submission, strong/weak, subaltern/elite subjects.

Strategies/tactics bipolarity refers to ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ subjects, used in studies of subaltern subjects⁵⁴ and resistance to domination. Here I treat resistance in a problematic way⁵⁵, not substantialised – the same way I do not substantialise the ‘state’.⁵⁶ I do not necessarily read ‘metis’⁵⁷ tactics as acts of resistance, as a medium to reach ‘hidden transcripts’ of domination.⁵⁸ Rather this bipolarity is used not in oppositional, exclusionary terms, but as an analytical tool to view the ‘consumption’ in hand in its ‘productivity’.

I thus view the boundary between strong/weak inherent in the strategies/tactics bipolarity as fleeting and unstable. An actor can be considered as weak or strong in different contexts and in relation to different actors and situations, the same way his actions can be seen as strategic or tactical depending on the context. Thus, it is the position of the actors within a network of power relations and local social conditions that can define their status in any circumstance as weak or strong, and their responses as strategic or tactical. There is no place for an a priori subaltern within such a conceptualization. Notwithstanding the obvious relations of power between our actors, I feel

⁵³ De Certeau, *Practices*, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Necmi Erdoğan, “Devleti ‘İdare Etmek’: Maduniyet ve Düzenbazlık”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, No 83, (2000).

⁵⁵ Sherry Ortner, “Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No 1, (January 1995).

⁵⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998). Scott has been extensively criticized for substantializing resistance and overestimating the role and power of the state under ‘high modernism’. For an example of this critique see Beatrice Hibou, “Conclusion”, in Joel Migdal (ed), *Boundaries and Belonging. States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁵⁷ Tactical in character everyday practices and ‘ways of operating’: “victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’, clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, ‘hunter’s cunning’, maneuvers”. De Certeau, *Practices*, p. xix. For a discussion of the concept metis see also James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, chapter 9 “Thin Simplifications and Practical Knowledge: Metis”, pp. 309 – 341.

⁵⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

problematic to assign an overall subaltern status to our subjects - the Halkevi inhabitants, the same way it is difficult – not to say problematic - to read their responses as conscious acts of compliance, resistance or subordination to the policies of the centre. It would be too simplistic either to assume a given, essential(ized) subaltern, or to read his/her (and our actors’) responses and representations solely through the conceptual repertoire of resistance/compliance. In addition, social actors upon whose voices this thesis is based do not fall under the category of the subaltern subject as this is conceptualized in the subaltern studies literature, which is based on a distinction between elite and subaltern, i.e. between literate and thus ‘source - producing’ urban elites and illiterate, and thus ‘source-wise silent’ peasants. Most of the sources used in this thesis were produced by ‘urban elites’ rather than ‘subaltern’, peasant, or ‘underclass’ subjects.

Nevertheless, our sources, texts produced by the centre or by our Halkevi actors, are haunted by the presence of the ‘other’, usually referred to as the ‘People’ and/or the villagers, social actors that can easily be termed subaltern. Whether produced in the texts of the centre or, more so in the texts of our Halkevi authors, the utterances about and representations of this ‘other’ are saturated with seemingly conflicting but also complementary images, in the sense that can only stand dialectically: the ‘real people’ that is at once the ‘master of this country’ and in essence prepared and equipped due to his national qualities for ‘modern civilization’, but at the same time is ‘not really ready yet’ and needs to be ‘educated’ to that ‘level’; the peasant who is at the same time considered the repository of the true, authentic and celebrated national qualities but is also feared and distrusted as the site of ‘backwardness’, ‘tradition’ and possibly opposition to the centre’s reform policies. The internal other of the ‘occidental fantasy’, to use Ahiska’s concept, is always present, and for those living closer to the border and in proximity with the ‘other’ (such as our Halkevi actors in the countryside and the provinces) even more so. Furthermore the way this internal other is conceptualized by non-western local elites points to a number of tensions in various levels that have been identified and explored by authors within the subaltern/postcolonial tradition. This tension that is inherent in the modernization discourse is revealed in the elites’ internalized images of the west/modern in contrast to the internal other, the ‘traditional’, ‘backward’ to be changed; in the populist rhetoric of the nation/people portrayed as almost ‘modern’ and at the same time as the internal ‘backward’ and ‘traditional’ other;⁵⁹ in between these different and conflicting understandings of historical time in terms of different spaces,⁶⁰ i.e. spatialized

⁵⁹ As Mardin notes on the Kemalists’ feeling of urgency: “to work for something which did not exist as if it existed and make it exist”. Quoted in Ahiska, “Occidentalism”, p. 367.

⁶⁰ In Ahiska, “Occidentalism”, article: “the homogenizing attempt of modernization is premised upon a differentiation that [m]ust first be recognized in order to be negated, so that ‘that the results of synchronic comparison are ordered diachronically to produce a scale of development. [In] this sense the linear time model is also an invisibly spatial one. The resulting paradox is that the movement of time is cancelled by the stasis of space. The essential time of the non-west is stagnant

notions of historical time and different historicities of ‘west’ and ‘east’, ‘modern’ and ‘backward’; in between the ambiguities, experiences and representations of being ‘modern’ and ‘national’, ‘global’ and ‘local’, demonstrated in the ‘not yet’, the sense of belatedness, the ‘waiting room’,⁶¹ the ‘time lag’, the image of ‘running behind a train’, the ‘bridge metaphor’, habitually used even today to express Turkey’s position and quality of being a point on the map but also in time connecting east and west.⁶²

To sum up, starting with a broad definition of state, not in abstract/institutional terms (independent of society), but in terms of state actors and agencies situated within society (state-in-society approach), and with a distinction between the ‘image’ or discourse of the state and the ‘actual practices of the state’, I choose to focus on processes and actors instead of ‘institutional’ change, through a micro-level analysis of case studies of local societies, actors and processes. My focal point of analysis is on the various levels and ways of interaction between the discourses and practices coming from the centre with the responses and acts of resistance, accommodation, (re)appropriation, in short their ‘usage’ or ‘consumption’ by social actors in situ, within local societies and a space – the People’s House - operating within local politics and power relations. The People’s House is the privileged site for this analysis, treated as a ‘space on the border’, a ‘juncture of state and society’,⁶³ where the policies, discourses and projects of the regime come into interplay with state actors and other social forces and groups in concrete social contexts, in provincial towns.

This thesis then is a study of the Halkevi, conceptualized as a space wherein the reforms were introduced and enacted in local societies. It is a (i) study of this space in its local dimensions and of the social actors inhabiting it. In other words, it is a study of the Halkevi space in relation to the society and population within which it is situated, but also of the Halkevi actors and their own voices in relation to their own self-positioning into the Halkevi space and (but also in relation to) the local society; it is also a (ii) study of the Halkevi space as an arena of power relations and local politics, a stage wherein local, state and non state actors interact and fight each other in struggles implicating various actors and agencies, state and non state, local and not; and finally it is a (iii) study of the (re)production of three social categories (women, leisure, villager) within a space as defined above (in i and ii) and by the Halkevi actor. This is accomplished by directing our focus on the Halkevi as an arena, space,

and is defined in opposition to time and change.” Also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 7-10, where “historicism posited historical time as a measure of the cultural distance that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West”.

⁶¹ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 6 – 11.

⁶² Ahiska, “Occidentalism”.

⁶³ Joel Migdal, “The state in society: an approach to struggles for domination”, in *State Power and Social forces* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 23 – 30.

stage and medium through, within and upon which social categories, as well as related discourses and social practices, are enforced, contested, refused, evaded, reproduced, constructed, manipulated etc.

Organization of the thesis.

The first chapter attempts to locate the Halkevi space in the center's discourse, in the realm of the centre's intentions, the 'image of the state', to quote Migdal. It thus tries to study this 'juncture of state and society' from the center's point of view, in its normative and programmatic level. In order to do so, it first turns to the prehistory of the similar institutions and their underlying discourse of 'popular education', starting roughly after the 1908 revolution and culminating in the establishment of the People's Houses in the beginning of the 1930s. The second part of the first chapter describes the People's Houses institution in its programmatic nature, as imagined by its founders and laid down in normative texts such as the Halkevi statutes.

By studying the regime's imaginary version of an institution that was created with the direct aim to introduce the reforms to the people, we also desire to highlight the center's perspective over this reform-diffusion operation, including any ambiguities and contradictions in the centre's discourse about the Houses, their aims, the people who were supposed to carry out the Houses' operations and the people who were supposed to be the targets of the Houses' activities.

The second and third chapters study the Halkevi space and its inhabitants in local contexts; situate the Halkevi into local societies and within local populaces, or else position the local society and population in relation to the Halkevi, primary drawing upon the examples of two Houses, in the provincial towns of Kayseri and Balıkesir. The idea behind these two cases studies is to remove the Halkevi space from the regime's plans and insert it in the social context of a local society, or, in another sense, to situate the imaginary and programmatic nature of the center's plans and discourse upon a local population, within local social, political and economic networks. This positioning is carried out in two moves. The first move (Chapter 2) involves the drawing of a social and human 'geography' of the Halkevi, its cadre and members in local societies of provincial towns (where the majority of the Houses were established), and among local social groups and forces.

The second move (Chapter 3) is carried out by concentrating on a number of visible in the sources Halkevi actors and embarking upon a reading of their own voices in relation to the House and its activities, the local population, and their own participation in and relation with the House, as well as the local society and people. In situating the Halkevi actors within a local society, we sketch a rather static picture of the Houses' social inclusiveness of the local population, of the position in the House and in the local society of locals and

outsiders, state and non-state, Party and non – Party actors, also in relation to other, formal or informal, social networks such as family, educational and/or occupational groups. Upon reading the voices of the Halkevi actors on the other hand, we expose a more dynamic picture of our actors in the local House and society. In this level of sources and analysis, issues of gender, power, local politics emerge, all contingent upon the actors' position (as well as self-positioning) within the local setting as locals, outsiders, Party members or not, state or non state actors, members of broader social, male or female (occupational, economic, power, educational) groups and families.

The second part of this thesis (Chapters 4 and 5) attempts to inscribe the Halkevi space and its actors in networks of power relations, concentrating on local politics, a structural phenomenon in local societies that surfaces in the Houses, involving various locals and outsiders, state and non-state actors, implicating central Party and state institutions in a dialogue with local state or non state actors and agencies. Local politics and conflicts enacted on the Halkevi stage present a novel dimension for the study of the Halkevi institution, conceived as a 'juncture of state and society', an 'intermediary space' where state policies and plans reach their target, the local population. Thus, I argue that this dimension that is missing from the literature has to be addressed and analyzed in order to contextualize more accurately the Halkevi institution and activities, to understand the process of reform-diffusion the Houses were supposed to initiate, and to explore the state's and state actors and agencies' relation with local societies and social actors. By directing our focus on a case study of conflict involving local power brokers, state actors and agencies in a local society, chapter four deals with the case of the first chairman of the Halkevi of Balikesir.

Drawing on a corpus of complaint letters sent to the Party Headquarters in Ankara from the provinces, the fifth chapter 'reads' the Halkevi as an arena or a stage for/of conflict between various individuals and/or groups, whether local elite forces and individuals between themselves and/or with outsider state actors. This chapter dwells on the at once accommodating and conflictual nature of the symbiosis of state and non-state elite actors in local societies as it emerges on the Halkevi stage. We detect instances wherein state actors and agencies combine forces with other state and/or non-state local elite actors against other individuals or groups. On the Halkevi arena, the 'state', through its local actors and their practices, appears and functions quite differently from what the image of a unitary, monolithic, distinct from society state projects. Local non-state elite actors, usually local Party power brokers, appear able to manipulate and occasionally control the way state policies are implemented.

The third part of the thesis (chapters 6, 7 and 8) investigates the 'uses' of the center's policies by local actors. In other words, the aim of this part is to study the center's and the Halkevi's programmatic aims on three rather distinctive issues from the perspective of the people who use them. More specifically, these chapters touch upon the centre's set of discourses and practices to be

realized in the House by Halkevi actors in relation to women, men's socialization and leisure time, and villagers. In all three instances of consumption I investigate the production by social actors of a wide set of tactics of accommodation, practices and discourses that attempt to alleviate the tensions that surface upon the introduction of novel practices, to 'tame' the unfamiliar and even provocative for local realities practices the center was striving to initiate. I employ the term domestication⁶⁴ to refer to these tactics of accommodation. I view domestication as an imaginative and suitable concept to express the local actors' 'turning' and 'twisting' the Halkevi space and its activities into something more agreeable to local sociopolitical and cultural realities.

Chapter six explores the ingenious inclusion into the Halkevi space by local actors of popular leisure and pastime activities that were proscribed by the centre. We come across poetic solutions enacted by local actors to tactically evade and/or domesticate the centre's policies and discourse in relation to leisure time activities, exemplified in the case of what we term 'coffeehouse activities' (card and backgammon playing, consumption of coffee and alcohol). By cunning practices and the application of 'metis' tactics in the intersection of the center's plans with local practices, the space of the Halkevi seems to be inverted: instead of functioning as a space colonizing local society and people, it becomes itself 'colonized' by local and popular practices of entertainment and leisure.

Chapter seven considers the 'usage' of the centre's policies and discourses on women by local actors in local societies. In this chapter we read a number of complaint letters about incidents related to the presence or absence of women in the Halkevi, and we come across a wide set of responses to the center's policies and ideas about women. Studying the discourses and practices of local actors in Halkevi activities such as dancing parties and theatrical plays, we discern moments of conflict and tension, resistance by local actors to the regime's intentions, accommodation of the center's policies to local practices that seemingly run contrary to and are designated as the 'other' of the centre's policies. This chapter is also about the tensions, disturbances and confusions felt and expressed by local actors in relation to 'identity management'⁶⁵ issues the enactment of such policies brought about. We attempt to read these felt and expressed moments of uneasiness as signifying a creative tension that is significant in relation to the emergence, shaping and negotiation of identities by social actors.

The last, eighth chapter, examines the 'Village Excursion', a Halkevi activity that was highly systematized, programmed, and tightly defined by the centre. A set of Village excursions carried out by the Kayseri House between 1936 and 1939/40 offer the necessary sources and local context for a case study

⁶⁴ For an earlier usage of the term see Christopher M. Hann, *Tea and the Domestication of the Turkish State* (Huntingdon: Eothen Press, 1990).

⁶⁵ Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern", p. 127.

of this moment of ‘meeting’ of the Halkevi actors (and what they stand for as state/Party agents and city dwellers) with the villagers. I read the texts the Halkevi actors produced within the scope of these excursions and relate them to the programmatic texts the centre had crafted on the ‘Villagist operation’. I then try to locate the similarities and divergences between the centre’s designs and the way the local Halkevi actors put them into practice. In this way the failure of local Halkevi actors to strictly conform to the state’s plans for the villager, and, thus, the weakness of the state in the actual in situ practices of its various parts and agencies to impose its policies is revealed. I ultimately read this Halkevi activity as a border-setting operation, significant for crafting the mutually constitutive discursive and practical categories of villager/peasant and villagist/urbanite, as well as the border separating them. I argue that this border is constitutive of the identity of the urban, educated, modern intellectual/citizen and of the villager, as well as of the way his/her understands of each other, the ‘state’, the ‘city’, the ‘countryside’.

In sum, this thesis has attempted to study social change initiated by projects of social engineering as a process choosing to view it from the local level and from the perspective of social actors consuming the products of such projects of social mechanics. It would seem that this thesis has adopted a ‘bottom-up’ perspective, but this would be quite misleading, because one of its basic questions is to problematize such binaries as top/bottom, state/society, centre/periphery, Europe/Orient. I rather argue that we should treat such binaries upon which the study of social change has been heavily based as fleeting and contested. I contend that the notion of the state as the fulcrum of change against the society that is treated as a silent or resistant recipient of change is a simplistic dualism that cannot easily be substantiated by fieldwork. We rather have to search for the common grounds, the meeting spaces wherein such binaries are negotiated by social actors, these in-between spaces and practices that constantly (re)shape their discursive and practical borders, their fleeting and ‘blurred boundaries’.⁶⁶ It is in the everyday practices of social actors that we need to look at. Likewise social change cannot be conceived within this dualistic framework that ends up obfuscating a vast array of practices of accommodation and domestication of what the ruling elite attempted to initiate, something the study of the consumption of change by social actors reveals.

I also contend that this thesis has demonstrated that the consumption by social actors of the products of a dominant order is significant in relation to the shaping of social identities. I have attempted to study the practices and discourses produced upon this consumption and relate them to the actors’ identity management, although this thesis cannot draw any extensive

⁶⁶ Gupta, Akhil, “Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State”, in Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, *The Anthropology of the State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

conclusion about the emergence of new forms of subjectivity. To do so we need more detailed studies of actors within a wider span of time, perhaps monographs of individuals or families situated within more rigidly studied sociopolitical and cultural contexts, something this thesis cannot contend of having done. I can only maintain that this thesis can offer an elementary context for prospective endeavors towards that direction.

Chapter One

The People's House

If you want to create a nation in this century, to create a community on national qualities, you'll have to create the basis of a popular education.⁶⁷
Recep Peker

The People's Houses were established by the Republican People's Party (CHP) in 1932 as an institution of 'Popular Education' (*Halk Terbiyesi*). Aim of this chapter is to study the People's Houses, this 'juncture of state and society' to quote Migdal, in the realm of the state's intentions, of the 'image of the state'. In order to do so, we first start with a short study of 'Popular Education', the concept upon which the Halkevleri were created according to Recep Peker, the powerful General Secretary of the CHP in the early 1930s. We attempt to trace its origins roughly since the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the Second Constitutional Period in tandem with the rise of Turkish nationalism, through the Turkish Hearths Association in the Republican Period up to the 1930s and the establishment of the People's Houses. The second part of this chapter focuses on the 'textbook version' of the Halkevi institution defined as it was in a number of normative texts, such as the Halkevi bylaws and other Party papers. The study of such sources aims at presenting the Houses' administrative structure and the ways they were designed to operate.

Finally the third part of this chapter attempts a 'critical reading' of the center's aims and perspective in respect to *Halk Terbiyesi* and the Halkevleri as an institution of 'Popular Education' created by the centre to transmit the reforms to the populace; a 'critical reading' that tries to be inclusive and interpretative of any ambiguities and contradictions situated at the core of the center's discourse about the Houses, their modus operandi and aims, the people who were supposed to carry out their operations as well as those who were supposed to be the targets of their activities. In a more general sense, it entails a double, or else an elaborate, reading of the center's 'modernizing discourse' (and the Halkevleri as a part of it): firstly as a seemingly seamless set of programmatic ideas and goals as it is expressed in normative, pattern-setting texts (Halkevi bylaws for instance) and secondly as a discourse (but also a practice of power) that intrinsically contains ambiguities and contradictions next and in line with similar inconsistencies in the political system of the period, within which the reform movement and the Halkevi have to be considered.

⁶⁷ Recep Peker, "Halkevleri Açılma Nutku", *Ülkü*, No 1, (1932), p. 6, speech at the opening ceremony of the first 14 People's Houses.

In a more general sense this chapter attempts to offer an elementary context for the study of the Halkevi institution, offering a prehistory of similar institutions and placing it in the center's aims and policies, and the regime's discourse.

A

A concept: *Halk Terbiyesi*

In January 1931, Hamit Zübeyr gave a speech on 'Popular Education' (*Halk Terbiyesi*)⁶⁸ at the Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) building in Ankara.⁶⁹ Three articles presenting institutions of Adult/Popular Education in various European countries were published in 1929 and 1930 in *Türk Yurdu*, the journal of the Turkish Hearths.⁷⁰ Within 1931 the venue these debates were taking place, the *Türk Ocakları*, was closed and, in 1932, the People's Houses, a network of adult education centers directly administered by the People's Republican Party, was established. Nevertheless, the interest continued. In the first volume alone (1933) of *Ülkü*, the journal of the People's House of Ankara, seven articles treating the issue of Popular Education in Turkey and Europe appeared.⁷¹ It is evident that the term *Halk Terbiyesi* and what it denoted appeared repeatedly around the year 1930, especially with the establishment of the Halkevleri institution. If this growing interest in Popular Education in the beginning of the 1930s is compared to the references to the term *Halk Terbiyesi* during the previous period it becomes evident that Popular Education became an issue of particular importance, debated among intellectuals and circles within the regime, around 1930.⁷² The repercussions of the 1929 crisis, the Free Party experiment with a loyal opposition and the consequent Menemen incident alarmed the ruling elite of the regime's unpopularity among the population and of the failure of the reforms to take roots among the people.

⁶⁸ *Halk Terbiyesi* is literally translated as 'training of the people/people's training'. Here we prefer to use the less precise but more elegant 'Popular Education'.

⁶⁹ Hamit Zübeyr (Koşay), *Halk Terbiyesi* (Ankara: Köy Hocası Matbaası, 1931).

⁷⁰ S. Laslo, Faşist Halk Terbiyesi, *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 4, (1930); F. Yozsef, "Fin Yüksek Halk mektepleri", *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 1, No 24- 218, (1929); n. a., "Yugoslavya'da İslav Sokol Kongresi", *Türk Yurdu*, V. 5/24, No 32/226, (1930).

⁷¹ Osman Halit, "Cumhuriyette Halk Terbiyesi", *Ülkü*, No 9, (October, 1933); Kazım Namı, "Cumhuriyet Terbiyesi", *Ülkü*, No 10, (November, 1933); H. Z. Koşay, "Halk terbiyesi Vasıtaları", *Ülkü*, No 2, (March, 1933); Nusret Kemal, "Sovyetlerde Bayram ve Terbiye", *Ülkü*, No 9, (October, 1933); Nusret Kemal, "İnkılap Terbiyesi", *Ülkü*, No 7, (August, 1933); R. Ş., "Garp Memleketlerinde Halk Terbiyesi", *Ülkü*, No 4, (May, 1933); M. Saffet, "İnkılap Terbiyesi", *Ülkü*, No 8, (August, 1933); S.S. Tarjan, "İtalya'da Halk ve Gençlik Teşkilatı", *Ülkü*, No 3, (April, 1933).

⁷² Only one article seems to have been published on *Halk Terbiyesi* in the 1920s, at least according to the Cumhuriyet Dönemi Makalalar Bibliyografyası. İsmail Hakkı, "Halk Terbiyesi", *Muallimler Mecmuası*, No 50-51, (İstanbul, 1927).

The emergence of the concept of Popular Education at that time was not coincidental with the political unrest around the year 1930. It has to be understood as a part of a conscious attempt by the ruling elite to win the population to the reform movement. The significance of Popular Education, beginning in the early 1930s, can be also seen in the creation of an ‘institution of Popular Education’, as the Halkevleri were considered. The PRP’s General Secretary and a very influential political figure of the period, Recep Peker,⁷³ stated the following at the opening ceremony of the first 14 People’s Houses in February 1932:

Friends; we have firmly decided to raise the national unity in a painstaking work and assemble all the fellow citizens under the roof of the Halkevleri that have been created with a mentality that sees all the sincere and Turkish fellow citizens in a place of equal honor.

The school is the classical institution a country has to prepare the nation for the future. However, in order to organize and educate the modern nations as an entity, the usual methods and the regular efforts are not sufficient. However, if you want to create a nation (milletleşmek) in this century, to create a community on national qualities/values (milletçe kütleleşmek), you’ll have to create the basis of a popular education (bir halk terbiyesi) at the same time with schools, and after it, that will make the people work together as an unit.⁷⁴

Although the term *Halk Terbiyesi*, as well as the state’s direct involvement in Popular Education, emerged in the 1930s, ideas and activities that were closely related to what in 1930 came to be referred to as *Halk Terbiyesi* had existed before, an immediate example being the *Türk Ocakları* association. Germane as this concept was to the institution under treatment in this thesis, our aim here is to discuss the ‘prehistory’ of the term; to investigate upon the emergence of ideas and activities aiming at ‘educating’ or ‘awakening’ the people; and to come to see how and for what reasons the term came so vigorously to the forefront in 1930.

Before starting this ‘archeological’ survey, it is necessary to understand what the term stands for, or at least how the term was defined in the 1930s. In the following passage Hamit Zübeyr gives an outline of what *Halk Terbiyesi* stands for.

How can we raise the level of civilization of the villager? The sole remedy is Halk Terbiyesi. What is Halk Terbiyesi? It is the work carried out in order to organize the nation and to bring

⁷³ For Peker’s biography see Ahmet Yıldız, “Recep Peker”, in Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (eds.), *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm*, Volume 2, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 58 – 63.

⁷⁴ Recep (Peker), “Halkevleri Açılma Nutku”, pp. 6-8.

out our national values. It means to educate the soul by working the feelings, thoughts and the demands of the individual in a way that is appropriate for the whole nation's ideal. It means to knead the nation's units that have come apart to many pieces as a result of different accents, levels of civilization and religious sects, into a social body, into the state (haline) of a nation. It means to give a share of the national culture back to the broad strata of the Turkish nation, to make the conscious groups (küme) become part of the political and social life of the Turkish nation. It means to make them evolve and progress. This is something we cannot just leave to schools. Adults also need to be educated in this way. (...)

The aim of Halk Terbiyesi is not just to offer knowledge. Its primary aim is to stir up the desire to move forward and become civilized; to make this desire permanent; to inspire the people to educate itself; to make the people a part of this process.⁷⁵

The same author states that the “first aim (of popular education) is national consciousness and racial civilization (*ırki medeniyet*). The second is to raise the human soul. The means to achieve these are merry discussions, national dances, folk plays and sports, all within a moral framework (*ahlak çerçevesi*).”

⁷⁶ In another article in *Ülkü*, R. S. argues the following:

In the progressive western countries next to the school structure that works in the direction of educating the children there is a structure that strives to make the working generations live better off and happier. These activities and structures are defined as Popular Education. Halk Terbiyesi tries to educate those who have not managed to be educated for a variety of reasons; to increase the skills and the knowledge of those educated; to transform them into useful and valuable members of the society.⁷⁷

Based on the above definitions, it is possible to offer a first outline of what the term signifies. Firstly, all the above authors agree on the inadequacy and/or inability of the state educational system to ‘educate’ the people, especially the villagers that make up the majority of the Turkish population. Adults compose a large part of the ‘uneducated’ population as well. Popular Education, then, denotes the necessity to educate these segments of the population that the school cannot touch.

Secondly, the contents of this ‘educative enterprise’, or else the aims of *Halk Terbiyesi*, are manifold. The authors refer to the need to ‘mold’ the ‘people’ into a nation. The aim is to make the ‘people’ cognizant of themselves

⁷⁵ Koşay, “Halk terbiyesi Vasıtaları”, pp. 152 – 3.

⁷⁶ Hamit Zübeyr, *Halk Terbiyesi*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ R. Ş., “Garp Memleketlerinde Halk Terbiyesi”, p. 295.

as a nation, of being citizens of the Turkish Republic. This means to accept for themselves an identity that had been constructed for them by the state. More specifically, this entails that the ‘people’ are to understand and agree to the principles and reforms that were introduced by the regime. Apart from being a form of ‘civic training’, *Halk Terbiyesi* also aims at the ‘raising of the level of civilization of the people’. Its aim is to create a ‘People’ that would have both ‘modern’ and ‘national’ qualities. In Şükrü Kaya’s words, “the decisions and activities of the People’s House must be carried out in an entirely western, modern and national mentality”.⁷⁸

A third characteristic aspect of the term Popular Education emerges if we consider what the word ‘halk’ denotes. The term ‘people’, used in the sources of the period, is ambiguous; on the one hand, the term refers to the nation, on the other it seems that the ‘people’, or else the ‘common people’ (*asul halk*), signifies the large majority of the population – in contrast to the intellectuals - that has not yet reached the level of civilization the elite or intellectuals have supposedly achieved. In that sense, an implicit distinction is located in the core of the term *Halk Terbiyesi*; the division between the ‘common people’ and the intellectuals. The intellectual, or the ‘citizen’ is a person educated in the principles of the Republic, cognizant of his/her duties and rights, devotee of the reform movement, in a word, a person who is able to act as a representative of the Republic. The movement of ‘Popular Education’ then requires that these “conscious groups become part of the political and social life of the Turkish nation”, in Hamit Zübeyr’s words. The ‘people’, in contrast, is the large part of the population, uneducated and usually still attached to a rejected by the elite ‘past’, a majority that has not yet discovered its real self, almost a ‘child’⁷⁹ that needs to be instructed.⁸⁰ In this perspective, Popular Education comes to mean the envisaged process by which the ‘common people’ are to be ‘educated’ by the intellectuals in order to become aware of their own identity – in reality the identity the ruling elite has carved for them, in other words, to accept and attach themselves to the state’s reforms and principles, to become model citizens of the Turkish Republic.

The reference to childhood and the expressed need to educate and civilize the ‘people’ - apparently still in a state of infancy – to the level of a modern citizen aptly conveys a sense of belatedness, of still being unqualified for that task, which many intellectuals and bureaucrats present as a cause, or even an excuse, for not being able on their part to bestow upon this child-like, ‘unprepared’ people the status and rights of a community of citizens. Recep Peker for instance was adamant and quite expressive in declaring this state of inapplicability and delay: “Democracy is not a dogma, a paragraph of the

⁷⁸ Şükrü Kaya, *Halkevleri ve ödevimiz*, TC Ordu ilbaylığı (Ordu: Gürses Matbaası, 1938), p. 22.

⁷⁹ Koşay, one of the intellectuals dwelling on the issue of Popular education, argues that “the people exactly like children are captivated by the picture” (*halk tıpkı çocuk gibi resme meftundur*); in Koşay, “Halk terbiyesi Vasıtaları”, p. 154.

⁸⁰ Funda Cantek, *‘Yaban’lar ve Yerliler. Başkent olma sürecinde Ankara* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), p. 34.

Kuran (*ayet*). It is a spirit (*bir ruh, bir espri ve bir manadır*) and a meaning. If the works to be done are carried out after being passed from a filter called reason (*akıl*) and in accordance with a necessity called place (*muhit*) then they are useful and take roots. Orange trees cannot grow on mount Zigana”.⁸¹ Neither the ‘people’ then possessed the necessary ‘reason’, nor the inescapable place they occupied was ready for the ‘luxury’ of the ‘orange groves’ of democracy. The people have to be instructed, ‘trained’ into citizenship, into being ‘civilized’ and ‘national’ by means of ‘Popular Education’.

The choice of words is probably not totally coincidental: the primary meaning and connotation of the term *terbiye* is ‘(training in) good manners’, ‘civilized behavior’, ‘learning through practice’ rather than ‘knowledge’, ‘education’ and ‘learning through teaching’ the term *maarif*, or later *eğitim* connotes. Even today in Turkey ‘terbiyeli’ is a person with ‘good manners’, ‘civil’, ‘well-bred’, while ‘terbiyesiz’ (rarely *edepsiz*) is the uncouth, impolite, unsophisticated/unrefined and rude person, bearing close semantic similarities with words used to describe people (and/or things related to people) from villages or the countryside (*köylü, taşralı, kurnaz*). Viewed from such an etymological perspective, *Halk Terbiyesi* appears as a civilizing operation, almost a colonial mission to civilize the ‘indigene’, an internal indigenous ‘other’ though, quite dissimilar from the indigenous populations the colonial powers conquered and occupied.

Peker’s spatial metaphor can also be read upon the temporal axis.⁸² A prominent intellectual of the period, the peasantist Nusret Kemal (Köymen) offers such an example where the process by which the state educates the people can be easily understood in temporal terms. He wrote of the ‘duty’ of the populist state to take the necessary measures in order to have the ‘people’ reach its own level of culture and consciousness that will make them capable of administering themselves. As a result of these measures, “those among the people who reach this level will automatically be made partners in the administration of the country”.⁸³ The belatedness, the ‘time lag’ between the modern (west, Europe, colonizer, etc) and the backward local (east, colony, islam, etc) of the colonial/orientalist discourse, also appears at the centre of the discourse of the non-western indigenous elites that adopts a similar historicity and sense of time and place.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Speech of Recep Peker on the new Party program on the 13th of May 1935 in *CHP Genel Sekreter Söylevleri* (Ankara, 1935), p. 33.

⁸² For a similar perspective see Meltem Ahıska, “Occidentalism: The Historical fantasy of the Modern”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102, 2/3 (2003).

⁸³ Nusret Kemal (Köymen), “Halkçılık”, *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 3, (April 1933), p. 187.

⁸⁴ Meltem Ahıska, “Occidentalism: The Historical fantasy of the Modern”; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 7-10.

'Towards the People': Ottoman/Turkish Associations in the turmoil years 1908 - 1923

The need to 'educate' the people was heard before the 1930s, during the late 19th century, especially in relation to issues such as the simplification of the language in order to become more intelligible to the people.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the issue of awakening the people was repeatedly raised during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. The 1908 Young Turk revolution, the subsequent establishment of various social and political associations, and the publications' boom that followed, had as an effect the creation of a more open than before public space wherein intellectual and political figures were expressing the need to awaken the people in order to save the threatened state.

Among these intellectuals, a number of Russian Muslims played a prominent and influential role. These intellectuals differed from their Ottoman colleagues in several respects. They had been Muslim citizens of a Christian state. Most of the 'Russian Muslim' intellectuals, men like Yusuf Akçura, Ismail Gasprinski, Ahmet Ağaoğlu and Hüseyinzade Ali, had been educated in Russian schools and were aware of the shortcomings of the old *medrese* type of education.⁸⁶ They had stressed the importance of education in raising the national consciousness of the people.⁸⁷ Some of them were aware of, and had been deeply influenced by the (Narodnik) Populist movement in the late 19th century Russia. Hüseyinzade Ali was reported to have taken part in the Narodnik movement in Russia.⁸⁸ It is not a coincidence then that in 1912 the name *Halka Dođru* (Towards the People) was given to a journal published by the *Türk Ocakları*. 'Towards the people' was the slogan of the Russian populists, and Hüseyinzade Ali was almost certainly the one who introduced it.⁸⁹

Ottoman intellectuals were also emphasizing the need to awaken the people by means of education. François Georgeon indicates that the emergence of nationalism among the non-Muslim populations of the Ottoman Empire alarmed the Ottoman intelligentsia. The emerging nationalism of their non-Muslim classmates seems to be one of the reasons for which a number of students of the Military School of Medicine decided to form an association

⁸⁵ David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876 – 1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), pp. 56 – 80.

⁸⁶ Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (California: University of California Press, 1998).

⁸⁷ Shissler, A. Holly, *Between two Empires. Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: Tauris, 2003), p. 170.

⁸⁸ İlhan Tekeli and Gencay Şaylan, "Türkiye' de halkçılık ideolojisinin evrimi", *Toplum ve Bilim*, No 6-7, (Summer-Fall, 1978), p. 57. It has been also argued that Russian populism had also indirectly influenced the Young Turks this time through their cooperation with Slav intellectuals against the Sultanate regime in Macedonia.

⁸⁹ François Georgeon, *Aux origines du nationalisme Turc. Yusuf Akçura (1876 - 1935)*, (Paris: ADPF, 1980), pp. 66-7.

with the direct aim to ‘awaken the people’, a desire that led to the creation of the *Türk Ocakları*.⁹⁰

Ziya Gökalp, who came to be known as one of the fathers of Turkish nationalism, was undoubtedly one of the most influential thinkers of this turbulent era. His writings inspired many of his contemporaries, among them the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, who were deciding upon the country’s fate during that period. One of the recurrent themes of his writings was the need to awaken the people. His famous distinction between civilization and culture is of great use here. In his theoretical scheme, Gökalp states that the ‘intellectuals’, whom he considers as the conveyors of civilization that is one and essentially international, should reach the ‘people’, who are the possessors of the real, pure Turkish culture, with the double aim to bring civilization to the people on the one hand, and, on the other, to educate themselves into the national culture that is only to be found among the people. In this framework, “the intellectuals and the thinkers of a nation constitute its elite. The members of the elite are separated from the masses by their higher education and learning. It is they who ought to go to the people.”⁹¹ The word ‘People’ in Gökalpian terms connotes “the main bulk of a nation excluding the elite”, the elite being “intellectuals and thinkers”.⁹²

What is evident from the above extracts is an explicit distinction between the elites – described as intellectuals – and the people, a distinction also to be found in the core of the Kemalist discourse implicitly hidden behind the populist overtones. Gökalp, then, is preaching for a move ‘towards the people’ by the intellectuals in order to realize his ‘synthesis’ of civilization and culture, between the elites and the people. It is almost a commonplace to stress Gökalp’s influence on his contemporaries and the impact of his ideas on the policies of the Turkish Republic after 1923, but we cannot but underline here the close relation of his suggestions to the intellectuals to study the folklore and literature of the people, as well as his short works on folklore and literature, with the aims of the Halkevleri in the 1930s and 40s to collect folk traditions, poems, and establish museums of folk art.

Gökalp, the circle of “Russian Muslims”, as well as other Ottoman scholars, were engaged in publishing, as editors of or contributors to the journals of the era. Moreover, they were among the founding members of associations that had among their aims to reach and educate the people. The need to educate and enlighten the people can be seen in the founding texts of a number of associations of the period: the declaration of the *Türk Derneği* (1908);⁹³ the 1915 bylaws of the *Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti*;⁹⁴ the 1912

⁹⁰ Georgeon, *Aux origines*, p. 67.

⁹¹ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp* (London, 1959), p. 259; extract from Gökalp’s article ‘Halka Doğru’.

⁹² Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism*, p. 127.

⁹³ Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 7-20.

⁹⁴ İsmayil Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, *Halkın Evi* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1950), pp. 22-4.

Nizamname of the Turkish Hearth (1912);⁹⁵ the bylaws of the *Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti* (1919)⁹⁶ and of the *Halka Doğru Cemiyeti* of Izmir (1916),⁹⁷ to state a few.

Türk Derneği (Turkish Association) was formed in 1908 by a number of scholars, the most prominent of them being Yusuf Akçura. According to the “Declaration of the Turkish Association”, published in the second issue of their publishing organ *Türk Derneği*, aims of the Association were to spread the Ottoman – Turkish language among all Ottomans, publish books in order to complete the education of all Turks, set up libraries and similar educational activities. The declaration speaks of an Ottoman language and of Ottomans, but at the same time stresses its Turkish character.⁹⁸ Moreover, it refers to the education not only of the Ottoman Turks, but also of ‘all Turks’, that is Turks living in other states, a direct influence of the ‘Turkists’, the Muslims coming from Russia. The importance of this declaration for this thesis lies in the call for education of the Turks, by means of spreading the knowledge of the Ottoman Turkish language, the opening of libraries, and the publication of books, all three of which were considered instruments of ‘Popular Education’ in the 1930s.

Undoubtedly the most famous intellectual center of the Young Turk Period was the Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) society. The initiative for the establishment of the Turkish Hearth came from the students of the Military Medical School, who were alarmed by the spreading of nationalist/separatist ideas among the non-Muslim students of their School. In a statement composed by Hüseyin Ragıp Baydır dated 24 May 1911, the Medical students declared the need for the spreading of education among the people. They suggested that a national and social institution with branches in both Anatolia and Rumelia must be established. Together with this statement, the students visited intellectuals and tried to win their support for their cause. Among the intellectuals the students contacted, Ahmet Ferit proposed the creation of a club that would gather the Turkish youth and have as its aim to awaken the common people. Various means would be used to succeed in this endeavor, such as the publication of books and brochures, the offering of material and moral aid to schools, etc.⁹⁹ Georgeon evaluates the establishment of the Turkish Hearth association as a reflex of defense of the intellectuals and students facing the critical state of the Empire. Their aim was to maintain the Ottoman state

⁹⁵ Francois Georgeon, “Les Foyers Turcs à l’ époque Kemalist (1923 - 1931)”, *Turcica*, XIV, (1982), p. 169. Also in Zafer Toprak, “Osmanlı Narodnikleri : Halka Doğru gidenler”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, 24, (1984), p. 70.

⁹⁶ *Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti esas nizamnamesi* (İstanbul, 1335 [1919]).

⁹⁷ Toprak, “Osmanlı Narodnikleri”, p. 75.

⁹⁸ Arai, *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 7-20.

⁹⁹ Arai, *Turkish Nationalism*, pp. 72-3.

against external enemies and centrifugal forces, namely the development of nationalism among the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire.¹⁰⁰

Some time after the defeat in the Balkan Wars, İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu gave a speech and published a brochure about the “education of the people” (*Terbiyeyi Avam*). In his book about the People’s Houses published in 1950, he writes a small history of popular education in Turkey stressing the importance of the political and social associations of the period after the 1908 revolution, especially the Committee of Union and Progress, the Turkish Hearths and the *Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti*.¹⁰¹

In 1912, within the Turkish Hearth association a new movement, called *Halka Doğru* (Towards the People), appeared. It started with the publication of a new journal with the same name. Yusuf Akçura, director of the *Türk Yurdu*, was among the founders of this journal. *Halka Doğru* was a publication related to the *Türk Yurdu* journal; while the latter was a more scientific literary review, *Halka Doğru* was a periodical published in the simple language, accessible to everyone, and treating practical problems and issues of education. Most of the contributors of *Halka Doğru* can also be found in the redaction committee of *Türk Yurdu*; Halide Edib, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Yusuf Akçura, Celal Sahir, Hüseyinzade Ali, Ziya Gökalp.¹⁰² The use of the Russian populists’ slogan ‘towards the People’ was not of course a coincidence, as the presence of the Russian Muslim intellectuals suggests. In 1916, the *Halka Doğru Cemiyeti* of İzmir was founded. The Bylaws of this association state the aims, as well as the proposed actions, of the Association. Article 2 declares that the aims of the Association are to set up libraries with works that would enlighten the people and help them progress, to publish journals, open reading rooms, organize scientific competitions, “in short, to raise the moral, economic and social level of the people”.¹⁰³

Parallel to the gradual emergence of the concept of the ‘people’ and the ensuing need to train the population into being ‘the people’, the concept of ‘youth’ as a separate category of the population that also needs special treatment and attention appears. Following the Balkan Wars the Unionist leadership established a number of youth associations with the aim to prepare the youth of the country for war. The Ottoman Strength Clubs (*Osmanlı Güç dernekleri*) were founded by the war ministry in 1914. The Turkish Strength Association (*Türk Gücü cemiyeti*) was established by Cemal Paşa the previous year. Selim Sırrı, an ex army officer, later to become famous as the introducer of Swedish Gymnastics in Turkey wrote an article in 1915 on “how to prepare

¹⁰⁰ Francois Georgeon, “Les Foyers Turcs à l’ époque Kemalist (1923 - 1931)”, *Turcica*, XIV, (1982), p. 169. Also in Zafer Toprak, “Osmanlı Narodnikleri : Halka Doğru gidenler”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, 24, (1984), p. 70.

¹⁰¹ İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, *Halkın Evi* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1950), pp. 18 – 28.

¹⁰² Georgeon, *Aux origines*, pp. 66-7.

¹⁰³ Toprak, “Osmanlı Narodnikleri”, p. 75.

the youth for military service” (*gençler askerliğe nasıl hazırlanmalı*). His emphasis was on the Turkish youth as the future soldiers.¹⁰⁴

In 1918, yet another Association stemming from the Turkish Hearth Society was founded under the name *Köycüler Cemiyeti* (Villagists’ Association) by a group of doctors active within the Turkish Hearth association. Reşit Galib, a young idealist doctor, later to become Education Minister of the Republic of Turkey, was among the founding members of the Association. The first paragraph of the short statute of the *Köycüler Cemiyeti* stated the following: “in Istanbul, on the 25th of November 1334 (1918) an association under the name *Köycüler Cemiyeti* was founded with the aim to provide help to the villagers in the fields of education and hygiene while working among them in a (*insaniyetkar bir tarzda*) humanitarian manner.”¹⁰⁵ In 1919, a group of members of the association – all of them doctors – went to Kayseri and settled in nearby villages in order to take care and treat the villagers. Uluğ İğdemir, writing about his old friend Reşit Galib, described his life as one of a missionary.¹⁰⁶ The depiction of Reşit Galib, who was a prominent member of the Turkish Hearths Association and a person engaged personally into the movement to educate the people and raise their level of civilization, as a missionary, highlights the distance between intellectuals – elites and the people, a distance that lies in the foundations of the ideas and activities of the advocates of ‘Popular Education’ movements.

Taken together with the *Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti* established in İstanbul roughly the same period, (1335 [1919]), the ‘Villagist Association’ was a natural and logical extension, or part of the whole ‘Popular Education’ movement emerging among the intellectuals of the period. The vast majority of ‘the People’ they were aspiring to ‘educate’ and ‘enlighten’ were peasants living in villages. The Villagist trait, composing an integral and significant part of ‘Halk Terbiyesi’, received increased interest during the chaotic years of the almost continuous warfare till 1922. Interestingly enough, the war brought many elite figures into greater contact with the villagers. Consider the words Mustafa Kemal devoted in a letter to a female friend to his peasant soldiers in Gallipoli, at once demeaning and respectful: “My soldiers are very brave. Their private beliefs make it easier to carry out orders which send them to their death. They see only two supernatural outcomes: victory for the faith or martyrdom. Do you know what the second means? It is to go straight to heaven. There, the houris, God’s most beautiful women, will meet them and will satisfy their desires for all eternity. What great happiness?”¹⁰⁷ The villager and village life was introduced in the literary canon in essence during the

¹⁰⁴ All information on youth associations is taken from Handan Nezir Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey. The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: Tauris, 2005), 163 – 172.

¹⁰⁵ Uluğ İğdemir, *Yılların içinde* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976), p. 292.

¹⁰⁶ İğdemir, *Yılların içinde*, p. 293.

¹⁰⁷ Given in Mango, *Atatürk*, p. 150.

Republican Period, a fact that by itself only exhibits the growing interest of the elites in the peasant.¹⁰⁸

In spite of their aims, the activities of the Turkish Heart Association, the Villagists and the *Halka Doğru* movement remained rather trivial due to the extraordinary circumstances of the last years of the Ottoman Empire. The First World War, the War of Independence, and the consequent establishment of the Republic of Turkey in place of the defeated Ottoman Empire had an enormous impact on the existence and activities of the Associations we discussed above, as well as on the lives and ideas of the intellectuals we mentioned. The situation in 1923 was completely different from the preexisting order. The Ottoman Empire had disappeared together with any appeals to an Ottoman state or identity. The outcome of the Great War had destroyed any hopes and dreams of a 'Turkic' state that would unite the Turkic peoples of the former Russian Empire with the Ottomans. The remainder became the only option: a new state devoid of Christian minorities, with an almost totally Muslim population. The Turkish Hearths continued to exist after 1923, since they had wholeheartedly supported, as well as most of their influential members, the Nationalist Government of Ankara during the War of Independence.

The Turkish Hearths Association in the Republican Period

The 1924 Congress of the Turkish Hearths ratified the new statute of the Turkish Hearts (*Türk Ocakları Yasası* 1925). Article 2 defines the geographical domain wherein the Hearths would exercise their activities. It states that the Hearths would work among the Turks, having as their aim to reinforce the national consciousness and the Turkish culture, facilitate the progress of civilization and hygiene, as well as the development of the national economy. Article 3 forbids the Hearths' connection with any political Party. It is stated that the members are forbidden to use the Association for political purposes. Georgeon in his article on the Turkish Hearths in the Republican era gives an overview of their structure and their growth in the 1920s. He also calculates that almost 70% of the Hearths' members belonged to what we can call 'western' elite, in a broad sense of the term, that is the parts of society that had a 'modern' or 'western' type education, mainly teachers, doctors, officers, lawyers and state functionaries.¹⁰⁹ According to the bylaws of the Hearths, it was extremely difficult for a person to become a member. It seems that this

¹⁰⁸ The very first novels and short stories that depict or refer to peasants and village life appear during the late 1910s. Reşat Nuri's *Çalılıkıuşu*, published in 1922, was one of the first and probably the most popular novel about life in a village. See Carole Rathbun, *The Village in the Turkish Novel and Short Story 1920 to 1955* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1972), pp. 18 - 21; Ramazan Kaplan, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Romanında Köy* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1997), pp. 33 - 63. Mehmet Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses and the cult of the peasant in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34 (4), (1998). For more information on the Villagist movement see Chapter 8 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁹ All information is drawn from Georgeon, "Les Foyers Turks à l' époque Kemalist (1923 - 1931)", *Turcica*, XIV, (1982).

was a conscious choice of their executives who were constantly afraid of the possibility of 'reactionary' elements infiltrating the Association. From another point of view this exclusionary mentality that differentiated between the rulers, state - functionaries and the rest of the population had a long past and can be found in the political discourse of the state elites of the Ottoman Empire.

Even though the members' statistics show that the majority came from the educated segments of the Turkish society, the Activities Programme of the Turkish Hearths gave great emphasis on the contact with the common people. The *Türk Ocakları Mesai Programı* (Activities Program of the Turkish Hearths), published in 1926, laid the foundations of their intended activities. According to the Program, every Hearth was supposed to organize a conference once a week on Fridays for the benefit of instructing the people on various subjects, such as economical issues, history, geography, local researches, fine arts, and other relevant subjects. The Hearths were also to establish public libraries, as well as to collect photographs of the natural beauties of their region. Moreover, every Branch was requested to set up a lecture Hall, where journals and periodicals would be exhibited. They were also advised to organize exhibitions of local products and artifacts, and to work for the preservation of the Turkish culture by assembling and recording traditions, folk songs, dances and music. The objectives of the members of the pre-war Villagist movement of the *Köycüler Cemiyeti* and the *Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti* were also to be continued, given that the Activities Program considered as one of the Society's aims to 'go to the People', to the villagers, examine the population, distribute medicines, fight against contagious diseases, and to help ameliorate the local production means. Finally, the branches of the association were asked to open courses of foreign languages, commercial techniques, and relevant subjects.

The activities of the Turkish Hearths described in their Program adopt a more systematized than before form. These activities can be seen as a continuation of the aims and projects of the pre-war *Türk Ocağı* taken together with the *Halka Doğru* movement and the *Köycüler Cemiyeti*. In place of a sometimes rather romantic, unplanned mission to 'civilize' the 'common people', which in most cases never went beyond the realm of wishful thinking in the Young Turk era, we now observe the drawing of a more organized operational plan.

The structure and organization of their activities in line with a meticulous program indicate that the 1920s was a period of expansion for the Turkish Hearths. This development is also testified by their growth in absolute numbers. In 1924 there were 71 branches of the Hearths and their budget did not exceed an amount of 8.900 T. Liras. In 1931, year of their dissolution, the Hearths had 267 branches, over 32.000 members, and a budget of 1.500.00 liras. Interestingly enough, as Georgeon notices, before 1925 almost all of their branches were located in the western regions of Turkey and along the Black Sea coastline. The branches opened after 1925, though, were mostly

established east of the Adana – Trabzon line. Georgeon convincingly argues that this was the result of a conscious policy of the Hearths that was in line with their aims, since the Eastern part of Turkey was, and still is, considered the most ‘backward’ area with a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups. In that sense, the ‘people’ of the eastern part of Turkey were considered more ‘in need of education’. If we also take into consideration the ‘nationalistic’ overtones of the Turkish Hearths together with the existence of large ethnic minorities in the east, then Georgeon’s observation immediately becomes more credible.

Upon a closer look at the *Türk Ocakları Mesai Programı*, the ideas of Ziya Gökalp can be easily tracked. More specifically, his famous distinction between civilization and culture is echoed in such activities as the collection of folk traditions and the opening of museums of local traditional artifacts and products, wherein the local, national, and ‘pure’ Turkish culture is to be saved from extinction, collected, systematized and rejuvenated. The drive ‘towards the people’ he, as well as other intellectuals, had preached for is also embedded in a number of activities that were planned to take place among the people, in the villages, such as medical treatment and distribution of medicines. The ‘Gökalpian synthesis’, wherein the intellectuals will bring ‘civilization’ to the people and, at the same time, re-immerse themselves in the Turkish culture of the people, is reproduced in the *Mesai Programı*.

The activities of the Turkish Hearths can be broadly put into three major categories. Firstly, we can speak of educational and/or propaganda activities, such as the conferences, libraries and courses the Hearths were organizing. The works of the old Villagers’ Association (*Köycüler Cemiyeti*) fall into a second category. The Hearths were working towards the sanitary, educational and economic condition of the villagers by promoting the improvement of the economic and material conditions of the people, mainly by introducing new methods of cultivation and production. Finally, their folklorist activities, such as the collection of traditional forms of culture and the opening of museums, make up a third category. In the last two categories, we see, again, the influence of Gökalp’s teachings: the intellectuals bring ‘civilization’ to and take ‘culture’ from the people.

What is not explicitly stated in the *Türk Ocakları Mesai Programı*, but Georgeon describes as one of the Hearths’ primary activities, is their active participation in the state’s reform program, mainly in diffusing the reforms to the masses. In Hamdullah Suphi’s words, “the Hearths are the guardians (*bekçi*) of the revolution”.¹¹⁰ In 1928, Propaganda Committees (*irşad heyeti*) existed in 14 Branches. In the Trabzon Turkish Heart an *İnkılap işleri* (Revolutionary works) Committee was set up. It was composed of a school principal and two teachers, who were visiting villages to introduce the ideas of Kemalism and of the revolution to the villagers. Moreover, the Turkish Hearths took an active part in the introduction of the Latin alphabet by opening courses

¹¹⁰ Georgeon, “Les Foyers”, p. 203.

and teaching thousands of citizens the new script. The Hearths, throughout the 1920s, were closely working with the state and acted as the educational and cultural arm of the regime. They supported the regime and its reforms, tried to disseminate its ideology and, finally, tied themselves to the Party. At the 1927 Congress the Turkish Hearths decided to act as 'cultural branches' of the RPP. The Bylaws of the ruling Party approved at the Congress stipulated that the Party Inspectors would investigate the Hearths activities and structures, and that they could even intervene in the Hearths' policies and in the election of their executives.¹¹¹

If we are then to look at the *Türk Ocakları* association more broadly, we can firstly discern a strong connection with the Turkish Hearth and their ideas/activities during the Young Turk era. This continuation becomes more evident when looking at their leading cadres, which include most of the influential intellectuals of the previous period. Secondly, the *Türk Ocakları* of the Republican period adopted a more systematized than their predecessor structure and form of activities, and expanded enormously during the 1920s (branches, members, budget). Finally, the content of their program and works became more concrete, as they had to work on a more or less set, defined political and ideological setting than before. In other words, their aims became clearer in the context of the Kemalist reform movement.

In short, what was defined as *Halk Terbiyesi* around the year 1930 and became the program of the People's Houses in a form even more systematized than the *Türk Ocakları Mesai Programı*, can be seen as a developed and refined form of a set of ideas and practices that had been frequently heard since the Second Constitutional Period.

1930: the turning point

The year 1930 is considered a turning point in the history of modern Turkey. A series of events led the leading cadres of the state to move towards a more authoritarian restructuring of the regime. More specifically, the unsuccessful experiment at a loyal opposition with the Free Party and the events that occurred during its short life, as well as the Menemen incident, had a great impact on the ruling elite of the period, and, consequently on the

¹¹¹ The Hearths chairman, Hamdullah Suphi, was the only delegate to disagree in vain and speak against the 40th article of the 1927 Party Bylaws that curtailed the independent/autonomous status of the Turkish Hearths. Tuncay Dursun, *Tek Parti Dönemindeki Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Büyük Kurultayları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), pp. 20 - 1.

political and social life of the era.¹¹² It has been argued before that the innovations in the political and social life the Kemalist elite introduced after the Free Party experiment in multi party politics were reactions to the issues the Free Party and other developments, like the Menemen incident, had brought to the surface.¹¹³ Following the dissolution of the Free Party, the ruling elite went through a period of 'soul-searching',¹¹⁴ Atatürk's long investigation trip throughout the country seems to suggest.¹¹⁵ An imminent effect was the expansion of the ruling Party's prerogatives and powers especially in relation to non-Party associations, with parallel attempts to increase the control of the Party leadership over the provincial Party structure, a tendency that had already been initiated with the first organizational attempt at the 1927 Party Congress.

First of all, a wide set of changes were initiated in the People's Republican Party, especially after the 3rd Party Congress in May 1931. Modifications of the Party's by-laws were introduced and a number of prominent deputies of the Free Party were included in the CHP. "The 1931 reorganization, the immediate response to the events of the Free Party period, was a combination of tightening the control of the top echelon of leaders over the party's central organs, and decentralization at the province level."¹¹⁶

The trend to close down independent cultural or political clubs and associations, or control them directly, grew during this period, under the slogan of unifying the forces of the Revolution.¹¹⁷ Student Unions, Teachers' Unions, Journalists' society, the Reserve Officers' Association, the Union of Turkish Women, Mason Lodges were either abolished, or decided themselves, probably following directives, to dissolve or join party associations.¹¹⁸ The tendency towards the centralization of power within the party and the intention to deal with those forces that were out of reach of the regime can also be seen in other instances, such as the University reform, carried out in 1933. It was an example of how "the aim of creating a university that would be a supporter of the political power and that would defend the principles of the Turkish Revolution was realized."¹¹⁹

¹¹² Walter Weiker, *Political tutelage and democracy in Turkey* (Leiden, 1973). Mete Tunçay, *T. C. 'nde tek-parti Yönetiminin kurulması (1923-1931)*, (Ankara, 1981).

¹¹³ Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de Tek-parti Yönetimi ve siyasal katılım (1923 - 1945)*, (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1992); Yılmaz Gülcan, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (1923 - 1946)*, (İstanbul, 2001), pp. 155-62.

¹¹⁴ For the tremendous effect the short Free Party experience had on the ruling Party see Cemil Koçak, *İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), especially pp. 343 - 508 for a number of reports by Party men.

¹¹⁵ Ahmet Hamdi Başar, *Atatürk ile üç ay ve 1930 dan sonra Türkiye* (Ankara, 1981).

¹¹⁶ Walter Weiker, *Political tutelage*, p. 193.

¹¹⁷ M. Asım Karaömerlioglu, "The People's Houses and the cult of the peasant in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol 34, No 4, (1998), p. 68; Tunçay, *T. C. 'nde tek-parti Yönetiminin kurulması*, p. 297.

¹¹⁸ M. Asım Karaömerlioglu, "The People's Houses and the cult of the peasant in Turkey", p. 68, 86 (footnote 6); Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye'de tek parti yönetimi* (İstanbul, 1983), p. 62, 78-86.

¹¹⁹ Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye'de tek parti yönetimi*, p. 72; Ali Arslan, *Darülfünun' dan Üniversiteye* (İstanbul, 1995).

Within such a political environment the term ‘Popular Education’ becomes a catchword, as it epitomizes the regime’s aspirations and efforts to win over the population to their ‘ideal’, in other words to propagate the reforms that had been implemented since 1923, but failed to win the acceptance of the people. This is evident in the preamble of the statute of the People’s Houses, an institution based on the notion of Popular Education:

*We have the obligation and duty to pull out from the deepest structures of society the roots of the institutions that already belong to the past, and clinch the principles of the republic and of the revolution, in the form of the holiest provisions, to all the spirits and opinions. As we are not far away from the Menemen incident and other similar events, it is evident that we must leave as soon as possible the stage/phase of negative tendencies to the past. The power and speed the nations show in their way towards the road of life is parallel to and commensurate with the work of guidance and education that is carried out.*¹²⁰

The statute of the People’s Houses enumerates the duties of each one of the nine working Sections of every Halkevi. It is a detailed program of activities and, in that sense, shares many common features with the *Türk Ocakları Mesai Programı* of 1926. It is fairly reasonable to argue that the *Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* was influenced by the experiences of the Turkish Hearths, although this is not acknowledged in the *Talimatname*. Nevertheless, it suffices here to mention that most of the individuals engaged in the drawing up of the statute had also been active members of the Turkish Hearths.¹²¹

The interest shown in the institutions of Popular education in various European countries indicates the importance the regime and its advocates placed on *Halk Terbiyesi* as a means to carry their reforms to the people. A number of articles appeared in the first volume of *Ülkü* describing Popular Education in Europe. Within this trend, we also come across more than a few articles on the achievements of authoritarian regimes and their Popular Education associations in Europe, usually of the Soviet Union and Italy.¹²² This interest takes place within the political and ideological tendencies of Turkey after 1930.

¹²⁰ Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası, *Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932), p. 4.

¹²¹ Şevket Sureyya Aydemir, Sadi İrmak, Tahsin Banguoğlu, Hamit Zübeyir Koşay, Hüseyin Namık Orkun, Kerim Ömer Çağlar, Namık Katoğlu, Vildan Aşir Savaşır, Reşit Galip and others. Anıl Çeçen, *Atatürk’ün kültür kurumu Halkevleri* (Ankara, 1990), p. 95; Orhan Özacun, “Halkevlerin dramı”, *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996), pp. 89-90.

¹²² Nusret Kemal, “Sovyetlerde Bayram ve Terbiye”, *Ülkü*, No 9, (October, 1933); R. Ş., “Garp Memleketerinde Halk Terbiyesi”, *Ülkü*, No 4, (May, 1933); S. S. Tarjan, “İtalya’da Halk ve Gençlik Teşkilatı”, *Ülkü*, No 3, (April, 1933); H. Z. Koşay, “Halk terbiyesi Vasıtaları”, *Ülkü*, No 2, (March, 1933); F. Yozsef, “Fin Yüksek Halk mektepleri”, *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 1, No 24- 218, (1929); n. a., “Yugoslavya’da İslav Sokol Kongresi”, *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 5/24, No 32/226, (1930).

In brief, the reorganization of the regime following the 3rd Party Congress in 1931 and the consequent centralist and authoritarian policies described above went hand in hand with a positive reception of the achievements of authoritarian and/or totalitarian regimes, especially of the Soviet Union's economic policies and propaganda institutions, and of Italy's successes in Popular Education. Falih Rıfki Atay, journalist, one of Atatürk's confidants and an extremely influential person among the elite groups, wrote two books drawing on his recollections and thoughts from his travels to Russia and Italy in the beginning of the 1930s. A passage from his book called *Moskova Roma* illustrates, first of all, the search for solutions for a 'stagnating' revolution, and secondly the prevalence of influences from an authoritarian contemporary Europe:

*The name of the Turkish revolutions is Kemalism. The most precious value of Kemalism is Turkey's experiences from 1919 up to 1932. All the revolutions are going to take a lesson from these experiences of Kemalism. We can also take advantage of the experiences of Leninism in Russia and of Mussolinism in Italy. We will step by step investigate Moscow's methods of mass education for the sake of the education of the Turkish masses, Fascism's corporatist methods in order to help the Turkish statist economy, as well as the methods both revolutions use for the education of both children and grown ups, in order to educate a Republican youth with a completely new mind and soul.*¹²³

Hamdullah Suphi, the president of the Turkish Hearths association, claimed that parallelisms exist between the Turkish nationalism and the Piyonir – Komsomol – Children of October organizations created after the 1917 revolution in the Soviet Union aiming at the physical and political education (*vücut terbiyesi ve siyasi terbiye*).¹²⁴

To sum up, the aim of this 'archeological survey' was to explore the 'prehistory' of the term 'Popular Education' and the activities it connotes, taking as *terminus ante quem* the year 1930. It has been then argued that an intellectual movement within the framework of the emerging Turkish nationalism in the Young Turk era preaching the need for the education of the People continued with clearer aims in the Republican period. In the last years of the Ottoman Empire and in the new Turkey, the Turkish Hearths Association was the headquarters of a movement that was calling for the education of the people. During the first part of their life, the Hearths managed to gather a number of intellectuals coming from different backgrounds. The

¹²³ Falih Rıfki Atay, *Moskova Roma* (Muallim Ahmet Kitaphanesi, 1932), p. 5.

¹²⁴ Hamdullah Suphi's speech at the opening ceremony of the Ocak in Ankara on the 23rd of April 1930. Üstel, *Türk Ocakları*, pp. 166-7.

influence of the ‘Russian Muslims’ and of Ziya Gökalp was paramount. The continuous state of war and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire limited the activities of the Turkish Hearths, although a number of projects, such as the Villagists’ Association (*Köycüler Cemiyeti*) and the *Halka Doğru* movement stemmed from the *Türk Ocağı*. A further effect of the chaotic situation of the last years of the Empire, where various ideological schemes that were often inconsistent and contradictory to each other were put forward, was the relative vagueness of the movement’s aims and activities. When the outcome of the War of Independence and the Lausanne Treaty settled the fate of the Ottoman Empire, and the Republic of Turkey was established, the Turkish Hearths were restructured and adopted an organized makeup and program of activities. Their activities, as well as their prominent members, demonstrate the strong connection with the old Turkish Hearth. They continued to expand throughout the 1920s and tried to operate as the regime’s ‘guardian’ and ‘educator’. However, when the regime turned towards more authoritarian policies in the beginning of the 1930s, the Turkish Hearths were closed¹²⁵ and the movement of ‘Popular Education’ came under the total control of the party and state with the establishment of the Halkevleri institution, while the content of that ‘education’ assumed a more evidently political nature. In addition, a term (*Halk Terbiyesi*) was coined to designate the aims and ideas of the movement. A more detailed than the one offered here examination of the activities of the People’s Houses, as well as of the people engaged in this undertaking, will probably show that the continuation between the ‘Popular Education’ - as it was carried out in the Halkevleri - and the activities of the pre-existing associations is greater than what the sources of the 1930s and 1940s indicate.

B

Structure and Functions of the People’s Houses.

The structure of the People’s Houses and their modus operandi were laid down in a number of texts published by the Party. The majority of the literature on the People’s Houses is based on these same texts. In order to give an outline of the institution’s programmatic structure and activities we mainly use three Party publications. The first one is the People’s Houses Bylaws (*CHF Halkevleri Talimatnamesi*, henceforth *CHFHT*) issued in 1932. In 1940 a second and more detailed set of administrative and organizational Bylaws (*C.H.P. Halkevleri idare ve Teşkilat talimatnamesi*, henceforth *CHPITT*) was

¹²⁵ All the works on the dissolution of the Turkish Hearths and the establishment of the Halkevi state a number of reasons for this political decision. These reasons range from foreign pressure by the Soviet Union that was alarmed by the Hearths interest in Turcic populations in its borders, to the support the Free Republican Party had supposedly received from members and executive of the Hearths. For a thorough discussion see Füsün Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus Devlete Türk milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları (1912 – 1931)*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp. 321 ff.

published together with a set of operational regulations (*C.H.P. Halkevleri çalışma talimatnamesi*, henceforth *CHPHCT*).¹²⁶

General Structure

The first 26 articles of the 1932 bylaws lay down the structure of every House and describe their prerogatives and duties, as well as the activities they were supposed to perform. According to the first article,

The People's House is a place of gathering and work for those who feel affection for the country in their hearts and minds in the form of a holy, progressive and lofty enthusiasm.

The article continues stating that every citizen can become a member of a House, whether he/she is a party member or not. Nevertheless, only Party members can be elected in the Executive Board of every House and the Administrative Committee of each Section.¹²⁷ There was no legal objection to civil servants joining the Houses or becoming members of the Sectional Committees. The Halkevi employees (secretary, cleaner, porter, librarian) though had to be Party members.¹²⁸ On the contrary, the participation in the Halkevi works was 'highly recommended' to all school teachers by a circular of the Party sent by Recep Peker, the Secretary General, and also signed by Esat, Education Minister in 1932.¹²⁹ According to the 1940 bylaws (*CHPITT* article 16), civil servants (*devlet memurları*) could also be elected to the Sectional Committees. Given that many state employees were not Party members, this clause in reality provides a justification for the employment of educated (mostly school teachers) civil servants that were not (or could not be) party members in the Halkevi activities and management.

While the decision for the opening of a People's House in a region is taken by the General Administrative Board of the CHP, it is the Party's Provincial Branches that carry out all the preparatory work and the actual establishment of the House.¹³⁰ This clause is also included in the duties of the

¹²⁶ *C.H.P. Halkevleri idare ve Teşkilat talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zevbamat, 1940); *C.H.P. Halkevleri çalışma talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zevbamat, 1940).

¹²⁷ *C.H.F. Halkevleri Talimatnamesi (CHFHT) Umumi idare heyeti tarafından ihzar, umumi reislik divanınca kabul edilmiştir* (Ankara: Hakimiyet-i Milliye Matbaası, 1932), article 1, p. 5. "The People's House is a place of gathering and work for those who feel affection for the country in their hearts and minds in the form of a holy, progressive and lofty enthusiasm. With this in mind the doors of the People's house are open for all citizens, whether they are members, or not, of the Party. However, it is compulsory that the members of the Executive Board and of the administrative Committees of the sections in a People's House are also members of the People's Party." Also *CHPITT* article 16.

¹²⁸ *CHPITT* article 53.

¹²⁹ From the General Secretary of the Republican People's Party to the Provincial Executive Committees of the Party, 13/3/1932, No 28, in Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası. *Katibi umumîliğinin Fırka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı* (Ankara, 1933), Vol. 1, pp 56-7.

¹³⁰ *CHFHT*, article 2, p. 5. "The decision for the opening of a House and the conduct of its works is the work of the General Administrative Board of the Party; the foundation, formation,

Provincial Administrative Committees of the Party, as they are asserted in the 75th article (paragraph G) of the statuses of the CHP (*CHF Nizamnamesi ve Program 1931*, Ankara, 1931), approved by the 3rd Party Congress in 1931.¹³¹ The Provincial Party Administrative Committees were also entrusted the duty to “obtain, prepare and provide the Halkevi building”.¹³² In fact, most of the first 14 Houses established in February 1932 were housed in the former *Türk Ocakları* buildings that a year before had been transferred together with their property to the Republican People’s Party. Other buildings were also used, such as the former building of the Committee for Union and Progress in Edirne.¹³³

In addition, the local Party structures maintained a tight control over the funding and finances of the Houses.

*The Houses are governed, exactly as their revenues are provided and fixed, by the Party’s Provincial Boards. The Party’s Provincial Boards are also ratifying and inspecting the budgets of the Houses.*¹³⁴

The Houses were administered with the support of revenues that the Local Administrative Board of the Party provided and secured. The Party’s Provincial Boards were inspecting and ratifying the budgets of the Houses (CHFHT article 9 and CHPITT article 25). Any donation given by individuals or institutions to the Houses was accepted and appropriated for the needs of the Houses by the Executive Board. (CHFHT article 16) The same responsibility was also bestowed upon the Party’s Headquarters (General Administrative Board – Genyönkur) with the 1935 Party bylaws.¹³⁵

All Houses were divided into nine working sections, “in order every citizen to be able to find his preferable sphere of activities according to their various interests, aptitudes and desires.”¹³⁶ The Sections were the following:

- 1-Language, History and Literature Section (*Dil, Tarih, Edebiyat Şubesi*).
- 2-Fine Arts Section (*Güzel sanatlar [or Ar] Şubesi*).
- 3-Theatre Section (*Temsil Şubesi*).
- 4-Sports Section (*İspor [or spor] Şubesi*).
- 5-Social Help Section (*İçtimai [sosyal] yardım Şubesi*).
- 6-Adult Courses/Education Section (*Halk dersaneleri ve kurslar Şubesi*).
- 7-Library and Publications Section (*Kütürhane ve neşriyat [yayın] Şubesi*).

preparation and composition of the House, according to the Regulations, is the work of the Provincial Administrative Committees.”

¹³¹ Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti nde Tek – Parti Yönetiminin kurulması*, pp. 317 and 439.

¹³² CHFHT, article 8, p. 7; also CHPITT article 28.

¹³³ Neşe Gürallar Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri: ideoloji ve mimarlık* (İstanbul, 1999), pp. 135-6.

¹³⁴ CHFHT, article 9, p. 7.

¹³⁵ *CHP Tüzüğü* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1935), article 49, in Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye’de Tek Parti Yönetimi*, p. 267.

¹³⁶ CHFHT, article 4, p. 6.

8-Village Section (*Köycüler* [or *Köycülük*] *Şubesi*).

9-Museum and Exhibitions Section (*Müze ve sergi Şubesi*).

The 1940 bylaws introduced a reorganization of the Sections affecting the first and last Section (*CHPITT* article 8). The first became Language and Literature (*Dil ve edebiyat*), while the last Section was named History and Museum (*Tarih ve Müze*). The names of the other Section were changed according to the language preferences of the time, something that had happened before with the 1935 bylaws, which were actually an *Öz Türkçe* version of the 1932 registrations. Some of these changes are given above in parenthesis.

Every Section keeps a registration book to enroll the new and record the old members. Each section is directed by an Administrative Committee elected from its members, composed of 5 members for those Sections with more than 50 members, and of 3 members for those ones with less than 50 members. However, a Section with less than 10 members cannot have a Section Committee; those elected to be their representative in the House's Executive Board carry out at the same time the duties of the administration of that Section. The Administrative Committee of each House is composed of one representative member from each Committee elected among the members of the Committee for this particular purpose, or between the members of the Section in the event of less than 10 existing members. The Sections have a relevant autonomy to arrange the rules and regulations concerning their activities, as well as the division of labor between the Committee members by themselves, but these regulations have to be endorsed by the Administrative Committee of the House. Some Houses even published the regulations of each Section in the form of bylaws. Although the Party General Secretariat was the supervising authority for the Houses, the Halkevi of Ankara functioned as an unofficial model for all Houses and was the first House to publish these *Talimatnames*, setting the pattern.¹³⁷

Every House must be equipped with a hall devoted to the exercising of certain indoors sports (billiards, table tennis), and that cinema and radio would be used to communicate with the people. Furthermore, the House is compelled to arrange at least once a month a general programme aiming at assembling the entire population of the area.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Orhan Özacın, *CHP Halkevleri yayımları bibliografyası* (İstanbul, 2001), p. 1, 5. For example, Ankara Halkevi: *Ankara Halkevi Dil, Tarih, Edebiyat şubesi talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932); Ankara Halkevi: *Ankara Halkevi içtimai yardım şubesi hususi talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932); Ankara Halkevi: *Ankara Halkevi kütüphane ve neşriyat şubesi hususi talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1933); Ankara Halkevi: *Ankara Halkevi spor şubesi hususi talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1933).

¹³⁸ *CHFHT*, articles 12, 13 and 14, p. 7.

Administrative Committee

The Administrative Committee of the Houses were composed of one representative from each Sectional Committee elected among them. Elections for the Administrative Committee and the Sectional Committees were held once every two years. The president of the Administrative Committee of the House was selected by the Party's local Administrative Committee among its members and not elected by the House's Administrative Committee, or the members of the House. (*CHFHT* article 19). The 1940 Bylaws though allowed for the appointment, again by the local Party Administrative Committee, of civil servants to the Halkevi chairmanship upon recommendation and if a suitable candidate could not be found among the Party members.¹³⁹ Indicative of the same mentality was the proviso that the president of the People's House in Ankara was appointed by the General Administrative Committee of the Party, and that the Ankara People's House communicated directly with the General Secretariat and sent the reports directly to that office (*CHFHT* article 3 and *CHPITT* article 41).

The Administrative Committee of the People's Houses convened at least once a week and its duties were the following:

*a-- the organization and preparation of the general shows for the people at the national anniversaries. b-- the carrying out of the House's programmes. c-- the preservation of the working harmony between the various sections. d-- the arbitration between the sections in case of any dispute or misunderstanding. e-- the examination and ratification of the special bylaws that will be prepared by the sections in order to organize their activities. f-- the keeping of the Houses' accounts and the supervision of their heavy equipment. g-- the drawing up and carrying out of the House's budget.*¹⁴⁰

With the 1940 Bylaws, the Halkevi Administrative Committee became also responsible for the pronouncement and application of disciplinary decisions, introduced by the same Bylaws for the first time, and the employment and dismissal of the Halkevi employees.¹⁴¹

A clear separation of responsibilities was introduced between local and central Party structures in relation to the monitoring of the activities of the Houses. "The Administrative Committee of each House communicates with the Party's Provincial Administration Boards on financial and local administrative matters, and with the Party's General Secretariat on issues related to the duties and activities of the Sections shown in the regulation books of the sections. The budget of each House is ratified by the Party's

¹³⁹ *CHPITT*, article 35.

¹⁴⁰ *CHFHT*, article 20, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴¹ *CHPITT*, article 43.

provincial Administration Committee.”¹⁴² Moreover, the House’s Administration Committee was to send a report on the efforts and activities of the various sections to the General Secretariat of the People’s Republican Party every three months. One copy of these reports was also dispatched to the regional Party Administrative Committee.¹⁴³

*Language and Literature Section*¹⁴⁴

The Language and Literature Section aims at spreading the principles of the CHP through researches and other activities and raising the general educational level. It organizes lectures “with the purpose of raising the general knowledge. These conferences have as their aim to well establish the principles of the Republic and the Revolution, to increase the love of the country and the feeling of the duties of citizenship.” It also carries out research and collects “ancient national fairy tails, sayings and proverbs, as well as ancient national traditions”. The Section takes part in the language reform project by collecting ‘pure Turkish’ words and in publications on the above-described subjects. “The Section protects and encourages those youngsters who, while being educated in the House, show a special aptitude in the fields of science and literature. The Section tries to ensure ways and solutions so that they may cultivate their aptitudes and capabilities”. It publishes the House’s journal and organizes ceremonies to commemorate the ‘Great Turks’ in the fields of literature, knowledge and the arts. The General Secretariat has to be informed on - and probably consent to, although such an approval is not mentioned – the persons to be commemorated before the actual ceremony takes place.

*Fine Arts section*¹⁴⁵

The aims of the Fine Arts Section are to gather artists who would be active in the arts such as music, sculpture, architecture, or the decorative arts; organize concerts and play music in the House and during the House’s shows; ensure that the modern and international music is performed in its true nature; increase the number of those interested in the fine arts, by way of giving lessons if possible; promote the learning of the national marches and songs by the whole people; record the notes, as well as the harmony and style, of the national songs that are recited among the people, especially in villages and in nomadic communities. The Section should encourage the performing and should incorporate into its shows national dances with their original clothing,

¹⁴² *CHPITT*, article 21, p. 9.

¹⁴³ *CHPITT*, article 26, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ *CHPHCT*, articles 1 – 18.

¹⁴⁵ *CHPHCT*, articles 19 – 42.

instruments and songs. It should also encourage men and women to perform these dances together. The Section should also open exhibitions of painters and photographers.

*Theatre Section*¹⁴⁶

The Theatre Section establishes a theatrical group composed of male and female members and stages plays. The plays to be staged should be approved by the General Administrative Board of the CHP. The female roles in the plays cannot be given to male actors. Shadow theatre and puppet show (*Karagöz and Orta Oyun*) are very important for the purpose of educating the People (*Halk Terbiyesi bakımından*) and should be incorporated into the works of the Section. The Section can also acquire a cinema projector and organize cinema shows free of charge in order to “raise the ideas and good taste of the People through the means of cinema”. The films to be shown are sent by the government or the Party. The Theatre Section tries to propagate the ideology and principles of the Party through the staging of theatre plays and cinema.

*Sports Section*¹⁴⁷

The Sports Section organizes sports events, “teaches the citizens the indoor Gymnastics that are the foundation of modern Hygiene”, and opens physical training rooms. Once a week it organizes a gymnastics event, separately for men and women. With the passing of the Law for Physical training (*Beden Terbiyesi*) the Section cooperates with the local Director of Physical training in organizing sporting events. The recruitment of Gymnastics teachers is also emphasized. The Halkevi Bylaws refer to and recommend certain sports in particular: hunting, *cirit* on horses, and wrestling are mentioned as ‘national’ sports that need to be developed. Other, equally ‘masculine’ sports are recommended: fencing with the assistance of army officers, boxing; moreover, cycling, winter sports and skiing in particular, and sea sports, especially swimming. The reasons for the development of these particular sports are interesting and significant for understanding the planners’ ideas. Some of them are designated as ‘national’, while the development of other sports that were not widespread at all is considered a national need. Swimming is an illustrating example: “everyone should learn how to swim”. One cannot but underline the potential ‘martial’ use of all the sports mentioned in particular in the Bylaws and, in that sense, we can point to the similarity with the ‘youth associations’ established during the First World War.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *CHPHCT*, articles 43 – 52.

¹⁴⁷ *CHPHCT*, articles 53 – 65.

¹⁴⁸ The issue of Physical Training and sports in general and in relation to the concept of ‘the youth’, as well as the state’s policies in this respect is quite large and we cannot of course dwell further into it. For an analysis of the policies on sports during the Republican Period: Yiğit Akın, “*Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*” *Erken Cumhuriyet’te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004).

*Social Assistance Section*¹⁴⁹

The Social Assistance Section organizes and carries out philanthropic activities alone and with the cooperation of other similar Associations. The Section “acts as a guide for the transport of those who need medical treatment”, “provides shelter in the cities and towns to those farmers and their families coming from the villages in need medical treatment”, and “mediates for the jobless to find a job”. The targets of its activities are orphan students, the disabled, especially war veterans, women with no men or family, the elders, the sick, and the villagers. In the villagers’ case, the Sections activities are to be carried out with the help and cooperation of the Village Section. The Section might work in order to open and operate dispensaries or Medical Examination Centers that will offer their services free of charge. The cooperation of the doctors and medical staff of the district is mentioned in particular.

*Courses Section*¹⁵⁰

The Courses’ Section “offers its assistance to the works of those enterprises of the municipalities and private local institutions that aim at strengthening individuals, by teaching them reading and writing, foreign languages and sciences, art, and every day life practical information”. Courses on many subjects (Reading and Writing, historical and local information, knowledge of civilization, foreign languages, arithmetic, accounting, typing) are given by volunteers, even in Prisons. Attesting to the positivist ideological roots of the Houses own project, the bylaws mention that the Section might also open laboratories of physics or chemistry that will introduce the exact sciences to the people of the region.

*Library and Publications Section*¹⁵¹

The Library and Publications Section establishes and runs a library open to everybody free of any charge and carries out events that aim at “boosting the people’s knowledge”. It can also establish reading rooms and book exhibitions. The 1940 Bylaws are very meticulous in relation to what kind of books are not supposed to be found in a Halkevi library offering us a very short but detailed description of the regime’s own specters:

“Books of religious nature, [books] that do not comply to the ideology of the Turkish revolution, that depict foreign regimes and ideologies, that aim at [spreading] superstitions that run contrary to the overall national and realist opinions but at [spreading] backwards and reactionary mentalities, that inspire pessimism, that depict crime and actions like suicide, works that increase the inclination for lust and greed and encourage the youth to harmful habits.”

¹⁴⁹ *CHPHCT*, articles 66 – 78.

¹⁵⁰ *CHFHT* articles 45 – 52; *CHPHCT*, articles 79 – 88.

¹⁵¹ *CHFHT* articles 53 – 56; *CHPHCT*, articles 89 – 103.

Furthermore, “all kinds of publications¹⁵² that might possibly be sent to the Houses from a foreign source – no matter how – are to be sent to the General Secretariat before being placed in the House’s library.”¹⁵³

*Village Section*¹⁵⁴

The Village Section “works towards the material, aesthetic and sanitary progress and growth of the villagers, as well as towards strengthening the feelings of mutual affection and solidarity between the villages and the city dweller”, “by means of inviting the villagers of the nearby places to the Houses’ fests and the Houses’ members to the countryside festivals”. Moreover, in cooperation with the Social Assistance Section it expands the activities of this Section to the countryside and to the villagers. A more detailed presentation and analysis of the Village Section’s activities is given in Chapter 8.

*History and Museum Section*¹⁵⁵

Finally, the Museum and History Section assists in the establishment or enrichment of Museums, organizes exhibitions of works of artists and of “national products and manufactures”. It works to assemble Ethnological and folklore material. All the material to be collected is to be registered in an inventory to be sent to the General Secretariat.

As for the general atmosphere that should reign in the Halkevi halls and among its members and guests, it is one of fraternity and equality.

No separate place is reserved for individuals during the meetings of the Houses. Only as a sign of respect for persons like His Excellency the national leader, Gazi Mustafa Kemal, and the State authorities, a special place is prepared for the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime minister, and in places with Civil Servants, for the prefects, majors, village headmen, and the highest military commander of the region. A sense of sincerity and brotherhood reigns under the roof of the People’s Houses. For these reason there is no place in the People’s Rooms for

¹⁵² Later on the General Secretariat issued lists of books that “inculcate the idea of communism to the youth, which will dominate the future of this country, while they are also effective in propagating similar foreign and false views” and should therefore be erased from the records of Halkevi libraries and be sent immediately to the General Secretariat, as the No 1166 communiqué of 8/4/1938 to 209 Houses stated. The communiqué contains two lists. The first contains seven books in Turkish by Karl Marx, Fatma Yalçın, Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel), Haydar Rifat. The second list contains eleven books, (Marx and Engels, Nazım Hikmet, and translations of Hikmet Kıvılcım, Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, Haydar Rifat and Hasan Ali). Contained in *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Genel Sekreterliğin Parti örgütüne Genelgesi, İkinci Kanun 1938 den 30 Haziran 1938 tarihine kadar*, Vol. 12, (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1938), pp. 74 -5.

¹⁵³ *CHPHCT*, articles 90 and 94.

¹⁵⁴ *CHFHT* articles 57 – 61; *CHPHCT*, articles 104 – 112.

¹⁵⁵ *CHPHCT*, articles 113 – 117.

*any thinking to act contrary to the idea of treating everybody the same way (as equals). Those who come late at the gatherings, if there is no seat available, remain standing. Although these principles are safeguarded, the Executive Board of every House, in order to organize the attendance of the meetings and the activities that take place in the Halls, as well as to preserve the tranquility and order, can lay down provisions, in harmony with the peculiarities of the region.*¹⁵⁶

C

The Halkevleri institution was a product of its era, the 1930s. This can be read in their administrative and organizational built up expressed in the normative texts of the period. My argument is that the political system and regime of the period, the ruling elite's preoccupations, plans and aims were inscribed into the Houses' structure and the way they were designed to operate.

By political system I am referring to the one-Party regime, the two-tier electoral system that safeguarded the selection by the centre of the MPs to be 'elected'. A large part of those elected to the National Assembly had no real ties to their electoral constituencies, had been born elsewhere (usually in the Balkans or the Caucasus region), had military or bureaucratic background, and, probably most important, had close ties with (or even were members of the narrow circle of) the ruling elite, as friends, associates and colleagues. The rest (and less significant) of the members of the National Assembly – if we take this group as representative of the centre – were mostly professionals from the provinces.¹⁵⁷ Members of Government and other positions with executive power were staffed by persons of the same background with close ties to the ruling circles. In short, at least the political and executive power in the centre was held by a rather small group of people with military or bureaucratic background and a similar past (participation into war of Independence and ex-Unionist or at least sympathizers).

From the beginning of the 1930s, a tendency towards centralization was well under way.¹⁵⁸ A wide set of innovations and changes in the regime and the political system at that period attest to this growing at that time attempt

¹⁵⁶ *CHFHT* article 15.

¹⁵⁷ Frederic Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge Mass, 1965); Cemil Koçak, "Parliament Membership during the Single-Party System in Turkey (1925 - 1945)", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Thematic Issue No 3, Being an MP in contemporary Turkey, (2005), URL: <http://www.ejts.org/document497.html>.

¹⁵⁸ To be more precise, the changes introduced by the 1927 Party Congress (selection of Party candidates for the Parliament by the Party president, control of non party associations by Party inspectors) according to Öz were a "legitimization of the centralist – authoritarian structure" and laid the foundation of the One Party System. Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de Tek-parti Yönetimi ve siyasal katılım (1923 - 1945)*, (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1992), pp. 99 – 101.

towards the organizational sophistication in the centre and the periphery with the employment of vertical, top-down control mechanisms: the establishment of General Inspectorates¹⁵⁹ with wide authorities staffed by persons very close to the Party and State leaders; the Party reorganizations of 1931 and 1935, the sophistication of Party activities and structure, part of which were the regularization of the Party Congresses, the corollary to the Party Congresses “*Dilek Sistemi*”¹⁶⁰ and the administration of petitions and grievances by Party and State;¹⁶¹ the reemergence of the Party Inspectorship System¹⁶² with the appointment of trusted by the centre non-local to their Inspectorship areas Party inspectors in place of the old (Unionist and later Party) local ‘trustees’ (*mutemed*). The convergence between the Party and the state mechanisms at the centre was close even before the 1936 resolution that merged the offices of the Interior Minister and the General Secretary of the Party.¹⁶³ The office of the General Secretary had always been occupied by political figures that had been or were to become ministers or high government and state officials since the establishment of the *Halk Partisi*. Many of the people staffing the General Secretariat were also state officials and/or members of the ruling Party elite at the centre (MPs for example). In other words, the Party headquarters, i.e. the General Secretariat, cannot be understood as an autonomous from the central state and Party organization, at least in terms of its cadre.¹⁶⁴ We cannot apprehend these policies without taking into account an increasing distrust by the centre of the Party membership and bosses in the provinces.¹⁶⁵ In short, the

¹⁵⁹ Cemil Koçak, *Umumi Müfettişlikler (1927 - 1952)*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003).

¹⁶⁰ Probably the best description of the *Dilek Sistemi* and the Party Congresses is to be found in Esat Öz, *Türkiye’de Tek-parti Yönetimi ve siyasal katılım (1923 - 1945)*, (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1992). Also in Tuncay Dursun, *Tek Parti Dönemindeki Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Büyük Kurultaylar* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), p. 24 – 5.

¹⁶¹ Yiğit Akın, “Reconsidering State, Party, and Society in early Republican Turkey: Politics of Petitioning”, *IJMES*, No. 39, (2007); Alexandros Lamprou, “‘CHP Genel Sekreterliği Yüksek Makamına’: 30’lu ve 40’lu yıllarda Halkevleri’yle ilgili CHP’ye gönderilen şikayet ve dilek mektupları üzerine kısa bir söz”, *Kebikeç*, 23, (2007).

¹⁶² Cemil Koçak, “Tek- Parti Döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi’nde Parti Müfettişliği”, *Tarik Zafer Tunaya’ya Armağan*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 1992). For reports by Party Inspectors see Chapter 2 and Murat Metinsoy, “Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde mebusların intihap dairesi ve teftiş bölgesi raporları”, *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, No 3, (Spring 2006).

¹⁶³ Cemil Koçak, “CHP – devlet kaynaşması (1936)”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, No 118, (November 2003).

¹⁶⁴ The archive of the General Secretariat of the CHP contains thousands of documents of correspondence between state offices (Secretaries, Ministries, various state offices) and the Party Headquarters. It is not an exaggeration to argue that the General Secretariat of the CHP was partly functioning as a state bureau.

¹⁶⁵ Speaking against the proposed 125th article of the Party Bylaws during the 1931 Party Congress that stated that no candidate is put forward at the Party elections unless proposed by the General Committee of the President (*Umumi Reislik Divanı*, i.e. the Party and State president, the prime minister) Alaeddin Bey, delegate of Kütahya expressed this deep suspicion of the Party elites, members and, consequently, of the population at large: “There are 30 thousand Party members in the Vilayet of Kütahya. There would be no issue, if 3 thousand had comprehended the revolution’s ideology. If we abolish the ‘namzet system’ – our friends from Anatolia know that – demagoguery plays a major role in Anatolia. If we abolish it, as a result of propaganda of the type ‘he does not pray’, ‘he does not fast’, we won’t see any youth that has accepted the revolution enter any (Party) Administrative Committee.” In *CHF Üçüncü Büyük Kongre Zabıtları* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931), pp. 231, 236.

1931 and 1935 Party reorganizations as well as the overall tendency throughout the 1930s went towards the expansion the central Party and State's control over the Party mechanisms and structures in the provinces. Needless to say, this policy of centralization run parallel to the ongoing penetration of the state into the countryside, through the establishment and expansion of communication networks, a national market, and various state agencies (educational, judicial, military, administrative, financial institutions).

In principle and theory, this tendency and in general the policies of centralization and the increasing control of the provinces by the centre can be read as an attempt by the state to curtail, or at least seize, some of the powers and privileges of the provincial elites and local notables who had traditionally functioned as middlemen between central state and population. These middlemen were well-entrenched local elites constituting the backbone of the provincial Party leadership, exhibiting a high degree of integration into the political system through their status in the provinces, their Party positions and their vertical connections with state offices and men (in the provinces and in the centre) by virtue of their official and unofficial status and functions (tax-farmers, court witnesses, municipal officials, members of chambers of commerce, ex-CUP and current CHP members and executives, second electors, vote-mongers, useful for the mobilization of the population as in the case of the War of Independence).¹⁶⁶

In practice though, there was the other side of the coin. Past the center's intentions and the rationale behind the policies of centralization mentioned above, it is essential to acknowledge the *center's constraints* in implementing such policies in the provinces. It was not only the local elites that benefited from their cooperation with the center. The centre as well had to rely on these local elites that formed its Party core in order to control the provinces and population as long as the central state did not have the capacity to control the periphery on its own. In other words, the structural dependencies of centre on the local (Party) elites due to the rather low level of state (offices, personnel) penetration of the provinces and the ongoing reform program necessitated the utilization (or at least could not do otherwise) of local elites. We also have to keep in mind not to imagine the centre (in terms of offices, structures and individuals and networks) quite away, distinct and unrelated to the provinces. Local elites had vertical relations with members and interests at the centre occasionally going years back, to the CUP and the War of Independence. Conversely many members of the core ruling elite in Ankara came from and had close personal ties and interests in the provinces.

Two examples illustrating the vertical link of the provincial elites to the center: (1) During the discussions over the new Party Bylaws (*tüzük*) at the 1931 Party Congress¹⁶⁷ one of the few topics that raised objections was the

¹⁶⁶ Hakkı Uyar, "Tek Parti İktidarın Toplumsal Kökenleri", *Toplumsal Tarih*, No 106, (October 2002).

¹⁶⁷ *CHF Üçüncü Büyük Kongre Zabıtları* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931).

126th article. The article stated that “persons working in the Party organization cannot occupy more than one position that produces income such as at the Provincial General Assembly, the Municipal Assembly, the Chambers of Commerce. Moreover, those occupying one position at these institutions cannot assume even a honorary duty in institutions such as the Red Cross.” At the end the article was accepted as it stood after Recep Peker, the powerful Secretary General, intervened. In defending the article at the debate, Hakkı Tarık was clear about the article’s aim. The article would help the Party become younger. Conversely what was feared was also stated: “Wherever we went we saw the core of the 25 year old Committee of Union and Progress in charge of the Party structures. Friends, it is a pity if 25 years now we could not produce a new ideological friend.”¹⁶⁸ In practice the provisions of the 126th article were habitually overturned, as we shall see in the second chapter.¹⁶⁹ That debate, rare as it was during the discussions, is, according to my reading, a sign of the uneasiness entrenched in the provinces local elites felt in relation to this article and to the possibility of losing some of the power they were possessing in the provinces. What is more, this uneasiness was expressed in the Party discussions demonstrating the existence of vertical connection of provincial elites within offices of the centre.

(2) In his memoirs Kazım Nami Duru writes of his experience as a Party Inspector of the Afyon region. After a inspection trip to the region he returned to Ankara where he learned that Ali Çetinkaya, a native and MP of Afyon, had spoken vehemently against him because his reports from Afyon gave the impression that the Party friends there were thinking of nothing but their own personal interests. Kazım Nami implies that this enemy his reports had won him, a person close to Atatürk, was the reason he never again was appointed as a Party Inspector.¹⁷⁰

Both cases, the debate on the 126th article and Kazım Nami’s story, demonstrate the existence of vertical relations between Party elites in the provinces and members of the ruling elite in the centre that might run contrary to the center’s plans.¹⁷¹ This contradictory relationship is evident in the words/names used for the Party bosses in the provinces before 1930:

¹⁶⁸ “Nereye Gittikse fırka başında 25 senelik İttihadü Tarakkinin anasını görüldük. Arkadaşlar, 25 senedir bir fikir olarak yeni bir arkadaş peyda edememişsek yazık bize.” In *CHF Üçüncü Büyük Kongre Zabıtları* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931), p. 276, mentioned in Tuncay Dursun, *Tek Parti Dönemindeki Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Büyük Kurultaylar* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), p. 43. See also Cemil Koçak, *İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), p. 259, where a Free Party pamphlet is referring to the power of the (CHP) Party’s men as ‘the sultanate of the usurpers’ (mütegallibe saltanatı).

¹⁶⁹ For a very detailed presentation of the issue of the 126th article see Cemil Koçak, *İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 294 ff.

¹⁷⁰ Kazım Nami Duru, *Cumhuriyet Devri Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1958), p. 46.

¹⁷¹ For a nuanced analysis of the relations of the forces of the center and the periphery in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey see Şerif Mardin influential articles, “Centre-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?”, *Daedalus*, (Winter 1972/73) and “Centre-Periphery as a Concept for the Study of the Social Transformation of Turkey”, in D. D. Grillo (ed.), *Nation and the State in Europe. Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

mütegallibe (usurper)-*mutemed* (trustee). Whether from the perspective of the central state/Party or of the provinces, the connotations of the latter term signify an entrusted local person representing the centre/Party to the province and vice versa, while the former term points to this person's illegitimate power to fulfill this intermediary role, to his usurping the power and status of another authority.¹⁷²

A similar case indicating the Party's preoccupations to enlarge its constituency at the expense of entrenched local elites appeared when in 1936 the Halkevi of Harput asked the General Secretariat's resolution regarding the existence of relatives in the Administrative Committee of the Halkevi. The Halkevi Bylaws did not clarify whether it was permissible to have members of the same family on the Halkevi Board. The General Secretariat replied to all Houses in 15/10/1936. The directive stated that the issue was discussed during the meeting of the GenYönKurul in 3/10/1936. Based on the 79th article of the Party Bylaws (*tüzük*) that forbids relatives (father, wife or children) to occupy more than one position in the Party Administrative Committees, the Party's equally decided to prohibit more than one relative in the Halkevi Administrative Committees. This stipulation did not apply to the Sectional Committees though.¹⁷³

To recapitulate, a tendency and a reality: the tendency of the centre to control the provinces and local party men, whom it did not fully trust, the reality imposing the need to employ these not fully trusted local elites to carry out its policies. The dynamics of the power distribution and politics at the local level depends on and oscillates between these two conflicting traits, always to be understood in relation to the social conditions of the local societies.

Parallel to these two attributes, we need to consider a third one, namely the centre's effort to propagate in the provinces and among the populace the reforms initiated in the 1920s and the ones continuing to be introduced in the 1930s, primary through a conscious attempt to broaden the regime's influence and constituency. The establishment of a novel set of institutions in the 1930s attests to the urgent need felt by the ruling elite to broaden its base and propagate its policies. The People's Houses were among these institutions preceded by the People's Orators (*Halk Hatipleri*),¹⁷⁴ to be followed by the

¹⁷² Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de Tek-parti Yönetimi*, p. 107; Hilmi Uran, p. 230; Alaeddin Bey, delegate of Kütahya at the 1931 Party Congress expressed this ambivalence regarding the Party *mutemed*: "We do know that many *mutemet* are old *ağas*, wherever we may go, a *mutemet* comes out, like a usurper (*mütegallibe*) of the old age." In *CHF Üçüncü Büyük Kongre Zabıtları* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931), p. 231.

¹⁷³ Both letter and directive contained in *BCA CHP*, 490.1/3.13.74.

¹⁷⁴ The People's Orators Organization (*Halk Hatipleri Teşkilatı*) was a Party initiative established around September 1931. The Orators were to be chosen by the Party center among the Party members. They would address the population during state anniversaries, national and local elections, during village fests and open markets in provincial centers and villages. The Bylaw of the Organization provides detailed information about the orators down to the way they were to address the people and even the clothes they were supposed to wear. They were to speak about the Republican regime, the Party program and principles, the Turkish history, civilization and bravery, as well as about issues that would arise on a daily basis in different localities and needed to be

People's Rooms, the Turkish Language Association, the Village Institutes, to name a few. In order to reach the periphery and the populace the regime couldn't but rely on the employment of the local Party structures. The provincial Party organization was probably one of the few organizational mechanisms under the relative control of the centre that possessed the necessary resources and means to penetrate the countryside. Both People's Houses and Rooms as well as the *Halk Hatipleri* initiative were conceived and activated through the employment of the Party's local resources. The oxymoron lies in that the centre was trying to reach the periphery and populace through the use of the same structures and people whose power it was on a more general level intending to reduce, namely the local notables, the provincial Party elites.

Furthermore, a first step towards increasing its following, propagating its policies and attempting to cling the population – by large considered hostile – to the reforms, was to consolidate what it considered its 'natural constituency', the educated parts of the population that had a more 'western' outlook, a rather easy task if we consider that most of them were state employees. A number of occupational and cultural associations and clubs were closed down, voluntarily or under pressure from the government, and their members, or even assets as in the case of the Turkish Hearths, were advised to join the Party or participate in Party controlled associations. The civil servants were prohibited by law to become members of political Parties. In practice though, this prohibition did not cover the RPP as there was not much objection when civil servants were or became members of the ruling Party.¹⁷⁵ The idea was to tightly control all non-Party and autonomous associations and absorb them and their members in Party or state structures.¹⁷⁶ I chose to read this as an attempted 'instrumentalization' of the educated segments of the population within Party structures. The regime's aim of this consolidation of 'kin' forces was to employ them in its ongoing program of 'reform diffusion' to the population that was to be carried out through Party organizations the People's Houses being among the most important. From another point of view, this 'instrumentalization' of the 'intellectuals', as the Party sources call the educated, was homologous to the center's policies that were aiming at controlling the Party structure in the provinces and raising the Party (and Halkevi) membership figures,¹⁷⁷ more generally put, to increase the

explained to the people. The information given here is taken from the detailed presentation of the organization in Işıl Çakal, *Konuşunuz Konuşturunuz. Tek Parti Döneminde Propagandanın Etkin Silahı: Söz* (İstanbul: Otopsi, 2004), pp. 67 – 82.

¹⁷⁵ Civil servants were apparently considered by the ruling elite as "natural elements" of the Party. Cemil Koçak, *İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 197.

¹⁷⁶ The motto of the period was 'unity of forces'. As Atatürk himself stated "the forces of the same nature must be unified towards the common aim." In *Vakit*, 25 Mart 1931, in Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye'de tek parti yönetimi*, p. 30.

¹⁷⁷ See directives from the General Secretariat urging Provincial Party structures to raise the Party membership: No 100, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Katibiumumluğunun Firka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı, İkinci Kanun 1933' ten Haziran nihayetine kadar*, Vol. 2, (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye

inclusiveness of the population into the Party and State structures and policies. The centre (central state and Party) was, simply put, quite suspicious, uneasy, or at least not quite trustful of its Party members and executives in the provinces. In certain circumstances, especially when it came to propagating the reforms and novelties to the population, it rather tended to favor and trust educated state employees and civil servants more than local elites that were staffing, or more openly put were the Party elite in the provinces.

The ‘textbook version’ of the Halkevi institution, its structure and modus operandi, in other words the way this structure was conceptualized and planned by the ruling elite, bares close resemblance to the political system this same elite partly inherited and partly shaped. In a single Party political system where opposition Parties were in practice banned especially after the year 1930, the People’s Houses were during the same period established upon the abolishment and occasional incorporation into their structures of a variety institutions, associations and clubs that were independent of or not directly controlled by the state and/or Party although they had similar ideological roots, functions and activities (Turkish Hearths, Women and Teachers’ Associations, Mason Lodges, etc). Likewise, the two-tier electoral system that allowed the ruling elite to virtually handpick the members of the National Assembly to be elected while giving the outward image of a Parliamentary Republic closely corresponds to the administration of the Houses: while everybody was free to become a member and vote in the House elections, those to be elected to the Sectional and the Administrative Committees had to be Party members or civil servants while the House’s Chairman was appointed by the local Party structure usually among its members. The electorate, either for the National Assembly or the Halkevi Committees, was deeply mistrusted, or at the very best was considered not yet mature – consider the ‘child(hood) metaphor employed to describe the ‘people’ and justify their exclusion – for full and free citizenship rights. This mistrust of the ‘center’ over the ‘forces of the periphery’, to use these terms in the way Mardin employs them, was not limited to the elusive ‘other’, the ‘childlike’ or ‘backward people’ that was at once viewed as the ‘true people’ and the ‘ignorant people’ (*asıl/cahil halk*); this entrenched suspicion and the corollary need for control extended to virtually all existing social, political and financial associations not directly controlled by the center.

Matbaası, 1933), p. 10; No 188, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Katibiumumliğinin Firka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı, Temmuz 1933’ ten Birinci kanun 1933 sonuna kadar*, Vol. 3, (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1934), p. 17; No 1179, date 4/5/1938, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Genel Sekreterliğin Parti örgütüne Genelgesi, İkinci Kanun 1938 den 30 Haziran 1938 tarihine kadar*, Vol. 12, (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1938), p. 23; No 1/1987, date 24/1/1941, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Genel Sekreterliğin Parti Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı, 1 Birinci Kanun 1941 den 30 Haziran 1941 tarihine kadar*, Vol. 18, (Ankara: Ulus Matbaası, 1941), p. 5. For directives urging for the registration of women Party members see No 413, 414, 420, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Katibiumumliğinin Firka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı, Temmuz 1934’ ten Birinci Kanun 1934 sonuna kadar*, Vol. 5, (Ankara: Ulus Matbaası, 1935), pp. 21, 22 and 29 respectively.

The establishment of top-down, vertical control/investigation institutions, either new or in place of pre-existing horizontal ones, is a direct indication of this tendency. The establishment of the ‘General Inspectorships’ and the re-emergence of the Party Inspectorships system¹⁷⁸ staffed by high level bureaucrats selected directly by the upper echelons of the Party and State leadership in place of the older system of the local ‘Party trustees’ (*mutemed*) is a case in point. Needless to say, the Party Inspectors, apart from their responsibility to investigate and report on almost everything in the provinces (from Party and State structures and employees to newspapers, Sports clubs, and other association, from the financial state of the regions and populace to the state of roads and popular grievances), had wide prerogatives to intervene in local Party and state politics and take decisions bypassing local authorities.¹⁷⁹

The argument put forward here is that all the above three tenets (i-centralization through vertical top down control mechanisms, ii-employment of local Party elites/notables and resources, and iii-instrumentalization of ‘intellectuals’ and state employees) can be read in the Halkevi institution’s administrative structure and underlying ideological framework, and thus have to be accounted for and problematised in any study of the Halkevi institution.

In terms of administrative structure, the dual control and administration of the Houses by the centre and local Party structures is an obvious example of the first two tenets. The Houses were to be established according to a centrally devised plan, run by local Party elites and through the employment of local resources but also controlled by central Party and state authorities, such as the Party Inspectors and/or the Party General Secretariat. The local Party was also

¹⁷⁸ The Party issued regulation booklets on the inspection activity of the Party Inspectors: *C.H.P. Teftiş Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Ulus basımevi, 1939); *C.H.P. Teşkilatı kurulmamış Vilayetlerdeki Halkevleri ve odaları Teftiş Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zerbamat, 1940); *C.H.P. Teftiş Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Sümer Matbaası, 1943).

¹⁷⁹ The ‘General Inspector’ and the ‘Party Inspector’ were the most high level bureaucrats holders of this rank, probably the most feared by those to be investigated, while they have also drawn the attention of the literature, if we judge from their appearance in novels and memoirs. Nevertheless, apparently there was a whole array of ‘inspectors’ from many state structures (ministries etc) cruising through the provinces. Even the rumor of an incoming müfettiş seems to have caused a lot of anxiety and fear among the people to be investigated but also in general. The event of an arrival of a müfettiş and the panic that follows was apparently so widespread that became the hilarious story of Orhan Kemal’s novel *Müfettişler Müfettişi* (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1966) about a trickster who travels around Anatolia pretending to be ‘the inspector’ in order to extract bribes and presents in exchange for not reporting the frauds and wrongdoings he supposedly finds. Cemil Koçak, “Tek- Parti Döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi’nde Parti Müfettişliği”, *Tarik Zafer Tunaya’ya Armağan*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 1992); Koçak, Cemil, *Umumi Müfettişlikler (1927 - 1952)*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003). For the account of the visit of an Inspector from the Ministry of Education to investigate the case of an alleged communist teacher in the Kayseri Lise see the novel of Cevdet Kudret, *Havada Bulut Yok* (İstanbul: İnkılab ve Aka Yayınları, 1976), p. 325 onward, as well as Fakir Baykurt’s memoirs *Köy Enstitülü Delikanlı* (İstanbul: Papirüs Yayınevi, 1999), pp. 301 – 324, where the real story of the visit of an inspector to investigate again an alleged communist teacher in the Village Institute the writer was attending is described. Although the former is a novel and the latter an autobiography, the similarities between the two stories are impressive suggesting that the experience of an incoming inspector was quite common.

designed to go through the same vertical, top-down control by similar authorities. The 1936 resolution for further cooperation between Party and state, and its practical result in the provinces, i.e. the presiding over the local Party structures by the Governor (Vali) in place of an elected/appointed local Party boss, as was the norm before, is also a case in point. The center's tendency towards more centralization through the employment of state employees and instrumentalisation of the 'intellectuals' was also inscribed into the Halkevi Bylaws. In the 1932 *Halkevi Talimatnamesi* the Halkevi chairman was to be elected among the members of the local Party Administrative Committee and the members of the Houses' Sectional Committees had to be Party members. The following sentence though stated that there is no objection to civil servants becoming Halkevi Committee members. The 1940 Bylaws were more straightforward: Party members and/or civil servants could become Committee members and even Halkevi chairmen. In practice that was the case even earlier in the 1930s as demonstrated in the second chapter for a number of Houses. All the normative texts regarding the Halkevi institution though never displayed any degree of ambiguity in relation to the need to employ the civil servants and the 'intellectuals'. From the Halkevi Bylaws¹⁸⁰ to the communications of the General Secretariat to the Party structures and the speeches of politicians and bureaucrats the point was made openly: the 'intellectuals' have to be incorporated into the Halkevi project. Coercion and pressure was rife.¹⁸¹

In conceptual terms, the Houses' essential task, i.e. *Halk Terbiyesi*, incorporates, or rather is written upon, the center's policies of centralization and instrumentalisation. The 'Popular Education' activities the Houses were supposed to carry out in accordance with their Bylaws bear a singular content, uniform for all parts of the country and for the population as a whole with no differentiation. This singularity is attested by the center's minimal tolerance to any degree of divergence in the Houses' activities or makeup due to local peculiarities; the project was to be identically executed with nation-wide uniformity. Allowance for the local was only allowed in case this local was to be part of a 'national canon', a distinctive local part of a larger national set of characteristics. The crafting of a national repertoire of folklore, salvaged and

¹⁸⁰ The activities and duties of the Halkevi Sections presented in the 1932 *Talimatname* required the employment of teachers, doctors/medical staff, artists, and, in general, the literate. Recep Peker's speeches are adamant in that respect: "We have to drive the new educated fresh elements every day and by every means to the pulpit, to the fronts of discussion" in Recep Peker, "Konuşunuz ve konuşturunuz", *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 1, p. 27; also "there is great need of a guiding element that would be composed of all the mature/experienced people that would function as educators. [A] school teacher after completing his assigned duty, a deputy after carrying out his tasks in the national assembly, a doctor after treating his patients with knowledge and tender, they think that they there is no other work and duty left to do for the community. This is what needs to be corrected in a true way", in "Halkevi Açılma Nutku", *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 1, (1932), pp. 6-8. Also in Recep Peker, "Ülkü niçin çıkıyor", *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 1, (1932), p.1.

¹⁸¹ Yahya Akyüz, *Türkiye'de öğretmenlerin toplumsal değişimdeki etkileri 1848 - 1940* (Ankara: Doğan Basımevi, 1978), p. 251; Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin tabanı. Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç* (Ankara: I Matbaacılık ve Ticaret, 1969), pp. 208, 213, 240. See also Chapter 5 of this thesis.

purged from undesired elements, de-contextualized, and inserted into the national repertoire of the ‘popular’ (dances, theatre, sports, music) that could be enacted time and again in a unified national time and space, a national ‘market’ for folklore, is one of the very few cases where the ‘local’ – de-contextualized, de-localized and instrumentalised in a different, national this time context - could be tolerated, employed and operated upon in and by the Houses.¹⁸²

In the introduction to this chapter we defined *Halk Terbiyesi* as ‘training’ of ‘the People’ by the ‘intellectuals’ the centre sought to instrumentalise, a ‘civic training’ to be realized in the Halkevi space, created by the centre, imbued with activities bearing a singular, uniform content, administered and provided for by local Party structures and resources, and optimally controlled by vertical top-down Party and State mechanisms.

Halk Terbiyesi, as a process and a concept, expresses a cleavage between ‘*halk*’ and ‘*münevver*’ felt and expressed in the core of the discourse of the centre. The nation and people is one, equal, ‘the true master of the country’, but also differentiated between ‘the real people’ and the ‘intellectuals’, between which a rift, a cleavage exists and needs to be closed through *Halk Terbiyesi*, the essence of the Halkevi institution. This Kemalist equation (*Halk + münevver = halk terbiyesi*) expresses the center’s uneasiness with and suspicion of the population, and implies a paradox if put next to the regime’s populist overtones. This paradox in the centre of the regime’s discourse can be explained with reference to the ruling elite’s internalization of core tenets of the orientalist discourse in what Ahiska has termed the ‘occidental fantasy’, wherein, among other things, the non-western elite discourse, in place of the ‘orientalist/colonial’ exotic other, constructs an internal ‘other’ inhabiting an ‘oriental/traditional/backward’ space-time.¹⁸³ The cleavage between the People and the intellectuals implied in the concept of ‘Popular Education’ becomes evident when we consider the way these two elements of the equation are mentioned in the normative texts.

The intellectuals, the ‘guiding element’, are described as ‘modern’, carriers of civilization, ‘western’ (*garpli*), but potentially idle, bored, snobbish, overwesternized, not adequately national perhaps, terms similarly used in the Kemalist literary canon of the 1930s for Istanbul and its supposedly corrupt, international and ‘Levantine’ character. The process of instrumentalising the

¹⁸² Öztürkmen’s works on folklore have forcefully made this point: “I dance Folklore”, in Arzu Öztürkmen, “The role of the People’s Houses in the making of national culture in Turkey”, *New perspectives on Turkey*, 11, (Fall 1994). Also Arzu Öztürkmen, “I Dance Folklore”, in Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber, *Fragments of Culture. The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (London: Tauris, 2002).

¹⁸³ Meltem Ahiska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı. Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik* (İstanbul: Metis, 2005); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000). In her article “Occidentalism: The Historical fantasy of the Modern”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102, 2/3 (2003), Ahiska reminds us that the Ottoman Empire can also be considered a colonial power – albeit a different one than the European colonial powers – in relation to the Arab lands and populations.

intellectuals, the educated and ‘westernized’ segments of the population within *Halk Terbiyesi* resembles the celebrated¹⁸⁴ Kemalist journey from the ‘oriental’, Ottoman, ‘old’, ‘idle’, ‘Levantine’, international and ‘degenerate’ Istanbul to the ‘young’, ‘modern’, national and vibrating Ankara, an obligatory journey to the Anatolian wasteland conversely feared and experienced with despair by many bureaucrats and state employees.

On the other hand the second part of the Kemalist equation, ‘the people’, were rather defined in the negative, as ‘traditional’, ‘backward’, ‘fundamentalist’ (*taasup, irticai*), in relation to similarly described events such as the Menemen incident, or in relation to a set of deficiencies, a lack of ‘civilization’, ‘modernity’, ‘nationhood’. The lack can be also read in temporal terms, as belatedness, the status of ‘not yet being there’, a time lag. The populist rhetoric of the time proclaiming the villager the real master of the country, the singularity of the people and the nation, equality and the abolishment of past privileges, was considered a target not a reality, a *telos* that had to appear like reality though. Likewise, the people were celebrated as the repository of culture, a national culture that had to be created though through the creation of national canons of folklore, language, music, etc – again a *telos* that was proclaimed and had to appear like reality.

¹⁸⁴ Especially Falih Rıfık Atay, Behçet Kemal Çağlar, see Funda Şenol Cantek, *Yabancılar ve Yerliler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), pp. 87 – 94.

PART I

Human Geography of Provincial People's Houses

Chapter Two

Halkevi in local societies: Kayseri and Balıkesir

In the first chapter we have presented the Halkevi institution the way the ruling elite of the period had envisaged and planned it based on a number of normative texts such as the Halkevi Bylaws. We have thus tried to inscribe the Halkevi project into the regime's discourse and policies, while proposing an analysis of its basic ideological and political tenets. Based mainly on the examples of two Houses and the local societies within which they operate, Kayseri and Balıkesir, this second chapter embarks upon a second 'contextualising operation'. This time the context within which they Halkevi is sought to be inscribed is local societies and populations. In other words, this chapter tries to remove the Halkevi space from the discursive standard of its 'textbook version' and insert it into the social context of local societies, or, in another sense, to situate the programmatic nature of the center's plans and discourse upon a local population, within local social, political and economic networks and boundaries. What then follows is in a sense a 'human geography' of the Halkevi space, its clientele and manpower within the societies of provincial towns, where the majority of the People's Houses were established. The aim is to present the inhabited next to the discursive space of the Halkevi we have analysed in the previous chapter.

A few words have to be said regarding the 'case-study' approach used here. Dwelling on the cases of Kayseri and Balıkesir does not amount to a local monograph per se. The study of Halkevi cases within and in relation to their local societies is necessary in order to arrive at a corpus of accumulative data, to establish, in other words, a necessary context upon which to place and attempt to answer our research questions. It is a necessary methodological step towards the study of 'state-society relations' and the 'usages' of the centre's policies by local actors, social groups and individuals. It provides us with a cumulative corpus of sources necessary for our reading of the voices of individual Halkevi members (chapters 3 and 4) and for the study of activities prescribed by the centre through the eyes of the local Halkevi actors (Chapter 8).

Kayseri and Balıkesir have been chosen first of all because of their similarities that assist in comparing data: both are administrative centres and provincial towns, urban provincial centres with a substantial bureaucratic/state presence and a rural hinterland, characteristics that make them rather representative of a large number of People's Houses. On the other hand, the differences between the two provincial centres and their population, especially the existence of a large industrial workforce in Kayseri and a large number of settled refugees in Balıkesir, also offer the opportunity to assess the extent local peculiarities affect the local Houses and their activities. A second and more mundane reason for choosing these two towns among many others that share common and comparable attributes was the availability of accessible data/sources both archival and published.

I. Kayseri

The People's House of Kayseri has been selected as a case study. With the case study approach the objective is to place the activities and the cadre of the Halkevi into its social milieu. Consequently, more than a few words have to be said about the society of Kayseri, its population, the local Party structure, and the local power groups and elites. Subsequently the data collected about the Kayseri Halkevi, its cadre and activities will be placed within the broader framework of the local society, as it emerges from the sources.

Population

The starting point in this investigation is the results of the 1935 census.¹⁸⁵ The central sub district (*merkez kazası*) of Kayseri had a total population of 114.781, while the city of Kayseri 46.181. Among the population of the city of Kayseri only a 24.5% was literate (could read and write according to the census), 37% for men and 11% for women (8881 and 2439 in real numbers respectively). Turning to the professional distribution of the population, 94.7% of the female population belongs to the category 'no or unknown profession' (*Mesleksiz, meçhul veya gayri muayyen*). Because of their almost total absence from the statistics, we will not use the percentages and numbers given for women. A 29.4% of the male population worked in 'industry and crafts' (*sanayi ve küçük sanatlar*), while an 8.2% in agriculture and a 10.8% in 'Administration, Public Services and the liberal professions' (*Umumi idare ve hizmetler, serbest meslekler*). A 34.4% of those working in the industrial sector were employed in the textile and clothing industries. The commercial sector comprised the 6.2% of the working force of Kayseri. 3,1% belonged to the category 'Transports and Communications', while the remaining 41,9% of the male population was not registered (*Mesleksiz, meçhul veya gayri muayyen*). Nevertheless, 2776 of the last category were registered as students. This number makes a 6% of the overall Kayseri populace. The female students were obviously fewer than the male ones (618 female for 2158 male students). As a percentage of the population, the male students make up 9% of the male and 4,5% of the total population of Kayseri, while the female students comprise the 2,8% of the local female and just a 1,3% of the total population.¹⁸⁶

The Party: CHP

The Party membership in the province of Kayseri by the 1940s was over the country average. In 1942-3 it was 15%, while the overall country Party membership average was between 8.5 and 9.5 %. In absolute numbers the

¹⁸⁵ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü Genel nüfus sayımı 20 İlk teşrin 1935, *Kayseri Vilayeti*, Vol. 33, (İstanbul: Hüsnütabiat Basımevi, 1937).

¹⁸⁶ *Kayseri Vilayeti*, pp. 6, 23, 26 – 32.

Kayseri Vilayeti had 45.759¹⁸⁷ in 1938, 51.721¹⁸⁸ in 1942 and 59.464 members in 1944.¹⁸⁹ The above numbers do not say much other than that compared to the membership numbers of other provinces the above 15% makes Kayseri one of the Vilayets with the largest Party membership figures. We do not have any indication why 15% of the Kayseri population was reported to be Party members. Even Öz, who has probably compiled one of the best works on the CHP of the period, neither offers any explanation why Yozgat and Konya, considered both rather 'conservative' provinces, have the highest percentage of Party members, nor makes clear why only 1% of the population of Malatya and 2,6% of Rize in particular register in the ruling Party.¹⁹⁰ My argument is that such statistical information has to be treated with great circumspection and always in relation to complementary data. Unfortunately more systematic and elaborate information about the members is not offered anywhere else. Only the educational background of the Party members is given in the first biannual report of the Kayseri Vilayet Administrative Committee in 1944.

Table 1

Educational level of Party members of the province of Kayseri (1944)

High	Lycee	Middle	Primary or able to read and write	Illiterate	Total
57	169	1270	47.972	9996	59464

Source: CHP Kayseri Vilayeti idare heyeti Haziran 1944 6 aylık çalışma raporu, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.261.1.

Nevertheless, more detailed information on the Party Administrative Committees (*İdare Heyetleri* or *Yönetim Kuruları*), from the *Vilayet* down to the *Ocak* level is provided by the Party itself. The Party headquarters (*CHP Genel Sekreterliği*) had dispatched a number of forms the local party structures were periodically obliged to fill in. These forms contain information about the Party structure, activities, members, as well as data concerning non-Party institutions (newspapers, social, professional and athletic clubs or benevolent institutions) and the population in general. The copy of such a form is contained in one of the files of the *CHP Genel Sekreterliği*. Although the date of the original is not stated, the date of the copy is given, 4/4/1941. It contains two tables showing the educational and professional distribution of the members of the Party Administrative Committees of the province of Kayseri.

¹⁸⁷ CHP Kayseri Yönetim kurulunun 30/6/38 6 aylık çalışma raporu (biannual activities' report), in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/670.255.1.

¹⁸⁸ *İstatistik Yıllığı (1942-43)*, (Ankara: İstatistik umum Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 1944), pp. I-VII.

¹⁸⁹ CHP Kayseri Vilayeti idare heyeti Haziran 1944 6 aylık çalışma raporu, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.261.1.

¹⁹⁰ According to a table given in Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de tek-parti yönetimi ve Siyasal Katılım (1923-1945)*, (Ankara: Gündoğan, 1992), p. 183. The percentage ranges from 1% in Malatya to 16.9% in Yozgat.

Table 2

Members of Party Administrative Committees according to educational background (Tahsilleri bakımından vaziyet)

İdare Heyetleri	Higher	Lise	Middle	Primary	Millet Mektebi	Illiterate	Total
Ocaklar İ	4	10	81	545	673	379	1692
Nahiye	1	2	25	96	18	12	154
Kaza	5	1	20	13		1	40
Vilayet	3		4	2			9
Total	13	13	130	656	691	392	1895

Source: BCA CHP, 490.1/276.1106.2.

Table 3

Members of Party Administrative Committees according to occupational background (Meslekleri bakımından vaziyet)

Occupation	Ocak	Nahiye	Kaza	vilayet	Total
Lawyer	2		1	1	4
Doctor			2		2
Pharmacist	2			1	3
Veterinarian					
Land owner	48	4	10	2	64
Teacher	3	5	4	1	13
Engineer	1				1
Retired Officer	1	4	2	1	8
Retired servant					
Merchant	134	22	13	3	172
Farmer	1322	108	7		1437
Worker	179	11	1		191
Total	1692	154	40	9	1895

Source: BCA CHP, 490.1/276.1106.2.

It is obvious that the educational level of the Party cadre rises at the upper echelons of the Party local Administration. The majority of those having higher education staff the Party Administrative Committees of the Province (*Vilayet*) and sub provinces (*Kaza*). As we move downwards to the Ocak level, the vast majority of the Party's cadre is illiterate or just knows how to read and write. Moreover, at the Ocak and Nahiye level most of the members are farmers or merchants. The above data seem to confirm Esat Öz's suggestion about the Party membership:

As we look at the summit of the pyramid the predominance of the professions, civil servants, teachers and merchants is

*evident. We can say the same thing for the Party local administrative organs. Although in some cases (especially in underdeveloped areas where traditional structures are dominant) farmers members also exist, the dominant structure in the local branches is the one we see in the Assembly. As we move downwards, the structure of the party membership starts to overlap more with general social structure. Between the local (il) administrative structures and the high Party structures a harmony is observed, while a disharmony with the general social structure.*¹⁹¹

No more information is given in the sources used here on the Party members and cadre below the Kaza level. The members of the *Vilayet* and *Kaza İdare Heyetleri* are mentioned in a number of sources. Their names and occasionally a short note on their personality are given in some of the reports of the Party Inspectors.¹⁹² Hilmi Çoruh, Party Inspector of the Kırşehir area, in his report¹⁹³ of 3/3/1940 offers a brief description of all the 47 members of the Vilayet and Kaza Administrative Committees of Kayseri. Half of them -23- are merchants, some of them quite wealthy as the Inspector notes. The Party chairman, for example, is one of the contractors of the dam in Niğde, while one of the members of the Vilayet Administrative Committee is a shareholder of one of the big factories in Kayseri and chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. Their wealth though was not accompanied with a higher or 'modern' education. The former is described as of little education, while the latter as strictly religious and a *medrese* graduate. The rest of the Vilayet İdare Heyeti is composed of a retired Gendarmerie officer, one of the members of the chamber of Commerce, the former mayor and Halkevi chairman, two more merchants, a lawyer and his sister-in-law, the wife of the Party secretary. The İdare Heyeti of the central Kaza consists of a doctor, a lawyer, a pharmacist, two wealthy merchants, a woman 'earning her livelihood as a tailor', and Osman Feyzioğlu, engaged in agricultural activities (*ziraatçi*), in all probability member of one of the wealthy and influential families of Kayseri.¹⁹⁴ In total, 37 out of the 47 members of the Administrative Committees are merchants, civil servants, lawyers, doctors and pharmacists. Five members are described as occupied in farming (*ziraatle meşgûl*) and only two as farmers (*çiftçi*). Some of them are also members of the local Municipal Assemblies, of the Chamber of Commerce and of the Bar Council. So, while the majority of the Party members in the province of Kayseri were farmers, the top echelons of the Party structure in the town were in the hands of local financial and political elites, mainly merchants, entrepreneurs and a few professionals usually members of local elite families.

¹⁹¹ Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de tek-parti yönetimi*, p. 186.

¹⁹² On the Party Inspectors see Cemil Koçak, "Tek- Parti Döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nde Parti Müfettişliği", *Tarık Zafer Tunaya'ya Armağan* (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 1992); Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi ve CHP* (İstanbul, 1999), pp. 244-47.

¹⁹³ Report of CHP Kırşehir Bölgesi Müfettişi Kastamonu Mebusu Hilmi Çoruh 3/3/1940 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/670.255.1.

¹⁹⁴ Members of the Feyzioğlu family: Sait Azmi Feyzioğlu, lawyer and MP for Kayseri, his son and founder of the Güven Partisi Prof. Turhan Feyzioğlu. Ali Rıza Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi (1910 – 1960)*, (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1972), pp. 153-4.

Various professional institutions

The Bar Council of Kayseri had 21 registered members in 1938.¹⁹⁵ Three of them were in 1938, or would become later on, MPs for Kayseri, five members of the Kayseri Municipal Assembly and one Mayor.¹⁹⁶

Kayseri was always a town famous for its merchants. The local Chamber of Industry and Commerce (*Kayseri Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası*) was established in 1312 (1896). In 1938 1630 members/firms were registered. The great majority – 1089 – was described as *küçük esnaf*, or small-scale craftsmen and tradesmen. Three banks, six factories, two printing houses, and hundreds of grocers, green grocers, plumbers, bakers, restaurant and coffeehouse owners, barbers, all kinds of tradesmen, contractors, and similar professions representing the largest professional group of Kayseri were registered.¹⁹⁷ The Municipal Assembly of Kayseri was also crowded with merchants; between the years 1939 – 1942 19 out of 30 members were tradesmen.¹⁹⁸

The 1935 census testifies the existence of an expanding industrial sector in Kayseri. Almost 35% of the industrial working force of Kayseri was employed in the textile sector. According to the data given in the 1927 Sanayi Sayımı, 1096 workplaces (of which 1064 employed less than 10 workers) with 6747 workers existed in the province of Kayseri, the majority employed in the textile sector (4281).¹⁹⁹ In 1937 the Sümerbank Bez Fabrikası opened. By the next decade this factory employed more than 3000 workers. The Tayyare Fabrikası (Airplane Factory) was another industrial unit employing more than 300 workers. The above numbers clearly indicate that a large part of the working population of Kayseri was employed in the industrial sector and, after 1937, in one of the largest industrial plants of Turkey, the Sümerbank Bez Fabrikası.

This was not just a factory. Apart from the huge factory buildings, the company also constructed a small hospital, apartment blocks for its employees, sports facilities (football, volleyball, tennis courts), a 500-seat cinema.²⁰⁰ The area where the factory and the rest of the facilities were situated became a part of the city, and by 1938 its Party Structure (*Sümer Ocağı*) had 1079 members, a considerable amount when compared to the 4455 members of the inner city. It was, as it seems, the only Party structure whose members were paying their Party fees.²⁰¹ It is not definite though whether the strength of this particular

¹⁹⁵ Kayseri Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası, *Sekizinci İzmir Fuarında Kayseri* (n.p., 1938), p. 48.

¹⁹⁶ MPs: Sait Azmi Feyzioğlu, Mustafa Kemal Şatır, Raşit Turgut. Municipal Assembly members: Bekir Rıza Alpaya, Ahmet Necmettin Feyzioğlu, Mustafa Kemal Şatır, Osman Nafiz Akşehirlioğlu, Ahmet Sait Karamercan and Ahmet Hıfzı Gözübüyük. Necmettin Çalışkan, *Kuruluşundan Günümüze Kayseri Belediyesi* (Kayseri: Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1995), pp. 9-10, 18-9, 90-5, 117, 122-3, 133-4.

¹⁹⁷ Kayseri Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası, *Sekizinci*, pp. 23-7.

¹⁹⁸ Çalışkan, *Kuruluşundan Günümüze Kayseri Belediyesi*, pp. 94-5.

¹⁹⁹ Mentioned in Osman Köroğlu, *1923 – 1950 yılları arası Kayserinin ekonomik ve sosyal yapısı* (MA Thesis, Erciyes University, 1992), p. 18.

²⁰⁰ Köroğlu, pp. 25-8.

²⁰¹ *CHP Kayseri Yönetim Kurulunun 30/6/38 6 aylık çalışma raporu* (biannual report of activities), in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/670.255.1. Sümer Ocağı was one of the few Party subdivisions in Kayseri collecting money from the members, according to another biannual reports as well: *CHP Kayseri Vilayeti İdare Heyeti 1939 birinci kanun altı aylık çalışma raporu*, p. 6, also contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/670.255.1.

Ocak was strictly based on the members' initiative. In Cevdet Kudret's novel *Havada Bulut Yok*²⁰² a young worker in the Factory describes his payment in the following way: "I get 100 *kuruş* every day. They do not pay the Sundays; it is a holiday they say. They also cut 15 *kuruş* for the Party, they say there is an Ocak room in the factory (*Ocak odası varmış*), the money is gathered there."²⁰³

The 1935 census (as well as the Party membership statistics) reveals the significance of tradesmen in the society as well as in the CHP cadre of the city of Kayseri. Together with the educated segments of Kayseri, especially all kinds of state employees and the liberal professions, they constitute the local elite, in economic and political terms. The members of the Municipal Assembly, the Party Administrative Committees, and the occupational associations, as well as the representatives of Kayseri in the National Assembly, by majority belong to this group. In some cases, certain important families come to the forefront. People bearing the same surname appear in all the above institutions indicating the existence of powerful wealthy families. Lawyers, tradesmen, farmers, doctors from families such as the Feyzioğlu, Karakimseli, Özsan, Bürüngüz, Tacettinoğlu and Taşcıoğlu appear in all the Party, occupational and commercial Institutions mentioned above. Conversely, the workers and farmers of Kayseri, although comprising the most numerous part of the local society, do not appear in the representative bodies of the region.

Kayseri Halkevi

The People's House of Kayseri opened on the 24th of August 1932, together with another 19 People's Houses around Turkey. The first 14 Halkevleri had been established a few months before, in 19 February 1932. The Kayseri Halkevi building was the old *Türk Ocağı*²⁰⁴ headquarters, an old Armenian church, up until the early 1940s when a new Halkevi was built.

Kayseri Halkevi Chairmen

The first chairman of the House was Reşit Özsoy, the local Party chief and MP for Kayseri from 1927 to 1950. He remained the House's chairman up until 1935, when he was replaced by the lawyer Naci Özsan. Özsan, member of the regional CHP Idare Heyeti, stayed in that position until 1940, when Hayrullah Ürkün took over. Ürkün had been the Mayor of Kayseri from 1936 to 1939 and would become an MP for Kayseri from 1946 to 1950. In 1941, the director of the Kayseri Lycée, Ömer Sıtkı Erdi, became the chairman of the House, position he held until 1942, upon his appointment to Bursa, and was replaced by Fevzi Kızıklı,²⁰⁵ among the members of the Party Administrative Committee of Kayseri. Kızıklı stayed only for a few months, until the

²⁰² See chapter 3.

²⁰³ Cevdet Kudret, *Havada Bulut Yok*, 2nd edition (Istanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1976), p. 235.

²⁰⁴ Unfortunately the available here information about the Kayseri Turkish Hearth is very few. In 1928 and 1929, a number of courses (typing, foreign languages, new alphabet) were taught, theatrical plays staged, and various conferences were given. İbrahim Karaer, *Türk Ocakları (1912 - 1931)*, (Ankara: Türk Yurdu Neşriyatı, 1992), pp. 74, 87, 96 and 112.

²⁰⁵ Merchant, member of the 1948 İktisat Kongresi, <http://ekutup.dpt.gov.tr/ekonomi/iktisa48/ikt48-1.pdf>.

beginning of 1943, when he was replaced by Nazmi Akyurt,²⁰⁶ who was in turn replaced a few months later, in March 1943 by Feyzullah Karakimseli, chairman of the local Party Administrative Committee and a teacher. Karakimseli was in turn replaced by another teacher, Reşat Oğuz (Vilayet Idare Heyeti member), principal of the Kayseri Lycée, in the beginning of 1945. The next Halkevi chairman was Tacettin Tacettinoğlu, a merchant, member of the Chamber of Commerce of Kayseri, of the regional CHP Administrative Committee, of the Municipal Council, and, for a short period of time, the mayor of Kayseri. He was appointed Halkevi chairman in 1947, only to be replaced by the teacher Kazım Özyedikçi, or Yedikçi, in April 1948. Yedikçi stayed up until May 1949, when he was replaced by the lawyer Mustafa Tütüncü, who was to be the last chairman, up until the closure of the Kayseri Halkevi in 1951.²⁰⁷

According to the People's Houses' By laws, the Halkevi chairman was appointed by the local Party Administrative Committee among its members, while the members of the Houses' and Sections' Committees had to be Party members or civil servants.²⁰⁸ The purpose of course was to have the maximum control and supervision of the institution, its activities and members by the Party. In this way, the administration of the Halkevi and the communication with the supervising authority, the General Secretariat, was in the hands of the local CHP structure, the local Party elite. This was not the case exceptionally during the years of Adli Bayman, the Prefect and Party chairman during the Party and state merging years, 1936 – 1939. He had the double authority of Vali and chairman of the Vilayet's Idare Heyeti. All the papers of the Kayseri Halkevi sent to Ankara and found in the archive of the General Secretariat of the CHP in the Başbakanlık Archive in Ankara had been signed by Adli Bayman. Nevertheless, in general we observe that the chair of the local Halkevi was kept for the local Party bosses, among who the educated seemed to be more favourable. The Halkevi chairmanship, controlled as it was by local elites, can be put next to other positions of influence and authority in the local society, such as the mayor, the president of the Board of Commerce, and various other political, educative and commercial posts. In that sense, explicitly political in nature as it was, the Halkevi chairmanship was also a position fought for among conflicting competitors, an issue we treat in chapters 4 and 5.

Kayseri Halkevi Members

The overall number of the registered members of the Kayseri Halkevi is a rather controversial issue. According to the 28/01/1938 report of the House, the members reach the rather inflated (compared to another count given by another source below) number of 1399 for the first, and 1973 for the second semester of 1937. The report states that the House has among its members 8 lawyers, 11 doctors, 200 teachers, 234 merchants (Tecimen), 515 workers (işçi), 227

²⁰⁶ First principal of Kayseri Meslek Lisesi in 1942 according to www.kayserimerkezeml.com/tarihce.htm. In all probability he was not a member of the local CHP Idare Heyetleri since his name does not appear anywhere in the relevant files of the Archive.

²⁰⁷ Mustafa Şanal, "Türk kültür tarihi içerisinde Kayseri Halkevi ve Faaliyetleri (1932 - 1951)", *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, No 161, (2004), pp. 4-7.

²⁰⁸ *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932), § 1, p. 5.

farmers (çiftçi), and 165 belonging to the obscure category Fine Arts (Güzel Sanatlar). It seems that the only credible figure of this table is the ratio of female to male members: 53/1346 for the first and 82/1891 for the second semester. Such a low rate of women/men members is mentioned in almost all the Halkevi sources.²⁰⁹

The reasonable numbers for lawyer and doctor members are also understandable; it is difficult even for a 21st century observer, not least for the ruling Party in 1937, to imagine that the overall number of doctors and lawyers of Kayseri at that time was much higher than the one offered here. As for the absence of the category ‘Civil Servants’, it suggests how vague the category işçi might be. The majority of the secondary literature on the People’s Houses illustrates the preponderance of Civil Servants in the Houses. The absence thus of any Civil Servant member according to the above report raises a lot of questions about the credibility of such sources. In short, the superficiality of the above numbers and, probably, of many other parts of the report mentioned, and, consequently, of many other papers produced by local Party bosses eager as they were to yield results for the eyes of a demanding centre has to be recognized and treated accordingly, i.e. not at face value.²¹⁰ The implausibility of the figures above is highlighted when a more modest contemporary voice is taken into account. The Party Inspector²¹¹ Hilmi Çoruh, two years later, in 1940 counts only 253 registered members of the Kayseri Halkevi, unfortunately without giving more details:

Table 4

Members	Section
22	Language, History and Literature
20	Fine Arts
22	Theatre
22	Sports
53	Social Assistance
13	Courses
15	Library
56	Village
31	Museum and Exhibitions
253	Total

Source: report No 42, dated 03/03/1940 of the Kırşehir Bölge Müfettişi, Kastamonu mebusu Hilmi Çoruh, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.263.1/4th Büro.

²⁰⁹ The percentage of female members was almost always below 10% of the overall members even in Party sources. See Table with membership statistics from 1932 to 1941 in *CHP Halkevleri ve Halkodaları 1932 – 1942* (Ankara: Alaadin Basımevi, 1942), reproduced in Sefa Şimşek, *Bir İdeolojik seferberlik deneyimi Halkevleri* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2002), p. 253.

²¹⁰ This is something that unfortunately many works on the Halkevleri and their activities share in common.

²¹¹ On the Party Inspectors see Cemil Koçak, “Tek- Parti Döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi’nde Parti Müfettişliği”, *Tarik Zafer Tunaya’ya Armağan* (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 1992). See also Murat Metinsoy, “Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde mebusların intihap dairesi ve teftiş bölgesi raporları”, *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, No 3, (Spring 2006).

Kayseri Halkevi Committee Members

All nine Sections of the Halkevi of Kayseri were formed upon its establishment in 1932. The names and occupations of the cadre of the Kayseri Halkevi, i.e. the members of the Sectional Committees, are to be found in three different sources. The *Kayseri Halkevi Armağanı*, published in 1934,²¹² three years later, the 28/01/1938 report of the Kayseri Halkevi,²¹³ giving the members of the Committees of the Halkevi Sections in 01/07/1937 and 31/12/1937; and again three years later, in 1940, a report on the Kayseri Halkevi, by the Party inspector of the Kırşehir area, Hilmi Çoruk, MP for Kastamonu.²¹⁴

The first observation on the members' lists would be that a large part of the House's cadre was composed of teachers and civil servants,²¹⁵ while a few members came from the commercial sector and the rest of the professions, at least till the 1940 members' list. Moreover, the ratio of teachers in the Committees of the Kayseri Halkevi rises from 10/41 in 1934, to 15/44, 16/40 in 1937, and 29/44 in 1940. This trend seems to continue well in the later years, as a report sent by the Halkevi to the Party General Secretariat in 1950 indicates. Out of the 10 members of the Administrative Committee²¹⁶ of the Kayseri Halkevi mentioned, only the president is not a teacher.²¹⁷

Teachers and Civil Servants

Although many teachers were habitually transferred from one city to another, certain names recur from 1934 to 1950 among the above-mentioned Committee members. The irregularity of the available data might also suggest that more teachers than the ones referred here were active members of the Kayseri Halkevi for an uninterrupted period of time between 1932 and 1950. The names appearing more frequently are those of Nazlı Handan Kaspıralı, or Gaspıralı (wife of the doctor Haydar Gaspıralı son of Ismail Gasprinski), Hikmet Bora (Teacher of Music at the Lycee of Kayseri), Fahri Tümer, Hayri Özdemir, Nevzat Yücel, Cavidan Ada, Feyzullah Karakimseli, Kazım Özdoğan, to mention only few. Among them Nazlı Handan Kaspıralı, Fahri Tümer, Nevzat Yücel and Kazım Özdoğan were publishing articles in the House's journal Erciyes.²¹⁸

The case of Kazım Özdoğan (1901 - 1961), member and chairman of the Museum and Exhibition Section for many years, is an example that deserves our attention since, as a local teacher and scholar, he can be seen as a representative of many similar teachers and functionaries who built their

²¹² *Kayseri Halkevi Armağanı*, No 3, (Kayseri: Yeni Matbaa, 1934), p. 49.

²¹³ The report is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2/5th Büro.

²¹⁴ Report No 42, dated 03/03/1940 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.263.1/4th Büro.

²¹⁵ Teachers were of course state employees. Nevertheless, here we follow the sources, which mention teachers separately from other civil servants.

²¹⁶ The Administrative Committee of the People's Houses is composed of one representative from each Section and a president, appointed by the local Party Administrative Committee. Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası, *Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932), articles 17 and 19.

²¹⁷ Report of 23/08/1950 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/838.311.1/5th Büro.

²¹⁸ Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi*, pp. 109-10.

intellectual persona within the People's Houses and the opportunities they offered to educated people. Kazım Özdoğan was born in Kayseri, where he received his primary and secondary education. He became a teacher in 1925 after obtaining a Diploma from an İmam - Hatip School. He carried out many studies and researches, mostly on local history. He took an active part in the Village Excursions the Vali Adli Bayman was organizing in the mid 1930s²¹⁹ and published the results of these village excursions in a number of brochures.²²⁰ He also published several article in most of the journals and newspapers of Kayseri. In 1948 he published the first part of a four-volume Kayseri Tarihi. Ali Rıza Önder, probably a student of Özdoğan at the Kayseri Lisesi, wrote that he was the teacher usually entrusted with the duty to deliver the speeches at the national holidays and fests. Other sources indicate that Özdoğan was giving conferences in the Halkevi as well.²²¹

In regard to civil servants, the above tables suggest a slightly decreasing presence in the Committees of the House: 19/41 in 1934, 15/44 and 12/40 in 1937, and 10/44 in 1940. In 1942, the Party Inspector of the Niğde area, A. Sırrı Levend, MP for Aydın, refers to the civil servants' indifference towards the activities of the House in one of his teftiş raporları.

The civil servants, especially the Directors of State Offices, are not interested at all in the activities of the Halkevi. With the exception of the Director of Medical Services (in his capacity as chairman of the Social Assistance Section of the Halkevi) and of the Director of Education (in his capacity as the chairman of the Sports Section), the indifference of all the other directors is overtly striking. I have been able to see some of them coming to the lectures I personally gave only out of kindness and to the family meetings once in a while. [It] is impossible for them to work voluntarily.²²²

The 1934 members' list shows that six employees of the State Railroads were members of the Sectional Committees. Their names though completely disappear three years later. Moreover, none of them seems to have contributed any piece to the House's journal, according to the list of contributors Önder is offering.²²³ Whatever their incentive had been in joining the executive groups

²¹⁹ In one of the reports the Vali Adil Bayman sent to inform the Party Headquarters of these excursions, he refers to a speech Kazım Özdoğan gave at the Mimar Sinan village on the life and works of the famous architect. This is an indication of the important role Özdoğan was playing in the Vali's 'village enterprise'. Contained in the 19/11/1936 report of the Kayseri Valisi and C.H.P. İlyönkural başkanı Adli Bayman to the C.H.P. Genel Sekreterliği in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2/5th Büro.

²²⁰ Kayseri Halkevi Köy tetkikleri seri 1 – 5, *Tavlusun, Germin, Mimar Sinan, Arguncık and Talas köyü* (Kayseri: Vilayet Matbaası, 1936 - 38).

²²¹ Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi*, p. 165. The text of a speech given by Özdoğan at the Kayseri Halkevi in 30/01/1938 is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/227.895.1/1st Büro.

²²² Abstract from the No 238 report of the Aydın mebusu (MP) A. S. Levent, Niğde Bölge Müfettişi, Kayseri 16/07/1942 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.259.1/4th Büro.

²²³ Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi*, pp. 109-10.

of the People's House, whether (un)official pressure from above, or sheer interest, it did not last for long.

Sahir Üzel, on the contrary, is an exception among the category 'Civil Servants', in that he appears as a member continuously from 1932 at least up until 1940. In 1932 he is a member and, from 1937 to 1940, the chairman of the Library and Publication Section of the Kayseri Halkevi. Üzel, a scribe in the Public Works Department and the Kayseri correspondent of the Cumhuriyet newspaper, also contributed articles to Erciyes, the House's journal and gave speeches, as the 1938 report of the House indicates.²²⁴ He was also publishing articles in Kayseri, the local newspaper.

Artisans, Merchants, workers, farmers

The Halkevleri lists, as well as the Inspectors reports and the Party papers, classify the Houses' members as Teachers, Doctors, Lawyers, Civil Servants, Workers, Merchants and/or Esnaf and Farmers. In the case of the Kayseri People's House, workers, Merchants, Farmers and Esnaf members seem to play some role during the first years. According to the above lists of members, in 1934 the overall number of Workers/merchants/esnaf/farmers is 6/41, in 1937 14/44 and 11/40, while in 1940 no member seems to belong these three categories. Tacettin (Tacettinoğlu) is the only tradesman whom the available sources indicate as more active in both the Halkevi activities and the political and economic life of Kayseri. Between 1932 and 1938 he was among the members of the Administrative Committee of the Kayseri Chamber of Commerce (Kayseri Ticaret Odası).²²⁵ He was also a member of the Municipal Council and for a short period of time the mayor of Kayseri in 1950. The 28/01/1938 report of the House states that he gave two speeches during 1937, one at the Cumhuriyet Bayramı and one during the Tasarruf Haftası.²²⁶ As for the rest of the merchants, esnaf and farmers mentioned in the lists above as members of the Committees between 1934 and 1937, their names are not to be found anywhere else in the sources used in this essay. The disappearance of members from these occupational categories in the 1940 list suggests that they had not been equally important in the activities of the Halkevi as schoolteachers.

Mahir Şener, chairman of the Fine Arts Committee from 1934 till, at least, 1938, is an interesting case. He is a worker (pipe fitter – teşviyeci), probably a foreman, and the only worker - chairman of a Halkevi Section in Kayseri. In 1937, seven out of nine chairmen were teachers, one a Civil Servant and Mahir Şener the only işçi. Hamit, Ali and Sait are three more teşviyeci featuring in the Halkevi lists in 1934 and 1937. Nevertheless, none of them seems to have

²²⁴ He gave two speeches, at the *Zafer Bayramı* and at the *Dil Bayramı* in 1937. 28/01/1938 report of Kayseri Halkevi contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2/5th Büro. About Üzel also in Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi*, p. 55.

²²⁵ www.kayserito.org.tr.

²²⁶ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2/5th Büro.

published anything in Erciyes, the Halkevi's journal, or in any of the books/brochures published by the House. In the 1940 list they quietly disappear, as well as all the esnaf and farmer Halkevi Committee members, to a dominant teacher (29/44), and, to a lesser extent, civil servant majority.

Reading the figures

A first crude indication of the People's House's appeal among the population of Kayseri can be extracted from a comparison between the membership statistics and the population of the city of Kayseri as recorded in the 1935 census. Three groups of figures are given: the Halkevi overall membership, the Halkevi Committees' membership and the population statistics. The indication is crude because of the suspected artificiality of the numbers and the given occupational categories of the members' statistics – consider the certain need of the Halkevi officials, all local Party men, the town's socioeconomic elite, to demonstrate their achievements to Ankara; the absence of the category civil servants although we know that a significant part of the active members were civil servants; the unclear category 'Fine Arts'. With these restrictions in mind, the comparison yields the following result:

Table 5

Percentages of occupational categories among the overall Kayseri city male population, the Halkevi members and the Halkevi Committee members.

	Kayseri (male)²²⁷ population 1935	Halkevi members 1937	Halkevi Committee members 1934 – 1940
Workers	29,4%	26,5%	All three categories
Merchants	6,2%	12%	
Farmers	8,2%	11%	
Sub Total	43,8%	48,5%	13%(1934) - 31%(1937) – 0%(1940)
Teachers		10%	22%(1934) - 65%(1940)
Civil Servants	10%		43%(1934) - 22%(1940)

Sources: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü Genel nüfus sayımı 20 İlk teşrin 1935, *Kayseri Vilayeti*, Vol. 33, (İstanbul: Hüsnütabiat Basımevi, 1937); *Kayseri Halkevi Armağanı*, No 3, (Kayseri: Yeni Matbaa, 1934); 28/1/1938 report of Kayseri Halkevi contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2/5th Büro; 3/3/1940 report of Hilmi Çoruh in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.263.1/4th Büro.

²²⁷ The female population is not taken into account because 94,7% of the Kayseri city women is registered as 'jobless'.

The first comment on the above table would be to state the overrepresentation of teachers among the Halkevi members, but especially among the Sectional Committees. Together with the Civil Servant members, they constitute the majority of the Committee members. If the number 200, given in the 1937 members' statistics is correct, then almost the total majority of the Kayseri teachers were Halkevi members; even teachers from other parts of the Kayseri Vilayeti might have also registered.²²⁸ The teacher preponderance coincides and probably correlates with the well-known Party and state desire and policy to have the teacher's army, as it is called occasionally, enlist in the Houses.

A second remark would be that the absence of the category 'Civil Servant' in the House Membership statistics seems rather strange given their noticeable presence in the Sectional Committees. Moreover, this absence makes the rest of the categories unclear – consider the category 'Fine Arts'.

The merchants of Kayseri seem to have registered in large numbers. According to the 1935 census they comprise the 6,2% of the Kayseri male population, while they stand for 12% of the House's overall members. Their preponderance in the House can be explained by the fact that they compose a large part of the CHP manpower in urban centers. Merchants also compose the larger part of the 13% in 1934 and 31% in 1937 joint category of workers, farmers and merchants in the Halkevi Committees. Farmer Committee members do not exist. As for the worker Committee members, they are limited to the small group of pipe fitters (*teşviyecisi*) mentioned above. As skilled workers, probably coming from the same workplace and/or social space, this group cannot be considered as representatives of the large unskilled industrial (or not) workforce of Kayseri.

In sum, although the proportion of farmers and workers among the Halkevi members is almost identical to the percentage of farmers and workers of the Kayseri population, these two categories are definitely underrepresented in, or even excluded from the House's executive, with the exception of the *teşviyecisi* company. Teachers, Civil Servants and merchants, on the contrary, make up the largest part of the Halkevi members, although they comprise a rather small section of the Kayseri population. The preponderance of teachers and civil servants, but not merchants, even rises in the Committees and the People's House's administration. In addition, merchants do not contribute articles to the Halkevi journal, or appear in the Halkevi activity reports. An explanation for this is that during the first years after their establishment the Houses were one of the most important projects of the Party and gathered around them a large part of the Party's members, a large part of which was composed in provincial centres by merchants and artisans. Without ignoring the Party directives to register or any kind of official pressure to do so, we must also consider that

²²⁸ 229 were all the teachers appointed in the whole of the Kayseri Vilayeti in 1931-2. 88 were appointed in Kayseri, while the rest in the villages of the Vilayet. *Başvekalet istatistik umum müdürlüğü, Maarif istatistikleri 1923 – 1932*, (İstanbul: Devlet matbaası, 1933), pp. 82 and 93.

many Party members registered for political reasons as well, to show their commitment to the Party, or even not to lose any status the Halkevi membership might entail. In the 1940s though, during the war period and its hardships, but especially with the end of the war and the gradual ‘opening’ of the political regime and the creation of opposition parties, the Halkevleri in general, partly because of the criticisms it attracted, adopted a more educational and less partisan appearance. This offers an explanation for the gradual disappearance of merchants and the increasing presence of teachers.

The Kayseri Halkevi then seems to have gathered around it the majority of the local schoolteachers and professionals, a part of the town’s civil servants and merchants. Turning to the executive of the House, the members of its Committees, we observe a clear teacher predominance, which also entails the presence of students, as the sources indicate as well.²²⁹ The administrative cadre of the House then was drawn from a very small part of the population of Kayseri for sure. What is interesting is that it was not the local Party elite that had already been staffing the local Party structures and the rest of the local political and social associations that totally occupied the Halkevi administrative cadre. Rather, it did so together with schoolteachers and other educated civil servants and professionals, a number of whom were non-locals. Furthermore these schoolteachers and professionals seem to carry out most of the House’s activities, in contrast to merchant members who seem to minimally interfere with the House’s program of activities. On the other hand, the financial control of the House was in the hands of the local Party structure and part of its income came from the municipality, both structures controlled by local Party elites, which were locals, in their majority merchants and professionals, from local elite families. The Halkevi chairman was after all appointed by them usually among their members.

In a sense, at first glance the available sources portray a Halkevi space inhabited and controlled on the one hand by local Party elites providing the political and financial capital necessary for the House to operate, and, on the other hand, by educated state employees (teachers, civil servants) and professionals, a large part being non-locals, providing the ‘scientific’ capital, their technical and professional expertise. Although, a first reading of the sources would allow us to speak of two categories of Halkevi executive members – interestingly quite similar to the way the centre imagines and designs the Halkevi space, we should not apprehend them as quite distinct and dissimilar. Rather, we should allow for both dissimilarities and conflicts, as well as convergences and alliances between Halkevi actors. We should view the Halkevi space not only in its textbook terms, but also as an extension of the

²²⁹ Theatrical plays were staged by students of various schools. *Kayseri*, No 714, 15 October 1932, p.1., and 1 April 1940, p. 2; *Kayseri Lise Mecmuası*, No 5, 30 April – May 1933, p. 19. Teachers were also organizing literature evenings together with students or giving lectures followed by students. *Kayseri Lise Mecmuası*, No 5, 30 April – May 1933, p. 20. Gymnastic shows were given by students in the Halkevi Hall. Language, physics and chemistry courses for students were opened in the House. *Erciyes*, No 28 and 29, May, June/July 1945.

local society and politics, thus an arena of both negotiation and conflict between individuals and fractions. Consider for example the existence of other constellations of power existing parallel and in relation with the local Party elites and the teachers and professionals operating in the Halkevi. Adli Bayman, the governor of Kayseri is an instructive example: a non-local high-level bureaucrat, heading most of the state services in the province plus the local Party structure, due to the 1936 decision for closer cooperation of State/Government and Party structures, and thus supervising the local Halkevi.

The sources do not indicate whether the people frequenting the Halkevi and its activities (conferences, concerts, plays, meetings) were also from the same restricted parts of the local society, although some indications imply that this was the case. In other words, we have a clear picture of who were (and what was the position in the local society of) the people directing the House and its activities, but only few sources indicating who were the recipients of them, the audiences of its concerts and plays, those registered in its courses, or the users of its library;²³⁰ in short, which were the segments of the local society affected by the House's activities, or else, to what extent did the House (and its sermons) penetrate the local population - teachers, students and civil servants excluded.

²³⁰ A table attached to the 28/1/1938 report of the Kayseri Halkevi, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2, shows that almost 1/3 of its library users to be students. Moreover, teachers, civil servants, officers, students and liberal professions (*serbest meslek*) make up the 70% of the total users between 1/7/1937 and 31/12/1937.

II. Balıkesir

This part focuses on the People's House of the town of Balıkesir. The first principal objective is to study the constituency of the House in the local society, or, more specifically, to determine the House's manpower, its members and executive. A second corollary aim is to place this constituency into the local society. The rationale behind this positioning of the Halkevi men and women into the locality is to appreciate the environment, or context, within which the Halkevi was operating. This act of contextualization entails at first the study of the local population, based on the population census of 1935. The primary organization in charge of the Halkevi, the local Party, its members, staff and leadership forms the second focus of this chapter. Next to the Party, other local institutions and their personnel will be examined, to the extent our sources allow for such an investigation. Thirdly, the Halkevi's membership statistics available and the managing team of the House are to be examined in terms of their gender, educational background, occupation and their relations to the local society.²³¹ All the above data then is collectively examined in an attempt to uncover the position of the House's personnel in the society and populace of Balıkesir; the segments of the local society the Halkevi draws its manpower from; the control and influence of the local Party structures upon the Halkevi; in short, the position the House occupied in the local society.

Finally, the conclusions of this part are compared to the findings of the part about the Halkevi of Kayseri. The similarities and differences between the comparable data for both cities (their population, Party and other social and political structures and People's Houses) are examined. An attempt is made to account for the similarities and differences between the two cases and offer some primary suggestions about the factors that can be constitutive of them and, thus, might have general interpretative value for People's Houses elsewhere and for the dynamics of the social change they were meant to initiate and advance.

Balıkesir society: population, Party, Associations

Population

According to the 1935 general census²³² the city of Balıkesir had a population of 26.699. Once again, as in the case of Kayseri, the majority of the female population (91.8%) is registered as "without profession, profession unknown or uncertain". A rather large part of the male population (41.4%) as well falls into the same category. Due to the almost total absence of

²³¹ Due to a limited availability of sources for the 18 years the House was operating, we concentrate on the period yielding a dense set of data, that is the first years, especially between 1933 and 1935, although some Party papers used here were composed as late as the mid 1940s.

²³² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü. Genel Nüfus sayımı. 20 ilk teşrin 1935, *Balıkesir Vilayeti*, Vol. 8, (İstanbul: Hüsniyat Basımevi, 1936).

information about the women of Balıkesir in the census, the analysis below is based on the data given for men, unless otherwise mentioned.

The largest occupational category is registered under the title “Public Administration, Services and Professions”. It stands for the 20.9% of the total male population of the city, mainly including all types of state employees (civil servants, teachers, doctors, nurses, judges). “Industry and artisans” forms the second largest category (18.4%). The title though is misleading since the city of Balıkesir did not have any large industries or any industrial working force. Most of those registered were various construction workers and artisans – *esnaf* (grocers, bakers, butchers, photographers, etc). An 8.3% of the male population is registered as farmer. The next occupational category is the merchants with a 7.2% (Merchants, Banks, Hotel, coffeehouse owners, “other commerce-related occupations”). The last category of occupations related to “Transport and Communication” makes up the 3.2%.

As for the local women, the largest part having a registered occupation is working as farmers (4.1% of female populations). Balıkesir boasted of a rather large student population. An almost 7% of the overall female population is registered as student. The percentage of male students to the male population is 12%, while the overall percentage of students to the town’s population is 10%. Teachers form the only major occupational category with a female majority (82 women for 41 men). So, students and teachers were the two of the few categories of the local population that included substantial numbers of women.

Local CHP

In one of his reports, Fuat Sirmen, MP for Erzurum and Party Inspector of the Balıkesir area, provided the General Secretariat with the names and occupations of the members of the Party Administrative Committees of the province of Balıkesir he inspected.²³³ Not all the *Idare Heyetleri* members are there; the inspector mainly visited most of the Party structures of the city of Balıkesir and of the other cities in the Province (Balya, Edremit, Burhaniye, Dursunbey, Erdek, Ayvalık, Gönen, Bandırma, Sındırğı and Susıřırlık, all *ilçe*, that is sub provinces). In that sense his report presents the local Party leadership of the towns and not of the province’s rural hinterland. He reports the names of 205 members of the Party Administrative Committees. The largest group, 54% or 111 persons, is formed by all kinds of Merchants and Artisans (grocer, shoe-maker, baker, tailor, tobacco merchant, driver, oil merchant, petition writer (*arzuhalcı*), shop owners). 33 persons (16%) were civil servants or bureaucrats of all kinds (the Prefect, the mayor, scribes in various state departments, Agricultural Bank, Municipalities). An 11% was composed of the liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, dentists). Only six were registered as farmers, but we have to keep in mind that the report mostly registers urban Party members, since the Inspector did not visit villages and places smaller than the sub-province level. Four schoolteachers were also registered. Together with the farmers and two workers they make the 2% of the 205 names given by Fuat Sirmen. Lastly there is a 13% (or 27 persons)

²³³ Report dated 15/2/1937 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/623.46.1.

described only by their position in the Provincial or Municipal Assemblies. If we distribute these 27 persons to the above categories accordingly the percentages emerge as follows: almost 62% for merchants and artisans, close to 20% for civil servants and bureaucrats and something less than 15% for the professionals.

In his report, Fuat Sirmen presents the overall Party membership in the region. The central Kaza of Balıkesir had 9.196 members over its total population of 154.760, that is a 5,9%. The percentage for the rest of the sub provinces ranged from 4,5% for Sısiğırlık to 11% for Edremit. The overall percentage for the province was 7,5%, almost the same as the overall membership percentage for Turkey at that time.²³⁴ In 1941 the percentage for Balıkesir rose to 8,5%, again identical to the national percentage.²³⁵ The first biannual activity report of the Provincial Party Administrative Committee of 1943 raised the Party members in the province to 41.704, an 11,5% of the 1935 population.²³⁶ Even if we allow for the population growth from 1935 to 1942, the percentage to the overall population has to be higher than the 8,5% of the previous 1941 figures. The real numbers should be somehow lower for a number of reasons. First of all, we have to account for the local Party men's inclination to report inflated number of members in order to please the center. The local party structures from the lower *ocak* level informed the higher structure to which they were hierarchically linked of their activities and members. Thus, from *ocak* to *nahiye*, from *nahiye* to *kaza*, then to the Vilayet level, and finally to Ankara, the numbers could have potentially been altered a number of times. Secondly, an unknown number of members were registered in more than one Party structure, usually due to their change of residence. In most cases, these members were never deleted from their previous Party register.²³⁷ Nevertheless, the importance of these statistics is not related to their numerical accuracy, rather to their capability to show the upward tendency of the party membership in the long run.

Another document dated 19/3/1941 from the archive of the General Secretariat of the CHP offers two tables, reproduced below, with the occupational and educational distribution of the members of *all* the Party Administrative Committees of the Balıkesir Vilayeti.

Table 6.
Members according to educational background.

Administrative Committees	Higher	Lise	High school	Primary School	Milli Mektep	Illiterate	Total
Ocak	7	20	243	1031	796	744	2841
Nahiye	3	13	67	138	52	11	284
Kaza	7	26	24	16	1	0	74

²³⁴ Esat Öz gives a 7,8% for 1936. Öz, *Türkiye'de Tek-Parti Yönetimi*, p. 182.

²³⁵ Öz, *Türkiye'de*, p. 183.

²³⁶ CHP Balıkesir VİLAYETİ İdare Heyeti 1942 birinci 6 aylık çalışma raporu (biannual report) 25/6/942, p. 2, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/624.49.2.

²³⁷ This was acknowledged by the Party inspector Fuat Sirmen in his report mentioned above contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/623.46.1, p. 12.

Vilayet	4	2	3	0	0	0	9
Total	21	61	337	1185	849	755	3208

Source: Report of Balıkesir Vilayeti İdare Heyeti Reisliği in 19/3/1941 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/276.1106.1.

Table 7.

Members according to occupational background.

Occupation	Ocak	Nahiye	Kaza	Vilayet	Total
Lawyer	4	1	2	2	9
Doctor	2	0	1	0	3
Pharmacist	1	0	2	2	5
Veterinarian	0	0	0	0	0
Land owner	122	31	6	1	160
Teacher	23	15	6	0	44
Engineer	0	0	0	0	0
Retired officer	3	3	0	0	6
Retired Civil Servant	13	12	2	0	27
Merchant	308	66	43	4	421
Farmer	2047	154	12	0	2213
Worker	318	2	0	0	320
Total	2841	284	74	9	3208

Source: Report of Balıkesir Vilayeti İdare Heyeti Reisliği in 19/3/1941 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/276.1106.1.

This second report that gives the Administrative Committees' membership for the entire province has to be read together with the Fuat Sirmen's report that is giving the members of the Administrative Committees of the central sub-province, that is the city of Balıkesir from the Vilayet to neighborhood level (*ocak*), plus the Administrative Committee members of the towns in the Province (sub province level). In Sirmen's report, i.e. in Balıkesir and the towns of the province, farmers form a tiny, unimportant percentage of the Party Administrative Committee members, while the 1941 report about the entire province reveals a striking 68,9% of farmer members. A 92,4% of these farmer members were registered in the *ocak* Party level. The *ocak* is the smallest Party structure corresponding to neighborhoods and, mostly, villages. As for the mighty percentages the consortium of merchants, artisans, and civil servants achieve in the sub-province (*kaza*) and Vilayet level, it retreats to a tiny 17% of the membership of the entire Party structures of the Province. If we consider these statistics from a different perspective, the percentage of merchant members, for instance, decreases as we descend to the *ocak* (village) level; from 44% (Vilayet administrative committee), to 58% (*Kaza* level), to 23% (*nahiye*), to a 10% at the *ocak* level. In other words, as we climb the ladder towards the upper echelons of the Party that were definitely more important in terms of decision-making, we observe the preponderance of civil servants, professionals and merchants, or else of urban elites. If we move downwards,

towards the villages, the Party membership statistics tend to overlap with the overall population, an observation made by Esat Öz as well.²³⁸

Another rough indication of this tendency can be also demonstrated by a simple comparison of the percentage of illiterates between the Administrative Committee members and the overall Party members of the province of Balıkesir. The 19/3/1941 report²³⁹ of the members of the İdare Heyetleri gives a 23% of illiterate members, while the 1942 biannual report²⁴⁰ of the Party membership offers a 42% of illiterate members. Given the known tendency of local Party men to exhibit a picture that looked more amenable to the center, we might also assume that a part of the 45% of the Party members registered as “literate or Primary education” (*İlk tahsil veya okur yazar*) might have actually been practically illiterate or just able to read. In that case, the actual percentage of illiteracy among the Party membership has to be considered higher.

Although the above documents did not differentiate between female and male members, Fuat Sirmen’s report gives an indication of the female participation in the Party structures: only one woman is mentioned among the Administrative Committee members of the towns of Balıkesir, Balya, Edremit, Burhaniye, Ayvalık, Dursunbey, Bandırma, Sındırğı, Gönen, Erdek, and Susurluğı. It almost goes without saying that the female participation in the lower Party structures (villages mostly), if existing at all, should have been exceptional, or, more probably, nonexistent.

Local Associations

The social and political landscape of a Turkish town in the mid-thirties and forties cannot be fully understood by examining its population and Party structures, or the members and executive of its Halkevi alone. Balıkesir, for instance, hosted a cluster of associations and institutions with varying goals and structures that were apparently attracting, or at least their administrative members came from, the local elites.

Some of these associations were local, others had nationwide presence; their level of independence from Party and state varied, some being totally independent only in theory. In reality though, they were staffed and administered by local elites. Moreover, they were inspected by Party and state men, as the following document displays. One of the duties of the Party Inspectors was to inspect the non-party associations, clubs, as well as the local press, and inform the Party about the level of their cooperation with the local Party and state authorities. Similar information were requested by local Party structures; in one of the questions they had to reply in the biannual reports they were sending to the General Secretariat, the local Administrative Committees had to provide information regarding local associations and societies, athletic clubs, workers’ unions and local newspapers. In these reports the local Party

²³⁸ Esat Öz, *Türkiye’de tek-parti yönetimi*, p. 186.

²³⁹ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/276.1106.1.

²⁴⁰ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/624.49.2.

structures were also asked about their cooperation with non-Party associations; the level of the associations' commitment to the regime's ideals; the existence of any discord between the local Party and non-Party associations; whether their chairmen or Committee members were Party members, and similar questions.

In 1944, the Party Administrative Committee of the province of Balıkesir, following the No. 9/2483 Party directive of 1/12/1943, informed the General Secretariat on the local Associations.²⁴¹ Ten Associations are mentioned (*Türk Hava Kurumu*, *Kızılay*, *Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*, *Ulusal Ekomomi ve Arttırma kurumu*, *Yüksek Tahsil Talebe kurumu*, *Öğretmenler ve kültür müntesipleri biriktirme yardım birliği*, *Yoksulları Gözetme Birliği*, *Avcılık kulübü*, *Şehir kulübü*, and *Yardım Sevenler Cemiyeti*). With the exception of the *Türk Hava Kurumu*, *Kızılay*, and *Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*, all the remaining associations were established in Balıkesir after 1932. The document also lists the names of the members of the Administrative Committees of the above associations and whether they were Party members or not. Out of 69 names 53 were Party members (one of them also a teacher), three were identified as not Party members, three as civil servants (*memur*) and 10 as teachers. Moreover, it seems that some of them were not just Party members. At least 12 of the persons mentioned in the above document also appear as members of the Party Administrative Committees of the town of Balıkesir, according to the 1936 inventory of Fuat Sirmen mentioned above, although there was an eight years distance between the two documents.

Next to these societies, the city of Balıkesir hosted a Teachers' Academy (*Muallim Mektebi*), a Lise, and a number of (*Orta okul*) High and (*İlk okul*) Primary schools. The existence of these educational structures, their staff and students is essential for an understanding of the local society and, consequently, of the local People's House, its clientele, its administrative and working personnel. Based on articles by the local newspaper and the Halkevi journal, we immediately realize what most of the sources and the secondary literature on the People's Houses mention, i.e. the predominance of schoolteachers in the Houses and their activities. In short, the Balıkesir Lisesi with its 51 teachers,²⁴² not to mention their colleagues in the High and Primary schools and the Teachers' Academy with their students, function as one of the local nuclei (in all probability the most energetic and important) of personnel the local House is based on.

To recapitulate, the social and political associations and clubs of the city of Balıkesir in the 1930s and 1940s were by majority staffed on the one hand by members of local notable families, be it merchants or professionals, and, on the other, by state employees and teachers, some of them locals, but mostly outsiders appointed to Balıkesir. The placement of local elite members in various local structures/associations appears in other sources as well, such as the reports sent occasionally to the General Secretariat of the local Party Administrative Committee members by Party Inspectors or the applications

²⁴¹ Letter No. 27 dated 31/1/1944 signed by the chairman of the Party Administrative Committee of the province of Balıkesir contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/595.58.3.

²⁴² *Alkım*, Balıkesir Lisesi Dergisi, No 18-22, (15 May – 15 September 1938).

sent to the Party Headquarters before the national elections by the same members – a source to be treated below. These sources display the control of the Party structures and the non-Party associations and unions by the same group of people.

Nevertheless, these sources offer a rather ‘frozen’ picture of these actors’ participation in, or rather membership of these structures. The dynamics of the symbiosis of people with obviously different occupational and educational profiles within the existing social and political associations of Balıkesir is missing. In other words, the above sources offer a highly static picture of their coexistence and interaction, bereft of any conflicts or antagonisms that are inherent in any given political landscape occupied by actors competing for a limited number of resources, and especially within a context of an extensive top-down sociopolitical change wherein a wide range of well entrenched habits, mentalities and attitudes (from political legitimization and religious outlook to everyday attire) were rendered obsolete and even treacherous, thus creating breaches between social actors that could be used in their struggles. Any set (new) sociopolitical order creates its enemies and the Kemalist regime was no exception to that; ‘reactionaries’, ‘Islamic lodges’, ‘foreign ideas and movements’ (catchword for communism), to state a few proclaimed threats of the regime, were prescribed categories ready to be used against adversaries. Given that the Houses, as we have seen in the case of Kayseri and, now, of Balıkesir, were one of the structures local elites occupied next to the Party branches and other local associations; given the conflictual nature of local politics – politics defined here as the exertion of actors to occupy a limited number of positions of power, status and authority, then the People’s House being such a structure of power and authority cannot but have been the locus of conflicts and struggles between local actors. The case of the first chairman of the Halkevi of Balıkesir to be treated in the fourth chapter offers a more dynamic picture of the coexistence and antagonisms between local elite actors.

Balıkesir Halkevi

Background and establishment

Before entering into our discussion of the People’s House of Balıkesir, it is necessary to mention the prior existence of a Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) in the same town. In the First Part of this thesis we have discussed the close relation between the Halkevi institution and the Turkish Hearths in terms of their cadre, ideology and activities. There were several similarities between the two institutions, in both ideological and organizational terms. The People’s Houses were founded upon the existing structure of the Turkish Hearths and the formative/constitutional documents of both institutions share great similarities. The property of the Hearths was transferred to the CHP and used for the establishment of the Houses. The first Houses were founded in the buildings of the Turkish Hearths. A degree of continuity in the human resources of both institutions is also to be expected, although the necessary sources to confirm this assumption are not available. The little information

available indicate that the Turkish Hearth of Balıkesir was one of the more active in the country, if we take the frequency Karaer mentions it in his book on the Turkish Hearts as a measure of its output. In 1925 the Turkish Hearth of Balıkesir opened a clinic and had patients examined by itinerant (*gezici*) doctors; in 1927 the Hearth organized shows and speeches to ‘enlighten the people’ on ‘national, financial, social and medical issues’; in 1928 it opened courses to teach the new alphabet and gave dance parties (*balolar*); in 1930 it is reported that the Hearth continued its ‘villagist’ activities and that it opened a typewriting course for women granting diplomas to 20 ladies.²⁴³

The Halkevi of Balıkesir was established in December 1932. In the following days it started to register members and elect the members of its activity Sections.²⁴⁴ “The local Party Administrative Committee was ordered to open the People’s House of Balıkesir in 11/12/32. Esat Adil was elected among its members as the House’s chairman. The House is composed of seven rooms, of two Halls, of 80 and 500 capacity, and a large garden. Up until now our members are 577. 97 of them have a university degree and 14 from a European University. *Balıkesir Gazetesi* is a wall newspaper, printed once a week in 1500 items by the House’s Village Section. The House will open a *Köylüye kolaylık bürosu* (Office for the Assistance of Villagers).”²⁴⁵

A brochure published in 1934 by the Halkevi of Balıkesir describes its establishment in the following words:

*The Administrative Committee of the Balıkesir CHF after receiving the order to open the Balıkesir Halkevi in 11/12/1934 elected from its own members Esat Adil as president of the Halkevi and started the preparatory works for the opening of the House. Building: The building of the old Turkish Hearth situated near the station was given to our House.*²⁴⁶

²⁴³ İbrahim Karaer, *Türk Ocakları (1912 - 1931)*, (Ankara: Türk Yurdu Neşriyatı, 1992), pp. 74, 87, 95, 113, 158-9, and 171.

²⁴⁴ “Halkevi Faaliyete Geçiyor”, *Türk Dili*, 20 December 1932, p. 1; “Halkevi Kütüphane ve Neşriyat ve Temsil şubeleri bugün toplanarak komitelerini seçeceklerdir”, *Türk Dili*, 23 December 1932, p. 1; “Halkevi Şubeleri faaliyete”, *Türk Dili*, 25 December 1932, p. 1; “Halkevi Güzel San’atlar Şubesi bu akşam toplanacaktır”, *Türk Dili*, 26 December 1932, p. 1.

²⁴⁵ “Balıkesir Halkevi Tesis Faaliyeti”, *Kaynak*, No 1, (February 1933), p. 32.

²⁴⁶ Balıkesir Halkevi, *Sekiz ayda nasıl çalıştı ve neler yaptı* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Vilayet Matbaası, nd), p. 27.

Members

The following table with the membership of the House is published in page 27 of the brochure.

Table 8.
Halkevi Membership statistics.

Section	Men	Women	Total	Primary	Middle	High
Language, History Literature	48	3	51	2	35	14
Fine Arts	105	37	142	39	94	9
Sports	84	3	87	33	44	10
Social Assistance	99	6	105	9	68	28
Courses	62	8	70	22	44	4
Library	68	4	72	2	56	14
Village	105	0	105	28	62	15
Museum	15	0	15	2	11	2
Theatre	48	6	54	6	43	5
Total	635	67	702	143	458	101

Source: Balıkesir Halkevi, *Sekiz ayda nasıl çalıştı ve neler yaptı* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Vilayet Matbaası, nd), p. 27.

According to this statistical data, almost 80% of the Halkevi members were High School/Lise and/or University graduates. The remaining 143 members were registered under the title 'Primary Education' (İlk Tahsil). With respect to the absence of any illiterate members mentioned, one might convincingly assume that either the illiterate were not registered (or even allowed to register) in the Halkevi, or that they were 'hidden' under the category 'Primary Education'. In any case, the above data suggest that all Halkevi members were literate and, most important, that four out of five Halkevi members were graduates of High Schools or Universities. This is an astonishing ratio compared not only with the educational background of the population of Balıkesir in the 1930s, but also with the population of several areas in Turkey today. It can be doubtlessly argued that the Halkevi was drawing not only its administrative members – as we shall see below- but also its members from the educated minority in the local society. Thus, the People's House, at least upon its establishment, was appealing to the literate and educated parts of the local population. On the other hand, the illiterate of Balıkesir, a total 62% of the city's population (49,4% for men and 75,4% for

women),²⁴⁷ were totally absent from the House's membership statistics and in all probability formed a tiny minority among its members.

Next to the illiterate, women were also seriously underrepresented among the Halkevi members. Female members made only a 9,5% of the overall members. If we are to assume that the female members of the Halkevi came from the same social and occupational backgrounds as the female staff members (treated below), then a large part of these 67 women were predominately teachers and/or relatives (usually wives) of other usually educated Halkevi members. That means that some of them were not locals (teachers or wives/daughters of civil servants appointed to Balıkesir), while some (if not the majority) of the local female members were similarly teachers or Halkevi members next, or attached, to their male relatives, also members of the local Halkevi. In both cases, the Halkevi female minority appears to correspond to an even smaller, miniscule section of the local female population. To drive this reasoning even further, a part of this tiny female minority becomes inscribed in this space, an act that has a supposedly 'emancipatory' quality for women and runs against their seclusion and control by men, which is one of the aims upon which this institution was established, in a fashion that refutes the very logic behind this 'inscription', i.e. as wives or daughters of men, not just as women recently 'liberated' from the 'shackles of obscurantism'.

Apart from being plausible, if the above reading of the sources is correct, the above reasoning can then function as a crude indication of the penetration of the regime's emancipatory discourse and policies in relation to women into society and its popularity among the populace. The female presence/participation in the Houses is a subject pervading most of the sources – occasionally by its own ubiquitous absence – and we shall examine it in a more detailed fashion in the third part of this thesis drawing on sources that discuss women-related incidents directly.

Executive Members

The names of the Halkevi's Administrative Committee members are published in page 30 of the brochure "Balıkesir Halkevi, *Sekiz ayda nasıl çalıştı ve neler yaptı*".

²⁴⁷ Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü. Genel Nüfus sayımı. 20 ilk teşrin 1935, *Balıkesir Vilayeti*, Vol. 8, (İstanbul: Hüsnütabiat Basımevi, 1936), p. 42.

Table 9.

Administrative Committee (Idare Heyeti) of the Halkevi of Balıkesir.

Chairman	Esat Adil, jurist, member of <i>Vilayet Daimi Encümeni</i> (Standing Committee)
Secretary	Abdi, Chemist
Accountant	Suat, Primary School principal
Member	Ali Rıza, Surgeon, Memleket Hospital
Member	Halit Bedi, Music Teacher at Teachers' School
Member	Hasan, director of printing house (<i>matbaa müdürü</i>)
Member	Niyazi, chief interrogator
Member	Kemal, Doctor
Member	Bedri, High School teacher of Physics
Member	Avni, Pharmacist

Source: Balıkesir Halkevi, *Sekiz ayda nasıl çalıştı ve neler yaptı* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Vilayet Matbaası, nd), p. 30.

The names of the members of the Sections' Administrative Committees follow in pages 30 and 31.²⁴⁸ 14 school teachers, 11 professionals (doctor, lawyer, chemist), three merchants or artisans, seven state employees and three unidentified persons made up the 38 members of the Houses Administrative Committee. In other words, 32 out of 38 members were either state employees or professionals. Of the three merchants, Ekrem (Çavuldur) was a member of the Hacıilbey Party Administrative Committee in the city of Balıkesir,²⁴⁹ the Chairman of the *Ulusal Ekonomi ve Arttırma Kurumu* in 1944²⁵⁰ and a candidate for the 1934 municipal elections. He was not the only member of the 1934 Halkevi executive members to stand for the 1934 municipal assembly. Four more Halkevi executive members were candidates (Esat Adil, Avni, Kenan Emin, Sadık), although only Esat Adil managed to be elected.²⁵¹

Besides their presence in the House's administrative cadre, the active engagement of teachers and, consequently, students in the activities of the House can be easily detected in the local press and the publications of the Halkevi. During the first weeks following the establishment of the House nine out of 13 members of three Sectional Committees were teachers;²⁵² public speeches (*konferans*) in the House were mostly delivered by teachers;²⁵³ when the subject was of medical or legislative nature, doctors or lawyers might also

²⁴⁸ The third issue of *Kaynak* published the names of the House's staff in April 1933. With a couple of exceptions the Committee members are the same. See "Halkevimizin bir buçuk ayda yaptığı ve başardığı işler", *Kaynak*, No 3, (19 April 1933), pp. 93-6.

²⁴⁹ Fuat Sirmen's report of 15/2/1937 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/623.46.1.

²⁵⁰ Report of the Balıkesir Vilayeti İdare Heyeti Reisliği in 19/3/1941 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/276.1106.1.

²⁵¹ Candidate list in *Savaş*, No 270, Sunday 30/9/1934, p. 1 and list of those elected in *Savaş*, No 282, Sunday 14/10/1934, p. 1. Artisans and merchants form the majority.

²⁵² "Halkevi Şubeleri Faaliyete", *Türk Dili*, 25/12/1932, p.1.

²⁵³ Balıkesir Halkevi, *Sekiz ayda nasıl çalıştı ve neler yaptı* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Vilayet Matbaası, nd), p. 12, 14-5; *Balıkesir*, 3/2/1936, p.1.

participate;²⁵⁴ ten out of 14 actors/actresses of the first theatrical play staged in February 1933 were teachers;²⁵⁵ teachers continued to stage plays in the Halkevi and open courses for students²⁵⁶ and women;²⁵⁷ students and teachers from the city's Lise and the Teacher's Academy recited poems during a 'literature night' in the Halkevi;²⁵⁸ finally, students and teachers formed the bulk of the Halkevi library's users.²⁵⁹ The majority of activities reported in the local sources (newspapers, *Kaynak*, Party and Halkevi sources) were either carried out by schoolteachers (occasionally with the cooperation of students) or by a small number of local professionals, usually doctors and lawyers, and a few state employees (Bank, Railway, various state departments). Most of the state employees and the professionals were Party members. Some of the teachers were also registered members of the ruling Party. Notwithstanding the fragmentary nature of the sources, the members and staff of other, beside Party and Halkevi, local associations and unions were people with the same educational and occupational profile, in many cases quite the same individuals.

In short, the sources used here suggest that the entirety of the political and social structures in the locality were occupied by a specific group of people – by majority men. We can broadly speak of local Party and state elites. Of course, the differentiation between locals and outsiders (usually state employees) cannot necessarily be always rigid. Many civil servants were locals. What is more important for our argument here is that it was the identity of an individual as an educated state employee and/or professional, local or outsider, Party member or not, that made him/her eligible to be an executive member of the People's House, the Red Crescent, the City Club or other similar associations. Most of the professionals were locals and Party members; some of them evidently came from local notable families other members of which were also Party members and executives (for example the families of Kırımlı, Seremetlioğlu, and Yırcalı). Teacher Halkevi members tend to be less Party members probably due to their status as civil servants (although exceptions exist) but also because a large number of them were not locals and were habitually reappointed to schools in other regions.

²⁵⁴ "Konferans ve Nutuklar", *Kaynak*, No 10/11, (October 1933), p. 295.

²⁵⁵ "24 Şubat", *Kaynak*, No 2, (19 March 1933), p. 64. Four of the six actresses were teachers, the remaining two were the wives of two of the actors.

²⁵⁶ *Balıkesir*, 31/7/1933, p. 4. A physics class was opened for students in the Halkevi.

²⁵⁷ *Balıkesir*, 16/12/1935, p. 3, 4. Sewing courses for women in the Mithatpaşa school.

²⁵⁸ *Balıkesir*, 25/11/1935, p. 5.

²⁵⁹ "Halkevimizin dördüncü üç aylık çalışması", *Kaynak*, No 22, (October 1934), p. 498. Four categories of readers are given: 'students', 'teachers', 'civil servants' and the rather vague category 'people'.

Conclusion

The basic assumption upon which this chapter is structured is that the study of the Halkevi institution as a space of interaction between the centre, its policies and projects, and the wider society and population requires the contextualization of the Halkevi space not only in relation to the sociopolitical order and discourse that established it, but additionally in relation to local societies and social forces, groups and individuals. This chapter executes this contextualization by outlining what I have called a human geography of the Halkevi space. Two provincial towns, Kayseri and Balıkesir, their population, local elites and their Houses offer the necessary local context, the stage or the map upon which to inscribe and thus test the textbook version of the Halkevi project, that we have attempted to describe in the first chapter.

Elites

Our data for both towns indicate that urban elites²⁶⁰ were by majority bureaucrats (state employees usually in the military, education and administration) and local *eşraf* members (merchants, landowners and professionals). While some bureaucrats were non-locals posted to the area, the *eşraf* were locals from a number of prominent families, some members of which had studied and lived in big cities, in Istanbul, Ankara, or even abroad.²⁶¹ Local elites, local bureaucrats but mainly members of *eşraf* families occupy the local Party leadership, the Municipal and Provincial assemblies, the financial and cultural/social institutions of the region (Chambers of Commerce and Industry, City Clubs, various associations), are elected in the Parliament and act as representatives of their region in Ankara, but also serve as middle men between the state and the rest of the local population, the peasant majority through horizontal and vertical links with bureaucrats both in the locality and the centre, and the local population. Their status and function as middlemen had a long past as some of these had a tradition as tax farmers (*mültezim*).²⁶²

²⁶⁰ The people who staff the local political, financial and social institutions.

²⁶¹ Hakkı Uyar has come to the same conclusion about local elites in his study of the lists of the second electors (*müntehibi sani*) of the 1935 elections for the towns of Denizli and Konya in his article “Tek Parti İktidarın Toplumsal Kökeleri”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, No 106, (October 2002). For similar conclusions on Develi, a town in the province of Kayseri, see Ayşe Güneş Ayata, *CHP Örgütü ve İdeolojisi* (Ankara: Gündoğan, 1992).

²⁶² I cannot claim to have carried out the necessary research to sustain such a statement, which is nevertheless supported by a number of monographs on provincial towns. See for instance Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (California: University of California Press, 2002); Horst Unbehau, *Türkiye kırsalında kliyentalizm ve siyasal katılım. Datça örneği :1923-1992* (Ankara: Ütopya, 2006). For a nuanced discussion on ‘provincial elites’ in the context of Ottoman History see Antonis Anastasopoulos, “Introduction”, in Antonis Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Provincial elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Halcyon Days in Crete V. A Symposium Held in Rethymnon, 10 – 12 January 2003, (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005), pp. xi – xxviii.

Comparison

If we compare the statistics of the population and the Party elite of Kayseri and Balıkesir a number of differences and similarities emerge. First of all, although the city of Kayseri had almost twice the population of Balıkesir, the province of Balıkesir had twice the population of the province of Kayseri. Secondly, the workforce of the city of Balıkesir was quite different from that in Kayseri. The percentage of civil servants was 20% in Balıkesir and only 10% in Kayseri, indicating a far stronger state presence (state departments, educational and administrative institutions, civil servants and professions) in Balıkesir.²⁶³ This presence is also evident if we compare the percentage of students in the population of the two cities; 10% in Balıkesir, a mere 6% in Kayseri. The comparison of the number of schoolteachers between the two towns and their surrounding provinces yields the same results: for 229 (107 women) teachers in the town of Balıkesir in 1932, just 88 (18 women) teachers in Kayseri. Similarly 260 (35 women) teachers were employed in the rest of the province of Balıkesir, and just 141 (6 women) in Kayseri.²⁶⁴ The percentages of farmers and merchants are almost identical for both cities, while the numbers of industrial workers and artisans are quite dissimilar indicating the presence of a growing industrial workforce in the factories of Kayseri, something missing in the city of Balıkesir (18,4% in Balıkesir, 29,4% in Kayseri).

Interestingly the comparison of the Party elite (Party Administrative Committees) of the province of Kayseri and Balıkesir does not yield any analogous differentiation. On the contrary, there is not any great dissimilarity between the Party bosses of the two provinces; there is a slight larger number of civil servants and merchants in the Administrative Committees of the city of Balıkesir, but what differentiates the two cities, i.e. the industrial working force, is completely absent from the Party statistics. In other words, the local Party leaders in both cities (and in the rest of the towns of the two provinces) were by and large stemming from the commercial and artisanal segments of the local society. A number of professions (doctors, lawyers) and various state employees were also Party executive members, mostly in the two cities rather than in the smaller towns, a quite reasonable phenomenon given that the occupational environment of these occupational groups, related as it is with the presence of state services (hospitals, schools, courts of law, financial and administrative institutions), is to be found in the larger financial and administrative centers, in our case mostly in the provincial centers of Kayseri and Balıkesir. Regardless of their presence in the two towns, workers and

²⁶³ 644 teachers and civil servants plus 586 lower civil servants (*Daimi müstahdem*) in the Balıkesir province to just 237 teachers and civil servants plus 90 lower civil servants in Kayseri. Başvekalet İstatistik Umum müdürlüğü, *Vilayet Hususi İdareleri 1929 – 1936. Faaliyeti istatistiği. Varidat, masrifat, memurlar* (Ankara: Receb Ulusoglu matbaası, 1938), p. 92, 95.

²⁶⁴ Başvekalet istatistik umum müdürlüğü, *Maarif istatistikleri 1923 – 1932* (İstanbul: Devlet matbaası, 1933), pp. 76-7, 82, 93.

farmers were not a part of the Party leadership, although farmers were forming the bulk of the Party membership and leadership in the lower (*nahiye* and *ocak* levels) Party structures mostly in villages that were relatively insignificant in terms of decision-making.

Halkevi

In Kayseri the merchant Halkevi executive members were at least double than in Balıkesir upon the establishment and during the first years of the Halkevi (Kayseri: 13% in 1934 and 31% in 1937, Balıkesir: 7% in 1934). Conversely, the teachers, civil servants and professionals were staffing the Balıkesir House in greater numbers than in Kayseri at the same period (Balıkesir: 84%, Kayseri: 65% in 1934), which can be attributed to the greater numbers of these occupational groups in Balıkesir than in Kayseri. In other words, the state presence in Balıkesir, in terms of numbers of employees in educational, judicial, administrative and financial institutions, greater as it was than Kayseri, is displayed in the administrative members of the two Houses.

Although the Balıkesir Halkevi was mostly staffed by state employees and professions, the local Party elites, mostly merchants and artisans, formed the majority of the Party Administrative Committees, as we have seen, but also of most of the local associations and political structures (Municipal and Provincial Assemblies, Chamber of Commercial, City Club, etc). Moreover, members of local elite families appear among the staff and members of merely all local associations and social, financial and political structures (Yırcalı, Keskin, Kırımlı, Seremetlioğlu). The same family names appear in the Party Administrative Committees, and in the local Associations almost a decade later (1944).

To recapitulate, the Balıkesir Halkevi seemed to draw the town's state elites – state employees, teachers – and the liberal professions, in a sense the educated segments of the local society, locals or/and outsiders. The presence of local merchant and the artisanal urban elites in the Halkevi administration, on the other hand, were rather weak, compared to their pre-eminence and definitely their importance in the local Party structures, in the town's Associations and Clubs, and finally in the Municipal chamber. In Kayseri, on the other hand, while the Party membership and staff figures display an almost identical to Balıkesir picture, the Halkevi staff is more similar to the general population and Party membership distributed, although the presence of teachers and civil servants steadily grew up to the late 1940s.

This small differentiation between the cases of the Kayseri and Balıkesir Houses can be at least partially explained by a relative greater state presence in Balıkesir, in terms of state institution and personnel. Within the analytical framework of modernization theory or even centre – periphery relations the above finding can lead to a crude formula/hypothesis claiming that the existence and expansion of the state's penetration of the locality through its

offices and personnel is inversely proportional to the local Party elites' power and domination over the local society, population and the local People's House. The substantiation of this hypothesis of course needs further and more detailed case studies. Nevertheless, the 'state in society approach' and recent works of the anthropology of state urge us not to read the power relations in local contexts solely in exclusionary terms, but rather to study the interdependencies and multiple negotiations between various social groups and individuals. Moreover, in treating such assumptions we need to consider the dynamics of local societies. Our data here comes from provincial towns, Vilayet and kaza centers, where the majority of the People's Houses were established, exhibiting rather similar population and elite configurations, but we also have to account for structural dissimilarities and apparent divergences between many Halkevi centers.

More specifically, the membership figures of the Administrative Committees of a number of provincial Houses in Vilayet and Kaza centers reveal similar tendencies. In 1933 the Administrative Committee of the Halkevi of Aydin was composed of ten schoolteachers, two doctors, four bank employees and a writer.²⁶⁵ Seventeen out of 32 members of the Administrative Committee of the Halkevi of Mersin were at the same date (1933) schoolteachers, bureaucrats and doctors. The occupation of the rest of the members was not defined, but a number of them were in all probability local merchants/artisans.²⁶⁶ The Halkevi of yet another provincial centre, Trabzon, shows a similar picture. The 1935 membership statistics demonstrates that the identifiable majority of the Halkevi members were merchants, teachers, and professionals (doctors and lawyers). We have argued above that the membership statistics produced by the Houses were occasionally vague and ultimately not trustworthy. In this case the statistics refer to 357 members belonging to the unclear category 'fine arts'. Nevertheless, we can more or less trust the numbers for teachers (94), lawyers (8) and doctors (35). These occupational categories could not easily be inflated without being quite obvious; their numbers and whereabouts were easily detectable.²⁶⁷ The provincial town of Uşak is another example displaying in 1937 similar figures in relation to the Administrative Committee members of the local Halkevi.²⁶⁸ The Halkevi of Gaziantep is another similar example.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Adil Adnan Öztürk, "Halkevleri ve Aydın Halkevi", *Tarih ve Toplum*, No 182, (February 1999), p. 44.

²⁶⁶ Resul Yiğit, *Mersin Halkevi (1933-1951)*, (MA thesis, Mersin University, 2001), p. 35.

²⁶⁷ İbrahim Azcan, *Trabzon Halkevi* (Trabzon: Serander, 2003), pp. 76, 86, 97, 101, 107, 111, 116, 119, and 122.

²⁶⁸ *Uşak Halkevi, Bir Yıllık çalışmaları*, No 2, (İstanbul: Resimli Ay basımevi, 1937), pp. 20-1. 21 teachers, 11 clerks/civil servants (justice, bank, private sector), 7 merchants, 2 factory owners, 1 doctor, and 1 bank manager.

²⁶⁹ *Gaziantep Halkevi Broşürü* (Gaziantep, 1935). 12 out of 29 members of the sectional Committees are teachers, 5 civil servants, the local gendarmerie commander and 2 doctors. The remaining members were 5 tradesmen and three farmers.

The above figures demonstrate that in provincial towns the Halkevi administration was mainly composed of civil servants, professionals and merchants, local Party and state elites. Although this was a definite tendency supported by many sources, we cannot argue here that it was an overall reality applicable to *all* Houses and provincial towns over Turkey. Other factors have to be taken into consideration as well. Regions with extremely dissimilar linguistic, financial and ethnic conditions and population – the southeast is a case in point – define the limits of applicability of the above hypothesis and must be treated separately, something though this thesis cannot account for. The example of Mardin is quite instructive. Within a population that in 1927 displayed an almost 90% illiteracy rate and whose mother tongue was by 85% other than Turkish, the local Halkevi seemed to be frequented and controlled almost exclusively by non-local civil servants.²⁷⁰ The same applies for Artvin as well. Out of 29 members of the local House’s Administrative Committee, 24 were civil servants (eight schoolteachers, three judges, five directors of state departments [*müdür*] and eight other civil servants). The five remaining members were the mayor, two Party chiefs, a merchant and an artisan.²⁷¹ In such cases, the existence of an extremely small in relation to other provincial towns²⁷² nucleus of non-local civil servants did not result in a Halkevi dominated by local merchants and artisans. The absence – rather common in most of the southeastern provinces - of a local Party structure that was habitually staffed by these urban strata is probably relevant.

On the other hand the membership statistics of the Halkevi of Eminönü, the first People’s House in Istanbul, reveals a picture that was quite dissimilar from the Houses we study, although different from Mardin, defining in a sense the limits of the above hypothesis’ applicability. The Eminönü Halkevi did not have a Village Section as no members were registered. Furthermore, only one member registered as farmer, while 4741 out of 5904 registered members were put under the category ‘other occupations’, in a members’ list that did not include the category ‘civil servant’.²⁷³ The obvious argument is that the city and Houses of Istanbul cannot be comparable to provincial towns, where the majority of the People’s Houses were operating.

²⁷⁰ Suavi Aydın, Kudret Emiroğlu, Oktay Özel, Süha Ünsal, *Mardin. Aşiret – Cemaat – Devlet* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2000), 370 - 1, 374 – 382. CHP Mardin Halkevi, *Mardin* (İstanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası, 1938). *Mardin Halkevi* (Mardin: Ulus Sesi Basımevi, 1935).

²⁷¹ From the 1941 activities’ report of the Artvin Halkevi reproduced in a circular to all Houses by the General Secretariat of the CHP. Circular No 5/2035, dated 19/3/1941, in *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Genel Sekreterliğin Parti Teşkilatına Umumi Tebliğatı, 1 Birinci Kanun 1941 den 30 Haziran 1941 tarihine kadar*, Vol. 18, (Ankara: Ulus Matbaası, 1941), p. 80.

²⁷² I am referring to provincial town with a larger state presence that host a number of state departments and personnel such as Kayseri.

²⁷³ *İstanbul Eminönü Halkevi (1936 – 1938)*, (İstanbul, 1938), p. 64, where table showing the membership figures in 31/12/1937.

A place for the Turkish woman

The sources on both Halkevi and local Party structures and associations are the products of the correspondence between central and local Party. Most of these sources came in the form of standard forms that were devised by the central Party and had to be filled in by local Party structures or Party inspectors. Reports on local Party membership statistics, local associations, Halkevi members, executives and activities, all these documents were composed in the form of a questionnaire, a set of questions to be answered, an amount of information to be given to the Party Headquarters. Interestingly enough, figures on women were only requested in relation to the People's Houses. Every six months the local Party structures were asked to report on the Party membership figures. Occasionally the central Party requested information on local non-Party associations and clubs. The Party inspectors had also to provide the Party regularly with information about a wide range of issues in relation to local societies: Party structures and conferences, the local press, all kinds of non-state and non-Party associations, the People's Houses, even state offices and personnel.

Nevertheless, among all the information the central Party was apparently asking information about women *only* in relation to the local Houses. Sporadically the General Secretariat sent directives regarding women and their participation in the political life of the locality or Turkey in general.²⁷⁴ The majority of the Party papers though are silent on women. The statistics asked by the General Secretariat and composed by local Party structures on Party membership provide information about the educational and occupational distribution of members, never about gender.

The data on the Houses' membership though always provide information about female and male members. This trend can be explained when we consider the center's emphasis normative texts such as the Halkevi Bylaws put on the 'cultural' and not 'political' nature of the People's House. This preoccupation with the institution's non-political nature is probably related to the centre's expressed desire to enlist the support of the educated segments of society that are mainly state employees and thus in theory at least prohibited from entering overtly political entities, but also to establish an institution that would be more inclusive of the population than the local Party structures, in a sense to lure social groups and individuals who for a variety of reasons did not desire - *or were not considered fit* - to enter Party or explicitly political structures. Students and 'the youth' (*gençlik*), for example, although considered by the Party Bylaws as 'natural members' of the Party, were considered fit to enter the Party and politics only after having finished their studies and 'reached

²⁷⁴ See for example the directive of Faik Barutçu, General Secretary of the CHP, sent in 5/7/1946 to the Halkevi chairmen to inform women Party members of the new, direct system of election to be applied for the first time. **BCA CHP**, 490.1/6.30.26.

an age of maturity'.²⁷⁵ Needless to say, this attitude towards the youth concided with the respect for age/seniority.

My argument here is that the same applies for the place women were considered to occupy in a society broadly structured upon the segregation of sexes and the assignment of different social roles to different sexes. Politics as a public activity was considered to be the domain of men. My argument is that this perception of gender roles that was quite common in society was implicitly reproduced in the centre's silence and indifference when it came to women's participation in the Party structures, and in its explicit interest to have women register and participate in the Halkevi activities. Coupled with the emphasis laid on the 'cultural' and not 'political' character of the Halkevi as designated in its textbook version, the center's discourse appears to favour the engagement of women in 'cultural' activities, to assign women to the domain of 'culture', which can be conversely read as an implicit disinclination to have women perform more 'political' – widely considered more 'masculine' – roles. The above understanding of the regime's discourse based on our reading of the Party sources eminently comes to blows with the regime's celebrated discourse on women and the explicit references to the need to have women fully engage in the nation's life. This is not the first contradiction or ambiguity we have detected in the ruling elite's discourse though. In stead of reading contradiction and ambiguity as an anomaly though, we should rather see it as systemic to any sociopolitical order that attempts to instigate social change. Moreover, we need to attend to these contradictory moments and instances of ambiguity, the tensions they originate from, and, even more importantly, to the tensions and negotiations they give rise to on the field, upon the performance of social actors (see Chapter 7).

Women, Party and Halkevi

The data about the female participation in the Party structures reveals that only a handful of women - all wives or sisters of local Party men - were members of the upper Party structures in Kayseri, and only one in Balıkesir. Not even one woman seemed to be an *İdare Heyeti* member in the lower Party structures in the countryside, where the Party membership tended to overlap with the nationwide occupational and educational majority (i.e. illiterate farmers). This tendency, one might convincingly argue, seems to run parallel to the wider society's cultural and social perceptions regarding the position of women in social life, something the Party itself was purportedly struggling to change. The exceptional presence of women in the Party structures of the large

²⁷⁵ According to the 1927 Party Bylaws a citizen can become a Party member only if (s)he is older than 18 years old. The limit was raised to 22 years in the 1939 Bylaws. On the other hand the 1935 Bylaws declared that all the Turkish youths that have not yet reached the age of 'political activity' are considered natural members of the CHP, a provision that was erased in the 1943 Bylaws. Tuncay Dursun, *Tek Parti Dönemindeki Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Büyük Kurultayları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), pp. 15, 105, 37.

towns and cities as well as the absence of women in the rest of the country, even if we allow for possible exceptions, functions as a crude indication of the degree the Party and regime's ideas in regards to women had penetrated into Turkish society, especially in the countryside.

The Halkevi of Balıkesir on the other hand had 67 women among its 702 members in 1934. Among 43 executive members six women appear out of which four were teachers, while one was the wife of a lawyer and member of the Administrative Committee of the Village Section and another one was mentioned with just her name. It is thus safe to argue that the Houses' female administrative members were mainly women teachers. The first theatrical play the House staged in 1933 confirms this phenomenon; four of the six actresses were teachers, the remaining two were the wives of two of the actors, both state employees.²⁷⁶ This was also the case in the Halkevi of Kayseri as we have already seen. In both towns then, with the exception of not even a handful of wives of local Party men, the majority of women Halkevi members were teachers and civil servants, wives and daughters of state employees, a large part of which were not locals. The obvious question would be why the female members of local Party elites and especially merchants and artisans – the backbone of the local Party membership and leadership – were not registered, or perhaps allowed to register, in the Halkevi. Why did not even one of the female family members of the local Party men appear on the Halkevi stage in a theatrical play?

In her study of the People's Republican Party, Ayşe Güneş Ayata notes that in the 1930s but also in the 1970s the only women who participated in Party politics in Develi – a small town in the province of Kayseri - were the wives of educated men, mostly non local civil servants and local professionals with a western life style educated in Ankara or Istanbul. Their participation was restricted to exchanging visits and tea parties with other women in an attempt to support their husbands' political career. In the 1970s, when she conducted her research in Develi, the participation of women in 'politics' was literally non-existent.

There were many reasons – mostly cultural – that the participation of women in political activities was so restricted. In Kale [Develi] the engagement of women in politics was not considered appropriate. Local men, including some intellectuals, thought that their wives, daughters or any female member of their families should not take an interest in politics. Even for women working outside their houses, any political activity was deemed inappropriate because it meant that they would come into contact with men. [N]obody wanted to injure his honor by granting his female relatives permission to engage in politics.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ "24 Şubat", *Kaynak*, No 2, (19 March 1933), p. 64.

²⁷⁷ Ayşe Güneş Ayata, *CHP Örgüt ve İdeoloji*, p. 185 (emphasis mine).

‘Injuring his honor’ by having his wife or daughter engage in politics for a local merchant or artisan would mean losing face with his clients and hurt his position as middleman and its benefits without necessarily gaining anything substantial in return from the centre. He might also give weapons to his local rivals as the following complaint against the first chairman of the Kayseri Halkevi and his sister-in-law Mamurhan, one of the exceptional cases of local women engaged in politics and active in the Halkevi, reveals: “Naci the lawyer is almost blind, his sister-in-law has no potential to be elected and is known among the people as a woman of low morals.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Sent to the Party Headquarters by the chairman of the Lale ocak in Kayseri Ali Talashoğlu and Murat şerbetçi, member of the same *ocak* (Party structure) in 14/3/1939, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/344.1440.4.

Chapter 3

Halkevi members: political ambition, segregation and alienation.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus upon a number of cases of Halkevi members and executive. These Halkevi actors are studied in relation to and upon the framework offered by the previous second chapter, i.e. not only in relation to the 'textbook version' of the Halkevi institution, but also in relation to the local society that contains the House and provides for its resources, personnel and clientele. Through the voices of these Halkevi actors we will attempt to study how the centre's version of the Halkevi is experienced and accounted for by social actors in the field; how these actors' status and position in the local society interfere with and define their experience as members of such a project; and, ultimately, how and to what extent the local socio-political milieu interrelates with and affects the Halkevi space.

The first part of this chapter addresses the cases of six members, three women and three male members of the Kayseri Halkevi. A scribe in a State Department, a local teacher and a foreman from Istanbul working in the Airplane Factory in Kayseri are the three male cases. A teacher from Istanbul working in the Kayseri Lisesi, the wife of the local CHP secretary, both of them Party members, and a young girl from a poor family of refugees recently settled in Kayseri make up the three cases of women members. The second part of the chapter dwells on the writings on Kayseri of two educated outsiders in an attempt to examine the discourses on Kayseri and its population of those who were by large supposed to 'enlighten' the local 'real people' by their engagement in the Halkevi activities. This chapter then culminates in the analysis of a more detailed case of a Halkevi member, a schoolteacher from Istanbul appointed to the High school of Kayseri.

In the previous chapter we have seen that the core of the active Halkevi members in Kayseri were by majority teachers and other state employees, a large part of whom were not locals, but appointed to Kayseri from other cities, usually Istanbul. A small number of professionals – lawyers, doctors and veterinarians, was also registered. The administration though of the House was kept in the hands of the local Party leadership and the chairman was a local member of the Party Administrative Committee and usually from a prominent local family of merchant – *eşraf* origin. We have also seen that in terms of its active manpower and executives the Halkevi space was related to other local spaces of state or local power and authority, such as the school, the local Party structure, the Municipality, a variety of financial and social clubs and associations. In terms of spatial location also the House, housed in the 1930s in the old Armenian church, was located in the centre of the town next or close to other centres of state or local power and authority: the Party building, the High School, the market, the main square, the Provincial Administrative Building

(*Hükümet Konağı*), the Municipality, the banks and Chamber of Commerce. The ideological proximity of the People's Houses to the educated segments of the society we have detected in their constitutive texts was also declared with a spatial proximity to the places these segments inhabited during working hours and after. The House was literally inscribed, inserted into the administrative, political and financial centre of the provincial town, a centre mainly inhabited by state and local elites that was habitually avoided by, or even kept clear of, the 'other'.²⁷⁹

A) *Halkevi members*

Sahir Üzel: A dialogue with or a Discourse about the local People, the Halkevi's 'other'

Sahir Üzel is one of the few state employees who was also an active member of the Kayseri Halkevi. Between 1936 and 1940, he was either a member or the chairman of the Library and Publications Section of the House. Üzel, a scribe in the Public Works Department, was also contributing articles to *Erciyes*, the Halkevi journal, and to *Kayseri*, a local newspaper.

In two of his articles in *Kayseri*, he touches upon issues related to local women. With his piece "Faces revealed, scarves removed. Since the 8th of September 1935 the *çarşaf*²⁸⁰ has been removed",²⁸¹ Üzel discusses the custom of veiling, which he describes as ridiculous (*gülünç*), vulgar (*kaba*), as well as contrary to the state laws, social life (*içtimai yaşayış*) and the bases of civilization (*medeniyet kaideleri*), which is of course understood in the singular, i.e. western civilization. In short, veiling is a sign of a sick soul (*hasta ruhlu*) and of reactionary mentality (*taasup zihniyeti*). The vocabulary he uses to disprove a practice that was common among the population is indistinguishable from the one the regime utilizes to classify and engage its at once 'other' and 'enemy', the pervasive target of the reforms: *taasup/irtica*. Üzel's piece follows the local ban of the *çarşaf* that was enacted a day before, as the article's subtitle suggests. His direct aim is to refute the likely accusation that unveiling runs contrary to Islam, the national customs, and the society's morality.

Nevertheless, although the bifurcated time of the 'modern' vs. 'backward' comes up in his article as revealed by his reference to 'civilization' as juxtaposed to 'reaction' (*medeniyet/taasup*), the stress of his argument shifts to

²⁷⁹ In her work on Ankara Funda Çantek has demonstrated how the residents of the old city of Ankara were avoiding but also expelled from the new parts of the city. Funda Çantek, *'Yaban'lar ve Yerliler. Başkent olma sürecinde Ankara* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), p. 147.

²⁸⁰ Garment covering a woman from head to foot.

²⁸¹ Sahir Üzel, "Yüzler açılıp, çarlar çıkarılırken. 8 Eylül Pazar gününden itibaren çarşaf ve peçe kalktı", *Kayseri*, Monday 9 September 1935, p. 1.

the issue of honour (*namus*), a discursive and cognitive category that is mainly invoked by the those who reject the novelties the regime was initiating at least in relation to women. In Üzel's piece *namus* is not discarded as an obsolete or backward value; instead the argument that veiling safeguards the honour of women is rejected. "The honour of the Turkish woman has always been clean, her forehead has always been white (clean) and free of sin (*pak*). The *çarşaf* does not protect honour, cannot act as the guard of honour." On the contrary, veiling "has always had a bad influence on the character and morality (*ahlak*) of women." Thus "the time headscarves had been dirtying this forehead has finally passed." Üzel then is 'defeating' his opponents with their own weapons, by turning against them their own arguments.

In another newspaper piece about the Sümerbank textile factory Üzel once more invokes modernity in relation to local women.²⁸² In a celebratory discourse he describes the 'modern' factory and all its positive consequences: "a brand new and modern city has been created". It is something more than a factory; it is also a school where young workers are taught how to run the machines, a canteen where you can hear "the subtle (*ince*) sound of spoon and fork", and a sports field. "Eat here, work there, sleep in these modern apartments, take a bath, do sports in these wide fields." The dialogic character of his piece becomes more evident if we imagine these attributes in the opposite: 'eat where you work, sleep in backward dwellings, do not wash, do not do sports and stay idle'. Although not mentioned outright, his arguments address an 'other' that apparently refuses to see his 'truths' and work in the factory.

Given the attractiveness of the environment for our writer, his frustration as exclaimed at the article's subtitle becomes more obvious: "Why women do not take advantage of such a blessing/favor?" Apparently female workers were more productive in the textile industry than men. Nevertheless, a constant²⁸³ complaint of the factory director was the unwillingness of local women to work there. Üzel gives three possible reasons for this unwillingness only to dismiss them as false. "Some think it is a result of your husbands' and your own fanaticism (*taasubunda*), others think that you do not want to lower yourself by working, while others speak of low daily wages." What Üzel is refuting here are the regime's expressed enemies, 'reactionary Islam' and 'communism'. These are "wrong and bad thoughts", but not the real reason for the absence of women. For Üzel the real reason is that "you and the people" have not yet been explained the lofty aims of the factory. "The factory in our region is a basis for the Turkish industry, a source of livelihood for the workers, and a source of

²⁸² Sahir Üzel, "Kayseri Kadınları. Bu nimetten neden istifade etmiyorlar?", *Kayseri*, Monday 11 May 1936, p. 1.

²⁸³ Linke, a journalist travelling through Turkey at the same period was told by the factory director about the unwillingness of local women to work in the factory. Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned. A journey through Modern Turkey* (London: Constable and Co, 1937), p. 312. The same problem is also stated by A.S.Levent, Party Inspector for Kayseri in his 14/71941 report to the General Secretariat of the CHP contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.262.1.

work and honour (*namus*) for the women workers.” Despite all his rhetoric about ‘the new and modern’, Üzel, although refuting it, or by the very act of taking it into account in order to refute it, implicitly admits what the director of the factory openly states about local women:

*But the women in Kayseri and the villages nearby belonged to the most conservative in the whole country and were shocked at the very idea of working side by side with men though they were living in dire poverty and could well do with a few piastres.*²⁸⁴

In short, as we have seen in the above two articles, Üzel, a state employee, educated and Halkevi member, in his attempt to present two of the novelties introduced to Kayseri and its people, the unveiling campaign and the Sümerbank factory with its mixed workforce, enters into a dialogue with the ‘other’, with those referred to as ‘reactionary’, or ‘old mentality’ people. He incorporates their voices only to the extent necessary to refute them. The interest in Üzel’s imaginative dialogue with the ‘other to-be-instructed’ lies in his inability to totally discard their categories as exemplified in the case of ‘*namus*’ – honour.

Notwithstanding the obvious propagandistic nature of both texts, I argue that in engaging himself in a dialogue with the ‘other’ he and the centre’s discourse situate at the other side of the border, our Halkevi executive member is actually drawing that same border that separates the ‘modern’ or ‘civilized’ from the ‘backward’ or ‘reactionary’ and at the same time signifies what both set of terms mean. The act of discursively drawing that border however exposes a delicate *tension* inscribed into the core of Üzel’s discourse. This *tension* is exemplified by the use of *namus* in relation to women and their attire in this respect. The position of women in society has been extensively considered *the* indicator of ‘modernity’, the measure of being modern/civilized and thus has functioned (and very much still functions) as the foremost boundary dividing the discursive and cognitive category modern from backward. The exact same can be argued, from the other side of the fence though, for the category *namus* – also related to women, although we cannot restrict its semantic validity only to gender issues. *Namus* and its possible violation functions exactly as the prime marker of difference, the reason why women were refusing to work “side by side with men”, or insisting in ‘dirtying their foreheads’ with the headscarf. Needless to remark, the addressed ‘other’ does not reply, but remains silent.

²⁸⁴ Linke, *Allah Dethroned*, p. 312. In a letter to Şükrü Kaya, Interior Minister, the Vali Adli Bayman confesses that “Kayseri is a part of our country that has lagged behind (*geri kalmış*) and has to be developed (*kalkınması*). In this region that has a very backward social life (*sosyal hayatı çok geride olan*) men and women have not come together (*kaynaşmamış*).” The letter, dated 26/4/1937, is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2.

Kemaleddin Karamete: the absent Kayseri of a local teacher.

Kemalettin Karamete was a local teacher and Halkevi member with a discernible life journey and career. Karamete, or else Kemaleddin Kara Mehmet Ağa zade, was born in Kayseri in 1908; completed his secondary education in the Lycées of Kayseri and Istanbul; lived in France and studied Chemistry and French at the Universities of Lyon and Paris. From 1930 till 1952 he taught French at the Lycée of Kayseri. He was engaged in publishing: 1934 Erciyes Kayserisi ve Tarihine bir bakış; a brochure called Yeni Erkilet and a guidebook of Kayseri in Istanbul. He was also publishing in local newspapers and journals.²⁸⁵ Some of his writings apparently were published in the Revue Hittite et Asiatique in Paris.²⁸⁶ Karamete was also an active member of the Kayseri Halkevi, registered in the Language, History and Literature Section. In the Halkevi Karamete taught French, delivered speeches, prepared the programme of a local holiday with his students at the local High School.²⁸⁷

Next to all these activities, Karamete aspired to be elected to the National Assembly. He applied at least twice, in 1943 and 1946, to the General Secretariat of the CHP.²⁸⁸ The second time, in order to convince the Party, he wrote a five page application enumerating in great detail all his achievements in Kayseri. His Mebustalebnamesi (application to become a Party candidate for the National Assembly) constitutes an extremely interesting text in relation to the study of the Kayseri Halkevi's cadre. It has been shown above that schoolteachers, such as Karamete, were among the House's executives and most active members. Karamete's application then offers us the opportunity to see how a local teacher and scholar presents himself and his work in Kayseri to the Party Headquarters.

He starts by declaring that his family, as well as his wife's family, is one of the oldest families of Kayseri. He then presents his educational background, with studies in Turkey and France, and his mastery of four European languages. He mentions his military service as an NCO, and his professional status as a teacher of French in the Kayseri Lisesi. The lengthiest section of his application though is about his publications and researches on local history, mainly on the Hittite monuments of the Kayseri province. As he puts it himself, "I was not content with just teaching; I worked to make Kayseri and its inhabitants known to Turkey and the outside world."²⁸⁹ This work is conceived as a national duty; one of his books "ensured that a Turk before any foreigner made a number of historical monuments of our country known." To

²⁸⁵ Kemaleddin Kara Mehmet Ağa zade, *Erciyes Kayserisi ve Tarihine bir bakış* (Kayseri: Yeni Matbaa, 1934). Additional information on Karamete taken from Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi*, pp. 169-70.

²⁸⁶ Önder, *Kayseri Basın tarihi*, p. 170.

²⁸⁷ Kemaleddin Kara Mehmet Ağa zade, *Erciyes Kayserisi ve Tarihine bir bakış*, pp. V – VI.

²⁸⁸ His Applications are contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/306.1249.1; 490.1/307.1250.2.

²⁸⁹ One of his forthcoming books doubtlessly serves this purpose; *Et'in Ulus hayatında önemi ve ürünlerinden pastırma* (The importance of meat in the Nation's life and one of its products, *pastırma*). Mentioned in his 1946 *Mebustalebnamesi* contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/307.1250.2.

reinforce this image of himself as the introducer of Kayseri to the world, Karamete states that “it is me who for the last 16 years is presenting Kayseri to all the Turkish and foreign scholars, Ambassadors, and other visitors.”

His work in the local People’s House is also mentioned in brief, as well as his articles in the local newspapers. Last but not least, his commitment to the Party is explicitly stressed in the concluding paragraphs of his letter, where, in an overtly ornamented language reminiscent of the era’s politician’s panegyric speeches, Karamete confesses his loyalty to the regime’s great deeds and goals towards progress (ilerlemeğe), which he defines as the creation of the numerous revolutions (reforms), the destruction of whatever is outmoded and harmful to the nation, and the protection of the nation and the country from the troubles of the Second World War.

In short, in his attempt to promote his request by presenting himself, Karamete refers to a number of attributes he considers essential for a prospective MP. Judging by his own case, his reputable family and educational background, his esteemed profession, his voluntary active participation in the state and regime’s social projects – the Halkevi being one of them, his interests in local studies and social activities, and his capacity/authority to act as a representative of his region to important foreign and Turkish guests, as well of the reforms to his fellow compatriots, all make him eligible for the job. What is more, all the above characteristics outline a - to some extent definitely imagined - persona, an ideal(ized) citizen of the Turkish Republic, instilled with all the necessary qualities granting him membership of a prescribed/imaginary group, what high-level state and Party functionaries were calling ‘guiding element’, or ‘mass of intellectuals’ (rehber unsur, münevver kitleleri/kütlesi). Being an energetic ‘Halkevci’ is definitely considered desirable, if not a prerequisite, to belong to such a category. Karamete was not the only local schoolteacher and Halkevi members who considered himself a natural member of this enlightened group. It is not a coincidence that at least another four schoolteachers and Halkevi members asked for the Party’s nomination in Kayseri.²⁹⁰

However active he might present himself to be in presenting Kayseri to the world, in his speeches and books about Kayseri the contemporary town and its people are conspicuously absent. Karamete was a highly educated local, an intellectual coming from a local prominent- eşraf family who was obviously intimately familiar with the local society and population. Nevertheless, in his account of Kayseri presented in his book²⁹¹ he has almost nothing to say about modern Kayseri and its people. Only a few pages are dedicated to Kayseri’s recent past, more specifically to the town’s contribution to the war of independence coupled with a few remarks about the achievements of the

²⁹⁰ Fahri Tümer, Ömer Sıtkı Erdi, Hamdi Uçok, Nazlı Gaspıralı. Since we could only find the relevant folders for the 1943 and 1946 elections in the Archive, it is not illegitimate to expect more similar cases. These applications are contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/306.1249.1 and 490.1/307.1250.2.

²⁹¹ Kemalettin Kara Mehmet Ağa zade, *Erciyes Kayserisi ve Tarihine bir bakış*.

Republican regime in the locality. Karamete's Kayseri is a town with a reclaimed illustrious and national Hittite - Turkish history evident in the monuments of the distant past and an absent and uninhabited present. His inability, or reluctance, to address his contemporary Kayseri differentiates him from other educated and non-local Halkevi actors, such as Üzel, İğneci and Kudret (treated below), whose texts dare to wrestle with the present, the people and the city surrounding them.

Mahir Şener: Halkevcisi with a purpose.

The files in the State Archive contain information regarding yet another member of the Kayseri People's House, who fortunately comes from a different occupational background than our previous examples. Mahir Şener, a foreman at the Airplane Factory (Tayyare Fabrikası) in Kayseri and the chairman of the Fine Arts Section of the Kayseri Halkevi, sent two requests to the Party Headquarters in 1938 and 1939. In his first letter,²⁹² dated 28/7/1938, he asks for a financial favour, to receive a monthly salary (maaş) instead of a daily wage (yevmiye).²⁹³ According to the information given in his dilek, Mahir Şener was sent for three years to an A.E.G. factory in Germany during the First World War, where he received training in arms production.²⁹⁴ He had been working for 23 years in various arms production units in Turkey. For the last 6 years he had been employed in the Airplane Factory in Kayseri, paid on a daily basis (yevmiye). In order to buttress his request he mentions his engagement in the local House. "Apart from my official duty, I have been working at various People's Houses in the Fine Arts Section and their Committees; moreover I have been working for the publication and propagation of our national music together with my daughter for the sake of realizing our People's Party's principles." He then goes on in a fashion that is quite typical of similar petitions by stating his and his family's destitute financial situation. "I am the father of six children and together with my parents and wife I provide the means of support for a family of ten persons." A letter of support from Naci Özsan, the Halkevi chairman, was attached to the request. The chairman confirmed that the Fine Arts Committee chairman Mahir Şener and his daughter, Ms Belkis, actively participated in the House's annual programme of activities.

In his second letter to the Party, dated 20/5/1939,²⁹⁵ Mahir Şener asked for the Party's mediation to become the head of a section of the Factory or be transferred to the management of any other department outside Kayseri, as my

²⁹² **BCA CHP**, 490.1/838.311.1.

²⁹³ With a monthly wage he would probably be paid for all the days of the month instead just the working days the daily wage covered. In other words, he was asking for an increase in his payment.

²⁹⁴ AEG was involved in airplane manufacture during the 1st World War and Mahir was probably trained in this field as his employment in the Kayseri airplane factory suggests.

²⁹⁵ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/478.1947.1.

family “can not get on well with the climate here.” Once more he played the card of his position and work in the Halkevi to persuade the Party to help him. He even implied that he is entitled to this help by calling the possible realization of his request “a reward (mükafat) for his numerous efforts”. He also named witnesses that can vouch for his person and works; the MP Reşit Özsoy, the Halkevi Inspector Behçet Kemal Çağlar and ‘the people of Kayseri’.

Mahir Şener is the only Committee chairman who was not a teacher or a civil servant. He was the only worker in the Halkevi whose voice has been recorded in these letters. The 1934 and 1937 lists of the Sectional Committees mention three more pipe fitters (teşviyeci) - Hamit in 1934, Ali and Sait in 1937. Their names appear only in those lists. They did not seem to publish anything in the Halkevi journal. In default of more sources we can only speculate on their cases. On the other hand, turning to Mahir Şener, with a relative degree of certainty we can argue that, as a foreman in a specialized field with training abroad, he cannot be considered a typical case of worker, such as the unskilled ones we might expect to find working in the Kayseri factories. Furthermore, he was not from Kayseri, where he settled in 1932 (or 1933) coming from Istanbul, a fact situating him far off the bulk of the industrial workforce of Kayseri. The Sümerbank factory workers Lilo Linke is describing in her book could not have been Halkevi frequenters in any case: “most of the workers looked wild and uncouth, with faces burnt by the sun and clothes torn by age and hard work. Peasants and regular workers, hitherto living without any regular order, sleeping in hovels or, during the summer months, out in the open, half animals in their dumbness and ignorance.”²⁹⁶

Şener’s petitions were forwarded through the Halkevi and local Party mechanisms. His membership and active involvement in the House is presented as an argument to buttress his demand to the centre, exactly the same way Karamete and the Halkevi actors to be treated below in their petitions to the Party. These sources portray the Halkevi as a mediating institution between Halkevi members and the centre, between elite social actors and the state/Party mechanisms. This constitutes an obvious and widespread deviation from the way the Halkevi was prescribed by the centre to operate, something the sheer number of similar petitions sent to the Party Headquarters reveal.²⁹⁷ The constitutive of the Halkevi institution texts presented in the first chapter envisage and stipulate a ‘cultural’ institution that would close the gap between the ‘real people’ and the ‘intellectuals’, an institution that would mediate between the wider society to-be-‘enlightened’ and the educated - mainly under the state’s employment and payroll - segments of society, a process to be carried out under the supervision of state and Party (local and central). Şener’s

²⁹⁶ Linke, *Allah Dethroned*, p. 303.

²⁹⁷ The reply of the General Secretariat to Şener’s and Özsan’s letters rejects their demand for mediation and thus the Halkevi’s involvement in such issues reminding them that the petition has to be addressed to the Undersecretariat of Defence. The reply of 3/8/1938 is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/838.311.1.

petitions, as well as the petitions of Karamete's and of numerous other Halkevi members, present a quite different picture. The People's House of their texts rather appears a space frequented, manned and controlled by local elites and state employees, functioning as a means of negotiation and communication between these local and state elite actors and the centre. In short, instead of being an institution that introduces the centre's policies and reforms to the local population by facilitating the 'merging' of 'intellectuals' and 'people', our sources display the Halkevi of Kayseri as an establishment controlled and inhabited by local and state elites that facilitated the communication between centre (central state and Party mechanisms) and urban elites, locals and outsiders, state employees, professionals, and merchants.

Women

Among the names of the Committee members, women always constitute a minority. Almost all of them are teachers and usually a male member of their family also takes part in the Halkevi activities. The same applies for the female Party members. Unfortunately the Party statistics do not state the percentage of women over men members. The only available evidence is the list of members of the Municipal Assembly and the Administrative Committees of the local CHP. According to these sources, women are extremely rare exceptions; no more than four women appear in Municipal Assemblies between 1930 and 1950, and two women in the Party *Idare Heyetleri* between the years 1940 – 1946. In the first case, Nazlı Gaspıralı was among the Municipal Assembly's members between 1933 – 1936 and 1946 – 1950. Mamurhan Özsan was also a member between 1933 – 1936 together with Naciye Özsan, the wife of Naci Özsan, Mamurhan's brother-in-law. Finally, Zehra Karakaya, described as "the daughter of the Mevlevi Şeyh Ahmet Remzi effendi", was the last female member of the 1933 – 1936 *Belediye Meclisi*. Zehra's name appears nowhere else. As for the rest of the Municipal Assemblies (1930 – 1932, 1936 – 1939, 1939 – 1943, and 1946 - 1950), no woman was elected.²⁹⁸ The available here sources then indicate that the very few women at the high echelons of the local political elite were either educated outsiders or wives and/or daughters of influential locals.

The relevant Halkevi sources for Kayseri offer very little information about the women members, just numbers and a few names. In July 1937 the Kayseri House had 53 women members over 1346 men, and in December 1937 82 over 1891 male members. Women were mostly registered in the Language, Literature and History, Fine Arts, Social Assistance and Courses Sections. The members' lists of the Administrative Committees of the House record 11

²⁹⁸ Çalışkan, *Kuruluşundan Günümüze Kayseri Belediyesi*, pp. 90-1, 94-5, 106-7, 117, 122-3, 133-4.

women, the majority (nine) being schoolteachers. It is highly probable that more teachers than the ones recorded at the Committee members' lists were registered. The number for these women teachers cannot be determined, but if we put them together with some of the wives and daughters of all those local Party men and state functionaries, the number 53 or 82 can be easily reached. A brochure published²⁹⁹ in Kayseri describing one of the Village excursions the Vali Adli Bayman was organizing in the 1930s contains a list of the participants. Apart from two women teachers, the rest of the 11 women taking part in the excursion were accompanied by (or accompanying) their husbands or fathers; the Vali's wife and daughter; the wives of the Özsan brothers (Naciye and Mamurhan); the wives of the Sumer factory director and of the Sumer Sports' Club chairman; the wife and daughter of a certain Mustafa Okar.

If the above data is treated as representative of the female Halkevi membership, then the two groups, schoolteachers and women from the families of important local or non-local statesmen, comprise the majority of the women members of the Kayseri Halkevi.

Information concerning three women members is given here. Luckily enough, although in a fragmentary form, their own voices are also heard. Without claiming that the following three cases constitute a cross section of the women members, they definitely allow for an insight of their own understanding and experience of their participation, as well as for a glimpse over the involvement of women in a provincial House.

Nazlı Gaspıralı

Wife of Dr Haydar Gaspıralı, son of İsmail Gasprinski, Nazlı Gaspıralı, teacher of Turkish at the Kayseri Lycee, was either a member or the chairman of the Language, History and Literature Section from 1934 till 1940. In 11/2/1943 she applied to the Party to become an official Party candidate for the National Assembly. Her application (*Mebustalebnamesi*) is an interesting text, a kind of Curriculum Vitae where a Halkevi member is presenting herself to the Party with the direct aim to be selected an MP.

I am the granddaughter of Namık Paşa, who worked for the opening of the first War College, and daughter in law of the late Turkist (Türkçü) İsmail Gaspıralı. My social activities: after high school, I graduated from the Philosophy Department of the Literature Faculty at the Istanbul University. I was employed at the Istanbul Çapa Lisesi as a teacher and vice-director. I then settled in Kayseri as my

²⁹⁹ İlbay Adli Bayman'ın Başkanlığı altında Kayseri Halkevinin Tertip ettiği Yaya Köy Gezileri Tetkik Notlarıdır, Seri: 2, *Germir Köyü*, Yazan: Etiler Başöğretmeni Kazım Özdoğan (Halkevi Müze ve sergiler komitesinden), (Kayseri Vilayet Matbaası, 1937). The brochure is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.1

husband, Dr Haydar Gaspıralı, chose to work for the fatherland in Anatolia. After working for a long time at the Kayseri Lisesi for boys, together with my husband we went for a year to Germany for research in relation to our specialization. Upon our return, I undertook, following an invitation, certain social duties. I was elected to the Municipal Assembly. I was the president of the Language, History and Literature Section of the Kayseri Halkevi. After realizing the lack of good care for children in Kayseri, I resigned from my duty at the Kayseri Lisesi in 1941 in order to do something useful in relation to this issue. Although I undertook a number of projects on this issue, due to the present (existing) order of things, I was not able to complete a number of preparations. In 22/11/1941, upon the proposal of the Exalted CHP, I was elected president of the Yardımsever Cemiyeti [Philanthropic Association] of Kayseri. During my time in office I managed to register 600 members to the Association. During the last elections, I was among the 12 nominees of the Exalted CHP for Kayseri. Due to a few lacking votes, I was ninth. My dissertation was on “war and peace stages of social evolution and theories of perpetual peace”. Research papers: “Character” (Seciye), on Rousseau’s education principles, “Ahlak meslekleri” [Morality issues]. Another of my works is the translation of Leon Brunschvicg’s *Introduction a la vie de l’ esprit*.³⁰⁰

Nazlı Gaspıralı is definitely an exceptional person in Kayseri of the 1930s and 40s. She is an educated woman, teacher; coming from what seems to be an important family; member of the Municipal Assembly, almost an MP; chairman of a local Philanthropic Association; a translator and writer; and, finally, an outsider, an ‘İstanbullu’. She is not only an exception among the by 11% literate Kayseri women, but also among the Halkevi and Party members, as a woman and chairman of a Halkevi Section, probably by virtue of her education and family (and her husband’s family) lineage. This not explicitly stated exceptionality then makes her qualified to become an MP. Gaspıralı’s *Mebustalepnamesi* follows the same pattern as Karamete’s request. She stresses certain facts of her self and life that make her a member of that certain group considered able to represent the ‘people’, i.e. her modern education, her profession, her engagement in ‘social’ activities’ (Halkevleri, *Yardımsever Cemiyeti*), her literary works, and her family’s long and proven affiliation with the ruling elite and its ideas. Her gender is not an explicit issue though. Given the regime’s expressed interest in and legislation aiming at the improvement of the social status of women, one might expect Gaspıralı to underscore the fact that she is a woman, an exemplar of the ‘modern’ woman the regime was

³⁰⁰ BCA CHP, 490.1/306.1249.1. Leon Brunschvicg, *Introduction a la vie de l’ esprit* (Paris: Alcan, 1931).

aiming at. Nevertheless, she does not make a point of it, unlike our next example, Mahmuran Özsan.

Mahmuran Özsan

Mahmuran (or Mamurhan) Özsan, born in 1903 in Kayseri and graduate of the *Kayseri Kız Rüştüyesi*, was according to her own account a housewife engaged in ‘social services’ (*içtimai hizmetler*). She was married to Osman Özsan, the Party secretary in Kayseri, brother of Naci Özsan, who was also a Party member, lawyer, Halkevi chairman and MP for Kayseri. Mahmuran was a member of the Party Administrative Committee of the Vilayet, of the Society for the Protection of Children (*Çocuk Esirgeme kurumu*) and of the Social Assistance Section of the Kayseri Halkevi, “an enlightened/intellectual of the Kayseri women” and “sociable”, according to Party inspector Hilmi Çoruh (*Kayseri kadınlarının münevveridir. Girgindir*).³⁰¹ In 1937 she took part, together with her husband and brother in law, in the Village excursions organized by the Vali Adli Bayman.³⁰² In 1943 she sent a request to the Party Headquarters in Ankara asking to become an MP for Kayseri. According to her *Mebus Talebnamesi*, she was a delegate at the 4th, 5th, and 6th Party Congresses. She also mentioned her active engagement in the Kayseri Halkevi, the Red Crescent and the *Çocuk Esirgeme kurumu*. She did not fail to state that her father was a member of the *Müdafaayı Hukuk*³⁰³ and of the People’s Party.³⁰⁴ In short, she implicitly suggested that because of her family’s status and her dedication and labor within the Party and her ‘social and political services’ (*siyasi ve içtimai hizmetler*) she possesses the necessary qualities to become an MP. Moreover, “I believe that I’ll be able to act and work towards the realization of the revolutionary role of women in Turkey as well as towards the spirit of the advances of the revolution in the National Asssembly.”³⁰⁵

In another request, sent directly to the Party secretary Memduh Şevket Esendal in 22/2/1945, Mamurhan Özsan again highlights her chairmanship of the Social Assistance Section of the Kayseri Halkevi and the fact that she is the only woman between the members of the Municipal Assembly (*Umumi Meclis*) in order to buttress her request. According to her own words:

³⁰¹ 25/12/1944 report of the Party inspector Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/273.1094.1; 03/03/1940 report of Party inspector Hilmi Çoruh in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/670.255.1; reports of the local Party structure for the period between 1/6/1944 – 1/1/1945 and 1/1/1945 – 1/6/1945 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.261.1.

³⁰² İlbay Adli Bayman’ın Başkanlığı altında Kayseri Halkevinin Tertip ettiği Yaya Köy Gezileri Tetkik Notlarıdır, Seri: 2, *Germir Köyü*, p. 15, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.1.

³⁰³ She means the Societies for the Defence of National Rights (*Müdafaai Hukuku Milliye Cemiyetleri*) that started to be established in 1918 and were merged into the *Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaai Hukuk Cemiyeti* later to form the nucleus of the People’s Party.

³⁰⁴ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/306.1249.1.

³⁰⁵ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/306.1249.1. “Türkiyede kadının inkılabcı rolünü idrak ettiğine ve büyük millet meclisinde inkılab hamlelerinin ruhuna uygun hizmet ve faaliyetlerde bulunabileceğine kan ...yım.”

A year ago my house was broken into and all the winter clothes and objects were stolen. [...] in order to obtain all the indispensable items and as my family has no other income except my husband's 100 lira wage, I was compelled to run into debt during the war years. I have been a member of the Party Administrative Committee for 11 years; the only woman member of the Umumi Meclis for the last three periods; president of the Social Assistance Section of the Halkevi. I have been a person working with all my heart and energy for the social and political activities of my region the last 11 years. My father has worked in the Party for long years and is now an old man who has lost his wealth. [...] I'll ask for your help in order to save myself from this grave situation. [...]

The situation is the following: the issue of the elections for the Kayseri Umumi meclisi will come to an end by March. The allotment for the members of the Daimi Encümen of the Umumi Meclis is 140 lira and I am asking to become a member of it. I was a member of the Daimi Encümeni before and I worked without a fault. As the only woman I was always in the minority. Because of various interests the male friends do not want to give me this job. [...] You will say 'why don't you get in touch with your seniors there?' I am a woman, if this issue stays behind, my self-respect [izzeti nefsim] will be damaged. Besides, the interests excessively collide on this issue. The male friends always have the upper hand.³⁰⁶

Mamurhan Özsan was one of the extremely rare cases of women members of Party and Municipal Administrative³⁰⁷ bodies. She was an educated – rare in those days – woman married to an influential local Party boss and one of the very few local women who were members of the People's House. Similar to Nazlı Gaspıralı but more explicitly she evokes her family's – or, more precisely, her male family members' - involvement in the War of Independence and their Party credentials. In a sense, both women's commitment to the Party, regime and reforms is testified not only by the direct involvement in its projects – the People's Houses being one of them, but also by their family, their husbands and fathers. Their male ancestors and their husbands with their Party or 'Turkist', or 'Müdafaayı Hukuk' credentials bestow upon them an almost natural membership to a greater 'family', to the political elite and its cause. The oxymoron lies in the fact that these two 'liberated' and 'modern' women who openly participate in the local political and 'cultural' life among men do not fail to stress their attachment to male relatives, an emphasis that is quite reminiscent of the wider society's traditional – here in the sense of

³⁰⁶ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/478.1947.1.

³⁰⁷ It seems that she did not manage to become a member of the Standing Committee and one and a half year later she resigned from the People's Republican Party. The letter of her resignation is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/450.1854.5.

widespread – ideas about the proper position of women in the private sphere among family members and definitely not among unrelated men. Even for these very rare cases of politically active women– at least as members of local political assemblies – their participation in local politics seems to be only possible through their husbands. In the local socio-political arena – as well as to the General Secretariat of the ruling Party - they appear (and chose to appear) not only or primarily as individuals but as members of a family, that is women related to their male relatives, most commonly a husband who is also a locally active political figure. The voices of these women then - certainly Mamurhan, whose husband is the local Party secretary - speak of their husbands as well, if not primarily. They attest their husbands’ attachment to the regime’s ideology and policies in relation to the women’s issue. When they speak of their engagement in local politics as women, they also speak of, and thus applaud, their husbands’ political life, the same way Ali Talaslıoğlu and Murat Şerbetçi target Naci Özsan, Halkevi chairman and local Party boss, when they inform the General Secretariat that his sister in law, Mamurhan, “is known among the people as a woman of low morals”.³⁰⁸ The very few active in Halkevi and local politics women are thus not independent, but rather operate through and next to their husbands, whose political career and prospective can potentially both enhance and harm.

Mamurhan is again more explicit regarding the impact of her sex on her political life and the way “the male friends” treat her. First of all, she stresses that she is a woman right from the beginning. She pledges to work for “the realization of the revolutionary role of women in Turkey”. She mentions that she is the only female member of the Municipal Assembly, and then being “the only woman always in the minority”, “the male friends do not want to give me this job.” The reason she gives for not speaking to the ‘seniors’ in Kayseri is that as a woman “if this issue stays behind, my self-respect [*izzeti nefsim*] will be damaged. [T]he male friends always have the upper hand.” In order to further her request Mamurhan plays the ‘female card’, emphasizes her exceptionality as a woman, and finally while mentioning the attitude of the male friends towards her because she is a woman, she implicitly alludes to the opposition of the ‘male friends’ and – we might also add – of the wider society to the participation of women in the public and political life of the region.

By mentioning the possible threat and damage to her public esteem and honour, Mamurhan informs the Party of the sacrifices involved in her attempt to be a model Turkish woman in a resisting society. Although explicitly mentioned by her, we can also assume the danger her damaged self-esteem might pose for her husband’s honour. In case the public esteem or honour of a woman is hurt, it is her male relatives, fathers of husbands whose *izzeti nefis* is

³⁰⁸ Denunciation sent to the Party Headquarters by the chairman of the Lale ocak in Kayseri Ali Talaslıoğlu and Murat Şerbetçi, member of the same ocak in 14/3/1939, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/344.1440.4.

primarily damaged as they are considered to be the guardians of their families' (and women's) honour.

Unlike Mamurhan, Nazlı Gaspıralı is less interested in referring to such a resistance to her involvement in local socio-political institutions such as the Halkevi, even if we allow for a rather cryptic reference to the "existing order of things" as an excuse for not accomplishing all her plans in the region. I contend that for outsiders with more loose connections to the locality and the population like Gaspıralı, the opposition to female political participation due to issues of 'honour' is less relevant. For Mamurhan on the other hand, her husband and family's status is relevant and crucial because of their position in the local power networks as local power brokers competing with other local elite segments in front of the eyes of the local public, in front of local rivals and clients. Admirable as it might have been for the eyes of the CHP leadership in Ankara, a politically active woman in a provincial society might easily invite opposition and threaten her and her husband's position in the local political equilibrium. My argument is that Mamurhan's letter to the CHP has to be placed and understood within the frame of local politics and the resistance the participation of women in politics was instigating. Within such a context Mamurhan's petition appears as an attempt to enlist the assistance of the central Party against the opposition she and her husband were facing by local rivals within a society that was not that agreeable to innovations regarding the participation of women in politics.

Zatiye Tongu

Zatiye Tongu was another young woman engaged in the activities of the Kayseri Halkevi. Her case deviates from the above-described pattern of female participation in the Halkevi. She was first of all younger, 18 years old, and came from an apparently less well-off family of refugees from Romania only recently settled in Kayseri. Up until her dismissal in 1940, she had been employed in the library of the Kayseri Halkevi. In 21/8/1940 he wrote directly to the Secretary General of the CHP asking to be reemployed.

Her request is the following:

Your humble servant, I come from the immigrants from Romania, a girl of 18 years old I am. We came to Turkey two years ago and were settled in Kayseri. My family consists of eight members. I take care of the education of my four brother and sisters. I also have an aged father and mother. It is me who provides the livelihood for all of them. A year ago I was employed at the library of the People's House of Kayseri for a salary of 30 liras. For a whole year I had never left my duty

*(post) and I had been working every day till 11 o'clock at night. The other day I was ill, I took two days' leave from the Halkevi secretary and after being treated for two days I returned to my duty. By that time the Halkevi chairman had dismissed me from my duty. [...] Now they rejected me and a family of eight persons has been impoverished. This is why I write to you [...] I cannot work anywhere else because I am a girl and we cannot go anywhere else once we had been settled in Kayseri. That's why I ask for your mediation to get back to my post.*³⁰⁹

Zatiye Tonguç was probably one of the girls Hilmi Çoruh, the Party Inspector, was referring to in his 3/3/1940 report on the Kayseri Halkevi. The Inspector found the Halkevi Library in a bad state with many books missing and unregistered. "Two 15, 16 year-old girls are employed with a 30 Lira salary as Library Servants (*Kütüphane memuru*). They are also supposedly working in the Theatre Section as well.³¹⁰ It is not right to assign this job to these ladies who have not a legal license. There is a need for a responsible clerk."³¹¹ It is not clear whether Zatiye was also active in the Theatre Section, but even if she was, as an article in a local newspaper suggests,³¹² she did not mention it to buttress her request, as might have been the case in the above examples of Halkevi members. Karamete, Mamurhan Özsan and Nazlı Gaspıralı did not neglect to refer to their Halkevi credentials when sending their requests to the Party – surely for something regarded as rather more significant than a petty job request. This difference can quite plausibly pinpoint the social distance between Zatiye and the previous Halkevi members. For a girl from a poor family recently immigrated to Turkey stating the obvious, i.e. their destitute situation, might seem sufficient enough to make her seniors feel sorry and help her, rather than bragging about her commitment to the Party's high ideals and her participation in the reform projects, which seems to be the case in the more typical Halkevi Administrative members mentioned above. Zatiye's moving piece seems to have touched the Secretary General Dr. A.F.Tuzer, who personally sent a letter to the chairman of the Kayseri Halkevi asking for the employment of 'our little girl' to her former position or to a 'suitable job outside the House'.³¹³

Up until now, Zatiye seems to be the only woman from a 'lower' social background than the previously mentioned women whose voice has survived,

³⁰⁹ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/838.311.1. Original text in Appendix.

³¹⁰ In all probability the employment in the library came as a reward or a compensation for their acting on the Halkevi stage, something widely considered not moral for women. Because of the unwillingness of women to 'climb the stage', compensation in the form of a job or an amount of money was offered to women ready to take part in theatrical plays in many Houses. See Chapter 7.

³¹¹ Report contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.263.1.

³¹² "Halkevi Temsilleri", *Kayseri*, 1 April 1940, p. 2. "Lise orta kısım talebelerine Reşat Nuri'nin 'Taş parçası' (...) Remzi rolünde Ahmet, Müzeyyen rolünde Zatiye".

³¹³ Letter dated 19/9/1940, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.263.1. The Secretary General would only rarely interfere personally with such 'trivial' issues and, in not a small number of similar requests, no answer is to be found in the archive.

albeit in a fragmentary form, in the archive. We do not possess any source that would demonstrate whether Zatiye case's was typical among Halkevi members. It is almost impossible with the available sources to say anything definite on whether people, especially women, from poorer and less, or not at all, educated segments of the local society were Halkevi members, to what extent, for what reasons, and what they might have thought of it. It suffices here to say that their silence in the sources rather points at their absence. In that sense, Zatiye Tonguç was, in all probability, an exception among the women of the House, as well as an exception of the women of her social status in Kayseri as a newcomer with no roots in the region. This can be also seen as a sign of the House's popularity among middle or low class locals and, especially, women.

B) Images of Kayseri

We have seen that a substantial number of the active members of the Houses we have studied were educated outsiders, usually civil servants (teachers, doctors, bureaucrats) appointed to the region. The aim of the following is to examine what educated outsiders (in majority coming from Istanbul) say about Kayseri and its people through their texts. The way they viewed the city, the local society, not to mention the people they were supposed to 'instruct', is important if we are to come to a better understanding of the Halkevi as an institution of the prescribed social change these people were (supposed to be) involved in. The images of Kayseri and its people they convey in their writings are significant for the purpose of contemplating their self-positioning within a local society, its people, and, most important, within an ongoing process of imposed social change, the *per se* locus of which was the People's House.

Two texts are used here, two cases of Istanbul intellectuals either visiting or working in Kayseri in the mid 1930s. The first one is the novelist Nahid Sırrı Örik. He wrote travelogues about the places he visited in Turkey.³¹⁴ In March 1936 he visited Kayseri. He published his impressions in 1955.³¹⁵ The Kayseri travelogue was published again in 2000 as a part of a compilation of Örik's works; this version is used here.³¹⁶ The second case is Murat İğneci's article series "Bir Geziden İntibalar", ('Impressions from a trip') published in the local newspaper *Kayseri*, between 2 and 20 March 1939. In these articles İğneci is presenting Kayseri to one of his friends coming from a large city. In short, we are dealing with a novelist writing for an educated audience and a civil servant writing in a local newspaper for a local public.

³¹⁴ For a short biography and a list of his published works see <http://www.biyografi.net/kisiayrinti.asp?kisiid=818>.

³¹⁵ Nahid Sırrı Örik, *Kayseri Kırşehir Kastamonu* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1955).

³¹⁶ Nahid Sırrı Örik, *Anadolu'da yol notları, Kayseri Kırşehir Kastamonu, Bir Edirne Seyahatnamesi* (İstanbul: Arma, 2000).

Nahid Sirri: a Kayseri travelogue for a nationwide readership

In March 1936 Nahid Sirri visited Kayseri; he stayed four days. He was accommodated at the Kayseri high school building. He was mostly attracted to the remains of the past and his travelogue is full of description of old monuments and buildings, mosques, libraries, as well as famous individuals, poets, scholars and rulers. He does not show the same interest in the contemporary city or her people. When he turns his attention to the city and her people, his comments are not very flattering.

Immediately after his arrival he went out to visit a coffeehouse. By visiting a coffeehouse, he claims, a stranger can quickly feel the general character (*umumi hava*) of a city and witness some of its peculiarities. The coffeehouses of Kayseri though were very few. He was told that the most suitable and clean coffeehouse was the one across the Lise building. "This coffeehouse, though, that was the cleanest one of a Vilayet centre such as Kayseri, the ninth largest city in Turkey with a population of 46.419 according to the 1935 census, was a place that would not give the right to any provincial town to praise itself." What was wrong with that coffeehouse? It was crammed with customers, the tables were not covered with any tablecloth, most of the customers were playing backgammon, and the only available newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, was moving from table to table. "The atmosphere was heavy, smoky and suffocating. Small local civil servant and small tradesman types." The voice of the radio, the backgammon and chat noises, together with the sound of the door being closed and opened, disturbed and annoyed the author and his company. Even the waiter seems to annoy the author: "... the waiter, whose white jacket had lost its colour and whose hair seemed to have been lost since his childhood." The author and his company left the coffeehouse displeased without even finish drinking their coffee.³¹⁷

The next day the author woke up early and wandered around the city streets without any certain direction; "[n]arrow, knotty, quiet stone streets". Both sides of the streets were blocked by walls covered with thick, black stones. The city has been built upon a straight road, while the houses could only partially be seen or even not at all. "These roads, these houses very much display an Arabistan picture."

Our author then strolled through the *Cumhuriyet Meydanı* (Square of the Republic). "The central square of Kayseri is full of small, ugly and ruined buildings. The place has not been repaired; it is full of mud in the winter and full of dust in the summer." The author was equally disappointed by the cinema of Kayseri. "I went to the cinema; very expensive and crowded." The author had seen the film the previous year in Ankara, so he left for the coffeehouse.

³¹⁷ This is an all too typical of the period discourse on the coffeehouse as a degenerate place of gathering. See Chapter 6.

It is difficult to find a single word of praise in what he wrote about modern Kayseri. All the places he visited were described as ugly, unsatisfactory, always in lack of something. The coffeehouse, the restaurant, the cinema, a building with shops at the market, the hotel, even the streets and houses, all are presented as deficient and ugly, unable to match the grandiose of the monuments of the past, the magnificence of the Mimar Sinan mosque or the old castle of Kayseri.

What he has to say about the local people is equally negative. “After a while the doors started to open and men exited the houses. The frock coats they wore with their grey backs resembled long overcoats, or even the robes of the ulema. They rarely wore collars or ties, while some had caps. It was the first day of the Bayram and these men are the first visitors. Women could only be seen later on. As the *çarşaf* had been abolished, they were all dressed in coats, but some of them wore black coats and gloves, holding their black umbrellas in such a way, that it would have been impossible for anyone to see their faces.”³¹⁸ Ironically the author is once more referring to the past when describing in this way the people he saw. This is not the illustrious past of famous ancestors though, but a contemporaneous past, or else a ‘backward’, ‘traditional’ present that should have stayed behind both in space and time, in ‘Arabistan’ as he writes in disgust some paragraphs above.

Two pages above, a remark on some pictures in a house he visited reveals the way Kayseri, or probably any given provincial town, was thought of and situated in space and time by intellectuals and people with a ‘modern’ education. The pictures depicted a city by the sea, ‘just like Istanbul’, as the author writes. “Who might have been the painter coming from which place in Europe, passing who knows where from to come all the way up to *this place!*”³¹⁹ Once again, Kayseri, as described by our Istanbul gentleman, is a ‘location’ distanced in space – and thus, in time - from a place where such activities as painting mean anything, something the author’s amazement makes clear.³²⁰ Nahid Sırrı’s account of Kayseri and the local people appears as a description of an ‘other’ in its own space and time, away from the ‘modern’ time and space the author resides in. His text is imbued with images and expressions that assign this ‘other’ to a ‘backward’ space and time, the space of an ‘Arabistan’.

³¹⁸ In relation to the way women dressed after the local abolition of the *çarşaf*, the author seems to describe here a ‘making do’ practise, where the people/actors, unable to reject an order imposed upon them, invent ways to circumvent it, or else to evade without openly or formally opposing it. Necmi Erdoğan, “Devleti ‘Idare etmek’: Maduniyet ve Düzenbazlık”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, 83, (2000).

³¹⁹ Italics mine.

³²⁰ All the extracts quoted above are from Nahid Sırrı Örik, *Anadolu’da yol notları, Kayseri Kırşehir Kastamonu*, pp. 90 - 116.

Unlike Nahid Sırrı who was a visitor, Murat İğneci lived and worked in the region, although he was not a local of Kayseri. In this article series published in a local newspaper in March 1939, he describes the visit of a friend from Istanbul. The visitor was employed by some state department to travel through Anatolia and compile some kind of report. The author acted as his guide. His articles are important in that he provides us with the feelings and thoughts an educated foreigner – and Halkevi member - living in Kayseri had about the city. In a sense his articles offer us a picture of Kayseri through the eyes of an educated civil servant with a ‘modern’ outlook, interested in the cultural activities – including the Halkevi – of the region.

The article has an obvious overall negative stance and as it is published in the local press the author feels obliged to state just after the title that his ideas and critique do not accuse anybody, individual or institution.

He starts by writing that he feels ashamed to show a city full of mud and dirt to his friend and old classmate, Hüseyin Özkan, who had studied city planning in Europe and now travelled through Anatolia as an official. The author warns his friend not to expect much of Kayseri and states that he is probably going to feel ashamed himself too. Just to prove the already stated, Özkan’s left foot falls into a ditch at the beginning of their tour. They return to their residence so that Özkan would wear a new pair of trousers, since the old one is full of mud.

They then walk through the town’s market place. The market is full of village women, elders and local tradesmen trying to sell their goods by shouting, something ordinary even today in Turkey as elsewhere too. The author feels annoyed though, as “the shouting is annoying the customers”. The goods are displayed in baskets and open bags “open to microbes in the mud”. The market itself is “full of mud and dirt”. The author poses a series of ‘whys’: why so much dirt, why no price labels, why do they have to shout, why do the sellers try to deceive the customers, why don’t the authorities do something?³²¹

They then proceed to the Cumhuriyet Square. In the middle of the square there is an empty pool within which an empty column is standing. The plan was to inscribe the Atatürk’s speech to the youth (*Gençliğe Hitabesi*) but due to low temperatures the plaster fell. That’s why they kept the pool empty. They had also placed dung in the pool in order for it not to crack. It is fortunate that ‘we were saved from [having to endure] that smell.’³²² A series of ‘lacks’ or deficiencies pervade the text. The author complains about the absence of any public toilet. The town clock is not working.

Next comes the local cinema. They could not find any difference between 1st and 2nd class tickets. The furniture is in bad condition. “[They] have been made in order to make people feel uncomfortable.” The hall was full of noise.

³²¹ Murat İğneci, “Bir Geziden İntibalar”, *Kayseri*, 2 March 1939, No 1316, p. 2.

³²² Murat İğneci, “Bir Geziden İntibalar”, *Kayseri*, 16 March 1939, No 1320, p. 2.

“This is not the director’s fault. This noise directly shows the social and psychological manners (*terbiye*) of the spectators.” They whistle, shout, and applaud. “The curses fill the hall right from the beginning.” “We give 35 *kuruş*, we sit on wood, our head explodes with the noise, and every two minutes the film is cut.” The author’s friend thought that there was a second film. “Second film? What second film? Did you think you were in a cinema in Ankara or Istanbul? It is too expensive!”

“We walked around Kayseri, step by step. We walked one after the other, without being upset, the poor (*zavallı*) streets that were full of mud, dirt, rubbish and dirty water. [...] We saw there how the people throw their garbage to the streets, how the garbage collectors do not lower themselves to collect it, how they surely take the garbage inside their houses in cans. We saw how these poor people live in houses with no number or with broken or unreadable numbers, which are also impassable because of the animals’ dung. Go and see yourselves. [...] The city is becoming prettier but too slowly.”³²³

What does an educated outsider say about a place like Kayseri, either as a sightseer or as a compulsory resident, a state employee? Unlike Karamete’s silence, in describing Kayseri, or presenting Kayseri to an outsider these two texts appear as a treatment of (or for) absence, i.e. lacking of certain attributes. Even when our authors depict negatively something existing in Kayseri – the dirty muddy roads or the ugly buildings, they actually invoke the lack or absence of something that should had been there. Certain things are really missing, like a public toilet, or an ambulance, newspapers (apart from *Cumhuriyet*), and so forth. Other things are *there* – restaurants, coffeehouses, Hotels, market places, cinema – but are devoid of certain qualities the authors are apparently expecting, be it beauty, hygiene, cleanliness, table cloths, and so many other characteristics that would not evoke a picture akin to an *Arabistan manzarası*.

The people of Kayseri we encounter in their pages are also not as they should have been; they live in awful old houses full of dirt, mud and garbage, they are coarse, lacking in manners as they shout and annoy customers at the market or in the cinema hall. Their cloths were not what Nahid Sırrı would expect, ‘western’, but suspiciously resembling the cloths of the ‘other-to-be-abolished’, the cloaks of the ulema or the *çarşaf*. İğneci felt ashamed of Kayseri and Nahid Sırrı’s travelogue conveys a sense of mistrust (or even suspicion) and clear disgust for the local people. Both texts reveal a polarized sense of time (and place, i.e. spatialized time³²⁴), a historicity to be found in the

³²³ Murat İğneci, “Bir Geziden İntibalar”, *Kayseri*, 20 March 1939, No 1321, p. 2.

³²⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 7-10.

occidental discourse of non-western elites complaining about the 'lagging behind' of their countries and fellow citizens.³²⁵

What educated intellectuals appointed to Kayseri from big cities like Istanbul felt and wrote about Kayseri and its people is essential if we are to study the way they experienced their residence in the provinces and the engagement in the People's House. What then emerges from their texts is a sense of embarrassment – one might even say repulsion – for Kayseri, and mistrust for the local people they were supposed to 'instruct'. This professed and felt distance separating these intellectuals from the 'real people' is expressed – but also criticized- in a somehow different account of the same period – the mid 1930s – and environment, Cevdet Kudret's story of a schoolteacher.

C) The Kayseri of Cevdet Kudret: the town, its people and Halkevi

Apparently the most dynamic and committed element of the cadre of the Kayseri Halkevi was, according to the Committee members' lists, the mass of teachers of the various schools of Kayseri and, to a lesser extent, the civil servants of the region. Nevertheless, the archival sources used here do not tell us much about the way all these members experienced their involvement in the activities of the Halkevi, or about their motivation to take part in such an enterprise. Fortunately enough one of the teachers involved in the activities of the local Halkevi in the 1930s left us an account substantially different from the sources heretofore used.

The novelist Cevdet Kudret spent two years in Kayseri between 1936 and 1938/9. His name is not mentioned in the Halkevi lists, since he was a simple member of the Language, History and Literature Section of the People's House of Kayseri and a literature teacher at the Kayseri Lycée. Most important, he wrote a novel³²⁶ describing the life of a literature teacher in Kayseri. Apart from telling the story of Süleyman, his hero, Cevdet Kudret is also describing the life of civil servants and teachers in the Kayseri of the 1930s and 1940s. In other words, Cevdet Kudret in his novel *Havada Bulut Yok* is offering us a personal and semi-fictitious account of a teacher's life in Kayseri and his engagement in the Halkevi in the 1930s. It is widely acknowledged that *Havada Bulut Yok* depicts parts of Cevdet Kudret's life in Kayseri. The author himself admits³²⁷ that he used his experiences as a Lycée teacher in Kayseri as raw material for this novel.³²⁸

³²⁵ Meltem Ahıska, "Occidentalism: The Historical fantasy of the Modern", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102, 2/3 (2003) 351-379.

³²⁶ Cevdet Kudret, *Havada Bulut Yok*, 2nd edition (Istanbul: İnkılap ve Aka, 1976).

³²⁷ İhsan Kudret and Apay Kabacalı (eds), *Cevdet Kudret'e saygı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993), p. 171, from an interview of the author.

³²⁸ İhsan Kudret, *İhsan benimle çalıştır mısın?* (İstanbul: İnkılap, n.d.), p. 96.

Cevdet Kudret's life and some pages from *Havada Bulut Yok* can clearly demonstrate this autobiographical quality of the novel. Cevdet Kudret (Solok) was born in 1907 in Istanbul, graduated from the Istanbul Law Faculty and worked as a literature teacher at the Kayseri and Ankara Atatürk Lycées. He started publishing poems while still a lycée student in *Servet-i Fünun*, in 1928. Between the years 1936 – 1938 he taught literature at the Kayseri Lycée, where in 1937 he married his 19 year-old student İhsan Kudret, one of the very few female students and member of one of Kayseri's old and influential families, the Feyzioğlu.³²⁹ He was an active member of the local Halkevi, participating in a number of its activities.³³⁰ His experiences in Kayseri were used as raw material for his novel *Havada Bulut Yok*, which he wrote between 1947-9. In an interview, the author states the following about himself and his life in Kayseri:

I went to Kayseri with great hopes. I hoped to transmit an interest in literature that is open to the western civilization to this city of middle Anatolia and one of the important centers of Eastern civilization. I was a child of Istanbul. The first time I traveled to the province was full of very painful realities. I was faced with a number of 'scenes from real life' (hayat-ı hakikiye sahneleri). When I saw students coming to school without coats and with holes in their shoes during the winter, I fell from the clouds to the face of earth. Some of them did not even have a light in their houses and were doing their homework under the street lamps. Literature was a clear luxury for them. I was then left in such a dilemma. In order to get to know the environment, I tried to help in the Social Assistance Section and the village activities of the Halkevi during my spare time. I was probably very much engaged in these activities, because my behaviour opened the way to a number of whispers. I used my observations in Kayseri later on as material for my novel 'Havada Bulut Yok'.³³¹

According to Ali Rıza Önder, an old student of Cevdet Kudret, the novelist was one of the youngest teachers of their Lycée. "He was a person born and raised in Istanbul, but this did not obstruct him from feeling close to the people of Anatolia. He developed an interest in the folk singers (*ozan*) of our region. He once brought one of them, Uzunyaylalı Âşık Talibi Coşkun to our school. We gathered in our school's courtyard and listened to his poems and tales (*Şiir ve öykü*). We knew that he was interested in cultural meetings outside school.

³²⁹ She was apparently a relative of Prof. Turhan Feyzioğlu. For a biography of Cevdet Kudret see Murat Yalçın (ed), *Tanzimat'tan Bugüne Edebiyatçılar Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), pp. 524-5.

³³⁰ His name is only once mentioned in the Kayseri Halkevi papers in the State Archives when in 1938 he gave a speech about the life and works of A. Hamit contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2.

³³¹ İhsan Kudret and Apay Kabacalı (eds), *Cevdet Kudret'e saygı*, pp. 171-2.

He gave a very instructive lecture on Nazım Hikmet in the Halkevi Hall located in one of the old churches. This lecture was not confronted with any kind of reaction either by the officials or by the part of the people that was opposed to the left.”³³²

Both texts, Cevdet Kudret’s own account as well as his student’s recollections, speak of an educated person of somehow left leanings, an idealist teacher coming for the first time from Istanbul to the provinces. Both are alluding to a specific difference existing between a person such as Cevdet Kudret and the people of Kayseri. The author though, as well as his novel’s hero, tried to surmount these differences and interact with the local people. Cevdet Kudret on the one hand had hopes to make a wind of literature “that is open to the western civilization” blow, while on the other hand he showed an immense interest in local folk songs and stories. “I wanted to experiment with a contemporization of tradition by taking advantage of the folk song tradition in Kayseri.”³³³ Kudret easily falls into the category of the ‘idealist teacher’ or intellectual (*mefkûreci/ülkücü öğretmen/münevver*), following the archetype of Feride of Reşat Nuri Güntekin’s *Çalığışu*. It does not come as a surprise then that the reality he comes across upon arriving at Kayseri falls short of his dreams and ambitions, even though Kudret’s appointment is in a provincial town and not in a village.³³⁴

Teachers, state functionaries and Kayseri Halkevi

a) Civil Servants: boredom and alienation

The first person the hero talks to upon his arrival at Kayseri is the principal of the Lycée. He says to Süleyman:

- *We are like a family to each other. We are all very close to each other. We are 15 to 20 intellectuals. Fifteen to 20 educated persons also come from other [state] departments; you cannot find anybody else to see. Do you know how to play backgammon?*

- *No.*

- *Very bad! You must learn at once. (...)We, the intellectuals, have nobody else here.*

³³² Ali Rıza Önder, “Cevdet Kudret ve anımsadıklarım”, *Cumhuriyet*, 10/10/1992, in İhsan Kudret and Apay Kabacalı (eds), *Cevdet Kudret’e saygı*, pp. 121-2.

³³³ İhsan Kudret and Apay Kabacalı (eds), *Cevdet Kudret’e saygı*, p. 172.

³³⁴ For an example of the influence of Güntekin’s story on generations of teachers see Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin tabanı. Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç* (Ankara: I Matbaacılık ve Ticaret, 1969), p. 185.

This feeling of alienation from the locals that can be discerned in the principal's words reappears again in Kudret's description of the civil servants' life in Kayseri. At 15:00, when the school closes, the teachers go to the coffeehouse (probably the one opposite the High School building, 'the best of Kayseri', as Örik describes some pages above).

After 15:00 the door of the coffeehouse the teachers frequented opened. One by one the intellectuals, the principal was referring to, arrived. Burhan the bailiff, İhsan the land registrar, Selami the matrimony officer, Yahya the birth registrar, Nazım the pharmacist ...

After many card and backgammon games, the group of teachers went to the restaurant for dinner. One of them is amazed to find out that Süleyman is not drinking raki.

Don't you drink raki? And how are you going to spend your time? Every day after leaving school at 15:00, what are you going to do up until 23:00? If you are thinking of books, they don't come here; if you are thinking of newspapers, until they arrive here its all old news. If you are thinking of cinema or theatre, there are no such places here. Not even a decent brothel exists here... If you are married (...). But you are single. How are you going to spend your free time after 15:00, or when you do not have any lessons, from the morning till the evening? It's easy for one or two days, but what when it is for 1,3,5 years, every single day after 15:00? You are obliged to go to the coffeehouse, play backgammon, then to go to the restaurant and drink raki till you go to sleep.

Cevdet's description of the coffeehouse and tavern the teachers frequented, their clientele and conditions are almost identical to Nahid Sırrı's account of the same places, a detail that exhibits the proximity of the background in terms of place of origin and education of both writers. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the same applied for many state employees with a similar background appointed to places like Kayseri. A similar reference to the alienation and isolation educated state functionaries were experiencing in provincial centres can be found in an account by a foreign writer. Lilo Linke, a German journalist, toured through several regions of Turkey in 1935. In her book *Allah dethroned. A journey through Modern Turkey*, published in 1937, raki is once more the exit from, and at the same time the signifier of, boredom. In July 1935 Linke was introduced to Galib, a civil servant in Giresun. "For eight years he had been living abroad, mainly in France, to study law. Now he was a junior town clerk with a monthly salary of 50 Turkish Liras. '[I] don't complain. Turkey is a poor country. Things will be better in a few years', Galib

says. He then states, 'I am speaking of rakı. Everybody drinks here. Life is so dull, we couldn't bear it otherwise. On Sundays we start at three o'clock in the afternoon, on ordinary days at six'.³³⁵

Kudret – with a dose of exaggeration perhaps - describes Kayseri almost as the intellectual's wasteland, and it is plausible to think that many people with similar experiences must have felt the same way about Kayseri in the 1930s and 1940s. A further reasonable assumption would be that the People's House must have been an alternative 'they' could not easily refuse, a place where 'We, the intellectuals', as the principal had eloquently put, could gather and spend their time among peers. It should not then be a coincidence that the members' lists cited above suggest exactly this: that the largest part of the House's cadre was composed of teachers and state functionaries. It should be acknowledged though that the People's Houses, although designed to fuse the 'real people' (*asıl halk*) with the intellectuals (*münevver*), were clearly designated to gather and have these 'intellectuals' as the organizers of their activities. Several sources indicate the centre's aim to draft the 'enlighten' segments of society into the People's Houses.³³⁶ Official and/or unofficial, direct or not, pressure on teachers to join in the People's Houses was routine.³³⁷ Nonetheless, Karamete, Özdoğan, as well as Cevdet Kudret and his hero, and many other teachers' membership and active involvement, cannot be considered just as the result of pressure from above. The names of teachers filling the pages of the Halkevleri journals³³⁸ and the members' lists suggest

³³⁵ Lilo Linke, *Allah dethroned. A journey through Modern Turkey* (London: Constable & Co, 1937), pp. 150-1.

³³⁶ It suffices here to mention of only a few: Recep Peker, the Party's Secretary General states at the opening ceremony of the first 14 Halkevi: "there is great need of a guiding element that would be composed of all the mature/experienced people that would function as educators". When, a few lines below, he becomes more specific, he only refers to teachers, deputies and doctors. (Recep, "Halkevleri açılma nutku", *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 1, (1933), p. 6). In a circular sent to the Party Branches by the Secretary General a few days before the opening of the first Halkevi, the Recep Peker states that "it is very useful to invite to the halls of the Houses the country's educated elements, for example a week before the opening ceremony, and explain them beforehand the common goals". Moreover, "efforts will be made to have, civil servants or not, intellectuals from all the professions, especially teachers, come to the first gathering that will take place with the aim to organize the opening." In *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Genel Sekreterliğinin Fırka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı* (Ankara, 1933).

³³⁷ Akyüz argues that the Turkish Teachers Unions were insistently pressed to join the Halkevleri during the years Recep Peker was the Secretary General of the Party. Yahya Akyüz, *Türkiye'de öğretmenlerin toplumsal değişimdeki etkileri 1848 - 1940* (Ankara: Doğan Basımevi, 1978), p. 259. Another example comes from the memoirs of Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin tabanı. Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç*, p. 208: in 1938 Arman witnessed in Denizli the Vali's obsession with the reluctance of the women teachers to take more active roles in the Halkevi and, more specifically to act at the theatrical plays the Halkevi was staging. The Vali even went as far as to report the situation to the Party, which in turn informed the Education Minister. Both the Vali's letter (No 273/CHP Denizli İlyönkurul başkanlığı, dated 02/06/1939) and Hasan Ali Yücel's reply are contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1.

³³⁸ Ahmet Yüksel has demonstrated that, in the case of the Merzifon Halkevi, a group of schoolteachers were mostly responsible for the Halkevi activities and the publication of its journal *Taşan*. When some of them were appointed elsewhere in Turkey and had to leave Merzifon, the quality of the journal fell leading to its closure a few months later. Ahmet Yüksel, "Merzifon Halkevi ve Taşan Dergisi", *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996). For the predominance of schoolteachers

the existence of alternative motives for participating in the Halkevi activities than sheer pressure from above. Undoubtedly some participated because they were pressed to do so, or just “out of kindness”, as A.S. Levent noticed in one of his reports on the Kayseri Halkevi,³³⁹ others, considering it as a promising choice in their social, professional life,³⁴⁰ or even a future in politics,³⁴¹ yet others might have joined because they wholeheartedly espoused their role as ‘educators of the people’, the enlightened/educated element Recep Peker and the Party was searching for; finally, others – Cevdet Kudret and his hero Süleyman being one of them – while believing in their status and function as educators working for the progress of their people, never accepted the overtly paternalistic and implicitly contemptuous for the common people mentality and practices of the *mission civilizatrice* of which the People’s Houses formed an essential part.

In his novel, Cevdet Kudret gives a picture of the Kayseri Halkevi and its activities, as well as of some of its members.

b) Reports’ Factory: Kayseri Halkevi

In order to evade from boredom, Süleyman becomes active in the local Halkevi. His association with the Kayseri House starts when he visits the Halkevi chairman to ask his mediation so that one of his poor students can find a job in one of the state factories. It seems that this was a rather common activity of the Halkevleri.³⁴² The author describes the chairman, Reşat bey, as an ambitious man whose aspiration is to become an MP.³⁴³ He believes that being the chairman of the local Halkevi is a position that would lead him to the

in the Halkevleri journals also see B. Varlık’s articles: Bülent Varlık, “Yozgat Halkevi Dergisi bibliyografyası”, *Kebikeç*, Vol. 2, No 3, (1996); “Devrimin sesi: Bilecik Halkevi dergisi bibliyografyası”, *Kebikeç*, Vol. 3, No 6, (1998); and “Ülker, Niksar Halkevi Kültür dergisi”, *Kebikeç*, Vol. 7, No 14, (2001).

³³⁹ Report No 238 of the Aydın mebusu (MP) A. S. Levent, Niğde Bölge Müfettişi, Kayseri 16/07/1942 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.259.1/4th Büro.

³⁴⁰ In his memoirs, Rauf İnan recalls the story of Seyfeddin Erdem, a teacher who tried to prevent his appointment to a remote village playing the ‘Halkevi card’. He said the following to İnan, who was the director of primary education of the region: “What have I done without knowing it that I am punished with an appointment to a village? I am the chairman of the Halkevi of Alaşehir.” In Rauf İnan, *Bir ömrün öyküsü* (Ankara, 1986), p. 193.

³⁴¹ Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, *Anıların izinde* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1977 - 9). p. 274 (1st volume); Şevket Beysanoğlu, “Anımlarımda Diyarbakır Halkevi”, *Kebikeç*, Year 2, No 3, (1996), p. 165. The files of the Archive containing the *Mebustalebnameleri* of those desiring to become MPs quite eloquently demonstrate the importance the supplicants place on their Halkevi credentials, as we have already seen in Chapter 3.

³⁴² Resul Yiğit, quoting from the *Yeni Mersin* newspaper and the Halkevi journal *İçel*, has shown in his unpublished MA thesis that the Social Assistance Section of the Mersin Halkevi was operating as an employment bureau; Resul Yiğit, *Mersin Halkevi (1933 - 1951)*, (MA thesis, Mersin University, 2001). P. 89. It is also listed in the *Halkevleri Talimatnamesi* as one of the Social Assistance Section’s duties. *C.H.P. Halkevleri Çalışma Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1940), article 68, p. 20.

³⁴³ Naci Özsan was the Halkevi chairman when Kudret was in Kayseri. A local Party boss and lawyer, Özsan applied at least in 1946 to become an MP candidate for the CHP. His application is contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/307.1250.2.

Parliament. He doesn't seem to be genuinely interested into the Halkevi activities, but rather sees them as instrumental for his political and social rising. He has an obsession with the activity reports he compiles and sends to Ankara. He even writes reports of completely fictitious conferences and other events. It is in this sense that he is willing to help Süleyman's student to find a job, since he conceives this as a great subject for a report on the 'solutions the Halkevi gives to the people's problems'. Moreover, he asks (in return) Süleyman to join the Social Assistance Section of the House, which is also something he doesn't fail to record in his next report as yet another success of the House.

Next to the Halkevi chairman, another local Halkevi member is also described rather negatively. The Music teacher of the local high school, Şadan bey, was a local teacher with political ambitions. He became a Party Orator.³⁴⁴ Cevdet describes his colleague with a dose of irony. He notes that he became a Party Orator by giving a speech to no more than a handful of people 'at a corner of the square of the statue' in Ankara. Our author is referring to the Ulus Square in Ankara under Atatürk's monument in an obviously ironic fashion. Şadan bey then returned to Kayseri and assumed all by himself the serious role of the regime's representative and instructor, only to be mocked and ridiculed by the locals and most importantly by local elites and state employees. He was wandering around the town showing everyone his identity card as a Party Orator and a picture showing him delivering a speech to 5 – 10 people in the Ulus Square, always trying to find an opportunity to 'climb the podium' in public ceremonies and deliver speeches, even when he was neither invited to do so nor such a speech was part of the program. He had a number of ready-made speeches with subjects such as the 'Turkish soil', the 'Fatherland', 'Our Blood', and so forth. Once in the middle of a public anniversary, he managed to climb the podium unnoticed and started shouting his speech. For all warnings, he did not stop shouting leaving the Governor (Vali) no choice but to order the band to start playing so that his voice would not be heard. After a while he had to run off the podium.³⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the chairman's and other local Halkevi members' attitude, Süleyman takes a real interest in the Halkevi and the Section's activities, but all the plans he recommends receive the same reply: 'no money'. Soon he understands that the Social Assistance Section, just like all the other Sections, is nothing but an empty structure. The House has no fixed income to carry out any activities, and furthermore only those activities that can yield an arresting report are taken into serious consideration.

Süleyman recalls some of the House's activities. During the 'Tobacco Week' (12 – 19 December) lectures were delivered and a number of signposts with slogans praising the value of saving were hung in streets and schools.

³⁴⁴ On the *Halk Hatipleri* organization see Işıl Çakal, *Konuşunuz Konuşturunuz. Tek Parti Döneminde Propagandanın Etkin Silahı: Söz* (İstanbul: Otopsi, 2004), pp. 67 – 77. It is interesting to see the reception of this project of the regime in a local society.

³⁴⁵ Cevdet Kudret, *Havada Bulut Yok*, pp. 80 – 3.

Copies of the conferences and pictures of the signposts were sent to Ankara in the form of a report. On another occasion, a wealthy merchant donated a sum of money that was used to purchase cloths for poor students. This event was turned into an important ceremony on a holiday's eve. Pictures were taken and then published in newspapers showing the members of the Social Assistance Section in the front and the sponsored students in the background.

After a while the hero was thinking to stop working in this 'report factory', as he called the Halkevi. The only reason he stayed was the village excursions that gave him the opportunity to visit the villages and see their situation. Up until the Second World War the work within the House continued in the same way, "full of ideas, projects, speeches, reports, members and activity sections."³⁴⁶ During the first or the second year of the war, though, as famine emerged, they had to come up with some kind of solution. Every day at least 8 – 10 people were coming to ask for job, help, charcoal, or bread. The Social Assistance Section started working to find new sources of income. There were thoughts to let out the new Theatre Hall of the House, to stage plays with an entrance fee, or to organize balls with the collaboration of all the Sections in order to gather money to support the Social Assistance Section. The money eventually gathered from these events was used to purchase wheat, potatoes that could then be distributed to those applying to the Halkevi. As soon as the news was heard, the Kayseri poor started coming to the House in groups. Finally, after witnessing such an unexpected demand, the Committee members came to the conclusion that they had to determine who were the real poor and then distribute the food. For this reason they set up a committee that would visit the neighbourhoods and, with the help of the local *muhtars*, make up lists of the city's poor.³⁴⁷ Süleyman was a member of this committee.

The author describes in great detail the hard living conditions of the poor people of Kayseri in contrast to the wealth of the few rich. Interestingly enough some of the poor did not know what the name Halkevi stood for. One of the poor women they visited, Kadıncıkanım, when informed that the Halkevi had decided to help her, asked: *'Who is this Halkevi? Is he very rich? It seems that good people exist in this world'*. The same occurred when she met another poor woman, Zelhana: *'What is the Halkevi you just said? Is it the government?'* One of the rich of the city though, Rüstem Ağa, was well aware of the existence of the House and its activities (or at least some of them): *'Tell me what is going on in the Halkevi now? Are you getting new theatrical groups? Are you going to put women on the stage again? Last time, that dark skinned woman had a great voice. Oh my God!'*

³⁴⁶ It has to be noted that the author demonstrates a great familiarity with the paraphernalia of the Halkevleri, reports, conferences, members' lists, meetings and similar documents and activities.

³⁴⁷ Both activities, the distribution of food and the compilation of a register of the poor with the help of the *muhtars*, actually took place in 1945 and 1946, according to Mustafa Şanal, "Türk kültür tarihi içerisinde Kayseri Halkevi ve Faaliyetleri (1932 - 1951)", *Millî Eğitim Dergisi*, 161, (2004), p. 10, where articles from *Erciyes* are used. It is not yet clear, though, whether Cevdet Kudret was in Kayseri at that period of time.

In Kudret's description of the Kayseri Halkevi, the people whose progress the House was supposed to work for either have not heard of it, or perceive it as a part of the Government or the state – not without reason one might say. This perception though demonstrates the distance existing between the 'real people', those termed as the 'targets' of the People's Houses, and the Houses themselves. The rich merchant, on the other hand, is aware of the existence of the Halkevi. His reported speech designates the House more as a place/source of entertainment, like a theatre or a cinema, rather than a more 'serious' institution carrying out 'the lofty aims' of the Party.

Kudret portrays the Halkevi as the playground of teachers, civil servants, local Party men and merchants, each one participating or just being there for his own purpose, be it sincere interest, boredom, political ambition, entertainment or, one might add, a combination of all or some of the above. The teachers and other non-local civil servants like himself are segregated among themselves, active in the House out of boredom, obligation or both, and with a sense of common identity in contrast on the one hand to the local people described in rather analogous terms with the texts of non-local educated civil servants or intellectuals such as Örik and İğneci, and on the other hand to the local elites, Party bosses, merchants and local intellectuals such as the Halkevi chairman, the teacher-Party orator and Rüstem Ağa. The local elites and teachers he is related to through the Halkevi activities are depicted with a degree of irony, only superficially interested in the Halkevi's activities, participating for their own reasons, be it political ambition or interest in the House's opportunities for entertainment, women on stage singing being one of them explicitly mentioned.

The rest of the Kayseri population, on the other hand, is absent from the House and in many cases incognizant of the House's existence, or unable to distinguish it from the state, the government or the Party. Seeing the House as an extension of the government would probably have driven the people even further away from the House, as the 'simple man' would rarely come willingly into contact with the state or its agents unless extremely necessary. The absence/exclusion then of the 'other', regardless of (or even in contrast to) the regime's rhetoric about the villagers and the 'real people', can be also sensed in the texts of the Halkevi members treated above, where a strong sense of identity, of membership in a particular group of people, and thus of a border separating them from the rest, is conveyed.

Conclusion

Building upon the 'human geography' of the Kayseri Halkevi given in the previous chapter, this chapter has focused on the writings of a number of members of the Kayseri House, in an attempt to consider how various social actors experience and express their engagement in the Halkevi project within a local society and population. By studying their texts our more general aim is to

study how this ‘juncture of state and society’ operates in practice and within local provincial societies, where the majority of the People’s Houses operated. We have seen that the pool of active Halkevi members was mostly composed of two groups: non-local educated state employees (mostly teachers) and members of what we can term urban elites (a few professionals and state employees, and mainly merchants/artisans, usually from certain families of *eşraf* origin) that occupy key positions in other local socio-political and financial institutions. While we can classify the first group of Halkevi members by their identity as state employees and educated outsiders with limited relations to the locality, the second group of Halkevi members derives its origin from local elite groups and individuals that traditionally had functioned as intermediaries linking the state and its agents in the periphery with the local population/society. This chapter then has turned to a number of Halkevi members differentiated by gender, occupation, social status/class and place of birth. With the possible exceptions of Zatiye and Mahir, the rest of the cases treated above belong to these two main categories of Halkevi personnel.

Halkevi actors

The texts of our Halkevi actors display a number of similarities and differences. Locals and non-locals alike usually appear to request something from the addressee of their text, be it a seat in the National Assembly, an appointment to the local Municipal Assembly, a promotion in their workplace or their reemployment in the House’s library. This characteristic is definitely due to the nature of the sources we use, by majority petition letters to the Party Headquarters. Nevertheless, at first glance these texts and the similarities they exhibit clearly point at certain characteristics that we can easily designate as structural. All our authors use their Halkevi membership – usually among other credentials – to bolster their request and in this sense the Halkevi undoubtedly appears to be used as an opportunity space for both locals and outsiders.

The local Halkevi actors, by majority merchants, landowners and local Party bosses and power brokers, tend to place themselves in the Halkevi institution, especially the management of the Houses, for political reasons. In other words, their membership and control of the House is instrumental as it offers a better positioning in the local politic scene to further their aims and interests. The participation into the House activities and management of the non-local state employees on the other hand apparently was not fulfilling the same objectives. Some data indicate that they were occasionally semi-obliged or even coerced to take part in the Halkevi activities, while other sources, including accounts by these actors, express other, more ideological, or even practical reasons for their participation. Some, like Cevdet Kudret and numerous other schoolteachers, saw and tried, occasionally in vain, to experience their participation as an idealist enterprise to ‘enlighten’, and ‘educate’ the locals. Others, as Kudret’s own account again implies, became

Halkevi members and used the People's House as a place they couldn't miss in the 'wasteland' of the local society: an exclusive space of gathering among themselves - the 'intellectuals' that facilitated their segregation from the locals whom they tended to mistrust and dislike.

The divergent patterns of participation into the Halkevi space and the different ways the Halkevi membership was experienced between local-elite and state-elite actors point at, and can be understood by, the divergent network of relations both set of actors have with the local society and thus the Halkevi. In other words, their position and interests in the local society and within local politics differentiates the Halkevi members in relation to issues they address in their texts as well as to the use they make of the Halkevi. We have seen how local Halkevi members in their texts to the centre might lie (Halkevi chairman composing reports of fictitious events) or avoid (Karamete's inability to talk about modern Kayseri and its population) addressing certain issues about their society. Non-local civil servants on the other hand, like Kudret, İğneci and Üzel, appear more outspoken in relation to the place they have been appointed and its population. Outsiders like Kudret and Üzel do not have the locals' entrenched interests and relations in the local society and thus are more open to speak about the local conditions and people. Their texts share motifs of mistrust, disgust of and differentiation from the locals, elites and non-elites alike (Halkevi chairman, Party Orator and wealthy landlord in Kudret's novel, the local people in Örik and İğneci).

The differentiation between locals and outsiders is also evident in the very few cases of women active in the local political and social life. Although both women treated in this chapter present themselves as members of a family and thus attached to their male relatives, fathers and husbands equally engaged in similar activities, they diverge with respect to the manner they express their exceptionality as female political actors in the region. This time it is the local Mamurhan Özsan who appears more outspoken than the outsider Gaspıralı about the fact that she is the only woman in various local political associations as well as about the opposition and resistance she is experiencing to her engagement from her male colleagues and the local society at large. Here the entrenched in local politics position of the local elite Halkevi members (women and their politically active family and husbands) and their organic ties and endangered interests in the region is more relevant and pressing than what an outsider like Gaspıralı might face.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ For more on female Halkevi members see Chapter 7 whose sole focus is the participation of women in the Halkevi activities.

PART II

*Local Politics. Political Geography of Provincial People's
Houses*

Chapter 4

Halkevi within local politics: the chairman of the Balıkesir Halkevi

Aim of this chapter is to look at the Halkevi space in relation to and from the vantage point of local politics through the detailed study of a case of a Halkevi chairman, a local Party and elite actor, Esat Adil Müstecablıođlu, the first chairman of the People's House of Balıkesir. A corollary aim of this study is to come to more general statements about the nature of local politics, the place of the People's House and its chairman within the local power networks. This chapter attempts to contemplate on the issue of how local power networks and actors interact among themselves and the centre and on the position of the People's House within these networks of power, as a structure situated within vertical and horizontal relations of power.

The House of Balıkesir within local power networks and actors

The 'human geography' of the Houses of Balıkesir and Kayseri attempted in the second chapter of this thesis gave the picture of a space inhabited, claimed and controlled by local and state elites next and in relation to other local sociopolitical (state and non-state) association, a structure with horizontal and vertical relations, a juncture of centre and elite segments/actors of the local society. More specifically, the outline of the local power structure of the town of Balıkesir has shown that the leadership of local Party structures was in the hands of a number of local urban elites, i.e. local notables of *eşraf* origin, mostly merchants and landlords, a few artisans, and some professionals (lawyers, doctors and pharmacists) usually from the same local urban elite families.³⁴⁹ The same local elite actors controlled other local associations and clubs, occupied the Municipal and Provincial Assemblies,³⁵⁰ and petitioned the Party in Ankara in order to be selected by the centre for the National Assembly.³⁵¹ A number of these supplicants were non-local state employees,

³⁴⁹ In the city of Balıkesir the Provincial (Vilayet), District (Merkez Kazası), and to a lesser extent sub-district (Nahiye) Party Committees were mainly staffed by merchants, notables and professionals. The majority of the Ocak (Neighborhoods) committee members though were artisans and shop owners.

³⁵⁰ See Chapter 2.

³⁵¹ The files of the Archive containing the applications of those asking the Party's nomination in Balıkesir for the national elections of 1943 and 1946 are another source that holds significant information about the local power structure, the local elites and their ambitions. These applications exhibit the close relationship between the staff members of the local House, the local Party structures, and, in general, the local elites. As in the case of Kayseri, most of the applicants were party staff members - usually members of a Party Administrative Committee - and, occasionally, members of other local bodies and associations (Municipal Assembly, Red Crescent, People's

mostly teachers, doctors and bureaucrats who stuffed the local Halkevi in larger numbers than the more 'traditional' local urban elites, the merchants, artisans and professionals who occupied all the other local power structures.

The position of the Halkevi chairman and Esat Adil

The Halkevi chairmen were elected by the local Party Administrative Committees. Moreover, they had to be Party members. In the first years Houses were opened usually in rather big provincial centers, especially in places where a Turkish Hearth had previously existed. According to the bylaws of the People's Houses, the Houses' executive members were elected by the House's members and had to be Party and Halkevi members. The Halkevi chairman though was directly appointed by the local Party Administrative Committee and was usually selected among its members.³⁵² Those educated among the local Party staff were considered more suitable, although other factors have to be considered, such as the balance of power/authority between the local and the appointed (state) elites. At least during the first years then, an educated and usually influential local Party executive member seemed to be typically the appointed Halkevi chairman (lawyer, doctor, teacher). As we will see below, the first Halkevi chairman Esat Adil covered all the above requirements; he came from an old local family, he was a member of the Party Administrative Committee, and a lawyer; although relative young, he possessed an education that was exceptional for his time and place, with degrees from the Law Faculty in Ankara and a PhD from the University of Brussels. Esat Adil, a young man who was active in local society and politics was an ideal candidate for the Halkevi chairmanship.

House etc). Their identity as Party executives, as well as the membership and participation in the staff and activities of various other associations was an attribute they never failed to mention when applying to the Party. It was considered, as we have also seen in the case of Kayseri, an almost indispensable quality or even prerequisite the applicants utilized in order to verify their attachment to the Party and its principles. Both in 1943 and 1946 then, most of the applications to the General Secretariat of the ruling Party from the province of Balıkesir were sent by local Party men. A rather substantial number (11/40) of applications were sent by teachers. Some of them were also registered party members (Refet Onurlu, Eminittin Çeliköz, Mükerrerem Su). There are seven more applicants: a lawyer, a former Provincial governor (Vali), a veterinarian, a bank director, the managing director of the Mining Company in Balya, a doctor, and a tobacco merchant. Application contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4 and **BCA CHP**, 490.1/241.1172.2.

³⁵² *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932), articles 1 and 19.

He was born in the province of Balıkesir in the village Müstecab in 1904, son of the teacher (*müderri*), poet, musician and scholar Müstecabzade Hafız Adil efendi. Esat Adil graduated from the primary and high school of Balıkesir and immediately after the War of Independence entered the Istanbul School of Commerce. Due to financial problems his family was facing Esat Adil had to return to Balıkesir before graduating. In 1924 he won a scholarship of the Ministry of Justice and entered the Law School of Ankara. In 1928 he graduated and instead of taking up his appointment at the Public Prosecutor's office in Kemah, he entered the Law Faculty of the University of Brussels, where a few years later he defended his PhD. Upon his return from Belgium in 1932 he became a member of the local CHP and was elected the first chairman of the newly established Halkevi of Balıkesir. At the same time he was a member of the Administrative Committee of the CHP, of the Local Parliament of the province of Balıkesir (member of the standing committee – *daimi encümen-* of the *İl Genel Meclisi*), and chairman of the *İdman Yurdu* (Gymnastics Club). He was publishing a local newspaper (*Savaş* 1933-1935) that, although not explicitly oppositional to the regime, in a number of cases was highly critical of government policies. Moreover, his socialist/left-wing leanings or sympathies, although not yet fully matured and expressed as they became in the 1940s, were felt by a number of people, first of all his local rivals. The two books³⁵⁴ he translated and published at that time, as well as his work in the Halkevi and his articles in *Savaş* in favor of workers and peasants, probably contributed to a growing suspicion of his political preferences that would follow him till his death. His activity and opinions probably alarmed his rivals³⁵⁵ and were used against him by his opponents in the local Party structure and the local society. Based on five of his articles in *Savaş*, he was accused of communist propaganda and of offending the government's authority (articles 40 and 30 of the Press Law) and brought to trial in 1934. He was acquitted, but resigned from the Halkevi chairmanship and was appointed in a number of places as Public Prosecutor or warden in penitentiary institutions: Kemah,

³⁵³ There is an issue that can potentially be perplexing and has to be acknowledged and treated before we enter into our investigation. It is Esat Adil's position – mainly in the late 1940s and early 1950s - in the socialist left in Turkey and, consequently, in the literature about the period and Esat Adil himself. More specifically, Esat Adil emerges as an almost hagiographic figure in the writings of some of his friends in left wing circles in the 1940s and 50s, as Aziz Nesin (in his article "Bir yaşam boyu çile" of 1958, reproduced in Aydın Ayhan, "Esat Adil Müstecablıoğlu'nun ilk yazıları", 3rd part, No 18 and 19, *Yeni Haber*, September – October 1995) or Arman Hürrem, or even of people writing years after his death, as Aydın Ayhan. Some of the sources written after his death in 1958, thus, have to be treated with caution, as they reproduce a romantic picture of Esat Adil and project it even before the 1940s and the period we are concerned with, between 1932 and 1935.

³⁵⁴ Grequvar Kuliçer, *Sosyalist Şefler ve Sosyalizm* and Francesco Nitti, *Bolşevilik, Faşistlik ve Demokrasi*.

³⁵⁵ The fact that his local constituency was large – second in votes in the 1934 municipal elections - was probably another cause of anxiety for his opponents. For a list of the elected in the Municipal elections of 1934 see *Savaş*, No 282, Sunday 14th of October 1934, p. 1.

Bursa and Kocaeli Public Prosecutor's Office, warden of the prisons in Edirne and Imralı, and prosecutor in the Court of Appeals. In 1943 he applied to the General Secretariat of the CHP to be appointed as MP candidate for Balıkesir.³⁵⁶ In 1946 he established the *Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi*³⁵⁷ that was closed the same year, and he was taken to court. In 1948 he was acquitted and in 1950 he once again established the TSP only to be closed again. Esat Adil was again brought to court and stayed in prison for almost two years. He died in 1958.³⁵⁸

Let us now concentrate on Esat Adil's life, firstly, until his return to Balıkesir in 1932, secondly during the years he was chairman of the local People's House (1932 -1934), and, lastly, till his departure from the city in late 1935.

The formative years. 1901 – 1932.

Esat Adil was born in Balıkesir in 1901, into a local notable family with ancestors distinguished as teachers and poets. He finished his primary and secondary education in Balıkesir; he briefly studied in Istanbul, then in the Law School of Ankara; he then acquired a PhD in Law from the University of Brussels and returned to Balıkesir in 1932 where he entered into the local political and social life as a member of the local Party, the Municipality, the Halkevi, and as a publisher of a local newspaper and editor of the Halkevi journal. That was not the first time he published though. In a series of articles entitled "The First Writings of Esat Adil" and published between 1994 and 1995 in the local newspaper of Balıkesir *Yeni Haber*, Aydın Ayhan presented Esat Adil's early writings up until 1928. Apparently, Esat Adil started publishing poems and articles in the local newspaper *Zafer-i Milli* between 1923 - 4, continued in the journals *Dilek* and *Çağlıyan* between 1924 – 6, and the journal *İrmak* in 1928.³⁵⁹ Esat Adil's interest in literature would remain in later years. He continued publishing poems in the journal of the Balıkesir Halkevi *Kaynak* in 1934-5. He also published a number of articles on various topics that display the multitude of his interests. As early as 1923 he wrote about the "Establishment and aims of the Chambers of Commerce". In 1924 he wrote a series of articles about financial institutions and village issues, while he also presented a number of books. These articles were probably written when he was a student at the Istanbul School of Commerce. Later on, in 1928 he

³⁵⁶ Application dated 1 February 1943 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4.

³⁵⁷ For the TSP see Özgür Gökmen, "Çok-Partili rejime geçerken sol: Türkiye sosyalizminin unutulmuş partisi", *Toplum ve Bilim*, No 78, (Fall 1998).

³⁵⁸ Abdullah Yurdakök, *Balıkesir Basın Tarihi (1886- 1991)*, (Balıkesir, 1992), p. 324. Özgür Gökmen, "Esat Adil Müstecabhoğlu", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Sol*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), p. 490 – 495.

³⁵⁹ Aydın Ayhan, "Esat Adil Müstecabhoğlu İlk Yazıları", *Yeni Haber*, 1994 – 1995.

wrote a number of articles supportive of the reform movement in *Irmak*, such as on the ‘language reform’ and the new alphabet. Finally, Esat Adil was also publishing articles on the history and folklore of his area, an interest to be continued with an number of articles in the Halkevi journal *Kaynak*.

In sum, Esat Adil’s family background, education and his early writings presented by Aydın Ayhan outline an educated person with a profile that was rather typical for an intellectual of his era. We have seen similar cases of local intellectuals in the Halkevi of Kayseri. Generally speaking, the intellectual and definitely political trend/movement to ‘enlighten/educate’ the populace through publishing and the almost concomitant and parallel interest in local (Turkish and/or Turkic) history and folklore had been developing at least since the Second Constitutional Period and was definitely reinforced in the new Turkish Republic by both state and institutions such as the Turkish Hearths, a branch of which was active in Balıkesir. Needless to say, the regime considered this stratum, usually called ‘the intellectuals’ and/or ‘the youth’ as its natural constituency and a defender of its beliefs and reforms, conformity in and support for which Esat Adil’s early writings evidently seem to display.

The apex: 1932 – 1934.

Return and entry into local politics

In 1932, Esat Adil finished his studies abroad and returned to Balıkesir. According to his 1943 application for the Party’s nomination for the National Elections, Esat Adil registered in the Party structure in Balıkesir on the 2nd of December 1932.³⁶⁰ A few days later, in 11/12/1932, he was elected between the members of the Provincial Party Administrative Committee as the first chairman of the town’s newly founded Halkevi.³⁶¹ Esat Adil was also active in a number of other local institutions. He was Inspector of the training area of Balıkesir (*Balıkesir İdman muntıkası müfettişliği*) and of the Balıkesir training society (*Balıkesir İdman yurdu*).³⁶² In 1934 he was a founding member of the Balıkesir City Club (*Balıkesir Şehir Kulübü*).³⁶³ Apart from being a member of the Provincial Party staff, in 1933 he was also elected member of the Standing Committee (*Daimi Encümen*) of the Provincial General Assembly (*Vilayet*

³⁶⁰ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4.

³⁶¹ “Balıkesir Halkevi Tesis Faaliyeti”, *Kaynak*, No 1, (February 1933), p. 32; Balıkesir Halkevi, *Sekiz ayda nasıl çalıştı ve neler yaptı* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir Vilayet Matbaası, nd), p. 11. These two dates pose a problem. We know that the members of the Provincial Administrative Committee are elected among the Party members during the Provincial Party Congress that convenes once every two years according to article 63 (paragraph D) of the 1931 Party By Laws. In all probability the date Esat Adil gives for his registration as a Party member is wrong, since it is a few days before his appointment as Halkevi chairman. If the date is correct, then the congress was either convened in December 1932, or Esat Adil’s appointment in the Provincial Administrative Committee was not carried out according to the By Laws.

³⁶² See his *Mebustalebnamesi*, submitted in 1/2/1943 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4.

³⁶³ *Balıkesir Şehir Kulübü Nizamnamesi* (Balıkesir: Türk Pazarı Matbaası, 1934), p. 11.

Umumi Meclis).³⁶⁴ According to an inventory submitted in 1944 to the Party General Secretariat by the Provincial Party structure five more associations were active in Balıkesir in the 1930s. Given Esat Adil's active participation in the public life of his town it is not unlikely that he was at least a simple member of some of these associations.³⁶⁵ Even before returning to Balıkesir Esat Adil was active in student associations. During his student years he was president of the student association of the Faculty of Law in Ankara, of the central office of the National Turkish Students Union (MTTB), and of the Turkish Student Association of Belgium.³⁶⁶

To recapitulate, upon completing his education and returning to his hometown in 1932 Esat Adil made an assertive entry into the local social and political scene once occupying a number of positions that carried power and authority in the local society. This should be considered neither a surprising nor an unexpected performance. He was after all an extremely educated person for his time and place from a notable and well-known local family. With his published articles and poems he had, at least locally, demonstrated his literary ability and had asserted a public persona as an intellectual and supporter of the regime. Given his education, his family background and his own political aspirations, it seems difficult, if not impossible, not to have been incorporated into the local (Party, educational, political) elite and not to have been entrusted with some position within the local elite structures if he wished so. What makes his case as a local power broker and Halkevi chairman worthy of attention is that he managed to sustain his position for a rather short period of less than three years.

In 1934, while still the Halkevi chairman, he was brought to trial; later on he resigned from the Halkevi chairmanship although elected in the Municipal elections; in 1935 he resigned from the local Party Administrative Committee and the same year he departed from Balıkesir for the position of Deputy Public Prosecutor in Kemah following a judicial procedure with the Ministry of Justice. His activities during this three-year period in Balıkesir definitely played a crucial role in his exodus from the local public scene. The examination, thus, of his deeds as a local influential political figure is essential if we are to come to an understanding of the forces that led to his departure from the town, but also, in a more general sense, in order to crudely gauge the level of inclusiveness shown by the central state and the local elite constellation of power/authority into a project that was mainly planned by the former and executed in situ by the latter. Let us start with the account of an outsider visiting Balıkesir in the summer of 1934.

³⁶⁴ "Vilayet Umumi Meclisi", *Kaynak*, No 2, (19 March 1933), p. 64.

³⁶⁵ Red Crescent (*Kızılay*), Association for the Protection of Children (*Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*), Hunting Club (*Avcılık Kulübü*), Turkish Aviation Association (*Türk Hava Kurumu*), Union for the Protection of the Poor (*Yoksulları Gözetme Birliği*). Report dated 31/1/1944 and signed by the Chairman of the Provincial Administrative Committee contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/595.58.3.

³⁶⁶ See his *Mebustalebnamesi*, submitted in 1/2/1943 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4.

'A populist Halkevi chairman'

In the summer of 1934, six friends, recent graduates of the Gazi Pedagogical Academy in Ankara decided to travel around the country by bicycle. The Secretary General of the CHP Recep Peker assisted them financially and sent a telegram to the provincial Party structures to provide them with assistance. A few weeks later they entered Balıkesir, where they stayed three days. Arman Hürrem, one of the students, recalls these three days in Balıkesir in his memoirs written almost 30 years later.³⁶⁷ The author first met the young lawyer, Halkevi chairman Esat Adil during this journey. They also met some years later in Istanbul with Nazım Hikmet, this time Esat Adil being the founder of the Socialist Party of Turkey, working to create syndicates for workers “which were not the satellites of power”. By the time our author met him in Istanbul in the late 1940s, Esat Adil was well known in the left wing/socialist circles. Arman’s account of the 1934 meeting definitely has a retrospective quality, something we have to treat carefully. For instance, he wrote that during their 1934 bicycle journey they were observing the People’s Houses in the cities and towns and the People’s Rooms in the villages, which of course was impossible at that time since the People’s Rooms were established in 1940. We cannot be certain to what extent the author’s life and memories after 1934 intermingle with his recollections from these three days. It is highly probable that some of the things Arman describes actually originate from his later meeting with Esat Adil, or at least were expressed under the influence of his later life’s aura and reputation among leftist circles.³⁶⁸

“A populist Halkevi chairman working for the People” (*Halk için işleyen bir Halkevi ve halkçı başkanı*): Already from the heading of the part about their three days in Balıkesir, Arman leaves no room for doubt about his feelings, which he reiterates with the concluding part of the chapter on Esat Adil: “to be acquainted with him in Balıkesir was one of the great successes of our journey.” The description starts with the youths’ entrance into the People’s House. Arman first recalls that there was a crowd of people waiting even before entering the House, in the garden, a fact he contrasts with all the other Houses they had visited, which were apparently less popular.

Even upon entering the House’s garden the difference [with other Houses] was striking one’s eyes. The garden was full of people. All those people either standing in the queue or those squatting in the corners were all villagers or workers. And it was neither a holiday nor an open market day in the city [i.e. the days villagers usually visit provincial towns]. We asked some of them what they were doing there. One said: ‘My landlord (ağam) is

³⁶⁷ Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin Tabanı. Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç* (Ankara: İş Maatbacılık ve Ticaret, 1969), pp. 138 – 142.

³⁶⁸ For an example see “Bir yaşam boyu çile”, an article by Aziz Nesin in 23 September 1958, reproduced in Aydın Ayhan, “Esat Adil Müstecablıoğlu’nun ilk yazıları”, 3rd part, No 18 and 19, *Yeni Haber*, September – October 1995.

inside, I am waiting for him'. Another: 'I came to the doctor'. Without understanding anything we went in. The inside was equally crowded. There was a queue in front of a door. Some were standing, others had sit on their heels waiting. We asked one what he was waiting for: 'I need something, I wait in the queue'. After a number of questions we understood. The chairman was a lawyer and so everybody had come to see him and get some advice about their problems, have their petitions written, ask about the outcome of their court trials. People had accumulated in front of another room waiting to be examined. There was a doctor inside, examining and giving prescriptions to be collected from a pharmacist free of charge. We learned from one of the people serving there that everyday it was that crowded, flooded with villagers and poor people. He said: 'It has been like that since Esat Adil became the chairman'. He said that we could meet him only after he has finished his work. Rejecting to introduce us he said: 'but you can enter his room yourself, he gets angry at me'. We had seen quite a few People's Houses, but that was the first time we saw one functioning in this way. Making the crowd open up – our clothes did have an influence – I managed to get in. A young man in a shirt was sitting in the desk listening to someone while taking notes. Upon realizing that someone with different clothes [from himself] entered, he ceased to speak. Immediately I said: 'We came from Ankara. We are traveling by bicycle. When can we meet?' [He replied]: 'You can see for yourself, many people are waiting. We'll finish around six. Have you come to meet for this business?' 'No', I replied, 'we want to discuss and learn how an alternative Halkevi might function'.³⁶⁹

Esat Adil, Arman's account continues, instructed one of his assistants to escort the visitors and describe them their activities. The assistant was a student of the local Teacher's Academy who, together with some of his fellow students, was taking part in the House's works. Arman recalls that 20 to 30 youths were reading in the House's library and that even people with workers' outfit were participating in the rehearsal of a theatre play he saw taking place on the Halkevi stage. He does not fail to register that the Halkevi was maintaining a ten-bed hospital in operation. Arman's guide then informs him about the chairman, Esat Adil. Once again the hagiographic narrative is in play: Esat Adil has managed to provide help for the people in need and the poor; not only students, but children from the people, even apprentices (*çırak*) take part and show their capabilities in the House's shows, in sports and in all the House's activities; the chairman comes from a rich and old local family; he works till late and is always among the people; he represents the poor in court

³⁶⁹ Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin Tabanı*, p. 139.

free of charge and does no more legal work; the Halkevi publishes a bimonthly journal and Esat Adil has been brought to court because of some of his articles to that journal.³⁷⁰ After a while Esat Adil joined them and they stayed together till very late discussing, something they repeated the next evening.³⁷¹ He concludes this part of his account with an overtly populist rhetoric, at once reminiscent of the regime's populist overtones, and at the same time somehow implicitly critical of its insincerity: "Yes this was a totally different People's House. And its chairman was one of those exceptional people who find their happiness in being with and working for the people." A similar account was written by Hüseyin Avni, one of the students, and published in Esat Adil's newspaper one day after their departure from Balıkesir. "At night we went to the Halkevi. We will never forget the coming and going of the people in the House as well as the way they worked in a quite democratic way without feeling estranged about it. We talked at length and learned a lot from the very young but also very talented chairman. We had a pleasant discussion with him about the country's numerous needs and troubles. For hours we listened to the chairman, who, honestly, is a treasury for Balıkesir and deserves all its honors."³⁷²

Arman's story, however contaminated by retrospective contemplation, gives a picture of Esat Adil's input into the activities and the profile of the local People's House. The participation of workers and farmers/peasants into the House's works – difficult as it might be to contemplate in a provincial House of the sort we usually find staffed and administered by local and state elites – cannot be verified by the Halkevi's own sources, namely its journal (*Kaynak*), a brochure published in 1934 and the reports by the House and the Party Inspectors that appear after 1937. Moreover, even if information given by the House's publications and reports refer to peasants and workers, it cannot be taken face value. A good example of this incredibility of such Halkevi-produced sources is their membership statistics, where a large proportion of peasant members is displayed when all other sources from the period confess the absence of these segments of the population from the People's Houses.³⁷³ The first issue of the Halkevi's journal, published in February 1933, informs us about the Halkevi's first activities. Among the many initiatives stated, the journal reports that the House "as its first work opened an 'office for the villager's convenience' in order to ensure the guidance and convenience of our

³⁷⁰ Arman probably misunderstood or remembered wrong, since Esat Adil was brought to court because of a number of articles that appeared in his own newspaper, *Savaş*, and not in the Halkevi journal *Kaynak*. We'll tackle this issue below.

³⁷¹ Their visit was also mentioned in *Savaş*: "Enstitü'lü izciler şehrimize geldiler", *Savaş*, No 215, 23 July 1934, p. 1, where the meeting with Esat Adil is also mentioned.

³⁷² Hüseyin Avni, "Görüşler ve Sezişler Balıkesir'de", *Savaş*, No 217, Thursday 26 July, p. 2.

³⁷³ Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, *Anıların izinde*, Vol. 1, (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1977), p. 336; Başgöz, İlhan and Howard Wilson, *Educational problems in Turkey 1920-1940* (Bloomington, 1968), p. 157. See also Mahmut Makal, *Köye gidenler* (Istanbul, 1965), p. 71, where the contempt of the Halkevi officials toward the villagers is revealed when an attempt is made to establish 'Villager evenings' in the House, an activity that ended with an almost immediate failure.

villagers in their relations with the town.” A few lines below we learn that the House “has initiated a close cooperation with the Red Crescent and the Association for the Protection of Children, while struggling to help the poor, the families in need, the children and the jobless.”³⁷⁴ Considered together with Arman’s recollections the information above might suggest that villagers and workers did enter the Halkevi or even had a minor participation into the House’s activities during Esat Adil’s chairmanship, a fact that distinguished the Halkevi of this town from other Houses as Arman was so pleased to notice.

Publishing Activity

Apart from holding a number of positions in the Party structures and other local Associations, Esat Adil continued to publish in the local press. This time he was directing the Halkevi’s journal, but also publishing a local newspaper. While *Kaynak*, as a Halkevi journal, was publishing mostly about the House’s activities and non-political subjects, such as literature, local history or folklore, *Savaş* was a “daily Political newspaper” with the motto “The Republic pays labour its due right, and provides freedom to value”.³⁷⁵ With its director’s editorials on social and political, local and nationwide, issues, *Savaş* bore more resemblance to a broadcasting agent of a rather ambiguous (liberal in matters of personal liberties and rights, expressing its devotion to the republican regime, but with leftist/socialist overtures at the same time) social and political platform of its owner and editor.³⁷⁶ We should not overemphasize the socialist overtones of the newspaper and Esat Adil at that period, or view them as anti-Kemalist. He rather believes that the republic is egalitarian, populist and even socialist in essence. That is why he declares that the republic would respect labour. Esat Adil, as we will see in the lines below, used the pages of *Savaş* in order to support the strike of the mineworkers of Balya, to demand the reduction of the electricity prices, to criticize government policies or the government’s lack of a policy on a specific matter, but also to publicize his ideas on more general subjects, such as the regime’s ideology, populism, ‘freedom and discipline’, the huge rift between the intellectuals/elites and the people/villagers, while declaring his genuine attachment to the regime and the reforms.

Downfall and Exodus: 1934-35.

On strike

In 1934 the miners of the Balya – Karaaydın mines went on strike. Esat Adil supported the miners with his newspaper *Savaş*. Almost 16 years later

³⁷⁴ “Balıkesir Halkevi Tesis Faaliyeti”, *Kaynak*, No 1, (February 1933), p. 32.

³⁷⁵ *Savaş*, *Günlük Siyasi Gazete*. Cümhuriyet: Emeğe Hak, değere Hürriyet getirir. The reference to ‘labour’ and the ‘right’ it deserves

³⁷⁶ On his political views see Gökmen, “Esat Adil Müstecaphoğlu”.

Esat Adil recalled the miners' strike in an article published in the newspaper *Gerçek*. He wrote: "The newspaper I was publishing supported the strike. I was depositing the newspaper's profits in the strike's account. The workers left their destiny in my hands. The Party chairman of the district of Balya was at the same time the legal consultant of the mining company and was naturally against the strike. As the company refused all 14 requests of the miners, there was no other solution but [to get] the support of the Government and the Party. The CHP General Secretary [Tevfik Silay] today was at that time the chairman of the Provincial Party Administrative Committee but did not want to play an active role in the whole issue for his own reasons."

With the assistance of the Army Commander of the region, Esat Adil met Celal Bayar who was visiting Balıkesir. Celal Bayar promised him to dispatch an inspector to check the company's accounts. Bayar also stated that they would soon prepare a Labor Law that would solve all similar problems. As for the result, "we neither saw any inspector nor any Labor Law." Esat Adil went to Balya and "causing a fait accompli I made the Party chairman resign. The town's mayor became the next Party chairman. The strike committee accepted my proposal for a hunger march to Balıkesir. The next day the Governor of the Province Salim Gündoğan grasped the serious effects that such a march could have. He showed his shrewdness when he called the representatives of the company to Balıkesir and informed them, as an order from the government, of the necessity to have the miners' demands accepted."³⁷⁷

The support Esat Adil offered to the strikers, as he himself implies, was disturbing for influential locals. Undoubtedly his actions – his support for the strike being one among others - worried a number of local notables and/or Party men, and won him enemies in the local society. A number of his articles in *Savaş* formed another source of anxiety for locals and generated the response of the Public Prosecutor.

Newspaper articles.

We could only consult a few months of Esat Adil's newspaper, namely from July to December 1934. In his article "Education in Populism"³⁷⁸ published in July, Esat Adil complains that 'the educational system is deprived of any populist principle'. In sum, he admits that the regime's principle of populism was not applied to the educational system. Two days later, he complains of the situation in the country's prisons. "[T]he most progressive Penal Code, the most backward jail! This is a very painful sign of irony towards the revolution."³⁷⁹ Three days later he signs yet another disapproving of the state policies article. The article 'With the eyes of the fighter: the Labor

³⁷⁷ Esat Adil Müstecabi, "İşçi sınıfına pey sürenler", *Gerçek*, Year 1, No 7, 5 April 1950, pp. 1 and 4. I would like to thank Özgür Gökmen for bringing this article to my attention.

³⁷⁸ Esat Adil, "Halkçılıkta Maarif", *Savaş*, No 201, Friday 6 July 1934, p. 1.

³⁷⁹ Esat Adil, "Savaşçı gözüle, Hapishanelerimiz", *Savaş*, No 202, Sunday 8 July 1934, p. 1.

Law³⁸⁰ is more explicit than the previous articles, almost polemical, in its criticism of the government's policies in relation to the working class. The Financial Minister should account for the delay with which the government and the parliament treat the issue of the new Labor Law. "[An answer] has to be given to the Turkish worker who is made to work 14 hours a day and is deprived of all types of civil rights. We want to know: is it more difficult to pass the Labor Law from the Assembly than the military law that has loaded the state with so heavy obligations? And why? We have a law for obligatory primary education but in the cities thousands of children are employed in the most heavy services."

A week later Esat Adil signed an article addressed to his opponents, those "using a dirty lens against the publication of *Savaş*". He openly accused them of being with the regime only to serve personal and material interests.

*We have accepted the principles of the revolution and the regime's complete soul not only with our feelings, but also with our brains' belief. As we are this country's genuine children, we are also a genuine member of this revolution, a member that cherishes no low desires and no hypocrisy. Those using a reverse and dirty lens against the publication of *Savaş* and those liking to make a livelihood with the swindlers of hidden politics should know that:*

*We are attached to the principles of the regime with our knowledge and feelings, not our bellies! The sole desire of *Savaş*, which believes that those with phony competence, the half men and the pavement politicians will never be able to accept this regime, is to see that every citizen becomes a revolutionary.*³⁸¹

This article was in all probability a response to a rumor spread by his rivals in the local society and CHP, or even to an article of *Türk Dili*,³⁸² another local newspaper owned by Hayrettin Karan, local Party boss and MP for Balıkesir in the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and MP for Bilecik in the 4th Parliamentary period.³⁸³ Although we could not locate the source for Esat Adil's forthright reaction, it is yet another indication of the existence of rivalries between local power brokers and especially of the opposition by locals to Esat Adil's activities and publications.

Another issue that might have created antipathy towards Esat Adil was his articles, again in *Savaş*, condemning the high electricity prices charged by the

³⁸⁰ Esat Adil, "Savaşçı gözile, iş kanunu", *Savaş*, No 205, Wednesday 11 July 1934, p. 1.

³⁸¹ Esat Adil, "Savaşçı gözile, Dürüst olalım", *Savaş*, No 212, Thursday 19 July 1934, p. 1.

³⁸² The close relationship and cooperation of this newspaper with the local Party Administrative Committee is attested by M. Bengisu, Party Inspector of the Balıkesir Area and MP for Izmir in his 8/3/1940 report of contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/623.47.1.

³⁸³ https://www.balikesir.gov.tr/pgae_blank1.asp?id=29.

local Electricity Company. Although the relevant articles could not be found, a reproduction in *Savaş* of an article of the journal *Yeni Adam* provides some information on this issue. “The newspaper *Savaş* in Balıkesir started a fight to reduce the electricity prices. *Savaş* succeeded in this fight and the prices were reduced. [Esat Adil] also published a number of articles in favor of the workers of the Balya Karaaydın mines and attracted the government’s attention to the company.”³⁸⁴ Apparently the articles attracted the government’s attention towards the author as well.

Court Trial, Resignation and Exodus

The above article was republished in *Savaş* only three days after the beginning of a court trial against Esat Adil that had started only a few days after Esat Adil’s series of articles touching issues that were delicate for the regime, such as the Labor Law or the country’s penitentiary institutions.

On the 22nd of July 1934 the Public Prosecutor, following orders from the Ministry of Justice, opened a court case against the newspaper *Savaş* and its editor Esat Adil, based on five of his articles. The Prosecutor considered these five articles breached the 30th and 40th articles of the Press Law.³⁸⁵ The case hearing began in August and ended with Esat Adil’s acquittal.³⁸⁶

Probably it was the first time Esat Adil was openly and by state actors accused of making illegal, i.e. communist, propaganda (article 40 of the Press Law), something to be continued in the 1940s mainly with his more open political activity and the establishment of the short-lived Socialist Party of Turkey. We cannot determine whether his local rivals had a role in inciting the state’s intervention and, if that was the case, to what extent. In any case, their involvement was both possible and probable, given their position in the local and national political life. His local opponents were influential and powerful individuals holding key positions within the local Party and in the Assembly. It can also be argued that Esat Adil was posing a threat to their hegemonic position in Balıkesir. Only two months after the court trial and his acquittal, Esat Adil received 5025 votes in the municipal elections, only second to the, at that time, mayor Ismail Naci (Kodanaz) who received 5347.³⁸⁷ Esat Adil’s name figures in a candidate list full of local artisans and notable Party members (-*zade* and -*oğlus*).³⁸⁸ Out of 26 elected members there were only two pharmacists and two lawyers in an almost complete merchant and artisan

³⁸⁴ “Yeni Adam’ın baş muharririmiz hakkında bir kadirşinaslığı”, *Savaş*, No 240, Wednesday 22 August 1934, p. 1.

³⁸⁵ “Gazetemiz aleyhine Müddeiumumilik dava açtı”, *Savaş*, No 215, Monday 23 July 1934, p. 1.

³⁸⁶ “Muhakememiz dün başladı”, *Savaş*, No 238, Monday 20 August 1934, p. 2; “Karar bugün tefhim edilecek”, *Savaş*, No 240, Wednesday 22 August 1934, p 1; “Beraat Ettik”, *Savaş*, No 241, Thursday 23 August 1934, p. 1.

³⁸⁷ *Savaş*, No 282, Sunday 14th of October 1934, p. 1.

³⁸⁸ Before the introduction of surnames only few urban families, merchants artisans and local notables for the most, had family names. These surnames were usually formed with the addition of the suffix -*zade* or -*oğlu* (son of) to the first name of an ancestor and denoted an illustrious lineage and/or the status of belonging to a notable family.

majority. Merchants and artisans, what we may term local elites, formed after all the backbone of the Party membership in provincial towns and in the Party administrative Committees, as we have seen in Chapter 2.

Rivalries and personal antagonisms were evidently at play as many actors competed for a limited amount of positions, and differences in educational background, manners and personalities were significant. Esat Adil's criticisms, his actions in favor of workers and peasants, his local constituency, alarming as it was for his threatened competitors, combined with the 'communist' stain that in part might have been manufactured, but definitely used against him, by his local rivals, all reveal (maybe just the tip of the iceberg of) a local struggle among elite players. A few months after the court trial, in October 1934, Esat Adil resigned from the Halkevi chairmanship³⁸⁹ and the following year from the Provincial Party Administration Committee. The concluding act in this feud came from the Ministry of Justice. In October 1935 Esat Adil agreed to accept his appointment as Deputy Prosecutor in Kemah after a court trial that was initiated by the Ministry. Esat Adil was obliged to work for the state in return for the expenses the Ministry of Justice had provided for when he studied at the Law Faculty in Ankara. In response the Ministry dropped the charges brought against him of a debt of 1078 Turkish Liras, created by his study at the Law Faculty in Ankara on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.³⁹⁰ The interesting point here is the timing of the court procedure. Esat Adil returned from Belgium in 1932. Three years had to pass to be asked to pay his debt or accept his appointment in Kemah as an obligatory service in return for his studies in Ankara. This can be read as an indication that Esat Adil's debt was used as a pretext to have him administratively exiled from the province when he started to become annoying for local antagonists and central government together.

Local Politics and the Halkevi chairman

Control of local Party bosses over the local Party

During the elections for the Standing Committee (*Daimi Encümeni*) of the Provincial General Assembly (*Vilayet Umumi Meclis*) in 1935 two of the members of the Provincial Party Administrative Committee, Esat Adil being one of them, resigned in protest because candidates were nominated (*yoklama*)

³⁸⁹ According to the 126th article of the 1931 Party Bylaws (*CHF Nizamnamesi*), those working at the Party Administrative Committees can occupy only one position that brings profit, such as in the Provincial General Assembly, the Municipal Assembly and the Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, those holding two positions are prohibited from 'holding voluntary duties' in other institutions such as the Red Crescent. Esat Adil's resignation from the Halkevi chairmanship in 23/10/1934, just a week after his election in the Municipal Assembly, could have been a result of pressure from his opponents and/or his own desire to abide by the Bylaws, as he was also president of the local training club (*Balıkesir İdman yurdu*). For a list of the positions he was holding in various local institutions see his *Mebustalebnamesi* in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4. For a thorough discussion of the 126th article see Cemil Koçak, *Belgelerle İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), p. 294-9.

³⁹⁰ Decision of 18/10/1935 of the Ministry of Finance contained in **BCA (Bakanlıklar Arası Tayin Daire Başkanlığı)**, 030.11.1/99.34.14.

in direct contrast to the Party rules (*Parti intihap yoklama talimatnamesi*). Esat Adil justified his resignation in the following words in his newspaper *Savaş* in 10/2/1935:

*I respectfully inform you that I resign from the Provincial Party Administrative Committee because the decision of the provincial Administrative Committee against the putting forward of candidates at the elections of the General Assembly was overlooked with the distribution of sealed lists of candidates and because the open (public) objection to this irregularity I made before the elections was not taken into consideration although it expressed an obvious truth.*³⁹¹

The putting forward of candidates (*yoklama*, which can be rendered as the act of scrutinizing the potential candidates) in local Party or municipal elections was prohibited by the Party regulations. It seems though that the declaration of preferred candidates by local Party leaderships was habitual. In 1943, seven years after the 1935 events that led to Esat Adil's resignation, a complaint letter³⁹² sent to the Party General Secretary in Ankara by Zühtü Özmelek, merchant from Balıkesir, describes in detail the techniques used by the local Party boss of the central district (*merkez kazası*) to manipulate the members and have his followers elected in the *nahiye* (sub-district) and *ocak* (village or neighborhood) Party congresses, in the elections for the Provincial General Assembly (*Vilayet Umumi Meclis*) and the Municipal Council (*Belediye Meclisi*).³⁹³ As a consequence of such practices, the complainant argues, "in the process of distributing the positions for a number of duties, the elections were abandoned to the monopoly of one group; responsible for this situation are the members of the Party Administrative Committees of the Province and the Central District." He continues, giving twelve examples of Administrative Committee members at the provincial and district level. They all occupy two or even three more positions, in addition to the Party Administrative Committees, in various local institutions, such as the municipal assembly, the standing committee (*Daimi Encümeni*), the Provincial General

³⁹¹ Parts of the article in *Savaş* are reproduced in Esat Öz, *Türkiye'de Tek-Parti Yönetimi ve Siyasal Katılım*, p. 204, endnote 90.

³⁹² Letter of 18/1/1943 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/142.569.1.

³⁹³ Among the irregularities mentioned: the district Party chairman presided over the *nahiye* and *ocak* congresses; he did not permit the members to discuss the petitions (*dilek*) submitted to the congresses; the elections for the Administrative Committees were carried out with open vote; "certain friends" (a designation used for Party members and executive) were proposed for those positions; if any objections was to be submitted, the presiding Party boss would postpone the congress for the next day saying "majority has not been reached", while the following day the congress would convene with three or five members. In the municipal elections the Party candidates were nominated by the Administrative Committee and announced without any prior consultation or discussion; "among the elected in this way there is even a person accused and condemned for profiteering". In the elections for the General Assembly, although it had been decided that no candidates should be put forward, the Party boss came with marked vote bills saying, "these are the Party candidates in contrast to the Party directives".

Assembly, the Chamber of Commerce, the Halkevi, the bar association, the hospital, the Sports Committee (*Beden Terbiyesi*), the Red Crescent, and the Air and Agriculture Chamber (*Tayyare ve Ziraat Odası*).³⁹⁴ “The professionals and especially the intellectual and mature youths were not given any position in the Administrative Committees of the *Ocak* and *Nahiye* level. Most of those appointed – not elected – to the Committees are illiterate.” He ends his letter asking the Party to “put an end to the sultanate³⁹⁵ and domination of this group that acts against the populist principles of our Party that accepts no class or group difference.”³⁹⁶

The situation Zühtü Özmelek described in his letter, reminiscent of Esat Adil’s statement upon his resignation from the Party Administrative Committee some seven years before, provides an insight into the way in which Party politics were functioning at the local level. We know that as we climb down the provincial Party organization, both in terms of members and staff (*idare heyetleri*), the Party structures were less organized, possessed less power and influence, while the personnel – staff and members – tended to overlap with the overall population, that is illiterate peasants/villagers whose education and general outlook did not place them very close to the Party/regime’s ideas and reforms. It is also reasonable to argue that as we climb the Party hierarchy up, to the Party (and state) leaders, the trust towards the Party’s base in the provinces diminishes. This becomes evident with just a simple look at the Party’s various documents, such as Bylaws and manuals. In several cases, the Party statutory documents clearly opt for a top-down centralist administration of the Party and for the creation of again top-down control mechanisms, the Party Inspectors being the most obvious example.³⁹⁷ In case persons appointed by the Party centre in Ankara (mainly Party Inspectors) could not be used to control Party structures and mechanisms at the provinces (for instance the Party *kaza* (district), *nahiye* (sub-district) and *ocak* (village or neighborhood) Congresses), the Party bylaws leave the duty to overlook and control these

³⁹⁴ Terzi (Tailor) Ahmet Necati, Hasan Kaptanoğlu, Azmi Sakol, Rasim Çağan, Fuat Bil’al, Abdi Ağabeyoğlu, Niyazi Akyürek, Vasif İspartalı, Lütfi Kural, Muzaffer Uzkuur, Tevfik Başaran, İsmail Hakkı Varnalı. All the above names figure in the lists of the Party Administrative Committees in the 1930s and 40s. Most of them also applied for the National Assembly. See reports in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/624.50.1; **BCA CHP**, 490.1/623.46.1; **BCA CHP**, 490.1/624.49.2; **BCA CHP**, 490.1/595.58.3; **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4; **BCA CHP**, 490.1/241.1172.2.

³⁹⁵ The use of this word is reminiscent of and quite related, one might add, to common accusations voiced earlier on by supporters of the Free Republican Party against the Party trustees (*mutemet*), such as ‘*mutemed saltanati*’, ‘*mütegallibe saltanati*’, ‘*zorbalar saltanati*’ (sultanate of trustees, usurpers and warlords), although this time it is uttered by “a loyal to the Party person”, as the complainant writes. For the accusations against the Party trustees see Cemil Koçak, *Belgelerle İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, p. 259-60.

³⁹⁶ All quotations are from the above letter in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/142.569.1.

³⁹⁷ Cemil Koçak, “Tek- Parti Döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi’nde Parti Müfettişliği”, *Türk Zafer Tunaya’ya Armağan*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 1992); Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi ve CHP* (İstanbul, 1999), p. 245; *C.H.P. Teftiş Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Ulus basımevi, 1939). For a presentation of the reports of Party Inspectors see Murat Metinsoy, “Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde mebusların intihap dairesi ve teftiş bölgesi raporları”, *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, No 3, (Spring 2006).

procedures to the Party officials of the immediately superior structure, i.e. the *ocak* by the *nahiye*, the *nahiye* by the *kaza*, the *kaza* by the *vilayet* structure. In practice this kind of management functioned in favor of locally entrenched elites assisting them in perpetuating their position as middlemen and power brokers within a patron-client system of relations with the local population. The paradox lies, as we have also pointed out in Chapter 1, in the center's expressed desire to directly control local Party structures and curtail the power of local elites, which Ankara occasionally viewed as not adequately partisan of the reforms.

Another example of the Party and state leaders' suspicion of and desire to control the Party was the 1936 'merging' of Party and state³⁹⁸ by which the goal was to establish control of the Party by the state bureaucracy. In the provinces the local Party structures were to be controlled by non-local state bureaucrats. The Party 'trustees' (*mutemed*) of the 1920s can be seen as another indication of the tendency of the centre to control the provincial Party through local elites. The same way, one might convincingly argue, the central state, or even its representatives in the localities, utilized the services of local notables in order to reach the local societies and populations. In many cases, older Unionist representatives (or sympathizers) and older 'imperial' elite families³⁹⁹ in the provinces continue as local Party 'trustees', in reality local Party bosses.

The situation the above complaint letter describes has to be seen within this framework of local politics and the relations of local elites with the central state and its representatives that had been inherited from the previous years and was additionally systematized in the 1930s with the reorganization and centralization of the ruling Party. On the other hand, our perspective should also be inclusive of the local circumstances of inter- Party conflicts among the local elites striving for positions of power/authority. These two components elucidate the conditions, or else provide a rough outline of the frame within which we have to place the case of an ambitious and energetic local Party man like Esat Adil. What is more, parallel to the power local Party elites have upon the local Party structure, the situation the above letters describe is also telling of the limits of the central state's and Party's ability to control and closely monitor the local Party and, more generally, the local society, let alone to 'change' these local societies and populations in accordance with its innovating policies through the Halkevi institution, which, as we have seen, was controlled by these very same elites. The ability of the central state to act without the help of local notables appears rather constrained.

³⁹⁸ Cemil Koçak, "CHP – devlet kaynaşması (1936)", *Toplumsal Tarih*, No 118, (November 2003).

³⁹⁹ Meeker forcibly presents this argument in relation to a small town in the Black Sea coast. Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (California: University of California Press, 2002).

Conflictual nature of local politics and limits of the centre's intervention

Another illustrative of the conflictual nature of local politics source situating at the same time Esat Adil - among others - within the competition for positions of power was sent to Ankara in 1939. Basri Çantay, a retired schoolteacher from Balıkesir, sent two letters (denunciation - *ihbar*) to the Party headquarters in Ankara providing information about a number of local influential people. Basri Çantay also noted that he had served as an MP in the first period and that his character was known by the Prime Minister. To name well-known members of the Party or the bureaucracy that can vouch for the informer's good will and character is a usual technique used by many complainants and supplicants. We do not have the original letters, but a summary typed by a Party clerk. The file⁴⁰⁰ containing the letter is actually composed of the summaries of 93 complaint/denunciation letters sent in February and March 1939 (the last one is dated 19/3/1939). All the letters are denunciations of candidates for, as well as members of, the National Assembly. In all probability, the above file was composed in order to be of assistance in the process of selecting the Party nominees for the coming elections. The date of the last denunciation letter in the file supports this suggestion: the last letter was sent in 19/3/1939 and four days later in 24/3/1939 the Party's General Presidency Group convened and announced the Party's list of candidates.⁴⁰¹ Basri Çantay, to return to the letter, wrote about eleven candidates, all from Balıkesir. One of them is Esat Adil. The name of each of the candidates mentioned is followed by a registration number (*Kayıt numarası*). This is not the number of their registration in the local Party structure⁴⁰² and can, thus, only be the registration number of their *Mebus Talebnamesi*, that is their application to be Party candidates, which was stamped on their application,⁴⁰³ or – in any case less probable – the number of their file in the Party Headquarters, if such a file existed. If our assumption about this registration

⁴⁰⁰ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/ 344.1440.04.

⁴⁰¹ Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi*, Vol. 2, p. 33.

⁴⁰² Emin Vedat Çataloğlu, one of the denounced in Çantay's letter, also has a *Kayıt Numarası*, although he was not a Party member due to his activities during the War of Independence. In a report sent to the Party Headquarters in Ankara by the Balıkesir Administrative Committee in 1934 (*C.H.F. Balıkesir Vilayeti Kazalardan gelen Ağustos 1934 Raporları muhteviyatı* contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/623.46.1), the local Party had to answer the following question: "Are there any resident with a Lise or a higher education who is not a member of our Party? What is the reason for this and what are their tendencies?" One of the persons mentioned in the reply is Emin Vedat. The reason given is that 'He cannot be a member of our Party according to the 7th article of the Party's By Laws.' As for the 7th article of the *C.H.F Nizamnamesi ve Programı* (in Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 452), it stipulates that members of the Party can be those that 'did not take an oppositional stance to the National Struggle'. According to Çantay, Emin Vedat was opposed to the National Struggle and was publishing a newspaper during the Greek occupation of Balıkesir.

⁴⁰³ The archive of the CHP contains a number of files with such applications, classified by date and province. All the applications are stamped with a number. For examples of such files: **BCA CHP**, 490.1/291.1171.4, **BCA CHP**, 490.1/241.1172.2 for the elections of 1943 and 1946 respectively from Balıkesir and **BCA CHP**, 490.1/307.1250.2 and **BCA CHP**, 490.1/306.1249.1 for the elections of 1946 and 1943 respectively from Kayseri.

number is correct,⁴⁰⁴ something we cannot confirm from the archival documents in our hands, both Basri Çantay and Esat Adil had applied in 1939 for the Party's nomination, something not entirely unbelievable if we recall that Esat Adil also applied in 1943.

To turn to the contents of the two letters, the summary refers to eleven persons, all locals, the majority of whom are described negatively. Some have "low moral principles",⁴⁰⁵ another is described as "exploiter, ignorant, disgusting";⁴⁰⁶ yet another as "awful, immoral, thief, troublemaker";⁴⁰⁷ another's wife is foreigner and "on the outside a mistress".⁴⁰⁸ Another's moral standards are "zero" having published a newspaper during the Greek occupation while opposing the National Struggle.⁴⁰⁹ While some other had a small contribution to the national struggle,⁴¹⁰ another is described as "moral and with good manners" although "not educated",⁴¹¹ and yet another had protected his morality and seriousness although he was the local chairman of the Free Party and had no credentials from the War of Independence.⁴¹² As for Esat Adil, Basri writes only the following: "friend of Nazım Hikmet, was publishing the newspaper *Savaş*. He is now the warden of the prison in Edirne." Although not openly negative, these few words insinuate Esat Adil's socialist/leftist leanings through his friendship with the famous poet and demonstrate that his political preferences were known but also used as a weapon against him in the local rivalries for power, as we have already seen with the accusations of communism leading to Esat Adil's trial in 1934. In their entirety these two letters are, after all, an indication of such infightings between local power holders/brokers and constellations of power/authority, mostly within the local CHP.

What is significant for an appreciation of the strategies and tactics of this infighting is the role of the centre and its agents in the locality. All sides apply for their mediation to get the upper hand, some more successfully than others, probably depending on their connections and the circumstance. All our actors in one time or another were in the position of supplicants: Zühtü Özmelek and Basri Çantay with their complaints/denunciations, Esat Adil and the rest of the local power-brokers applying for a position in the National Assembly, Esat Adil with his employment of two agents of the centre, the Governor and the Army Commander, in favor of the strikers and against a Party boss. In the case

⁴⁰⁴ My guess is that it is correct just for practical reasons. Stating the number of the denounced supplicant's application would be helpful for those (i.e. the Party's General Presidency Group) trying to decide upon the Party's candidate list. In this way they could easily track his application for further information.

⁴⁰⁵ Feyzi Sözen.

⁴⁰⁶ Hilmi Şeremetlioğlu.

⁴⁰⁷ İbrahim Süruri.

⁴⁰⁸ Sıtkı Yırcalı.

⁴⁰⁹ Emin Vedat Çataloğlu.

⁴¹⁰ Fahrettin Tiritioğlu, Niyazi Akyürek, Rasim Çağan,

⁴¹¹ Rasim Çağan.

⁴¹² Tefik Başaran.

of the 1934 and 1935 trials, we might also presume that the public prosecutor and the Ministry of Justice did not act on their own autonomously of implicated local rivals of Esat Adil. The timing of both trials seem to indicate the complicity of locals. The first one was based on and followed a number of articles, but also actions that threatened local rival interests. The second one was rather belated, as Esat Adil had returned to Turkey in 1932, and rather points to a politically motivated case, not one generated purely out of administrative criteria. In both cases, as well as in the 1933 utilization of the Governor and the Army Commander by Esat Adil, the centre's interference in local politics and conflicts through the actions of its agents was of a secondary nature, dependent of the local elites' interference vertically with the center or horizontally with/through state agents in the locality, another indication of the centre's limits of action independently of peripheral elite forces.

Limits of the centre's tolerance and cooptation

Not a few persons with a later life in the Turkish left or at least with left/socialist ideas were active, passed through or even were 'educated' in the People's Houses. The same has been extensively argued both by supporters and adversaries of another Kemalist institution, the Village Institutes.⁴¹³ Hasan İzzet Dinamo, Arman Hürrem, Yaşar Kemal, Fakir Baykurt are some examples. On the other hand, many intellectuals and politicians with different and occasionally conflicting ideas were also participants and supporters of the reforms and members of all the republican projects and associations. Extreme nationalists, Turkist/Turanists, former communists (*Kadro*), 'humanists', and advocates and admirers of contemporary authoritarian and totalitarian regimes⁴¹⁴ and policies can all be found in the list of people who supported and staffed structures such as the People's Houses. In one sense this cohabitation was normal, given the at least minimal acceptance of some basic premises of the Republican regime: the republican regime, secularism, positivism and faith in progress, the need to educate the people. For some populism was just a catchword, for others it was an essential principle of the new regime.

The coexistence of people with quite dissimilar backgrounds and beliefs under the Republican institutions was natural from another point of view, or else another common denominator between such diverse elements; they represented the extremely small percentage of the population with a 'modern' education usually employed by the state. In the 1930s and early 1940s the political, intellectual and occupational options/positions offered were almost

⁴¹³ M. Asım Karaomerlioglu, "The Village Institutes Experience in Turkey", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No 1, 1998.

⁴¹⁴ Ünver, Cennet, *Images and Perceptions of Fascism among the mainstream Kemalist elite in Turkey, 1931 – 1943* (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2001).

nonexistent outside the state and regime's reach. Only from the second half of the 1940s onward with the gradual liberalization of the regime new options emerged. Esat Adil's itinerary after his 'exile' from Balıkesir can be also indicative of the state's (and of the regime's) method of dealing with dissident voices/persons. More specifically, while exiled from his power base in the local society, Esat Adil was not totally excluded from other positions (Public Prosecutor in Kemah, Bursa and Prison ward in Edirne and Imralı), but was included in the state service and on its payroll somewhere else, where he did not seemingly pose a threat. We might argue that such a course of action, i.e. not to totally eliminate dissident voices, but rather (re)employ them in a less threatening position, was a fairly conscious and traditional attitude on the part of the centre, one that might predate the republican regime. Such an attitude might be justified by the relative scarcity of actors that were well educated and relatively supportive of the regime – those deemed 'reactionary elements' apparently were thought more dangerous and were not treated with the same leniency. The state, in other words, did not have the luxury to totally exclude (by way of imprisonment for example) such persons that were under its relative control, i.e. civil servants. The center would rather attempt to incorporate and employ them in other positions. Occasionally, depending on the degree they challenged the system, it might need to intimidate them one way or another. In Esat Adil's case this happened with the two court trials. This 'carrot-and-stick' method rather changed after 1945. The liberalization of the regime, and the concomitant emergence of alternative political and social structures – from liberal to socialist – relatively autonomous vis-à-vis the state/centre, altered the center's options towards 'dissident' persons and institutions. The closure of political parties and the imprisonment of oppositional leaders was another option employed. The closure of Esat Adil's Party and his imprisonment stands as an example of the new state of affairs and the new methods.

The relative absence of additional options outside the CHP before 1945 and the Party's and regime's monopoly over the existing political means and structures is demonstrated by the fact that both sides in a conflict like the one we described above ask for the center's intervention to gain the upper hand. Esat Adil applied at least once, in 1943, to the Party to be nominated candidate for the National Assembly – an action that can be considered an attempt to outmaneuver his rivals, while his local adversaries had probably denounced him, as the 1939 letter of Basri Çantay suggests.

Based on his case as established above, my argument here is that both centre and local power/elite groups seem to be able to include (tolerate) into their structure and projects a person (and his actions/ideas) to the extent that (s)he does not threaten (a) the local equilibrium of power and (b) the centre's ideological and practical domination with dissident activities that were critical of its policies. Esat Adil's case indicates the point when this inclusiveness shatters and the competitor is excluded when his presence and various activities in Balıkesir becomes threatening for both his local rivals and the

central state/ regime. His support for the miners' strike and his activities in favor of peasants and workers that probably contributed to his rising local constituency was posing a danger for his local rivals, while his leftist ideas and his criticizing of government policies through his articles had probably alarmed the government. His removal from his position in the local power structures and finally from Balkesir came as a result of local initiative and central/state intervention. The almost contemporaneous reaction by rival local powerbrokers and central structures (Party and/or state) implies a degree of collaboration between the two, which was possible through a number of channels of communication, the complaint letters we have studied being one of them.

This to and fro between local notables/Party bosses and center is another significant and structural factor, crucial for the understanding of local politics, in the middle of which the Halkevi institution lies. The constant interplay of local actors with the center (be it the General Secretariat, a Party Inspector, the Ministry of Interior, or a Provincial Governor), that appears to us in the form of complaint letters, petitions, various applications by locals and reports by Party Inspectors and bureaucrats, is a variable the literature on the People's Houses and, more generally, on state – society relations has rather failed to address and problematize. The archival remnants of such an interaction can reveal (or amplify) the existence of local feuds (between locals and/or locals and state functionaries) and the state's/Party's intervention, its nature and extent, in short it can assist in an elaboration of the symbiosis of local notables and bureaucrats, of (usually elite) segments of the local society, state functionaries and the central state.

To elaborate on and problematize this symbiosis and what it entailed for our actors, the People's Houses, but also the reforms they were supposed to propagate, we first need to further reflect on this interplay, this peculiar form of dialogue between local actors and the state. Secondly, in order to surpass the fragmentary nature of the existing sources, it is necessary to draw on a large number of sources (and thus cases), a luxury Esat Adil's case cannot really offer. With respect to this relation of local societies and their actors with the central state and Party and due to the very small number of sources/documents, his example has served us as a mere generator of the discussion, as an overture to the next chapter, where relevant issues (and cases) will be tackled with the aim to move towards generalizations on, or maybe some structural and repetitive characteristics of this symbiosis and what it entailed for the People's Houses, their position within the local societies and a reform program that was then implemented.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on its first chairman in order to study the relations of power within which a House, its personnel, executive members and chairman were inscribed and had to operate. Our case study of a local power broker and Halkevi chairman has demonstrated the simultaneously conciliatory and conflictual nature of the relations between local power holders and state officials in a local society and the dynamics of local politics, within which the Halkevi space is entirely inscribed. The case study of Esat Adil has shown that local elites operate in the local Halkevi and participate in local politics in a dynamic interaction, at once in conflict and negotiation, among themselves and in relation with state offices and employees both in the locality and in the centre (central state and Party bureaucracy).

In addition, the outcome of a local power struggle among local power brokers with the involvement of local and central state mechanisms and officials offers an indication of the central state's reaction in similar cases of local conflicts and, in a more general sense, of the central state's ability and/or inclination to operate independently of local power holders. In the case studied above, both local and central state mechanisms operated in conjunction with local elites and/or in reaction to their acts, while in both instances its representatives favored acting in a cooptive rather than confrontational manner. Even in the case of a dissident voice and a potential political challenger of its ideological monopoly, the state appeared not to react preemptively and independently of local elite actors, but only after the local power equilibrium had been shattered, opting for a solution that would not entirely exclude the 'exiled' power broker from the state's employment and reach.

If our findings on the relationship between local power brokers, bureaucrats and central state/Party mechanisms and actors are to be related to 'statist' conceptions of the relationship between state and society in the late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey, the simplistic overtones of theories that clearly differentiate between an omnipotent and monolithic 'state' or 'bureaucracy' operating 'against' or even 'on-top' of an equally undifferentiated and potentially hostile society become evident. Such conceptions fail to question the 'image',⁴¹⁵ or the 'discourse of the state',⁴¹⁶ either in its Ottoman version of the divide between rulers and ruled, or in the persistence of a similar 'state discourse' and mentality in the Republican Turkey and among the state bureaucracy. The continuation of this discourse and the correlative mentality is exemplified in the suspicion of the non-state forces of the periphery, both elite groups and population (consider the demeaning *mütegallibe* or *cahil halk*). Although hidden behind the regime's 'populist' slogans, this suspicion and distrust of the population was persistently appearing in the sources of the period. Nevertheless, to assume that this state

⁴¹⁵ Joel Migdal, *State in Society*, p. 15 – 17.

⁴¹⁶ Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State", p. 94.

discourse and mentality can account for and explain the vast array of interactions between state and non-state actors without taking into account the actual everyday ‘practices of the state’ is rather simplistic.

The findings of this chapter point to a different conceptualization of ‘state – society’ or ‘centre – periphery’ relations, one that draws on Migdal’s state-in-society approach and is closer to Meeker’s conception of the ‘old imperial system’s survival and functioning in the ‘new’ Republic, wherein peripheral elite forces cooperate with state officials, occupy state offices, function as intermediaries between the local society and population, and occasionally act as representatives of the centre to the local population and vice versa by utilizing their position in the local society and their relationship with central state and Party offices and officials.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁷ Joel Migdal, *State in Society*; Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*.

Chapter 5

Dramas of Conflict

On Friday the 8th of March 1940, in the early afternoon Muammer Köksal finished his work at the Dumlupınar school in Trabzon and went to the Halkevi to start working on a project of the school's principal. They were struggling to stage *Aksüs* and the school's principal Orhan had asked him to compose the music of the play. Upon arriving at the House Muammer took the piano from the Hall to their room, the Fine Arts Section's room, and started working. In the late afternoon the Halkevi chairman came in and hearing the piano asked the janitor who was playing. He had the janitor call Muammer to his room.

- *You asked for me, I said.*
- *By whose authority and with what right do you open the piano?*
- *If I do not open the piano, who is going to open it. As a matter of fact there is only one friend apart from me that plays the piano, isn't that so?*
- *Sir, the piano was closed.*
- *If the piano is closed, I have the keys.*
- *Did you ask me? In that case you might as well open the safe in the Halkevi.*
- *You cannot compare the piano with the safe. It is my right to open the piano, not yours. You won't insult me for a piano and you have no right to shout at me.*
- *You have gone to far, I will shout, without asking me not only you won't open the piano, you won't be doing anything here. Otherwise I should resign and you should take my place.*
- *It won't be bad; it would be better if you resign, that's what the youth wants after all.*
- *You talk too much, get out, and don't come here again, he yelled.*
- *Just don't forget that this is the People's House; no power can throw me out, not even you.*

[Some days latter] I went to the orchestra room. Ten minutes later the janitor came to tell me that the chairman was calling me. I went downstairs to his room.

- *You have called me, I said.*
 - *No, I haven't called for you, they have (with his right hand he showed the police officers standing by the door).*
- There were five of them. He was supposed to have me taken to the police station.*

- *Look, am I a murderer? Can anybody be driven away, can anybody be sent to the police station from the Halkevi?*

*It has become clear after this incident that the chairman and the Halkevi accountant, who assists him in this kind of business, have not yet understood what the Halkevi means.*⁴¹⁸

Muammer ends his letter writing, “I think that today the House’s activities are going to become weak because of the chairman and the accountant” and asks for the Party’s intervention. Muammer’s letter is one of the many denunciation and complaint letters that describe, imply or refer to similar cases of a clash or an ongoing struggle between a number of people in relation to the People’s Houses, mostly staged in the Halkevi Halls. The denunciations of Halkevi chairmen by fellow Halkevi members or others,⁴¹⁹ usually concluding with a request for his removal, demonstrate exactly what the above letter speaks about, i.e. a feud or a situation of conflict between (usually) prominent members of a local community. This struggle between persons or groups/fractions is revealed to us when one of the sides, usually the overpowered one, asks the center’s mediation in order to get the upper hand. The conflicting persons/sides can be diverse. The same applies for the occasions and/or pretexts leading to the written appeal to the center. District and sub-district governors (*Vali, Kaymakam*), gendarmerie and army officers, Party leaders, Judges and Prosecutors, Mayors, civil servants of almost every state department, school teachers, tradesmen and professionals, Party members or not, Halkevi chairmen and members, some, or even all of them, might appear on one side or the other of a conflict/power struggle set in a provincial center, where other spaces and constellations of power, such as the local Party, the chamber of commerce, the local army unit and Police, the municipal assembly and the bar, as well as local kinship structures, might be involved in the conflict, internal and inter-institutional enmities and alliances into the open.

The scope of this chapter is to study the complaint letters and the reports of Party inspectors that relate to these feuds and conflicts that seem to be ubiquitous in local societies and occasionally surface in the Halkevi Halls. It is an attempt to place the Halkevi, its activities and members, within its local

⁴¹⁸ Letter by Muammer Köksal sent in 14/3/1940 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/844.337.2.

⁴¹⁹ Some examples of denunciation of Halkevi chairmen: 15/11/1946 letter of Hakkı Özveren from Kütahya in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.319.1; 7/5/1943 letter of Mustafa Dedeoğlu in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.323.1; Anonymous letter signed by ‘Akhisar Gençlik kulübü gençleri’ in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.323.1; 19/7/1943 letter of Hakkı Kunt from Edremit in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.265.2; 23/7/1943 letter of Hasan oğlu Alitaş from Mardin in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/841.925.2; 18/4/1949 letter of Hasan Öztürk from Eğrigöz (Kütahya) in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.320.1; 15/7/1939 letter of Salih Türk oğlu from Van in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/845.342.1; 4/5/1942 letter of Mehmet Gülmen from Dereçine Afyon in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/733.1.1; 15/2/1946 letter of Hasan oğlu şemseddin güner from Doğubeyazıt in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/733.2.2; 20/8/1939 letter of Ali Karataş from Elaziğ in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.287.2.

society while illustrating the relations, the ties and bonds connecting the House with other spaces and their residents. In Esat Adil's case, in the previous chapter, we have studied a case of conflict between local power brokers, one of them being chairman of the local Halkevi. Nevertheless, the local House, although connected to the conflict once its chairman was implicated in it, did not feature in the core of the feud, was not the foremost battleground of the rivals. In this chapter, based on a number of complaint letters, we focus on fights between elite social actors enacted in the Halkevi halls. In the cases to be treated below, the People's House is the stage upon which, the arena wherein the local feuds are fought and in relation to which the actors unfold their narrative.

The study of these narrated 'moments of conflict' will help us inscribe the Halkevi space into the local society; view how the Halkevi space might be related to other spaces through the words of social actors related to the House and other spaces of status and authority. In a similar sense this part will try to place the Halkevi into its local surroundings, an operation that is rather difficult if we consider the nature of the bulk of the sources, i.e. the official Party sources, which depict the People's Houses as a replica of the regime's plans and discourse, in the utopian realm of the not-yet-there, the still-under-construction.

A second aim of this chapter is to treat these fights in the Halkevi halls in order to address the issue of the relations between the centre with (state or local) social forces and agents operating in provincial urban settings. The centre was implicated in these fights from the very beginning through the participation of its agents in the periphery. It was usually the texts the rival sides/actors addressed to the Party Headquarters and/or to state offices that initiated the centre's involvement. Lastly, the reports by high-level bureaucrats and Party men the centre was appointing to investigate attest the involvement and occasionally the centre's response to the supplicants and to the issue in hand. Besides being the stage of the fight and/or the space claimed then, through this 'dialogue' generated by the communications between agents of the centre and forces in (or of) the periphery, the Halkevi also emerges as a juncture through but also in relation to which a multidirectional interaction between the state, conceived as offices and agents in the centre as well as in provincial societies, and social forces in (and/or of) the periphery is performed.

Conflicting sides I: Party and Halkevi officials vs. State Officials

Gendarmerie Officer

A first instance where we observe the space of the People's House/Room claimed by different persons is in a number of cases of 'occupation' (*işgal*) by local Gendarmerie officers. This seemingly happened in small towns or villages where few suitable buildings existed for the use of state offices, such as the Police/Gendarmerie structure. In 24/12/1945 Şakir Karataş, teacher and chairman of the People's Room of Gölyaka, complained that the Gendarmerie Commander (*Jandarma Komutanı*) had occupied the local People's Room.⁴²⁰ In 18/1/1950 Alihan Tatar, chairman of the Şırnak Halkevi, reiterated the same complaint. He informed the Party "the elections are coming ... [and the House needs to] deliver necessary speeches to enlighten the people".⁴²¹ Another letter comes from the Party leader of Hopa in 12/5/1948. He complained that Turgut, the local military commander, and Ertuğrul, the deputy sub-district governor (*kaymakam vekili*), "have filled the House with soldiers."⁴²² In a similar complaint, the party chairman of Bingöl informed the Party Secretariat in 25/7/1951 that the local recruitment officer Captain Sabahettin Noyan had requested to use the Halkevi building in order to assemble the recruits and upon receiving a negative answer occupied the House for one day breaking the doors and leaving a lot of damage.⁴²³

I chose to read these letters as the result of a local dispute between Halkevi or other local Party leaders and a state functionary, such as the Gendarmerie officer. Such a dispute is evident in two more examples. Mustafa Bener, chairman of the People's Room of Belveren requested the Party's intervention against the local Jandarma officer. "We thought to organize a party to celebrate the coming of the New Year. We invited the people. While the people and the students of the 4th and 5th grade were in the Room, for a reason we did not quite make out the Jandarma officer, corporal Adem, left the Room and, after returning with 3-4 Jandarma men, threw the students out with curses and improper language. He ruined the merriment and leisure of the people shouting insults (I am the security officer I can do whatever I like) to Mehmet, school teacher, and Mahmut, nurse."⁴²⁴ In another case, the Halkevi chairman of Buldan was brought to court by the Jandarma officer with the accusation of being "an ordinary theatre man" (*alelade bir tiyatrocı*). Because of the usual lack of female volunteers, the Halkevi chairman had invited two actresses from a traveling theatre company to participate in a theatre play to be staged by students. According to the chairman's letter, the Jandarma officer demanded

⁴²⁰ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.271.3. The letters that follow are not necessarily presented in a chronological order, as I have classified them according to the subject or question I want to address.

⁴²¹ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/843.332.1.

⁴²² **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.279.2.

⁴²³ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.332.1.

⁴²⁴ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.321.1.

this cooperation to be stopped. “He maintained that the coming together of these sick women with the youths would supposedly give rise to a number of negative feelings among the youths.”⁴²⁵ The Halkevi chairman suggests that his employment of the two actresses was just the pretext for the Jandarma officer to intervene. Although not giving the ‘real’ cause behind the officer’s action, the Jandarma officer’s determination to produce a document (*zabit varakası*) that could be used against the Halkevi chairman in court points to a deep-rooted enmity between the two actors.

More denunciations of sub-district governors by Halkevi or local Party chiefs exist. Local Party and/or Halkevi men had in many cases written denunciations of ‘outsiders’, in particular powerful state functionaries, such as the Kaymakam or the Jandarma officer. The files of the archive that have been consulted for this study are only the ones the Party’s General Secretariat classified as relevant to the People’s Houses. Large numbers of denunciation/complaint letters exist in other files.⁴²⁶ Consequently similar letters describing conflicts between locals and state officials are very likely to exist in greater numbers. It will become clear from the following examples that clashes between influential/powerful individuals or groups were rather typical in local settings. Our concern here though is not the disputes per se, but the venue of their staging, i.e. the Halkevi. Consider the following case of a letter against the Jandarma officer of Pazar.

*In the afternoon of the 12th of December 1943 during a concert organized in the Halkevi the commander of the Gendarmerie Company Nazmi Sevin was seen publicly on the stage engaging in immoral acts with Ms Necmiye, who was singing on stage.*⁴²⁷

The above is an extract from an official record (*zabit varakası*) signed by the Halkevi secretary and accountant as well as four citizens. It was sent to the General Secretariat of the Party with the request for a formal investigation by the Party and the Public prosecutor. The Party Inspector of the Trabzon Area (*Trabzon bölgesi Parti müfettişliği*) was ordered to visit the region and investigate the issue. According to his report⁴²⁸ the Jandarma officer had embraced and kissed Naciye, who his sources described as “a woman of low morals who goes with everybody”. As for the Jandarma officer, following exchanges with the locals, the Inspector wrote the following: “apart from any legal and disciplinary action that is necessary, I report that his removal from Pazar would be appropriate. Nazmi Sevin, who dared to make such an ugly act and various similar actions, is known by the people of Pazar as an enemy of

⁴²⁵ Halkevi chairman Cevdet Kızıloz to CHP, 7/1/1943, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1.

⁴²⁶ Only the archive of the General Secretariat of the ruling Party contains a number of folders with complaint letters in relation to a variety of issues, from Party, Municipal and National elections, to Party Congresses, Party candidates and ‘General Issues’. The other archives of the State Archives also contain folders with complaint letters as a simple search on its web site demonstrates.

⁴²⁷ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.329.1.

⁴²⁸ Report No 71, dated 3/8/1944, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.329.1.

morals (*ırz düşmanı*) and for this reason has attracted the hate and disgust of the people.” The report disclosed something the initial letter had not mentioned. The relations of the officer that was denounced in the letter above with the locals, or ‘the people of Pazar’ as the Inspector writes, had been pretty bad even before his ‘acting on stage’.

High School Principal

The Gendarmerie officer was not the only state official/civil servant to attract the Halkevi chairman’s rancor. The Pharmacist Ziya Evren, chairman of the People’s House of Aydın signed a letter to the Party Headquarters asking for the removal of the director of the town’s *Ticaret Lisesi* (Commercial High School), Mehmet Özmet.⁴²⁹ His letter is a list of accusations against the director. It starts with Özmet’s refusal to allow one of his students to participate in a theatrical play on the Halkevi stage. The Halkevi chairman notes that although he showed him the General Secretariat’s communiqué,⁴³⁰ Özmet refused saying “I don not recognize the Party and the Halkevi. The House did not give me chairs for the Dance Party I gave; the same way I do not allow this student [to perform in the House].” By his account, the chairman had even applied to the Provincial authorities, but to no avail. From this point forth the letter escalates into a polemic against the *Lise Müdürü* (High School Principal). A series of charges are lodged. He did not invite but a few people to the opening of the two schools “thus showing that he gives no value to the people and the region’s intellectuals; he always and everywhere engages in questioning issues he is not justified to question (*kendine ait olmayan işlerin tahkikile uğraşmaktadır*); he speaks against our Party disputing in detail the outcomes of the Party meetings and tries to initiate gossip”; “when discussing with his friends he even speaks in a manner that downgrades the enormous achievements of the Turkish victory and of the great Turks”; lastly, “he is the grandchild of the Kurd Cemil who, together with the last ottoman sultan and caliph, tried to strike the Turkish nation in the back at its most difficult times”.

The letter was written in 1948, at a time of relatively more liberal Party politics than before and of a severe competition between Government and opposition. Although the political antagonism of the era could have been a reason for the chairman’s hostility, he failed to note it. The letter is rather implying another set of reasons for this dispute. “From the very first day he came to Aydın, we never discovered this person’s nature. He has been opposing any kind of gathering (*topluluk*), he has been opposing the institution of the ‘Teacher’s Association’ (*Öğretmenler Derneği*), he has not entered the Association, but also prevents his teachers from entering. In this way he has damaged the solidarity within the family of culture (*kültür ailesi arasındaki*

⁴²⁹ Letter of 31/10/1048, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.263.1.

⁴³⁰ The occasion for the theatre play as well as other happenings in the House was the 25th celebration of the proclamation of the Republic. The Party communiqué the chairman is referring to was probably a letter giving local Party and state authorities orders/instructions about the celebration.

tesanüdü bozmuştur)." What the complainant is stressing here is that the teacher was not a local to the region and that he never tried to become a part of the local *kültür ailesi*, which were probably the reasons for the hostility against him.

The social, educational, life-style, and mentality differences between locals (elite and especially non-elite populace) and the state officials coming from outside, usually from big cities like Istanbul or Ankara (where the major educational institutions existed in the 1930s and 40s) was a well known phenomenon, essential for understanding the symbiosis, the coexistence and relations between these actors. By means of their education, status and of the power the state had entrusted upon them, these educated outsiders, mostly state employees, were automatically positioned among the local elite, and thus among the existing local power relations with their fractions, alliances and conflicts. The important place these 'outsiders' occupied in local communities and among the local elites becomes more apparent in the case of state officials/employees that were carrying more influence and power than our Lise director. Consider the case of the sub-district Governor (*Kaymakam*).

Sub-district Governor

The *Kaymakam* appears equally with the Gendarmerie officer or the teacher, if not more, vulnerable to similar to the above complaints by local actors,⁴³¹ including the Halkevi chairman. Consider the following denunciation of the *Kaymakam* by the Ilgaz Halkevi chairman.⁴³²

*The sub-district governor Agah Erozan has covered himself behind the government's authority and has exploited his position and influence to satisfy his personal desires. In that sense he does not refrain from doing exactly the opposite of these principles.*⁴³³

He is also plotting against civil servants and persons from the people (halktan) he dislikes using official dealings as a pretext. He tries to succeed in satisfying his desires by complaining about them and by using his powers to open investigations against them.

⁴³¹ The sub-district officer was a common target of denunciation letters not only by Halkevi chairmen, like the ones treated here, but also by other locals as well. For instance by local Party chairmen as in the case of the denunciation of Osman Tulğa, *Kaymakam* of Pınarbaşı by six members and the chairman of the Party Administrative Committee of the town, dated 19/2/1947, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/239.950.1 and of the *Kaymakam* of Tercan denounced by the local Party chairman in 12/1/1939 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.289.1. In both cases the reasons given for the denunciation of the *Kaymakam* were multiply among them being an accusation of damaging the works of the local Halkevi.

⁴³² Letter of Mustafa Akman, chairman of the Ilgaz Halkevi, No 106, dated 12 April 1940, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.278.2.

⁴³³ He refers to the principles of the Halkevleri and the regime, such as the need to 'enlighten the people', to 'make them love the government,' and similar 'national' needs, all dressed up in the regime's jargon.

Those under his influence, both civil servant and individuals from the people are hindering the communication between the people and the rest of the civil servants.

Unfortunately, the people of our sub-district have stayed behind in the realms of culture and knowledge. Because of this they think that his acts are in concert with the government's wishes and for this reason the people, as it is normal, have started to harbor concealed disobedience towards our institution.

Moreover the people, unable to tolerate these unlawful acts, have appealed to various official authorities and have made complaints even to ministries. [...]

Nowadays he has even attacked me and he has consequently started to become an obstacle to the activities of our House.

A similar denunciation letter comes from Bulanık, a town in the province of Muş. The chairman of the local Halkevi wrote a complaint letter against the *Kaymakam* of the regional Kaza.

The kaymakam of the kaza Asım Büyüklü, although invited with a personal note, did not come to our theatre play 'Yurdumuzu Geziyoruz'. Moreover, he invited a number of our intellectual friends to his house and, in this way, prevented them from coming to our House.

He then reported that a few weeks before a similar incident had occurred.

The kaymakam ordered the Gendarmerie to prohibit the staging of the play 'Kanun adamı' we had prepared for New Year's Day because, as he said 'I was not informed'. He also ordered [the officers] to use their weapons in case 'they don't listen'. But, without being aware of that, we had already postponed the play for a couple of days. In the evening the Police commander came and told us not to stage that play. Everyone heard this and all the people were informed. This incident has reduced the people's interest and the region's esteem towards our House and, as a consequence, is preventing the realization of our aims. [...]

In order not to cause similar ugly events and not to break the people's interest in our House, we informed the Kaymakam with a document that a place has been reserved for him and asked him to honor us with his presence. It was only in this way that we managed to be saved [and stage the play]. But he did not come again.

The Halkevi chairman continued: "if this *Kaymakam* stays here, there will not be any possibility to continue with our activities. Because I am a civil servant, he wants to damage my record and tries to discredit me to my

superiors.” He ends his letter with a direct request for the *Kaymakam*’s removal from the region.⁴³⁴

Another comparable incident happened in the Halkevi of Çan in the province of Çanakkale. The problem started when a traveling theatre company asked permission to perform in the local Halkevi.⁴³⁵ The permission was given and the theatre company gave four shows. The crisis began on the second day when “it was observed that the play was running contrary to our By Laws”, as the chairman wrote to the General Secretariat. “At the same time a petition writer (*arzuhalcı*) named Yunus Özdemir was seen drinking rakı and was immediately warned not to continue drinking. On the third day of the play more persons were told not to drink rakı”. The Halkevi officials decided to stop the play. The artists went to the local Party leader Osman Kaya, at whose hotel they were residing, and asked for his mediation in order to continue performing. Osman Kaya tried to intervene “in order to safeguard his own interest”, but was informed that their performance was not appropriate to the Halkevi By Laws.

Osman Kaya took the theatre players with him and went directly to the Kaymakam. The Kaymakam İslam Ferit Öztürk said to the Party chairman “apart from you nobody can interfere with the Halkevi; I am ordering you now, go to the Halkevi and inform the chairman”. While I was sitting with two of my friends from the administration [of the Halkevi], the [Party] chairman came and said ‘Kazım, the kaymakam has ordered [that the players should continue to perform] and is informing us’. I reminded the chairman that such an order was not proper (yerinde olmadığını). He went again to the kaymakam. This time the kaymakam took the Gendarmerie officer and went to the Party. He said ‘since I am the chief of the sub-district and hierarchically (badema) the Party chief is responsible for the Halkevi, I gave the order and the players will perform’. Then the Gendarmerie officer came and said in a threatening tone ‘I gave an order, you are not going to interfere with this issue, otherwise you will be reported’. In this way the players performed in the evening of 3/3/1947.

The Halkevi chairman continued his letter referring to similar problems he had with the *Kaymakam* and the local Party chief in the past. “In the past I wrote numerous letters to the Party Inspector and the Provincial Party structure concerning the national and local elections. The *Kaymakam* is definitely aware of that and is continuously trying to cause problems to my personal issues and to accuse me. Once again I prepared a report to the provincial Party structure about the last village/neighborhood headman (*muhtar*) elections that contained

⁴³⁴ Letter No 3, dated 19/1/1941, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/841.326.2.

⁴³⁵ Letter of Kazım Özyurt, Halkevi chairman, dated 4/3/1947, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.277.1. All the following extracts are from this letter.

a paragraph about the *Kaymakam*. Osman Kaya took a copy of that report to the *Kaymakam* saying ‘here you are! Again he writes against you’. The paragraph was then erased. Then the *Kaymakam* came to our [Party] meeting of 4/3/1947 and stayed until the paper was signed”. The offended Halkevi chairman then asked for the Party’s intervention. “In case this situation is not ameliorated, I’ll decide to resign from the Halkevi and the local Party Administrative Committee.” At the end of the letter he also shortly presented himself to the Party: “I am a villager by origin and current situation and I reside in the village. I have been a Party member since 1928. Before the sub-province of Çan I have worked in Biga. I have been elected delegate to the provincial congresses for the last ten years. I was a member of the previous Provincial Parliament (*İl Genel Meclisi*). I have been a member of the Çan sub-district [Party] structure since its foundation and the Halkevi chairman.” His last words to the Party Headquarters reveal that the Halkevi chairman was not a ‘common’ person, but one of them, of the ‘Party friends’, plus a ‘villager’, which is a reference to the Party and regime’s discourse. His request was not disregarded by the Party and the Party Inspector was dispatched to investigate his accusations.

Recai Güreli, MP for Tokat and Inspector of the Balıkesir area (*Balıkesir Bölgesi Müfettişi*), sent his report in 17/5/1947. His account of the event that brought the conflict to the surface was similar to the chairman’s version. The Inspector did not dwell on this event but rather focused on the ongoing conflict between the *Kaymakam* and local dignitaries.

There is a complete disagreement between the Kaymakam, the Party chairman and members of the Administrative Committee [of the Party] in this region. This Kaymakam is constantly creating problems for the Party friends and acts in an oppositional manner (Müşkilat çıkarmakta ve muhalefet göstermektedir).

He looks down on the Party friends, considers them incompetent and thus prevents all the achievements they want to demonstrate in the name of the Party and the Halkevi. In fact, the Kaymakam İslam Ferit Öztürk feels that he was insulted by the Party and the Government because he was made Kaymakam to this sub-district from a position as deputy Governor (Vali Muavinliğinden). As a matter of fact, during the previous national and municipal election he betrayed our Party. I have reported this issue before. I consider his immediate dismissal from this region as quite appropriate.⁴³⁶

Let’s take a step back: a trivial Halkevi theatre play provided the stimulus for the surfacing of a local feud. The consequent letters of the Halkevi chairman and the Inspector’s report reveal that there was a state of conflict

⁴³⁶ BCA CHP, 490.1/830.277.1.

between local power brokers and the *Kaymakam*. The Inspector gave a plausible reason behind the *Kaymakam*'s reported negative behavior towards the Party and its local representatives. He probably considered his appointment as the *Kaymakam* of Çan (in the province of Çanakkale) as a form of administrative exile and demotion from a Provincial centre and the position as the Deputy Governor. This might seem sufficient to account for his 'betrayal of the Party and the Government' but it does not fully elucidate the relation between the *Kaymakam* and the local Party boss, an issue not mentioned by the Party Inspector, whose report simply states that the *Kaymakam* was in constant disagreement with the Party friends. Moreover, if we consider this case in relation with the above denunciations of state officials by local Party men, the option of the *Kaymakam*'s resentment caused by an 'administrative exile' or 'demotion' alone does not seem adequate to explain the clash. In my opinion, an explanation pertaining to less personal and more social attributes appears more reasonable. More specifically, I wish to argue that local social, economic and cultural conditions, local power networks, as well as the place reserved for, but also claimed by, the 'outsider' state official within that 'local order of things' can and should provide a broader interpretative framework for an analysis of the relations between state officials and local power brokers (local Party men, merchants, professionals). In many cases this relation must have been conflictual from the very beginning, especially in areas the Party Inspectors or Governors might describe as 'lagging behind' (*geride kalmış*). This idea becomes more obvious, if we think that most educated civil servant usually came from big cities and were most likely prone to 'read' local norms (from local habits and beliefs to local accents) as signs of 'backwardness'. Consider the motif of the 'idealist teacher' and the 'idealist *Kaymakam*' struggling against all odds to bring 'civilization' (*medeniyet*) to an indifferent, or even hostile, populace. In reality the motif of the 'idealist teacher' points to the cultural difference and the difficulties to adapt to local condition the state officials encountered, rather than solely to the mission-like effort they were showing (or were supposed to show).

Adaptation to local conditions meant cooperation with local power brokers, such as the local Party, social and economic elites. This cooperation might at the same time mean that the state official was taking one side in an ongoing local feud. Horst Unbenhaun in his monograph on the small town of Datça indicates that since the 1930s the local *ağa* families were establishing a set of relations with the state officials coming from outside. The local elite families offered cheap housing and provisions services. The local Party structure was staffed by members of the same families. Within such a setting, the opinions of the *Kaymakam*, Unbenhaun remarks, can be observed upon a shifting axis roughly corresponding to their relations with the local elite families, be it close or not that close. Occasionally we can speak of a strategic alliance. It is not a coincidence that till 1945 three sub-district governors were married to the daughters of local *ağas*. On the other hand, "the two

Kaymakams (in 1928 and 1942) that went contrary to the power of the ağas demonstrate that the symbiosis did not always operate the same way.”⁴³⁷ A similar instance illustrating the potentially troubling symbiosis of the ‘outsider’ district governor and local elites, between representatives of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ republic, as he terms the two systems, is given by Michael Meeker in his book on the district of Of. There the *Kaymakam* forcefully replaces the mayor with the deployment of gendarmeries, but then artfully enters into negotiation with the deposed mayor in order to select his successor.⁴³⁸

In sum, the letters read here position us in the middle of that problematic symbiosis between ‘locals’ and ‘outsiders’, as well as in the midst of ongoing feuds involving local elite actors and ‘outsider’ state officials, operating as individuals or, more commonly, in antagonistic to each other groups. Of course, the letters rarely offer a complete picture, but rather fragments of the conflict, usually the voice of one of the camps. What is of interest to our study here though is not the local feuds described/mentioned in these letters, but rather what these stories of conflict reveal about their actors in relation to the People’s House, which emerges as the stage of the conflict and/or the space whose control the battling sides and individuals are clashing for.

Conflicting sides II: Denunciations of Halkevi chairmen.

Halkevi chairmen and local Party bosses were not the only complainants to the Party headquarters in Ankara. They were also the object of complaints by Halkevi members or other citizens as we have pointed out in the beginning of this part with Muammer Köksal’s story. Let us now turn to some examples of similar complaints against Halkevi chiefs that reveal the existence of conflicts between Halkevi members. The letters used here to demonstrate that a state of struggle and antagonism existed in the Halkevleri do not necessarily denote that such open conflicts were always on the local agenda, but rather that the position and functions of the People’s House within a local community was shaping the Halkevi as a space structurally susceptible to such events.

The first example comes from Nazilli. It is an anonymous letter sent by a Halkevi member in 29/9/1948.⁴³⁹ The anonymous ‘Partili’ complained that the Halkevi chief was displaying tyrannical behavior towards the Halkevi members. More specifically, the Halkevi chief Fütuhât Töker, was the wife of the director of the local Factory. The conflict emerged when she asked Bedia Erbatur, chief of the Social Assistance Section, to give her the money the Section had gathered from various events. The president of the Social Assistance Section demanded to know where these funds were to be spend in order to record it into the Section’s registry book (*Faaliyet defteri*). The

⁴³⁷ Horst Unbehaun, *Türkiye Kırsalında Kliyentalizm ve Siyasal katılım. Datça Örneği: 1923 – 1992* (Ankara: Ütopya, 2006), pp. 171-3.

⁴³⁸ Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (California: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 306-8.

⁴³⁹ Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.263.1.

Halkevi chief's response was fierce: "(I ask for your apology, but that is what she [the Halkevi chief] said). With what right are these idiots asking me to account for this. I terminate the [existence of the] Social Assistance Section."⁴⁴⁰ According to the complainant the rest of the Halkevi officials did not resist at all, "because Mrs Fütühat is the director's wife; if one goes contrary to her wish or even shows courage to speak, one is messing with his future."

The anonymous complainant, probably an employee of the Factory, continues with more examples of the Halkevi chief's oppressive behavior that was based on her husband's powerful position in the area. The state Factory (*Sümerbank Basma Fabrikası*) was one of the large state industrial projects of the era. It seems that the directors of these factories were treated as high-level bureaucrats, as their names figure prominently in the Party and Halkevi sources.⁴⁴¹ In short, in his/her complaint of the Halkevi chief the anonymous 'Partili' discloses first of all the importance, status and power the state Factory, its director, and his wife enjoyed in the local society, and, secondly, the currency this status had in the Halkevi, with all the consequences – in our case the inscription of the Halkevi space into the geography of local power brokers and their rivalries.

Finally, the letter implied that a number of Halkevi members were troubled with the president of the Halkevi, but were unable and scared to act because of the president's husband. Apart from these unhappy Halkevi members, the author implicated another person in the incident. He requested that the investigation he was asking for be carried out by the retired Captain Osman. Instead of reading this just as a request for impartiality in the person of the retired officer, it might also be suggestive of the existence of various fractions and/or persons antagonistic to the persons holding positions of power, such as the Halkevi chairmanship.

The file does not contain any other paper – the report of a Party Inspector for instance - that would defend the above suggestion. In other instances though the existence of the 'outsider's' voice - in our case an inspector's report - makes my suggestion more plausible. An example comes from the town of Artvin. Between September 1940 and August 1942 three complaints were made against Cemal Alper, the local Halkevi and Party chairman. The last one,

⁴⁴⁰ *O eşşekoğlu eşşekler benden ne hakla hesap sorabiliyorlar, sosyal yardım kolunu la[ğ]v ediyorum.*

⁴⁴¹ In Kayseri, for example, where another large state factory was built in the 1930s, the director's name can be found in a couple of sources indicating his high status. For instance, in a brochure of the Kayseri Halkevi describing a 'Village Excursion' the names of two Factory directors are between the first in the list following the Provincial Governor and the local military commander. *İlbay Adli Bayman'ın Başkanlığı altında Kayseri Halkevinin Tertip ettiği Yaya Köy Gezileri Tetkik Notlarıdır, Seri: 2, Germir Köyü, Yazan: Etiler Başöğretmeni Kazım Özdoğan (Halkevi Müze ve sergiler komitesinden), Kayseri ilayet Matbaası, 1937, contained in BCA CHP, 490.1/837.310.1.* The extraordinary status and power of the director of a state factory can be found in Linke's description of the director of the Kayseri factory, in Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned: A journey through modern Turkey* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), pp. 300-14.

signed by the tailor Bahri Curdan, brought about an investigation by the Party Inspector of the Çoruh Area. The first letter,⁴⁴² signed by two civil servants and two teachers, is a direct denunciation of the Halkevi chairman Cemal Alper. More specifically, the incident that caused the writing of the complaint letter was described in the following way by the complainants:

On Thursday 12/9/1940 the plaintiffs went to the Halkevi to listen to the Radio broadcast as always to learn the last events of the war. A little later the Halkevi chairman came together with the Party secretary, two municipal officers and the secretary of the local Department of Education. The Halkevi chairman and his friends were reported as being in a cheerful state. They ordered the Halkevi janitor to change the Radio to a music channel. The complainants protested, a debate followed, and, finally, the Radio was set again to the news broadcast, but it was only at the end of the program. They also complained that the Halkevi chairman had behaved similarly many times in the past. In their opinion such acts run contrary to the principles of “our honored Republican Government” and of the Party. They finish the letter asking that such acts be prevented in the future. The letter describes a verbal confrontation between two groups of civil servants in the garden of the Halkevi. Moving beyond the core of the letter’s complaint, which is the dispute about the Radio broadcasting, we can see that the group of complainants denounced the Halkevi chairman’s general manners and by asking for the center’s intervention, which can be read as an indirect invitation to have the chairman removed from office, revealed a confrontation between local elite actors for the control of the Halkevi, its facilities, consequently the status and power their control entails, and, even more interesting, the prerogative to represent the Government and the Party.

One and a half year later, the chairman of the Halkevi of Artvin became the target of two more denunciation letters. Luckily in this case, the report on the second complaint letter by the Party Inspector uncovers the dynamics of a conflict staged in the Halkevi between the chairman and a group of ex-members of the Halkevi. The Inspector’s report also reveals the tactics the complaining group chose to follow to further their plans.

The first letter was sent to Fikri Tüzer, General Secretary of the ruling Party, in 25/2/1942 by Mehmet Bilgetürk, Accountant at the Directorship of State Monopolies in Artvin (*İnhisar Başmüdürlüğü*).⁴⁴³ It is a direct assault on the Halkevi chairman, Cemal Arper. The letter can be divided into two sections. The first in all probability describes the core event that led the complainant write the letter. The second is a list of accusations against the Halkevi chairman.

⁴⁴² Letter of 12/9/1940, signed by the *ziraat muallimi* (teacher of agriculture) Şevket Şengün, two civil servants in the Financial Department, (*Maliye veznedarı*) Haydar Beken and (*Maliye tahrirat katibi*) Nuri Atabek, and the schoolteacher of the village Aydın Hasan Fehmi, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.279.2.

⁴⁴³ Letter of 25/2/1942, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.279.2.

Mehmet Bilgetürk starts his letter with a brief description of his relationship to the Halkevi of Artvin. He was a member of the Theatre Section, but was also active in the Fine Arts Section. The chairman requested from the Administrative Committee of the House to remove the orchestra's chief, "Hasan, a clean youth [well] known to all people of Artvin." The decision was signed by the majority and Hasan was removed from his position and from the House. "After a few days the Decision Book (*Karar defteri*) was brought to me for signing by the House's secretary Ibrahim. I did not sign because of the following phrase: 'Due to his continuous immoral behavior he was removed from his duty'. Later on I understood that it was Cemal Alper who had added that phrase." Following his refusal to sign he was never again called to the meetings of the Administrative Committee of the House. Some time later he received a letter from the Halkevi chairman informing him that he was considered resigned from the House, something he never accepted.

In the second part of his letter, Mehmet Bilgetürk launched even more accusations against the Halkevi chairman. He complained that the Halkevi account books were full of irregularities he had attempted to fix, as he was a professional accountant employed in the Monopolies Department. Needless to say, the chairman was against his efforts and removed him from that duty. He then reported that the furniture of the House were in bad condition. Moreover, he accused the chairman of tyrannical behavior. "This man is an ignorant person who cannot understand what he is reading." He even accused him of drinking rakı in the garden of the Halkevi. This complaint letter is typical in its narrative structure, from the description of the critical event that led to the confrontation, to the climactic delirium of accusations, some of them seemingly inflated.

A third denunciation of the same Halkevi chairman and the following report of a Party Inspector somehow elucidate the event. It becomes evident that the Halkevi chairman was the target of an orchestrated assault by a group of people close to the local Halkevi. "The Halkevi chairman is a man with much influence in the region but worthless. Although worthless, his supporters form the majority and thus he is powerful. He became the Halkevi chairman, although he was the local Party leader as well. [...] The Halkevi of Artvin shows no activity due to Cemal's unlawful and unplanned activities." The denouncer, signing as "Bahri Curdan, tailor in Artvin", based his denunciation of the Halkevi chairman on general grounds without describing any particular incident.⁴⁴⁴

The report on the issue sent to the Party Headquarters by the Party Inspector of the Çoruh area on the 1st of October 1942 added a lot of information about the complainants of the last two letters, Bahri Curdan and Mehmet Bilgetürk. According to the Inspector, Bahri Curdan "is a personality who has no relations with the Party and the Halkevi, and is unable to

⁴⁴⁴ The letter is not dated. It was sent before the 12th of August 1942, day the Party instructed the Party Inspector to investigate the issue. **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.279.2.

understand anything of the region's problems. In July he had given two anonymous and meaningless letters to Nazif Ergin, 3rd General Inspector, upon his arrival at Artvin. [The 3rd General Inspector] attempted to find the meaning and aim of the complaints of this person's letter; as a result, it became evident that he [the complainant Bahri] is an abnormal man." The Inspector continued that Bahri Curdan was actually used by Mehmet Bilgetürk and Hasan Şener, the former a civil servant and the latter a member of the Halkevi orchestra. Both had been removed from their duties in the Halkevi by the chairman and had henceforth been acting against the Administrative Committee. The Party Inspector considered the complaint a malicious and fake charge (*iftira*) against the Halkevi chairman. The cause behind the complaint was their removal from the Halkevi due to "the improper execution of their duties and their unpleasant behavior that was distressing the region."⁴⁴⁵

In the time span of two years three denunciations of the same Halkevi chairman were made. As in so many other cases, we can definitely argue that the position of the Halkevi chairman almost automatically attracted opposition. The complaint and denunciation letters we treat here are a confirmation of this hostility. The chairmen of the People's Houses were elected, or rather appointed, by the local Party Administrative Committees, in many cases from among its members. The Halkevi chairmanship was a foremost Party position and thus a position of power and influence. In official ceremonies, the Halkevi chairman figures among the important local Party and state leaders (*Vali/Kaymakam*, Military/Police commander, Party and state officials). Moreover, the physical closeness of the Halkevi to other Party and state buildings (usually situated on the *Cumhuriyet Meydanı* [Square of the Republic] next to the *Hükümet Konağı* (the 'Government's Mansion', i.e. the Headquarters of the state administration in the locality, seat of the Governor), the CHP, the Lise and other state buildings) underscored the Houses' place within state and Party power.⁴⁴⁶ In some cases the Halkevi was even sharing the same building with the local CHP. Photographs of state ceremonies show the state and local elites in their official attire in front of the Halkevi building. By taking into account the disputes between local elites, as well as the struggle to occupy the limited number of positions of power open to them, our letters, what they describe and, even more important, what they rarely refer to openly – local conflicts, are related to a broader context, i.e. local politics and the relations of power between local power brokers, state officials and their contenders.

From another point of view, our letters form just the tip of the iceberg in that they rarely offer a complete picture of an ongoing conflict between two sides. They usually refer to the acts of the denounced that usually turn into a

⁴⁴⁵ Letter No. 260 of 1/10/1942 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.289.1.

⁴⁴⁶ For an elaborate reading of the public space and especially the *Cumhuriyet Meydanı* within which the Halkevi is usually situated see Neşe Gurallar Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri: ideoloji ve mimarlık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999), pp. 140 – 7. Needless to say not all Houses were situated in the *Cumhuriyet Meydanı* but were nevertheless in physical proximity to other power-laden buildings.

inflated climactic inventory of accusations, without any direct mention of the ‘other side’, something the report of the external Party Inspector customarily reveals. In some few cases though, the antagonism escalates into an open fight with occasional use of physical force, where the conflicting sides are exposed. In such cases, the accounts portray the Halkevi as an arena within which ‘dramas of conflict’⁴⁴⁷ are staged between local actors. The selection of the Halkevi for the staging of the conflict is not always accidental: in most case it is the control of the Halkevi that is contested, but also the Halkevi clientele is selected as the audience of such a play, which can be considered as a tactic employed for the public discrediting of the accused side/person. Let us now turn to a couple of examples of such ‘dramas of conflict’.

Dramas of Conflict

The Halkevi of the small town of Silvan, the administrative center of a sub-district linked to the Province of Diyarbekir, became the stage of two consecutive clashes between two of the House’s chairmen and a group of civil servants and Party officials. Both cases are relatively well reported in the archive enabling a more in-depth reading and analysis of such cases of conflict than the incidents we have treated above. Apart from the relevant abundance of sources, another feature distinguishes Silvan from the previous cases: an actual verbal and physical confrontation between the conflicting persons/sides on the Halkevi stage, reported by both sides. In other words, the existing antagonism between the actors escalated and erupted into an actual fight. This eruption offers the opportunity to study the conflicting discourses produced about the ongoing hostility and about its escalation into an actual fight, but also to ‘read’ the actions and tactics used by the actors in situ, before, during, and after the fight.

Stage one: ‘Ulan namussuz Tefvik!’

On the 17th of January 1935 a person signing as Rahmi, resident of Silvan, wrote a complaint letter to the Silvan sub-district governor (*Silvan kaymakamlığına*) against Tefvik, the chairman of the local Halkevi.⁴⁴⁸ In his rather long letter (5 handwritten pages) Rahmi accused Tefvik of as many as 17 faults. Nearly all his charges (15 out of 17) are of financial nature. For

⁴⁴⁷ Here I draw on Victor Turner’s work on ‘social dramas’, defined as ‘public episodes of tensional irruption’ performed by social actors in situations of conflict. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Societies* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 33. See also his “Social Dramas and Stories about Them”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No 1, (Autumn 1980), p. 150.

⁴⁴⁸ Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

instance, he accused Tevfik of embezzling the House's income in several ways; denying control by accountants; not paying the Halkevi janitor; purchasing a number of items for the House at inflated prices; moving furniture from the Halkevi to his House; and other similar charges. Lastly (charges No. 16 and 17), he charged Tevfik (school principal) with not attending his classes while spending his working hours in the House and with treating his subordinate teachers badly. At this point, we have to keep in mind two issues: firstly, most of the accusations above pertain to the chairman's financial 'misconduct' indicating that the complainant was rather skillful in economics or accounting. Secondly, from the 12th accusation onwards the handwriting is completely different denoting that at least two persons wrote and were aware of the accusations, and thus can be considered as Tevfik's opponents.

Three months later, in 21/3/1935, Rahmi wrote another denunciation of the Halkevi chairman this time to the superior of his previous letter's addressee, the Provincial Governor of Diyarbakır (*Diyarbakir vilayeti yüksek makamına*). Rahmi, again signing as resident of Silvan, reported: "because up until today there has been no result from my last denunciation (*ihbariye*) of Tevfik, this person has become more audacious and in the evening of the second day of the Bayram attacked the *Kaymakam* and the Director of Finance (*Malmüdüri*) while he was drunk. [...] Moreover, he damages the accord between high and low officials. Because of his sick mind he does not find the time to oversee the students and the teachers of the school. It is well known that the second and third grade students under his instruction do not know how to multiple one by one."⁴⁴⁹

Rahmi's letters are different in size and content. The latter is shorter and – except from his rather exaggerated way of accusing Tevfik of professional incompetence – reports something completely different from the former. His last letter charges Tevfik with breaking the harmony between high and low rank civil servants. He also reports that Tevfik was drunk and assaulted the *Kaymakam* and the Director of Finance, an incident that supposedly implicated the local police officers (*bu bapta mahalli zabıtasınca ifadesi alınmıştır*). Unfortunately no other document in the relevant file refers to this incident, real or not. Nevertheless, this last letter argues that the local sub-district governor and at least one high-ranking civil servant had been engaged in a fight with Tevfik. The letter also implicates other civil servants as well, although in a quite vague way.

Next comes Tevfik's own narrative about the situation sent in 4/4/1935 as a telegram to the Party headquarters in Ankara.⁴⁵⁰ According to Tevfik, *Kaymakam* İzzet had been speaking negatively of the People's Houses for a long time. As a result, he had caused the following events. Some 'drunkards' had attacked his house some nights before, in the evening of the 31st of May 1935 and "had insulted with curses the spiritual personality (*şahsiyeti*

⁴⁴⁹ Letter in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

⁴⁵⁰ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

maneviye) of the Halkevi and the committee that had the holy duty to organize the show (*musamere*) for the benefit of the Red Cross”. In addition, it was the *Kaymakam*’s opinions that led to the events during that show, when “our beloved people participating in the show had to flee their own House.” Tevfik ended his letter with a request for the removal of the *Kaymakam* from Silvan. He did not name the ‘drunkards’, targeting just the *Kaymakam*. He did not even explain what had happened during the Red Cross evening in the Halkevi. In all probability this was not the only letter he wrote about the events.

Luckily, there is one last relevant document. It was sent from the Ministry of Education (signed by the General Director of Primary Education) to Necip Ali (Küçüka), mistakenly called ‘president of the People’s Houses’.⁴⁵¹ It is dated 26 May 1935. The writer described it as “the result of the investigation regarding the Educational Officer of Silvan (*Silvan Maarif Memuru*) Tevfik”. He is described as an ill-tempered and heated person.

He was born in Sivrek in 1307 (1901). He graduated from the Diyarbekir Teacher’s College in 1331 (1915). [L]ately his relations with the Kaymakam and some of the people following him have been bad. As a result, on the evening of 30/3/1935 during the show organized in the Halkevi for the benefit of the Red Cross, a group composed of the Director of Finance, tax collectors and civil servants from the Financial Departments (Hususi Muhasebe ve Varidat memurları ve tahsildardan mürekkep bir gurup) entered the House. The ‘Income Officer’ (Varidat Memuru) shouted, “this one did not pay”; then he closed the gramophone behind the stage that was playing music for the people and started checking the tickets. When someone suggested that the control should be done at the entrance he started shouting. Tevfik then said ‘don’t break the good order of the Halkevi’. In reply to this it was uttered, ‘Hey! Shameless Tevfik’ (Ulan namussuz Tevfik); according to some present even harsher words were exchanged such as ‘Don’t make me say what I’ll do to yours and to the Halkevi’s good order’. Next the director of Finance said, ‘My officers know what they’ll do’. He declined the intervention of the head of the Conscription Office. As a result, the assailants were taken out by the police (jandarma vasıtasıyla). The aforementioned civil servants were dispatched to other areas and Tevfik was removed from the Halkevi chairmanship by the provincial authorities (Vilayetçe).⁴⁵²

This report describes the fight at the Red Cross evening Tevfik was alluding to in his own letter. The report clarified who the conflicting sides

⁴⁵¹ Necip Ali was the head of the 5th Bureau of the General Secretariat of the CHP, one of the duties of which was the monitoring of the activities of the People’s Houses.

⁴⁵² **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

were: the *Kaymakam* and a number of civil servants from the Financial Services against the principal Tevfik. The reason behind the antagonism that culminated to the events described above is not given. If we believe the two complaint letters by Rahmi, the dispute was due to Tevfik's unlawful administration of the Halkevi revenues, his professional negligence and tyrannical behavior towards his subordinates. Although not mentioned, Tevfik's being from the area, but not a local of Silvan, (he was from Siverek, a largely Zaza-speaking area), might have been a reason for the disagreement. Moreover, the letters indicate that the actual incident at the Red Cross evening was a public eruption of an ongoing hostility between the two sides that had been dragging on for quite a while. The clash that evening was to a certain extent, as the letters leave to be understood, premeditated and staged by Tevfik's opponents.

In a number of his works, Victor Turner has focused on situations of conflict between individuals and/or groups within social groups. He has termed such conflicts 'social dramas' during which public eruptions of hostility between the warring sides take place. He has argued that what he terms as a 'social drama' is a social event identifiable in every human society, not only the Ndembu where he primary carried out fieldwork. He also has offered a structural analysis of such social dramas dividing them into four distinguishable phases. The drama starts, signaled by an act that makes the feud visible, by a 'public eruption' of hostilities, what he terms a "*breach* of regular norm-governed social relations". It is followed by an *escalation* of the crisis, where the conflicting sides become clear and it is difficult for individuals or groups/institutions not to take sides, which is then followed by *redressive action*, i.e. by activity aiming at the resolution of the crisis. This may take the form of formal or not, institutional or unofficial arbitration. As a consequence of the mediation acts, the last phase of the drama ends with the *reintegration* of the sides within the social format or with an *irreparable schism*.⁴⁵³

In view of Turner's classificatory and analytical categories, we may examine our case as a series of structurally interrelated phases, even though our sources present a rather limited picture when we compare them to Turner's simultaneous fieldwork analysis. Open hostilities in Silvan seem to commence publicly with the actual incident at the Red Cross evening, a public declaration of war staged by one side, quite similar to Turner's breach. The public character of the breach is crucial, not only for probing the centre's involvement – probably not caused by the previous denunciation letters, but also in order to create a public fait accompli, an event that would make the return to the status quo ante difficult, if not impossible. The humiliation of Tevfik is a tactical move by his rivals. This direct, visible and public attack on his personality and public persona renders his ability to execute the responsibilities and duties of the positions he occupies (teacher, Halkevi chairman, thus state and Party

⁴⁵³ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, pp. 38 - 40.

representative) curtailed in front of the eyes of both his local clients (students, Halkevi audiences, local public) and his superiors (Party and state). It is not accidental then that the accused side, Tevfik, is describing the incident exactly in terms of an attack on the ‘spiritual personality of the Halkevi and its executive members’ that made the people ‘flee from their own House’.

If the public eruption of the feud appears as the first necessary and structural phase, the petitioning, denouncing, complaining and reporting ‘communication battle’ that follows – in our case it had already started before the actual incident – is the second, successive structural phase of the ongoing feud-come-public. Bearing similarities to Turner’s second and third phases, the communicative skirmishes of our actors can be rather accurately explained as an attempt by both sides of the conflict to win the war by successfully instigating the involvement and/or mediation of mechanisms of the centre. Given the probably staged character of the Red Cross event, it is rather evident that one of the reasons behind its staging was exactly that, i.e. to bring about the institutional intervention of supervising state authorities. In this sense, both phases, the eruption of the incident and the communicative war that followed, were structurally interwoven and complementary in nature. The provoking of a public incident then is an act with communicative value, is a ‘play’ staged for an ‘audience’ - in our case both state/centre and local society – that aims at and finally achieves the direct involvement of this audience.

A part of this communicative battle – probably a large part – is missing. We could only uncover a few of its archival remnants that nevertheless indicate that more authorities must have been implicated than the local state bureaucracy, the Ministry of Education and the central Party mechanism. The paper trail regarding this case is not full. The reports of the accused *Kaymakam*, the local Governor, the Governor’s superior office, i.e. the Ministry of Interior, as well as the communications between these offices, to state a few possibly compiled documents, are missing.

Notwithstanding this partiality of the sources, the letters in hand give us a hint of the tactics the opponents followed during this entrenched battle of petitioning superior authorities. The one side accused Tevfik of occupational incompetence and negligence, of financial misconduct and embezzlement, of injuring the accord between civil servants; and lastly for being a drunkard. The accusations were directed to the complainants’ superiors, the highest state bureaucrat in the region, the Governor. All but the last accusations against Tevfik were pertaining to issues that fell under the direct responsibility and interest of the state administration and the local *Vali*. They were in a sense accusing their opponent of impeding the state’s authority and work, thus aiming at – or even trying to manipulate - the addressee’s sensitivity towards such issues and his duty to intervene.

Tevfik’s account of the clash exhibits the same quality. He elected to address the CHP, under his authority as Halkevi chairman and accuse his opponents of damaging the ‘spiritual personality’ of the House and its

executive members, as well as of causing ‘the People’ to flee from their ‘own House’. Correspondingly to his opponents then, he is accusing them of impeding the realization of the Halkevi’s aims, which were not accidentally the aims and policies of the Houses’ owner and the letter’s addressee, the regime and state itself.

Both sides then denounced their opponents to different parts of the centre, the Party Headquarters and the civil bureaucracy, in an attempt to gain the edge. They tried to implicate one part of the centre against another in the conflict, in a curious ‘civil strife’ between state offices and individuals occupying these offices. This ‘civil strife’ among state actors *at the local level* attempting to implicate other state mechanisms against each other has not been accounted for, or even is overlooked by the dominant in the history of modern Turkey theories and approaches overplaying a strong state tradition or a modern monolithic state against the passive, undifferentiated and occasionally ‘hostile’ society we encounter in both Kemalist sources from the period and in a large part of the bibliography on the period. The ubiquitous conflicts between state and non-state actors implicating state offices against one another, which occasionally erupt in ‘social dramas’ as the ones we study here render such approaches quite simplistic and unresponsive to scrutiny and to the data from the field.

Given the fragmentary nature of our sources it is rather tricky to determine what the conclusion of Tevfik’s case was, reintegration or an irreparable schism, in Turner’s classification. At first sight it seems that the Governor’s involvement produced a resolution of the crisis by removing Tevfik from the Halkevi chairmanship and some of his civil servants opponents from the area reappointing them elsewhere, although the *Kaymakam*, referred to by both Tevfik and the Ministry’s report as implicated in the event, was not removed from Silvan, but, according to another source,⁴⁵⁴ was made chairman of the local Halkevi, probably for a short, intermediary period until a more suitable candidate could be selected. Although the actors participating in the public event at the Red Cross evening were removed from the area and a new Halkevi chairman was selected, this was not a lasting solution.

Stage two: ‘he slapped his face in reaction’

Almost one and a half year later another similar incident between the chairman of the Silvan Halkevi and a number of state officials erupted in the Hall of the Halkevi. The file does not contain any document from an outside source (Party Inspector for instance), but only the letters of the two sides, the *Kaymakam* in defense of his assault and the Halkevi chairman demanding reprisal. The chairman’s (Ömer Öner) letter to the Party in Ankara was sent in 30/11/1936.

⁴⁵⁴ Letter of Ömer Öner, chairman of the Silvan Halkevi in December 1936, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

In the evening of 26-27/11/1936 I was at my place together with the teacher Aydost, Saadet and Esma from the family of the retired Rahmi. Sergeant Ali, the municipality's tax officer came and told me that the Kaymakam was calling me to the Halkevi. I went with Aydost. The Kaymakam Ekrem, the Sectional chief Hulki, Captain Doğan and Inspector İbrahim Omay of the Land Registry were present in the Hall. There was a picture of Premier İnönü that was sent at the time of the old chairman, the Kaymakam İzzet Kılavuz. This picture was left in the book cabinet, the best place in the House. They attacked me using as a pretext that the photograph was not put on the Hall wall – as if there was not a bigger one on the wall – and taking advantage of the picture to further their secret aims with the inspector, with whom they had spend their last days and nights together. I was insulted and slapped in the Halkevi Hall, where we struggle everyday to enlighten and guide our people. They had opened the Hall with no authorization, they had sent the janitor away, and had put a (Jandarma) policeman at the entrance. In this situation I hardly managed to escape and save myself. The life of your child was in danger today in Silvan, your child that with a clean heart and a lofty aim has the Turkish culture on his shoulders. Let my records be examined. For the last ten years I have been working as teacher, principal; I have always been struggling in cultural duties and there is no black stain on my forehead.⁴⁵⁵

A few days later it was the *Kaymakam*'s turn to report the event to his superior, the Provincial Government.⁴⁵⁶ His report is not significantly different from the chairman's. The actors remain the same with Ömer's account of the event (minus the police officer at the entrance). Nevertheless, indirectly he admits that what they did that evening was to a certain extent premeditated. He wrote that even before the chairman Ömer came they had prepared an Official Document (*zabit verakasile*), where they explained the state of the Premier's photograph. The Halkevi chairman argued that the photograph was a pretext for the assault of the *Kaymakam* and the Land Registry Inspector. The *Kaymakam*, on the other hand, holds throughout his letter that the starting point for the dispute was the Premier's photograph. The premeditated nature of their acts though, as well as what he wrote below about the chairman and the judge of Silvan disclose a deeper animosity between power brokers of the region. The *Kaymakam* reports that a week after the incident another picture, this time of Atatürk signed by him for the Halkevi was found in the school "in an ugly state, with its cadre made of common wood, full with glue stains, while for its

⁴⁵⁵ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

⁴⁵⁶ Letter of Ekrem Gönen, kaymakam of Silvan, dated 8/12/1936 (*Diyarbakir Vilayetine*), contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.283.1.

back cover newspaper had been used. I took this picture with the aim to put it in a proper cadre.” The *Kaymakam* then turns to Ömer:

The aforementioned Ömer was not insulted; it was he who insulted these photographs with his acts. This person was beaten in the middle of the market in public in the towns of Lice and Osmaniye where he used to reside. In what sense then is this person referring to self-esteem? He is a bad person and I think that just the event that took place above is sufficient to give an idea about his morality (bunun ahlakı).

The letters reveal that the incident was just the beginning; both actors tried to act in response. The chairman wrote to the Party; the *Kaymakam* to his superior. Moreover, as the *Kaymakam* reported, Ömer enlisted the assistance of the local judge, who opened an investigation against the Land Registry Inspector. The *Kaymakam* accused the judge of partisanship and of trying to take revenge. He did not explain the reason for the judge’s behavior though. “The people of our region were living in order and peace for two months because the judge was on leave. [S]tarting from a small issue he magnified it to the point that the state authority is being broken.” He called the judge a ‘leader of bandits’ (*çete reisi*) and deplored that he had not been removed from the region after so many complaints and “letters sent to official authorities”, but instead had been increasing “his influence among the ignorant people.” The *Kaymakam* ended his letter requesting the removal of both judge and Halkevi chairman to another area. In his words: “because a teacher that has been beaten cannot instruct the local children (*ders ve terbiye*) [...] he must be appointed to one of the nearby districts.” Moreover, he recommended the Director of Finance for the Halkevi chairmanship. If his requests were not to be carried out, he asked for his own reappointment elsewhere.

The two letters above clearly demonstrate that the clash – orchestrated in all probability - between the two bureaucrats (*Kaymakam* and Land Registry Inspector) and Ömer in the Halkevi was just one round in the fight between the two sides. It also becomes clear that many more people – bureaucrats and teachers – were implicated directly or indirectly by either side: the judge, the land Registry Inspector, a couple of teachers, the wife of the retired⁴⁵⁷ – probably teacher – Rahmi, the Director of Finance (*Malmüdüri*). We have to keep in mind that the persons referred to in these documents, even if not directly taking part in the dispute, were in all probability not mentioned in vain, but rather as potential witnesses in the (likely) case of an investigation,

⁴⁵⁷ Here I translate the sentence “ve mütekait Rahmi’nin ailesi Esmâ” as ‘the wife of the retired Rahmi. If he was the same person that a year before had twice written to the Party against the then Halkevi chairman Tefvik, then my translation in the previous part of the chapter of his signature “Silvanda mütekait Rahmi” as ‘Rahmi resident of Silvan’ is wrong and should be ‘Retired Rahmi in Silvan’.

which is usually requested by one or both sides. In that respect, it is highly probable that they can be considered as allies of one side or the other.

Having concluded that the Premier's photograph was not the sole cause of the conflict but rather the pretext, we cannot but notice the similarities of these events with those that had taken place one year before in Silvan again involving the principal and Halkevi chairman, the *Kaymakam* and a number of other state officials. Even if the *Malmüdürü* was not the same person, the match in terms of posts is almost identical. In this sense, the existing sources indicate that a rather enduring local feud was on. Another more general hypothesis is that in a place where the positions of power were even more limited than elsewhere (absence of Party structure – see below), the struggle for control over one of the existing ones – the Halkevi – was immediately more intense. Was there a 'locals vs. outsiders' character in the fight? In the case of Tevfik we know that he was from the region. Ömer, in the second case, seems to have been employed mainly in the region (Lice and Osmaniye). From the opposite side, the *Kaymakam* was always a foreigner of the region, as well as the Land Registry Inspector and the army officer in all probability. The same was also likely for the Director of Finance. Many more qualities of the actors might have been significant and contributing to the schism, for instance ethnic origin and language, social and educational background, lifestyle, although not mentioned in this case.⁴⁵⁸

Another point that deserves to be mentioned is the absence of any reference to local Party structures. Unlike most of the similar cases of conflict in a local setting, here the local Party is absent from the documents. Party structures were actually not established in most of the southeast provinces up until the late 1940s.⁴⁵⁹ A high-ranking arbiter existed though. The letter of the *Kaymakam* was sent to the Vali of Diyarbakır who in turn forwarded it to the 1st General Inspector (*Birinci Umumi Müfettişliğine*), who was probably the one who forwarded it to the General Secretariat of the Party.⁴⁶⁰

In case we employ Turner's four-phase scheme to examine this second successive 'social drama' enacted on the Halkevi stage of Silvan, we would encounter great similarities with the previous stage. The feud between groups of civil servants erupted into the open with a 'breach of social protocol', the public slapping of the Halkevi chairman into the House. As a consequence of

⁴⁵⁸ In a number of cases ethnic difference are raised. 8/3/1947 letter of Kemal Zülfikaroğlu complaining that during a show at the Diyarbakır Halkevi the accent of Bitlis was mocked. Without directly referring to Kurdish, he implies it when stating that "The people of Bitlis not only always speak Turkish everywhere, but also speaks pure Turkish." **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.270.2. Another example comes from Ağrı. The former Halkevi secretary complains that the current secretary was brought to this position by "Hamdi one of the Kurdish warlords of the area", while "I am the head of the Kara babk tribal confederation/clan (*aşiret*)". **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.268.2. Letter of Nusret Arslan dated 13/1/1945.

⁴⁵⁹ Provinces of Elazığ, Tunceli, Bingöl, Urfa, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Hakkari, Siirt, Bitlis, Muş, Van and Ağrı according to *C.H.P. Teşkilatı Kurulmamış Vilayetlerdeki Halkevleri ve Odaları Teftiş Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zerbamat, 1940), p. 5.

⁴⁶⁰ Cemil Kocal, *Umumi Müfettişlikler (1927 - 1952)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003).

this staged public act, the feud became public and visible, and the opposing sides (Kaymakam and other civil servants vs. judge, Halkevi chairman and probably other schoolteachers) entrenched. What is more, audiences, both local and external, were established by the very same public, and thus communicative, act.

The digging of opposing trenches and the communicative trench warfare that followed the event, and which we can only partially access through some of its archival traces, can be apprehended as part of the second and third phases of Turner's processual analysis of 'social dramas'. This communicative warfare involved – among certainly other tactics as well – the petitioning of higher authorities. Both sides became supplicants to their immediate superiors; the *Kaymakam* wrote to the Vali, the Halkevi chairman to the Party Headquarters in default of a local Party structure. Again their arguments bare close similarity to the ones the actors of the previous incident in the Silvan Halkevi had used. In order to achieve his goals and have the Halkevi chairman and local judge removed from their offices, the *Kaymakam* tried to manipulate the state's concerns in relation to what was considered the proper functioning of civil bureaucracy. He accused his rivals, especially the judge, of hurting the cooperation of state officials, endangering the 'peace and order' in the region, and braking the 'state authority' by 'increasing his influence among the ignorant people'. The words had been carefully selected to make an impression on the Vali: speaking of '*sükünet ve asayış*' and '*cahil halk*', the *Kaymakam* played with the state's most dire preoccupations, suspicions and fears in general but especially in that largely Kurdish-speaking area. Regarding the Halkevi chairman, the *Kaymakam* hinted at an anti-regime stance on his side and was not afraid to admit that he slapped him. In addition he questioned his morality informing his superior that this person had been beaten in public twice before and thus he had no honor. "You cannot hurt the honor of someone who has been already publicly dishonored". In that respect he made use of societal values rather than administrative criteria or preoccupations.

The tactic followed by the Halkevi chairman on the other hand was to petition the Party Headquarters and denounce his opponent of posing a threat to and damaging the ideals and policies of the letter's addressee, the Party and regime. In unison with the references to his curtailed duty to enlighten and guide 'our people', aims the Party and state had assigned to him as an 'intellectual' and Halkevi chairman, in respect to the incident he presented himself as the 'unjustly treated', a narrative tactic typically employed by non-state social actors petitioning state authority against a local state representative.⁴⁶¹ In short, both sides in their discursive tactics made

⁴⁶¹ It was the state or ruler's duty to undo wrongdoings and protect his unjustly treated subjects (*mazlum*), from the oppression of his servants (*zülüm*). The self presentation of the petitioner as unjustly treated was a common theme of petition and complaint writing even before the establishment of the Ottoman state. See S.M. Stern, "Petitions from the Ayyubid Period", *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*, Vol. 27, No 1, (1964), p. 9. On the system of grievance administration see "Mazalim", *EI*, 2nd Edition, Vol. VI, p. 933.

allowances to both state preoccupations and societal values, addressing both centre and local society, a necessity as it seems, once the ‘social drama’ is staged for and in front of a double audience, the soon to intervene state authorities and the implicated, gazing and evaluating residents of Silvan, whether locals or outsiders, family members or students of the attacked schoolteacher, local clients of the implicated state actors, Sergeant Ali, the police officer, or even ‘the ignorant people’.⁴⁶²

Conclusion

The clashes the above sources portray draw a picture of the Halkevi as a space of conflict, a ‘stage’ upon which ‘dramas of conflict’ are enacted. In the heat of the battle ‘actors’ perform in, but also claim the Halkevi space. Seen solely as text or script, various – almost theatrical - types emerge, the ‘idealist’ one – be it the vigilant complainant or the ‘unjustly treated citizen’ - being the most common self-portraying category. As for the villains – in our case unchangingly the accused side, the ‘oppressive’, ‘corrupt’, and even ‘immoral’ state and/or Halkevi official constitutes the major category.

The aim of this chapter is to utilize these ‘moments of conflict’ in order firstly to move beyond the “life is better, life is merrier”⁴⁶³ picture of the Halkevi institution the official sources reiterate. To do so it is necessary to remove the Houses from the a-topian nature of the official sources and place them into their respective societies. This essentially contextualizing, or better re-contextualization, operation requires the incorporation into our own analysis, or perhaps ‘script’, of the Halkevi inhabitants, or rather the voices of ‘actors’ taking part in ‘plays’ the Party’s official ‘programme’ did not include. The input of actors then is provided by exactly these ‘moments of conflict’, through the actors’ one-sided ‘scripts’ though. Luckily enough the occasional ‘critique’ of these plays by an authoritative and, because an outsider, relatively trustworthy Party spectator makes the conflictual nature of these dramas, as well as the actors’ motives more obvious.

A second corollary aim of this contextualizing operation is to demonstrate that the Halkevi formed a nexus in a social network, where people, social groups and forces interact, in short a place linked with actors and other spaces of its locality. The People’s Houses were actually envisaged exactly as spaces

⁴⁶² Leslie Peirce came up with a similar observation in her study of the court records of Antep in the 16th century. “Despite their brevity, the 16th century records of the Aintab court also reveal deliberate rhetorical strategies, but their audience was not the sultan. [R]ather, the audience was necessarily local”. Especially in case where “honor was at stake, they [the litigants] were mindful that another audience was listening.” Thus many, especially women, might break the law or opt for a stance that would convict them in court in order to protect their threatened honor and thus appear socially absolved. Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales. Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (California: University of California Press, 2003), p. 203.

⁴⁶³ Quote attributed to Stalin amidst the famine.

of interaction – ‘fusion’ [*kaynaşma*] – by their creators. The nature of the designer’s interaction was rather different from what we actually witness in our sources. The Halkevi space emerges not (only) as a space occupied by local elites in unison according to the regime’s wishes, but in conflict and antagonism, a place the control of which was constantly claimed and contested by different opposing fractions. The contestants and contesting groups were numerous. They seem to include the majority of what we can term elites, that is state officials – locals or outsiders, teachers, local urban elites, without, or usually, with Party credentials.

This conflictual quality of the Halkevi is also telling of the circumstances within which the aims of the Halkevi institution were (supposed to be) understood, performed, enacted and contested in a local setting. The social, discursive and practical space the Halkevi occupied in a society was not just one vigorously delimited from and exclusive of the ‘other’ it was supposed to reform (by his/her incorporation), but also (perhaps primarily) a space constantly claimed and fought for – an arena to wrestle in (and for) or a stronghold to be conquered - by the included, or at least those entitled to such an inclusion, collectively termed elites, local and state elites.

These characteristics of the Halkevi space are also telling of the possible ways the House – not to say anything about what it was supposed to stand for - might be understood by the larger populace, those habitually excluded, or at least temporally included (for instance in a cinema or theatre show with an entrance fee). The power struggles and the position of the Halkevi in their midst were known by the populace (‘heard by our people’ as the letters frequently mention). In that sense the Halkevi emerges in the eyes of the excluded ‘other’ as a space of power (state, Party), possible coercion and violence.

Lastly, this chapter has aptly demonstrated that the realm of interaction between state and non-state actors in local societies between themselves and parts of the centre cannot be understood within a simplistic framework based on the assumption of an immune to local social forces state and of a distinct border that separates state from society. Rather, my reading of these dramas of conflict depict the center (in terms of its practices and relations with the forces of and in the provinces) neither away from (or totally incognizant of) the ‘periphery’ (provincial urban centers here) nor totally immune to the social forces, actors, practices and discourses of the periphery.

PART III

*'Gamblers', 'Theatre Girls' and 'Villagists': Kemalist Policies
consumed*

Chapter 6

People's Houses vs. Coffeehouses

The aim of the following three chapters is to study how social actors in provincial centers were 'consuming' a number of 'novel' social practices the People's Houses were to initiate and/or develop in local societies. Here I should repeat that by consumption I refer to "what 'consumers' or 'users' make with the 'products' imposed by a dominant economic order", a 'making' "related to social situations and power relationships",⁴⁶⁴ necessary contexts I have attempted to sketch in the first two Parts of this thesis with the 'human' and 'political' geography of the Halkevi space.

More specifically, in this chapter I study the Halkevi as a space of socialization and leisure-time practices in relation - or in contrast - to the social space of the coffeehouse, its clientele and activities. My ambition is to 'read' the consumption by social actors of free-time activities the center had imagined and planned for the Halkevi as they interrelate with pre-existing male socialization and free-time practices and spaces, among which the coffeehouse occupied the most prominent place. I particularly choose to focus on one of the most prevailing themes of the corpus of complaint and petition letters,⁴⁶⁵ namely the *kahvehane* in relation to the People's House. My basic argument holds that the association of the coffeehouse and related practices of male socialization with the Halkevi is a privileged site to study the consumption of the products of the Kemalist 'dominant sociopolitical order' for two reasons: firstly, there is a long history of conflictual relations between central state and coffeehouse since the latter's appearance in the 16th century. Secondly, the center's discourse started to portray the coffeehouse and the social practices related to the coffeehouse space in antagonistic terms, as a direct threat and rival to the new spaces and practices the state and Party were establishing, such as the People's House and People's Rooms.

The first part of this chapter offers a brief history of the relations between central state and coffeehouse, a short presentation and analysis of the dominant - or 'official' - discourses produced in relation to the coffeehouse, and of the consequent placing in the 1930s of the coffeehouse and what it was considered to represent in direct contrast to the People's House and similar 'modern' spaces. In the second part of the chapter I study how social actors in the complaint letters consume and ultimately re-use the 'official' discourse about the coffeehouse. Lastly in the third part I focus on the social practices my letters disclose in relation to socialization and free time activities in the Houses, and elaborate on what these practices can ultimately tell us about the ways social

⁴⁶⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p. xiii, 31, 35-6.

⁴⁶⁵ For a presentation of the corpus of complaint/petition letters used in the thesis see Appendix.

actors make sense and use of the discourses and practices the center propagated in relation to free-time socialization through the Halkevi institution.

A short history of state – coffeehouse relations

There is a long history of relations of tension between coffeehouses and the state.⁴⁶⁶ Almost since their establishment in the 16th century coffeehouses became the targets of oppressive state policies and a negative discourse uttered by state and religious authorities. Kırılı has demonstrated that this negative discourse was framed in terms of morality, albeit not in the modern sense of the word. Rather the discourse of morality employed in relation to coffeehouses was a political discourse signaling the transgression of social boundaries between rulers and ruled, a transgression the coffeehouse was supposed to establish by bringing together a heterogeneous clientele and becoming the hotbed of subversive popular political discourse. The coffeehouses were places the state was suspicious of, not without good reason, one might argue: a number of rebellions resulting in the sultan's deposition were reported to have started in coffeehouses.⁴⁶⁷ Thus the periodic closing down and the attempts to control the coffeehouses by means of exemplary punishments, or later on by the employment of spies.⁴⁶⁸ Kırılı's main argument is that roughly since the 1840s a change had occurred in the way the state was viewing the coffeehouses, passing from methods of disciplinary punishment to surveillance, a change signaling the emergence of popular opinion, or rather the importance of public opinion for the state, and of a gradual change in the way the state treated and managed its subjects, in short of "a new 'governmentality' that underlined the Ottoman polity towards the mid-nineteenth century."⁴⁶⁹

Further changes altered the coffeehouse during the 19th century. With the introduction of the printing press and the publication of the first newspapers the coffeehouse started to function as a reading room. A new kind of coffeehouse, the *kiraathane*, was established. Books and newspapers were to be found, bought, read (out) and discussed in the coffeehouse. Coffeehouses in Istanbul

⁴⁶⁶ The 'oriental'/Ottoman coffeehouse is a large subject I cannot account for in this thesis. I am drawing on a few works for the above presentation. Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses, The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1996); Ekrem İşın, "A Social History of Coffee and Coffeehouses", in Selahattin Özpabırcıoğlu (ed), *Coffee, Pleasures in a bean* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001); Helene-Desmet Gregoire and François Georgeon (eds), *Doğuda Kahve ve Kahvehaneler*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999); Cengiz Kırılı, *The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780 – 1845* (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, 2000); Serdar Öztürk, *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesinde Kahvehane ve İktidar (1930 - 1945)*, (İstanbul: Kırmızı Yayınları, 2005); and Uğur Kömeçoğlu, *Historical and Sociological Approaches to Public Space: The Case of Islamic Coffeehouse in Istanbul* (PhD Dissertation, Boğaziçi University, 2001).

⁴⁶⁷ Kömeçoğlu, "Historical and Sociological Approaches to Public Space", p. 46.

⁴⁶⁸ Kırılı, "The Struggle over Space", p. 24.

⁴⁶⁹ Kırılı, "The Struggle over Space", pp. 283 – 4.

were frequented by state employees and intellectuals and started to resemble modern day clubs and associations.⁴⁷⁰ They continued to function as centers of communication. Prominent intellectuals during the last years of the Ottoman Empire were giving lectures in coffeehouses. Members of the Committee of Union and Progress used the network of coffeehouses and *kıraathanes* for propaganda purposes. Coffeehouses were also used during the war of independence for propaganda and mobilization purposes.⁴⁷¹

In the second half of the 19th century we can speak of a gradual change in the way the coffeehouse was represented and thought. Many intellectuals started to criticize the coffeehouse on different grounds than before. In a way resembling the discourse of westerners on the oriental coffeehouses, prominent intellectuals of the last period of the Ottoman Empire started to emulate the orientalist discourse in relation to the coffeehouse, which they compared to the cafés of European capitals and criticized as ‘nest of the idle and the ignorant’.⁴⁷² Instead of being attacked solely in terms of the illegitimate *devlet sohbeti* or the trespassing of the accepted borders, new concepts started to be employed in relation to the coffeehouse. The coffeehouse was to be criticized with reference to the ‘new’ discourse of hygiene, productivity, physical training and free time.

*“Nest of the idle, the jobless, the reactionaries, the gamblers and drunkards”:
negative discourse about the coffeehouse*

The early republican period was not devoid of negative representations of the ‘coffeehouse’ and what it was supposed to stand for, mostly to be found in newspapers, but also in the writings of intellectuals and politicians of the period. Serdar Öztürk’s seminal work⁴⁷³ offers numerous examples of this anti-coffeehouse discourse. Coffeehouses were depicted as places “hurting family life”, “lodges of the idle”, and “nests of gossip”. There were thus identified as almost antagonistic to the ongoing reform program. It was lamented for example that ‘our coffeehouses’ did not resemble the cafes to be found in European capitals, Vienna being the most popular example. In addition, a number of ‘plans’ to reform the coffeehouses in Turkey were articulated and, to a small extent, attempts to ‘modernize’ a number of coffeehouses were realized, mostly in Ankara and Istanbul.⁴⁷⁴ Voices recommending more

⁴⁷⁰ For a brief history of the Ottoman coffeehouse and the *kıraathane*/literary coffeehouses of late 19th century Istanbul see Kömeçoğlu, “Historical and Sociological Approaches to Public Space”, pp. 29 – 74 and 59 – 62 respectively.

⁴⁷¹ François Georgeon, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Son Döneminde İstanbul Kahvehaneleri”, in Helene-Desmet Gregoire and François Georgeon (eds), *Doğuda Kahve ve Kahvehaneler*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), pp. 72 -7.

⁴⁷² Öztürk, *Cuhmuriyet Türkiyesinde Kahvehane ve İktidar*, pp. 86-8.

⁴⁷³ Öztürk, *Cuhmuriyet Türkiyesinde Kahvehane ve İktidar*. For examples of the negative discourse directed against coffeehouses see especially from p. 111 onward. The book in its entirety is full of newspaper articles containing anti-coffeehouse rhetoric.

⁴⁷⁴ Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, pp. 183 - 267.

aggressive policies, even the closing down of coffeehouses were heard in the 1930s and 1940s. In some rather rare cases, it was not the central state but bureaucrats in the provinces and municipal authorities that applied a number of oppressive policies, such as the closing down of coffeehouses, the prohibition of opening new ones, and the strict control of the existing ones through the employment of hygienic and administrative regulations.⁴⁷⁵ Such policies did not seem to have any substantial impact on the coffeehouses, probably due to their sporadic nature. The substantial amounts of tax revenue coffeehouses were producing was probably the most significant reason the state did not apply any oppressive coffeehouse-related policies that would completely adhere to the suspicion it historically had nurtured towards the coffeehouse space or to the prevailing among intellectuals and statesmen alike negative discourse about the coffeehouse. The same financial reservations leading to similar inconclusive policies of the Ottoman state in relation to coffeehouses and taverns have been pinpointed by Kırılı as well.⁴⁷⁶

In a nutshell, what I call ‘official-moralistic’ discourse continued in the 1930s and 1940s. The center’s suspicion of the coffeehouse space persisted, exemplified occasionally in suppressive policies and sporadic attempts to reform the coffeehouse space in accordance with a number of ‘modern’ discourses (hygiene, free time, productivity, etc). Nevertheless imbued with ‘orientalist’ overtones, this discourse still contained elements of and similarities with the old discourse of morality used continuously since the 16th century. Serdar Öztürk has forcefully demonstrated that the Republican leadership continued to be suspicious of the coffeehouse space for the same or similar reasons with the ‘old regime’. The coffeehouses of the minorities and ethnic groups were thought as spaces promoting minority and ethnic identities against the unitary national identity the regime was striving to enforce;⁴⁷⁷ following the closure of their lodges, dervish orders were suspected of secretly operating in coffeehouses;⁴⁷⁸ after the Şeyh Sait uprising and during the *Takrir-i Süküin* period coffeehouses were suspected of providing shelter to brigands, vagabonds and lowlifes (*çete*, *şaki*, *kabadayı*, *serseri*),⁴⁷⁹ and the police was ordered to monitor and even to prevent the discussion of politics in coffeehouses (1926);⁴⁸⁰ there was even a proposal heard in the National Assembly to close down all village coffeehouses for the above reasons;⁴⁸¹ coffeehouses were also considered spaces of subversive ‘propaganda’ and ‘gossip’, whether communist, reactionary, or even anti-CHP, before, during and even after the short life of the Free Republican Party in 1930.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁵ Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, pp. 162 – 79.

⁴⁷⁶ Kırılı, “The Struggle over Space”, pp. 58 – 62.

⁴⁷⁷ Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, pp. 99 - 100.

⁴⁷⁸ Öztürk, *Kahvehane*, p. 106.

⁴⁷⁹ Öztürk, *Kahvehane*, pp. 101 -2.

⁴⁸⁰ Öztürk, *Kahvehane*, p. 104.

⁴⁸¹ Öztürk, *Kahvehane*, pp. 104-5.

⁴⁸² Öztürk, *Kahvehane*, pp. 357 ff. During the years of the Second World War coffeehouse frequenters were ridiculed for their ignorant know-it-all talking as ‘coffeehouse diplomats or

The Halkevi and the Coffeehouse

The anti-coffeehouse moralistic discourse employed by intellectuals and in regime/Party sources conversely describes a number of spaces fabricated by the state and/or Party as contrary to coffeehouses and their 'dirty atmosphere', the People's Houses, People's Rooms and Reading Rooms (*Okuma Odaları*) being amongst them. The Halkevi emerges as a place alternative to the coffeehouse, assigned with qualities, infused with activities and ideas supposed to be contrary to those of the coffeehouse. Similarly, the People's Rooms in the villages were viewed by the political power and intellectuals close to the regime as spaces opposite to the village coffeehouses and the village rooms (*köy odaları*). According to Kemal Akça, the village rooms had served their purpose and had become outdated with the introduction of the Halkodaları.⁴⁸³ The images employed to describe these two spaces overtly correspond to the incompatibility that was supposed to exist between them. Village Rooms were places "filled with smoke, nasty smells, and foggy", in contrast to the "clean and educational order" of the People's Rooms.⁴⁸⁴ The opinions voiced about the *Halk Okuma Odaları* were analogous. "The Reading Rooms are hearths of education and ideas for the people of every class and type. [Their aim is] to satisfy the students' need for reading, to save them from dirty places like the coffeehouse and the night club (*gazino*)."⁴⁸⁵ A newspaper announcement of the Education Ministry about the aims of the Reading Rooms stated the following: "The reading room is an upright (*nezih*) place for the people to visit instead of going to the coffeehouse".⁴⁸⁶

According to this 'official-moralistic' discourse, 'the people' and 'the youth' were those mostly suffering from the coffeehouse and were thus in need of the 'new' spaces created for them by state and Party. Occasionally even 'the intellectuals' were suffering from the lack of Reading Rooms, Sports Clubs, and People's Houses and, of course, the activities these spaces were supposed to offer. Nevertheless, the principal targets of the 'new' spaces were 'the youth' and, more generally, 'the People'. Both terms are general and vague, but can be somehow clarified by the way they were used in the sources, that is, next or in contrast to 'the intellectuals'. The intellectuals were usually defined as the civil servants, the educated professionals, or in sum as those considered closer to the regime, its policies and imposed reforms. Thus what the sources

politicians' (*kahve diplomati/politikacısı*). Based on his own experience of the 15 days he was hiding from the police, Rifat İlgaz's novel *Karartma Geceleri* is a first hand account of the close supervision of coffeehouses and similar public spaces by spies and policemen in Istanbul during the Second World War. Rifat İlgaz, *Karartma Geceleri* (İstanbul: Çınar Yayınları, 1974).

⁴⁸³ Kemal Akça, "Eski Köy Odaları", *Folklor Postası*, Vol. 1, No 6, (March 1945), pp. 3-4, mentioned in Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, p. 285.

⁴⁸⁴ Naşit Uluğ, "Halkevlerinin Memleket Hayatına getirmiş olduğu büyük içtimai inkişaf", *Ulus*, 25 February 1940, reproduced in Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, p. 286.

⁴⁸⁵ Akşam, 17 January 1930, mentioned in Serdar Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, p. 186.

⁴⁸⁶ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 15 January 1932, reproduced in Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, p. 188, where more examples are given.

called ‘the People’ can be broadly defined as those considered (or suspected of being) somehow distant from the regime’s ideas. Together with ‘the youth’ then they were ultimately in need of getting closer to, accepting and believing in the reforms, which the new spaces were supposed to propagate.

The above separation of the ‘people’ or the ‘Turkish nation’ between ‘intellectuals’ and the rest of ‘the people’ used in regime sources, and their ‘coming together’ presupposes a deep distinction, difference and ultimately distrust of ‘the people’, something not openly proclaimed if we are to take into account the celebratory populist rhetoric of the period. This divide and the concomitant contradiction of the official discourse with its rhetoric on the issue can be also sensed in relation to activities related to coffeehouses and condemned in the examples of the ‘official – moralistic’ discourse given above. If we are to put it differently, while on the one hand the ruling Party and its supporters were publicly claiming and boasting of being from the ‘people’, on the other distinguished in every occasion themselves from the ‘people’. In an analogous contradiction, the activities this elite declared to be harmful for the people in relation to the coffeehouse seem to be at least silently tolerated and practiced by local elites as our letters below disclose.

This ambivalence can be observed in a similar occasion. Only two years before the establishment of the People’s Houses, the General Secretariat of the ruling Party issued a communiqué in relation to the consumption of alcohol and gambling in Party buildings. Just ten days after the establishment of the Free Republican Party (SCF) the CHP General Secretariat in a communiqué sent to ten Party Inspectorships prohibited the consumption of *rakı* and the playing of cards in the Party buildings and the Turkish Hearths. The reasoning for such a prohibition is interesting: “these activities [drinking and gambling] will not be tolerated by the people”. Nevertheless, drinking and gambling per se were not prohibited in general, as “in reality drinking is not at all prohibited by our principles. Everybody is free to exercise this pleasure”, but “it is forbidden to give the impression of a drinking tavern (*meyhane*)”.⁴⁸⁷ The center’s preoccupation with appearances here is comparable to the Ottoman state’s attitude towards the coffeehouse: it was not against the consumption of coffee per se, but against the uncontrollable socializing in coffeehouses, the concomitant trespassing of the social borders separating the population from the state, and the subversive popular political discourse, the *devlet sohbetleri* mentioned in the police reports Kırılı studied.⁴⁸⁸

Considering the position and functions these two spaces had (or were supposed to have) in local societies, the rivalry the official discourse claimed to exist between them seems reasonable. Notwithstanding their differences in many respects, both were spaces of free time, after-work socialization. The

⁴⁸⁷ Communiqué No 2882, dated 21/8/1930, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/435.1804.2, reproduced in Cemil Koçak, *İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), pp. 193 – 4.

⁴⁸⁸ Kırılı, “The Struggle over Space”, p. 50.

Halkevi was not supposed to be restricted to men only, as was the case with the coffeehouse, but the female participation in the Halkevi space and activities, as we have seen in previous chapters, was rather low and less than expected, if we take into consideration a series of directives from the General Secretariat to the provincial Party structures,⁴⁸⁹ and the coercion exercised upon women teachers to participate in the Halkevi activities.⁴⁹⁰ This overlapping of activities together with the pervasiveness and long history of the coffeehouse in the Turkish society as a widespread male socialization space immediately established the Halkevi as a space competitive and rival to the coffeehouse and vice versa. This rivalry becomes evident if we only consider a few of the Halkevi activities that were customarily carried out in coffeehouses. The Halkevi theatre stage, musical events, the Houses' radio sets and cinema projections were directly competitive to the coffeehouses, where similar or identical activities were taking place: wandering theatrical group's performances, *Karagöz* shadow theatre, *Orta Oyun* and *Meddah* shows, occasional cinema projections, radio listening and newspaper reading.⁴⁹¹

The letters used here amply employ this 'moralistic' discourse when referring to the coffeehouse or activities related to coffeehouses, such as gambling, drinking coffee or being 'unproductive' and 'idle'.

Letters on Halkevleri and Coffeehouses. Employment of moralistic discourse.

A very large proportion of the complaint letters used here criticize the consumption of coffee, alcoholic drinks and the playing of cards and other games in both coffeehouses and Halkevleri. This is probably the most prevailing complaint issue. Gambling and alcohol were strictly prohibited by the By Laws of the People's Houses. The drinking of coffee was not; nevertheless, coffee is used as a metonym for the coffeehouse and what it was supposed to stand for, almost a complete reverse of the People's House. In many letters the contrast between the House and the coffeehouse is stressed, as in a letter by 18 people signing as the "the Youths of Sarıgöl", sent in 3/4/1940: "... this holy nest you have opened with the aim to enlighten and save us, the youth, from the dirty atmosphere of the coffeehouse...".⁴⁹² In another letter

⁴⁸⁹ See directives No 413, 414, 415, and 418, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Katibiumumluğunun Firka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı, Temmuz 1934' ten Birinci Kanun 1934 sonuna kadar*, Vol. 5, (Ankara: Ulus Matbaası, 1935), pp. 21, 22, 23, and 27 respectively.

⁴⁹⁰ See next chapter.

⁴⁹¹ Some of the Halkevi activities were apparently antagonistic to other enterprises as well. Consider the letter of the Yıldız cinema owner in Trabzon complaining to the ruling Party in 20/6/1939 that the local Halkevi was organizing cinema projections free of charge and was thus damaging his livelihood. Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/844.337.2. For a similar complaint see the two letters of Hakkı Darcan, cinema owner in Aydın, sent to the General Secretariat of the CHP and to the Ministry of Interior, dated 10/11/1939 and 8/2/1939 respectfully, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/824.260.1.

⁴⁹² Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.322.2. "biz gençlere pis kahve havasından kurtarip nurlandırmak gayesile açtığınız kutsi yuva...". Also in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/844.340.2, 27/1/50 signed

sent from the sub district of Bahçe in 3/2/1942, Salim Çanga complains that the books and newspapers coming to the House are locked up by the chairman and so “our people lead a solitary life in the coffeehouse corners.”⁴⁹³ The image of the coffeehouse with all its negative characteristics, gambling and drinking, is recurrently used to stress the gravity of the described problem.⁴⁹⁴ The prevailing in newspapers and Party publications ‘moralistic’ discourse about the coffeehouse is employed by our authors as well, but this time in regards to the Peoples’ Houses. Mehmet Solmaz civil servant from Düzce, wrote to the CHP: “Why the youth is not taught to exercise here? Why are they damaged in the corners of the coffeehouse, in dirty places?”⁴⁹⁵ In another anonymous letter from Sariyer, dated 27/9/46, the author, signing as ‘Bir Partili’, wrote the following about the Sports Section of the local Halkevi: “This Section is non existent. It has not initiated any activity to attract the youth. [T]he youths will be surrendered to very catastrophic ideologies in the coffeehouse corners. Whose is the duty to save these youths from the coffeehouse corners?”⁴⁹⁶

The similarities the letters display with the official ‘moralistic’ discourse continue. Our authors, clearly copying the official jargon, contrast the Halkevleri and Halkodaları with the coffeehouses. According to the letters, the Halkevleri were established in order to save ‘the People’ and ‘the youth’ from the coffeehouse, but in most of the cases this was not achieved for a number of reasons, which usually form the core of the letters’ complaints. The letters usually invoke the negative image of ‘the (dirty) corners of the coffeehouse’ in two circumstances: firstly when the Halkevi is reported functioning as a coffeehouse (coffee drinking and gambling) and, secondly, when the exclusion

by Ahmet Kayaner Ceylanpınar bucağı Gençlik kulubu başkanı (chairman of the Youth Club), and 27 more names. “Halkodasında kumar oynatmaktan başka bir faaliyetini gördüğümüz yoktur (We have not seen any other activity in the People’s Room apart from gambling). [If you do not do anything] bizleri ve bizim gibi gençleri kahve köşelerinde zehirlenmemize sebebiyet verdireceğini arz ederiz. (we inform you that you will become the cause we and other youths like us get poisoned in the corners of the coffeehouse.)”

⁴⁹³ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

⁴⁹⁴ “Tamamen bir oyun yeri olan ve tam bir kahve manzarasına arzeden. (It is completely a gambling place and completely resembles a coffeehouse.)” **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.322.2, 30/6/1935 from Kula Halkevi Temsil kolu başkanı (chairman of Theatre Section) Mustafa. “Okuma odası bir kahve haneden ayırt idemesiniz ... buranın sekreteri ... fazla içki istimal itmesi halkevi muhitinde fena tesir yapmaktadır. (You cannot distinguish between a coffeehouse and the Reading Room. The halkevi is having a catastrophic effect on the region, as its secretary consumes a lot of booze.)” **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2, 27/8/1943 from İnegöl, signed by 10 members of the Theatre and Spor Sections. “8 – 10 masasında kumarbazlar sabahtan akşama kadar kumar oynamakta ve bu güzelim salon adı bir kumarbaz kahvesine çevirilmiş bulunmaktadır. (The gamblers gamble from dusk to dawn and have turned this beautiful place into a common gambling coffeehouse.)” **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1, anonymous from İzmit, sent in 27/11/48.

⁴⁹⁵ Letter of 3/8/1939 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/828.271.3.

⁴⁹⁶ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/835.300.1. For some more examples: Article from newspaper *Tasvir* of 30 September 1945 about the Kırşehir Halkevi in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/838.314.1; letter by Hüseyin Erkaya from Kadınhan, dated 10/11/1949 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.320.1; letter of 22/3/1941 signed as “yüzlerce bafra genci (hundreds of the youths of Bafra)” in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.330.2. The majority of the letters dealing with similar issues (coffeehouse, gambling) use similar expressions.

of the complainant and/or those he purportedly represents ('the people', 'the youth') from the Halkevi leads them to the coffeehouse.

Riza from Kızılhisar in the province of Denizli complained that "from the 1st of November coffee and tea is served to the visitors of the Halkevi library, while they can also play domino, chess and similar games. Now this nest of culture functions like a coffeehouse; it is impossible to read a book or a newspaper because of the noise."⁴⁹⁷ In a telegram to President İnönü in 29/11/1947, Salih Peker from Elmalı complained that "some civil servants, thinking highly of themselves and despising the local population, are customarily and in front of the local youths exercising immoral deeds, such as gambling and drinking in the Halkevi."⁴⁹⁸ Two tailors from Biga complained that the Halkevi chairman and the members of its administrative committee were playing cards and poker in the Halkevi, while "the youths spend their time in coffeehouses."⁴⁹⁹ Drinking coffee or alcoholic drinks, playing cards or other games, and gambling, activities the letters relate to the 'dirty corners of the coffeehouse', are reported to take place in the People's Houses of Bozcaada,⁵⁰⁰ Osmaniye,⁵⁰¹ Bayramiç,⁵⁰² Arhavi,⁵⁰³ Tortum (Erzurum),⁵⁰⁴ Kemalpaşa,⁵⁰⁵ Kuşadası,⁵⁰⁶ İnebolu,⁵⁰⁷ İzmit,⁵⁰⁸ Kızılhisar (Denizli),⁵⁰⁹ Kula (Manisa),⁵¹⁰ Kızıltepe (Mardin),⁵¹¹ Sinop,⁵¹² Erbaa (Tokat),⁵¹³ Bingöl,⁵¹⁴ Amasya,⁵¹⁵ the People's Rooms of Ceylanpınar (Urfa),⁵¹⁶ and Bozova (Urfa).⁵¹⁷

⁴⁹⁷ Letter of 16/11/1947 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.282.2.

⁴⁹⁸ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/824.257.1.

⁴⁹⁹ Letter of Sami Filibeli and Mehmed Dilmez dated 3/9/1941 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.276.1.

⁵⁰⁰ Letter by F. Doğaner, dated 18/3/1948 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.277.1.

⁵⁰¹ Letter of 26/11/1946 by Fuat Karal, principle of the high school of Osmaniye, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

⁵⁰² Letter of 1/3/1948 by Mustafa Timin in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

⁵⁰³ 29/9/1948 article of *Tasvir*, "Halkodası değil, kahvehane" contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.279.2.

⁵⁰⁴ Telegram by Ahmet Umutlu, 5/8/1948, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.291.2.

⁵⁰⁵ Telegram to Premier Şükrü Şaraçoğlu by Nuri Gümedağ, 18/3/1946, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1.

⁵⁰⁶ Letter by local party boss Dr. Sezai Yavaşca to the CHP Administrative Committee of the Vilayet of İzmir following a complaint letter, 1/4/1944, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1.

⁵⁰⁷ Letter of Ahmet oğlu Hamdi Gozluk and Sadettin, 29/3/1949, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.309.1.

⁵⁰⁸ Anonymous letter, 27/11/1948, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1.

⁵⁰⁹ Letter by Riza, dated 16/11/1947, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.282.2.

⁵¹⁰ Letter by two members of local Halkevi's Theatre Section, 30/6/1935, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.322.2.

⁵¹¹ Letter of 23/6/1948 (No 7/12089) from the CHP General Secreter (signed by Cevad Dursunoğlu, MP for Erzurum) sent to the CHP Administrative Committee of the Vilayet of Mardin following a complaint letter. **BCA CHP**, 490.1/841.325.2.

⁵¹² Anonymous letter of 8/10/1949, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/843.333.2.

⁵¹³ "Gençlik", in *Hürses* (Günlük Siyasi Demokrat Gazete), No 135, 8 February 1946, p. 6, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/843.336.2.

⁵¹⁴ Letter of 28/4/1941 by Ali oğlu Mustafa contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.269.1.

⁵¹⁵ Letter of Hasan Karabacak, 4/5/1949; letter of Ahmet Yumuk dated 18/8/941 to CHP General Secretary, and 15/9/1941 to Halil, MP for Zonguldak; letter of Tahir Atabay, dated 9/2/1939. All four letters contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/733.3.2.

The exclusion of their authors from the Halkevi is probably one of the most common themes of the letters. Sometimes it forms the main or sole reason for complaining, sometimes it emerges as a corollary of the described situation or event. In their attempt to report their exclusion from, or inability to enter the People's House for a variety of reasons, not a few authors resort to the argument that 'unable to go to the House, the people or the youth spend their time in the coffeehouse', which the letters describe of course in negative terms employing the official – 'moralistic' discourse.

Şakır Karataş, teacher of the Gölyaka İmamlar village school, in a letter to the ruling Party in 24 December 1945 complained that the local Gendarmerie corporal had occupied "the People's Room and its garden."⁵¹⁸ When the doors of our People's Room closed for our villager fellow citizens, everybody, the youth and the elders started to waste their time in the coffeehouse corners."⁵¹⁹ In a similar vein, Rifat Kayral "from the people of Buldan", complained not of the local Gendarmerie officer, but of the 'illiterate' and 'ignorant' Halkevi janitor who was the reason "our people and our youth are refused the access to knowledge" and "spend their time in the coffeehouse corners".⁵²⁰ In a different tone, İbrahim Kacar, the chairman of the Sports Section of the K. Bölük Halkevi, wrote: "it is difficult to assemble the youth to do sports, because there is no space for such activities, which means that the youths stay behind in life as they generally spend their time in the coffeehouse corners."⁵²¹ More inspired reasons were also given for the youth's estrangement from 'their own House'. According to an anonymous letter from Doğubayezit (*sic*), the youths were filling the coffeehouses playing poker because the Halkevi chairman could not speak Turkish and the Halkevi secretary was a pedophile.⁵²² 'Lack of order' [*idaresizlik*] and apathy were in another occasion the reasons the youths of Bilecik were left with no choice but to "spend their time in the coffeehouses and in the streets gossiping."⁵²³ Another example comes from the People's Room of Bahçe. Salim Çanga complained that the chairman kept the books and journals of the People's Room locked in a cabinet. Consequently, "our people

⁵¹⁶ Letter signed by Ahmet Kayaner, president of the "Gençlik kulubu", and 27 more people, 27/1/1950, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/844.340.2.

⁵¹⁷ Letter by Mehmet Akcan, 5/2/1946, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/844.340.2.

⁵¹⁸ The occupation of or the claim over the Halkevi space by Gendarmerie officers or other civil servants and the concomitant exclusion of the complainant is a common theme of the complaint letters as we have seen in Chapter 5 and is an indication of local politics and ongoing struggles between social actors in local societies, the control of the Halkevi space and its facilities being one amongst the conflicting sides' objectives.

⁵¹⁹ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

⁵²⁰ Letter sent in 25/11/1939 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1.

⁵²¹ Letter of 21/2/1940 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1. Similar letter by Mehmet Solmaz in 3/8/1939 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/828.271.3.

⁵²² "Sonra 45 yaşlarında bir katibi vardır bu adam ötedenberi gençleri kirletmek sevdasında yani türkçesi (kulampara) dır." Letter of 29/11/1945 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/733.2.2.

⁵²³ Letter of Üzeyir Tüzün Köylüoğlu, dated 17/10/1945, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.268.2.

are not taking advantage of the books and lead a solitary life in the coffeehouse corners”.⁵²⁴

Even upon a quick reading of the letters, it becomes immediately apparent that their authors were aware of and utilized the official negative discourse about the coffeehouse. The large employment of the ‘moralistic’ discourse about coffeehouses and ‘coffeehouse activities’ in the letters then suggests that the state’s and regime’s preoccupation and suspicion was acknowledged and manipulated to a certain extent by the authors. Apart from signifying the possible existence of similar views in society then, the continuous utilization of this discourse demonstrates the authors’ ability to make out the regime’s fears and preoccupations while manipulating them in order to advance their own demands and interests, their claim over the Halkevi space, its resources and the facilities and status it might offer to contesting sides in an ongoing local feud the existence of which our letters seem to indicate. The similarities then between the official discourse and the letters suggest that the regime’s rhetoric/discourse was understood and used.⁵²⁵

Although the letters employ similar discursive elements with what I call official – moralistic discourse of the state/Party and its supporters, from another perspective they deviate from the center’s aims and discourse. First of all, it is clear that in many cases the employment of the official discourse is instrumental in furthering the authors’ aims. ‘Speaking Kemalist’,⁵²⁶ that is using the regime’s jargon and showing a minimum of ideological affinity, is something expected and in deed noticed in similar works on denunciation and complaint letters.⁵²⁷ Secondly, apart from just copying the regime’s discourse, many authors’ tactical use of it overturns some of its propositions. The authors frequently employ the distinction of the official discourse between ‘the intellectuals’ and ‘the people’ or ‘the youth’. In their use though, the terms are transformed. They usually depict themselves as (‘of’) ‘the people’ or ‘the youth’, without though accepting the implied in the official discourse distance from the reforms and the regime’s ideals on their part. After all their letters are sent to the regime itself and, although they mostly protest about somebody or something, they ultimately request something as well; thus they need and try to phrase their demand in the appropriate language. Letters filling a total refusal of the Party’s policies are not easily to be found in the Party’s archive. Instead, their employment of the ‘intellectuals vs. People’ distinction is different from

⁵²⁴ Letter of 3/2/1942 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

⁵²⁵ Other works on previous periods have attempted to gauge the degree of reception by ordinary people of the state’s discourse and policies. See Milen V. Petrov, “Everyday forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864 -1868”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 46, No 4 (2004), pp. 730-59.

⁵²⁶ Paraphrasing Davies’ ‘speak Bolshevik’ in Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 7.

⁵²⁷ Vladimir A. Kozlov, “Denunciation and Its Functions in Soviet Governance: A Study of Denunciations and Their Bureaucratic Handling from Soviet Police Archives, 1944 – 1953”, in S. Fitzpatrick and R. Gellately (eds), *Accusatory Practices. Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789 – 1989* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 136.

the official discourse. Although stating their acceptance of the reforms and their willingness to take part in them, the authors - signing as 'the People' and/or 'the youth' - were complaining that they were excluded from the 'new' spaces and their activities. Of course, what the Party and Halkevi sources collectively call intellectuals (civil servants, teachers, doctors, Party men, or in general the educated segments of the local societies) the authors call 'civil servants', 'landowners', 'high class', 'usurpers', needless to say all words with negative connotation.⁵²⁸ The celebrated 'people' of the official populist rhetoric then is transformed to and becomes the metonym for the 'humble' or the 'unjustly treated' subject- an old and common motif in petition letters - and the despised by the officials 'people' and 'youth' of the letters.⁵²⁹ This 'turn' signifies the actors' ability first of all to acknowledge and, secondly, to manipulate - to subvert without denying it - the official discourse in a tactical attempt to safeguard their interests.

The absence, or, one might add, exile from the letters of any explicit connection to religious discourse(s) in regards to the coffeehouse might be read as another sign of the authors aptitude to consume the official discourse, that is to use it in a complete different way its authors might expect it to be understood and used. The absence of any religious connotation from a discussion over a subject (coffeehouse) religious discourse has copiously treated before seems rather noteworthy especially when we bear in mind that the discussants likewise copiously attack the coffeehouse, its activities and clientele, excessively drawing upon the equally critical of the coffeehouse discourse of the governing elite, which in turn has exiled any explicit reference to religion in its public discourse.

Our letters keep an analogous stand in relation to the presence of women in the Houses and especially their stage. Once more, as we will see in the next chapter, our authors excessively employ another category - morality (*ahlak*) - that still exists in the official discourse but is less used in relation to women than the divide modern/backward. In this way our authors, without formally refuting the official power discourse, choose to use an argumentation in regards to women that draws its origin from both, seemingly contradictory, set of discourses, i.e. the 'modernist', secular discourse of the regime and the popular, faith-based discourse(s) common in society. One of course might also argue that this 'turn', this 'discursive hybridization', expresses the actors' attempt to consciously manipulate the official discourse to further their aims, or even a sincere attempt to think, speak and act in a 'Kemalist' way on the part

⁵²⁸ For some examples: 29/11/47 letter of Salih Peker from Elmalı to İnönü contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/824.257.1; 7/1/44 letter signed by "Kurtulmak isteyen Kozan gençliği" (Youth of Kozan that wishes to be saved) contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

⁵²⁹ The same usage has been noticed by Davies, *Popular Opinion*, p. 8, where "officially hallowed words such as 'revolution' or 'the people' were reclaimed for the expression of dissent. So, while the regime employed *narod* to denote 'the whole people', and thereby to imply unity, dissenters used it in a divisive way to signify the powerless lower classes."

of our authors, which seems to be a more poetic act than a simple mimicking of the Party jargon that a first reading of the letters might suggest.

Practices

Moving away from their discursive components, when read together with the reports written by the Party inspectors, the letters disclose a number of practices that relate the Halkevi to the coffeehouse, as well as to activities enacted by the frequenters of both spaces.

One of the letters' most pervading theme is the exclusion of their writers from the People's Houses and Rooms. The exclusion of the complainants from the Halkevi is also reported in relation to the (on and off-stage) presence of women in the Halkevleri, a subject to be treated in the next chapter. The authors stress it once more in relation to the coffeehouse and to 'coffeehouse' activities. It is expressed again in terms of the all-pervasive divide between 'the people' and the 'intellectuals', an omnipresent theme as well. This divide, and the exclusion it signifies, apart from a rhetoric scheme of the letters, denotes certain social and discursive practices enacted by our actors customarily, but also in response to the center's policies and their implementation, such as the creation and running of new social and institutional spaces (i.e. Halkevi, Halkodaları, Okuma Odaları).

The practice touched upon in this chapter is the drinking of coffee and/or alcoholic drinks, the playing of cards and/or gambling, and the everyday social interaction mostly between men, activities customarily enacted in coffeehouses, but also as our letters disclose to some extent in the Halkevleri. These 'coffeehouse activities', negatively described in the official – moralistic discourse, are connected to the coffeehouse and contrasted to the People's Houses and their activities.

Drawing on similar discursive elements then, our authors complain that the same practice, although prohibited, is performed in the Halkevleri, which end up look like coffeehouses. Moreover, the letters relate this practice – either in the Halls of the People's Houses or in the coffeehouses – to those performing it, expressing in these terms the omnipresent 'people' vs. 'intellectuals/civil servants' divide. More specifically, the letters protest that civil servants/intellectuals monopolize the Halkevi space excluding at the same time their authors, 'the people' and/or 'the youth', while practicing what the center is criticizing the people of doing in the coffeehouses. In simple words, the argument goes as follows: '*they* gamble in the Halkevi, when *we* are asked not to visit the coffeehouses in order to gamble'.

The letters first of all point to the distinction between 'the People' and 'the intellectuals' – a distance the intellectuals are criticized of trying to maintain. Secondly they disclose the performing of a practice the center had prohibited in the Halkevleri, namely the playing of cards and similar games. Consider the following incident as described by six complainants to the CHP and as

explained by the local CHP chief. A telegram from Kuşadası, dated 3/11/1944 and signed by a farmer, two headworkers (*kalfa*) (one in a tailors shop, the latter in a shoe shop), a porter in the municipality, a caretaker in the state dispensary, and a grocer, reported the following to the Party Headquarters

Is the People's Room the club of the civil servants? The people (halk tabakası) is rejected there. We, the youths signing below, were expelled from the People's Room by the District Governor, who also cursed and slapped one of us in the face.

The letter of Dr. Sezai Yavaşca, chairman of the sub district's CHP branch, was sent in 1/4/1944 to the Party chairmanship of the province of Izmir. The chairman's account of the event is quite different:

Our district is small and there are no suitable places for our civil servant friends⁵³⁰ to sit. In order not to have them visit unsuitable places but in order to gather [in a place] together, one of the rooms of this building, which belongs to the municipality, was allotted to them. Those from them [civil servants] desiring to study and exchange opinions pass to the People's Room, which is a separate room, while those wishing to play common games enter the other room. So the incident took place in the civil servants' room, which has no relation to the People's Room. As for the incident:

When Fevzi Hamurculu, the district governor, entered the civil servants' room, the complainants were playing parafa [a card game] on one of the tables. The Kaymakam addressed them in the following words: 'why do you follow us, there are 80 coffeehouses, this place belongs to the civil servants. There is no reason to be impolite, just go there'. Then, according to rumors, he entered the room a little later and, seeing them there again, he slapped Kenan Önder in the face. All of them are about 18-20 years old. They are not intellectuals, but immature youngsters, some of them wishing to pass for rowdies and toughs.⁵³¹

The way the local Party chief describes the plaintiffs is telling of the way categories that were exalted in the official discourse, such as the 'youth' or the 'intellectuals', are used in the local context. In his text their youth appears as a handicap rather than an asset and somehow attests to the fact that they were not intellectuals. I suggest that the chief's contempt for their age conforms to wider social norms regarding seniority. In that sense the complainants were depicted as trespassing on a space they were not fit to enter due to status (intellectuals and civil servants) and age (elders) restrictions. Needless to say, these

⁵³⁰ Party sources generally use the term 'friends' to refer to Party members and executive.

⁵³¹ Both letters contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1. Emphasis mine. "Müştekilerin hemen hepsi 18-20 yaşlarında münevver olmayan bir parça serkeş ve küllhanbeyi geçinmek isteyen toylardır."

restrictions were not to be found in the Halkevi bylaws; quite the contrary, they were prohibited. What is more, in discrediting the complaints, Sezai Yavaşca moves away from categories employed by the official discourse (intellectuals/the People) and invokes the image of the *külhanbeyi* of the neighborhood. In popular representations the *külhanbeyi* is an ambiguous figure, the local ‘tough guy’ who would ‘protect’ the ‘honor’ of the quarter and its residents – especially its women - against outsiders or ‘outside threats’, but also the local bully. In the eyes of a center that aspires to penetrate and ‘modernize’ the locality this local ‘tough guy’ is protecting against outsiders, the *külhanbeyi* is translated into an outdated negative type that obstructs the very ‘progress’ of the region the center is aiming at with the People’s Houses.

The manner gambling is accounted for by the implicated is also telling of the way the distinction between civil servants and locals is expressed and performed. The complainants do not mention anything about gambling. Instead their accusation is based on the argument that they were expelled by the *Kaymakam* because they were from ‘the People’ and not civil servants. The accused side on the other hand admits that the act of denying access to ‘non-civil servants’ was taking place, albeit not from the People’s Room, but from an adjacent room that had been allocated for the exclusionary use of civil servants. Moreover, in a style somehow assenting to the accusations of exclusion, the local Party chief explains the reasons for having a separate room for the sole use of the civil servants: “*Our district is small and there are no suitable places for our civil servant friends. In order not to have them visit unsuitable places and in order to have them assemble together*”. As for the complainants, the *Kaymakam*, who was accused elsewhere⁵³² of playing backgammon with the Bank’s vice chairman in the Halkevi, is reported explaining where the complainants - that is not the ‘civil servant friends’- should assemble, i.e. the coffeehouse. The problem thus was not playing cards per se, but playing cards in the wrong place, in the Peoples House where gambling was prohibited. And, as one can plausibly assume and the Party chief’s letter implies, the civil servants were playing cards, or – as Dr. Sezai Yavaşca puts it - “common games” in the Halkevi. Instead of excluding the ‘non-intellectual other’ from the People’s Room then, as the complainants protest, the local CHP chief’s response denotes that a separate space was created for that same purpose within, or next to, the People’s Room. If true, this arrangement seems to be an ingenious solution on the part of local Party and state elites, an answer to two seemingly incompatible demands: one the one hand to have a space of their own and keep segregated from the locals without monopolizing the Halkevi and thus excluding the ‘other’, while, on the other hand, to be able to perform separately, and not publicly in spaces more open to the public eye and the local population, such as the coffeehouse,

⁵³² Telegram to the Prime Minister Şükrü Şaraçoğlu, sent in 18/3/1946, by Nuri Gümedağ from Kemalpaşa, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1.

activities the centre had banned in the People's Houses.⁵³³ From another point of view, in terms of the Ottoman state's political theory, this solution prevented the transgression of the border between rulers and ruled, safeguarding in this way distinct spaces of socialization for state and/or local elites.

A letter from Inebolu discloses an analogous ingenious method to 'keep the border intact', to achieve the segregation of 'the intellectuals' from the rest by a similar act of exclusion, while performing 'coffeehouse activities'.

We are of the People's Party and since the Halkevi was established in our district, it has been divided into two parts; the large hall is reserved for studying, theatre plays and all kinds of meetings; the other part is a small room where the Halkevi administration has permitted the [drinking of] coffee, and the playing of billiards. All the people could sit in both rooms. In the evening of 22/3/1949 we, children of this country, went to the Halkevi that we know to be open to everybody and sat in the small playing room that is used as a coffeehouse. When we asked the coffeehouse owner [kahveci] to make us two coffees and give us the domino, we were faced with the following answer.

He told us that he will not give us the domino and make us coffee because, apparently the Halkevi chairman had said that only the Halkevi members, High School graduates and civil servants could enter this small room that was used as a coffeehouse and was open to all the people over the age of 18. If High School graduates and civil servants are considered to be from the people, then aren't we - not High School graduates or civil servants - from the people?⁵³⁴

The two practices the letters disclose, that is, on the one hand, the segregation of the 'intellectuals' from the rest of 'the People', and the playing of cards and games on the other, are also echoed in relation to a similar complaint theme, the 'City Club'. The 'City Clubs' were targets of both some complaint letters and many newspaper articles.⁵³⁵ Both sources condemn them on the same rhetoric and discursive terms as in the case of the coffeehouse. Although the City Clubs' alleged aim was to "form a scientific and social

⁵³³ This compartmentalization of the Halkevi space in order to serve the civil servants' need to segregate from the locals has been also observed in the House's discursive rival, the coffeehouse. Referring to the coffeehouses in Orf, Meeker mentioned the existence of inner rooms in some coffeehouses reserved for the exclusive use of certain 'notables'. In a similar fashion, some coffeehouses were frequented mainly by non-local civil servants and educated local youths, while others by locals, villagers, merchants and artisans. Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (California: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 348, 350-2.

⁵³⁴ Letter of 29/3/1949, singed by İnebolu Çamikebir Mahallesinden Ahmet oğlu Hamdi Gözlük ve Sadettin, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.309.1.

⁵³⁵ For examples see Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve iktidar*, pp. 175 – 178, 240.

institution in the region”⁵³⁶ - to quote the Bylaws of the *Şehir Kulübü* of Balıkesir, in place of debate, they were reported hosting “high gambling parties.”⁵³⁷ In most of the sources –complaint letters and newspaper/journal articles – the City Club, apart from the gambling accusations and the gap between intellectuals and people reported to preserve, is negatively associated to the People’s House and its activities by both complainants and Party Inspectors. Zühtü Durukan, MP for Samsun and Party inspector of the Bilecik area, relates the indifference shown by a number of civil servants to the Halkevi activities to the existence of a City Club. According to the inspector, Bilecik was a small and neglected provincial center; the former Vali did not care about anything as he was waiting to serve his last five years until retirement; and a number of civil servants, who had not been prosecuted for previous offences, had been appointed there as a form of punishment. These civil servants “were taking advantage of the governor’s indifference, have lost their discipline to the state, and were assembling in a place called ‘City Club’, where they were gambling all night till morning, sometimes abandoning their service and continuing gambling even during the day.” As a result of the civil servants and teachers’ indifference the Halkevi “remained stagnant”, and “as some of the addicted to gambling high-level civil servants were not visiting the Halkevi, they became an obstacle to the works [in the Halkevi] of the junior civil servants as well.”⁵³⁸

Muhsin Adil Binal, MP for Konya and Party Inspector of the Seyhan area, provides a more general assesment regarding the ‘City Club’ phenomenon, its causes and results.

*In fact, one of the first things a District or provincial Governor is thinking of doing in the cities and towns is to find a building for the civil servants in particular to assemble in order to relax, and to manage it as a Club. In such a place, [they] come together to chat and read newspapers and journals; depending on the place, in a small or large scale, gambling is accepted as a natural fact. Our People’s Houses are obliged to benefit from the efforts of the intellectuals and the expertise of the civil servants. After all, in small towns the success of the activities of the Halkevleri depends solely on the civil servant members. From this perspective, the existence of such Clubs is naturally preventing the activities of the Houses. It is also needless to explain how much damage to our social body the gambling in the Clubs and the creation of lazy and vagabond types produces.*⁵³⁹

⁵³⁶ *Balıkesir Şehir Kulübü Nizamnamesi* (İstanbul: Türk Pazarı matbaası, 1934), p. 2.

⁵³⁷ Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve iktidar*, p. 175.

⁵³⁸ Letter No 354, dated 16/5/1941, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.268.2.

⁵³⁹ Letter No 31, dated 8/2/1944, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2.

Although criticizing the City Clubs as possible centers of gambling and recognizing the potential impediments to the Halkevi activities these clubs might produce, the Party inspector does not seem to consider the idea behind the creation of such clubs – the carving of an autonomous space for the exclusive use of the civil servants – harmful, unless used for gambling. This is reminiscent of the Party’s position on drinking and gambling in Party buildings and Turkish Hearths in 1930, when a Party communication stated that these activities were not prohibited in general, but only inside Party buildings in order not to give the wrong impressions to ‘the people’, who “will not tolerate them”;⁵⁴⁰ appearances again. The existence of the need to sustain the border is silently expressed, the civil servants within the border though should not *appear* provocative to the excluded. The ambivalence is once more conveyed: drinking, gambling and playing games, although condemned as inappropriate and unpleasant in the official discourse, do not seem to be evaluated the same way always, and regardless of where and by whom they were performed. The opinions of the main users of such spaces, the civil servants, are not directly voiced in the sources used here, but the Party Inspector Muhsin Adil Binal seems to partially convey them in an implicit way. The civil servants are recognized the right to assemble together separately from the rest of the people and, if not becoming “lazy and vagabond” or “preventing the activities of the Halkevleri”, “gambling, big or small, is considered a natural fact”, almost acceptable – if we may add.

Similar critiques were raised by complaint letters as well. A letter from Tosya (in the Province of Kastamonu) attempted to direct the attention of the Party Headquarters to the City Club of the area “because I consider it to be opposing the principles of the government and the Party.” The anonymous author wrote that all the civil servants of the region, including the public prosecutor, the judge, the mayor and the Halkevi chairman, were members and were paying membership fees. He then enumerated the effects this ‘establishment’ had for the region. “For this reason the civil servants are totally indifferent to the Halkevi. This establishment creates a gap between the people and the civil servants. The membership fees are not used for the common good. This place is doing nothing good for the region, but it is just a nest of gambling and drinking for three or five civil servants and chiefs (*ümera*). For the Judge and prosecutor’s sake Party and Halkevi members say nothing and have fun together.”⁵⁴¹

Three years later, a communiqué of the Ministry of Interior reiterated almost identically the charges of the above letter against the ‘City Clubs’. The communication admitted that the City Clubs were established and run in opposition to the People’s House; that the Clubs had obtained a number of privileges in comparison to other public places; that because of these privileges

⁵⁴⁰ Communiqué No 2882, dated 21/8/1930, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/435.1804.2, reproduced in Koçak, *İktidar ve Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, pp. 193 – 4.

⁵⁴¹ Letter of 15/9/1941 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.309.1.

they had become gambling and drinking centers; that they were obstructing the ‘coming together’ (*kaynaşma*) of the People and the intellectuals; and that they were preventing the interest and participation that was necessary for the People’s Houses and Rooms.⁵⁴² Considered together with the Party Inspector’s report given above, as well as together with numerous letters from Party chiefs and civil servants, this communication reveals the center’s considerations regarding the position of the Houses and of state representatives and employees within local societies. All the above sources then admit that there was a head-on confrontation between a number of conflicting needs and aims expressed by central and provincial institutions and actors. On the one hand, silently or not, the need of civil servants and bureaucrats to separate and keep themselves segregated from the rest of the local people is voiced, while on the other hand the objective of the regime and the People’s Houses to carry out the ‘coming together’ of intellectuals and people is equally expressed. The ingenious solutions to this deadlock, created and evenly denounced by social actors, were the answers to the tension the two conflicting needs were producing at the local level.

‘Border administration’

To sum up, the complaint letters and the reports - be it from a local Party man or an (external) Party Inspector - refer to two practices already present in a number of spaces and occasions even before the creation of the People’s Houses or similar ‘new’ spaces. The former is the practice of segregation of the educated and elite segments of local societies from the rest of the population. The latter is a wide set of leisure time and socializing social activities the center had suspected for centuries together with the space within which they typically take place, i.e. the coffeehouse. These practices intersect with the ‘new’ space of the People’s House and its activities; encounter and contrast with the Houses’ aims; interrelate with, reflect and become reflected in conflicting but also parallel discourses employed both by regime and social actors. We have seen how the accommodative discourse uttered by civil servants and Party men in relation to their need to segregate from the rest of the people is contrasted to the accusatory discourse of those excluded from or denied access to the Halkevi.

If we are to remember the political geography of the Houses sketched in chapter 4 and 5, we may well read the letters’ complaining about the civil servants’ gambling (or generally about gambling and related ‘coffeehouse activities’) and the exclusion of their authors from the Houses, as a sign of ongoing struggles between local actors for access to the Houses, their facilities and, as a result, to the status this association might entail. In many occasions, as we have seen above, various groups were trying to maintain the exclusive

⁵⁴² Communiqué No 22328/10391, dated 23/12/1944, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/847.352.1, mentioned in Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, p. 240.

use of the Houses' space, occasionally by the simple exclusion of others, with the employment of coercive methods (police, gendarmerie), or by imposing restrictions of entrance, enforcing rules of partial (spatial and temporal) inclusion/exclusion of others, as in the case of a 'Women's evening' (*kadın gecesi*),⁵⁴³ the 'davetiye system',⁵⁴⁴ the allocation of one room for the exclusive use of members or civil servants, and similar cunning regulations to bypass the programmatic dictum of the Bylaws that the Houses are open to all citizens regardless of wealth and social position. Telling of the struggle between various groups and individuals for entrance and access to the Houses on the other hand stand the letters complaining about many deficiencies, wrong doings and the exclusion of their authors from the House and/or its activities. Willing but unable for a number of reasons to enter by their account, their authors use the official discourse in a tactical and ingenious way, 'turning', stretching and even mutating without totally and outwardly refusing it, 'using' its own contradictions and ambiguities in order to further their accusation and, ultimately, their request, which we can finally read as a result of a continuous struggle that was waged by our actors (included and excluded) upon the Halkevi border. By Halkevi border I do not refer here to the Houses' spatial characteristics alone. I rather refer to the discourses describing, the practices connected, the values attributed to the Halkevi, and to the contenders or refuters of such discourses, practices and values, who in our case are the actors situated in, on, outside but also far away from the Halkevi border.⁵⁴⁵ I chose to view these twists and turns and the accommodation tactics and discourse involved as acts of domestication of the practices the center was striving to introduce. Domestication here refers to acts by social actors that attempt to

⁵⁴³ See next chapter.

⁵⁴⁴ I call 'davetiye system' the system of invitation cards to Halkevi events, like theatre and musical performances, that was devised by Party and Halkevi bosses to regularize the entrance to Halkevi activities but also to restrict the entrance only to the people receiving the invitations. The davetiye was one of the most prevailing subjects of complaint letters signaling the exclusion of the complainants from the Halkevi Halls. See anonymous letter of 8/7/942 from Zonguldak complaining about the system of 'colored tickets' applied by the Halkevi to regulate the entrance to the Halkevi cinema: Monday evening shows are restricted to the head of departments with the white card; Tuesday evenings to the rest of the civil servants with the pink card; on Wednesdays to the company executives with the blue card; on Thursdays to the low level employees of the company with grey cards and finally on Friday evenings to the workers. Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/845.344.2. For a similar system see Esra Üstündağ – Selamoğlu, "Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması. Hereke'de Değişim", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 8, No 45, (September 1997). Also letters of lawyer Necati Erdem from Sinop, dated 5/12/1947 and 23/2/1948, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/843.333.2. Letter signed by ten Halkevi members from İnegöl, dated 27/8/1943 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2. Letter signed T.C. from Tosya, dated 22/3/948, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.309.1. Also complaint letter published in 6/2/1940 in the newspaper *Kars*, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.306.2. Letter of university students sent in 27 February 1943, and letter of Ayni Kozak from Izmir Halkevi, both contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1. For a printed davetiye card of the Karşıyaka Halkevi sent to the General Secretariat by a number of students excluded from a Halkevi event see their letter in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1.

⁵⁴⁵ Other *spaces* might possess similar characteristics, the 'City Club' being one example among a number of possible spaces with similar clientele and characteristics (*Askeri mahfil, Cumhuriyet balosu, Muallim Cemiyeti, Okuma Odası*, etc).

render the kemalist policies familiar to local needs and interests, in sum to the sociopolitical and cultural realities of local societies.

Drawing on Meltem Ahıska, I employ the term ‘border administration’ to designate but also to explore this process of domestication, of that continuous ‘turning’, ‘twisting’ and accommodation of the center’s projects, but also of the struggle waged upon the real, practical and discursive border of the Halkevi, and the level of inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the ‘other’ displayed by each House.⁵⁴⁶ Ahıska refers to a ‘border administration’ that was continuously employed in the 1930s and 1940s in radio broadcasting between supposedly conflicting concepts, such as foreign/national, elite/people, men/women. Ahıska uses the term to point at the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the representations of such notions in radio broadcastings. She notes the ability of the representations to recognize the existing borders and thus draw new ones, while stressing the association this operations of ‘border administration’ has to relations and practices of power. In our case ‘border administration’ is used in a broader sense to include not only the representations or discourses but also the practices that constitute the ‘border’ between the Houses, or what the Houses are supposed to stand for, and the ‘outside’/‘other’; between social actors that were either included in or excluded from the Halkevi, while fighting either to enter or deny access to the Halkevi space.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have seen how social actors cope with the center’s ‘new’ habits, discourses and practices of leisure time socialization, while at the same time making allowances for local popular widespread practices and discourses as well as their personal and group interests; how both in terms of discourse and practices the actors of our stories manage to ‘domesticate’ the ‘new’ practices of leisure time by means of manipulating the ambiguities of the Kemalist reforms and their underlying discourse, as well as through a number of ingeniously crafted adaptations of the activities the center had planned.

More specifically, we have seen that (a) the complainants were able to recognize and employ the ubiquitous in the press, but also – to a lesser extent – in Party sources, ‘moralistic’ discourse about the coffeehouse. In addition, we have shown how (b) the authors employed elements of the official discourse cunningly manipulating its ambivalences, which enabled them to ‘turn’ it without refuting it entirely. The way the word ‘people’ is employed in the complaint letters – to denote the powerless and unjustly treated - is a telling example of our authors’ ability to draw on a key element of the official discourse and ‘turn’ it to signify something completely different from its former meaning – the hallowed ‘people’ of the populist rhetoric.

⁵⁴⁶ Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı. Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik* (İstanbul: Metis, 2005), p. 46.

In terms of practices, our letters once more convey the exclusion of their writers from the Halkevi, an exclusion they relate to coffee drinking and gambling, activities habitually performed in coffeehouses, but also in the People's Houses, although formally forbidden. Our complaint letters reveal that what the official discourse of the period was despising about coffeehouse and the Halkevi Bylaws prohibit was actually taking place in the People's Houses. Furthermore, the letters reveal that in many cases the practice of playing cards, backgammon or domino, the drinking of coffee and alcohol in the Houses was concomitant with the (need for) separation of civil servants and educated people from the rest of the population.

In addition, we have seen that Halkevi actors – usually civil servants and local elites - devised a number of ingenious techniques to keep the space of the Halkevi segregated while performing 'coffeehouse' practices. In short, the argument put forward is that by looking at the accusations about the consumption of coffee, alcohol and the playing of cards, activities associated with the coffeehouse, we actually become witnesses of yet another 'turn' or 'twist' of what the center attempted to create with the establishment of the People's Houses. Activities implicitly and explicitly condemned as contrary to the essence of the 'Kemalist cause', and were consequently prohibited, continued to exist within the Halkevi walls as well as in their initial core, the coffeehouse. I view this as an act of *domestication* of the space and the activities the regime was attempting to initiate. The 'domestication' refers to the way the center's ideas and plans – without being rejected - were 'blended' by local actors with activities, perceptions and practices they were supposed to eradicate, or to which they were discursively at least opposed.

By studying the accommodation and domestication of the reforms by social actors, my aim is not to assess the success of failure of such projects of social mechanics.⁵⁴⁷ I am rather interested in viewing the consumption involved as a *process of border administration*. By studying the consumption of a number of products of the center's *project*, I wish to demonstrate the significance this *process of border administration* holds in relation to our actors' identity management.⁵⁴⁸ If we are to study the "emergence of new identities and new forms of subjectivity", I argue that we need to be attentive to the production of such 'accommodated' spaces, discourses and practices, in short to the "local specificities of modernity",⁵⁴⁹ that local sociopolitical and cultural milieu within and upon the 'administered' borders of which our

⁵⁴⁷ For a critique of the recent literature on the 'Turkish Modernization' and the trend to view it as a failure or success see Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı*, especially the part "Model ve Kopya", pp. 35 – 45.

⁵⁴⁸ On identity management see Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, "Introduction", in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 10.

⁵⁴⁹ Both direct quotations from Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern. On Missing Dimensions in the Study of the Turkish Modernity", in Bozdoğan and Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity*, p. 113.

subjects operate and produce meaningful representations of themselves and others.

Chapter 7

Women on the Halkevi Stage

In this chapter I attempt to read a number of complaint and petition letters in relation to the presence and participation of women in the Halkevi activities. More specifically put, our reading of the corpus of complaint letters will focus on gender issues in relation to the People's Houses in an attempt to study the meeting of the regime's high-modernist discourse and policies on women with wider society's perceptions and practices in relation to women.

One of the targets of the reform project was the Turkish woman. The place of women in the 'new' Turkish society was quite different and novel in comparison to what can be considered as their culturally prescribed role. Women were to become more visible in the public sphere. They were given equal civil rights with men, they were supposed to be educated and work together with men, vote and get elected, but at the same time continue to perform their 'traditional' duties as mothers and wives. The People's Houses were the locus wherein and by the activities of which the position of women in this new Turkish society was going to be realized. Women were given the privilege and at the same time duty to be members of the Houses, give lectures to mixed audiences, act on stage, play and enjoy music, socialize with men in 'family meetings', concerts, cinema and theatrical plays, dance with men in festivals and parties, visit villages and participate in various courses as both instructors and students. These practices, especially in provincial towns where such habits had not been witnessed before, were quite novel. Being openly contradictory to the established beliefs regarding the role of women in society, one can reasonably expect to encounter a number of conflicting views and reactions towards them, from overtly opposing to accommodating. In accordance with their interests and beliefs, as well as those of their social environment, people could openly refuse or embrace, (attempt to) avoid when possible or even (try to) 'turn' these novelties to something more familiar and socially less provocative, 'domesticating' them one might say. Such contradictory to or challenging the official discourse on the 'women's issue' opinions are not explicitly to be expressed in the normative sources on the Halkevleri, namely the Party and government publications, not unreasonably if we consider their propagative nature and function. In an attempt to overcome this lacuna in the official sources, this chapter attempts a reading of the complaint and petition letters sent to the Party headquarter.

In Chapter 2 we have dealt with the participation of women in the People's Houses, the local Party structures and other local associations of the provincial towns of Kayseri and Balıkesir. Our sources for both towns indicate that first of all the numbers of women Halkevi members and executive were disproportionately low compared to male members. Secondly, we have identified that the majority of the very few female participants were

schoolteachers. This female group of members exhibited two characteristics. Firstly they were probably the only female state employees in the provinces and, secondly, a part of them, the larger if we might guess, was composed of non-local women appointed to the provinces usually from larger cities, such as Istanbul or Ankara. Finally, a few of the female Halkevi and Party members were the wives, daughters and sisters of mostly non-local state employees and local Party bosses, although the vast majority of the female members of local urban elites was absent from the Halkevi and Party registers.

I have also argued that the choice of local elite members to enlist their women into Party or Halkevi structures was an intentional move. The same can also be argued for the opposite stance, i.e. keeping them away from the local public life. In the first exceptional case scenario, the expected addressee of such a decision, or rather the audience of such a performance was the Party superiors. Such an open and personal act of adherence to their 'ideals' and policies was expected to generate their positive reaction when asked or needed, as we have seen with the case of Mamurhan Özsan's petition letter. A denunciation letter against Mamurhan's husband on the other hand indicates the reasons behind the opposite choice, i.e. to keep the female family members outside the Halkevi and Party public spectrum. In that letter, the complainant attacked Naci Özsan because "his wife was considered of 'low morals' among the people". This accusation gives us a clue about the reasoning behind the decision of most local Party bosses and members alike not to promote their women to the local public life either in the Halkevi or the Party structures. More specifically, I refer to the possible and probable discrediting such an act might entail for the 'liberating husbands' in the eyes of the local society whose value system assigned women to the segregated sphere of the family and the house and to their men the obligation to safeguard their honour and protect their own manly self-esteem. Thus, publicly and openly 'emancipating' their wives and daughters to earn the high Party's approval was a dangerous move for local elites that could possibly damage their standing in the local society and among the local population and politics.⁵⁵⁰

Already with these attributes that were stemming from and coupled with wider society's attitudes and perceptions on women we have a clear indication of the resistance and opposition to the regime's and the Halkevi's policies in relation to women and the ongoing struggle and tension produced upon the implementation, or, to use De Certeau's term, upon the 'consumption' of the Halkevi's women-related policies and activities at the local level. The study of this secondary production, the 'consumption' by social actors of a number of Halkevi activities that involved women is, thus, the primary target of the following.

⁵⁵⁰ In Develi, a small town near Kayseri, while all male family members had adopted an outward 'western' outlook, most urban Party elites were keeping their wives and daughters segregated because they did not want to hurt their honour (*şerefine halel getirmek*). Ayşe Güneş Ayata, *CHP Örgüt ve İdeoloji* (Ankara: Gündoğan, 1992), p. 185.

Women and Theatre

Although our corpus of letters deals with a variety of subjects, certain themes predominate. Immorality is probably one of the mostly popular charges pressed against Halkevi and Party figures. Accusations of immorality are mostly related to the presence, absence and activities of women in the Houses. The Halkevi theatre stage⁵⁵¹ is a privileged site to study the attitudes, ideas and reactions towards the presence of women in the Houses. The majority of letters referring – even vaguely – to women is related, one way or another, to theatre, either visiting theatrical groups or the Houses' own groups.

The People's Houses' stage

The Party regarded theatre as a powerful educational and propaganda means to disseminate its reforms. Apart from its value as an artistic form, theatre was perceived as one of the most important means for the development of what the sources of the period call *Halk Terbiyesi*, the transmission of reforms one can argue in a more general sense.⁵⁵² This importance is definitely due to the theatre's direct impact on the audiences, especially in largely illiterate societies. Similar arguments were raised with regards to cinema and radio in relation to 'Popular education'.⁵⁵³ This was also true for radio and cinema. It was then the regime's explicit intention to popularize theatre and use the stage as a medium to transmit its reforms and ideas to the populace. In that sense, instead of "literary virtue", most of the Halkevi plays relied "on the emotional merit of one or more men dying for their country and the survivors waving the flag just before the final curtain", to use a revealing quote of an eye witness.⁵⁵⁴ The creation of a specific Halkevi Section that would "organize a theatrical group composed of both women and men",⁵⁵⁵ "make the Houses lively and energetic, help to cover the theatrical needs in towns and cities, accustom the youth to speak openly and beautifully, educate good orators [and] be of useful advice for the society and region (*Memleket ve cemiyet için faydalı telkinlerde bulunmak*) underscores the significance theatre had for the regime.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵¹ On the Halkevi Theatre stage see Nurhan Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998) and Eyal Ari, "The People's houses and the Theatre in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No 4, (2004).

⁵⁵² On *Halk Terbiyesi* see Introduction.

⁵⁵³ Hamit Zübeyr Koşay, *Halk Terbiyesi* (Ankara: Köy Hocası Matbaası, 1931), and his own "Halk terbiyesi Vasıtaları", *Ülkü*, No 2, (March, 1933).

⁵⁵⁴ Donald Webster, *The Turkey of Atatürk. Social Process in the Turkish Reformation* (New York, 1939), pp. 188-9.

⁵⁵⁵ *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932), p. 11.

⁵⁵⁶ *C.H.P. Halkevleri çalışma talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zevbamat, 1940), p. 13-4.

CHP commissioned⁵⁵⁷ the writing, organized play writing competitions⁵⁵⁸ and published a series of theatrical plays for use by the People's Houses. The Party also issued a catalogue of plays⁵⁵⁹ appropriate for the Halkevi stage⁵⁶⁰ and even promoted theatrical groups to perform in the People's Houses.⁵⁶¹ Plays not included in the list had to be approved by the General Secretary.⁵⁶² Most important, men were forbidden to play women's roles.⁵⁶³ This created a real problem for the Halkevi officials. It was a common secret that women volunteers willing to take part in Halkevi plays and put themselves and their bodies on stage in front of the local public were rare.⁵⁶⁴ In view of this issue, the Party explicitly asked for plays with a handful of female characters. According to the conditions of the 1938/9 Halkevi theatre play competition, the theatrical plays to be submitted had to have few female roles. The conditions for the 1941 competition stated that the plays should contain three female roles at the most. Before trying to contemplate on the reasons for this refusal, let us see how the Party attempted to resolve this issue.

In need of women: pressure, refusal, evasion and enticement

Faced with women's refusal to act on stage, the Party and State applied official and unofficial pressure and in many cases local Party and Halkevi officials lured women's participation offering some kind of salary or a job, in direct contrast to the logic of the Halkevi bylaws, according to which participation in the Halkevi activities was considered voluntarily and not in return for money.

In a report by the Party Inspector Dr. Hasan Vasıf Somyürek, the chairman of the Manisa House is accused of using two men to play female roles in a

⁵⁵⁷ Vahap Kabahasanoğlu, *Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel* (İstanbul: Toker yayınları, 1979), p. 16.

⁵⁵⁸ Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları*, pp. 109 – 12.

⁵⁵⁹ Kenan Olgun, *Yöresel Kalkınmada Adapazarı Halkevi* (İstanbul: Değişim Yayınları, 2008), p. 66; Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları*, p. 103.

⁵⁶⁰ In a dispatch to the Houses in 1934 Saffet Ziya of the Genel Secretariat asked the Houses' executive members not to perform any play that had not been previously approved by the Party. *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Katibiumumluğunun Fırka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebligatı, İkinci Kanun 1934' ten Haziran 1934 sonuna kadar*, Vol. 4, (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1934), p. 30.

⁵⁶¹ According to a communication of the General Secretariat of the CHP to 29 Houses the theatrical group or Atıf Kaptan and his wife Fatma Leman "will arrive at your House to stage theatrical plays of the repertoire given below." The communiqué was sent in 26/9/1946 and defined the allocation of the profit to the House and the percentage to be given to the group. Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/7.39.22.

⁵⁶² *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi*, article 38.

⁵⁶³ *CHP Halkevleri Çalışma Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zerbamat, 1940), p. 14. In the 1932 bylaws this is not explicitly prohibited, but implied, one can argue, since this is the only part of the text that both 'men and women' are referred to together and required to form the House's theatrical group.

⁵⁶⁴ Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları*, p. 109 – 110.

Halkevi play because two women teachers abandoned the rehearsals.⁵⁶⁵ The lack of women willing to take part in the Halkevi theatre experiment was a common secret, something Halkevi chairmen were mentioning in the letters to the Party, either as an excuse for the bad performance of their House's stage, or as reason for the Party and/or state's intervention, mostly by pressing the female teachers to 'go on stage'.⁵⁶⁶

Given the importance the Party placed on theatre and the participation of women in theatrical events, various methods were employed to overcome the ubiquitous lack of women volunteers. Instructions were sent by the Party to local Party structures and Halkevleri requesting the cooperation of teachers.⁵⁶⁷ The Education Minister issued a dispatch strongly recommending teachers to participate in the Halkevi activities.⁵⁶⁸ The regime's aim was to have teachers and in general civil servants form the nucleus of the People's Houses. In that respect autonomous teachers' associations were under pressure by Party and/or state to close down and join in mass in the Halkevleri.⁵⁶⁹ Another form of pressure on women schoolteachers was to make them sign an official paper registering their refusal to take part in the House's theatre plays.

*Although it has been recommended to them to play the female roles in the theatre plays to be staged in the Halkevleri, the women teachers informed that they would not be able to accept. I respectfully submit a signed document (...) I inform you that I won't be able to accept (Signature). I cannot accept (Signature). I won't be able to accept (Signature). I feel uncomfortable. I won't be able to accept (Signature). I won't be able to accept (Signature).*⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁵ Letter of Kütahya Bölgesi Müfettişi sent to CHP in 7/5/943 from Manisa contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/840.323.1.

⁵⁶⁶ Some examples: 23/11/1939 letter of Party inspector of Bolu Area Karaca in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/828.271.3; 25/7/934 letter of Karahisar Halkevi chairman to CHP and 10/7/934 to local district officer (*kaymakam*) on the refusal of local women teachers to take part in the Halkevi theatre in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.293.1; letter of Izmir CHP chairman (1/11/935) to CHF mentioning the teachers' indifference towards the Halkevi activities, especially theatre in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.303.1.

⁵⁶⁷ For an example see dispatches No 83 (28/6/1932), 66 (7/3/1932) and 67 (25/5/1932) in *CHF katibiumumiliğinin Fırka Teşkilatına umumi Tebligatından Halkevlerini alakadar eden kısım Ağustos 1931den Kanunuevvel 1932 nihayetine kadar*, Vol. 1, (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1933), pp. 56, 46 and 48 respectively.

⁵⁶⁸ *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası katibiumumiliğinden Fırka Teşkilatına umumi Tebligatı Mayıs 1931den Birinci Kanun 1932 nihayetine kadar*, Vol. 1, (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1933), p. 92.

⁵⁶⁹ Yahya Akyüz, *Türkiye'de öğretmenlerin toplumsal değişimdeki etkileri 1848 - 1940* (Ankara: Doğan Basımevi, 1978), p. 251.

⁵⁷⁰ Letter from Iskilip *Maarif memurluğu* (local Director of Education) to *Kaymakamlık* (Office of the sub district governor), 11/11/1941, where five women teachers were put to sign their refusal. In **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.280.2. A similar case took place in Bergama in late 1935. Letter (18/10/1935) of Bergama Halkevi chairman and the minutes of a meeting (10/10/1935) with 9 teachers in the Halkevi where their refusal to act on stage was discussed. Contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.303.1.

This paper was usually sent to their superior, usually the local Department of Education, the Ministry of Education, or the District Governor. It was presumably expected to intimidate those refusing to participate and act as a warning for the rest. Another example comes from Denizli, where an overzealous Vali was after the female schoolteachers who were sceptical about 'coming on stage'. Both Arman Hürrem in his memoirs⁵⁷¹ and the files concerning the Halkevi of Denizli in the archive demonstrate the unwillingness of female teachers to take part in the Halkevi theatre stage as well as the Vali's insistence and pressure.⁵⁷²

Another letter to the CHP by the chairman of the Karahisar Halkevi suggests that a struggle was taking place within the under-pressure group of women schoolteachers.

Because of the lack of women members of our House's Theatre Section we could not stage any plays. As a result of the efforts made in order to ensure that women, which form a part of our social cause, take an active role in [social] life, Mrs Necdet Yazıcıoğlu and Mrs Fatma in order to overcome this destitution, have put their selves forward with great self-sacrifice and, in order to be an example to other young women by eliminating this obstacle, they have registered in our Theatre Section, staged 'Hedef' with great success and promised to participate in all the plays our House is going to stage. [...]

In opposition to the pleads we have made for many years to the women teachers, who are supposed to be the initiators of everything, to take part in our plays, I heard that Mrs Ayşe, one of the teachers witnessing the participation of the above mentioned ladies in the play, did not find sufficient enough to abstain from such kind of unselfishness but she also tried to sabotage our House's efforts on this issue by referring to the wickedness

⁵⁷¹ Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin tabanı. Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç* (Ankara: I Matbaacılık ve Ticaret, 1969), pp. 208, 213, 240.

⁵⁷² Letter of the Vali of Denizli to the General Secretariat of the CHP, dated 2/6/1939, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1. The Vali reports that the schoolteachers are those among 'the youth' whose psychological state (*halatı ruhiye*) and their occupation makes them suitable for the activities of the Houses. Nevertheless, he continues, a lot of the teachers of the Primary and Lise schools have neglected to assume "their duties in our Houses". "The women teachers were not able to be convinced to take part in the Halkevi theatrical plays, although the Section's chairman is a woman teacher and has asked for their participation, despite the intervention of the Director of Education and of the Vali, who is also the local Party chairman." At the end of his letter, the Vali asked the Party to have the Ministry of Education apply pressure to the schoolteachers who had rejected to participate in the theatrical activities of the local Halkevi. The Party replied that the participation of the female teachers cannot be achieved by an administrative order but through "inspiration, and wide affection and respect". Letter of General Secretary of the CHP to the Vali of Denizli, dated 4/7/1939 and contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1. Both documents were forwarded to the Education Minister. In his reply to the CHP in 13/7/1939 contained in the above archive folder, Hasan Ali Yücel agreed with the General Secretary.

*[fenalığı] of acting on stage and spreading her propaganda towards other women.*⁵⁷³

Apart from sheer pressure, the Halkevi authorities sought other ways to solve the problem. The Halkevi By-Laws prohibited the allotment of any kind of salary or any amount of money to the Halkevi members in exchange for their participation, which was considered voluntary. Nevertheless, financial compensation was a rather common practice, especially for women. Some women were offered a job in the Halkevi in return for their participation in the Halkevi plays. When she was asked to take a role in a Halkevi play, the ex secretary of the Edremit House told the Halkevi chairman: “I am not the Halkevi secretary any more, I cannot go on stage.” She had found a job in the İş Bankası of Edremit, as the angry chairman complains to the Party.⁵⁷⁴ In a letter to CHP sent in 5/2/1937 the chairman of the House in Elaziğ states that “because of the lack of women to act, [our stage] cannot be put in permanent motion. While thinking of how to overcome this difficulty, in articles we read in the Istanbul newspapers on various dates we saw that 1) The People’s House of Bursa is employing female stage performers (*sahne artistleri*) for its stage activities with a wage, and that 2) the Ferah theatre of the Eminönü Halkevi is staging plays with an entrance fee. In order to follow such examples, we request to know to what extent such actions are appropriate to the Halkevi Bylaws, and in what way they were invented.”⁵⁷⁵ In a letter to CHP, dated 16/5/1942, Mazhar Gençkurt from Bursa, member of the Local House’s theatre section, seeks the Party’s mediation to solve his problem. His 12 year daughter had apparently received twice the amount of ten lira to cover her expenses in the plays she took part in the Halkevi. He is asking for this amount to be given to his daughter on a monthly basis,⁵⁷⁶ together with two more female members of the Theatre section. In his words, “taking into consideration the problems encountered in the procurement (*tedarik*) of ladies, you [CHP] have ordered that necessary expenses are to be given especially to women in all Houses.”⁵⁷⁷ Zatiye Tonguç, the young girl, whose request to be re-employed in the library of the Kayseri Halkevi is given in Chapter 3, was probably also employed in the library as an implicit payment for her participation as an actor in the Kayseri Halkevi’s stage.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷³ Letter of 16/3/1937 by Hasan Özaraç, chairman of Karahisar Halkevi contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.293.1.

⁵⁷⁴ Letter of 13/1/1942 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.265.2.

⁵⁷⁵ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.287.2.

⁵⁷⁶ He does not call it a salary though, probably understanding the Party’s objection.

⁵⁷⁷ Letter contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2 together with CHP Bilecik Bölgesi Müfettişi Zühtü Durukan’s 1/6/1942 relevant report.

⁵⁷⁸ See Chapter 3.

Images of Theatre and actresses in the provinces: 'Tuluat tiyatrosu'

The complaint letters offer considerable insights into the perceptions and attitudes towards theatre and women on stage. Theatre introduced by the People's House was something new for many parts of the country and for many people it was not a morally upright form of entertainment, given the presence of women on stage. Previously it was not that common to have Muslim women on stage and female roles were usually enacted by non-Muslim women, Armenian, Jewish and Greek. Given the 'liberated' role women were assigned in Turkish society by the Kemalist elite, whether 'off' or 'on stage', controversies and confusion are expected. This is evident when considering that the only subject discussed by our authors in relation to theatre is women and morality issues; there is no letter complaining about low quality artists or plays, for example. In many cases, the letters use theatre as a metonym for immorality, a category we have also encountered when dealing with the coffeehouse in the previous chapter.

To a large extent the experience people had of theatre in provincial towns in the 1930s and 1940s was that of the *tuluat tiyatrosu*.⁵⁷⁹ In most of the cases it is not certain whether the letters complain of travelling theatre groups performing *tuluat* theatre in the strict sense or not. Given the widespread negative connotations the word had among society, it is probable that in many if not most of the cases the word is used as a metonym for low quality and obscene language or morality performances. In Reşat Nuri Güntekin's travelogue *Anadolu Notları* a scissors maker gives a vivid picture of the effect *tuluat* artists, especially women, had on Anatolian men. "May Allah punish them, once in a while theatre players come here. There are inappropriate (*uygunsuz*) women among them. They take the country's (*memleket*) money, but they also seduce families. I say families, but they have also destroyed a couple of old men's families." The author continues himself: "the town's sober, the Hacıs and Hocas get bored of these groups, while the pure Turkish woman fears them like disease or fire." As for local men, "the only thing they can see of women during the day is a ghost lost inside a large *çarşaf*,⁵⁸⁰ a tight veil. The young know of no woman except their mother and sister." The effect the *tuluat* stage had on these men seems to be devastating: "they enter a crowded place in the middle of the night. A little later, a colourful wall is lifted among sounds of *davul*, violin and *zil*. Women dressed in golden cloths glimmering under the lamps' flashing lights appear, with their faces, hair, and

⁵⁷⁹ A type of theatrical performance usually combining music, songs, with a large degree of improvisation and no script. İsmail Dümbüllü (1897 - 1973) is considered the most famous *tuluat* artist. Gradually *tuluat* came to be considered by intellectuals as a low quality theatre of light or even vulgar entertainment. During the Republic the coarse vocabulary and obscene scenes of the *tuluat* performances were occasionally giving rise to police-related incidents. "Tuluat tiyatrosu", *Türk Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 31, (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1982), pp. 483 - 4.

⁵⁸⁰ "An outer garment covering a woman from head to foot and designed to hide her body form the view of men." *Redhouse Büyük ELSÖZLÜĞÜ*, (İstanbul, 2000).

arms uncovered, their chests open. What are these men supposed to do faced with this view, if not go crazy, abandon their wives and children?”⁵⁸¹ *Tuluat*, theatre in general, and especially the ‘inappropriate’ women are a calamity, consist a threat for the family and for moral values. The expression ‘*tiyatro kızları*’, used in the complaint letters to denote the immoral women acting and/or singing on stage, expressively reveals a quite common perception about women performing on stage. In a letter from Eleşkirt, the local Demokrat Parti leader complains that the local CHP’s refused to allow his Party to use the Halkevi Hall. His use of the expression ‘*tiyatro kızları*’ underlines the gravity of the wrongdoing.⁵⁸²

Tuluat Theatre Companies on the Halkevi Stage

As has been shown above, the traveling theatrical groups that the People’s Houses hosted in their Halls, occasionally called *tuluat kumpanyaları* or ‘common theatre’ (*adi tiyatro*), constitute a common target of the petition letters. In 15/11/1946 Hakkı Özveren, from the Kütahya Halkevi, describes the people’s reaction to the *tuluat kumpanyası* performing in their Halkevi. “The Halkevi Hall was used by a *tuluat kumpanyası* and for days the people had been coming to the House with the only purpose to watch naked legs. Some people did not even refrain from gossips like ‘Well done Party! At last by showing naked legs they managed to assemble people at the People’s House’.” A couple of years before, the author wrote, the Halkevi stage had been given to a *tuluat* theatre again. A sign was placed on the Halkevi wall: ‘It is prohibited to pass words to the girls’. The author does not feel the need to comment on this sign. It is explicitly improper enough for the Halkevi ‘sacred building’. True or not, this sign is also an indication of the popular perception of what a *tuluat*-theatre girl or, more generally, a woman on stage is and how men can behave to her.⁵⁸³

Another example from Izmit sent in February 1942 is more expressive. The author is not stating his name, but instead signs as ‘an officer and his family’.

I love theatre. But only theatre. And not the gung of prostitutes and vagabonds that has brought shamelessness, immorality, disgrace and all the consequent calamities to our city. In short, these supposed theatre people made their third visit here and this

⁵⁸¹ Reşat Nuri Güntekin, *Anadolu Notları* (Istanbul: İnkılap va Aka, 1989), pp. 132-133.

⁵⁸² “*Tiyatro kızlarının oynamasına müsaade edilen Halk evimizde partimiz menfaatına tertip ettiğimiz müsamerenin oynanmasına müsaade edilmediği.*” (Our show, organized for the benefit of our Party, was not permitted to take place in our Halkevi where the performance of theatre girls is permitted). In **BCA CHP**, 490.1/733.2.2, dated 13/02/1950.

⁵⁸³ Letter of Kütahya Halkevi Temsil kolu komite üyesi (member of the Committee of the Theatre Section) Hakkı Özveren sent to CHP in 15/11/1946, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.319.1. “*Kızlara laf atmak yasaktır*”.

*time after drinking in taverns (meyhane) they tried to deceive the region's youth by poisoning them with propaganda, by having a 13-14 year old girl almost naked on stage drinking from a rakı bottle. Is it the aim of the People's Houses to entertain the country's drunkards and womanizers in the lowest way, by having prostitutes perform in their Halls? [...] is our House going to enlighten the people in this way, with belly dancing?*⁵⁸⁴

Two more letters from the same city, Izmit, criticize the *tuluat kumpanyası* performing in the city's Halkevi. The former, sent in 18/6/1943, complains about an incident that was "completely contrary to the sacred aims" of the Halkevi.

*Known to be an Armenian, the person known with the nickname Attila, together with Muhlis Sabahattin and some ill-famed women he had gathered from Istanbul, have been performing şaklabanlılık [performance by a stand-up comedian usually considered of low quality or obscene] for a fortnight in the - sacred for us - Halkevi stage; we also saw them bringing a live donkey on stage and becoming the cause for a number of repulsive events.*⁵⁸⁵

The author also finds annoying the way the Halkevi megaphone system advertises these events. In order to state his annoyance he offers a colourful description of the setting:

For the last 15 days the Halkevi megaphones have annoyed thousands of citizens with extremely boring and irritating broadcasting. Hello, Hello, Dear citizens. This is the People's House. One of our country's most famous artists, Kamil Tekin now on our stage... From this to that date he is going to amaze you for ten days with his strange tricks ... Don't miss it. Skeletons speak, living people become skeletons .. Cheap tickets, simple 35, balcony 50 cents.

Two miserable gypsy kids with bells walk around the town carrying a table with pictures on it shouting: run to the People's House tonight ... watch, be amazed.

*These days we watch again in the streets the pictures of the funny dümbüllü İsmail .. we also see them squeeze their flyers in the hands of the passers-by....*⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ In **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1.

⁵⁸⁵ *Bir ermeni olduğu malum bulunan Attila takma isimli zat, Muhlis Sabahattin ile İstanbul'dan derlediği kötü tanınmış kadınlarla Halkevinin bizce mukaddes olan sahnesinde onbeş gün şaklabanlılık ettiklerini hatta sahneye canlı merkep çıkarıp bir takım çirkin vaziyetlere sebebiyet verdiklerini gördük.*

⁵⁸⁶ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1.

The second letter, sent in 16/11/1943 by one of the members of the Theatre Section, clearly states the repercussions of having “the vulgar and low expressions of a *tuluat kumpanyası* [performing on the Halkevi stage.] The plays we have been staging years now with the school theatre group have stopped, just as the affinity we had with our House has ceased. A family girl that has closed her ears with great self-sacrifice to all kinds of gossips and has participated in the Halkevi Theatre would now feel the necessity not to take once more any role on the Halkevi stage.”⁵⁸⁷ In a similar vein, in a letter from Boğazlıyan (Yozgat) published in the newspaper *Tasvir*, Hüseyin Öney complains that “the Halkevi chairman and members have left this nest that is our own House to worthless theatre people who only work to fill their stomachs. In my opinion it is an unforgettable mistake to have some senseless people break the Halkevi’s windows while trying to watch theatre through windows and doors.”⁵⁸⁸ What all letters above demonstrate is the close association between wider perceptions of immorality and theatre, especially the *tuluat* version, and the disinclination of women and girls to participate in Halkevi plays, their families’ reluctance to permit their participation, and more generally the shortage of actresses in the Halkevi theatre.

The *tuluat* travelling theatre groups performing in the People’s Houses are occasionally mentioned as one of a number of calamities the local society is facing, such as the playing of cards and the drinking of alcohol. Mustafa Timin, a party member from Bayramiç, criticizes the local Halkevi’s decision to rent out the Halkevi stage to *tuluat* companies, as well as the playing of cards in the House. As a result, he writes, “the children of our deprived town are robbed off the few cents (*kuruş*) they have to feed themselves creating in this way difficulties to their families.”⁵⁸⁹

Mazar Gençkurt, member of the Theatre Section of the Halkevi of Bursa, wrote a denunciation of the Section’s chairman. Apart from the many things he accuses the chairman of, he stresses that he acted in *tuluat* theatre companies (*artistlik yapmış*) and that the previous year he brought Faik’s *kumpanyası* to perform his ‘pornographic’ (*müstehten*) acts on the Halkevi stage.⁵⁹⁰

‘Immorality’ on the Halkevi stage: relationships

Another sensitive issue the letters touch upon was the reported sexual and/or emotional relationship between Halkevi members. Many letters suggest that such relationships were inappropriate and immoral damaging the Houses’ esteem among the population, or in the words of five witnesses to such an

⁵⁸⁷ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1.

⁵⁸⁸ “Boğazlıyan Halkevinde neler oluyor”, *Tasvir*, 11/12/1947, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/845.343.2. *Halkevi başkanı ve mensupları kendi evimiz olan bu yuvada ilim kıymeti olmayan kavın tokluğuna çalışan tiyatroculara bırakılmışlardır. Bir çok kendi bilmeyenlere kapıdan pencereden tiyatro seyredeceğim diye halkevinin camlarını kırılması bence affedilmez bir hatadır.*

⁵⁸⁹ Letter dated 1/3/1948 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.277.1.

⁵⁹⁰ Letter of 5/4/1944 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2.

event “it badly affected the families and the region (*memleket*)”. The incident started when the gendarmerie officer of the town of Pazar hug and kissed Necmiye, a lady “singing on stage” during a Halkevi concert. The Halkevi Secretary saw them and “the following day it was heard by everybody”. This is called an ‘ugly incident’ (*çirkin hareket*) by the Party Inspector Kemal Çelik and five witnesses alike, inappropriate for an upright/moral “nest of culture that is always open for our People” (*Halkımıza kapusu daima açık bulunan nezih bir kültür yuvasında*). As for the lady involved, “according to the result of the researches I have carried out properly, she is a woman of low morals going with everybody” (*düşük ahlaklı herkesle düşüp kalkan bir kadın*).⁵⁹¹

The Bursa Halkevi became the stage of a similar event. In a letter to the Party headquarters the chairman of the Bursa Halkevi explains why Ms Saadet was dismissed from the Theatre Section. Her affair with Mr. Turgut, also a member of the section, necessitated their expulsion. “This lady lives together with Mr. Turgut as his mistress. As a result, Mr. Turgut has abandoned his family. (...) This affair has affected our House and stage [and] their resignation became necessary”. In what way were the Halkevi and its theatrical stage affected? According to the Halkevi chairman the affair gave rise to allegations against the rest of the female members, although “the allegations directed towards them belong altogether to another woman.”⁵⁹²

Here again the public opinion is considered extremely important and apparently taken seriously. We cannot say for sure whether in this case what the people (are supposed to) say is really the sole reason for the Halkevi chairman’s letter or whether ‘the people’s’ reported aversion serves solely as a pretext for the dismissal of an otherwise undesired person from the Halkevi. The common use of such categories (immorality, gossip) though, suggests – according to *my* reading of the sources - that popular reactions to such events were taken seriously (or even feared) and attempts were made to avoid them. The dispatch of a Party Inspector for instance is a definite indication of the Centre’s interest. In a number of cases the Party Headquarters in Ankara reacted to a number of problems the letters were complaining about by issuing directives. On the 29th of March 1949 a Party directive to the People’s Houses requested information regarding traveling theatrical groups performing on the Halkevi stages after a number of complaint letters reached Ankara. “The Halkevi Administrative Committees must consider the impressions and influences these theatrical plays will have on the area.”⁵⁹³ In this respect the Centre appears to make some allowances to local reservations and even negative responses to its policies by instructing local Party structures to take the *local* conditions into consideration, thus refuting the nationwide singularity of the Halkevi project. Here we can only guess whether the Party’s half-

⁵⁹¹ Report of Parti Müfettişi Kemal Çelik, 3/8/1944 and *Zabit varakası* (official record) signed by five witnesses, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.329.1.

⁵⁹² Letter of Bursa Halkevi chairman to CHP General Secretary dated 5/4/1940 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2.

⁵⁹³ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/9.47.14.

heartedness on this matter was connected to the changing political landscape with the introduction of multi-party politics after 1946.

Another anonymous letter from Izmit touches upon a similar subject, although not directly connected to Halkevi theatre. According to a complaint letter, the president of the *Yardım Sevenler Birliği* is not only the Halkevi chairman's mistress, but also "she, together with some more loose women, invites every day some local ill-fated women teachers and girls and introduces them to men of her kind. Therefore, the Halkevi of our Izmit has become a house of theft, gambling, rendezvous and prostitution, unlike the People's Houses that everywhere else are cultural and moral institutions." This is why, the author adds, the "honourable families and family girls" (*aile kızları*) have withdrawn from that "dirty place".⁵⁹⁴ The Halkevi chairman and his condemned relation with the president of the *Yardım Sevenler Birliği* became the cause for yet another complaint letter, this time from Colonel F. Kutlu, the staff commander of the 6th Army stationed in Izmit. The Halkevi's "Hall is a place where our boys should assemble under conditions of firm inspection and supervision from a moral and social point of view (*ahlak ve içtimai hayat bakımından sıkı bir nezaret ve murakabe altında bulundurulması*), and where moral people have to be employed." The source of the problem is an employee called Namık, who is "a bachelor and corrupts the youngsters." As for "our girls, the situation is more tragic. Our girls, students of the High School and the Girl's Institute (*Kız Enstitüsü*) who wish to continue in the Music, Fine Arts and Theatre sections of the Halkevi are frightened by the attacks of that immoral employee. [...] I state with regret that a keen on art young girl working at the Monopolies (Tekel) Administration became the subject of gossip because of that disgraceful scum." The list of 'immoral' persons in the Halkevi goes on: apart from the above "famous for his immorality uneducated bachelor jerk", the chairman is a grocer (*bakkal*); his girlfriend teacher corrupts the rest of the female teachers with the help of a third teacher, "a lick and a stain for the High School and our Izmit".⁵⁹⁵

A similar complaint comes from Ağrı. In 12/1/1939 the local Party chairman complains about the regional (Tercan) Kaymakam's affair with Emine, again described as a woman performing on stage. (*tiyatro sahnesinde oynayan alefte Emine adındaki kadını evine aldığı ve karı koca gibi yaşadığını*). Moreover, because of this relationship, a number of moral

⁵⁹⁴ Anonymous letter dated 27/11/1948 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1. A betrayed husband complains to the Party about his wife on similar terms: "*Halk evimizden Nazilli halkevine fuhuşla meluf 24 yaşında genç ve güzel bir kadının memur sıfatı ile alınması ve nazilli kaymakamına ve halkevi başkanına bir zevk aleti olmaktan başka bir vazifesi bulunmayan [...] bu benim karımdır.*" [A young and beautiful woman of 24 years of age is employed by the Nazilli Halkevi; this woman is known as a prostitute and has no other duty in the Halkevi other than being an instrument of pleasure for the Halkevi chairman and secretary. (...) This is my wife.] In **BCA CHP**, 490.1/824.260.1, dated 21/9/1940, signed by Tütüncü Mümin.

⁵⁹⁵ "*Mektepsiz bekar ve ahlaksızlığı ile nam kazanmış bir serseri*", Letter of 20 March 1950 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.316.1.

(*namuslu*) families were insulted by the Kaymakam.⁵⁹⁶ The letter is a denunciation of the Kaymakam full of accusations of extortion and profiteering. Here corruption and immorality go hand in hand, a combination typical of many similar denunciation letters as we have also seen in Chapter 5.

The accountant of the Giresun Halkevi and his reported immoral character and acts became the cause of yet another anonymous complaint/denunciation letter from Giresun.

Our Theatre Section is more active than the other Sections and, as it is normal, women and girls take part in the plays. Naci Laçın [the Halkevi accountant] comes close to the women and girls during the rehearsals drunk in order to get to touch and watch them if possible [sıkıştırmak kaş göz oynatmak]. He has managed to dishonour [yoldan çıkarmış] some of them and as a result no girl or woman is to take any role in the Halkevi stage any more. They managed to stage the 'Andaval Palas' play by giving the female role to one of the clerks of the Monopolies Department, since there was no woman to take the role. [...] This man, who is a catastrophic disease for the Halkevi, said a number of improper things to my sister as well. He said to her 'we want to stage a play and if you take a role I'll give you a pair of shoes, in the second play I'll give you a skirt' and so on. [...] Although many girls and women could take advantage of the Halkevi's activities, no one approaches because of this man's immoral behaviour [namusuzca hareketinden].⁵⁹⁷

Women's voice

Given that all the above letters were written by men, as the majority of complaint letters collected for this study, it is interesting to see how a woman described one of the above incidents. Ms Saadet, accused of being Mr Turgut's mistress, wrote her own account of her dismissal from the People's House. Her letter touches upon the difficulties a female Halkevi member might encounter, as well as the reasons that might direct her to the Halkevi stage.

I am a housewife with a family of two male children. In 1930 I finished the second class of the Teachers School for Girls in Bursa and I began working. For some time now I am obliged to

⁵⁹⁶ Kazamız kaymakamı Bay Cemil Aytemurun tiyatro sahnesinde oynayan alefte Emine adındaki kadını evine aldığı ve karı koca gibi yaşadığını Kaymakam Bay Cemil kazada tiyatro sahnesinde oynayan Emine adındaki kadını evine götürmüş ve dördüncü umumi müfettişin kazaya teşriflerinde bu fena hareketi meydana çıkar diye hususi bir otomobille kemaha kadar yolcu etmiş olduğu halde müfettiş kazadan ayrıldıktan sonra yine hususi adam göndermek suretile tekrar evine getirtirmiş ve hamamda kaza halkından birkaçının namuslu ailelerini tahkir [insult] ettirmiş ve bu kadın yüzünden dispanser odacısını odacılıktan kovmuş ve Celal adında birisini de tabancasile tehdit ve fena halde dövmüştür. Letter contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.289.1.

⁵⁹⁷ Anonymous letter of 31/12/1942 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/833.293.1.

earn my livelihood myself as I shouldered the responsibility to cover the expenses of my children myself. So, I live a modest family life by sewing. In 15/12/1937, after the numerous pressures and requests of my friends at the Theatre section of the Bursa Halkevi, and in spite of the intense critiques and objections of my environment and especially of my family, I joined the Section, which I regard as a work for the country in a holy nest. The very negative ideas of our people and especially of my environment and my family about the theatre stage left me in seriously speculation. But I was not discouraged. [After a while] they understood that the stage is not a bad place and that the people on stage are clean and honourable/moral as a teacher is. I worked for two years for 15 liras.⁵⁹⁸

While Saadet denied the accusations of being immoral, she described her acts and her opponent's (Halkevi chairman, chairman of the Theatre Section) acts on the same terms, moral/immoral, which were also the terms used by her family, environment and even 'our people'. Saadet's letter seems to imply that one of the reasons for her participation was the material hardship she was experiencing and thus the compensation in money she was probably receiving from the Halkevi to 'cover expenses'. It seems that Saadet did marry Turgut Simer, as a letter some years latter refers to a Ms Saadet Simer, member of the Bursa Halkevi Theatre Section.⁵⁹⁹ Moreover, the tone of her letter is apologetic, in direct contrast to the angry pitch of most men who happen to complain or defend themselves against a denunciation.⁶⁰⁰ This differentiation between the voices of men and women is definitely corresponding to wider social perceptions and practices regarding the place of women 'in the family', under the tutelage and protection of men, and not in the public and 'open' life of the community. What then makes this differentiation in the gendered voices interesting and telling of the ways the regime's 'emancipatory' policies were enacted, understood and voiced, in short the ways they were consumed by social actors, both male and female, is the surfacing, in the voices of social actors purportedly acting within the discursive and political framework of the regime's reform programme, of rival to that same framework and oppositional to that same programme voices.

In sum, what the above examples manifest is an overt preoccupation with issues of morality. This obsession with morality suggests that it was a popular (in the sense of widespread) 'code' by which people were apprehending the

⁵⁹⁸ Saadet Çırpan, 7/3/1940, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2.

⁵⁹⁹ Letter of Mazhar Gençkurt dated 16/5/1942 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2.

⁶⁰⁰ For a similar remark on the women supplicants' voices see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in the Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987). Also Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales. Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 199.

People's Houses and their activities. This will become clearer when we turn to the language of the letters.

Accommodative Discourse: Distinction

All the above letters imply that there was a distinction between the Halkevi stage and 'common theatre', the distinction being expressed in terms of morality/immorality. Not all agree on this distinction though. In a letter sent to Ankara in 13/1/1942 by the Edremit Halkevi chairman, we are able to view some of the reasons for a woman's participation, as well as the negative reactions towards her acting on the Halkevi stage. Once employed in the İş Bankası of Edremit, the former Halkevi secretary Didar Dülünay declined to continue performing on the Halkevi stage, because, as she is reported saying, "I am no longer the Halkevi Secretary, so I won't do it". The problem for the Halkevi chairman is that "she is spreading a negative propaganda about the House". In the chairman's description of the incident we also find fragments of the voice of the girl's mother. "Moreover, her mother, who is a dirty model of ignorance (*cehaleti galiza numunesi olan validesi*), is spreading this negative propaganda in a more public way, by saying that *there is no difference between common theatre and the Halkevi stage and that all those girls on the Halkevi stage are, at the end, nothing more than theatre girls*".⁶⁰¹

Another incident highlighting this perceived and expressed difference between 'common theatre' and Halkevi stage took place in Buldan in 1943. The local Halkevi decided to stage the theatrical play '*Bir Doktorun ödevi*'. While the 'youths' (Lise students) were preparing for the staging of the play, a theatrical group visited their town. In all probability, the lack of female volunteers made the chairman of the Theatre Section come to an agreement with the visiting group. The theatrical group would provide two actresses for the Halkevi play. This arrangement provoked the reaction of the gendarme commander, who deemed this cooperation inappropriate, because "the staging of a play by the youths together with sick (*hastalıklı kadın*) women [has resulted] in numerous gossips and is going to create a number of negative feelings among the youths".⁶⁰² As a result, the Halkevi chairman was brought to court accused of being 'an ordinary theatre man' (*alelade bir tiyatrocü kasdıyla*), according to his own account of the issue. It is not clear whether the real (or even the only) cause for the commander's reaction was the described event, or whether it was a pretext used in the context of a local feud or power

⁶⁰¹ In **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.265.2. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁰² Letter of Cevdet Kızılöz, Halkevi chairman to local Party structure (CHP Vilayet İdare heyeti reisliğine), dated 7/1/1943, and letter of Buldan Jandarma komutanı to Buldan Halkevi chairman, dated 8/2/1943, both contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1.

struggle. Nevertheless, the language used by both sides to describe the event underlines the (discursive at least) border separating the two stages. In the commander's account, this border was trespassed. The result was gossiping among the populace and the 'awakening of negative feeling among the students', necessitating, as a consequence, his intervention. Conversely, the Halkevi chairman struggled to prove that the accusations were false.

The tension produced upon the attempt to execute the Party's policies concerning theatre and women on stage that clashed with society's moral standards and the widespread perception of the immoral character of women on stage, as the term 'theatre girls' denote, is evident. This tension is also evident even today when that period is remembered with amazement. Consider Meeker's interlocutors in Orf still remembering in the 1970s the 'waiting girls era' (*karson kızlar devresi*) in the 1930s, something they did not fail to commend that 'is not happening today'.⁶⁰³ One of my interlocutors, an amateur actor in the Balıkesir Halkevi theatre stage in the 1940s, when asked about the local population's reaction to the participation of women in the Halkevi theatre plays, evaded any direct reference to likely accusations of immorality by evoking that "at that time in Balıkesir there were coffeehouses where girls were serving, something you won't see anywhere today".⁶⁰⁴ For others today, as it was definitely in the 1950s as well,⁶⁰⁵ having waitresses and local women on stage is received disapprovingly. Even today divergent memories of the period are indicative of the tension produced by the introduction of similar women-related novelties to local societies.

To recapitulate, my argument here is that the carving by our social actors of this distinction between 'moral' Halkevi theatre and 'immoral' *tuluat* theatre or 'theatre girls' is an actual tactical move accommodative to society's gender relations, perceptions and practices, in more general sense an tactical response to the tensions produced in local provincial settings upon the establishment of Halkevi theatre stages and the participation of local women in theatre plays.

The People's House: 'stage' of resistance, accommodation and segregation

By looking at the discourses (re)produced in the letters in relation to the presence of women on the Halkevi stage, the aim of this chapter is to show the difficulties the Halkevi administrators and audiences – not to mention the women themselves – faced upon attempting to realize the regime's directives to create a theatrical stage wherein local women (their wives, sisters and

⁶⁰³ Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, p. 307.

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Mehmet Şahin, Balıkesir, 3/6/2005.

⁶⁰⁵ Umut Azak, *Myths and Memories of Secularism in Turkey (1923 - 1966)*, (PhD Thesis, Leiden University, 2007), pp. 214 – 5, where requests by local congresses of the Demokrat Parti in the 1950s for the abolition of beauty contests, dancing parties, the employment of women in the public sector, etc.

daughters), and not the ‘dubious’⁶⁰⁶ *tuluat* women, would perform – act and sing – in public. We also have to keep in mind that this was supposed to happen in local societies where such a practice was broadly considered inappropriate and/or even immoral, given the popular experience and perceptions of theatre in the provinces exemplified above in the quotations from Güntekin’s *Anadolu Notları*. Those in charge of the Houses in the provinces – local Party elites, schoolteachers and civil servants- were thus situated between two opposing and conflicting set of ideas; on the one hand they were charged with the duty to fulfil the regime’s plan to introduce women into the public sphere by bringing them on stage, in social events such as concerts, lectures, social gatherings and celebrations (*balo, aile toplantısı*), where they were to socialize with, or at least be under the gaze of non-family men. On the other hand, the Halkevi officials were to do so in societies where such novelties purportedly aiming at a radical change of the social role of women were widely considered wrong and described as immoral.

Within such a social ‘stage’ we observe a number of ‘scenes’ acted by social actors. Firstly, we have detected the pressure applied on women, mainly on female schoolteachers, to ‘climb the stage’. They were rather easy targets, because of their status as state employees. After all, education was probably one of the few state sectors where women were employed in significant numbers. Teachers were frequently appointed in towns other than their place of origin and were thus lacking any social network outside their occupational group (such as family or local acquaintances) that might function both as their supporter against pressure as well as a social environment that would reject or offer support for their participation in such novelties.

Secondly, we encounter exactly those practices of direct rejection of state/Party pressure, or similar acts of evasion. We have seen above the cases of two women reportedly spreading ‘negative propaganda’ about the women who act on the Halkevi stage. One was reported declaring that there is no difference between *tuluat* artists and Halkevi actresses, while the latter was badly influencing her fellow teachers about the “wickedness (*fenalığı*) of acting on stage”. In another case, when asked to sign their refusal to participate, one teacher wrote underneath her signature “I cannot participate, I feel uncomfortable”.⁶⁰⁷

At a discursive level, what was called ‘common’ or ‘*tuluat* theatre’ performed on the Halkevi stage was charged with immorality and with having a bad influence on the ‘people’ and the ‘youth’. In many cases, undesired events (women related) during ‘Halkevi theatre’ this time were described with the same words (vocabulary) that were directed towards the *tuluat* stage indicating immorality. On the other hand, a distinction –reported as existing or necessary to be attained - is carved between the ‘common/immoral theatre’ and

⁶⁰⁶ ‘*Kötü tanınmış kadınlar*’, ‘*hastalıklı kadınlar*’, ‘*düşük ahlaklı kadınlar*’, ‘*orospular*’ etc.

⁶⁰⁷ Letter from the Director of Education of the town of Iskilip to the office of the sub District Governor, dated 11/11/1941, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.280.2.

the theatre produced by the Halkevi. The connecting element among the above discourses is the polarity morality/immorality, which is unquestionably related to women and their place and function on stage and in society in general. At the local level, this distinction indicates the production of a – what I choose to call - ‘accommodative discourse’ about theatre, that is, about the participation of women. Accommodative in the sense that it attempts on the one hand to follow the regime’s intentions and thoughts, while making, on the other hand, allowances for the widespread in society perceptions and moral reservations about theatre and, more generally, women. The conveyor of this discourse that tries to float between the two seemingly contradictory ends is typically the Halkevi Chairman, a Halkevi member, or even a habitu  of the Halkevi. The Halkevi chairman would usually try to refute the allegations of immorality about his⁶⁰⁸ Halkevi stage and the female artists, while a Halkevi member or a frequenter would whine about the transgression of that border that separates the two theatrical stages. What our letters did not openly reject was the practices the regime was attempting to introduce through the Halkevi institution in relation to women. The letters rather complain about the wrong – immoral as they state – way such activities as the Halkevi dancing parties or theatre plays were executed. The implication is clear though: such women related innovations and activities were not well received by the people or, as the letters occasionally state, ‘they left a bad impression in the region’. A few years latter, after the electoral victory of the Demokrat Parti, similar opinions were expressed more outspokenly. Local Party Congresses in 1951 and 1952 issued requests for the banning of beauty contests, dance parties (*balolar*), the dismissal of female state employees and the closing of City Clubs where officials were gambling and consuming alcohol.⁶⁰⁹

Turning back to practices, based on numerous complaint letters I argue that a certain practice of social seclusion was applied in/during activities similar to the ‘Halkevi theatre’, where the presence and participation of women was required, for instance dance parties, celebrations, and public lectures. A number of complaint letters indicate that entry restrictions were imposed for activities – especially ‘family meetings’ and dances - where women were present. On the basis of the identity of the complainants, as well as of the replies to such complaints by Party and Halkevi officials, it seems that the inclusion of some and the parallel exclusion of others was both desired and applied in practice, although no normative text or Party directive stating such a stipulation seems to exist;⁶¹⁰ on the contrary, the Party Bylaws and directives emphatically state that the People’s House is open for everyone and that any denial of entry could only be applied for practical reasons, for example an overcrowded Hall. Who is considered excludable? Bachelors, men

⁶⁰⁸ We have not encountered yet a letter by a female Halkevi chairman.

⁶⁰⁹ Umut Azak, *Myths and Memories of Secularism*, pp. 214 – 5.

⁶¹⁰ The Halkevi bylaws only impose restrictions in the entry of unattended children and High school students. See paragraphs 54 – 56 of 1940 Bylaws: *C.H.P. Halkevleri idare ve Teşkilat talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zevbatmat, 1940), pp. 12 -3.

unaccompanied by their families and men (women?) of low status or social position were excluded, because their presence amongst those participating and their families (i.e. women) was deemed inappropriate.

To make the above argument more clear let us turn to the texts.

'Family Meeting' and Dance Parties: occasions for segregation and 'shameful events' (çirkin hadiseler)

An afternoon/night family meeting took place in the House of Erzincan on the Halkevi anniversary. The Vali, all of us, and all the civil servants' families were there. The orchestra of the Division was playing. In the meanwhile, some youths came; although without [their] family, they were allowed to enter because their social position was considered. At 24:00 hours the meeting ended in an upright way. A little later, these youths asked rakı from the buffet. Although they were told that rakı is prohibited in the Halkevi, they insisted and the whole issue went on and they started to dispute with the waiters. At that moment, Ali Akcakoca, employee of the Forest Department, grabbed his pistol and fired twice at the ceiling. The officers sitting next to him took his pistol and took it (him?) to the Division. [...] the police officer made his investigation and the issue was taken to court.

This is the report of Muzaffer Akpınar, Party Inspector for Erzincan and MP of Balıkesir, sent in 3/3/1942.⁶¹¹ Similar reports are compiled by Party Inspectors as a result of a complaint letter or telegram, which is in most cases attached to the Inspector's report. This is not the case here, but it is not unwise to read this report as a possible reply to such a letter and its probable charges, just like the reports Party Inspectors were habitually writing. The report then immediately becomes a defence of the Halkevi (officials) against charges that could have been both possible and typical. There is a great number of letters complaining about the consumption of alcohol and immorality in the People's Houses. Read in this way, the Inspector's declaration that "the meeting ended in an upright way" (*toplantı çok nezih cereyan etmişti*) and that alcohol, although asked for, was not served, echoes like an answer to two common accusations.

Inspector Akpınar's report gives valuable information about the people attending the meeting: civil servants (*memur*), "all of us", which has to mean the 'Party friends', the provincial Governor (*Vali*), with their families, which is easily translated 'with the female members of our families, women and

⁶¹¹ BCA CHP, 490.1/833.289.1.

children'. The Inspector then, by referring to those entering the House although they were not supposed to be accepted, is suggesting exactly who were considered undesired during similar activities. The 'youths' were all civil servants in various state departments. The reason for not accepting such 'youths' was that they were without their families, i.e. with no women, probably bachelors. The reason then they were allowed to enter was their 'social position', that is being a *memur* (state functionary, bureaucrat). This being the case, in such a happening where the well-established men of the town had brought their women, people of lower 'social position' and bachelors were rather excluded, while the civil servants' entrance seemed rather acceptable.

Let us now examine a similar case through the eyes, or rather the pen, of the excluded. The following is the translation of a complaint telegram from Bitlis, sent by Nesimi Oğullarından Güney and Erdem (representative of Taş mahallesi) in 5/2/1940. The telegram was sent to the Prime Minister Refik Saydam, but was evidently forwarded to the CHP.

Yesterday at 20:00 hours we went to our Halkevi to hear the news on the radio. A group of people, almost thirty of us, we were expelled politely by the Director of Education and Halkevi chairman, because there was a family meeting going on inside. Is this insult lawful? Until when are we, Turkish children, going to be regarded with such contempt? We ask to what extent this insult is proper according to law.⁶¹²

The Vali of Bitlis, Hulusi Devrim, was entrusted with the investigation of the incident. The following is an extract from his report on the incident, sent in 15/2/1940.

There is a small recreation room in the Bitlis Halkevi. On Saturday evenings it has been decided that family meetings are going to take place there. All those desiring to take part with their families will be accepted. As for those from the people (Halktan), they can stay in the library room if they wish so. A letter announcing all the above had been placed on the Halkevi entrance and later on in the Halkevi Hall. Despite all these, those sitting there had not left the room at the proper time. Rifat Güney, whose personality has been figured out after this investigation, argued that the announcement was not signed. Upon hearing that, the Halkevi chairman came and signed it leaving thus no room for any warning to Rifat and his friends. Rifat's claim that they were thrown out is wrong. [...] Given the fact that the recreation room was appropriated for the family meeting, and although they do have a family, these people

⁶¹² BCA CHP, 490.1/827.270.2.

*desired to stay there among families unaccompanied and in this way use this family meeting as a pretext for wandering around.*⁶¹³

In short, what the Vali is stating, is exactly what the Party Inspector suggested rather more implicitly above; family meetings are for people with their family and not for men unaccompanied by their family, especially bachelors. It is not thus open to everybody. One of the reasons is definitely the presence of women, who have to be protected from the possible dangers of being in a place with undesired men. Who might they be? Men considered of low status, or of low social origin, youths, “persons wishing to stay among the families” to gaze at and/or flirt with the women present, women of those respectable families invited to such events, daughters and sisters of respectable men. By a flip of the tongue the Vali is also demonstrating another cleavage the letters routinely complain about, between civil servants or local elites and the rest of the people. When stating who can participate in these ‘family meetings’, he differentiates between ‘families’ and those ‘from the people’, who cannot take part but can stay in the Library room. The contrast is between ‘families’ and ‘those from the people’ who were obviously not without families. The Vali is implicitly stating a number of things. The excluded were first of all ‘from the people’, i.e. locals, probably not civil servants and of low status. They were also without their families, which is an implication that they did not bring their families, i.e. their women, to the Halkevi.

A large number of letters, all written by men, refer to such a segregation, or else exclusion of their writers from the Halkevi, the Halkevi library or Hall, and from a Halkevi activity. Their complaint is voiced in terms of ‘we’ against ‘them’,⁶¹⁴ where the category ‘we’, or else the writer and/or those the writer represents (or claims to represent), is ‘the youth’, ‘the people’, while ‘they’ might be ‘the civil servants’, ‘the rich’, ‘a few rich merchants and civil servants’.⁶¹⁵ In case reports of investigation about such complaints exist in the

⁶¹³ *Halkevinin halka daima açık bir kütüphanesi ve diğer büyük salonu mevcut olup haftada bir akşam bu küçük istirahat salonunun aile toplantısına tahsis edilmesine rağmen evli olduğu halde bila mazeret yalnızca aileler arasında kalmak isteyen ve böylece aile toplantılarını kendileri için bir seyrenğah sayan bu kimselerin.* **BCA CHP**, 490.1/827.270.2.

⁶¹⁴ The social cleavage uttered in terms of ‘us’ and/against ‘them’ is a recurrent category of the letters, and will be treated separately. It suffices here to note that the ‘us against them’ theme has been noticed elsewhere too, in works based on similar sources (letters) for the same period. See Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia. Terror, propaganda and dissent, 1934 - 1941* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), pp. 124 – 144.

⁶¹⁵ Some examples: Letter from Biga, 14/9/1941 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.276.1: “*müsamereler verilir memur içeri halk dışarı emri verilir*” (a show is taking place, the people are ordered out of the civil servants in); Telegram from Bulanık, 21/5/1942 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/841.326.2: “*Kaza Halkevi memur evimidir?*” (Is the People’s House of the district the Civil Servant’s House?); Extract from ‘Kars’ newspaper, 6/2/1940 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.306.2: “*Zira davetiye memur ve tüccar gibi ileri gelenlere dağıtılıyor, halk tabakası bu müsamereden mahrum kalıyor*” (The people are denied access to the show because the ‘invitations’ are distributed among notables like civil servants and merchants); telegram from Kuşadası, 3/11/1944 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1: “*Halk odası memurun kulubumudur orada halk tabakası terik edilirmi?*” (Is the Halkevi civil servants’ club. Is the people to be kept away from there?). As for the writers of the last telegram the local Party Chief wrote the following: “All of them are about 18-20 years old. They are not

relevant files of the archive, a variety of reasons are given for the exclusion or even expulsion. They usually range from ‘they were not allowed to enter because the Hall was full’ or because ‘they did not have an invitation’ to ‘they were expelled because they asked *rakı*’ or because ‘they wanted to play cards’. In some cases, a Party Inspector usually, or a local Party boss, would explain that the Halkevi officials could not have accepted them among families, because they were alone, ‘without family’, or, more openly, bachelors (*bekar*).⁶¹⁶ What was then to be avoided (and feared), although not explicitly stated, was the being together of undesired and/or uncontrolled (by the presence of their family for instance) men among ‘family girls’, the women present in such Halkevi events. It had to be avoided and it was feared because it might lead to incidents that would ‘have a bad influence on the area’ (*muhitte kötü bir tesir bırakmış*) and on the ‘honorable families’, that might abandon the Halkevi and its activities. The excuse offered for these acts of segregation is double: to safeguard the female family members among their families without the intrusion of bachelors, but also to keep non-elite locals away from these families and their women. We have also seen this segregation tendency among civil servants and the tactics employed to enforce it in the previous chapter. The presence of women made the need to segregate even more pressing. From another point of view, the exclusion of ‘the people’, so much denounced in the complaint letters, could be justified on the pretext that ‘those from the people’, as the Vali categorically stated, were not bringing their women to the Halkevi, but rather attempted to use it as a place of male socialization, in a way similar to the coffeehouse, a place nobody attempted to inhabit with women in direct contrast to the wider society’s practices and perception about the position of women.

What should not happen during such an event, as a family meeting, a dance party or a public holiday celebration, as well as how such an event should be accomplished is the subject of yet another letter from Çanakkale, dated 12/8/1940. T. İleri, chairman of the Village Section, member of the local Party Administrative Committee and director of the Department of public works, starts his letter by stating how a family meeting has to be conducted:

[I]n a meeting a fortnight ago the House’s Administrative Committee decided how a family meeting is to be carried out in accordance with the Halkevi’s aims and in order to introduce such an important innovation to Çanakkale. In short, every family meeting is to take place in the form of a show (müsamere) and under the responsibility and supervision of one of the

intellectuals, but youngster wishing to pass for punks and hooligans (*hemen hepsi 18-20 yaşlarında münevver olmayan serkeş ve külhanbeyi geçinmek isteyen toylardır*). The chief’s letter of 1/4/1944 is contained in the same file, **BCA CHP**, 490.1/836.305.1.

⁶¹⁶ Cengiz Kırılı, “The Struggle over Space”, p. 41; Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales*, pp. 197 – 8, about “the widespread perception that young men in unregulated spaces were social pariahs, sexual aggressors who destabilized moral boundaries.”

House's Sections. In this way, every Section will work to arrange new kinds of entertainment and, as a result, the family meeting will be a means for the people to spend beautiful, moral (upright) and joyful moments. In this fashion, the House will reach its objectives in relation to these family meetings. It was also decided that the Fine Arts section's orchestra would play music (exactly like the orchestra in the army club).

The specific event the writer complains about happened when a family meeting was arranged in a fashion contrary to what had been decided before. As a result, "I learned that families with their children were not taken in, that *caz*⁶¹⁷ was played and finally that ugly incidents between army officers and civilians trying to dance with a young girl happened during this meeting that was arranged without a previous decision, unresponsively and with no supervision." This event "is going to be a stain on the Halkevi and will prevent moral/upright families from coming to the House".⁶¹⁸

Another letter from Dursunbey this time discloses what was considered inappropriate for a family meeting.

Some days ago a family meeting took place as it happens occasionally. The young and single Kaymakam Osman Akçalı, who had recently arrived in our kaza, was also among those invited. In one moment, he was seen drinking beer in the room and upon told that this was contrary to the Houses' Bylaws this whole issue was prevented. During the meeting some youths came in with alcoholic drinks. After a while the Chairman told them 'the right way to participate in the meeting is with your families'.⁶¹⁹

The letter, compiled by the local Party chief, was the reply to a letter by the General Secretariat requesting information about a traffic accident that happened after the family meeting and outside the House but involving some of the participants. In all probability, the issue had come forth by a complaint letter to the Party Headquarters that unfortunately was not attached to the rest of the documents. If that was the case, the local Party chief refers to the

⁶¹⁷ It is not clear here what the author tried to convey by stressing that jazz was performed instead of "music like in the army club", but in any case it seems that the author considered 'caz' (or what he thinks that 'caz' was) a kind of music that can potentially lead to 'immoral' incidents. It may be possible that 'caz' was employed by social actors in a similar way 'tango' was used to denote – usually in a quite negative way – women dressed in European clothes. See Funda Cantek, *'Yaban'lar ve Yerliler. Başkent olma sürecinde Ankara* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), p. 151 f.

⁶¹⁸ Letter of 12/8/1940 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.276.1.

⁶¹⁹ Letter of 28/11/1945 by Ramazan Kılıç, chairman of the local Party Administrative Committee, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.265.2. Italics mine. Note the indication of the Kaymakam's age and marital status, a reference to widespread perception of young, non-local and unrelated/unmarried men as potentially threatening moral rectitude. See Cengiz Kırılı, "The Struggle over Space", p. 41 and Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales. Law and Gender*, pp. 197 – 8 for similar remarks from the 19th century Istanbul and 16th century Antep.

alcohol-drinking incident with the youths and the Kaymakam, although not directly connected to the traffic accident, because they were probably mentioned in the complaint letter. Even the reference to the Kaymakam's age and marital status, as well as the reference to the fact that the youths were not accompanied by their families, both seem as a reply to a previous accusation. What this letter and, in all probability, the missing one say is that the presence of 'unaccompanied youths' (especially if they bring or consume alcohol) and 'young and single' men – even if they are important people as the Kaymakam – is not considered to be entirely appropriate for a family meeting.

While CHP and various Houses have published numerous works on several Halkevleri related issues (Theatre plays, Village Excursions – Studies, Folklore Collections, Guidebooks for Folkloric or Villagist research) there is no – to our knowledge – work on how to conduct a 'family meeting', a dance (*balò*), or, more generally, an activity involving women, their presence and/or active participation. Nevertheless, the letters used above indicate that there were some shared tacit rules or principles employed, which were necessitated by the presence of members of the local and/or state elite, but also of women during certain occasions. The most evident one would be the exclusion, or limited inclusion, of undesired persons. These can be broadly portrayed as male, single (and young), unaccompanied by his family, *and* of lower social status, something a Halkevi chairman or a Party Inspector might describe as non-intellectuals (*münevver olmayan*), non-civil servants, or even 'from the People' (*Halktan*). Those 'non-intellectuals' excluded from such Halkevi events use different categories though. Turning to the letters for a view from the other side, the excluded complainants turn the self-description of the included (*münevver*) to 'memur', 'zengin', 'muallim', 'ağa' (civil servant, rich, teacher and master, respectively), while they call themselves 'the people', 'of the people', 'the youth', or simply with their name and occupation, as in the following case of two tailors from Biga:

The chairman and the administrative committee of the People's House, which is supposed to be open to the people, came by every shop and store to sell tickets for the House's shows and meetings; as for the rest of the meetings that require no ticket they invite only the civil servants and those ladies and gentlemen suiting their interests, while they do not even open the door to the people and the youths who go there. In that [sense] the chairman is personally insulting [those people]. [I]s the Halkevi the personal property of these kind of gentlemen? (bu gibi Beyefendilerin çiftiği midir)⁶²⁰

Occasionally even those invited and covering all the necessary requirements prove to behave not as expected. The following event took place

⁶²⁰ Letter of 3/9/1941 sent by Mehmed Dilmez and Sami Filibeli, both tailors from Biga, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.276.1.

during a dance party (*balo*) in Gelibolu, at the local Halkevi. Nafia Izli, signing as ‘the wife of the secretary Kemal Izli’, invited with her husband to the dance, had to “share a table with the school principle Ahmet, his wife and his sister. While we were watching those dancing I saw that Ahmet was encroaching upon my virtue under the table (*ahmedin masa altundan namusuma tecavüz etdiğini gördüm*). Coming immediately to myself I showed it to my husband. Faced with this calamity, my husband told me to show his sister. Prodding her with my hand I told her ‘Don’t you see your brother Ahmet’s dishonourable action?’ But Ahmet continued behaving this way. [...] We returned home. My husband protested to the Party chief, but up until now [after almost three months] nobody showed any interest. [...] We are thinking how are we going to leave our children to instructors of such ethics and morals.”⁶²¹

In order to prevent such incidents, to keep aloof from those who might endanger their status and social position, or even because of unwelcome events as described above, the Halkevi officials and frequenters - Party men, local elites, state functionaries and teachers – employed a system of limited inclusion to activities where ‘their families’ were present. In some cases, this segregation was regulated with the use of invitations, the letters’ infamous *davetiye*⁶²² an issue for frequent complaints. By these acts of exclusion/inclusion a distinct *space*⁶²³ was carved, a space selected women could inhabit during certain occasions. My argument is that this *space* can be viewed as an “implicit, hidden form of segregation”, an “ingenious” –tactical to remember De Certeau - solution “devised to deal with the confusion” and the tension created when women – some women - were “propelled into the public world”, “in a culture where, by and large, women were still perceived under the tutelage of a man”.⁶²⁴ Thus the paradox⁶²⁵ Kandiyoti mentions and we claim to have detected in the creation of such a *space*: the propagated and in certain circumstances applied ‘unveiling’ of the ‘Turkish woman’ “has mandated new forms of puritanism” – and seclusion we might add – “in a society where femininity was incompatible with a public presence”.⁶²⁶ In a ‘family meeting’ or a dance party a girl seemed to be at the same time located both outside and inside the culturally prescribed for her space, not *in* the family, but *with*, or under the supervision of, the family and within an ‘extended family’ formed

⁶²¹ Letter of 31/5/1938 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/830.276.1.

⁶²² For a description of the ‘davetiye system’ see Chapter 6.

⁶²³ A spatial (place) and temporal container, but also a locus inhabited by social actors, occupied by discourses, loaded with meanings, a ‘stage’ of (and for) social interaction/activity.

⁶²⁴ All the above quotations from Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern. On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity”, in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 126-8.

⁶²⁵ In a similar tone Zehra Arat writes “with Kemalism and modernization the preoccupation with namus, which had been prevalent in the Mediterranean culture and was reinforced by the Islamic notion of fitne, must have increased as a result of the desegregation of the sexes and the women’s participation in public life”. In Zehra Arat, “Introduction”, in Zehra Arat (ed), *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), p. 26.

⁶²⁶ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern”, p. 126.

for the purpose. In another sense, she was residing in a *space* located somehow between the public and the domestic world, a secluded *space* denoting class and social status cleavages.

With the occasional breach of this secluded space our letters above describe, a dynamic picture of the practices and discourses employed in relation to women-related events comes into sight. The practices of segregation of women and their families from the undesired men and the occasional violation of this secluded space carved for such Halkevi events reveals an ongoing struggle between conflicting practices and discourses utilized by social actors, not to mention struggles and feuds between social actors as we have studied in Chapter 5. The regime's demand to conscript women out of their 'traditional' space in the family to the Halkevi space was running contrary to wider society's 'moral code' assigning a different space for male and female actors and demanding the 'protection' of women by the male members of their family. Consider for example petitions for explicit forms of sex segregation in the Houses. The chairman of the Halkevi of Elazığ inquired whether women and men could be invited separately during wedding ceremonies in the House.⁶²⁷ The chairman of the House of İnegöl is even more illuminating. "From time to time we permit weddings to be carried out in the Halkevi in accordance with the 61st article of the Bylaws. Some families though ask for ceremonies to be attended only by women, with which men would not interfere." Even after being told by the chairman that such ceremonies do not accord with the "Halkevi principles and the rules of civilization", they insisted on their requests relying on the absence of any clear explanation about this issue in the Bylaws. "In order to give a final answer we ask you to issue a clarification."⁶²⁸

The regime's expressed policy on the other hand to utilize the 'intellectuals', the majority of which were state employees, in an attempt to 'meet' the 'people' partially through the Halkevi network was equally running in contrast to the old tradition and current tendency in the period and society under study to maintain a border separating those same state employees from the rest of the populace, something all the sources we have thus far used amply demonstrate. Viewed in motion on the Halkevi 'stage', both sets of conflicting demands and conditions produce *tensions* surfacing in the numerous complaint letters and the ensuing reports by Party Inspectors or bosses. The practices we have thus far identified through our reading of the letters were attempts at resolving these tensions. The accommodative discourse and the distinction carved between moral Halkevi and immoral *tuluat* theatre, between theatre-girls and Halkevi actresses; the exclusion of non-elite or non-civil servants and low-class men from the Halkevi space through ingenious solutions like the *davetiye* system; and the creation of a 'modern mahrem' in the Halkevi for the

⁶²⁷ Letter of 3/12/45 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/832.288.1.

⁶²⁸ Letter of 8/5/1945 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2.

female members of prominent local and state men, are all signs of a 'border administration', to remember Meltem Ahıska.⁶²⁹

'Kemalist certainties and Moral reservations':⁶³⁰ vocabulary of gender

This felt and expressed tension is also evident if we turn our attention to the vocabulary employed by our authors. Beside their content, the letters contain language and rhetoric elements once utilized by their authors to enhance the expected result of their complaint and demand, but at the same time reflecting, to a certain extent at least, their authors' perceptual and cognitive panoply.

Since (s)he is writing to the Party usually asking for something, the author is likely to start and conclude the letter with some kind of reference to the ideals of the Party and the People's Houses. The vocabulary is very close to the official Party jargon. Words such as duty/görev, principle/prensip, high aims/yüce gaye, struggle/mücadele, self sacrifice/feragat, the/our great cause/büyük davamız, arrow/ok prevail. In this way the authors demonstrate their commitment to the regime's/Party's program of social change in a strategic attempt to ensure a positive reaction to their demand. We can read in this tactical move to 'speak Kemalist' the social actors ability to acknowledge and utilize (fragments of) the regime's jargon, but we cannot in no sense conclude by this that the discourse underlying this vocabulary was readily accepted by our authors, especially if we consider that such an opening as a structural and in that sense conventional way to address authority was surely used in the past as well. Not earlier than 20 or 30 years before similar or even identical letters touching upon a variety of issues were addressed to the authority of the time, which was not 'the lofty CHP', but the 'pious Sultan', the head of "the well protected domains". The wording was definitely different though. My argument then is that people can neither change their tactics when approaching authority nor their mental map within such a short period of time; a 'copy and paste' of the official jargon was not difficult to achieve especially if we accept that this was rather the core of their tactics in pursuing their aims when petitioning the state.⁶³¹

Nevertheless, when they move to the centre of their complaint, the authors use a completely different language: their discourse deploys language/rhetoric elements not to be usually encountered in the official discourse. The language they use about the Halkevi activities and officials revolves not on the axis of

⁶²⁹ Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı*, p. 46.

⁶³⁰ To paraphrase Reşat Kasaba, "Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities", in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 15 – 36.

⁶³¹ We should also take into consideration that a number of these letters was composed by a professional petition writer (*arzuhalci*).

modern versus backward but moral vs. immoral. The authors do not complain that the local Party and state officials are backward or reactionary, but, on the contrary, that they are acting in an immoral fashion. The words heavily employed are morality/immorality, clean, morally upright (*nezahet, nezih, ahlak, gayri ahlaklı, ahlaqsız, feci, temiz, hayasızlık, rezalet, namuslu/suz*). Moreover, a common rhetoric means to make the complaint more telling is to convey the image of the coffeehouse, the gambling house, the drinking tavern and the brothel, all signifying a moral and social decline⁶³² as well as making the letters an amusing source to read.⁶³³ What is interesting and significant is the inability – in our reading – of the authors to use what we can think of as ready-made anti-regime categories in their denunciations. The letters rarely accuse their adversaries as being ‘reactionary’ or ‘backward’. We rarely meet the vocabulary the regime used to identify its enemies: *yobaz, irtica, murteci, şeriatçı* and so forth. I argue that this absence can be telling of the degree the regime’s discourse and discursive categories had penetrated society or rather, from another point of view, of the degree these categories were relevant or meaningful in society and among social actors. Their relative absence rather points to a lack of relevance within any widespread frame of reference outside the official discourse. Otherwise, our authors would have been quick to use the Party’s jargon and catchwords to blame their adversaries as in the Soviet case, which exhibited a similarly, even greater one might say, social opposition/disagreement to the regime’s intentions, and where accusations like *kulak* and *Trotskist* were amply used.⁶³⁴

Occasionally, the emphasis on morality is coupled with words having religious connotation. The Halkevi stage, its activities, even the Halkevi building, are ‘sacred’, while the Houses spread the ‘lights of decency’ (*nezahet nurları*). The Edremit Halkevi chairman describes the House’s female members as “*imam ve hatip* girls and most honourable family children (*imam ve hatib kızları ve en şerefli aile yavruları*).⁶³⁵ In some cases expressions or

⁶³² See complaint letters on coffeehouse in Chapter 6. The coffeehouse was also a central target of the discourse of moral decay and decline in previous centuries. Cengiz Kırılı, *The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780 – 1845* (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, 2000).

⁶³³ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/824.257.1. Letter of Hüseyin Ekiz 19/2/1947: “*bu mukaddes yeri kerhaneye çevirmiştir. Halkevine şimdi aklı başında namuslu bir adam gidemiyor abdestaneler 31 çekme yeri olmuştur.*” (They have turned this holy place into a brothel. Now nobody who is moral and in his minds can go there. It has become a place of masturbation). **BCA CHP**, 490.1/834.296.2, March 1943, letter of Mustafa Kurtay from Egridir: “*Yıllardan beri kadın oynatarak, belediye parasile fahişeler ve piçler besliyerek*”. (For years they have been bringing there women and feeding prostitutes and dirty people). **BCA CHP**, 490.1/842.331.2, 22/11/1946 from Osmaniye orta okulu müdürü Fuat Kutal: “*İleri gelen partili bir iki ağanın meyhanesi (oldu) ve hatta Adanadan zaman zaman getirttikleri umumane kadınlarını oynatarak*”. (It has become the drinking tavern of a couple of Party notables and landlords, who they occasionally bring brothel women from Ankara to play).

⁶³⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 16-7, 200, 254-60.

⁶³⁵ Letter of Faik Barım, chairman of the Halkevi of Edremit, dated 13/1/1942, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/825.265.2. Also, “*Halkevi başkanı Remzi Ergene işgal ettiği Makamın kutsiyetini*”, in a letter by Hakkı Özveren from Kütahya dated 15/11/1946 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/839.319.1.

words closely connected to the Party jargon are used in unison with religiously flavoured words, such as in the case of “our Party’s sacred aims”, or “our bright [and/or saintly] arrows” (*nurlu oklarımız*). Even an expression that had become a Party and Halkevi slogan is uttered in an overtly ‘non-secular’ way: “Under this sacred roof, which is the Kaaba of our holy Party”.⁶³⁶

In a sense, what the regime had already banned from official and public discourse reappears in a fragmentary form, in disguise and in an awkward combination with officially sanctioned expressions. Our authors draw on two discourses in their attempt to administer moments of tension erupting upon the execution of a number of women-related events in the People’s House. These attempts give rise to the accommodative tactics of segregation and the accommodate discourse that establishes a distinction between moral and immoral theatre.

If there is a certain place wherein morality definitely resides, the ‘family’ is the centre of it, the place of women. Family is the prime victim of immoral deeds. The word is used in several letters to denote morality, moral women, or the proper place for women, in direct contrast to the ‘common women’ of the *tuluat* theatre. ‘Family girls’ are opposed to ‘theatre girls’. In this sense, the meaning of a ‘family meeting’ becomes clear: an event with the participation of ‘families’, that is ‘moral’, not ‘common’ women and ‘family girls’. The employment of the vocabulary of kinship was - and still is - used regarding unrelated women the contact with which had been initiated by a number of Halkevi activities. It was/is a common way to administer an encounter between social actors of the opposite sex that might be otherwise considered inappropriate. When inquired about the opinions within local society about the presence of women on the Halkevi stage and their relation to them, my informants, who acted on the Halkevi stage of Balıkesir in the 1940s, resorted to the vocabulary of family: “We respected all the girls acting on stage with us. For us they were our sisters (*ablalarımız*).”⁶³⁷ The employment of the ‘vocabulary of kin’ was a resourceful response to moments of tension, as in the cases we have treated above when unrelated men and women were participating in a Halkevi activity I view this response as an inventive and tactical act of ‘border administration’ that was aiming at alleviating and administer the tension produced when a social ‘border’ or ‘protocol’, in this case gender relations and practices, was ‘breached’.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ “Aziz Partimizin kabesi olan bu mukaddes çatı altında”, in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/829.273.2, by Mazhar Genç Kurt, 5/4/1944. The expression ‘Halkevinin çatısı altında’ is ubiquitous in any source related to the Houses, after being probably firstly used by Recep Peker at his speech at the opening ceremony of the first 14 Peoples House’s. In *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 1, (February 1933), pp. 6.

⁶³⁷ Interviews with Mehmet Şahin, 3/6/2005, and Zeki Özalay, 4/6/2005 in Balıkesir.

⁶³⁸ For a similar note on the “kinship idiom as a vehicle for easing social interaction and defusing tension” see Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern. On Missing Dimensions in the Study of the Turkish Modernity”, in Bozdoğan and Kasaba, *Rethinking Modernity*, p. 126.

Conclusion(s)

Women were one of the targets of the Kemalist reform movement and the People's Houses were entrusted with the duty to publicize the changes the regime had initiated in that respect. The Halkevi library, hall and stage were planned as desegregated spaces where women would participate next to men in Halkevi activities, something quite novel for many a place in Turkey of the period. We have seen that the female participation in probably the majority of the Houses was very low and that the majority of female Halkevi members were schoolteachers and wives of bureaucrats and very few local elite members. In this chapter we have tried to view the consumption of the regime's policies on women by focusing on a number of letters touching upon women-related activities and incidents in the People's Houses.

Firstly, our letters speak of morality/immorality and place women within this discourse of morality. The emphasis on immorality, especially in relation to women, highlights the importance of honour as a social value. Without taking into account whether each accusation of immorality is real, false or an exaggeration, the persistence of the dual morality/immorality points at its significance as a cognitive category, a way through which people viewed the People's Houses and the new ideas and habits they were introducing. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of the morality feature in the language of the letters might also offer an indication of the extent the official discourse (which mostly relies on the dual modern vs. backward – old vs. new) had penetrated society. This becomes more evident if we consider in contrast the quantity of the language elements of the official discourse and the way they are employed in the letters. They are less⁶³⁹ and used in an imitative or, occasionally, even in a non-orthodox way (e.g. holy Party etc).

The preoccupation with morality and honour, as well as the language elements, words, and images abundantly employed to illustrate it, indicate the magnitude of this way of thinking in society, and especially, as the letters themselves sporadically whisper, among 'the people', those who were not close, or explicitly committed to the Houses and their activities, not to say anything about the reforms. More plainly, in their attempt to make their accusation more effective the authors use rhetoric/language elements whose pervasiveness and richness in the letters reveal their magnitude in society, especially beyond its segments that are considered proportionately more partisan of the Kemalist cause, like our authors. In that sense, the letters can be

⁶³⁹ In contrast to what the only available paper dealing with petition - though - letters from the same period suggests. Akin, Yiğit, "Fazilet değil vazife istiyoruz: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi sosyal tarihçiliğinde dilekçeler", *Toplum ve Bilim*, No 99, (Winter 2003/2004), p. 118-9.

seen as containing but also reflecting the voices of people who usually remain silent in the sources.

The ‘morality discourse’, the preoccupation with issues of morality, point at a further phenomenon, the exclusion from the Houses and their activities of many of the complainants. A large number of letters, not only the ones related to women’s issues, convey a sense of exclusion of their writers. This exclusion is occasionally portrayed as a symptom of corruption and immorality on the part of those who administer the House and/or the local Party structure. In many letters an explicit cleavage is expressed in terms of ‘we’ against ‘them,’ where the category ‘we’ is given as ‘the youth’ or ‘the people’, while ‘they’ are named as ‘tyrants’ (*mütegallibe*), landowners (*ağa*), people with old mentalities (*eski kafalı adamlar*), occasionally opponents of the innovations (*yeniliklere karşı*), illiterate – uneducated (*terbiyesiz, mektepsiz*), and of course with all the above mentioned words suggesting immorality. In that sense the Houses emerge as an arena where different fractions compete with various objectives; control over the Party and Halkevi structure; access to the Houses’ resources and to the social status it entails.

Our letters amply express the tensions the social actors implicated in the events they describe were experiencing. They also hint at the tactics, discourse and practices used to confront similar instances producing tension, pointing towards a set of ‘tension management’ or ‘border administration’ tactics habitually employed by social actors in the field. In terms of practices, the letters we have chosen to read here in relation to the presence and participation of women to Halkevi activities (theatre, family meetings) disclose a number of responses to the imposed (women related) ‘innovations’ by local actors. We have noticed cases of attempted evasion of participation in the Halkevi stage by women teachers, as well as resistance to the state and Party’s pressure to act on stage.

On another point, what I chose to call accommodative tactics emerge, both as discourse and practice: on the one hand a distinction separating ‘moral’ Halkevi theatre from ‘immoral’ *tuluat* or ‘common theatre’ is uttered, while on the other we have discerned the creation of ‘new’, ‘moral’ and ‘modern’ *spaces* of mixed gender socialization. In another sense, we have seen the seclusion of women to the domestic sphere the regime was ostensibly fighting to re-emerge in the form of a new seclusion within the ‘modern’ space of the Halkevi, a space carved by acts of exclusion of the ‘other’, as exemplified in the case of a ‘family meeting’.

Lastly, if we are to move beyond the authors of our letters towards a wider imagined collective authorship, we seem to approach the wider society’s ideas about women and about the imposed novelties, or towards a third option: the total refusal of the ‘new’ ideas and practices about women, and the self-exclusion from them which can be both spatial and discursive: refusal to participate and rejection of the distinction between moral and immoral options, rejection of the ‘accommodation’ with the ‘Kemalist’ novelties and discourse

option. This is meaningfully expressed by one of Öztürkmen's informants: asked about the People's House of her region she replied, "there was shamelessness, we were not going there".⁶⁴⁰

Having stated the findings of this chapter we cannot but stress the importance these tactical manoeuvres and the positioning of our actors (evasion, refusal, accommodation, etc) vis-à-vis the prescribed by the centre activities and the local public played in relation to identity issues. I view such practices of 'border administration' as signifying acts, and contend that the Halkevi theatre and dancing events recounted above ultimately produced discursive and cognitive categories such as the 'theatre girls' of our letters, women of 'low moral disposition' in contrast to 'upright women' and '*imam ve hatip* girls', as it equally produced 'liberated and modern' in contrast to 'secluded and backward' women.

⁶⁴⁰ Arzu Öztürkmen, *Türkiye'de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletisim, 1998), p. 69: "*ayıplık vardır, gitmezdik*".

Chapter 8

Halkevi in the countryside: Village Excursions

In one of his short stories Mahmut Makal⁶⁴¹ recounts the story of a ‘Village Evening’ in a provincial Halkevi.

Last year the chairman of the Village Section of the Halkevi came to the teacher: a decision was taken to organize ‘Villager’s Evenings’ once a week. In the beginning the Administrative Committee objected. They ridiculed this activity saying ‘The villagers are occupied in their own works [and they won’t] attend your meetings’. They found the idea funny. “What does a villager understand of meetings; a lesson on military issues might be ok...” they said.

Nevertheless, out of curiosity, out of interest to this novelty, the Hall was very crowded on the meeting days. Because the town’s market was on Thursdays, most of the villagers were coming to town the previous day. So, the Wednesday evenings were quite suitable for the meetings. This was the reasoning behind the decision. In any case, this was a good start. After all, the Halkevi Hall was not to become dilapidated. Even if these meetings were nothing more than that, at least they were an opportunity for the villagers to see the inside of a structure they had been seeing for years from the outside.

During these evenings, dances, popular songs and wrestling events, all familiar to the villagers, were organized. The customs of every village were introduced to the others. An attempt was made to give the villagers some basic information (basit bilgiler). This was a part of the activity described as People’s Education. The villagers were coming in great numbers.

Later on though nothing could be performed or sold, as the complaints began. “The Hall is full of lice, get rid of the villagers!”. This voice came from the eminent merchants, the grocers and the ‘bosses’ (amir), as well as from those who had taken the decision to carry out these meetings.”⁶⁴²

The Halkevleri institution was established by the ruling Party with the primary aim to disseminate the reforms and the regime’s new policies to the people. This ‘reform diffusion’ being amongst its most significant objectives, the People’s House was envisaged as a melting point of the ‘people’ and the intellectuals, in other words of those the Party regarded as its natural followers and the ‘remainder’, often called the ‘real people’ (*asıl halk*). All the relevant sources we used in chapter 2 on the People’s Houses of Kayseri and Balıkesir indicate that the People’s Houses were under the control of the party and the

⁶⁴¹ A village(r) teacher who became very famous in the 1950s with his autobiographical book *Bizim Köy* translated into English as Mahmut Makal, *A Village in Anatolia* (London, 1954).

⁶⁴² Mahmut Makal, *Köye gidenler* (Istanbul, 1965), p. 70.

local party elites, while a large number of their active members and authors of their activities were schoolteachers.⁶⁴³ By virtue of their education and social status, as well as because of their membership and active engagement in an institution propagating the fusion of intellectuals and ‘real people’, the Halkevi officials and members are in the middle of a rather confusing situation; they are asked to violate the social borders separating them from the rest of the people, the old border of the Ottoman state discourse between *has* and *avam*. Needless to say this differentiation between state officials and population was quite similar to the old border of the Ottoman state discourse that differentiated the governing state elite from the rest of the governed subjects.

We have seen that the incorporation of the ‘other’ in the Houses the regime was planning was exceptional or even minimal. Makal’s story is quite expressive in demonstrating the attitude of the urban elites staffing the Houses towards the villagers. A number of texts by both local and non-local members of the Halkevi of Kayseri treated in Chapter 3 offer a similar picture. Their texts are usually devoid of locals, especially those that might easily fall in the category of the ‘real people’, and when they refer to them, a sense of embarrassment and discomfort emerges, signifying in a sense the social distance separating the ‘intellectuals’ (*münevver*) from the people. The limited inclusiveness of the Halkevi officials and regulars was in all probability coupled with the indifference, even repulse of the ‘real people’ over the Halkevi, although the evidence is rather circumstantial and limited.⁶⁴⁴ This is reinforced by the given exceptionality of the very few cases of Halkevi worker or ‘underclass’ members (see case of Mahir Şener or Zatiye Tonguç). The People’s House then appears less as the House of the people, but rather as the ‘Intellectual’s House (*Aydımlarevi*), a term coined by an eyewitness of their activities.⁶⁴⁵

There is a Halkevi activity though, richly recorded in contrast to the rest of the Houses’ activities, that by its very nature demanded the coming together of intellectuals and people, although not in the House and under given limitation of time and space, the Village Excursion (*Köy Gezisi*). It can be broadly

⁶⁴³ İbrahim Azcan, *Trabzon Halkevi: Türk modernleşmesi sürecinde* (İstanbul: Serarder, 2003); Çelik Bilgin, “Tek Parti döneminde Aydın’ın Sosyokültürel Yaşamında Halkevinin rolü”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 11, No 66, (June 1999); Melek Çolak, “Muğla Halkevi ve Çalışmaları”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 13, No 73, (January 2000); Nurhan Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatro çalışmaları* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998); Müge Özmen, *The activities of the People’s House of Eminönü and its review: Yeni Türk* (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1995); Adil Adnan Öztürk, “Cumhuriyet ideolojisini Halka Yayıma Girişimleri: Halkevleri ve Aydın Halkevi”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol. 31, No 182, (February, 1999); Resul Yiğit, *Mersin Halkevi (1933 - 1951)*, (MA Thesis, Mersin University, 2001); Sabri Zengin, “Yeni Tokat. Bir halkevi Dergisi”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol. 39, No 232, (April 2003).

⁶⁴⁴ In Cevdet Kudret, *Havada Bulut Yok* (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka Kitapları, 1976), the city poor do not know what the Halkevi is. In Arzu Ötürkmen, *Türkiye’de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998), p. 69, an old lady says that she did not go to the House because of shamefulnes (*ayıplık vardır, gidmezdik*). We have viewed a similar sense of inability to enter the People’s Houses due to issues of low morality and shamelessness conveyed in the large number of complaint and petition letters treated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

⁶⁴⁵ Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, *Anıların izinde*, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1977), p. 336.

defined as an expedition of a group of Halkevi members to nearby villages in order to carry out a number of activities, most of them stated in the Halkevi Bylaws.

The aim of this chapter is to study this moment of ‘fusion’ in order to explore the ‘consumption’ by Halkevi actors of the regime’s village(r) policies. In a way similar to the ‘Turkish woman’, the ‘Turkish Village’ and the ‘Turkish villager’ were targeted by the regime and its policies. The People’s House was in the middle of this attempted change of the villager, of the way the villager was perceived and accounted for. The Halkevi was expressively designed and instructed to execute village(r) related activities. This chapter is about exploring the (re)appropriation by social actors of the village-related categories, discourses and practices the regime had produced and attempted to introduce through the Halkevi network. I argue that it is upon this (re)appropriation that the categories ‘villager’ and ‘village’ are (re)created and (re)defined, the same way the relationship between (and the border separating) the villager and the state, its offices and personnel, between the countryside, its inhabitants and the city is also shaped.

In the first part of the chapter I try to give a brief outline of the emergence of the ‘village issue’ offering a ‘prehistory’ of organizations aiming at changing the village and villager roughly since the 1908 Young Turk revolution. The second part presents the textbook version of the Halkevi’s village activities drawing on a number of publications on the activities of the Village Section of the People’s Houses and proposes an analysis of the Halkevi ‘village operation’. Next follows the study of the execution of this Halkevi operation based on a series of Village Excursions of the Halkevi of Kayseri in the late 1930s.

The emergence of the Village Issue: a short Prehistory

Before dwelling on the Halkevi *Köy Gezisi*, a few words have to be said about the history of similar ‘villagist’ programs and activities preceding the establishment of the People’s Houses. The village excursion was not an activity initiated by the People’s Houses in the 1930s. The Halkevi institution was not the first cultural and political structure to conduct village and villager related activities in Turkey. A steadily increasing interest in villagers and villages had existed, in a more or less organized form, at least since the Young Turk revolution and the second Constitutional Period. This interest took a solid form within the ideological framework of the emerging Turkish nationalism and especially within the era’s cultural, and certainly political associations, such as the *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, the *Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti* and the *Türk Ocağı*, as a part of what was later to be emphatically called ‘Popular Education’ (*halk terbiyesi* or earlier on *terbiyeyi avam*).⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁶ İsmayil Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, *Halkın Evi* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1950), pp. 20-28. See Chapter 1 for a more thorough presentation of ‘Popular Education’.

The increasing interest in the villager and the village life that appeared at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th among intellectuals was also echoed in the literature of the period. Village actors and themes started to make their appearance in the Turkish novel since the beginning of the 20th century. It was after the 1920s though that a ‘village literature’ emerged with the works of a number of urban intellectuals. Makal was probably the first village born writer to publish ‘village literature’ works, but it was in the 1950s.⁶⁴⁷ The interest in the village cosmos evident in the contemporaneous emergence of ‘village literature’ works and of the thesis about the ‘education of the People’ was an urban phenomenon taking shape among urban elite circles.

Although the term ‘Popular education’ and its meaning might not have remained certain and uncontested throughout the period from the 1908 revolution to the Republican Turkey of the 1930s, the core of the term’s definition was surely stable: it referred to the need to have the ‘people’ ‘educated’, or ‘enlightened’ by the ‘enlightened’, the intellectuals. We can discern this continuity in a number of sources from the period: the declaration of the *Türk Derneği* (1908);⁶⁴⁸ the 1915 bylaws of the *Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti*;⁶⁴⁹ the 1912 *Nizamname* of the Turkish Hearth (1912);⁶⁵⁰ the bylaws of the *Köylü bilgi Cemiyeti* (1919);⁶⁵¹ the preamble of the 1932 bylaws of the People’s Houses.⁶⁵² The term ‘people’ is used in contrast to the ‘intellectuals’, but it definitely denotes the villagers, as the majority of the ‘non-intellectuals’ reside in villages. ‘Popular education’ then necessitates the coming together of the two groups, ‘intellectuals’ and the ‘people’, the ‘fusion’ the Halkevi sources refer to as the main goal of the Houses. Ziya Gökalp’s influence is obvious; the distinction between intellectuals seen as carriers of civilization, and the ‘people’ as the reservoir of (national) culture, as well as the need to have these two ends of the spectrum come together in a process of mutual exchange resides in the core of Gökalp’s thought.⁶⁵³

The need to reach the ‘people’ and especially the villagers – consider the creation of a specific Halkevi section for this reason, the Village Section - was also felt in the Turkish Hearth association, within which two groups were formed during the First World War with the specific aim to ‘reach the people’, and thus the villagers: the *Halka Doğru* journal and movement and the *Köycüler Cemiyeti*. In 1916, the *Halka Doğru Cemiyeti* of Izmir was

⁶⁴⁷ Ramazan Kaplan, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Romanında Köy* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1997), pp. 33 - 63; Carole Rathbun, *The Village in the Turkish Novel and Short Story 1920 to 1955* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1972), pp. 18 - 22; Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “The peasants in early Turkish literature”, *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No 2, (2002).

⁶⁴⁸ Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 7-20.

⁶⁴⁹ Baltacıoğlu, *Halkın Evi*, pp. 22-4.

⁶⁵⁰ Francois Georgeon, “Les Foyers Turcs à l’ époque Kemalist (1923 - 1931)”, *Turcica*, XIV, (1982), p. 169. Also in Zafer Toprak, “Osmanlı Narodnikleri : Halka Doğru gidenler”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, 24, (1984), p. 70.

⁶⁵¹ *Köylü Bilgi Cemiyeti esas nizamnamesi* (İstanbul, 1335 [1919]).

⁶⁵² *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Halkevlerin Talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932).

⁶⁵³ Niyazi Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp* (London, 1959), p. 259; see extract from Gökalp’s article ‘Halka Doğru’.

founded,⁶⁵⁴ followed in 1918 by yet another Association stemming from the Turkish Hearth Society, the *Köycüler Cemiyeti* (Villagists' Association).⁶⁵⁵

All the above associations underscore the rising interest in and the importance intellectuals of the era – soon to be seen in key positions in the Republican state – placed on the 'enlightenment' and 'progress' of the villagers. Due to the precarious conditions of the period though, these villagist⁶⁵⁶ activities remained extremely limited in nature, scope and outcome, never really surpassing a missionary-like enterprise with no clear aims and program. This lack was partly covered with the expansion of the Turkish Hearth association within a more stable social and political environment after 1923.

Village Operation: Theory

The villagist part of the 'Popular education' movement adopted a more organized and systematised form with the establishment of the People's Houses in 1932. The years preceding their establishment saw a growth in the importance placed on *Halk Terbiyesi* by intellectuals, especially within the Houses' predecessor, the Turkish Hearths.⁶⁵⁷ A number of events though that took place around the year 1930 alarmed the ruling elites of their failure to pass their reforms to the people. The failure of the Free Republican Party to provide a loyal and controllable opposition Party, the Menemen Incident, the repercussions of the 1929 Crisis, and reports of a widespread public distress over the regime's policies – to name only a few of these events, led to the adoption of a set of policies seeking to overcome the failure to win the population to the reforms, the establishment of the Halkevleri being one of them. One of the sections of the Houses was especially devoted to the 'progress' of the villagers. The Village Section was the headquarters of the Houses' 'villagist' activities, which had adopted a more organised and sophisticated form than the earlier attempts by the Turkish Hearths. A series of publications⁶⁵⁸ were compiled by the Party or various Houses, especially the

⁶⁵⁴ Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Narodnikleri", p.75.

⁶⁵⁵ Uluğ İğdemir, *Yılların içinde* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976), p. 292. Reşit Galib was also a member of the group of leading intellectuals and politicians engaged in the establishment of the Halkevi institution. Anıl Çeçen, *Atatürk'ün kültür kurumu Halkevleri* (Ankara, 1990), pp. 107 – 110. For more information on similar associations see Chapter 1.

⁶⁵⁶ The term köycü/köycülük is rendered here as villagist; peasantist is another alternative.

⁶⁵⁷ Some examples: Hamit Zübeyr (Koşay), *Halk Terbiyesi* (Ankara: Köy Hocası Matbaası, 1931); S. Laslo, "Faşist Halk Terbiyesi", *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 4, (1930); F. Yozsef, "Fin Yüksek Halk mektepleri", *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 1, No 24- 218, (1929); n. a., "Yugoslavya'da İslav Sokol Kongresi", *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 5/24, No 32/226, (1930).

⁶⁵⁸ Some examples: Ankara Halkevi, *Ankara Halkevi köycüler şubesi talimatnamesi* (Ankara, 1932); Tevfik Kılınçarşlan, *Köy kütüğü* CHP Ankara Halkevi Büyük boy No. 25, Köycülük Şubesi, (Ankara, 1939); Salahaddin Demirkan, *Köy nasıl tetkik edilmelidir?*, İstanbul Eminönü Halkevi Dil ve Edebiyat şubesi Neşriyatı: XX, (İstanbul: Kültür Basımevi, 1942); "Ankara Halkevi Köycüler kolunun çalışması", *Ülkü*, Vol. 4, No 24, (February 1935), p. 465; "Köy Anketi", *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, No 6, (June 1933), pp. 362-4; Salim Gündoğan, *Köycülük ve Köy Davası hakkında bir etüd*. Aydın

Ankara Halkevi, and distributed to all Houses.⁶⁵⁹ These publications functioned as a set of directives or instructions on how to carry out a number of village-related works, from the collection of folklore material to the speeches the Halkevi visitors were supposed to deliver to the villagers.

Ülkü, the journal of the Ankara Halkevi, was among the first to pave the way and give instructions and examples of ‘Village studies’ with an article series entitled “Village Survey” starting in June 1933. The article recommends a number of sections a village related study should have: ‘General information about the village’, ‘Social situation’, ‘Educational situation’, ‘Economical situation’, ‘state of hygiene’. More articles on the Houses’ village activities followed.⁶⁶⁰

Published in 1939 by a member of the Village Section of the Ankara Halkevi, *Köy Kütüğü* (Village Register) is another example of publications offering guidelines on ‘Village studies’. It is a booklet offering Halkevi members, especially members of the Village Section, a set of guidelines on how to conduct their activities. “Our House’s Village Section has created a ‘Village Register’ for every village with the aim to render the cause for village progress, to which our Party has given great importance and value, easier as well as in order to achieve more positive results in practice.” The book is actually a list with all the information deemed necessary for the village development operation of the Party. Starting with a sketch and photographs of the village before and after the Republic (*Eski ve Yeni köy*), the prospective authors of such ‘Village Registers’ are asked to collect and register information divided into a number of sections: geographical data (climate, water, natural difficulties and beauties), population statistics, cultural situation (schools, number of students, teachers, literacy statistics, stories and tales), historical information and folklore (dances, musical instruments, songs, customs, stories about the village’s name and history), administrative situation (number of gendarmeries, households, public services), public works (roads, gardens, parks, ponds, bridges, Square and monument of the Republic), hygienic conditions (general hygiene, cleanliness, Turkish bath, laundry, swamps, stables and manure, water, diseases), economy (agriculture, crafts and commerce), and social situation (family life, family budget, ways of living – *hayat şekilleri*).⁶⁶¹

Halkevi Neşriyatından 25, Köycülük Şubesi (Aydın: CHP Basımevi Raif Aydoğlu, 1944). See also Nusret Kemal, *Köycülük Rehberi* (Ankara: Çankaya Matbaası, 1934), where most of his articles in *Ülkü*.

⁶⁵⁹ For an account of the Villagist discourse see Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “The People’s Houses and the cult of the peasant in Turkey”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34 No 4, (1998) and Asım Karaömerlioğlu, *Orada bir Köy var Uzakta* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006).

⁶⁶⁰ Dr. Zeki Nasır, “Köylerimizin sağlık işleri”, *Ülkü*, Vol. 2, No 5, (August 1933), pp. 42 -45; Salahattin Kandemir, “Coğrafya bakımından köy”, *Ülkü*, Vol. 3, No 14, (April 1934), pp. 153 – 160.

⁶⁶¹ Tevfik Kılınçarslan, *Köy kütüğü*, CHP Ankara Halkevi Büyük boy No. 25, Köycülük Şubesi, (Ankara, 1939), pp. 1 - 47. For a similar plan of village research see Nusret Kemal, *Köycülük Rehberi* (Ankara: Çankaya Matbaası, 1934), the part entitled ‘Köyü nasıl tanımalı’ (How to know the village), pp. 6 – 18.

The People's House of Kütahya published a similar booklet on the subjects a Villagist should turn his/her attention towards when studying a village.⁶⁶² The categories of study are similar: the geography of the village, its position, waters; agriculture; the village houses, transportation means; the village culture; schools, teachers, literacy rates, existence of books and newspapers, dictionaries, Atatürk's speech and law books; fairy tales, sayings, folk songs and stories (Battal Gazi, Nasrettin Hoca, Köröğlu); social situation: drugs, alcohol consumption and gambling; reactionary and superstitious customs; men and women's clothes; economy and products.

Another book published in 1942 by Salahaddin Demirkan gives a similar account of how a village research is carried out. Most important, he notes in his introduction: "the village and the villager are distinctive beings, just like all the objects and aspects of nature and society. In relation to them, [we] have to be as objective as possible, as if we were to study an 'object', staying away from any personal interests, objective, calm and with no resentment."⁶⁶³

Both books stress the importance and seriousness of the operation to be conducted in the villages and upon the villagers. Villagers and villages are 'objects' to be counted, described, photographed, transformed, and instructed. Moreover, they almost emerge as parts of nature, in contrast to what the visitors stand for, which is not mentioned but somehow implied: the city, the state, the elite, civilization. Both texts inscribe relations of power between researchers and researched (in contrast to the populist rhetoric of the regime about the villager). "The peasant subject is produced for non-peasant consumption", Mitchell reminds us.⁶⁶⁴ This becomes apparent when we look at who possesses speech, or more plainly who is bestowed the right to speak about whom. What these books on how to conduct research on villagers describe is an 'operation' over a mute, or rather silenced 'other'; an object created within the wide framework of the social and political change that had been going on for some decades by the time these works were published; an object 'inherited' by local scholars, 'villagists' and Halkevi members, in other words those instructed to carry out the operation, from previous institutions and persons with similar aims, as well as from the Party headquarters. Drawing from De Certeau's distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics', I argue that what I call here 'Village operation' is exactly what he describes as a 'strategy' in contrast to a 'tactic', i.e. "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats can be managed. It would be also correct to recognize in these strategies a specific kind of

⁶⁶² C.H.P. Kütahya Halkevi Köycülük Şuğbesi, *Köycünün defteri* (Kütahya: İl Basımevi, n.d.).

⁶⁶³ Salahaddin Demirkan, *Köy nasıl tetkik edilmelidir?*, İstanbul Eminönü Halkevi Dil ve Edebiyat şubesi Neşriyatı: XX, (İstanbul: Kültür Basımevi, 1942), p. 5.

⁶⁶⁴ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts. Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 144.

knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with its own place.” In our case the center’s power to operate upon the villager sustains but is at the same time justified by the rationalist and expansionist knowledge of ‘science’, be it hygiene, architecture, rural planning, medicine, and the statistics to represent and legitimize the operation. By contrast then, tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. (...) The space of the tactic is the space of the other. (...) In short, a tactic is an art of the weak.”⁶⁶⁵ Thus, tactical can only be the villager’s response to a strategic operation, such as the Village Excursion.

What we have termed Village Operation, the Halkevi Village Excursion being part of it, signals the change of the state’s perspective on the villager. From the Sultan’s subject, a resource for the extraction of taxes and conscripts, the villager became citizen of the Republic, and in the populist rhetoric of the period was proclaimed the ‘true master of the country’. The populist overtones and the nationalism of the Republican regime and its discourse clashed with the old mentality and practice of the Ottoman state to differentiate, at least in theory, between the ruling elite and the population.

Nevertheless the discourse of the Village operation discloses a ‘objectified’ villager, a mute, silenced object, upon which the state’s increased interests and aims are to be enacted by state mechanisms and personnel (in a variety of fields, from education, military, and financial, to the cultural field). So if we place the village operation or more broadly the state’s new attitude over peasants, within the unchallenged relations of power existing in the countryside, we can speak of a continuation of the old state mentality that sees itself away and over society and populace in direct contrast with the otherwise expressed policy of populism, a paradox or ambiguity exemplified in the Party slogan ‘*halka rağmen halk için*’ (for the people, in spite of the people).

In a nutshell, the change in the state and regime’s perspective and wishes for the villager did not seem to significantly alter the old mentality and practice of demarcation that functioned within an effectively uncontested system of power relations.

Village Operation: an Example

A series of Village Excursions were carried out by the Kayseri Halkevi between the years 1936 – 1939 with the active encouragement and involvement of Adli Bayman, the Vali of Kayseri.⁶⁶⁶ Bayman reached Kayseri in September,⁶⁶⁷ while the first Village Excursion took place in October 1936.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 35-7. Italics in original.

⁶⁶⁶ Necmettin Çalışkan, *Kuruluşundan Günümüze Kayseri Belediyesi* (Kayseri: Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediye Kültür Yayınları, 1995), p. 17.

⁶⁶⁷ “Yeni Valimiz geldi”, *Kayseri*, 3 September 1936, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁸ “Köy Gezintisi”, *Kayseri*, 22 October 1936, p. 1.

More were to follow.⁶⁶⁹ Adli Bayman describes the aims of these excursions in a letter to the Interior Minister and Secretary General of the CHP: to work for the progress of the villager, to carry out research in the villages, and to enlighten the villager. The situation in Kayseri, according to the Vali, makes these needs even more pressing: “Kayseri, as you also know and recognize, is one of the most underdeveloped parts of our country.”⁶⁷⁰ Every Sunday, a group of people, mostly members of the Kayseri People’s House, headed by the Vali himself, were walking to nearby villages. Apart from the reports the Vali of Kayseri was sending to the Party Headquarters, a series of brochures about the villages they visited was published. Bringing these sources together with some of the participants’ accounts and with Cevdet fictitious - Kudret’s to a certain extent - version of the visits, as well as comparing the discourses of all sides, could be highly instructive in an attempt to comprehend the actors’ conflicting perspectives on the Excursions and of the Halkevi activities in general.

A report by the chairman of the Village Section of the Kayseri Halkevi informed the General Secretariat of the ruling Party of the Section’s activities.

- 1) The Village excursions program continues with the participation of women. We are working towards the strengthening of feelings of mutual affection and cooperation between men and women villagers and city men and women.*
- 2) A doctor and a health care worker take part in the excursions examining the ill villagers. Medicine is distributed free of charge by charitable associations.*
- 3) Research on the cultural, social, and financial situation as well as on the history and hygiene of every village is carried out and an attempt is made to publish a brochure on every village visited.*
- 4) During the excursions orators from the Section deliver speeches on various issues with a simple and comprehensive to the villager language. (Revolution, Independence, infectious diseases, village cooperatives, improvement of products and animals).*
- 5) Our villagers are invited during the holidays and fests to the House. Wrestling competitions are set up between villager wrestlers.*
- 6) Our section is trying to establish People’s Courses (Halk dershaneleri) by coming into contact with the village teachers (they are considered natural members of the section). Our Section also assists the villagers who visit the Halkevi in their paperwork with state offices.*

⁶⁶⁹ “Germir gezintisi”, *Kayseri*, 9 November 1936, “Mimar Sinan gezintisi”, *Kayseri*, 16 November 1936. In 21/11/1937 to Erkilet, in 31/10/1937 to Molu village, in 19/2/1938 to Karahüyük village, in 12/12/1937 to Anbar village, in 8/5/1938 to Yamula village, and in 15/5/1938 to Ağırnas village, according to Adli Bayman’s reports to CHP contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2.

⁶⁷⁰ Letter sent by Adli Bayman to Şükrü Kaya, General Secretary of the ruling Party, in 26/4/1937 contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/ 837.310.2.

7) *During the village excursions members from the theatre section stage plays inoculating the revolution and independence. The Halkevi band is also taking part playing national songs creating in this way a beautiful and amusing day.*⁶⁷¹

The Villagists of the Kayseri Halkevi carry out philanthropic (treatment of illnesses, distribution of medicine), propagandistic, cultural and educational (speeches, music, theatre, courses) activities, as well as the more ‘scientific’ work of studying the village(rs) and collecting a broad spectrum of information about the village, from folk songs and material to financial and agricultural data. The village is counted, registered and studied, medically treated and politically instructed; and becomes the recipient of entertainment and charity. The Section’s activities are canonical, that is they bare close similarity and in one sense follow the norms set by canonical texts on villagist activities; at least in theory, when reported to the source of that canon, the ruling Party.

Participants

Before moving to the actual texts we have to clarify who were the participants in these Village excursions. The authors of the accounts are either teachers (Özdoğan, Fahri Tümer, Cevdet Kudret) or civil servants (Sahir Üzel, the Vali Adli Bayman). Moreover, most of the participants referred to in the texts are also teachers or some kind of civil servant (doctor, scribe, health care worker). One of the brochures published by the Kayseri Halkevi describing the excursion to the village Germin listed the names of all participants.⁶⁷² Thirty-seven men and women took part. Ten Halkevi members, whose names are not mentioned, composed the Halkevi music band. The other 27 participants are given by name. Out of the eleven women, eight were actually accompanying their husbands or fathers: the wife and daughter of the Vali, the wives of two local Party men, of the local military commander and of the director of the Sümerbank factory. The last three women were schoolteachers. The male participants were, apart from the above ‘influential’ men, three schoolteachers, a lawyer, a merchant, a doctor – all Party members, two civil servants (a scribe and a nurse), an army officer, the president of the Sumer Sports Club, and an ‘unidentified’ man. The participants’ names mentioned in the Vali’s reports and the rest of the accounts used here show that the group of people taking part in similar excursions were almost the same, or at least from similar social

⁶⁷¹ Report of the activities of the Village Section’s for the period between 1/7/1937 and 31/12/1937, compiled by the Section’s chairman Fahri Tümer in 28/1/1938, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2.

⁶⁷² *İlbay Adli Bayman’ın Başkanlığı altında Kayseri Halkevinin Tertip ettiği Yaya Köy Gezileri Tetkik Notlarıdır, Seri: 2, Germir Köyü*, Yazan: Etiler Başöğretmeni Kazım Özdoğan (Halkevi Müze ve sergiler komitesinden), (Kayseri: Vilayet Matbaası, 1937).

groups. In short, this ‘villagist’ group of people was mainly composed of civil servants, teachers and local Party men, plus some female family members. In a sense then, the group acted, or at least was perceived (certainly in the eyes of the villagers), as representatives of the state, the Party, and the People’s House, sometimes combining all three statuses. After all, all three institutions were considered, not at all unjustifiably, very similar if not identical. From a different point of view, these people can be seen as agents of the city and carriers of all it might signify – civilization, power, the state, science, authority – to a place and to its inhabitants residing in a space away from all the above, closer to, or even *in*, nature. Nature then can be perceived as a place away from and lacking (or perhaps in need of) the above attributes.⁶⁷³

For some of the civil servants, similar Village excursions were definitely their first contacts with villages and their inhabitants. Conversely, we do know that provincial elites – usually local Party bosses – had been in contact and had a set of relations with villagers. Urban elites had been maintaining client – patron relations with villagers, provided credit and help when needed, absorbed part of the villagers’ product, acted as middle men in the villagers’ relation to state and town officials, and might have a past as tax-farmers (*mültezim*). In short, the local urban financial and political elites that were usually the local Party bosses shared a complex and old set of relations with the village population extending from financial, to political and cultural ties. Part of the aims of the regime’s Village operation and the discourse about the villager was referring to the need to ‘enlighten’, ‘civilize’, and ‘liberate’ the villager from the ‘oppression’ of the ‘landlord’ (*ağa, mutegallibe*). Put more simply, a paradox emerges: the Village Operation was partly executed by members of a social group whose structural relation with the countryside and the villager population was one of the prime targets of that very same operation.

Let us now turn to the texts and their authors.

The Bureaucrat: Adli Bayman

In his report sent to the *CHP Genel Sekreterliği* in 13/01/1937,⁶⁷⁴ Adli Bayman is describing their visit to the village of Reşadiye. “A group of 29 people from the Village, Sports, Music and Social Assistance Sections of the People’s House, we went on foot to the Reşadiye village.” Because the common room of the village was not big enough, the visitors and the villagers had to gather in the village mosque. “For hours we discussed with the villagers.

⁶⁷³ Mitchell has noted that similar lotions and images of the ‘exotic’, ‘child-like’ villager residing in nature and lacking ‘education and culture’ abound in peasantist studies about the Egyptian villager. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, pp. 127 ff.

⁶⁷⁴ Report No 1177 of the Kayseri Provincial Party leadership to the *C.H.P. Genel Sekreterliği*, dated 13/01/1937, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2. Bayman was also sending copies of the same reports to the Prime Minister, contained in **BCA Muamelat Genel Müdürlüğü**, 030.10/199.360.16, dosya No. 23716.

Speeches on social issues (*sosyal konular*) were given in a language intelligible to the villagers.” The Vali is then enumerating some of the “problems” the villagers were facing, such as the lack of a road, school, mill, the dispute between the villagers of Reşadiye and a nearby village about grazing space. Apart from ‘discussing’ with the villagers about “their problems” and delivering them speeches, the visitors compiled a list of the village’s orphans and poor children in order to distribute them books gratis. They then distributed sweets to the village children. The Halkevi’s music group sang national songs (*ulusal havalar*) to entertain the villagers. Finally, the doctor examined the villagers and wrote prescriptions for 28 of them. The medicine were to be distributed free of charge at the Memleket Hospital and the American dispensary.

In a second report compiled some months before,⁶⁷⁵ the Vali Adli Bayman describes yet another Village Excursion, this time to the Mimarsinan village. The structure of the report, and probably of the work done, is similar: they (40 men and women visitors) ‘listened to the villagers’ problems’, ‘discussed’ with them, gave them speeches on appropriate issues,⁶⁷⁶ distributed sweets to the village children and books to poor children and orphans, played music, ‘entertained’ the villagers, examined and distribute them medicine. Once more, as in the previous report, the Vali mentions problems relating to the conditions of roads, schools and drinking water. He also gives examples of the excursion’s ‘achievements’: “five Liras were given to a disabled man who had lost his one foot in a work accident. Quinine was distributed free of charge to the poor malarial.” Moreover, Hacı’s wife, the poor and blind Halide, would be operated thanks to the Local Administration’s support. Finally, the Halkevi gave a gift to all houses of the village: a gilded photo of Atatürk and Mimar Sinan.

Bayman wrote his reports in his double role of Vali of Kayseri and Chairman of the local Party branch.⁶⁷⁷ As the local leading bureaucrat supervising all state affairs in the province he was interested in problems of infrastructure, such as the state of roads and bridges, education and school buildings, the local economy and agriculture. On the other hand, as head of the local Party and, thus, of the local Halkevi, he presided over the House’s and Party’s ‘cultural activities’ and the regime’s attempt to disseminate its reforms and set of ideas to the local population. The Village Excursions he had initiated then gave him the opportunity to combine these two functions, on the one hand

⁶⁷⁵ Report No 1046 dated 19/11/1936 in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2/5th Büro.

⁶⁷⁶ The teacher Kazım Özdoğan spoke about Mimar Sinan, his life and works.

⁶⁷⁷ A few months prior to Bayman’s appointment to Kayseri, the cooperation of Party and Government was strengthened, with the June 1936 declaration of the Prime Minister and Deputy head of the Party İsmet İnönü. According to the new policy, the Party’s General Secretary was also to become Interior Minister, while the Prefects (*Vali*) were also to become heads of the local party structures. Cemil Koçak, “CHP – devlet kaynaşması (1936)”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, No 118, (November 2003).

as a bureaucrat inspecting the villages and solving problems falling under his administrative jurisdiction, and on the other as Party leader supporting the Party and Halkevi activities in the villages. Bayman's reports were composed for the eyes of his superiors. They are, in a sense, texts explaining his actions and achievements, reports of a work in progress concerning the 'development' of the region.

The schoolteacher: 'Village studies' and 'Village research notes'

The Vali also started the publishing of a series of booklets, one for every village they visited. Kazım Özdoğan was the teacher entrusted with this mission. These booklets were envisaged – as the title suggests – as a series of 'research notes' of the Village Excursions the Vali had initiated. Five of them were published in 1937. They were the published outcome of the research carried out during the Village Excursions. Two more 'Village Studies' were published in *Erciyes* – the House's journal – a year later in 1938 by yet another teacher and participant in the Excursions, the head of the House's Village Section Fahri Tümer.⁶⁷⁸ They more or less follow the 'norm' set by the party and Halkevi publications – directives concerning Halkevi activities.

The "research notes" about the Germin village seem to fulfil two aims. The booklet first of all gives a short account of the Village Excursion, such as information about the participants, their journey from Kayseri to the village, and the acts of the 'villagist' group (medical treatment of villagers, distribution of books, speeches, hearing of complaints). Secondly, the brochure takes the form of a 'Village Study', complying to the categories the Party had set: description of the village's geography, economy, its social, cultural, educational state, and lastly the village's hygienic conditions. The text is supplemented with photographs of the Excursion, where a group of men and women dressed in suits and European style clothes are posing to the lens. There are no village women in the pictures and even villager men are hard to spot.⁶⁷⁹

Tümer's articles in *Erciyes* are closer to the Party's archetype of a "Village Study". The two texts can be easily described as a set of answers given to a compartmentalized questionnaire. The author starts with a physical description of the village and its surrounding area and a few notes on the legends or narrations about the village's past and history. He then continues with population data, number of households, men and women under the subtitle *Köyün nüfusu* (Village population). He comments on the waters and springs used by the villagers. Information on schools, libraries, reading rooms, students and local poets and songs (if any) go under the subtitle 'Cultural situation' (*Köyün kültür durumu*). Next follows the sanitary conditions of the village, i.e.

⁶⁷⁸ Fahri Tümer, "Hisarcık köyü", *Erciyes*, Vol. 1, No 1, (March 1938), pp. 27 – 30, and Fahri Tümer, "Hacılar köyü", *Erciyes*, Vol. 1, No 4, (June 1938), pp. 122-6.

⁶⁷⁹ *İlbay Adli Bayman'ın Başkanlığı altında Kayseri Halkevinin Tertip ettiği Yaya Köy Gezileri Tetkik Notlarıdır, Seri: 2, Germir Köyü*, Yazan: Etiler Başöğretmeni Kazım Özdoğan (Halkevi Müze ve sergiler komitesinden), (Kayseri: Vilayet Matbaası, 1937).

data on diseases, cleanliness, child death rates, and child caring. The ‘Social situation’ is the next subcategory. This is the smallest and least descriptive part of the ‘Village study’. Apparently it consists of replies to a set of questions: “is the ‘Village law’ applied normally? Has the assembly of elders (*ihdiyâr meclisi*) been established? Is there any oppressor (*müteğallibe*) in the village? Do the civil servants visiting the village face any kind of problem? Are there different factions? Are the villagers devoted to the Party and the Republic?” These questions reveal the perspective of Party and regime over the village. They might also be seen as ‘problems’ faced in the past, or expected to exist in the future. They also reveal the centre’s concern about the reception of the new laws and the changes by the villagers, as well as the centre’s probable lack of information and feedback from the provinces. Finally, these questions expose the regime’s anxiety and mistrust of the villagers, and in general of the ‘real people’, as possible ‘reactionaries’. The last part of the study focuses on the economy of the village (*ekonomi durumu*), mainly stating the village’s agricultural, pastoral products and artefacts.

These studies say very little about the actual Village Excursion, the meeting of the Halkevi visitors with the villagers. They are extremely impersonal and tightly structured as they follow a ‘norm’, in reality a set of questions given by the Party headquarters reflecting the centre’s interest and perspective over villages and villagers. What do they say about the village and villager then? First of all, they see the village as a unit almost isolated in itself, away from the city and state, situated in nature having sporadic encounters with the state, its laws and functionaries. As for the villager, (s)he is a mute ‘object’, a ‘number’ in the population or education statistics, a healthy, or not, ‘body’, an agricultural ‘producer’, a passive ‘carrier’ of affirmative cultural qualities, such as music, songs, dances, folklore, or even undesired attributes, such as what the sources refer to as *batıl inançlar* (superstitious beliefs) or reactionary ideas. Finally, the villagers emerge as recipients of laws, instructions, propaganda, medical aid and charity, all ‘they’ (the villagers) *miss* (and thus *need*) and the visiting city dwellers *posses* and *offer*.

Another perspective: ‘impressions from a joyful journey to nature’

What both Bayman’s reports and Tümer and Özdoğan’s texts fail to express because of their specific aims is the atmosphere of the Village excursion and the impressions of the participants. In a newspaper article, M. Kılınmaz depicts the merry atmosphere of a group of friends and colleagues going on a weekend trip to the village of Erkilet.⁶⁸⁰ Although the article was published in February 1940, almost a year after Adli Bayman, the bureaucrat initiating the Village Excursions we are dealing with here, had left Kayseri, the mood should have been the same, since the participants were more or less the

⁶⁸⁰ M. Kılınmaz, “Erkilet Gezisi”, *Kayseri*, 1 February 1940, p. 1.

same people. Kılnamaz mentions four participants, all of them schoolteachers and Halkevi members: Nevzat Yücel (gymnastics teacher), Kemal Karamete (teacher of French), Hayri Özdemir (History teacher) and Melahat Erkmen⁶⁸¹ (gymnastics teacher). Kılnamaz offers an account of a journey full of joy.

Even before departing from the city the jokes started. [A]s the time passed the jokes continued and everybody started throwing snowballs to each other. Mr. Nevzat Yücel took a broken violin and tried to fix its strings. Ms. Erkmen then said, Children! Hit [with snowballs] Mr. Nevzat! [O]nce in a while, Mr Karamete and Mr Özdemir were joking to each other; we also participated sometimes and continued walking in joy. At the end, Mr. Nevzat Yücel managed to repair the violin and we started singing. Some of us sung songs, some türkii, but we were all very happy.

After resting for a while at the village, the merry atmosphere of the journey returned once more. “The jokes became more intimate and the souls more calm.” The article thoroughly reflects the joyful mood of the participants. Kılnamaz does not overlook to record yet another occasion for laughter. When they entered a village house and put their shoes off, “everybody looked at Özdemir’s torn socks and started laughing. At the end there was no end to our happiness, we were dancing, laughing, singing and having fun.”

Another constant element is the reference to nature coupled with the sense of joy transmitted in the above passage. Elements of nature, such as the weather or the landscape, are mentioned in an almost sensational way: “The sun was very nice and the horizon bright”; “a cool wind was caressing our hair”; “sitting proudly on the crest of a grey hill, boastful of its clean air and its abundant water, the village of Kırınardı has a delightful view. Like a magnified picture, a number of villages could be seen spread on the hillsides below.”⁶⁸²

Özdoğan’s brochure mentioned above also conveys the same feelings of joy together with a celebratory reference to nature. The brochure offers an almost expressionistic picture of the journey.

We went ahead following the Sivas highway under an autumn sun pouring out from the clouds. After five kilometres we arrived at the beginning of the road leading to the village. [We] passed through grey fields.

⁶⁸¹ Melahat’s husband (Ekrem Erkmen) was also a teacher at the Kayseri lisesi, chairman of the Library and Publication Section of the Kayseri Halkevi in 1940, and, in all probability also participated in the excursion. **BCA CHP**, 490.1/671.263.1, report No 42, of 3/3/1940 of Hilmi Çoruh, MP for Kastamonu, Party Inspector of the Kırşehir area.

⁶⁸² Sahir Üzel, “Köy Gezileri intibalarından. İki asrı birbirine bağlayan 130luk bir ihtiyaç”, *Erciyes*, Vol. 1, No 6-7-8, (1938), p. 187.

The author of the brochure, Kazım Özdoğan, reflects the pleasure of the journey, the merry atmosphere among the visitors, and then concentrates on describing the village, its houses, and its location amidst a beautiful landscape. Not much is said about the villagers or their problems, apart from a celebrated reference to their healthy appearance and nature.⁶⁸³

*Most important, the bodies of the village people are healthy and robust. The doctor of our group, Behçet bey, after examining the villagers said that there was only one sick, in fact crippled, villager. (...) There is not even one skinny and weak person among the villagers.*⁶⁸⁴

Deviation from the model: the Centre's objections over the 'Village Study' series

Apparently the author's choice to incorporate into his 'Village Study' all these references to nature and to the pleasure the participants were experiencing (as well as probably some comments that were overtly flattering the Vali)⁶⁸⁵ attracted the criticism of the centre. More specifically, N. Kansu, head of the 5th bureau of the *CHP Genel Sekreterliği*, the office responsible for the monitoring of the Halkevi activities,⁶⁸⁶ upon receiving a copy of one of the brochures, sent the Halkevi chairman a letter politely criticising the booklet.

Our Party received two of the booklets published by the Kayseri Halkevi under the title "Village Excursion Series". It is surely necessary to praise the Village Excursions and Village Studies. It is also proper to recognize such activities. Nevertheless, it has been concluded that the two brochures we have in our hands are overstating the work done enormously, while reducing the seriousness and Significance of the work. I am sending you the account of a Village Study published by the Ankara Halkevi (Küçük Yozgat köyü). It is useful to publish the results of Village Studies in this way. But publications like the ones of the Kayseri Halkevi leave bad rather than good effects while they cause

⁶⁸³ The romantic descriptions as well as the absence of the villager and of his/her voice seem to be quite common characteristics of such texts. Arzu Öztürkmen has noticed these features in 'Village Studies' from various Halkevi journals. Arzu Öztürkmen, *Türkiye'de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998), pp. 125 – 7.

⁶⁸⁴ Both extracts from Yaya Köy Gezileri Tetkik Notları, Seri: 3, *Mimarsinan Köyü* (Kayseri: Kayseri Vilayet Matbaası, 1937).

⁶⁸⁵ Page 16: "The affection and applauding of the village people towards us made our pleasure grow. The Vali was mixing with the people, listening to their problems, thinking of solutions, and showing the way towards their progress."

⁶⁸⁶ *CHP Genel Sekreterliğinin parti örgütüne genelgesi. Birinci kanun 38 den 30 Haziran 1938 tarihine kadar*, Vol. 12, (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1938), p. 18.

*expenses.*⁶⁸⁷

Nafi Kansu's letter is significant in that it expresses the centre's (in the sense of the Party, or better, the official Party department charged with monitoring the Halkevi activities) disapproval of the way the Halkevi village studies are presented, and, more generally, of the way village-related activities are executed. Kansu's letter indicates that the Village Excursions and the research to be carried out in the villages is an important and 'serious' work (or even a 'scientific' work one might say). We can then discern a divergence between the 'village operation' as it had been planned/envisaged by the centre and the manner it was actually carried out. This is even more evident in the text of M. Kılınmaz, where a village excursion is described as more of a joyful weekend trip of friends to the countryside rather than a 'serious' scientific work. Although Kansu's argument is related to the publication of a brochure referring to such undesired features during a village excursion – study, we can reasonably argue that such a perspective was also valid for the actual execution of the excursion (and not only its published outcome).

A similar viewpoint is expressed by Arman Hürrem, a student taking part in one of the first research missions to villages in the 1930s.⁶⁸⁸ The author together with a group of students of the Gazi Academy and Halkevi members were living in a village near Ankara. They were doing research when a group of men and women came from the Ankara Halkevi to visit the village and apparently destroyed the relationship they had painstakingly created with the villagers and thus the results of their research. Arman describes them as 'foreign tourists'. They stayed for some hours and a feast was organized to celebrate their meeting with the villagers. Their superficial interest in the villager is severely criticized by Arman. Here we bear witness to the clashing of two different perspectives of urban dwellers in relation to the villager. Arman's group of students indeed believed in the seriousness and importance of their work for the 'enlightenment of the villager', either they saw this as a 'scientific' or 'populist' (or even both) endeavour. They were annoyed by their fellow villagers' light-heartedness and disinterest in changing the villagers' lives and critical of the ongoing client – patron relations of power between villagers and local elites, by majority the same people controlling the provincial People's Houses.

⁶⁸⁷ Letter by Nafi Kansu to the chairman of the Kayseri Halkevi in 6/4/1937, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/837.310.2. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁸⁸ Hürrem Arman, *Piramidin tabanı. Köy Enstitüleri ve Tonguç* (Ankara: I Matbaacılık ve Ticaret, 1969).

Havada Bulut Yok: an alternative account

In his novel *Havada Bulut Yok*,⁶⁸⁹ Cevdet Kudret offers an account of a Village Excursion of the Kayseri Halkevi. The novel's hero, Süleyman is an idealist teacher with left leanings from Istanbul appointed to the Kayseri Lise to teach literature. He aspires to educate and help his fellow citizens to improve their life and he takes active part in the Halkevi activities.⁶⁹⁰ Cevdet Kudret describes a Village Excursion his hero and alter ego participated – Kudret himself was a literature teacher in the Kayseri Lisesi in the 1930s actively participating in the local Halkevi. Kudret's description is treated here in detail since it offers valuable insights into how a schoolteacher might have experienced such an enterprise without being restricted to write in a conventional way, as a Party or Halkevi spokesman would be.

A group of almost twenty people, among them teachers, the municipality doctor, the hospital dentist, the public works engineer, the amateur folklorist schoolteacher of German, the Halkevi secretary, some members of the Social Assistance Section and some from other sections, started their excursion on a Saturday morning on a hired bus. They reached a village of the region. They then rested at the Muhtar's house for an hour and waited for the villagers to assemble in front of the village *Halkodası*.⁶⁹¹ Then the House members stood in front of the Room facing the villagers.

The chairman ordered:

- Sit!

Everybody sat where they stood. Then the chairman said:

- Brothers, villagers! We have come here to listen to your complaints. The times have changed; in the old days you would stand in front of us. Nowadays it is we who stand in front of you. Look, the Halkevi chairman, the doctor, the dentist, the teacher, the engineer, great men came all the way to this place. Parties existed in the old days too, but this kind of things would have never taken place. The People's Party decided that the villager is the master (efendi). You do understand, don't you? Let us see, tell me, what are you?

A villager replied:

- We are villagers.

- Yes, you are villagers, but you are also masters. Impress this on your mind. You are now our masters.

⁶⁸⁹ Cevdet Kudret, *Havada Bulut yok* (Istanbul: Inkilap ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1976), pp. 108 – 111.

⁶⁹⁰ For Kudret's short biography and information about his time in Kayseri see Chapter 3.

⁶⁹¹ The People's Rooms were established in 1940 as an extension of the People's Houses in villages. Upon their abolishment in 1950 almost 5000 People's Rooms had been established. For their bylaws see "Halkodaları", *Ülkü*, Vol. 14, No 79, (September 1939), pp. 78- 80.

*Turning to the secretary,
- Suphi bey, give me this sign. See what is written here:*

THE VILLAGER IS OUR MASTER

*We will hang this on the People's Room's wall, you will show it
to those who come and you will read it yourselves.*

Kudret's irony is again at work: the Villagers are pompously given a sign they probably cannot read.

Then the chairman asked the villagers to express their complaints.⁶⁹² One villager complained that no doctor ever comes to their kaza. A second villager complained that the veterinarian as well is not coming to the village. Another was complaining about the taxes the muhtar is asking them to pay. The chairman instructed the secretary to write down these complaints in order to show the villagers that he takes an interest in their problems. Then he informed the villagers that they had brought books for them. The German teacher ironically remarked that no one knew how to read since the village had no school yet. At that moment, the villagers came to the People's Room to be examined by the doctors. The author is vividly describing the doctors' indifference to the villagers. When the villagers said that they do not have a pharmacist in their village to get the medicines the doctor is prescribing them, the doctor replies:

*- Well, I won't get involved with that. My job is to write
prescriptions. Haven't I written them? I have. As for the
other problems, you have to work them out yourselves.*

When Süleyman noticed that the dentist was taking out one villager's tooth he asks him:

*- Won't you use any anaesthetic before you pull it out?
- Drug you mean? These people have been used to a great
many troubles. Don't worry when they scream like that.*

After having their meal at the muhtar's place, the chairman addressed the villagers again.

*- Villagers, brothers! In the morning we heard your
complaints. Now let's hear your songs, let's watch your
dances.*

⁶⁹² Listening to complaints, receiving petitions and grievances was traditionally one of the Sultan's and state officials' obligations, as well as a tool to legitimize their authority. Halil İnalcık, "Şikayet Hakkı: 'Arz-i Hal ve Arz-i Mahzar'lar", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 7-8, (1988), p. 33.

*Five villagers started dancing and singing. [Th]e amateur folklorist German teacher was writing down the words. The chairman said to the music teacher, Şadan:
- Şadan Bey, write their notes. We'll use them in our concerts;
we'll also send a copy of them to Ankara.*

Then they hit the road again to visit yet another village. The place they were heading to was unsightly. The dentist commented on how people could set their village in such a remote place behind these rocks. The German teacher started to show off his knowledge explaining that the villagers always tried to hide from the tax collectors and the state. He referred to Evliya Celebi's Seyahatname and to Koçu Bey's Risale. This illustrates the way the villages and the villagers were viewed by the educated: as a page from a book, an object of literary, academic research, something completely alien to their lifestyle and mentality. After a while, due to the driver's carelessness, they had a small accident. Nobody was hurt, but the elderly doctor was terrified.

- My god, he said, I am not afraid of dying, one way or another we will all die one day. But we have to live for our cause. The men of the cause should die for the cause, not of a traffic accident.

The dentist showed his indifference and dislike for this work:

*The dentist spoke more openly:
- Why are we going to such remote villages? It's a corner of Hell. These are places of God's trouble (Allahın belası yerler). It is enough for us to improve the nearby villages. Let's leave the far away villages to be improved by those coming after us.*

After a while they managed to arrive at the village. They found the *muhtar* and arranged for 15 - 20 men to go and fix the bus. They then rested at the *ağa's* place. The *ağa* prepared a luxurious dinner with wine and *rakı*. Some of them slept at the *muhtar's* some at the *ağa's* house. The following day, after lunch they gathered the villagers.

*The same speeches were given; the same sign was hung in the Halkodası. The chairman:
- Come on speak, lets hear your problems.
Nobody said anything.
- Why don't you speak? Don't you have any problems?
A villager responded. It was not clear whether he was smiling or not, as his moustache was hiding his mouth.
- We don't have any problems, sir. Before you, a group of people (beyler) came here – may they be well – with pens in their hands.*

They wrote down all our problems. We are grateful; we have no more problems.

- A village without problems? How can this be real? Tell a few problems to us as well.

- There aren't any, sir. Who's the problem, who are we? (Dert kim, biz kim?) You have troubled yourselves to come all the way here. There is no road coming to our village, but yet you managed to find it. It's a pity for your bus.

The villagists were very sad to return empty handed from that village. They wanted to pay their debt for twice eating and drinking there by writing on a piece of paper their problems, but it didn't happen that way.

Kudret describes a Village Excursion almost as a travesty, in contrast to the official rhetoric that stresses the importance and seriousness of this Halkevi activity. The participants mentioned in Kudret's village excursion are the same persons we find in other accounts, teachers, Halkevi members, doctors and civil servants. The activities the Villagists carry out in the novel are the ones they were supposed to carry out and the same with those the other accounts mention: speeches on 'important issues', medical examination of villagers, distribution of medicine and gifts, folkloric interest, listening to the villager's problems. The significance of his story, if treated together with the rest of the accounts, lies not in his refutation of them, but rather in its complementarity with these accounts. For instance, the indifference – one might even say concealed antipathy – with which the Villagists treat the villagers in Kudret's novel easily corresponds to the 'disappearance' of the villager from the rest of the accounts. In the Village Excursion of the novel *Havada Bulut Yok* the villager is treated as a mere object of study, a quotation from a book (Evliya Çelebi), a text to be read, a music to be recorded, a body without an intellect or emotions to be 'fixed'. Kudret sketches in an ironic way the relations of power that are present at the encounter between the city visitors and their 'villager brothers': the Halkevi chairman orders the country's masters to sit and listen to him. The contradictions between the regime's statements about the villagers and the way the villagers are treated in reality by Party and state men and women are described with bitter irony.

Another instance of complementarity: in the Vali's report and Özdoğan's account the villagers are given prescriptions for medicine to be distributed free of charge in Kayseri. What they do not mention are the difficulties the villager might encounter to get to Kayseri or the expenses such a trip might entail. Kudret though does not fail to mention this fact. In short, Kudret offers an eyewitness' vivid account of the way villagers are thought of and operated upon by the Halkevi "beyefendiler".

Next to the participants' apathy towards the villagers, Kudret leaves the power relations between the visitors and the villagers as well as the occasional violence/coercion the villagers face in the hands of the Halkevi visitors

uncovered. The doctor's apathy to his patient's screams is an example. The villagers are ordered to sit in front of the standing Halkevi visitors in order to be demonstrated that they were the masters of the country. The irony is unmistakable. Lilo Linke described a quite similar incident that took place in Samsun in the summer of 1935. One of the members of the group of Samsun Halkevi members visiting the nearby villages, a young boy of 17 years, recounted the case of a villager with a venereal disease in need of medical treatment. "He had defied the previous orders of the visiting doctor. Talat [the Halkevi youth] warned him that he would be fetched by a gendarme and had told the *muhtar* and the teacher to keep an eye on him."⁶⁹³ Needless to say, the gendarme was the *bête noire* of the villagers, the villain of numerous complaint letters, and his service was necessary for the extraction of whatever the villager had to offer: taxes, military conscripts, corvee service, etc. In a number of cases disclosed in our letters we even see the gendarmerie providing the state and/or Party bosses in provincial towns with villagers from nearby villages to perform, dance and play musical instruments for the entertainment of high guests,⁶⁹⁴ in fests, holidays⁶⁹⁵ and folkloric events.

Lastly, *Havada Bulut Yok* offers some insights into what the villager's reaction might be during such an 'intrusion' of powerful city dwellers in his domain. The villagers treat the visitors silently but 'meaningfully': smile and nod affirmatively. When they speak they ask for practical things, a doctor, a veterinarian. Problems that we know the villagers were facing appear in Kudret's account: increasing taxes they are requested to pay, including part of the visitors' expenses (food, drink, shelter). It is rather reasonable not to expect such requests – if ever expressed – in the rest of the accounts treated above, although similar requests seem to have been heard in Party Congresses.⁶⁹⁶ As a matter of fact, the authenticity of the villagers' words is questionable in Kudret's novel. While it is reasonable to think that resentment among the villagers due to inflated taxes, forced labour, increased state control over their life existed in the countryside, it is difficult to expect this resentment to be

⁶⁹³ Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned*, p. 174.

⁶⁹⁴ Letter by Faik Barım, chairman of the House of Ayvalık, to General Secretariat of CHP, dated 16/9/1942, contained in BCA CHP, 490.1/825.265.2, where he informed the Party of his intention to have some villagers brought by gendarmes (*jandarma marifetiyle*) to play music for the visiting Halkevi Inspector Adnan Saygın.

⁶⁹⁵ Letter by the teacher of the village of Çıtak in the province of Denizli, dated 24/4/1945, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1, where the teacher, following requests from the villagers, complained of the customary (*her milli günde*) and by force (*cebren*) carrying of the village's musical group (*çalgı takımı*) by gendarmes to perform in the Sub-district (İlçe) that was ordered by the Halkevi chairman and the town's mayor. The Party did not show the same sympathy for the coerced villagers. In its reply to the teacher, dated 5/5/1945, contained in **BCA CHP**, 490.1/831.281.1, the Party wrote: "the calling (*çağırılması*) of village musicians to the town to perform on national holidays is right and must be considered positively because the happenings organized in the town become more national and more lively." The Party turned a deaf ear to the use of force: "it can be investigated by the responsible local authorities", in other words the local police, the very same people accused of using force.

⁶⁹⁶ *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Kayseri İli 934 – 935 yılları Kongre dilekleri ve sonuçları* (Kayseri: Yeni Basımevi, 1936).

expressed openly by the villagers in a setting similar to the one of a Village Excursion as described above.

The villager described, the villager quoted

At first glance, the villager is portrayed within the context of the limited – prescribed by the centre – way; as an object of study, as a number in population statistics, as a body in health-care accounts, as a producer of agricultural goods, as a container of ‘culture’ – music, songs, dances, proverbs and similar folkloric ingredients of a national culture in the making.

Images that correspond to, or perhaps derive from, the above way of looking at the villager emerge as well. The villager can be portrayed as happy, good looking and healthy.⁶⁹⁷ The typology goes on: the villager can have a heroic appearance (*kahraman yapılı*); he can be proud and full of national and military qualities: “I see in front of me a middle-aged villager with a thin beard. He is wearing a casket with the crescent and star on it saluting me militarily. – I am the village watchman sergeant Osman!”⁶⁹⁸ What all the texts agree upon is the Turkish villager’s hospitality, an almost national quality. Moreover, the villager is definitely a treasure and a history (or text) they – the intellectuals – have to read, study and evaluate.⁶⁹⁹ Invoking the characteristic category of the producer or the resident of nature are the metaphors of the field used to describe villagers: “their hands were like fields”, “her breasts resembled a productive field, a dried out spring.”⁷⁰⁰

The villager though can also be a repository of undesired, negative qualities. The superstitious villager who has faith in false beliefs (*batıl inançlar*) is also a common stereotype, a theme found in the manuals on how to conduct research in the villages, but also in literature.⁷⁰¹ In describing the village Hacılar, Fahri Tumer refers to a ‘superstition’ the villagers believe in. “A number of dervishes’ tombs (Seherdede, Heybetlidede, Hasandede, Sesli and Şeyharlan) exist here giving life to superstitions. These stones might be two or three meters long. The people believe that the dervishes were equally tall and attach long colourful wish-cloths to the tombstones. Some even attach silk veils and handkerchiefs. (...) The social life of this village that is very

⁶⁹⁷ “Köy halkının sağlam vücutlu ve dinç.” “Halk iri vücutlu, gülbüz cesur ve çalışkandır.” “Köy halkının yüzlerinde, güneşle tünçlaşmış bir renk, lastik gibi katı birer adede vardır. İçinde tek bir zayıf ve sıksası yoktur.” (The people of the village have robust and healthy bodies. The people have big bodies, are sturdy, brave and hard working. There is not even one weak among them.)

⁶⁹⁸ Naci Kum, “Bir köy gezisinden örnek”, *Kayseri*, 11 May 1939, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁹ “Köylerimiz, üzerinde durulması ve etüd edilmesi lazım gelen ne kıymetli hazinelerdir?” “Okunulmaya değer bir tarihi sayılan bu iki Türk karısı”. (These two Turkish women are regarded as a valuable history to be read.)

⁷⁰⁰ Sahir Üzel, “Köy Gezileri intibalarından. İki asrı birbirine bağlayan 130luk bir ihtiyar”, *Erciyes*, Vol. 1, No 6-7-8, (1938), p. 189.

⁷⁰¹ Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “The peasants in early Turkish literature”, *East European Quarterly*, 36, (2), (2002).

close to Kayseri has not yet been raised (*yükselmemiştir*). Blood feuds persist.”
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Apart from the way(s) the Halkevi intellectuals might speak of the villager, their texts purportedly report the villager’s ‘voice’ (mostly in the form of the ‘villagers’ requests’) as well. What are the villagers reported as saying and what are their requests? What does their reported speech tell us about the authors’ activities, the Village Excursions – Studies, the meeting of the ‘intellectuals’ with the ‘real people’?

What the villagers ask from the Halkevi members is more or less what the Halkevi members would deem necessary for their “village brothers”: information about childcare, a school building, a road, a reading room in the place of the municipal coffeehouse, the demolition of the dervish tombstones that give life to superstitions. Taxes are not discussed as well as compulsory work in the construction of roads and state projects. These are requests voiced in the Party congress of Kayseri⁷⁰³ a few years before. Some of them (taxes) were even mentioned by Kudret’s villagers. Given the nature of such texts,⁷⁰⁴ it is rather surprising to have real popular requests and issues that were definitely arousing popular distress recorded, such as the forced labour in road construction for those not able to pay certain taxes. Village Studies though did not refer to such complaints. This is an indicator of the authenticity of the villager’s voice in these studies and of the degree the villagers contributed to the ‘exchange’ the Village Excursion as a project was supposed to generate. In a given confrontation with the ‘state’ and its agents (gendarmes, tax collectors, conscription officers), and the Halkevi members – with or without the Vali – were definitely that, the villagers were reported to nod even when disagreeing or, more likely, understanding nothing of the things said. On the other hand, the villagers’ indifference, evident in Kudret’s text and easily sensed in the rest of the accounts, precluded any possibility of a dialogue between the two sides –

⁷⁰² Fahri Tümer, “Hacılar köyü”, p. 124.

⁷⁰³ And published as *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Kayseri İli 934 – 935 yılları Kongre dilekleri ve sonuçları* (Kayseri: Yeni Basımevi, 1936). Requests coming from villages are by large what the CHP elites would also condone, or perhaps motivate: road construction, school buildings, telephone connection of villages, and dispatching of teachers. Nevertheless, more sensitive for the state requests are voiced: abolition or exception from forced labour, donation of seed, abolition of village scribes, lowering of the price of sugar and salt, payment of debts to Ziraat Bankası in instalments. The abolition of village scribes, the lowering of animal taxes and the price of electricity are among similar requests to be found in *Kayseri ili içinde 934, 935, 936 ve 937 yıllarında arzedilmiş olan CHP nin kongrelerinde serdedilen dileklerin kovalama ve bitimleri* (Kayseri: Vilayet matbaası, 1938). Mahmut makal is also describing the villagers’ fear and disgust of the village clerk: “a ridiculous extravagance (...) their duties are two: they call at each village twice a year to collect the village tax, and register the number of cattle. These clerks, scoundrels most of them, are men who have retired from some job. The villager is so frightened of them”. Mahmut Makal, *A Village in Anatolia* (London, 1954), pp. 139 - 140.

⁷⁰⁴ After all they were compiled by local Party elites for the eyes of the supervising authority, the Party center. Mete Tunçay has argued that the published texts of Party Congresses and the requests (Dilek) they contain were by large expressing the demands and interests of provincial elites. Mete Tunçay, “CHF’nin 1927 Kurultayının Öncesinde Toplanan İl Kongreleri”, *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 36, (1981), pp. 281 – 333.

and dialogue here is defined as an exchange between two sides that desire to communicate and *speak the same language*,⁷⁰⁵ which is definitely not the case here.

Villager Quoted

In very few cases the villager is permitted to say a few words. The exceptionality of such direct quotations signifies on the one hand the low intensity of the dialogue between city dwellers and villagers, while on the other it reveals the little importance the Halkevi members attached to searching for and recovering the villager's own voice. Not that direct quotations by their nature and especially within such a authoritative discursive space as the Halkevi and Party publications in the 1930s carried any guarantee of authenticity, or that the quotations were real and spoken word for word. They are important though in that they can disclose the way(s) the writers viewed their object, the villager. When the villager 'speaks' in these accounts, he/she is in reality permitted to speak. What then does the villager say?

In M. Kılınmaz's article about an excursion to the Erkilet village, the villager calls one of the visitors 'my teacher' in a very polite and respectful manner, while they call him 'my child', an instance highlighting the social distance between the villager and the educated visitor.⁷⁰⁶ In Kudret' novel the villager is directly quoted just once, while trying in a canny way to escape from the visitors' questions/interrogation. In general, the texts examined here are void of any direct quotation of any villager, especially of any length. Just once, an apparent excitement caused by the presence of a 131 years-old village woman allowed for her quotation at more length than usual. Because of the interest shown towards her by the Vali and the Halkevi visitors, the old woman is reported crying and saying the following words to the visitors:

"May Allah give you a life as long as ours! But I do not know, are these words for us a wish or a curse?"

When asked about her reminiscences she is reported mentioning her husband's prolonged military service.

"My husband was a soldier for 12 years in the lands of Arabistan. I was waiting for him for 12 years in this village. I will not be able to forget this pain

⁷⁰⁵ The unintelligibility of the two languages, the one spoken by villagers and the other by villagers, is mentioned by one of the pioneering villagers and villager theorist in the 1930s in Turkey, Nusret Kemal Köymen, "Köycülüğün daha verimli olması hakkında düşünceler", *Ülkü*, Vol. 13, No 73, (1933), p. 27, mentioned in Gülsüm Baydar Nalbandoğlu, "Urban Encounters with Rural Turkey", in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 201. On the difference of the language spoken by villagers and villagers see Mediha Eşenel, *Geç Kalmış Kitap. 1940'lı Yıllarda Anadolu Köylerinde Araştırmalar ve Yaşadığım Çevreden İzlenimler* (İstanbul: Sistem Yayıncılık, 1999).

⁷⁰⁶ M. Kılınmaz, "Erkilet Gezisi", p. 1.

till I die.”

The author’s assessment of this statement is quite telling of the way a villager’s word might be read by a Halkevi member:

She said with tears in her eyes, still feeling the pains of the old regime.

The third and last direct quotation comes at the end of the article:

“I haven’t seen anything. That’s it, I came, I will go.” She described with one sentence in an open, absolute and eloquent way the philosophy of her long life.⁷⁰⁷

This article is subtitled “Impressions from village excursions” and thus it is not about the village excursion or the visited village; it cannot fall under the category of the ‘Village Study’ as the ones of Kazım Özdoğan either. It is almost completely about the old woman. Out of four and a half pages about this woman the three quotes above are the only few words she is allowed to utter. The rest is what the author says about her. What her words say then cannot stand alone but only in relation to the rest of the text. In the first quotation she expresses her gratitude to the Vali and the visitors for their help and interest. This can be also read as an endorsement of the current state activities in contrast to her condemnation of the old regime’s deeds, which is the author’s reading of the second quotation of her words, as well as its function in the text. As for her last words, they couple smoothly with the metaphors the author uses to describe her: the words of a simple person, of an ‘object’, or else, of a “*bridge* connecting the beginning of the previous century with the current one”, “a *field*”, “a valuable *history* to be read”, “a *spring* feeding 54 grandchildren”, “a *residue* tossed from the previous to this century”, and “a precious *treasure* that has to be studied”, all of which are images and concepts used by the modernizing subject to imagine, apprehend, study, in short, ‘operate’ over its selected object, a mute (and/or silenced) ‘other’, an ‘other’ much celebrated as the repository of national culture and simultaneously feared as a potential core of ‘reactionary’ opposition.

Even when directly quoted, exceptional as it may be, the villager’s words do not amount to anything more than a part of the Halkevci author’s discourse. The villager simply reiterates with his ‘own’ words what the rest of the text expresses about him/her.

⁷⁰⁷ Sahir Üzel, “İki asrı birbirine bağlayan 130luk bir ihtiyar”, pp. 189 – 190.

In lieu of Conclusions: Administration of the Border between and creation of the categories of ‘Villagist’ and ‘Villager’

The founding fathers had envisaged the People’s House as a place where what they perceived as their natural constituency, partisans of their cause – teachers, civil servants, doctors, in short people with a ‘modern’ education and outlook, would congregate and come in communion with what the regime termed ‘real people’, in a fusion that would facilitate the propagation of their political and ideological program(s) and result in the production of ‘responsible’, ‘positive minded’, ‘free of superstition and backwardness’ citizens.

In the previous chapters we have seen how the power relations coupled with the practice of social segregation between urban elites, state employees and the rest of the population worked to exclude the Halkevi’s prescribed ‘other’ from its premises. The Village Excursion then appears as maybe the sole Halkevi activity wherein the meeting of the two parts takes place, even outside the House and for a limited amount of time. This limited amount of time, this ‘short moment’, was thought and planned in its smallest details, a fact attesting to its significance for the regime. A series of guides on how to conduct such an operation and a number of model-works to be emulated were published, while more theoretical texts on *Köycülük* and its importance within the regime’s ideology appeared in the 1930s, all of the above creating a corpus of works distributed to the Houses, whose activities they were expected to direct.⁷⁰⁸

A relative abundance⁷⁰⁹ of accounts about the Village Excursions carried out during the period Adli Bayman was in office as the governor (*Vali*) of Kayseri offers an opportunity to follow the village operation in practice, as it was executed, and thus to check the similarities and divergences between the plan, as set by the Party directives, and its implementation, as well as to contemplate on the importance of such an enterprise for the participants.

In this perspective I have tried to show how local agents have portrayed the *Köy Gezisi*, while reading their texts in order to assess their experience as participants in such an event. Their rather superficial interest in the cosmos of the villager, a trend depicted more clearly in the more ‘scholarly’ texts that resemble the canonical texts of the centre, provoked the centre’s polite reprimand. I chose to read this as the expression of an inability on the part of the actors to conform to the expectations of the centre. The sources used here, with the exception of Cevdet Kudret’s novel, do not offer extremely different accounts of the excursions. This might give the impression – not entirely wrong – that the Halkevi villagists comprised a homogenous group with only

⁷⁰⁸ For an account of the ‘villagist discourse’ of the 1930s see Asım Karaömerlioğlu “The People’s Houses and the cult of the peasant in Turkey”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34 (4), (1998).

⁷⁰⁹ Abundance in contrast to sources of the same nature referring to other Halkevi activities.

inconsequential differences in outlook, perspective and thought about the villagers. Nevertheless, scarce as it may be, a different perspective of the Village operation is offered by Kudret, as well as in similar, mostly autobiographical, texts by schoolteachers engaged in Halkevi activities. These texts usually come later on though, in the 1950s and 1960s.⁷¹⁰

A variety of images of the villager emerges from the texts of the Halkevi villagists. The representations of the village, the villager, and village life might differ according to each author's and text's perspective, as well as the socio-political space within which it was produced, namely the author's social and occupational status, his position in a given local society, the nature of the text, the publisher, and, last but not least, the expected audience(s), be it the Party supervisors, Ankara, local readers or a broader audience, as in the case of a novel. Differences in style, language and overall perspective are thus expected. A number of features though that underscore the common origins of the endeavour persist unchallenged: those who speak and those who are spoken about; the villager either remains silent, or is spoken through the author, which in most cases means that the author's words give meaning to the villager's fragmented speech. The village operation by its conception, but also upon its execution, produces discourses *about* the villager and not *of* the villager. This is a common denominator of all accounts, however different they might be in style or authorial perspective: the villager is always a pervasive 'other', an object of study, interest, and description, an object to be operated upon.

If we imagine the dimensions of this village operation, the sheer number of excursions and texts produced as well as the number of participants within those 18 years of the Houses' life, then we can more clearly assess the range of the enterprise and reflect upon its outcomes. Between the years 1935 and 1941 at least 1000 village excursions were reported.⁷¹¹ We can only guess about the number of participants, but judging from the number of Village excursions and the 18 years the Houses –almost 500 in 1950 - were active, the number cannot be insignificant. Moreover, apart from the books published on villagists themes, such as folklore and village studies,⁷¹² the Halkevi journals were also publishing articles on Village themes for almost 20 years.⁷¹³ Clearly, the

⁷¹⁰ There is a large number of books by teachers, especially Village institute graduates, Mahmut Makal being a famous example.

⁷¹¹ Around 500 in 1935, 1250 in 1936, 1500 in 1937, 1900 in 1940 and 1200 for the first half of 1941. See figures in Sefa Şimşek, *Bir ideolojik seferberlik deneyimi, Halkevleri 1932 – 1951* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002), p. 265, reproduced from *CHP Halkevleri ve Halkodaları 1932 – 1942* (Ankara: Alaaedin Basımevi, 1942).

⁷¹² Özacın offers a rich catalogue of books published by Halkevi and Party. A rather large part was related to Villages and Villagers. Orhan Özacın, *CHP Halkevleri yayımları bibliografyası* (İstanbul, 2001).

⁷¹³ On Halkevi publications see Kemal Karpat, "The impact of People's Houses on the development of communication in Turkey 1931-1951", *Die Welt des Islams*, 15, (1974). For a presentation of the Halkevi journals see Nurettin Güz, *Tek parti ideolojisinin yayın organları: Halkevleri dergileri 1932-1950* (Ankara, 1995).

village operation could not have been realized everywhere and always the same identical way, but this cannot forcefully alter the basic argument.

The argument put forward here is that by such an operation – meeting the villager and producing representations of him/her, the category ‘villager’ – however described in the past, or by the canonical texts of the centre – emerges bearing a set of characteristics. Consider the amassed folkloric data on villagers that was necessary for and led to the creation of a national repertoire, a national literary and folkloric canon carving the category Turkish villager. The ‘villager’ ends up being such and such, with these characteristics, such and such potential and needs, such and such limits. This is what the modernizing subject decides for him. This ‘discovery’ of the ‘Turkish villager’ executed by and through these village excursions and the consequent formation of a literary and folkloric canon for ‘national use’ is a de-contextualizing operation and presupposes the ‘death’ of its object as it used to be, a similarity it shares with ‘popular culture’: “studies devoted to this sort of literature were made possible by the act of removing it from the people’s reach and reserving it for the use of scholars and amateurs”, as De Certeau, Dominique Julia and Jacques Revel argue in relation to the appearance of popular literature studies in the 19th century France.⁷¹⁴

The formation of the category ‘villager’ can also be seen as a redefinition of what the villager had been for the ruling urban elites before. As we have seen in this paper, through a intensifying process of ‘reaching the people’ roughly since the Second Constitutional Period that culminated in the establishment of the People’s Houses, a new set of discourses about the villager gained significance. The villager as a subject of the sultan (*tebaa*) only to be treated in disgust and only good for soldiering and paying taxes became the repository of the true Turkish culture and intellect in the process of becoming a citizen of the Turkish Republic through *Halk Terbiyesi*. It is not a coincidence that this gradual change of the villager’s essence runs parallel to the gradual expansion of the state’s control over the countryside (transport, communication means, infrastructure etc.). Not that contradictory images and ideas did not exist as well; the ignorant, backward, potentially hostile and dangerous peasant coexists with the polite, simple and hard working villager. We might also consider the increasing state and/or institutional interest and intervention in the countryside together with studies of ‘village sociology’ that started to appear by the late 1940s, for which the Halkevi Village Excursion/Study experiment (together of course with other important projects as the Village Institutes and their products) operated as an substratum of works, literature, attitudes and

⁷¹⁴ Michel De Certeau, Dominique Julia and Jacques Revel, “The Beauty of the Dead: Nisard”, in Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourses on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 119.

accumulated experience.⁷¹⁵

In that sense, I argue that the People's Houses Villagist operation was, to some degree, constitutive of the identity of what we might term 'Kemalist intellectual', or else for his/her (self)'positioning'⁷¹⁶ (or for its reinforcement) upon a social and cognitive 'map', where 'borders' and, thus, 'sides', are drawn. Apart from being an exercise in 'border administration' – to remember Ahıska, being a *Köycü*, working for the progress of the villagers, as an active participant in the Halkevi Village operation, was also a meaningful experience constitutive of the actor's social identity, for some to be mentioned with pride in their memoirs, for others an important argument when asking the Party for a favour, for instance to nominate them for the Municipal or the National Assembly.⁷¹⁷

Being a Halkevi member, participating in the Village excursions, meeting the other/villager, entails the realization of the border separating him/herself from the other (s)he is supposed to educate and change. If being a People's House member within a 'peopleless' House endows someone with status, if this membership plays a part in his/her positioning upon a social map, then the village operation (re)inforces this map, or, more precisely, makes the drawn borders more transparent. More precisely, borrowing from F. Barth's ideas on the significance of 'borders' for the (self)identification of ethnic groups,⁷¹⁸ I argue that by virtue of his/her Halkevi membership and, more importantly, by his/her participation in this 'map-drawing'/'border-(re)setting' operation the Village Excursions can be described as, the Halkevi member, if not initiated into, is reinforcing his/her position and membership within this missionary-like social group that aims at transforming the lives of the selected 'others', the villagers here. The 'fusion' ironically reinforces the existing distance between the two sides, the same paradoxical way the 'liberation' of the Turkish woman led to the creation of new forms of (hidden or not) segregation, something

⁷¹⁵ The articles published by Mediha and Niyazi Berkes in their journal *Yurt ve Dünya* in the early 1940s. Mediha Esenel, *Geç Kalmış Kitap. 1940'lı Yıllarda Anadolu Köylerinde Araştırmalar ve Yaşadığım Çevreden İzlenimler* (İstanbul: Sistem Yayıncılık, 1999). Niyazi Berkes, *Bazı Ankara Köyleri üzerine bir araştırma* (Ankara, 1942), Nermin Erdentuğ, *Hal köyünün etnolojik tetkiki* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1956), İbrahim Yasa, *Hasanoğlan köyü* (Ankara: Doğuş, 1950), and *Sindel Köyü'nün Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Yapısı* (Ankara, 1960). For a more detailed bibliography of village studies see Joseph Styliowicz, *Political Change in Rural Turkey. Erdemli* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 204 – 213.

⁷¹⁶ In the sense of setting and/or highlighting the necessary social and discursive borders for his/her (individual and/or as a member of a group) 'positioning' within a given society and within a social mechanics project in progress.

⁷¹⁷ The Archive of the CHP Genel Sekreterliği contain numerous files with a large number of Applications for becoming an MP (*Mebustalepnamesi*) composed by local elite members (schoolteachers, lawyers, local Party men/women, Halkevi members). Participation in Halkevi activities and Village Excursions is usually emphatically mentioned.

⁷¹⁸ Fredrik Barth, "Introduction", in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970). For a concise presentation of Barth's arguments see Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, "Introduction", in Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers (eds), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity. Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994), p. 1.

Kandiyoti⁷¹⁹ has alerted us to and we have also detected in women related events in various Houses in the previous chapter. The social distance between city dwellers and villagers, urban elites (patrons) and villagers (clients) that was once partially based on spatial distance is now (re)established and defined by small doses of an enforced ‘restricted proximity’ through the Village excursions.⁷²⁰

Secondly, although the existence of the border is not challenged, its range is contestable, as demonstrated by the divergent ‘positioning’ of actors upon the map, by differing perspectives over and images of the “beyond-the-border”, the villager. This divergent ‘positioning’ *vis-à-vis* the villager has been also noted in literary works of the same period whose main focus is the village(r). Cevdet Kudret (and his alter ego hero of the novel) can be placed quite close to Sabahattin Ali’s ‘leftist’ standpoint, while Kazım Özdoğan’s villager with his/her superstitious beliefs bears close similarities to the villagers in Karaosmanoğlu’s *Yaban*.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern. On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity”, in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), pp. 126-8.

⁷²⁰ In a similar vein, Mardin has remarked that “the modernization of media and of cultural life in Turkey generally increased, rather than decreased, the gap between the “little” (periphery, society) and the “great” (state, centre, bureaucracy) culture.” Şerif Mardin, “Center – Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?”, *Daedalus*, (Winter 1972/73), p. 179.

⁷²¹ Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “The peasants in early Turkish literature”, *East European Quarterly*, 36, (2), (2002).

Conclusions

An autobiographical anecdote of İsmet İnönü, Atatürk's companion, second President of the Turkish Republic and a staunch advocate of the reform movement, will serve as an illustrative example of what this thesis has attempted to address.

Years before the establishment of the Turkish Republic İsmet, a young staff officer of the Ottoman Army, was stationed in Yemen, where he and his officer colleagues bought a gramophone from a French engineer and western music records from an Italian diplomat. With hindsight, İsmet recounted many years later his first impressions upon listening to these records. Although they had never before listened to such music, they all considered it to be good music because it was 'European' and 'modern'. Nevertheless their first impressions were completely negative and they were annoyed that they could not appreciate these arias and operas. It was difficult to "endure it". "We put the machine off as we could not endure the noise of the pieces we did not know and sense." Having no other records to listen to, they listened to these records again and again every evening until some of them managed to appreciate it. "The next evening we had the same experience. It took us many long days to endure listening by force to these heavy records." İnönü, who later on would become a regular at classical music concerts at the Ankara Conservatory, apparently succeeded in appreciating this kind of music.⁷²²

Notwithstanding the happy end to this story, in İnönü's recounting of the event years later the initial difficulty to endure this music is not vanished pointing to an initially painful experience. I choose to read this little anecdote as an indication that even for those elite members of the Ottoman military and bureaucracy who had been educated in 'modern' schools and were convinced of the necessity to become 'modern' or 'civilized', at the personal level the path to 'modernity' or 'civilization' was not a straightforward path, devoid of ambiguities or difficulties. As the above anecdote reveals, the experience – the learning first to 'endure' and then to 'appreciate' - was disturbing and demanding, even traumatic one might say, in order to be 'successful' and remembered with pride after so many years. The path was then rather full of ambiguities, occasional contradictions, full of no-man's-lands, even for its most steadfast supporters like İnönü. To put it more forcefully, a severe believer in the reforms, İnönü was apparently quite religious and tried

⁷²² "İşitmediğimiz, bilmediğimiz parçaların gürültüsüne dayanamayarak, makineyi bırakırdık. Ertesi akşam aynı tecrübe. Bu zorla ağır plakları dinlemeye tahammül çok uzun günler sürmüştür." *İsmet İnönü Hatıralarım. Genç Subay'ın Yılları (1884 - 1918)*, Hazırlayan: Sabahettin Selek, (İstanbul: Burçak Yayınları, 1969), p. 112.

privately⁷²³ to perform religious duties, such as praying and fasting, till the end of his life.⁷²⁴

Moving away from such examples from the founding fathers of the Turkish republic to social actors in concrete social settings in the provinces, to whose voices I have attentively tried to listen in this thesis, a number of questions arise. How did they ‘endure’ listening only to western music on the state radio, or wearing the hat? How did they ‘cope with’ the tension the compulsory introduction of such innovations in their lives apparently gave rise to? Was their understanding and management of such moments of tension similar to İnönü’s response? And ultimately what can such disturbances and tensions, as well as their management in situ, can possibly tell us about (i) the vast and equally vague field of ‘state and society’ relations and (ii) how the consumption of these reforms within local sociopolitical and cultural contexts can be related to the study of collective and individual social identities.

In order to view what this ‘coping with’ change meant for social actors in the field, this thesis has focused on the People’s House institution and has resorted to an analytical perspective that led to an end-product that can be described as a multi-locale historical ethnography.⁷²⁵ Starting with an analysis of the institutional/text-book version of the Halkevi locus, the thesis turned to the study of specific social loci – Halkevi in provincial urban centers. Then moving away from the Houses’ ideological-discursive and social-political loci, the thesis jumped to ‘thematic’ loci and attempted to read the responses social actors in provincial urban societies produced upon consuming three ‘themes’, three sets of policies that were normatively produced by and in the centre and were (to be) enacted in provincial Houses.

‘Human Geography’ of provincial Houses

The ‘human geography’ of our case-study People’s Houses carried out in Chapters 2 and 3 has shown that most of the provincial Houses were manned by local notables (mostly local merchants, professionals and, to a lesser degree, artisans) and state employees, while at the same time they exhibited a limited degree of tolerance and inclusiveness of local social actors that belonged to other occupational categories and can be roughly described as ‘low-class’ or subaltern.

⁷²³ Atatürk was also privately enjoying traditional songs he was so absolute in ‘banning’ from the state radio and declaring inferior to western music and thus not adequately modern and suitable for the Turkish people. Mango, *Atatürk*, p. 466.

⁷²⁴ Metin Heper, *İsmet İnönü: The making of a Turkish Statesman* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 78 – 81, 100. He requested to be buried according to the Islamic custom.

⁷²⁵ George Marcus, “Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System”, in James Clifford and George Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 171 – 2.

More specifically, we have seen that the Halkevi space was managed and controlled by local urban social, political and financial elites – by majority local notable families that provided the local Party leadership as well – under the supervision of local Party structures, bureaucrats appointed to the region (Vali, Kaymakam), and to a rather lesser extent personnel and offices of the central state/Party (CHP General Secretariat and Party or General Inspectors). The predominance of local urban elites in the People’s Houses run parallel to the dominance of these social segments over the majority of other local social, political and financial structures. These local powerbrokers had also functioned in the past as middlemen between local populations, state structures and personnel. Some had even assumed official state employment positions in their locality or elsewhere, but also in central state offices becoming tax-farmers, bureaucrats, and MPs.

Next to these local elites, state employees, predominately schoolteachers and non-local civil servants, composed the largest group of active House members. We have seen in chapters 2 and 3 that the active participation in the Halkevi activities of schoolteachers was necessary for the ‘success’ of the Houses’ activities. It was schoolteachers who were carrying out the majority of the Houses’ activities. Schoolteachers in the previous years had also been active in the ‘cultural’ terrain as founders or members of similar institutions, the Turkish Hearths and Teachers’ Unions being the most famous examples. The Halkevi statistics show that the intended by the regime ‘instrumentalization’ in the Halkevi of the educated segments of society, the ‘army of teachers’ being the vanguard of this ‘enlightened element’ referred to in the regime’s discourse, was to a large extent successful. Moreover, schoolteachers provided the majority of the Halkevi female members.

Drawing from a number of texts produced by Halkevi actors, we have also detected different patters in the Halkevi participation as well as differentiations in the way the Halkevi experience and involvement was recounted and mentioned by members. This differentiation appears mostly between locals and outsiders, that is, between local urban elites and non-local civil servants – although this divide cannot be claimed to be absolute. These discrepancies though point to differences in the educational, professional and social outlook between Halkevi members, while they also confirm the existence of divergent – occasionally conflicting - interests and ultimately perspectives over the Halkevleri, their place and activities, as well as the reforms they were supposed to propagate to local societies and populations.

‘Political Geography’ of provincial Houses: Local Politics

Through the study of the case of the first chairman of the Balıkesir Halkevi and an analysis of a number of feuds between elite social actors that were related to and/or enacted on the Halkevi stage, I have attempted to inscribe the

Halkevi space into the local political landscape within which the Houses operated. By focusing on the relations, at once conflictual and cooperative, between local powerbrokers, bureaucrats, and civil servants in relation to the Halkevi space, as well as on the occasional intervention and level of involvement of the centre in cases of conflict, I have tried to view the People's House in its functioning as a 'juncture of state and society', as one of the spaces within which the symbiosis of non-local agents of the central state, state employees and bureaucrats, and local financial, political and professional elites was acted out.

The picture drawn from the study of local politics in these two chapters bears close similarities to Meeker's 'imperial state society', wherein local elites continue in the republican period to function as connecting ties between the centre, its agents in the local society and the local population. Occasionally local elite members become state employees, while they form the bulk of the provincial Party leadership and are occasionally elected to the National Assembly. In the provinces they interrelate with bureaucrats, while they even maintain vertical relations with members of the ruling elite in the centre they occasionally use to their advantage in cases of conflict with state employees or local rivals. From another perspective, the state bureaucrats in the provinces find it hard to accomplish their duties without enlisting the cooperation of local powerbrokers, whose hostility might even endanger their position in the locality but also their reputation in the centre and their standing in the eyes of their superiors.

All in all it is difficult to speak of a clear demarcation between state and non-state elites, between outsider state employees and local powerbrokers, or else, put more generally, between 'the state' and 'society' or between 'the state' and 'non-state social forces', although in many instances civil servants express the need to segregate from the local population and even construct such segregated spaces, a phenomenon vehemently criticized by local denouncers. Thus the 'border' separating an omnipotent, energetic 'state' from a passive and resistant 'society', inherent in the modernization paradigm and in 'statist' perspectives, but also abundantly expressed in both the 'image of the state' and in certain state practices, appears rather illusive. The Halkevi space and its habitués appear floating within society, situated within a *mélange* of interrelated social spaces, institutional structures, and a vast array of formal or informal financial, political, and social networks.

A further aim of this Part has been to reveal the significance of local politics in relation to the Halkevi space and to the various ways the discourses, ideas and practices initiated by the Halkevi were employed by local social actors, something the third part of the thesis has turned its attention towards. The 'consumption' of the regime's policies the Halkevi institution was planned to facilitate can neither be appreciated in a realm devoid of the dimension of local politics, in a power vacuum, nor within over-simplistic dualistic themes

of ‘modernizing’, ‘enlightened’ leaders, ruling elites, regimes or ‘states’ versus ‘backward’ and resisting ‘societies’ or populations.

Consumption

The three last chapters of the thesis have attempted to view the consumption by social actors, our Halkevi members and clientele, of three sets of policies initiated largely by and enacted partially within the Halkevi space. Placed within the framework of the ‘human geography’ and the web of local politics outlined in the previous chapters, I have tried to study the ways the Halkevi actors made use and sense of a number of practices the Halkevi was supposed to propagate, namely the free of ‘coffeehouse activities’ socialization in the Halkevi halls, the engagement of women in the Halkevi activities and theatrical stage, and the propagation of the regime’s policies to the villages that was supposed to be carried out through the Halkevi ‘Village excursions’.

In relation to these three themes, the Halkevi actors – by majority what we have termed urban elites - were requested to alter their social habits of segregated socialization by abandoning the coffeehouse and the practices associated to it, while the People’s Houses they were administering and frequenting were to be inclusive of the local population from which these same elites had been trying to keep aloof.

The Halkevi actors were also asked to facilitate the ‘liberation of women from the shackles of obscurantism’ by initiating and/or executing a set of women-related policies that were supposed to alter the social position of women in the Turkish society. Lastly, they were requested to enforce a contradictory set of villager-related plans and operations whose rationale required the altering of the entrenched among urban dwellers and state personnel alike practices and perspectives over the villager.

In short, the Halkevi actors were asked to ‘melt with the People’ and violate the otherwise endorsed practice to separate from the local/non-state population; change from coffeehouse male socialization to ‘modern’ practices of socialization in the Halkevi; make their women visible on the Halkevi stage and dancing floor among unrelated men in a society wherein women were (supposed to be) segregated and among a population that would immediately consider such acts and their perpetrators as immoral, and thus threatening their local status and authority; and ‘enlighten’ the fellow citizen villager the same Halkevi urban dweller was, by and large, distrusting, avoiding and treating with disgust.

I have argued that, upon consuming/using these practices, social actors produce their own responses, which should be understood not as passive consumption of the centre’s ‘products’ but as a new production, an active consumption shaped by local situations and power relations. I have also detected the surfacing of moments and instances of *tension* upon the execution

of these policies as well as a variety of responses to this tension by social actors. Social actors produced a variety of practices and discourses in response to the tension produced upon their consuming of these policies, a production that refers to tension and identity management.

In relation to ‘coffeehouse activities’ that were prohibited in the Halkevi, we have seen that social actors produced an accommodative discourse that claimed the need or even necessity civil servants had to segregate from the local population and create a space of their own wherein playing cards and backgammon while consuming coffee and alcoholic beverages was considered almost natural. We have also seen how cunning and tactical solutions were devised to fulfill this ‘need’, solutions that simultaneously attempted not to reject the centre’s prescribed ‘melting’ of the ‘intellectuals’ with the ‘People’. These practices and the discourses employed to justify them are reminiscent of the ‘state discourse’ and several state practices that differentiated ‘the state’ and its officials from the ‘subject’ population, and argued in favor of the observance of that border, something we cannot plausibly argue that was not still current among our social actors or even within the state bureaucracy at that period, even today as a matter of fact.

Similar accommodative discourse and practices were produced in relation to women-related Halkevi activities. Struggling to initiate and carry out a number of practices that were novel and widely considered inappropriate – to say the least – for women, Halkevi actors produced a number of practices that attempted to keep women participating in Halkevi activities segregated from unrelated and especially non-elite local men, thus carving a protective from the eyes of locals ‘modern mahrem’ for their women. This accommodative to wider social practices segregation was accompanied and justified to the centre by an accommodative discourse produced by Halkevi actors. We have seen how Halkevi members and executive heavily employed a discourse of morality and justified their practice of excluding and ‘othering’ the local non-elite population ‘in order to avoid ugly events’ (*çirkin hadiseler*).

On the other hand, these practices of ‘excluding and othering’ locals, especially non-elite males, were contested by the very same excluded and ‘othered’ locals, who in turn tactically employed the official populist rhetoric of the regime to counteract their opponents in the eyes of the centre, producing what we might call an ‘anti-civil servant’ and ‘anti-elite’ narrative repertoire. A third option was also mentioned in our sources in relation to women-related policies: the total rejection of these policies the centre attempted to initiate through the Houses and of the accommodative discourse and practices produced by the Halkevi actors in situ; for some, women on the Halkevi stage were nothing more than ‘theatre girls’ having no difference from the ‘immoral’ actresses of the *Tuluat* stage, which was equally condemned by Halkevi members, locals and, to a certain extend, the centre.

We have also detected a similar variety in the responses of social actors to the Halkevi Village excursions. The texts produced by Halkevi actors taking

part in these excursions demonstrate a variety of images and perspectives over their 'target', the villager. These texts end up in constructing the category 'villager' through the amalgamation of two different perspectives of the villager (the 'old' villager-subject and the 'new' villager-citizen), while they also contribute to the creation of a national canon of 'village(r)' themes and a national archive of folkloric material to be used in different contexts and audiences than the original ones, in the villages. The Halkevi village excursions constituted a part of a larger village operation that, I argue, was constitutive of the category 'villager'. The discovery of the villager in the Halkevi texts turns him/her into a 'topos' in the literature and understanding of urban and state intellectuals, an exoticed object, while on the other hand this 'discovery' the Halkevi facilitates becomes equally constitutive of the identity of the discoverer. A parallel consequence of this operation was the shaping of the category of the villagist, urban intellectual, through the (re)appropriation and restructuring of the discursive and practical border between the two categories, a re-appropriation oscillating between conflicting images of the at once celebrated in populist rhetoric 'master of the country' villager and the treated with disgust and suspicion potentially 'reactionary' peasant.

The Kayseri Halkevi villagists' discourse and practices produced upon the consumption of the centre's Villagist policies were equally accommodative to the existing sociopolitical relations between villagers and provincial urbanites. The villagists' texts, while paying lip service to the regime's ideas and projects, exhibit a practical inability of their authors to care about the villager and a general indifference in the villager's cosmos. The centre's 'new governmentality' and its envisaged 'scientific' village project is stripped off its 'scientific' overtones and is turned into a 'picnic', an occasion for a free time entertainment for urban elites, while on the other hand it becomes an opportunity for the reconfirmation and ratification of the power relations between urban elites and peasant population.

Local politics, power relations and local social practices were also clearly related and were partially giving shape to the practices and discourses (accommodative, exclusionary, dissident) produced upon the consumption of the centre's policies. The solutions Halkevi actors devised in order to exclude undesired locals from Halkevi activities, such as the 'davetiye' system, were clearly responses not only to their need to keep their women segregated and away from the eyes of the local male plebs. These exclusionary practices interrelated with local relations of power and authority. By such exclusionary practices the Halkevi executives – what we can also easily call local and state elites – were also cunningly bypassing the Halkevi's programmatic openness to all citizens to carve an 'elite space' and exclude local non-elite men – the participation of local women was, as we have seen, exceptional, not to say non-existent.

In a more general sense, my study of these three instances of consumption evidently exhibits the ability and creativity of social actors to re-appropriate,

re-invent, and re-signify the regime's policies and discourses in accordance with local discourses, practices, and power relations. This discursive and practical re-appropriation might occasionally run quite contrary to the regime's intended objectives, even if we treat these objectives as lacking any internal ambivalences and contradictions of their own, which was not of course the case. We have also seen how these ambivalences were cunningly employed by our actors to further their interests. What is more, this process of active engagement with and the consequent reshaping of the regime's policies and intended projects by social actors did not lack its own repercussions in the centre: in certain occasions we have seen that agencies in the centre assigned with the supervision and administration of such projects – in our case the General Secretariat of the ruling Party – modified their goals and attitudes in response to the feedback they received from the People's Houses.⁷²⁶ The controversy over and the final dissolution of the People's Houses and, even more, of the Village Institutes⁷²⁷ is a case in point. Both institutions were increasingly criticized⁷²⁸ from the establishment of the Demokrat Parti onwards and were finally abolished by the Menderes government in 1951. In both cases, it was evident that a part of the ruling elite in the centre and the provinces – the Democrat Party was after all established by leading members of the CHP and was widely supported by provincial elites that used to form part of the provincial CHP – was disapproving of the Halkevi and Köy Enstitüsü experiments for a variety of reasons.

I would further argue that, taken together, all three parts of this thesis contend that the bulk of the People's Houses to be found in provincial centres operated within and at the same contributed to the shaping of a discursive and practical local public sphere, wherein a number of structural and interrelated givens were at play: local politics, state and non-state elite actors and their complicated symbiosis, opportunities and interests of social actors, social (discursive) practices, an ongoing reform program and the regime's projects to be acted out in the Houses and other interrelated and occasionally rival local spaces (the coffeehouse for instance), and, at last, social actors that inhabit and function within this sphere and these spaces making sense and use, cunningly employing, domesticating, and/or rejecting these projects, while producing at the same time their own responses, practices and supporting discourses. These practices and the discourses employed in relation to and upon the consumption of these projects are significant in terms of identity management, in other words they are significant for the shaping of the social identities of their

⁷²⁶ The usage of Halkevi halls for circumcision ceremonies was an issue that was debated between Halkevi actors and the General Secretariat resulting in the altering of the latter's stance over the issue. See various documents in *BCA CHP*, 490.1/847.351.4.

⁷²⁷ M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "The Village Institute Experience in Turkey," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, (May 1998).

⁷²⁸ The discussion of a Party report about the prospective - but never to happen -reorganization of the Houses, which took place during the 7th Party Congress in 1947, is illustrative of the criticisms openly – perhaps for the first time – voiced of the way the Halkevleri had been operating. See *C.H.P. VII Kurultay Tutanağı* (Ankara, 1948), pp. 199 – 217.

producers, carriers and disclaimers, and for varying audiences, be it the Party Headquarters or other state offices in Ankara, or, equally important, audiences residing in the local public sphere, in ideological (or not) proximity, or even indifference, to the Halkevi space.

I imagine such a sphere as I crudely sketched above out of the ‘noise’ left over in our sources that points at a – again imagined – polyphonic assemblage of multiple and interrelated voices constantly performed at random and definitely not out of a group of voices performing a single and uniform monophonic ‘symphony’ of a mastermind single actor, composer and conductor at the same time, be it ‘the state’, the ‘ruling elite’, the ‘modernizing’ or ‘progressive forces’, and similar concepts the bulk of the literature on the ‘Turkish Modernization’ and its supporting theoretical constructions have imagined and accustomed us to expect. The ambition of this thesis is to demonstrate the need to study this sphere in concrete social settings - societies, to be attentive to its characteristics and the actors operating within, on its fringes, or even in isolation to it.

APPENDIX

I: COMPLAINT, PETITION, DENOUNCIATION LETTERS

1) Short description.

The corpus of letter used in this thesis is composed of almost 250 items. They were sent to the Party headquarters in Ankara and are contained in the archive of the General Secretariat of the Party to be found in the State Archives [T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Cumhuriyet Arşivi Başkanlığı, CHP Arşivi]. They were composed between 1934 and 1951 and came from all over Turkey with the exception of the Vilayet of Ankara. In many cases the letters are attached to reports on the incident the letter is referring to, usually written by Party Inspectors,⁷²⁹ or local Party and/or Halkevi officials. In some rare cases, even state employees, a *Kaymakam* for example, were one way or another contributing to this report-submitting bureaucratic enterprise.⁷³⁰

The authors

A corpus of 245 letters has been used. The authors are more than 245, since a number of collective petition/complaint letters are also contained. 85 persons – all male – without any information about themselves, sign 66 letters, the largest group. Occasionally the authors might add that they speak for, or in the name of, the Youth (*gençlik adına, gençlik namına, gençler*). The letters sent by Halkevi and Halkodaları chairmen form the second largest category with 39 letters. Another 14 letters are signed by 24 Halkevi members with no more information about their occupational status. Eleven schoolteachers have also written to the Party. The next category is made up of 14 letters signed by 18 civil servants (excluding schoolteachers). We also have six letters by four ex and serving officers (*Jandarma, subay, emekli jandarma, emekli subay*). Another 14 letters were signed by 15 shopkeepers/artisans and merchants (*otel sahibi, garson, terzi, tüccar*). Eleven persons sign twelve letters as Party chairman or member. Unsigned letters form another major group among the corpus we have constructed. Some of their authors conceal their name and sign as ‘a Party member’, ‘a citizen’, ‘a youth’, or ‘in the name of (the local) youth’ (*bir Partili, bir yurttaş, bir genç, gençlik namına, Sarıgöl genliği*). Two foremen in state owned factories, three students, two lawyers, five Halkevi employees (*katip, odacı*), the president of a local cultural association, a district officer (*kaymakam*), a local chairman of the opposition Party (*Demokrat Parti başkanı*), and a fine arts self-employed instructor form the rest of the letters’ authors.

Based on the information provided by the authors, the majority of the letters was compiled by teachers, lawyers, civil servants, and city merchants. The authors then can be classified as city dwellers, predominately male, educated or at least literate. They can be regarded as the genuine constituency of the People’s Houses and more generally the part of the population closer and/or committed to the reforms and novelties conveyed to the population by the People’s Houses. It is not a surprise that the Party too considered these occupational groups as the core of the Houses’ stuff.⁷³¹

⁷²⁹ On the CHP Party Inspectorship system (CHP Parti Müfettişliği) the only available work is Koçak, Cemil, “Tek- Parti Döneminde Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi’nde Parti Müfettişliği”, *Tarik Zafer Tunaya’ya Armağan*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Barosu Yayınları, 1992).

⁷³⁰ For further information on the letters and the petition writing phenomenon see Alexandros Lamprou, “‘CHP Genel Sekreterliği Yüksek Makamına’: 30’lu ve 40’lı yıllarda Halkevleri’yle ilgili CHP’ye gönderilen şikayet ve dilek mektupları üzerine kısa bir söz”, *Kebikeç*, No 23, (2007).

⁷³¹ See Recep Peker’s speech at the opening ceremony of the first 14 Houses in 1932: “There is great need of a guiding element that would be composed of all the mature/experienced people that

Time frame

The number of letters is quite small and the period under consideration (17 years) is quite short compared to the long history and the extent of the practice. Although, then, it would be quite precarious to make standing generalization based on their distribution upon the time frame, some initial suggestions can be offered. The bulk of the letters were sent after 1938 till the late 1940s; 195 letters (91%) were composed between 1938 and 1951. Conversely, we could only locate 20 letters sent between 1934 and 1938, which make up the rest 9% of our total. The letters seem to peak between the years 1939 – 1940 (37 letters), 1942 – 1943 (41 letters), and 1946 – 1948 (58 letters). It might be tempting to argue that these three peaks seem to coincide with the period after the death of Atatürk and the during the period when the power of İsmet İnönü was consolidating, the period of World War II with its hardships, and the period of multi-Party politics after 1946. But we cannot forcefully make a case that these three facts/set of events in the political scene were the generating of this increase factors, especially when they rarely form the explicit reason/basis for or content of the letters, let alone our small statistical sample. The war period hardships for example, although mentioned in other sources (Inspector's and MPs' reports, literature and even newspapers of the period), practically never appear in our letters. The same applies to the political events following the death of Atatürk and the take-over by İsmet İnönü. Party politics, on the other hand, or more specifically, the clashes between CHP and DP supporters, surfaces in the letters after 1946 as the People's Houses institution starts to form an issue of dispute between the two political Parties.

The formation of this corpus of letters and, partly, its distribution upon the time frame can be accounted for by other factors, such as archival and bureaucratic necessities and organization. More specifically, some of the letters were forwarded to other state offices (Police, Army, Ministries, etc) and thus are missing. The (re)organization of the Party headquarters and the various policies followed or introduced by consequent General Secretaries and other staff members could have an impact on the archival remains of the Party. It is a fact that from the mid 1930s onwards the amount of paperwork (reports, directives, incoming and outgoing papers) created, received and processed by the *CHP Genel Sekreterliği* drastically increase. This can be understood as a consequence of the reorganization(s) and refinement of the central Party and its functions together with the parallel expansion of Party structures and membership in the provinces. This factor, together with the gradual increase in the numbers of the People's Houses from the early 1940s can alone quite convincingly account for the growing number of letters received by the CHP in the 1940s.

Data and some thoughts on the Topography of the material

More than half (126 letters or 51%) of the authors of the letters resided in small provincial towns, mostly at the *kaza* (district) and to a lesser degree at the *nahiye/bucak* (sub-district) administrative level. 90 letters, or 36% of the total, were sent from provincial administrative centers (Vilayet). Only a 10 per cent of the authors (29 letters) wrote from villages and their letters have mostly to do with the local People's Room.

would function as educators." In *Ülkü*, Vol. 1, (March 1933). In a dispatch to the Party branches Recep Peker was once more referring to these 'educated elements': Efforts will be made to have, civil servants or not, intellectuals from all the professions, especially teachers, come to the first gathering that will take place with the aim to organize the opening." In *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Katibi umumîliğinin Fırka Teşkilatına Umumi Tebliğatı*, Vol. 1, (Ankara, 1933), 12/1/1932 telegram no 8.

This first distribution seems quite reasonable; the majority of the People's Houses were established in provincial centers firstly, and gradually in smaller provincial towns (*kasaba*). By the late 1930s then the majority of the Houses were operating in provincial towns. On the other hand, by the 1940s People's Rooms were established in smaller towns and village reaching as high as almost 5000 rooms by 1950. The fact that their number is extremely higher than the Houses (less than 500 by 1950) makes the percentage of the letters related to People's Rooms disproportionately smaller and less insignificant. From another point of view though, the majority of the villagers does not fit with the residential, occupational and educational profile of our authors as described above. As a matter of fact, most of the letters from villages were written by teachers, as chairmen of the People's Room and/or as representatives of the villagers.

Another remark has to be made in relation to the distribution of the letters in accordance with the administrative/bureaucratic hierarchy (*vilayet, kaza, nahiye*). Two towns that were both district (*kaza*) centers can be quite dissimilar between themselves in economic, climatic, political and social terms, as well as in terms of population. The same applies for Provincial centers as well; Istanbul or Izmir were very different in many aspects from Mardin or Gaziantep, although all four are placed under the category *Vilayet* center. Nevertheless, the fact that 90 % of the letters were sent from urban centers – small or big – stands.

As for the geographic distribution of the letters, it is also too reasonable that the majority was sent from the western and northern parts of the country. Only a 15% of the letters was sent from 12 southeastern provinces (*Siirt, Bingöl, Ağrı, Hakkari, Mus, Mardin, Erzincan, Diyarbakır, Van, Doğu Beyazıt, Tunceli, Çorum and Bitlis*). A variety of reasons can account for this; less Houses and Rooms;⁷³² higher rates of illiteracy; ethnic and linguistic diversity; less state presence; in most of the above provinces the ruling Party had not established Party structures as late as the mid 1940s; existence of a parallel administrative structure responsible for the area where grievances might have probably been administered (General Inspectorships).

2) Petition letter of Mamurhan Özsan, member of the Party Administrative Committee of the province of Kayseri, the local *Halkevi* and the local Municipal Assembly

Sayın B. Memduh Şevket Esendal
Parti Genel Sekreterimiz

22/2/1945

Bir sene evvel evimi soymuşlar bütün kışık geyecek ve kullanacak eşyandan beni mahrum bırakmışlardır. İnsan yemeden yaşayamadığı gibi geymeden'de yaşayamıyor. En mübremenlerini tedarik etmek bu harp senelerinden kocamın maaşı yüz liradan başka gelirimiz olmadığından borçlanmak mecburiyetinde kaldım. On bir seneden beri parti vilayet idare heyeti azasıyım. Üç devredenberi'de Umumi Meclis azasıyım. Umumi mecliste tek bir kadın azayım ve Divanı Riyaset katibiyim. Halkevi Sosyal yardım kolu Başkanuyum. On bir senedir memleketimin içtimai ve siyasi işlerinde canla'başla çalışan bir insanım. Babam'da partide ter temiz uzun seneler hizmet etmiş ve servetini kaybetmiş bir ihtiyardır.

⁷³² The overall number of Houses in these 12 provinces was 47 out of 478 Houses in all Turkey (9,8%) in 1949 according to a table Party document reproduced in Nurhan Karadağ, *Halkevleri tiyatrosu çalışmaları* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998), p. 95. The same percentage applies to the People's Rooms in the eastern provinces.

Gelirim yüz liradan ibaret ve borç içindeyim. Partinin bir ferdi sıfatı beni bu dar durumdan kurtaracak bir mevzuda yüksek yardımınızı rica edeceğim. Partimiz fiilen çalışanları Nizamnamesile'de düşündüğünden cesaret alarak zatıalınıza yazmak mecburiyetinde kaldım.

Vaziyet şu: Kayseri Umumi meclisi hali içtimada olup martın haftasına mesaisi bitecek. Vilayet daimi encümeninin tahsisatı yüz kırk lira olduğundan bu sene daimi encümen azalığını yüksek yardımınızla bir parti azası sıfatıyla dileyorum. Bundan evvelki devrelerde'de daimi encümende kaldım. Falsosuz çalıştım. Tek kadın olduğumdan daima ekaliyetteyim. Menfaatları icabı erkek arkadaşlar bu işi bana bırakmak istemezler. Bense bu sene güç durumda partimizin cidden yardımına muhtaç bir vaziyetteyim. Diyeceksinizki orada büyüklerinizle temas ediniz. Kadınıcım ricam geri kalırsa izzeti nefsim incinir. Hem burada bu mevzuda menfaatler fazla çarpşıyor. Daima erkek arkadaşlar kuvvetli oluyorlar.

Ben partili bir kadın arkadaş olarak çalışan ve çalışmasını bilen memleket hizmetlerinde erkek arkadaşlardan fazla enerji ve vakit verebilen şuurla çalışan ve bu çalışmanın bir defa'da mükafatını haklı olarak rica eden bu ricamın'da nazarı dikkatinizden kaçınıyacağımı ümit eden bir arkadaşınızım.

Ümit ediyorum ki gerek vilayete gerek parti başkanına küçük bir emir ve işaretiniz beni bu zor durumdan kurtarır ve bu vesile ile borçlarımı da ödeyebilirim. Yüksek partili ve insanı şefkat ve himayenizin vakti geçmeden yetişmesini en müşkül durumdan kurtarmanızı en derin saygı ve bağlılıklarımınla arz ederim.

*Kayseri CHP Vilayet idare kurulu ve
Umumi meclis üyesi
Mamurhan Özsan⁷³³*

3) Petition of Zatiye Tunguç, former employee of the library of the People's House of Kayseri

*Kayseri 21.8.1940
CHP Genel Sekreterliği yüksek katına*

Bendeniz Romanya muhacirlerindenim on sekiz yaşında kız çocuğuyum iki sene evvel türkiyaya geldik Kayser'de iskan edildik sekiz nüfus aile sahibiyim dört kardeşim okutuyorum ihtiyar babam ve annem vardır onların hepsini ben geçindiriyorum bir sene evvel kayseri Halkevi kütüphane memurluguna tayin edildim ve otuz lira ücret alırdım bir sene zarfında vazifemden hiç bir zaman ayrılmadığım gibi her gece saat on bire kadar çalışırdım geçen gün hasta oldum Halkevi katibinden iki gün izin aldım ve iki gün tedaviden sonra vazifeme devam edeceğim zaman Halkevi reisi vazifeme nihayet verdi halbuki halkevi katibi bana izin verdi halkevi reisi haftada bir gün daireye geldiği için tabi halkevi katibinden izin istemeye mecbur oldum şimdi sekiz nüfuslu ailemiz perişan bir halde retettiler onun için siz büyüklerimize derdimi anlatmayı kendime bir vazife buldum genç kız olduğum için başka yerlerde çalışamıyorum sonra kayseriye iskan edildiğimiz için başka memleketlere gdemeyiz Bu hususta yine yerime geçmem için delaletinizi bekler ellerinizden öperim.

*Kayseri Eski halkevi kütüphane memuru
Romanya muhacirlerinden
Zatiye tunguç⁷³⁴*

⁷³³ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/478.1947.1. The spelling of the original letter has been maintained.

⁷³⁴ **BCA CHP**, 490.1/338.311.1. The spelling of the original letter has been maintained.

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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)

Deze thesis streeft naar bij te dragen tot de studie van verandering die door sociale techniekprojecten wordt aangespoord die werden bedacht en uitgevoerd door de staat elites op de gerichte bevolking. Zich concentreert op het Turkse geval van sociale techniek in de jaren '30 en de jaren '40, is de ambitie van deze thesis dergelijke ogenblikken van verandering vanuit een perspectief die alternatief en kritiek is te bestuderen over de paradigma's van het 'modernisering' en 'afhankelijkheid'.

Het probeert zich over de vaak voorkomende kritiek toe te richten dat de literatuur over de 'Turkse Revolutie' geen ruimte verlaat voor de studie van het dagelijkse van de sociale actoren en de microaspecten van de sociale verandering en dat die zelden nadruk legt op lokale sociale en culturele contexten, of over de kwesties met betrekking tot creëren van sociale identiteiten denkt. Zijn doel dan is te bestuderen hoe de actoren met veranderingen omgingen, hoe dit 'omgaan' kruisten en in interactie kwamen met machtsrelaties, lokale sociale en culturele contexten en, uiteindelijk, wat dit 'omgaan' met zich mee brengt in termen van de productie van praktijken, verhandelingen en vertegenwoordiging door sociale agenten, wat het kan betekenen in verband van creëren van sociale identiteiten.

Om te bekijken wat dit 'omgaan' met de veranderingen betekende voor de sociale actoren, heeft deze thesis zich op de instelling van het Volkshuis geconcentreerd en gewend tot een analytisch perspectief dat tot een eindproduct leidde welke als multi- lokale historische etnografie kan worden beschreven. Om te beginnen met een analyse van het institutionele kader van de plaats Halkevi, richtte zich de thesis op de studie van specifieke sociale plaatsen - Halkevi in provinciale stedelijke centra. Dan verwijdt zich de thesis van de ideologisch- onsamenvangende en sociaal-politieke plaatsen van de Huizen en sprong aan 'thematische' plaatsen en probeerde de reacties van de sociale actoren in de provinciale stedelijke maatschappijen te lezen die op het verbruiken van drie 'thema's' worden veroorzaakt. Deze drie reeksen werden volgens de normen van het beleid door het centrum bedacht en doorvoert in provinciale Huizen.

‘Menselijke aardrijkskunde’ van de Huizen

De ‘menselijke aardrijkskunde’ van onze casestudy over het Volkshuis die in Hoofdstukken 2 en 3 worden behandeld toonden aan dat de meeste provinciale Huizen door lokale notables en staatswerknemers werden bemand, terwijl zij tezelfdertijd een beperkte graad van tolerantie en inclusiviteit van lokale sociale actoren tentoonstelden die tot andere beroeps categorieën behoorden en min of meer als ‘lage klasse’ of ondergeschikt kunnen worden beschreven.

Specifieker, werd de ruimte Halkevi beheerd en gecontroleerd door lokale sociale, politieke en financiële elites - door meerderheids lokale opmerkelijke families die eveneens de lokale leiding van de Partij verstrekten - onder de supervisie van de lokale structuren van de Partij, bureaucraten die aan het gebied (Vali, Kaymakam) worden benoemd, en aan een iets kleinere graad personeel en bureaus van de centrale staat en de Partij. De overheersing van lokale stedelijke elites op het Volkshuis stelt parallel aan de overheersing van deze sociale segmenten meer dan de meerderheid van andere lokale sociale, politieke en financiële structuren in werking. Deze lokale machtmakelaars hadden ook in het verleden als tussenpersonen tussen lokale bevolking, staatsstructuren en personeel gefunctioneerd. Sommigen hadden zelfs de officiële posities van de staatswerkgelegenheid in hun plaats of elders verondersteld, maar ook in centrale staatsbureaus die belastingslandbouwers, bureaucraten, en MP's.

Naast deze lokale elites, stelden de staatswerknemers, overwegend de leraren en de niet-lokale ambtenaren, de grootste groep van de actieve leden van het Huis samen. De actieve participatie van de leraren in de activiteiten van Halkevi was noodzakelijk voor ‘het succes’ van de activiteiten van de Huizen. De leraren voerden de meerderheid van de activiteiten in de Huizen uit. In de vorige jaren waren de leraren ook actief in ‘culturele’ terrein als stichters of leden van gelijkaardige instellingen geweest, waarvan de ‘Turk Ocaklari’ en ‘Turkse Unie’ de beroemdste voorbeelden zijn. De statistieken van Halkevi tonen aan dat door de regime voorgenomen ‘instrumentalization’ in Halkevi van de opgeleide segmenten van de maatschappij voor een groot deel succesvol was.

‘Politieke Aardrijkskunde’ van provinciale Huizen: De lokale Politiek

Door de studie van het geval van de eerste voorzitter van Balikesir Halkevi en analyse van aantal ruzies tussen elite sociale actoren, deze thesis beschrijft de plaats van Halkevi in het lokale politieke landschap. Door zich op de relaties te concentreren, gelijk tegenstrijdig en behulpzaam, tussen lokale machtmakelaars, bureaucraten, en ambtenaren, evenals op de occasionele interventie en het niveau van betrokkenheid van het centrum, bekijkt de thesis het Volkshuis als ‘verbinding van staat en de maatschappij’, als één van de ruimten functioneert waarbinnen de symbiose van niet lokale agenten van de centrale staat, de staatswerknemers en de bureaucraten, en lokale financiële, politieke en professionele elites uit werd gehandeld.

Het beeld dat van de studie van lokale politiek in deze twee hoofdstukken wordt getrokken bevat dichte gelijkenissen aan Meeker’s ‘maatschappij van de keizerstaat’, waarin lokale elites tijdens de republikeinse periode een rol speelden als het verbindende banden tussen het centrum, zijn agenten in de lokale maatschappij en de lokale bevolking. Nu en dan worden de lokale eliteleden staatswerknemers, terwijl zij het grootste deel van de provinciale leiding van de Partij vormden en dan verkozen aan de Nationale Bond. In de provincies hadden ze relaties met bureaucraten, terwijl zij zelfs verticale relaties met leden van de beslissende elite in het centrum hadden. Soms maakte deze elite gewoon voor hun eigen belang gebruik van gevallen van conflict met staatswerknemers of lokale rivalen. Vanuit een ander perspectief, vinden de staatsbureaucraten in de provincies het hard om hun plichten te verwezenlijken zonder de samenwerking met lokale machtmakelaars, waarvan de vijandigheid hun positie in de plaats maar zelfs ook hun reputatie in het centrum zou kunnen in gevaar brengen.

Alles bij elkaar is het moeilijk van een duidelijke afscheiding tussen staat en niet-staat elites, tussen de buitenstaande staatswerknemers en lokale machtmakelaars, of anders, meer over het algemeen gezegd, tussen ‘de staat’ en de ‘maatschappij’ of tussen ‘de staat’ en ‘niet-statelijke sociale krachten’ te spreken, hoewel de ambtenaren in vele gevallen de behoefte hadden om

van de lokale bevolking te onderscheiden en zelfs dergelijke onderscheiden ruimten te construeren. Aldus de 'grens' die de allemachtige, energieke 'staat' deelde vanuit een passieve en resistente 'maatschappij', diepgeworteld aan het moderniseringsparadigma 'statelijke' perspectieven, lijkt erg denkbeeldig. De ruimte Halkevi en zijn stam bezoekers lijken binnen een maatschappij te drijven, die zich binnen een melange van met elkaar verbonden sociale ruimten, institutionele structuren, en een enorme serie van formele of informele financiële, politieke, en sociale netwerken bevindt.

De consumptie

De drie laatste hoofdstukken van de thesis heeft geprobeerd om de consumptie door sociale actoren van de drie reeksen van het beleid binnen de Halkevi te bekijken. Geplaatst in het kader van de 'menselijke aardrijkskunde' en het web van lokale politiek dat in de vorige hoofdstukken wordt geschetst, bestudeert deze thesis de manieren die de actoren van Halkevi gebruikten en betekenis van een aantal praktijken gebruikt voor de door Halkevi moest gepropageerd worden, namelijk vrij van de 'koffiehuis activiteiten' was de socialisatie in de zalen Halkevi, de overeenkomst van vrouwen in de activiteiten van Halkevi, en de propaganda van het regimebeleid aan de dorpen te verspreiden.

Met betrekking tot deze drie thema's, werden de Halkevi actoren - stedelijke elites - verzocht om hun sociale gewoontes met onderscheiden socialisatie te veranderen door de koffiehuisen en de bijbehorende praktijken af te stappen, terwijl zij de Volkshuisen beheerden en ook stamgasten waren zoals de lokale bevolking waarvan deze zelfde elites hadden geprobeerd afstand te houden.

De actoren Halkevi werden ook gevraagd om 'de bevrijding van vrouwen van de keten van obscurantisme' te vereenvoudigen door een reeks op vrouwen-gericht beleid in werking te stellen en uit te voeren waarvan de sociale positie van vrouwen in de Turkse maatschappij moet veranderen. Ten slotte, werden zij verzocht om een tegenstrijdig aantal boeren-gerichte plannen en verrichtingen toe te passen zodat ratio nodige verandering van de vastgegroeide praktijken en perspectieven over de boeren onder stedelijke bewoners en staatspersoneel kan plaats vinden.

Bij het verorberen/gebruiken van deze praktijken, leverden de sociale actoren hun eigen reacties op, welke niet verkeerd interpreteert moeten worden als een passieve consumptie van de 'producten van het centrum' maar als een nieuwe productie, een actieve consumptie die door lokale situaties en machtsrelaties werd gevormd. Door deze thesis is er ook ontdekt zoals de oppervlakte van de voorbeelden of de spanning bij de uitvoering van dit beleid als ook de verschillende reacties van de sociale actoren over deze spanning. De sociale actoren maakten een verscheidenheid van de praktijken en voordrachten in hun reacties, ontstaan tijdens het verbruiken van dit beleid, een productie welke verwijst naar spanning en het beheer van de identiteit.

Met betrekking tot 'koffiehuizen activiteiten' maakten de sociale actoren een aangepaste voordracht die de behoefte eiste, de ambtenaren van de lokale bevolking onder te scheiden en voor hun een ruimte te creëren waarin ze kaarten en triktrak spelen terwijl het verbruiken van koffie en de alcoholische dranken als bijna natuurlijk werden beschouwd. Er werden sluwe en tactische oplossingen bedacht om deze 'behoefte' te vervullen, oplossingen die gelijktijdig probeerden om de 'intellectuelen' met de 'mensen' te 'mengen' zoals het door het centrum voorgeschreven was. Deze praktijken en voordrachten die worden aangewend om hen te rechtvaardigen laten zich herinneren aan de 'staats voordrachten' en sommige staatspraktijken die een onderscheid maken tussen 'de staat' en van zijn ambtenaren van het 'onderwerp' bevolking.

De gelijkaardige aangepaste voordrachten en de praktijken vonden ook plaats met betrekking tot vrouw-gerichte Halkevi activiteiten. Het worstelen om een aantal praktijken op gang te brengen en uit te voeren die voor vrouwen - om het zachtjes uit te drukken - nieuw en wijd als ongepast werd beschouwd, de actoren van Halkevi bedachten een aantal oplossingen zodat de vrouwen blijven deelnemen aan de activiteiten van Halkevi die gescheiden van de niet verwante en vooral niet-elite lokale mannen. Zo werden er vrouwen beschermd van de ogen van de lokale 'moderne mahrem'. Dit aangepaste bredere sociale scheiding van praktijken werden begeleid and gerechtvaardigd tegen het centrum bij aangepaste voordrachten door Halkevi actoren. De leden en de medewerkers van Halkevi hadden zwaar

met voordrachten van ethiek en rechtvaardigden hun praktijk door het uitsluiten en ‘vervreemden’ van de lokale niet-elite bevolking ‘om lelijke gebeurtenissen te vermijden’ (*çirkin hadiseler*).

Enerzijds, deze praktijken zoals ‘uitsluiten en vervreemden’ van de lokalen, vooral de niet-elite mannen, betwist door de zelfde uitgesloten en ‘vervreemd’ lokalen, die beurtelings tactisch de populistische retoriek van het regime aanwendden om hun tegenstanders voor het centrum tegen te gaan, producerend wat wij een ‘anti -burgerlijk bediende’ en ‘anti-elite’ verhalend repertoire zouden kunnen noemen. Een derde optie werd ook vermeld in onze bronnen met betrekking tot op vrouwbetreffend beleid: de totale verwerping van dit beleid door de Huizen en van de aangepaste voordrachten en de praktijken geproduceerd door de actoren van Halkevi ter plaatse. Voor sommigen waren de vrouwen op het stadion Halkevi niets meer dan ‘theatermeisjes’ en hadden geen verschil van ‘immorele’ toneelspeelster van het stadion Tuluat.

Een gelijkaardige verschil verschijnt in de reacties van sociale actoren op de excursies van het dorp Halkevi. De teksten die door deelnemende Halkevi actoren worden uitgevaardigd, tonen een verscheidenheid van beelden en perspectieven over hun ‘doel’, de dorpeling. Deze teksten beëindigen omhoog in het construeren van categorie ‘dorpeling’ door de samensmelting van twee verschillende perspectieven van dorpeling (het ‘oude’ dorpeling-onderwerp en de ‘nieuwe’ dorpeling-burger), terwijl zij ook tot de verwezenlijking van een nationale canon van ‘dorp’ onderwerpen en een nationaal archief van folklore bijdragen dat in verschillende contexten en publiek moet worden gebruikt dan de originele, in de dorpen. De Halkevi dorpsexcursies vormden een deel van een grotere dorpsverrichting die van categorie ‘dorpeling’ constitutief was. De ontdekking van villager in de teksten Halkevi verandert hem/haar in ‘topos’ in de literatuur en begrip van stedelijke en het staatsintellectuelen, exotische voorwerp, terwijl enerzijds deze ‘ontdekking’ Halkevi even constitutief de identiteit van de ontdekker vereenvoudigde. Een parallel gevolg van deze verrichting was het vormen van de categorie van de dorpeling, stedelijke intellectueel, door het toe-eigenen en het herstructureren van de onsamenhangende en praktische grens tussen de twee categorieën, een toe-eigenen

oscilleert tussen tegenstrijdige beelden en meteen gevierd in populistische retoriek ‘meester van het land’ dorpeling en behandeld met afschuw en verdenking potentiële ‘reactionaire’ boeren.

De voordrachten van de Kayseri Halkevi dorpelingen en praktijken die ze bij het verbruik van dorpelingen beleid van het centrum maakten waren even aangepast aan de bestaande sociaal politieke relaties tussen dorpelingen en provinciale bevolkingen. De teksten van de dorpelingen, terwijl ze met de mond belijden tegen de ideeën en projecten van het regime, tonen ze een praktisch beeld van hun auteurs dorpelingen en een algemene onverschilligheid van de dorpelingen kosmos. ‘De nieuwe mentaliteit van de regering’ van het centrum en door hun bedachte ‘wetenschappelijk’ dorpsproject werden ontdaan van hun ‘wetenschappelijke’ ondertonen en werden omgezet in een ‘picknick’, een gelegenheid voor een vrij tijdvermaak voor stedelijke elites, terwijl enerzijds het een kans voor de herbevestiging van de machtsrelaties tussen stedelijke elites en boeren bevolking was.

De lokale politiek, de machtsrelaties en de lokale sociale praktijken waren duidelijk ook verwant en gaven gedeeltelijk vorm aan de praktijken en verhandelingen (aangepast, uitsluitend, dissident) die op het verbruik van het beleid van het centrum worden geproduceerd. De oplossingen, zoals ‘Davetiye (Uitnodiging) Systeem’, worden bedacht door de Halkevi actoren om die ongewenste lokalen van de activiteiten van Halkevi uit te sluiten, waren duidelijk reacties niet alleen op hun behoefte om hun vrouwen afgezonderd te houden en vanaf de ogen van lokale mannelijke plebs. Deze uitsluitingpraktijken brachten met lokale relaties van macht en gezag met elkaar in verband. Door dergelijke uitsluitingpraktijken deden de lokale stafmedewerkers van Halkevi - en staat elites – op een slimme manier de programmatic openheid van Halkevi aan alle burgers om een ‘eliteruimte’ te veranderen en lokale niet-elite mensen uit te sluiten.

In een meer algemene betekenis, de studie van deze drie instanties van het verbruik blijktbaar vertoont de capaciteit en de creativiteit van de sociale actoren. Ze zijn weer geschikt, weer bedenkt en weer wijzen ze op in verband van praktijken, en machtsrelaties. opnieuw uit. Dit onsamenhangende en praktische

toe eiging zou nu en dan vrij strijdig met de bedoelde doelstellingen van het regime kunnen lopen, zelfs als wij deze doelstellingen behandelen als misbaar elke interne ambivalentie en tegenspraak van hun zelfs, die natuurlijk niet het geval was.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Alexandros Lamprou was born in Athens, on the 7th of September 1976. He graduated from the 3rd Ilioupolis Lyceum in 1993. He holds a degree in History and Ethnology from the Democritus University of Thrace (2000) and a M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Manchester (2001). Since 2003 he worked for her dissertation at the Department of Turkish Studies at the University of Leiden.