

**From the holdings of the Department of Special Collections , Princeton University Library,
Princeton, NJ**

These documents are either in the public domain, or can only be used for educational and research purposes (Fair use) as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls in the public domain or within fair use as defined by the copyright law. We do not charge any permission or usage fees for the publication of images of material in our collections, including those provided by Princeton University Library, via our website, catalog, or directly from staff. For more information regarding copyright, credit, and citation please review the information on the Copyright, Credit and Citation Guidelines page of our website.

<https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/policies/copyright-credit-and-citation-guidelines>. If you have any questions, including how to order higher-quality images from the collection, contact Special Collections Public Services via our Ask Us! Form. <https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/ask-us>

Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026

Anthropology

2017

BECOMING KURDISH: Migration, Urban Labor, and Political Violence in Turkey

Gunay, Onur

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

<http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp01z890rw90t>

U.S. Copyright law: The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, §108, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of fair use that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law. <https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf>

BECOMING KURDISH
Migration, Urban Labor, and Political Violence in Turkey

Onur Günay

**A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
ANTHROPOLOGY**

Advisors:

**João Biehl
Elizabeth A. Davis**

November 2017

© Copyright by Onur Günay, 2017. All rights reserved.

ABSTRACT

Throughout the 1990s, war brought about a sudden passage to urban life for millions of Kurds. Pursuing a policy of counterinsurgency, the Turkish state evacuated around 4,000 villages and displaced more than two million rural Kurds in this period. Istanbul was already host to a sizeable Kurdish population that had come to the city for its economic potential, making it one of the primary destinations for the displaced. Today, Kurds make up seventeen per cent of contemporary Istanbul's total population, corresponding to almost three million Kurds. This number makes Istanbul "the world's largest Kurdish city," as the saying goes among Kurdish migrants. Today, two thirds of the Kurdish population in Istanbul is comprised of the urban working class. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Kurds move each year between the Kurdish region and Turkish metropolises in search of temporary jobs and daily wage-labor.

My research shows how ethnic and social differences are recast through labor, as these differences mark migrant Kurdish men's bodies, sexualities, life prospects, and senses of belonging in the city. The ways ethnicity intersects with religion, urban class identities, and gender constitute a central concern in my work. I analyze the factors shaping Kurdish migration patterns and how those migratory patterns intersect with Turkey's changing socio-political and economic landscape. My writing foregrounds how Kurdish migrant workers articulate and perform their ethical understandings of self, kinship relations, and rights in relation to their struggles for economic survival and social mobility—all this in the context of dramatic economic restructuring and the rise of political Islam in Turkey. The ethnic difference that marks Kurds as targets of political violence is made and remade through their introduction into the labor processes and class relations that fashion cosmopolitan urban spaces. Seen from this perspective, "Kurdishness" is not an essential ethnic or political identity, but rather an uncertain form of

becoming that generates new ways of being as one's relations to self and others, to one's own body and to one's community, and to labor are transformed through experiences of loss, struggle, and recovery.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
INTRODUCTION	
UPROOTED LIVES AND MIGRANT BODIES	1
Azad's Scars	2
Kurdish Migration and Labor	8
Desire and Movement	18
A Smell, a Day Dream, and Altered Sensorium	25
Outline	29
CHAPTER 1	
IN VIOLENCE AND SELF-DEFENSE: THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF A KURDISH PRESENCE IN MIGRANT ISTANBUL	35
A Contingent Frame: "Just Violence" at the Conjunction of Ethics and Politics	44
Interlude: The Violent and the Ordinary	53
Remembering Sarı Komiser: Narratives of Violence and Self-Defense	55
Unstable Present: Elections of 2015, the Syrian War, and the End of the Peace Process	58
Punishing Sarı Komiser: Theorizing Agency and Interpretation	62
Conclusion: Reading Violence	67
CHAPTER 2	
FAMILY LABOR, RELATEDNESS, AND LIVING "AS IF"	71
A Workday in the Market	72
A Strategy for Economic Survival for the Displaced: Family Labor	74
Modalities and Ambivalences of Relatedness	79
Harun's Escape and Repentance	85
El Kapısı: Working for Others	90
"The Unity of Family" and Gendered Appropriation of Value	95
Living "As If"	101
INTERLUDE	
MOURNING HASAN AND HARUN'S ESCAPE	110

CHAPTER 3	
HEALING THROUGH REPENTANCE: SUFI ORDERS, DRUGS, AND KURDISH MIGRANT WORKERS	118
In the Naqshbandi Lodge	119
Drug Use and Spiritual Recovery	125
The Ethics and Politics of Everyday Life	132
Is Free Gift Possible?	138
The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam	144
Moral Education of Desiring Self	147
A Long History of the Present: The Naqshbandi Order in Turkey and Kurdistan	153
“Spiritual Police Stations”: The Naqshbandi Order, the Kurds, and the Modern Turkey	162
Harun’s Escape: Being, Becoming and the Self	170
Other Escapes: Rojava and Politics	177
 CHAPTER 4	
ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AND ETHNIC POLITICS	182
Ethnic Politics: A Missing Link in the Islamist Political Success	184
AKP, Ethnic Politics, and the Kurds	187
Swing Votes: An Electoral Puzzle	190
Why did the Metropolitan Kurds Support the AKP?	192
(I) Class based Inclusion – Anti-elitism, Populism, and Welfare	193
(II) Ethnic inclusion - Muslim brotherhood, Critique of the Secular State, and the Peace Process	195
Why did Kurds Stop Supporting the AKP?	199
The Resurgence of War and the Remaking of National Unity	205
National Unity, Kurds, and the Failed Coup	208
Conclusion	213
 CONCLUSION	
CONTRADICTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS	215
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	228

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Vote trends for AKP and HDP in Istanbul and Turkey in 2002, 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections	189
Figure 2: Vote rates of major political parties in Turkey (2002, 2007, 2011, June and November 2015 elections)	190
Figure 3: Changes in Kurdish Votes for the AKP and the HDP (January 2014 – October 2015)	201

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many of the Kurdish migrant workers whom I would like to thank cannot be named here. Their lives and experiences have been the inspiration behind this work. Harun, Ramazan, Azad, Metin, Servet, Osman, Ahmet, Bayram, Mustafa, İlhami, Kerem, Serdar, Umut, Aydın, and Kenan shared their time, food, and stories with me. I cannot thank them enough for what they have taught me in the past six years. I truly hope that my work has done some measure of justice to their own authorship of their lives.

The Department of Anthropology at Princeton University has been an intellectual home and an incredible source of supportive collegiality. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor João Biehl. His intellectual guidance, wisdom, endless passion for anthropology and philosophy, encouragement, and support as an advisor and teacher have critically shaped my thinking and writing. He read multiple drafts of all of the chapters of my dissertation and constantly pushed me to attend to the *real* lives of the people I worked with and to get closer to the ethnographic reality. I could not have asked for a more caring, humane, and loving advisor to learn from.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my advisor Lisa Davis who has been an extraordinary source of brilliance and inspiration. She never got tired of listening to my field stories, reading my manuscripts over and over, and she always urged me to challenge my limits. I owe a lot to her sharp critique, analytical clarity, and trust in me. Lisa's intellectual generosity, kindness, friendship, and engagement with different drafts of this dissertation have been invaluable. Without our Ruby times, it would have been impossible to complete this dissertation.

Classes and dialogues with Carol Greenhouse and Didier Fassin helped me find my anthropological voice, bring ethnographic research into conversations with politics and philosophy, and pursue unexpected connections. I am more than lucky for having learned how to write with indignation from outstanding scholars like them. Talking about luck, I met Julia Elyachar in my fifth year in the kitchen of the department. Her writing and thinking helped me reformulate my project during the final stages of my writing and think more creatively about markets, economic subjectivities, and community making.

I have been fortunate to learn from scholars at Princeton who shaped my intellectual development in classes, workshops, and over coffee. Classes and conversations with Abdellah Hammoudi, Carolyn Rouse, Isabelle Clark-Decés, Lawrence Rosen, John Borneman, Rena Lederman, Gyan Prakash, Mark Beissinger, Viviana Zelizer, Robert Wuthnow, Eddie Glaude and Cornel West have found their way into this dissertation, often in unexpected ways. I would like to especially thank Carol Zanca who coordinates the graduate program with much warmth, passion, and care, and Mo Lin Yee and Gabriela Drinovan for all of their help. In conferences and workshops outside Princeton, the suggestions and feedback of Adriana Petryna, Laurence Ralph, Kamran Asdar Ali, Andrew Shryock, and Fatma Müge Göçek for different parts of this dissertation have been invaluable. I am grateful to all of them.

This dissertation benefited immensely from the thoughts, feedback, and encouragement of my friends and colleagues at Princeton (in random order): Joseph Tsiamoglou, Igor Rubinov, Nick Nuñez, Nicole Berger, Sebastián Ramírez, Celeste Alexander, Alexander Wamboldt, Nikos Michaildis, Benjamin Fogarty, Quincy Amoah, Christine Chalifoux, Zehra Hashmi, Jessica Cooper, Heath Pearson, Bridget Purcell, Sarah Jane Koulen, Thalia Gigerenzer, Kessie Alexandre, Bernardo Fonseca Machado, Elise Dlag, Alexandra Middleton, Grace Carey, Kamal

Kariem, Elizabeth Saldana, Veronica Sousa, Marcus Johnson, Carolina Sa Carvalho, Reyhan Ayas, Varak Ketsemanian, Cevat Dargın, Nazenin Elçi, Gözde Güran, Killian Clarke, Abdullah Güler, Emre Türköz, Diana Andrade, Marcia Schenk, Joppan George, and Alex Balistreri.

Without their invaluable support, this dissertation would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Janet Keller, who has been a brilliant and attentive editor.

This research would not have been carried out without the generous support of the Princeton University Graduate School, the Department of Anthropology, the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS), and the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton. I am grateful to all of them for their trust in my work.

I owe special thanks to my professors at Boğaziçi University: Nükhet Sirman, Nazan Üstündağ, Meltem Ahıska, Ayfer Bartu Candan, Cengiz Kırılı, Şemsa Özar, and Ayşe Buğra. I am also indebted to the editorial board of the journal *Toplum ve Kuram* with whom I worked for three years: Namık Kemal Dinç, Ayhan Işık, Harun Ercan, Mehmet Polatel, Nazife Kosukoğlu, Şerif Derince, Ronayî Önen, Tahir Baykuşak, Adnan Çelik, Hakan Sandal, Ruken Alp, and Seda Altuğ. My Kurdish teacher Hişyar Aydın deserves special thanks as well.

I also benefited a lot from conversations with a large group of intellectuals, scholars, and friends in Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Europe, and the United States: Ali Sarı, Mustafa Avcı, Hişyar Özsoy, Ruken Şengül, Rüstem Taşdemir, Can Açıksöz, Zeynep Korkman, Başak Can, Erdem Yörük, Deniz Duruiz, Haydar Darıcı, Elif Babül, Aslı Zengin, Zeynep Türkyılmaz, Ergin Öpengin, Utku Balaban, Azize Aslan, Nihat Özdal, Ayşe Seda Yüksel, Mehmet Kentel, Zeynep Yaşar, Gülüzar Ünlü, and Gamze Tekeler. I owe them all a deep debt of gratitude.

I am one of the “academics for peace” in Turkey who signed a petition to say “no” to the resurgence of war and ongoing state violence against the Kurds in Turkey. To say the least, I am proud to be a part of this community of scholars who had the courage to tell the truth.

I met the Armenian musicians Onnik and Ara Dinkjian and started making a documentary film about their lives and music with the ethnomusicologist Burcu Yıldız in 2009. *Garod* was released in 2012, but the Dinkjian family, Burcu Yıldız, and Aytekin Ataş kept filling my life with their enduring love, warm friendship, and inspiring music. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Dinkjians (Ara, Onnik, Araksi, Margo, Simone, Kyle, and Arev), as well as Aytekin and Burcu, all of whom have been a family to me. From my perspective, Ahmet Kaya brought all of us together. His life and music have always been a source of inspiration and courage.

I met Alişya Anlaş in February 2016 when I came back to Princeton. We began playing the bağlama and singing together. Her strong character, intelligence, love, and singing helped me overcome the most difficult times of my life. We still play and sing together.

The lives of my parents have been my deepest source of inspiration. In the midst of grave difficulties and war during the 1990s, they taught me how to smile, love, and dream. Their unconditional love, honesty, and care made me who I am. I dedicate this dissertation to Leman and Bekir Günay.

Introduction

UPROOTED LIVES AND MIGRANT BODIES

Azad's Scars

“Are you looking at my scars?” Azad¹ asked me.

We were sitting at a coffeehouse in Çeliktepe, a working class neighborhood of Istanbul. It was a warm summer evening. I was actually staring at the scars on his arms, imagining the pain when they were inscribed, and wondering why. Caught doing something inappropriate, I started to look for words and apologies: “I am sorry, I was thinking of something else and looking in that direction.” He couldn’t care less about my white lies. “Don’t think that I am a psychopath. This is my life. Each scar reminds me of something,” Azad said. As he pointed to his left arm, he added: “This happened when I first ran away from home, the time I lived with my uncles. I slept at a park for a week and began smoking weed and taking pills. Can you believe that? I was just a child. Just 13 years old. Fuck that.” The young man paused, and took a drag from his cigarette: “That was the first time I cut myself and made these signs, so that I would not forget what had happened.”

Looking at his scars, Azad talked about the haunting stories of his life: Endless fights with family members, homeless and lonely nights in parks and mosques, drug-addiction, his father’s never-ending demand for money, exploitation of his bodily labor and struggles with bosses in the workplace, tales of police brutality, battles with nationalist Turkish gangs in his neighborhood, and the pain of love. Azad’s scars, stories, and plights hover on, if not haunt, my

¹ In classic anthropological tradition, all names of my interlocutors are changed.

imagination of the modes of existence, strategies of survival, and ethics and politics of Kurdish migrant labor in Istanbul.

Azad was 25 years old when I first met him in 2014. He had arrived in Istanbul as a temporary migrant worker at the age of eleven. At that time his family was living in Iğdır, an ethnically diverse city with Turkish, Kurdish, and Azerbaijani populations in eastern Anatolia on the Turkish-Armenian border. For the last three decades, young men of his village had been migrating to Istanbul in order to work at temporary jobs, to send remittances to their families, to save money for their marriages, dowry payments, weddings, and building a home for their families in their hometown or in Istanbul, if they got lucky. Azad is one of these young workers. He is also a part of larger collective of millions of Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul and other western Turkish metropolises.

Kurdish workers in Istanbul today comprise different groups of migrants: those who came between the 1950s and 1980s with increasing urbanization, those who fled political violence in the Kurdish region during the conflict-ridden 1990s, those who migrated to Istanbul largely for economic opportunities and temporary work during the 2000s, and the last wave of displaced migrants who arrived after the resurgence of war between the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Turkish state after the summer of 2015. However, the analytical distinction between economic impoverishment and political repression is hard to maintain; they sustain each other. Consequently, these groups live side by side, and do not conceive of each other as distinct groups, differences among them are blurred. The shared experiences of ethnic repression, displacement, dispossession, and travails of urban labor processes as well as common practices of self-defense, strategies of economic survival, and linguistic difference are key elements in the making of a Kurdish community in Istanbul.

After a long day of work, Azad came back from Ortaköy where he was setting the stage for a big music festival at Galatasaray University. We went to a Kurdish coffeehouse, where Kurdish workers meet, eat, and drink, exchange information, talk about politics, wait for jobs, pursue employment opportunities, relax, and play cards. Kurdish coffeehouses in Istanbul are distinctly male spaces known for serving “smuggled tea” with its distinctive bitter taste. They also function as communicative hubs for “phatic labor” (Elyachar 2010) connecting bodies, jobs, resources, and news among the Kurdish community.² Moreover, the circulation of workers’ bodies between Kurdish towns and western Turkish metropolises facilitates the exchange of the most recent news from the Kurdish region and increases the significance of coffeehouses in the making of Kurdish community.

Like many temporary migrant workers, Azad has been staying at “single men’s rooms” (*bekar odaları* in Turkish) in Istanbul. These rooms are mostly located in the basements of buildings where temporary migrant workers can find cheap housing for several months at a time. Depending on what they do, where they work, and the requirements of seasonal work trends, young Kurdish migrant workers stay in these rooms with family members, friends from their village, or co-workers from their workplace (depending on ties with relatives). The first time he arrived in Istanbul, Azad stayed with his kin in a house (which had only two rooms) with eighteen other workers, he told me.

Telling me the stories of his scars, Azad gave me a list of troubles he endured with his relatives. Whenever he had a fight with his uncles or cousins (also migrant workers), he would leave the house and stay in parks, mosques, coffeehouses or workplaces. “I swear I was going to

² See Julia Elyachar 2010 for a related discussion on how social infrastructure like coffeehouses become the hubs of communicative channels in Egyptian economy and play a key role in the creation of semiotic meaning and economic value. By phatic labor, she refers to chatting, gossip, talk for the sake of establishing ties with others; thus creating communicative channels that establish semiotic communities.

a corner in the park and crying there.” Azad paused for a second, and probably realized that crying was not the most appropriate act that can fit his masculine image. “Not even crying. Out of the blue, tears were coming from my eyes,” he said. “Did you try to go back to your village?” I asked. “I asked my father to send me back to the village. I was eleven. I told him that I missed my mother. He was telling me: ‘Fuck that, people of your age work and earn money. You are lazy, you don’t want to work.’ He did not let me go back.” He pulled out his box of cigarettes and gave me a cigarette before he lighted a new one for himself.

As he kept showing his scars inscribed by razor blades on his body, I noticed some that appeared different and dared to ask if he had scars from his work life. Showing me his left arm, “there were a couple of broken bones here, but that happens a lot. This is what I am paid for,” Azad said. He had not talked about the scars that work accidents had left on his body until I prompted him. For him, they were not worth talking about. I was struck that scars of labor were naturalized in his account. In contrast to the traces of problems with his kin and villagers, he regarded these scars of bodily labor as normal and ordinary. For the scars of the work accidents, there was nothing he could have done, he told me, to avoid the incidents. “In the end people pay you to work hard,” he said.

Azad was more concerned about disregard by his own family. Isn’t it a family’s obligation to care? It was the disregard by his family that troubled him most. “Those who cut their bodies with razors, don’t think that they are psychopaths, I swear to God, they all have problems with their families.” Every time he felt neglected, disregarded, or betrayed, Azad left a trace on his body. That night, he repeated many times that even though he felt depressed and isolated in the city, these scars on his body were not the signs of any abnormality or psychic problems but deliberate reminders of the acts of those who betrayed him instead of caring for and

helping him. Azad saw work accidents, exploitation, and precarity of daily work as an inescapable part of his life. Azad's razor scars spoke of the irreducible difference between what kinship ought to be and what kin actually do. The scars spoke of efforts at once of escape from and return to family, of broken families and imagined care, in a context in which the challenges of labor are inescapable and dreams of supportive kin ties ever present. Given the difficulties of migrant labor, kinship was the only hope for support but relational ties faltered in the urban environment; kinsmen not only withheld care but exploited younger or less experienced migrants.

Azad carried one more type of scars: Political scars. He showed me his scars from police torture and fights with nationalist Turkish mobs in his neighborhood. One time, he was severely beaten by two cops because he wore a particular type of scarf (*poşî* or *keffiyeh*) associated with Kurdishness and Kurdish resistance in Turkey. (In the Middle East, the *keffiyeh* was worn by Palestinians and became a symbol of Palestinian insurgency.) Azad conveyed pride in his political scars. "If we hadn't fought enough, they wouldn't have let us live here," he said. He regarded the scars as a part of the larger collective struggle of making Istanbul home for Kurdish migrants.

"No one is meant to forget the severity of the law" (Clastres 1987:177). So begins anthropologist Pierre Clastres's essay "Of Torture in Primitive Societies." Clastres gives an account of the way the law of society is inscribed on the bodies of the Guayaki Indians through torture and physical violence during their initiation rites. He shows how the body appears as a writing surface for the inscription of the legible text of the law. Among the Guayaki Indians of South America, the body is transformed into a site of memory through pain and suffering. "In the initiatory rite, *society imprints its mark on the body* of the young people" (1987:184). Through

initiation rites and torture, for Clastres, society *dictates its laws* to its members. The marked bodies entail an obligation to the equality of all those who are marked and an acknowledgement of full membership for the initiates in society: “You will not want power!”

Unlike Clastres’s description of the young men in the initiation rites of the Guayaki where the individual is given a lesson in equality through pain and suffering, scars on Azad’s body are the signs and symbols of inequality, poverty, political violence and his ethnic identity. His skin is a means to inscribe and remember injustices, an active writing surface of his personal history and his resentment against others. The skin, writes Michael M. J. Fischer (2009: 169), is “a writing surface of scars, tattoos, pigmentation, legacies of encounters with the world.” Scars of the hard labor, work accidents, political violence, and disregard by his own family inscribed the laws of inequality and difference on Azad’s young body.

Azad’s razor scars also spoke of individuation of his singular experience and autobiographical story. As an anthropologist, my challenge is to address how large scale historical, political, and economic processes impinge on bodies and collectivities and also to remain attuned to singularities and to the ways people have inscribed their singular histories and processes on their individual bodies as marks of the every day; living, desiring, and inventing a future of some sort. After I heard Azad’s story, I met with other Kurdish migrant workers, whose bodies were marked by scars of political violence, work accidents, and disregard by family. In my dissertation I document the traces of scars on individual bodies and on the larger collective body of Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul. I address the ways Kurdish migrant workers react to new techniques of power at the intersections of state sanctioned political repression and the urban labor market. Specifically, I explore the uprooted lives and migrant labor of Kurdish workers as they come to terms with political violence, exploitation, and precarious labor in the

city, as well as their hopes, desires, escapes, and struggles to take themselves out of the stream of this violent history.

My research shows how ethnic and social differences are recast through labor, as these differences mark migrant Kurdish men's bodies, sexualities, life prospects, and senses of belonging in the city. The ways ethnicity intersects with religion, urban class identities, and gender constitute a central concern in my work. I analyze the factors shaping Kurdish migration patterns and how those migratory patterns intersect with Turkey's changing socio-political and economic landscape. My writing foregrounds how Kurdish migrant workers articulate and perform their ethical understandings of self, kinship relations, and rights in relation to their struggles for economic survival and social mobility—all this in the context of dramatic economic restructuring and the rise of political Islam in Turkey. The ethnic difference that marks Kurds as targets of political violence is made and remade through their introduction into the labor processes and class relations that fashion cosmopolitan urban spaces. Seen from this perspective, “Kurdishness” is not an essential ethnic or political identity, but rather an uncertain form of becoming that generates new ways of being as one's relations to self and others, to one's own body and to one's community, and to labor are transformed through experiences of loss, struggle, and recovery.

Kurdish Migration and Labor

Beginning in 1984, the war between the PKK and the Turkish state led to massive destruction throughout the Kurdish region, precipitating a huge wave of displacement and dispossession for

the rural Kurds. The war between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers Party reached its peak during the 1990s when, pursuing a policy of counterinsurgency, the state evacuated about 4,000 villages and hamlets and displaced and dispossessed more than two million rural Kurds (Jongerden 2007). Since there was already a significant Kurdish population in Istanbul, the city, with its economic potentials and resources, became one of the main destinations for those displaced by the war. The passage to urban life has left its traces in the geographies, narratives, bodies, and everyday practices of Kurdish migrant workers. Forced migration compelled Kurdish peasants into a new mode of production as “free wage-laborers” who became a source of cheap labor. Today, with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, the Kurds are forced to compete at the lowest end of the labor market in the formal, informal, and illicit economies.

As I heard many times from Kurdish workers, since their arrival in Istanbul, they have struggled with insecure employment, low wages, inadequate housing, and social discrimination. Experiences of state violence, social memory of loss and ethnic discrimination get articulated with the urban labor experience. Today, Kurds make up 17 percent of contemporary Istanbul’s total population, corresponding to almost three million Kurds. This number makes Istanbul “the world’s largest Kurdish city,” as the saying goes among Kurdish migrants. Two thirds of the Kurdish population in Istanbul is comprised of the urban working class. Moreover, every year hundreds of thousands of Kurdish men (like Azad) move between the Kurdish region and Turkish metropolises in search of temporary jobs and daily wage-labor. In both ways, the forced migration of the Kurds radically altered the ethnic composition of the urban working classes in Turkish metropolises as well as the class structure of Kurdish society.

My dissertation is based on two years of fieldwork with Kurdish migrant workers in the service and construction sectors of Istanbul’s economy. I conducted ethnographic research with

male Kurdish migrant workers in Çeliktepe between October 2013 and January 2016. My interlocutors included those who had fled political violence in the Kurdish region during the conflict-ridden 1990s; and those who came to Istanbul to seek temporary work in the 2000s. My fieldwork took place in a masculine world among daily wage laborers in the construction sector, neighborhood vegetable and fruit markets, and subcontracting companies specializing in building platforms for daily events, university graduations, and concerts. During my research, I had access to my interlocutors through male workplaces, coffeehouses, and Islamic orders. With a few exceptions of female workers in the neighborhood markets, all the manual workers in my field sites were men. Islamic orders have separate meeting places for men and women, and I only had access to the former. Coffeehouses in the working-class neighborhoods are also masculine places as opposed to the new and modern cafes in the middle class parts of the city.

My research involved extensive participant-observation in the bazaars, workshops, and construction sites of Çeliktepe, an old working class neighborhood of Istanbul, where I labored alongside Kurdish migrant workers to develop a comprehensive understanding of labor processes, kinship ties, strategies of subsistence, patterns of employment, and modes of exchange in the workplace. Following anthropologists and historians of labor (Thompson 1966, 1991; Willis 1977; Wolf 1982), I extended my ethnographic research beyond the workplace. I also attended weddings, funerals, prayers, rituals, and political protests of Kurdish migrant workers, and observed their encounters with others in public spaces and sites of leisure. Spending time in coffeehouses, mosques, Islamic orders (*tarikât*), video arcades, billiard saloons, taverns, night clubs, and gambling and betting houses enabled me to delve in to the everyday lives of Kurdish laborers and to explore their social relations in the making. These spaces constitute symbolic and material frontiers between diverse ethnic groups and socio-economic classes, key sites for

exploring the encounters and interactions that shape practices and ideas about ethnic boundaries, class experiences, and social positions, as well as about people's ethical understanding of themselves in relation to others.

Through this dynamic process, I collected thirty detailed life histories from Kurdish migrant workers of different generations, illuminating how people make sense of their pasts (especially violent memories of war, displacement, and dispossession); how they relate present situations to broader political and socioeconomic transformations in Turkey; and how they generate subject positions, desires, dreams, and imaginings of the future. Participating in informal conversations and group discussions, listening to storytelling, and interviewing and recording life histories were crucial methods for my research, shedding light on how complex historical, political, and economic processes are understood and imagined in the lives of individuals and communities, and how people struggle with different forms of political violence and market forces.

My fieldwork also benefitted from collaboration with other social scientists working on war, displacement, and labor migration. Our scholarly overlaps opened avenues for disseminating my research findings through informal exchanges, co-publishing, and conferences. Between 2013 and 2016, I worked on the editorial board of the journal, *Toplum ve Kuram* (Theory and Society), and was the chief editor for the 2014 issue, "In Search of Truth and Justice: Remembering the 1990s." *Toplum ve Kuram* is an academic journal that promotes historical, sociological, and ethnographic research and intellectual dialogue regarding the non-Turkish and non-Muslim populations of Anatolia (specifically Kurds), the subject of a

longstanding taboo within Turkish academia.³ An important contribution of collaboration with young Kurdish and Turkish scholars and intellectuals at *Toplum ve Kuram* was learning about and helping to develop a scholarly ethics that refuses to relegate Kurdish studies to victimhood and instead recuperates Kurdish agency and anti-colonial struggle in the borders of modern Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. This was a crucial political and ethical intervention into the ways the Kurdish issue was discussed in the Turkish academy and the larger public, given the fact that the very existence of the Kurds was officially denied in Turkey till 2000s.

However, the ethnographic reality that I encountered among Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul significantly exceeded the boundaries of the victim-agent binary. The Kurdish migrant workers I worked with were not only victims of political violence or economic impoverishment, nor exclusively political revolutionary agents of Kurdish struggle. Their subjectivities were not overdetermined by the history of political oppression, dynamics of ethnic conflict, nor the economic hardships of the urban labor markets. They lived in the present; they desired things and strove for different lives. They were constantly negotiating their own conditions and making use of extremely limited economic and political resources. While community self-defense gave them the opportunity to open a space for themselves in the city and the labor markets, they did so under conditions of political repression, and it was through the use of kinship ties and other modalities of relatedness in urban laboring practices that Kurdish migrants responded, economically and socially, to their displacement and dispossession. The world of drugs, violent and masculine street culture, underground economies, lures of urban life, Islamic orders and

³ In 2015, I worked with the same group, this time as the editor of a book, *Yüz Yıllık Ah! Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde 1915 Diyarbekir* (“A Century-Long Curse! The Collective Memory of 1915 Diyarbekir”), which explores Kurdish memories of the Armenian Genocide. Drawing on a 15-month oral history project as well as archival research, *Yüz Yıllık Ah* was the first detailed study to thoroughly scrutinize Kurdish involvement in the Armenian Genocide and to document the collective memory of 1915 in Diyarbekir, the symbolic capital of historical Armenia and contemporary Turkish Kurdistan.

political Islam, and the Kurdish political movement constituted contradictory and conflicting means to remake their lives and offered potentials for escape from oppressive conditions of life and labor.

I published several articles in Turkish newspapers on the political trajectories of Kurdish migrants before and after the June general elections of 2015.⁴ The insights that I acquired through ethnographic research not only helped me to forecast a crucial vote swing among the metropolitan Kurds, but also to document ethnic and class dynamics of electoral politics in the changing political landscape of the Middle East. This vote swing and unexpected change in the Turkish political party system as well as the war in Syria became the most important reason for the rising state authoritarianism and the bloody upsurge of the Sunni Turkish nationalism in contemporary Turkey.

My hometown, Diyarbakır, played a key role during my research. It was my connection to the world of Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul. Being the symbolic capital of Kurdish nationalism and epicenter of Kurdish insurgency, my ties to Diyarbakır facilitated my access to the field, and people's willingness to share their stories with me. Even though our experiences were divided by social class and education, shared knowledge of state violence and war in Kurdistan, witnessing the atrocities of the Turkish state and everyday discriminatory practices

⁴ The final substantive chapter of my dissertation is written as a reflection on these newspaper articles on general elections of 2015 in Turkey, and includes an analysis of the failed coup attempt and its contradictory and ambiguous effects on the Kurdish constituency.

See, HDP, Seçim Barajı ve Metropollerdeki Kürtler (HDP, Election Threshold, and Metropolitan Kurds), *Özgür Gündem*, February 22, 2015. <http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/haber/126514/hdp-secim-baraji-ve-metropollerdeki-kurtler>

7 Haziran'ın Hakikati (The truth of the June 7th), *Evrensel Gazetesi*, June 14, 2015. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/115233/7-haziranin-hakikati>

Emanet Oylar: AKP metropollerdeki Kürt oylarını neden kaybetti? (Borrowed Votes: Why did the AKP government lose the votes of the metropolitan Kurds?) *T24*, June 18, 2015. <http://t24.com.tr/haber/emanet-oylar-akp-metropollerdeki-kurt-oylarini-neden-kaybetti-sebep-beyaz-turkler-mi,300004>

throughout our lives (although in different ways) gave us not only a common-territorial language to communicate but also a sense of trust to share our experiences and insights. Kurdish migrants became more willing to share their personal stories with me, as my background made it easier for them to understand the underlying reasons for my ethnographic curiosity as well as the potential ethical and political significance of my research.

That being said, the Diyarbakır connection also limited my access in specific ways: I was limited to particular forms of personal interactions and ethnographic encounters. Many Kurdish migrant workers I met in the first couple of months of my research expected and directed my research toward ethnic conflict and political violence during the 1990s. The historical context was of crucial significance: My interlocutors told me exclusively of their experiences as victims of state violence, mimicking the ways the Kurdish issue was being discussed by the AKP government and the Turkish state's intellectuals in the beginning of the peace process coinciding with my research.

In the beginning, my interlocutors were not willing to talk about issues that relate to the politics and ethics of their everyday lives. My questions concerning urban labor experiences, class dynamics, labor, drug addiction, gender, desire and religion fell outside the scope of the role⁵ I was given. During the first months of my research, people I worked with would remain silent on these questions, as they considered them irrelevant or secondary in the larger narratives

⁵ An ethnographer's position is shaped in a reciprocal relation given in a society's definition of the proper type of social interactions. In "Elicited Countertransference: The complementary role," Georges Devereux argues that the anthropologist, rather than being free from the social bonds and enjoying a bird's-eye view, "may suddenly discover that he is being irresistibly swept into the complementary role assigned to him and may therefore unwittingly see the society he studies *only* from the point of vantage of his ascribed status" (Devereux 1967:242). In this regard, ethnographic encounters and anthropological knowledge are bound by the role(s) assigned to a researcher by a society. Rather than considering this as a lack of objectivity for ethnographic study, Devereux claims that a conscious effort "to understand the position into which he is maneuvered and then analyzing both its subjective meaning and its objective implications" can open a space for the anthropologist to acquire a "comprehensive view of a culture" (1967:251) from a variety of angles.

of Kurds. It was only after they let me spend more time with them in workplaces and in their everyday lives that, over time and through my bodily presence, I found I gradually had more access to these spheres of quotidian life that are left outside the official boundaries of ethnic-identity politics.

Furthermore, our differences were at least as decisive as our shared experiences or *imagined* similarities. I lived in Istanbul for a decade prior to graduate study. During those years, Istanbul became a second home to me. However, when I went back for my fieldwork after two years of graduate school, my field site of working class neighborhoods was not a part of the social world that I was relatively familiar with. I was not simply “one of them” as some of American anthropologists still like to think about “native” anthropologists. As a member of the middle class, someone who does not necessarily have to sell his bodily labor (both my parents are teachers with rural backgrounds, they both had to work in the fields during their education); or as an urbanite, who was not displaced from his home by the Turkish military forces; my life experience has been quite distinct from their experiences. Before coming to Princeton University, I was a graduate student at Boğaziçi University,⁶ an educated person in the best university of the country. I am able to speak Turkish like a Turk when I need to do so and I am a secular urbanite with almost no relation to the spiritual world of religion and Islamic orders that are extremely prominent in the working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul.

“The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux,” writes Kirin Narayan (1993:671) in her classical essay “How Native Is a

⁶ Since Princeton University or the word *anthropology* did not mean anything to an overwhelming majority of my interlocutors, I told them that before Princeton I studied at Boğaziçi University for years and studied sociology and history as a graduate student there.

‘Native’ Anthropologist?”⁷ As we came to learn more about each other’s experiences, these differences marked boundaries between the Kurdish migrant workers with whom I worked and me. I understand my “nativeness” to my field site as a relational position, acknowledging that culture is never a closed and bounded entity equally shared by all members of a given society and that national and ethnic identities are not the sole determinants of our subjectivities and collectivities. One day, my young friends from the field were introducing me to one of their older relatives, and enthusiastically telling him that I was a Kurdish researcher from Diyarbakır doing research on Kurdish migration to the cities. The old man looked at them and asked whether I had any kin in Çeliktepe. Hearing the answer “no,” he refused to talk to me about his own experience during the violent 1990s and Kurdish displacement. He needed more than the Diyarbakır connection and an assumed ethnic affinity or acquaintance with his young relatives in order to trust a researcher. Ethnography can “take up *refusal* in generative ways,” writes Audra Simpson (2007:78) in her essay “On Ethnographic Refusal” (see also Simpson 2014 and McGranahan 2016). That refusal was key to my understanding of the multiplicity of the paradigms of social proximity and distance among my interlocutors as well as the shifting and contradictory grounds by which Kurdish community is imagined in Istanbul.

When describing their experiences of migration and labor, the Kurdish workers I met during my fieldwork conveyed diverse senses of ethnic and political belonging. Their differences ranged from their relations to Islam, to electoral politics and party affiliation, to morality, to language and group identity, as well as to communicative practices. I realized many times that these differences are pragmatically deployed, and they fluctuate as Kurdish migrant workers

⁷ National or ethnic identities do not totally determine who we are. “Factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts, may at different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status” (Narayan 1993:671-672). The multiplicity and changing characters of these factors over time unsettle the stability of the complimentary role imagined by Devereux.

traverse different neighborhoods, the market place, and other groups, state institutions, and researchers. Sometimes these differences are about the importance of kinship relations in the organization of everyday life and laboring practices, sometimes they are about being better Muslims through participation in Islamic orders, sometimes they are about witnessing state violence and terror, and at other times these differences and boundaries are constructed in relation to socio-economic class and laboring practices. Upholding an equality of intelligences and rejecting the division between those who know the world and those who must simply struggle to survive it (Biehl and Locke 2017:29), this dissertation is attuned to the multiple and changing ways Kurdish migrants organize knowledge about their own lives and labor. The shifting, ambivalent and contradictory ways my interlocutors conceptualize ethnic difference, socioeconomic class, and political subjectivity transcend the Marxist theories of misrecognition and false-consciousness, or totalizing forms of power and knowledge inspired by French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault.

“The grounds of familiarity and distance are shifting ones,” writes Marilyn Strathern (1987:16) in her inquiry on the limits of auto-anthropology. For Strathern, the question of producing knowledge about others and ourselves relies on “the kinds of premises about social life” that inform anthropological inquiry. These premises about social life and its representation and the question of whether the investigator and the investigated share them determine the extent to which they equally feel at home. In this interplay of familiarity, closeness and distance, my questions in this dissertation are not about retrieving authentic voices nor the restoration of Kurdish subjectivities through narratives. Among Kurdish migrant workers of Istanbul that would have been an enormously difficult, if not impossible, task given the contradictions inherent in the multiple narratives and political subjectivities.

Rather, following Strathern, I am more interested in “the productive activity which lies behind what people say, and thus their relationship to what has been said. Without knowing how they ‘own’ their own words, we cannot know what we have done in appropriating them” (1987:19). The question of “how one *knows* when one is at home,” or the domestic dilemma of “knowing more about ourselves as objects and knowing more about ourselves as subjects” in Strathern’s words, does not depend simply on anthropologist’s will or authorial choice but more on the nature of the society in question and its social and cultural practices: “What ‘our’ representation of others will mean must depend in part on what ‘their’ representations mean to them” (1987:23). For Strathern, where home is matters. Yet in the production of knowledge anthropologists don’t have the final say. For Strathern, the terms of anthropological knowledge take shape in the relationship between anthropological techniques for organizing knowledge and how their subjects organize knowledge about themselves (1987:31).

Desire and Movement

As Azad was telling me about the scars on his body during that evening, his cousin Metin joined us. He silently and respectfully waited while Azad told his stories. Unlike most of his kin who work in the construction sector or subcontracting companies for daily jobs, Metin has been working as a motorcycle driver (delivery boy) at a restaurant for the last 5 years. He told me that he arrived in Istanbul in 2002 at the age of twelve, and immediately started working as a shoe shiner on the streets. After spending two months and crying every single night for his family, he went back to his village, homesick. He came back again after two years, worked in a textile workshop with Azad, but the result was the same, what he imagined as an adventure in Istanbul

ended up in longing, despair, and homesickness. Metin left again, seeing the immense difficulty of migrants' life and labor in Istanbul. Azad interrupted and made fun of his cousin: "He was his Mama's boy. He used to miss his mom a lot." Like most of the migrant workers that I met during my fieldwork, Azad was proud of being tough and of his hard labor. Being a tough man and ability to do hard work are of crucial importance for the masculine identity of young Kurdish migrant workers.

A year after his second try, Metin's desires for a different life and better future brought him back to Istanbul. He worked at construction with his uncle, and went to some daily jobs requiring intense physical strength with Azad. It was too much for him. Azad smiled mockingly with a masculine pride as Metin was telling his story. Metin ended by finding a job at a restaurant as a motorcycle driver. In the beginning, he used to sleep at the restaurant, then the boss of the restaurant gave him a place to stay with other waiters and workers. I asked him why he insisted on coming to Istanbul.

Metin immediately responded, "Why did I come here? I wanted to be like my elder cousins who were working in Istanbul. When they came back home, they always had nice sneakers, jeans, and t-shirts. We used to wear rubber shoes because of poverty." Metin looked at Azad and smiled. "I remember, they were like the kings. They would do whatever they wanted. Nobody would touch them, neither their fathers nor mothers. And they didn't have to go to school. They would tell us their adventures with beautiful women in the city. They were also whiter than us." I was confused for a second; I asked, "What do you mean by whiter?" This question made my ignorance about agricultural work obvious. They laughed, Metin responded briefly: "They were not working in the fields anymore." Migrant workers literally had "another body" and things that others back home could only desire.

For young Kurdish migrant workers, Istanbul is an object of fascination, repulsion, and fear at the same time. From elder workers, they learn that some locals and Turkish migrants are hostile to Kurds, and the conditions of life and labor are hard in Istanbul. Occasionally, they see the funerals of their cousins who lost their lives in work accidents. A lot of elder workers are seen as waste of the urban labor markets; they can't work anymore because they hurt themselves and injured their bodies in accidents. However, the young still want to leave their villages and hometowns. They want Nike and Adidas shoes instead of their village shoes made of black rubber and associated with poverty and backwardness. Highly stylized expressions of tattoos, slim t-shirts, and fashionable jeans look more appealing than the village ways of doing things. They come away wanting, with a "desire for the things of the earth" (Steedman 1986:7).⁸

⁸ Carolyn Steedman's book *Landscape for a Good Woman* is a feminist intervention countering the heroic and masculine working class historiography. In her book, she (Steedman 1986) writes about her own childhood and her mother whose story does not conform to the histories of the English working class. Unlike what has been depicted about the struggle and solidarity of working-class heroes (and not heroines), her mother wants things. She wants "fine clothes, glamour, money; to be what she wasn't" (1986:6). Steedman's book is one of the most important critiques of the E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* in which Thompson (1966) introduces the previously neglected spheres of culture, religion and faith, and morality to the study of the working classes revealing the ways these spheres of life are crucial to the making of class. Steedman draws from this earlier work but rather focuses on her mother who finds no place in the iconography of working-class motherhood. Her book is "about lives lived out on the borderlands, lives for which the central interpretive devices of the culture quite don't work" (1986:5) and the ways "lived experience of the majority of people in a class society has been pathologized and marginalized" (1986:12).

Her mother was left alone by Steedman's father and raised her children almost alone, however, rejected motherhood. She wanted things and commodities, comfort of a middle-class life. She envied, she always wanted more than what she had. Her desires could only find a voice in conservative working-class politics that can entail the politics of envy. "She ran a working-class household far away from the traditional communities of class, in exile and isolation, and in which a man was not a master, nor even there very much" (1986:6). Steedman did not want to make Thompson's narrative ineffective, her aim was to reconstruct his narrative by including the stories of men and women whose lived experience did not conform to the epic narrative of the history of English working class (for a detailed discussion see Eley 2005). However, this radical reconstruction of the working-class narrative, did not work only by adding women's stories to it, but by showing the ways in which the central story was gendered and failed to reflect the lived experience of the majority of people, men and women.

"Once a story is told, it ceases to be history: it becomes a piece of history, an interpretive device," writes Steedman (1986:143). Her aim is not to preempt previous working-class histories and construct an oppositional history that merely focuses on margins and borderlands. Instead, she writes for a reconstruction of working class history that recognizes and yet refuses to celebrate what happens on the borderlands and margins: "I must make the final gesture of defiance, and refuse to let this be absorbed by the central story; [I] must ask for a structure of political thought that will take all of this, all these secret and impossible stories, recognize what has been made out on the margins; and then, recognizing it, refuse to celebrate it" (1986:144). Her political and intellectual struggle to

Back home, being “the king of the village,” at least for a day, is a common genre among migrant laborers who celebrate their homecomings in different parts of the world. That only happens through the ownership or temporary appropriation of objects, commodities, and things - “even if this means spending the last of their hard-earned money to hear their names praised” as anthropologist Masquelier puts it in his study of migration, labor, and consumption in the Mawri imagination in Nigeria (2000:102). Among the Kurdish migrant workers, new smart phones, rented cars, nice sneakers, Marlboro cigarettes, fine clothes, glamour, and money help them to become what they weren’t.

Looking at Metin and me with desperate eyes, Azad said, “There is no life in Kurdistan.” Kurdish youth not only see the dead bodies of their peers, migrant workers who have fallen to the weight of unfair labor practices. They witness the death of their peers as guerillas in the war between the PKK and the Turkish state, or the recent war between the Kurdish YPG/YPJ (People’s Defense Units / Women’s Defense Units) and the ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in Rojava (Western Kurdistan or Northern Syria). Following the resurgence of war between the Turkish state and the PKK in July 2015, there have been two funerals in Azad and Metin’s village. One belonged to a 17 years-old young PKK fighter who was killed in a military attack in Erzurum; and the other belongs to a 25 years-old YPG fighter killed by ISIS in Rojava. Moreover, young migrant workers witness the impoverishment of their whole region as a part of the Turkish state’s colonial policies to extract resources and labor. Those who want a different life leave their villages. In the midst of political repression and economic impoverishment of their home regions, the desires of these youths to leave their villages and migrate to the urban

reconstruct a more comprehensive working-class historiography is of crucial importance to her methodology. She tries to develop an approach to micro-history that both opens space for marginal personal experiences and psycho-affective conditions and documents the workings of capitalism and class inequalities at the same time.

centers constitute subjective ties between the Kurdish region and Turkish metropolises. These lines of flight are experiments with doing things, one's own body and labor, moral and political values. They entail the immanent human potentiality of making things otherwise, as well as vital and deadly experiments, multiple, unfinished, and open-ended becomings (Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009).

Azad, Metin, and other temporary migrant workers in Istanbul described their initial incentive to work in Istanbul in terms of economic necessity and as a hard step to help their families by earning enough to send remittances. Yet the road from their hometowns to Istanbul also implied the acceleration of the passage from childhood to adulthood, the lure of the prospect of money and the access to urban goods, commodities and pleasures. Aspirations for the “goods” of urban manhood, difficulties of hard manual labor and commodities constitute the layers of a larger initiation into manhood. Cultural membership among “real men” in the urban markets and seductive city life are the lures for labor migration. As I came to see over time, Kurdish labor migration for urban wage-labor operates as an extended ritual of manhood through which the young Kurdish boys become masculine laboring subjects.

Istanbul is not an easy place for them. First and foremost, it is a site of labor, political oppression, and struggle for Kurdish migrant workers. However, they also imagine and experience the city as a space of desire and fantasy; sex workers, nightlife, drugs, alcohol, and easy money gained through underground economies. The same desires that bring them to the cities turn them into a dangerous class for public authorities and upper-class city dwellers. In the political and religious-moral landscape of the urban space, many middle and upper class residents and public and religious authorities consider the desires of workers as disruptive of the moral order. Darker skinned migrant workers of the city have to be educated, suppressed, and

controlled. In the Islamic orders (*tarikats*) that are extremely prominent religious institutions in the poor working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul that Metin also attends, the religious authorities call it “the moral education of desire.” Through ethical practices, cultivation of pious subjectivities and collectivities, Islamic orders control the *dangerous* classes of the city, discipline their labor power, and contain Kurdish dissent as a part of the Turkish state’s project to control the urban Kurdish population. These mechanisms of discipline and control, however, are open to contestation, resistance, and escapes. Metin mockingly told how Azad was the first to escape from the religious gatherings.

Patterns of Kurdish migratory labor into the cities are non-linear, multi-directional, constantly changing, and complex. This variation depends on political and socioeconomic processes that shape the relations between the Kurdish region and western Turkey. Moreover, it relies on “a complex, shifting mix of strategies that draws on rural and urban resources and options” (Ferguson 1999:79) and the ways economic and political transformations are subjectively experienced by migrants and their families. Through an analysis of different forms of migration (forced, labor, temporary, seasonal, and permanent), I explore in this dissertation the structures of power and economy that bind Turkish cities to the Kurdish region. Systems of labor migration are uniquely characterized by a temporal and physical partitioning that divides the reproduction of the labor force (i.e., the birth of generations of workers in the east) from sites of production (Burawoy 1976; Ortiz 2002; Holmes 2013). Rather than a natural or voluntary feature of political economy, this separation relies on the enforcement of inequalities in wealth and protection from political violence. I read this separation as historically contingent, the result of contact between the Kurdish region and the Turkish metropolises. This inequality and the multiple ways people navigate it constitute a central concern of my study.

Anthropologists who have studied migrant workers point to the formation of “transnational” communities and migrant circuits that connect different locales to one other (Kearney 1986; Kearney and Nagengast 1989; Sutton 1987; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Rouse 1995). Rather than relying on an understanding of places that are separated from each other as earlier studies had done, these scholars began to think of migration as the setting in which people orchestrate their lives, form relationships, and understand themselves and their communities (Striffler 2007).⁹ Along these lines, my research also explores the ways Kurdish migrant workers understand themselves as the bearers of collective identities. How have their notions of personhood, collectivity, and difference changed as a result of their migration and urban labor processes? In what ways are these political and economic shifts intimately linked to the organization of migratory labor?

While subjective experiences of temporary migratory labor are framed by aspirations, desires, and dreams notwithstanding political and economic inequalities, the haunting memories of the forced migration of the 1990s are framed by violence, injustice, and resentment. For the Kurdish migrants who arrived in Istanbul during the huge wave of displacement of the 1990s, there is no return. What they have called home is burnt, destroyed, or evacuated. After their arrival in the city, they became key players in forming economic and religious networks and inventing urban space, i.e., in creating a Kurdish Istanbul.

⁹ More than two decades ago, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta suggested an alternative way to think about cultural difference and space. As opposed to conceiving of localized cultures as radically separated and geographically distinct, they insisted on conceiving fluid cultures in connected, shared and continuous space, traversed by unequal economic and political relations. Their suggestion was to explore “the production of difference in a world of culturally, socially and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces” (Ferguson and Gupta 1992:14).

A Smell, a Daydream, and Altered Sensorium

Once Ramazan was teaching me how to peel the artichoke as we were talking about business in the vegetable and fruit markets and about his future plans. He told me that he wanted to open a grocery store and let his kids go to school and get education. Ramazan did not want his children to have the same life and work experience that he had had to go through. He wanted them to have proper education and go to universities.

As lunchtime was approaching and he asked his apprentice Memo to slice melons for us. When Memo gave him a piece of melon, he smelled it and looked at me: “Back in the village I used to know the vegetables by their smell, I still remember the taste of tomatoes, the smell of melons,” he said. In the city, he learned to know them by the bodily pain they caused when he started to work in the vegetable markets as a porter. The same fruits and vegetables meant tons of loads to carry, itchiness, back and neck pain for workers’ bodies. His sensorium was altered by the city and the difficulties of the urban laboring practices.

Peeling hundreds of artichokes, his arm was laden with pressure and his muscles were tightened after the work. Like in a daydream, Ramazan started talking about his childhood memories of home, and the beauty of his village with a big smile in his face. He remembered swimming with his friends and cousins in the river, eating fruits from the trees, and wandering with his family’s herds in the plains and mountains. Under the July sun, the market place was relatively quiet and his workers, two sons, and I were listening to him with rapt attention.

Then, as if he just woke up from a dream, he shook me and said: “Look brother, if I have an opportunity to turn back to my village today, if I can grow my own tomatoes and pepper in

my own farm, I would not bear the smell of this Istanbul for a minute. If I can feed my family, I do not want anything else.” He paused for a second and looked at his sons. What he had just enunciated was radically different than his original future plans. He continued, keeping his eyes on his sons: “We don’t work like this in our hometown; we don’t get up at 2 a.m. in the night. There are gardens. There are animals. The work there is not as difficult as it is in Istanbul. There is no expense. [In Istanbul] If you get sick and don’t work one day here, you will be starving the next day. We don’t want their education, nor do we want to be their servants.”

The contrast between Ramazan’s future plans and urban realities (that education does not provide the means for upward social mobility for most of the Kurdish children) was as striking as the contrast between the distant tastes and smells of his past and his urban work experience. Inspired by a smell, his daydream was a rupture in the ordinary flow of things. That was the first time I listened to him telling me why his family had to leave their village and go to Istanbul. His stories spoke of the experiences of his villagers with the Turkish paramilitary forces and of the dynamics of the dirty war in the 1990s:

The state’s special military forces did it. We saw it with our own eyes. They arrived with their weapons. They had the guerilla uniforms. During that night, they raided the houses of villagers; threatening everyone from the *muhtar* [village headman] to the children. They told us that they would return tomorrow and the villagers should provide them with bread, cheese, and food. They told us that they are the men of mountains. They told that if we refuse to provide food, then they will rape our sisters and wives, and kill us all. Then, what happened? The villagers were frightened to death. Nobody had money, some villagers sold what they had, others got into debt. They would either run away and leave the village or give food to protect the honor (*namus*) of their families.

But these are village people; some of them had no money or opportunity to buy tea, sugar, or food that they could give away. How could they find all these items in the village? Then what did villagers do? After realizing that there was no other option, the villagers got their guns saying “It is either you or us who will die” and they started to wait for the soldiers. This happened in our village. The soldiers returned in mountain uniforms and the villagers told them that they could not give anything. But some people

who had money or an extra bag of wheat or flour in their houses, they gave food in order to protect their children and families. Later, the soldiers arrested them as well.

The next day, they returned, this time dressed in army uniforms. They told us that we provided flour and wheat to the PKK. The villagers told them that they provided these items in order to protect the honor of their families. The soldiers asked the villagers the reasons they did not inform the military. And the villagers responded: “How could we inform? They (you) told us that if we informed the state they (you) would burn out our villages. That is why we stayed silent.” They picked 4-5 people telling them that they helped PKK. They beat them in front of everyone. Then what happened? The soldiers forced to us migrate from our villages. Then they evacuated our villages reporting to the media that it was terrorists who burnt out and destroyed the villages.

While Azad’s scars inscribed his desire to remember those who betrayed instead of caring for and helping him, and to take revenge from them on his body, Ramazan’s altered sensorium and bodily memories of a lost home stirred a desire to return. Both the scars of the marked bodies and the altered senses encourage the men to tell their own stories. Ramazan continued: “Today why does the Turkish state call us back to our villages? Three years ago, they issued a fund, and they gave 10 bags of iron, 1000 bags of cement. Why are they doing this if they are not responsible? This is why we migrated here (Istanbul) from our villages, to protect our honor (*namus*). We came here to protect our livelihood, not to rebel against Istanbul or Ankara. We still love our villages and we want to return. Why shouldn’t we go back?”

Peace, maybe for the first time since 1984, was a strong possibility for Kurdish migrant workers when I began my fieldwork. The peace process between the Turkish state and the PKK began in January 2013 with the mutual aim of quelling the warfare that has raged between the two parties for three decades (for a historical background and critical reading of the peace negotiations between the state and the PKK, see Ercan 2013). However, political developments in the Middle East (such as the rise of the ISIS), changing dynamics of the electoral politics and increasing tension between the Turkish government and the Kurdish movement in Turkey and

Northern Syria brought the process to an end in July 2015.¹⁰ My ethnographic fieldwork—conducted from October 2013 to January 2016—thus took place in the interstices of a fragile peace and war. With the outbreak of war in July 2015, and the upswing of violence against the Kurds in Turkey’s western cities, I was able to document the effects of the resurgence of war in the everyday lives of Kurdish migrant workers. I recorded episodes of communal violence and the ways they have been understood, experienced, and contested. This helped me understand how the state was retooling ethnic politics and antagonisms in the resurgence of war, and how this process shaped migrant workers’ lives.

During my research, the multiple roles my interlocutors played in different settings and changing historical contexts, as well as the ways they deal with contradictions began to expand my imagination of ethnic, economic, and political subjects. As they were refiguring their political, social, religious, and economic identifications in the Istanbul milieu, I came to see Kurdish migrant workers as divided, fragmented, and multiple subjects at once. They were neither merely political subjects of ethnic conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish political movement nor simply economic subjects of neoliberal markets. They were not only victims of political violence and market forces, nor political agents of struggle, or breadwinner masculine working classes. They occupied these multiple, ambivalent, and contradictory subject positions at the same time and in different degrees. Taking a cartographic approach (rather than archeological) to the ethnographic subjects and their becomings, João Biehl and Peter Locke argue that the human subject is always an “unstable assemblage of organic, social and structural forces and lines of flight, at once shaping and shaped by its milieus” (2017:8). They call for a renewed ethnographic sensorium attuned to the unfinishedness of our human-world

¹⁰ Anthropologist Serra Hakyemez (2017) argues that notwithstanding the record high popular support and political legitimacy, the absence of legislative action delineating a roadmap for peace rendered Kurds more vulnerable to a possible breakdown in negotiations while augmenting the bargaining power of the AKP.

entanglements and an anthropology of becoming that “recognizes how power and knowledge form bodies, identities, and meanings, and how inequalities disfigure living, while refusing to reduce people to their workings” (5).

Seen from this perspective, this dissertation charts the ways Kurdish migrant workers made use of community self defense against political violence and ethnic hatred; harnessed relationality, and deployed kinship ties in the labor markets as strategies for survival. In mapping empirical dilemmas people sense and encounter, I examine the constitution of a new urban space and the ways in which Kurdish migrant workers became key players of this space and labor markets. My ethnographic analysis transcends Marxist positions on misrecognition and Foucauldian positions on subject formation to ethnographically explore the ways the different arts of government (of the sovereign state, economic markets and agents, Islamic orders and political parties) overlap and clash and how people react to them through the use of limited economic and political resources (of community self-defense, kinship relations and other modalities of relatedness, relational strategies for survival, individual and collective escapes, electoral and revolutionary politics).

Outline

The dissertation is composed of four main chapters. It is structured around political violence and the making of urban space, Kurdish migrant labor and kinship, substance abuse and religious containment, ethnic politics and the rise of political Islam in contemporary Turkey. It shows how a marginalized population that is subjected to state violence, the containment and regulation of

urban space and religious orders, and precarious working conditions can nonetheless invent new languages, imaginings, and politics in order to expand their life chances and possibilities for self-determination (not being governed too-much). Each chapter combines ethnographic complexity and theoretical reflection and addresses an unflattened social reality.

My first chapter, “In Violence and Self-Defense: The Ethics and Politics of a Kurdish Presence in Migrant Istanbul,” ethnographically documents personal and communal stories of Kurdish migrant settlement in inner city Istanbul. In the context of the resurgence of war between the Turkish state and the PKK, Kurdish migrant workers often remember and tell stories of violence and self-defense as they claim a dignified existence and seek to enter the social and economic life of a booming but divided city. There is a strong tradition of critical work in anthropology and social sciences on the state monopoly of violence (Weber [1919] 1994) and how state violence is legitimized (Bourdieu 1999; Daniel 1996; Coronil and Skurski 2006; Greenhouse 2002, 2008; Das and Poole 2004, Taussig 1987, 1992; Aretxaga 2005; Nagengast 1994). But the politically and ethically fraught question of self-defense has been left to moralists, politicians, and state discourses. In the intersection between the ethical and the political lays the fundamental question of legitimate use of violence. Recent anthropological work focuses on ethical claims about the use of violence by states and transnational institutions in “troubled waters” at the confluence of ethics and politics (Fassin 2015). By way of contrast, this chapter explores how Kurdish working class men in Istanbul imagine, narrate, and conceptualize a justness of violence used in self-defense.

Urban space is neither a neutral place for the newcomers, nor is it the natural product of a coming-together of diverse ethnic and religious groups. Rather, it is shaped through various encounters, conflicts, and negotiations between diverse groups of migrants, locals, and refugees.

The history of violence in inner city Istanbul is counterbalanced by the history of self-defense by Kurdish migrants who attempt to share urban space and enter the labor market. This confrontation lays the foundation for migrant settlement and constitutes a significant dimension of community making for Kurdish migrants in Istanbul. These encounters and conflicts are key to the formation of collective urban identities and differences. The narratives of self-defense and the Kurdish struggle to claim urban space link the unfinished histories of migrant settlement to the political agency of migrant workers and the making of an urban Kurdish community.

In my second chapter, “Family Labor, Relatedness, and Living ‘As If,’” I explore the patterns of employment and upward mobility, struggles for subsistence and dignity, and the modalities of social relations among Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul’s service economy. Drawing on my fieldwork in the neighborhood markets and participation in laboring practices for two years, I argue that it was first and foremost through mobilizing kinship relations (family labor) into work relations that Kurdish migrants responded to the huge displacement wave of 1990s, political and economic inequalities between the Kurdish region and Turkey, and the economic restructuring of the country. Other than kinship relations, ties with people from the same home region, belonging to Sufi orders, neighborliness, and ethnic/linguistic bonds are the main modalities through which daily wage workers, stallholders, and retailers related to each other in the market. These relations occupy a crucial, yet ambivalent and contradictory place in the economic and affective wellbeing of Kurdish migrant workers, as well as in the patterns of social mobility, employment opportunities, and economic exploitation.

In the working-class districts of Istanbul, as in Julia Elyachar’s description of workshop life in Cairo, it is clear that “neither ‘the gift’ nor ‘the market’ is an adequate concept with which to think about what is at stake” (2005:140). Value, in Istanbul’s neighborhood markets, lies not

only in “extending the self through ties of interdependence” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1987:197), but also in the mastery of mobilizing different modalities of relatedness for work (Elyachar 2005) and the ability to handle the immanent tensions and contradictions of these bonds as epitomized in the ambiguous politics of “as if.” Control over the labor force is not only a market mechanism but also a question of survival for the Kurdish migrant community of Istanbul. However, in a resource-poor context in which fragile and temporary work patterns, health problems, and an enduring economic indebtedness are significant aspects of everyday life, the familial, communal, and religious forms of control on laboring subjects both intensify the feelings of debt and obligation, and frequently make these relations unbearable.

In the third chapter, “Healing Through Repentance: Sufi Orders, Drugs and Kurdish Migrant Workers,” I explore the local dynamics of the Turkish state’s recent war on drugs and the ways it impacted the drug users among Kurdish migrants. When Turkey was heavily invested in the process of European Union ascension, statistical data concerning drug use, drug-related crimes and associated incarceration, as well as public health impacts of drug consumption began to emerge. State reports produced between 2006 and 2014 indicate an increasing rate of drug addiction and consumption, especially among the urban poor and the youth. As media headlines pointed to increasing consumption of synthetic marijuana, (especially *bonzai*) after 2013, much of the charity work carried out by Islamic orders were linked to the “war on drugs.” Some of these orders have started to operate as spiritual treatment centers for marginalized and working-class drug users.

In this chapter I ethnographically document stories of depression, drug use, and spiritual recovery among the Kurdish migrant workers of Istanbul. Through the analysis of these narratives and participant observation at the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order, I focus

on the prevalence, historical roots, and healing practices of Islamic orders, with an eye to the ways people craft new forms of religious and political subjectivities in the context of dispossession, political violence, and substance abuse. Specifically, I explore the politics involved in the formation of these “para-infrastructures” (Biehl 2013) and the therapeutic roles they assume to fill a gap in state’s care for drug users. Departing from the anthropologists of Islamic movements and Sufi orders, who turn the study of Islam into a critique of Western liberal secularism and its notions of agency, my work situates healing practices, moral economies, and ethical formations in Islamic orders of Turkey in a larger framework of political economy and history.

In the fourth chapter, “Islamist Movements and Ethnic Politics,” I discuss the place of ethnic politics in the rise of Islamist movements by focusing on political Islam and Kurds. The political success of Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa is a matter of scholarly debate; many scholars have emphasized socioeconomic, ethical, and political aspects of Islamist politics and mobilization in their accounts. Scholars have provided various answers to the widely debated question, emphasizing the religious nature of the discourses of the Islamist movements, their ideological hegemony, organizational capacity, the provision of social services, reputation, and structural factors. However, a key aspect of Islamist movements has been significantly underexplored in the current literature: Islamists’ promise to resolve ethnic questions, which remain unresolved in secularist nation-states. My own work attends to this lacuna, analyzing the ways in which the governing Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP) of Turkey has approached the Kurdish ethnic question, and demonstrating how the party’s national hegemony has depended on the extent to which it has been able to address that question.

I also explore the discourse and politics of “national unity” in Turkey vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue after the coup attempt of July 15, 2016. Rather than considering July 15 as a turning point, I trace the origins of the recent Turkish secular nationalist and political Islamist reconciliation to a shared and more-entrenched anti-Kurdish agenda. The Turkish state’s anti-Kurdish agenda includes more than bias in the face of ethnic and linguistic differences, it is a question of political sovereignty and colonial resource and labor extraction. That is why Turkish nation-state is foundationally opposed to any Kurdish claim to autonomy and self-determination inside its borders or elsewhere in the larger Middle East. I argue that the post-July 15 politics of “national unity” is the continuation of a more complicated response of the Turkish political establishment towards the electoral success of the HDP in the June 2015 elections, Kurdish political gains in Syria (in alliance with the United States and Russia), and the resurgence of war with the PKK in Turkey. Drawing upon my participant observation in “democracy meetings” as well as my ethnographic presence among metropolitan Kurds of Istanbul, I explore how Kurds cultivate a presence within the changing political field and what the limits of this presence are.

The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the dynamics of life and labor for Kurdish migrant workers under the rising authoritarianism in contemporary Turkey. Among other factors like the absence of a legal basis for the fragile peace process (Hakyemez 2017) and the lack of trust between the Turkish state and the PKK, the war in Rojava and change of the political balance by the Kurdish swing votes in the June 2015 general elections led to the revitalization of a Turkish-Islamic synthesis (reconciliation of the Turkish nationalism and political Islam) and the resurgence of the war with the PKK. However, the use of excessive political violence against the politically organized Kurdish population is not a sustainable position for the Turkish state within the constantly changing political field of the Middle East.

Chapter 1

IN VIOLENCE AND SELF-DEFENSE: THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF A KURDISH PRESENCE IN MIGRANT ISTANBUL

It is Monday evening, early September 2015. We are drinking tea and talking about current events in a basement Kurdish coffeehouse in inner city Istanbul where Kurdish workers meet, eat, and drink, exchange information, talk about politics, wait for jobs, pursue employment opportunities, relax, and play cards. Ahmet is a young single migrant worker who came to Istanbul from the town of Iğdır, on Turkey's eastern border with Armenia, looking for temporary work. He has returned from work and is telling me about his elder brothers' court hearings. He confides to me that he recently made connections in order to bribe the judge, yet the amount of money needed is more than a young migrant worker can save. His two elder brothers are on trial for killing a man who ran away from their hometown with their sister. They found their sister and her lover in Eskişehir, a city in western Anatolia. "That son of a bitch ran away with our sister. And all my brothers are rotting in prison because of him." He lights another cigarette. Two young workers, both of whom are his friends, come to our table. Ahmet does not want to continue the conversation about the appeal and the potential bribe.

Ahmet's need for money is urgent and crucial for two reasons. He has to look after the families of his imprisoned brothers in the village by sending them remittances. He has also been taking on extra daily jobs to save up money for a potential bribe that may reduce the sentence for his brothers. Like many Kurdish workers, Ahmet wants to be a middleman serving the temporary migrants who come from his villages (and the surrounding villages) and the companies (organization and construction companies as well as subcontracting firms) who need daily workers. In this way, he would secure his own daily employment and would get extra money for the laborers he brings to work. When his connections in the companies do not need workers for

brief periods, his kin and villagers find him daily jobs as these relations are formed on a reciprocal basis. Moreover, most of them recognize Ahmet's obligation to feed two families and try to help him as much as possible.

At the next table there is a heated discussion about whether young workers' tattoos create an obstacle to fulfilling their Islamic duties. Immediately after coming to the coffeehouse, Azad proudly showed off his new tattoos to get some attention from his younger friends. Azad is Ahmet's best friend and a fellow villager, another young migrant worker from Iğdır in his mid-twenties. Ramazan, an older coffeehouse patron, immediately begins criticizing the young Kurdish workers for conforming to urban life too easily and assimilating into an immoral urban culture. To no avail, Azad and several other young workers try to explain that this is not the case. Ramazan is a middle-aged Kurdish migrant worker from Bitlis, a city in the southeastern part of the country. He came to Istanbul with his family after the evacuation of their villages during the notorious 1990s when the Turkish army burned numerous communities in a counter-insurgency against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and forced millions of rural Kurds to leave their homes and lives. He is in his late thirties now. Working in daily jobs for many long years, he has ended up with a more stable position in the neighborhood vegetable markets of Istanbul.

"This is against Islam, you can't have the *ghusl abdest* (general ablution) with these stupid things" says Ramazan. *Ghusl* is the ritual cleansing of the whole body and it is obligatory before performing the daily prayers and becomes necessary as a purification following sexual activity, menstruation, and childbirth. The act of putting oneself in a state of purity through ablution is one of the five acts that make up the basic rituals of Islam. Although his friends and relatives often remark that Ramazan used to take drugs and spend time with prostitutes when he was younger, nowadays he conforms to the rules of his pious community and tries to be a model

for the young Kurdish workers with whom he shares the same social spaces. “Brother, hair grows on tattoo, which means that water will touch all my skin during ablution,” replies Azad showing his tattoo. Although none of us has a clear idea about the topic or really understands his reply, Azad’s detailed answer is sufficient to end, or most probably postpone, further discussion.

The air is thick with smoke. The television is broadcasting news about the ongoing war between the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the Turkish state, and migrant workers start to talk about these most recent political developments. Kurdish coffeehouses function as communicative hubs for “phatic labor” (Elyachar 2010) connecting bodies, jobs, resources, and news among the Kurdish community. Served together with small cups of tea are the sights and sounds from round the clock broadcasting IMC TV and other Kurdish channels. Workers supplement this information with constantly updated news and images from Facebook and social media. The circulation of workers’ bodies between Kurdish towns and western Turkish metropolises facilitates the exchange of the most recent news from the Kurdish region and increases the significance of coffeehouses in the making of Kurdish community.

With this chapter I ethnographically document personal and communal stories of Kurdish migrant settlement in inner city Istanbul. In the context of the resurgence of the war between the Turkish state and the PKK, Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul remember and speak of violence used in self-defense as a means to enter the social and economic scene of the city, and thus as an important part of their struggle for subsistence and dignity. Violence as self-defense, I argue, is conceived as a form of care through which Kurdish community is built in Istanbul. My interlocutors claim that in inner city Istanbul, practices of self-defense give Kurdish migrant workers the opportunity to construct a dignified presence in the urban space. The Kurdish

migrant workers' defense of their community and selves generates a balance of forces between Kurds and nationalist Turks—no matter how precarious that balance might be.

After two years of peace negotiations between the Turkish state and the PKK, my interlocutors are anxious about the resurgence of a war that lasted for three decades and resulted in the deaths of more than fifty thousand people. “It is enough,” one of the elder workers in the coffeehouse says; the others nod silently. Some young workers at another table are swearing and cursing, in both Kurdish and Turkish, those responsible for the resurgence of conflict. They are nervous about the lives of their kin, friends, and beloved ones in their hometowns; about their own lives and jobs in the western metropolises; and about their hopes for the future. Kurdish migrant workers constitute one of the groups most vulnerable to the collective violence of nationalist mobs in Turkey. In western Turkey, after the resurgence of war in July 2015, there were numerous cases of mob attacks against Kurdish workers.¹¹ Kurdish businesses and homes were burnt or attacked in Kırşehir, Beypazarı and Konya in central Anatolia. There were outbreaks of violence and acts of intimidation in Istanbul, Izmir, and Bursa. A Kurdish worker in Muğla was beaten and forced to kiss the statue of Mustafa Kemal (founding figure of the Turkish Republic).¹² Mobs in various cities attacked buses traveling to the country's Kurdish-majority southeast and east. Such mobs have been historically supported by the Turkish state in the mobilization of violence against religious and ethnic minorities. All this is ever present in my

¹¹ For a detailed account, see Scholars for Truth, Justice and Peace (2015) “Report On Recent Incidents Of Violence Against HDP And Kurdish Citizens In Turkey.” <https://barisistiyoruz.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/report/> (Last access on November 23, 2015).

¹² This was, to put it mildly, an act of symbolic violence given the history of Turkey. See “Kurdish man forced to kiss Atatürk statue in southwest Turkey.” *Hürriyet Daily News*. September 8, 2015. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/kurdish-man-forced-to-kiss-ataturk-statue-in-southwest-turkey.aspx?PageID=238&NID=88198&NewsCatID=341> (Last access on October 7, 2015).

interlocutors' minds: Members of the older generation, in particular, have memories of mob violence etched into their bodies and nerves.

As the television shows scenes of armed conflict in Kurdish towns back home, we hear the shouts of a crowd approaching the neighborhood. Kurdish workers in the coffeehouse start running to the main street. I follow them. Hundreds of men are in a crowd moving towards the neighborhood park, shouting slogans like "Martyrs never die, this country is indivisible." They wave Turkish flags and shout the Islamist phrase: "*Allahu akbar*" (God is the greatest), over and over again. The crowd consists of men between the ages of 15 and 40. A police scorpion (a heavily armed police vehicle) and two police cars accompany them.

The crowd stops at the park and begins singing the national anthem: "Fear not! For the crimson flag that proudly ripples in this glorious twilight, shall not fade, before the last fiery hearth that is ablaze within my nation is extinguished." The park is rectangular and located in the center of the neighborhood. A wall separates one side of the park from the police station. The municipality building sits on another side of the square. Across the park from this wall is a narrow street that empties onto a major thoroughfare. Down that thoroughfare marches the crowd. Within minutes, hundreds of Kurdish migrant workers appear on the sidewalk on the other side of the park to watch the demonstration. The scene taking shape is unusual. On one side of the street hundreds of protestors with the red-and-white Turkish flags shout nationalist and Islamist slogans and call for revenge against the PKK; on the other side of the street hundreds of Kurdish workers watch with rapt attention. I stand together with them.

Many of the Kurdish workers' arms and legs are trembling out of anger and fear. They swear at the crowd in Kurdish. Still, they make nonstop jokes, trying to calm each other down. I try to make out faces in the crowd of protestors and ask my interlocutors if they recognize any

locals among the crowd. Some locals indeed join the crowd during the national anthem or applaud them during the march. But no one else, the workers tell me, is from the neighborhood. The protestors stay in the neighborhood for 20 minutes and then move on to other neighborhoods. Clearly, the main purpose of the demonstrations is to protest the PKK's recent attack in Dağlıca, during which 16 Turkish soldiers were killed. I later found out that this group had staged the same demonstration in almost every neighborhood in the Kağıthane district—a project that took a full working day of 8 hours to complete. This was no spontaneous gathering, my interlocutors later told me. These protests turned out to be a part of a systematic planned response to the pro-Kurdish left-wing political party HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) and the Kurds.

The war between the Turkish state and the PKK brought a sudden and brutal passage to urban life beginning in 1984 for millions of rural Kurds. As part of a policy of counterinsurgency throughout the 1990s, the Turkish state evacuated approximately 4,000 Kurdish villages and hamlets, displacing and dispossessing millions of rural Kurds (Jongerden 2007). As state officials of the era explained, the aim was to “drain the swamp” (*bataklıği kurutmak*) to reduce Kurdish support for the PKK. Istanbul already hosted a significant population of Kurdish people who had come to the city seeking economic opportunities between the 1950s and 1980s. In the 1990s Istanbul became one of the main destinations for those displaced by war. Forced migrants of the 1990s constitute a significant part of the Kurdish population in western metropolises of Turkey like Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Adana, Mersin, and Bursa. Today, Kurds constitute 17 percent of Istanbul's population, which corresponds to 3 million Kurds. This number makes Istanbul “the world's biggest Kurdish city,” as the saying goes among the Kurds of Istanbul.

I conducted ethnographic research with male Kurdish migrant workers in Çeliktepe, an old working class neighborhood in Istanbul, between October 2013 and January 2016. My interlocutors included those who had fled political violence in the Kurdish region during the conflict-ridden 1990s; and those who came to Istanbul to seek temporary work in the 2000s. My fieldwork took place in a masculine world among the daily wage laborers working in the construction sector, neighborhood vegetable and fruit markets, and subcontracting companies specializing in building platforms for daily events, university graduations, and concerts. I had access to my interlocutors through male workplaces, coffeehouses, and Islamic orders.¹³ Located in an inner-city district of Istanbul, Çeliktepe sits in a valley extending inland from Istanbul's hilltop business districts and skyscrapers. It hosts urban poor, working classes of diverse ethnic origins, and displaced Kurdish communities of different political orientations as well as small factories, textile workshops, and bazaars. It is in this neighborhood where the scene I opened with, and return to now, takes place.

As the crowd leaves the neighborhood, some of the young Kurdish workers express their anger with law enforcement. Ramazan and the other older workers remember the violent 1990s and anti-Kurdish demonstrations and mob attacks of the period. They try to calm Ahmet, Azad, and the other young workers. "The cops would have attacked fully armed if it were Kurds who were marching," says Ahmet. The others silently assent. The protection of the crowds by the police and the fact that they let the crowds take to the streets without legal permission were clear signs for my interlocutors of the political side taken by law enforcement. Confirming their impression, journalists reported that law enforcement officials did nothing to prevent outbreaks

¹³ With a few exceptions of female workers in the neighborhood markets, all the manual workers in my field sites were men. Islamic orders have separate meeting places for men and women, and I only had access to the former. Coffeehouses in the working-class neighborhoods are also masculine places as opposed to the new and modern cafes in the middle class parts of the city.

during multiple acts of mob violence against Kurds that followed around the country that week.¹⁴ The state, in acting to protect mobs and in its failure to act on behalf of those attacked, is an important source of inspiration for the people in the crowds and their perception of the legality – as well as the morality - of their actions.¹⁵ The very existence of police protection for the crowd undoubtedly reinforces the sense that collective violence (physical or symbolic) is a moral act that aims to preserve and reproduce “social order” as opposed to “public order,” a distinction I borrow from criminologist Richard Erickson (1982:197–98) and anthropologist Didier Fassin (2013a:71).

As the crowd disperses, rage, fear, and hatred linger on the faces of the Kurdish migrant workers. Azad asks a waiter in a Kurdish restaurant on the main street to give him a knife “so I can kill four or five of these assholes, I don’t care what happens to me later.” The others laugh. Shouted slogans wash over us, more faintly now, from the next neighborhood. The slogans still call for revenge--revenge with blood: “We don’t want a [military] operation, we want a massacre,” interspersed with calls of “*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar*.” The crowd in Çeliktepe did not take revenge with blood, but other mobs did: They attacked Kurds, HDP buildings, and Kurdish businesses in different parts of Istanbul and other cities in western Turkey. The political rise of Sunni Turkish nationalism in Turkey – a reconciliation of secular nationalism with political Islam in a political oxymoron with brutal results – finds immediate call and response in the acts of these state supported mobs.

On 7 and 8 September 2015, the days of the demonstrations with which I opened this chapter, collective violence against the Kurds and the HDP was everywhere in Turkey. The

¹⁴ Scholars for Truth, Justice and Peace (2015) “Report On Recent Incidents Of Violence Against HDP And Kurdish Citizens In Turkey.”

¹⁵ “Nothing so inspires group violence against outsiders or perceived transgressors as the sense that the group is carrying out a legal, lawmaking, or law-preserving mission” (Weisberg 1992:185).

mood in Çeliktepe, like elsewhere in the country, was tense. Yet despite the co-existence of Kurds and Turks of multiple and opposing political orientations in the neighborhood, Kurds were *not* subject to physical attacks in Çeliktepe during this period. Migrant workers of different ages among my interlocutors had an explanation: They were proud of the power of the Kurdish community, which they said had been acquired through intense fighting and defense of the community over the course of many years. This theme of “defense of the community” permeated social gatherings of workers, coffeehouse conversations, and workplace discussions. What limited the crowd’s actions in their neighborhood, according to my interlocutors, was the fact that this Kurdish migrant community was in a position to defend itself and even to counterattack in the aftermath of mob attacks – and that the outsiders knew it.

A Contingent Frame: “Just Violence” at the Conjunction of Ethics and Politics

Ongoing cycles of violence, displacement, and community self-defense in shifting locations from Kurdish villages to urban Istanbul, from the 1990s to the 2010s, are constitutive of Kurdish political community as a collective force and a key part of working class in Turkey. In this constitution of Kurdish community and political subjectivities, key iconic figures emerge as constitutive figures. In the specific context of the resurgence of war and attacks against the Kurdish communities in western Turkey in the 2010s, stories about these figures circulated with increased intensity and tempo. Through these narratives, younger Kurdish workers learned about the violent history of the 1990s, the subsequent displacement and settlement of migrants in Istanbul, and about the importance of self-defense and care for each other. These narratives of violence are crucial in the very constitution of Kurdish community in Istanbul. Narratives and

ambivalent uses of self-defense are key to the ethical formation of Kurdish subjectivities, self-assertion, and the making of a political and moral community. Through these narratives, Kurdish migrant workers are writing their own histories of settlement into Istanbul as well as a genealogy of a diverse urban space. I read these narratives as an attempt by “the peoples of the periphery [to] return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis” (Bhabha 1990:6).

Violence is a constitutive element of modern states and societies; it is simultaneously destructive and productive of social relations (Clastres 2010; Daniel 1996; Das 2007; Fanon 1965; Han 2012). Violence participates in its own self-definition. State violence is accompanied by the epistemic production of its legitimacy through the interplay of illusion and truth, of fiction and reality. The constitutive violence of the state is inscribed into the very fabric of everyday life not only through structural and repressive means but also through the epistemic and violent production of the other (enemies, criminals, terrorists) (Taussig 1986; Aretxaga 2005). Any categorical rejection of self-defense or counter-violence, in turn, reproduces state violence through the negation of political subjectivities that the state views as subversive to its colonial order of things (Günay 2013).

There is a strong tradition of critical work in anthropology and sociology addressing the state monopoly of violence (Weber [1919] 1994) and how state violence is legitimated (Nagengast 1994; Bourdieu 1999; Das and Poole 2004; Taussig 1986; Aretxaga 2005). But the politically and ethically fraught question of self-defense has been left to moralists, politicians, and state discourses. In a lecture on ethics, Fassin (2015) conceptualizes the intertwining of ethics and politics as a defining issue for the contemporary world. In this intersection, Fassin argues, lies a fundamental question regarding the legitimate use of violence and related ethical

claims made by states and transnational institutions in “the troubled waters where ethics and politics meet” (Fassin 2015:207).

My interlocutors’ experiences and narrations of violence and self-defense in Istanbul, however, raise other issues. They raise an urgent issue for critical inquiry and politics alike in the ways in which the justness of violence is imagined, enacted, and narrated in self-defense against state violence – and in the kinds of social relations generated in response. Specifically, my interlocutors’ experiences of violence and self-defense has led me to examine previously ignored or unknown ways in which narratives of violence are told, retold, and circulated as an integral part of ethical self-formation. How does violence become justified in people’s lives? Is it ever justified? How are the contradictions regarding the use of violence resolved? If legal violence can be illegitimate, can illegal violence be legitimate? And, as anthropologists and social scientists, how can we talk about all this in ethnographic work and theoretical inquiry?

Violence is intrinsic to the processes through which rural Kurds are unmade as peasants, uprooted from their villages to Istanbul in the 1990s, and transformed into urban migrant workers. For my interlocutors, the 1990s meant burnt villages and homes, lost lives, lost friends and relatives, humiliation, lawlessness, and injustice. The state officials saw that most of the Kurdish villages did not accept the village guard system.¹⁶ Most villagers refused to fight against the PKK and the state treated them as potential terrorists. My interlocutors vividly remember killings by Turkish army troops dressed in PKK uniforms as a strategy of dirty war. They still feel the humiliation of seeing the respected elders of their villages stripped of their clothes in

¹⁶ The Turkish state initiated the village guard system in 1985 to recruit a pro-government Kurdish militia in its fight against the PKK. The law establishing this militia authorized the provinces’ governors to recruit “temporary” (paid) and “voluntary” (unpaid) village guards in provinces determined by the Council of Ministers (Belge 2016). The state recruited village guards locally from the rural Kurdish population and provided them salaries, weapons, and uniforms in order to assist security forces in their duties, to gather local information about guerilla activities, and to mark the local population as loyal or dissident.

front of everyone male and female. They still see, hear, and smell the slaughter of their livestock herds, the public display of murdered guerillas' bodies, and the evacuation of their villages. Violence against Kurds took diverse forms in different locales in the 1990s. But it had no spatial bounds. Local hatred, mob attacks, and police violence in Istanbul (and other western metropolises) against the Kurds extended the geography of war far beyond the original counterinsurgency in the eastern villages where Kurds mainly lived.

Beginning in January 2013, a peace process between the PKK and the Turkish state put an end to the war that had lasted for three decades and resulted in the deaths of more than fifty thousand people. During the peace process, Kurdish migrant workers began to see the socio-political situation of Kurds in the city as increasingly secure. They explained the relative peace of living in Istanbul over the course of the last decade – and the peace process itself – as a result of the struggle waged by Kurds in the city and the countryside. In their narratives, political struggles waged by the PKK and the rising urban Kurdish population had enabled Kurds to protect their neighborhoods, lives, jobs, and businesses against nationalist attacks, mostly in violent fashion. They imagine their violence as the most significant way to claim a space in the city, as an older Kurdish migrant reminded others in the coffeehouse on that Monday evening: “During the 1990s, we could not enter the coffeehouses. They were not selling tea to our elderly folks or us because we were Kurds. Now some impertinent among us say that ‘nobody can touch me.’ If we did not fight here, if the guerillas did not struggle, there would be no place for Kurds to sit in this city.”

Self-defense, drawing on my interlocutors' understandings, is the capacity of a community (or a person) to mobilize violence and protection against those whose violence is directed against the community's (or person's) very existence. Self-defense is a claim to justice

and equality for those who are under the threat of imminent violence, be it state or mob violence.¹⁷ It is an ethical as well as a practical response to a regime of impunity in which those who have the authority to punish the perpetrators of violence stand on the same side as the perpetrators. Keeping loved ones safe and caring for other members of one's own community are profound ethical imperatives that are repeatedly raised in violent encounters of everyday life for Kurdish migrants. The justness of violence enacted in self-defense and narrated in stories of self-defense appears as the ethical substance for self-making, self-assertion, and the practices of care for other members of a community that was itself formed as a result of state violence, displacement, and dispossession. Moral indignation against historical injustices and the impunity effect, which allows public, even spectacular violence to go unpunished (Chatterjee 2017), as well as the agency ascribed through the narratives of self-defense are central to the making of Kurdish community in Istanbul. For the Kurdish workers of Istanbul, care for others is an ethically prior practice that leads to formation of a moral and political community, though not one that is free from uncertainties and contradictions.

But the justification of violence in such situations is not where I stop asking questions. Violence is slippery. The framing of violence as just is contingent, not fixed. Violence almost always sees itself as self-defensive. This is why, in this chapter, I aim to go beyond the question of legitimacy (which helps form the legal category of self-defense) to take into account the intricate relations between narratives and practices of self-defense, ethical self-formation, and the temporal mechanisms of moral justification as they open toward the future. In this regard, violence is backward looking because it draws on memory of the past and at the same time, it is constitutive of future political subjectivities.

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt refers to the temporal character of the mechanism of justification: in the use of violence in self-defense danger is present and clear, "the end justifying the means is immediate" (Arendt 1972:151).

Violent acts for the defense of the community on the part of Kurdish migrant workers have proven to be practically productive in masculine street culture over time. But they can easily turn into delinquent and interpersonal violence. When self-defense loses its politically justified claims in the absence of an imminent threat, moral resentment against other groups or individuals may give rise to violence against them under the name of protecting the community.¹⁸ For example, Ahmet, his family and most of his friends considered the murder committed by his brothers as a defense of group integrity and morals. Most of the murders of women committed in the name of honor during my fieldwork were also seen as acts of maintaining group integrity and morals “against an immoral urban culture.” This is an echo of the prevalent Islamist discourses in the neighborhood that circulate through the powerful religious orders and also an important way for pious Kurds to think of ethnic difference and group boundaries.¹⁹

¹⁸ Fassin distinguishes resentment and *ressentiment*: “The resentful man is not directly or indirectly exposed to oppression and domination, but he expresses discontent about a state of affairs that does not satisfy him. *Ressentiment* results from a historical alienation: something did happen, which had tragic consequences in the past and often causes continuing hardship in the present” (2013b:260). For him, resentment as an ideological alienation and *ressentiment* as a historical alienation characterize two ideal-types of moral sentiments and modes of political subjectivation. Whereas Fassin refers to asymmetrical confrontations of the man of *ressentiment* and the resentful man as moments of truth for the society, in this chapter I am interested in the porous and fluid boundaries between the two. Following the lines Fassin draws between resentment and *ressentiment*, I ask: How can one become a subject of resentment and *ressentiment* at the same time? How can one’s historical alienation as a result of an experience of injury become the moral ground of an ideological alienation?

¹⁹ During my fieldwork, I attended the meetings and prayers of a prominent Islamic order (*tariqa*) in Istanbul on a regular basis. In most of these gatherings, the religious teachers emphasized the moral superiority of the universalism of Islamic solidarity and Muslim brotherhood over sectarianism and ethnic nationalism. Yet interestingly, Kurdish members regard themselves as more religious than Turks. Pious Kurds articulated the ethnic difference in terms of their devoutness and moral conformity of Kurdish communal life to Islamic teachings. Although most of them have been living in the city for decades, they see Turks as more urban and thus immoral. Secular and Westernized modes of urban life, heavily criticized by the religious teachers, have been associated with the Turkish culture in the Kurdish imaginary. Among the Islamist and pious Kurds, the Kurdish political movement is frequently criticized for its alliances to seculars, leftists, feminists, and LGBTQ communities. This mode of critique, I argue, is widespread also among the Kurds who are not part of the Islamist orders and communities and thus is influential in shaping the moral community in inner city Istanbul.

Studies of masculinity and violence show that a strong relation between the uses and narratives of violence and constructions of masculinities in different places (Herzfeld 1985; Gilsenan 1996; Connell 1995). In his ethnographic work on structural violence and social exclusion of Puerto Ricans in American inner city apartheid, Philippe Bourgois (1995) points to street culture as a creative response to the exclusion of class segregation and racial isolation. Streets, for him, create alternative forums for human dignity. For Bourgois, “youthful street culture may offer an alternative space for resisting exploitation and for subverting the ideological insults and hierarchies of mainstream society,” however the same streets are the sites “where drugs are purveyed, boys kill one another, infants are battered, and young women are gang-raped” (Bourgois 1996:250). Similarly, in his seminal study of working class boys’ resistance to school and education, Paul Willis (1977) points to the ways through which youth culture of resistance contradictorily buttresses society’s status quo. There, too, an oppositional and violent street culture “guarantees exclusion by requiring its participants to be semiliterate, expressively aggressive, unexploitable, and enmeshed in substance abuse and violence” (Bourgois 1996:250–51). My ethnographic research among Kurdish migrant workers in inner city Istanbul differs from Bourgois’ work in East Harlem in two significant ways. First, in Istanbul, it is not only the violent street culture but also the political resistance of the Kurdish movement that provides alternative and conflicting forums and discourses enabling human dignity. It is the constant oscillation between these different imaginations of a dignified presence that gives rise to contradictory Kurdish practices and narratives of self-defense.²⁰ Second, oppositional and violent

²⁰ “Moral concepts do not have sharp boundaries,” says Veena Das (2015:114) in her lecture on ethics. For Das, the effort to fix the boundaries may fail us when moral issues are at stake. In this respect, the fluid and even contradictory character of my ethnographic description of self-defense points to the blurred edges of the concept. For a philosophical inquiry on the vagueness of concepts and the blurred boundaries of moral concepts, see Sainsbury 2002.

street culture does not necessarily lead to further exclusion and marginalization; rather, it generates contradictory and ambivalent consequences for the Kurdish workers of Istanbul.

Kurdish migrant workers use violence in different registers relating to the defense of the political and moral community, and the ways they practice and narrate violence has a resilient impact on the making of their selves, social relations, and community. While there are overlaps between the formation of moral and political communities, the frictions, conflicts, and contradictions are also apparent and forceful in these troubled waters. I use the concept of self-defense instead of resistance to capture these contradictions and uncertainties in the ways people use and narrate violence. I vividly remember the shock of seeing one of my key interlocutors with his shirt full of blood after “punishing” a flirtatious gay man. He was confident that he “taught that faggot his lesson.” He is a young laborer who is proud of the political force of the Kurdish community acquired through defense of the community against state violence and racist mobs. In response to my criticisms, he said “I don’t want *that faggot* to become a bad example for the young members of my community, we have to protect them.” During my fieldwork I encountered cases in which some Kurdish migrant workers attacked homosexuals and drug users when they felt that the morals of the Kurdish communities were threatened by their very existence. In contrast to the expectations of Jean Paul Sartre ([1963] 1968) in his preface to Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, the counter-violence of the colonized does not necessarily lead into the creation of free subjects.

Rather, following Michel Foucault we need to scrutinize the ethical construction of the self through practices, symbolic discourses, and power relations. In Foucault’s historical problematization of ancient Greek ethics, care of the self is ethically prior to the formation of social relations, and the complex relations with others develops through the practices of self care.

Why does care for community become the ground of the construction of the Kurdish self and community in migrant Istanbul? Freedom, for Foucault, “is the ontological condition of ethics” ([1983] 2003:280). While he is suspicious of liberation due to its association with the idea of human nature, he acknowledges liberation as a political and historical condition for a practice of freedom under circumstances in which practices of freedom do not exist or are extremely constrained and limited. Nevertheless, Foucault’s account leaves a significant question unexplored: Under what conditions does the struggle for the very existence of a community become the ground of the self-formation of ethical subjects?

In a recent essay, Nazan Üstündağ discusses the ways self-defense in Rojava (Western Kurdistan - Northern Syria) becomes the medium for unmaking the nation state and creating revolutionary subjects. Self-defense (originally a question of protecting oneself from physical, symbolic, and cultural violence) is imagined and described as an antidote to the nation-state in Rojava Revolution. She argues that the institutional relation between the academies, communes, peoples’ assemblies and the canton governments of the revolution is “conceived not in terms of representation but in terms of self-defense” (2016:203). She defines a particular form of politics in Rojava, “a movement that is situated in the dialectic between state-ness and society” through which “society defends itself not only from the state that is under erasure but also from the one that is always in danger of emerging” (2016:208). While Üstündağ deals with the question of self-defense as a question of liberation in Rojava Revolution and scrutinizes its relation to the making of a new form of self-government that has the potential of “overcoming social separations and bringing all that is reified by the state and capitalism to the people to use freely” (2016:207), in this chapter I focus on the formation of moral subjects through the practices and discourses of self-defense at the heart of a Turkish metropole – where the question is not creating

a model of self-governance but rather claiming a dignified presence in the midst of oppression through the everyday use of violence.

Interlude: The Violent and the Ordinary

After the crowd disperses, we go back to the coffeehouse. This time the workers choose to stay in front of the building instead of going down to the basement. “It won’t be safe if they attack,” one says. Ahmet reflects a shared feeling among the Kurds about recent incidents: “This is like the 1990s.” The unexpected, volatile, and precarious present is apprehended and understood with reference to the experience and narratives of past events. Under this threat of violence, the memories and narratives of the 1990s are told and retold through stories, such as those about a notorious police chief, which I outline below, and provide an interpretive framework through which not only new meanings and modes of feelings can be acquired but also examples of “how to act” can be advanced.

The absence of any actual legal protection and the presence of imminent violence revitalize the memories of the 1990s for Kurds in Istanbul and attest to the urgent need to defend one’s self and community in these *out of joint* times. The need to care for others in the community becomes the basis of ethical self-formation. The Kurdish migrant workers warn me to be careful, since I spent two years in the neighborhood mostly hanging out with them. They show their care for me as an anthropologist who is doing research about the Kurdish migrant workers and as an urban Kurd from a different socio-economic class and occupation, out of

concern for my security. The elder ones ask the young ones to accompany me in the neighborhood.

Fear bridges the gap between generations; younger workers are much more respectful and careful listening to the experiences of the older workers. While drinking our teas and smoking, they talk about preventive measures they can take against violent attack. Ramazan and his friend Osman, who were compelled to come with their families to Istanbul during the forced migration of the 1990s, advise young workers not to walk alone, not to have arguments with young Turkish men, and to always carry a knife or gun to protect themselves. In the next couple of days, they surreptitiously share their weapons for the purposes of protection, giving priority to the houses in which migrant workers are living with their children and families.

Later on that night the conversation turns to the religious communities around the neighborhood and which groups have more sympathy for IS (Islamic State). Some of these groups, which they list by name, are organized around Islamic charity foundations and Islamist orders. “This is even worse than the 1990s,” says young Azad, “now ISIS is also attacking Kurds.” He is referring to the war between the IS and the YPG and YPJ (People’s Defense Units and Women’s Defense Units) in Rojava. Osman immediately opposes him, saying that the Kurds are much more organized and powerful now than in the 1990s. “You can’t imagine what the 1990s were like, you never met Sarı Komiser” says Ramazan, referring to an infamous police chief of Çeliktepe of 1990s. There is a masculine pride in his voice, but the fear is still palpable. Both of them leave to check whether their families are safe in their houses.

It is the beginning of the fall, and the weather is still warm. I leave the coffeehouse after this tumultuous afternoon with the young workers. We go to the park. The atmosphere is completely different than just a few hours earlier. Kids are playing soccer, women walk with

their babies, unemployed youth speculate about their job opportunities, and groups of young men and women eye one another. I see some Syrian and African refugees, and Turkmen migrant workers from former Soviet republics, still trying to understand what had happened with the crowd demonstrating in the park. The Kurdish young workers start to talk about the girls working in the supermarket on the other side of the street. Life goes on *as if* nothing had happened. Yet there is stillness in the movement. I am confused by the immense speed with which the people and their surroundings return to the ordinary. Passages between violent events and the ordinary and from the everyday to the eventful accelerated during the summer and fall of 2015.

Remembering *Sarı Komiser*: Narratives of Violence and Self-Defense

During that night and the days that followed, elder Kurdish migrants in Çeliktepe told many stories about an infamous police chief known as Sarı Komiser. *Sarı* means blond in Turkish and refers here to his fair complexion. He was notorious for inflicting beatings, insults, and torture on Kurdish migrant workers during the violent 1990s. Every morning, he would inspect the workers' market (*amele pazarı*) and insult the Kurdish migrants waiting to be hired for daily jobs. This informal job market was next to the police station, and every morning a large group of male workers from diverse ethnic groups would stand around waiting for jobs. Every day, Sarı Komiser would force some of the workers to clean up the police station without pay.

In the coffeehouse a day after the demonstration Mustafa, a Kurdish porter in his late forties, recounts for us his memory of Sarı Komiser. In stark contrast to the usual din of the

coffeehouse, with multiple occupied tables and several overlapping conversations, that day a silent and engaged audience of young migrant workers listens to Mustafa. Feelings of humiliation and moral indignation are apparent and powerful in his voice:

Every morning Sarı Komiser was asking us to stretch our arms and checking whether our nails and hands were clean or not. With his orders, the cops would chase us like herds. We would run away like animals. I felt so offended and humiliated for my folks, I can never forget that.

Kurdish migrants who were working or living in Çeliktepe at that time remember Sarı Komiser as a symbol of oppression, physical violence, humiliation, and racist hatred. The striking sensory richness of the stories about Sarı Komiser absorbs the atmosphere in which these events took place: the memories of the violent 1990s resonate back and forth with the world they now inhabit. These layered memories implicate diverse actors with differing degrees of responsibility: high-ranking commanders and soldiers involved in village evacuations and the burning of Kurdish villages; infamous JITEM²¹ members and paramilitary organizations responsible for torture and extra-judicial killings; and governments of the era. Those memories fold into the present and flow toward the future.

The atrocities of state officials fed on ethnic prejudice and hatred of local urban populations. Throughout the 1990s, landlords refused to rent their apartments to Kurds due to their nationalist feelings and/or fear of terrorism. The Kurdish language was stigmatized as a sign of terrorism in diverse neighborhoods. Although no official bans existed against speaking Kurdish in public spaces, migrants only felt comfortable speaking Kurdish quietly and among

²¹ For many JITEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism) was the embodiment of what was called the “deep state” in Turkey. However, it should be noted this focus on a “deep state” is misleading in the sense that it portrays JITEM as a deviation from the structure of the nation-state. The organization, however, was in fact a central mechanism of the Turkish state in its war with the PKK. JITEM was the crucial force behind the dirty war, numerous killings of the Kurdish intellectuals and politicians like Hasan Anter and Vedat Aydın, as well as the militarization of everyday life in the Kurdish region for decades.

themselves in private spaces. Furthermore, many of my interlocutors told me how humiliated they felt when they were refused access to coffeehouses and restaurants owned by Turkish neighbors (especially the older members of the Kurdish community).

The end of this Sarı Komiser story did not mark an end to state violence and police torture. But it marked another chapter in the history of the Kurds in Istanbul. Mustafa lights another cigarette and continues. Total silence among his audience of young workers intensifies the effect of his words:

They took care of him later on. What goes around comes around, you know, one of our kids cut his ear. They caught him right on the shore [of Bosphorous]. They cut off the entire half of his ear like that. He took a break with that wound for two years, after that he retired. What they said to him was, “you won’t continue [torturing and humiliating our folks],” they stipulated that condition. I heard it that way. It must have been such a good threat that the man didn’t continue.

Exploring the ways black urbanites in Chicago transform experiences of injury into communal narratives, anthropologist Laurence Ralph shows how stories of Jon Burge – a police commander infamous for his torture techniques – allow “the qualia of pain [to be] converted into narratives that shape community, and become the seedbed for historical consciousness” (2013:104). For Ralph, these narratives turn the experiences of injury into forms of communal remembering, and through them black urban residents come to terms with their shared pain. It is through these narratives that they “operate to produce their social world and fashion themselves as participants within it” (2013:105).

While Ralph refers to the forms of communal remembering and the ways and reasons Jon Burge’s legacy is frequently invoked by police violence in Chicago, I analyze here the ways in which Kurdish migrant workers build a moral and political community through memories of

violence and narratives of self-defense. Whereas narratives of the brutality perpetrated by Sarı Komiser (his torture and humiliation techniques) become a marker of political violence of the 1990s and the state's responsibility for people's suffering and pain, the act of punishing Sarı Komiser turns into a communal narrative of self-defense, and of Kurdish agency in Çeliktepe. The end of Sarı Komiser's story takes several forms and entails diverse interpretations of political agency.

"History is always produced in a specific historical context," wrote Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995:22). Exploring the differential exercise of power and the production of historical narratives and silences, Trouillot points to the semiotic ambiguity of an irreducible distinction and overlap between what happened and that which is said to have happened. Differences and overlaps between two sides of historicity, for him, point to the importance of the historical context in which historical narratives are produced: "The ways in which what happened and that which is said to have happened are and are not the same may itself be historical" (1995:4). Before moving on to different stories about punishing Sarı Komiser and the multiple interpretations these narratives entail, I would like to briefly visit the historical context in which these narratives were reproduced and circulated.

Unstable Present: Elections of 2015, the Syrian War, and the End of the Peace Process

The summer of 2015 witnessed the end of the peace process between the PKK and the Turkish state. Tensions between the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the Kurdish

movement in Turkey as well as the war between the Kurds and ISIS in Rojava resulted in a halt of the peace process. Several significant political developments need to be mentioned.

First, the war in Rojava and the Kurdish struggle for autonomous self-government created significant tensions and conflicts between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement. The very possibility of Kurdish self-rule in Syria rendered peace between the two parties untenable. From the perspective of the Turkish state, Kurdish self-rule or autonomy in Syria became a huge problem, as it had the potential to become a source of inspiration for the Kurds in Turkey. Two forms of mobility intensified the effect of Rojava on Turkey. First, a significant number of the Kurdish fighters who fought against ISIS in Syria went there from Turkey and hundreds of dead fighters' bodies went back to the Kurdish region of Turkey for funerals. These funerals turned into affective spaces that not only intensified moral indignation against the Turkish state and the AKP government but also radicalized Kurdish nationalism, transcending the borders of nation-states. Growing ethnic consciousness and cross border nationalism among Kurds in Kurdish areas, enabled by the struggle of the Kurdish forces in the Syrian War, was transmitted to the metropolitan areas via the movement of temporary migrant workers.

Second, in the June elections, the pro-Kurdish left-wing HDP earned 6 million votes (slightly more than 13 percent of all votes cast) and entered the parliament for the first time as a political party. The AKP government's perceived support for ISIS, resistance of the Kurdish fighters, and the defeat of ISIS in the historical battle of Kobanê significantly diminished the Kurdish political support for the Islamist AKP government. The AKP lost its majority and could not form a single party government, its Kurdish constituency significantly declined. With his chief advisor declaring the results of the June elections as "a vote for chaos," Turkey's president

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP cadres began to organize for snap elections to be held in November 2015.

Third, on 20 July 2015, a suicide bomber killed 31 students and left dozens injured in Suruç, a Kurdish town on the border of Turkey and Syria. A group of left wing Turkish and Kurdish students was planning to go to Kobanê in Rojava and construct a public park for children living where the Kurdish YPG and YPJ fought against ISIS. Two days after the Suruç massacre, the PKK killed two policemen in retribution for the killings, claiming that these policemen had assisted ISIS in planning the Suruç massacre. The Turkish government declared that, using its *right to self-defense*, Turkey would start a “war on terror” the same day. In contrast to public expectations, government operations did not target ISIS as much as they targeted PKK camps in Northern Iraq. This marked the official end of the peace process, postponing its resumption to an unknown future.

Fourth, Suruç was followed by another massacre on 10 October in Ankara, leaving 102 people dead and hundreds of people injured in the capital of Turkey. Again, most of the victims were Kurds and other HDP supporters, trade union members and supporters of various leftist parties who had gathered to protest the end of the peace process. This attack was the most destructive terrorist assault in the history of the Turkish Republic. The escalating violence produced not only a state of terror for the HDP and the Kurds but also a “violent victory” for the AKP.²² In addition to significant violence and political instability, the AKP played the Sunni-Turkish nationalism card and anti-Kurdish terrorism rhetoric to maintain the support of the

²² Roger Cohen, “Erdoğan’s Violent Victory,” *New York Times*.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/03/opinion/turkey-election-erdogans-violent-victory.html> (Last access on November 5, 2015).

nationalist and conservative votes in Turkey. The intensification of violence and the politics of fear helped the AKP to restore their power.

A couple of months after the end of the peace process, pictures of war-torn Kurdish cities and dead young fighters began to circulate on social media, an incredibly important source of information for my interlocutors. The cemeteries of Kurdish guerillas who lost their lives during the 1990s were destroyed after the fragile peace process broke apart. Images of murdered, tortured, and naked guerilla bodies – a brutal echo of the dirty war in 1990s – were distributed and circulated on social media.

There have been several public investigations regarding these images. However, the causes of these investigations were not the circumstances of killing, postmortem denuding, or torturing, but their photography “for public display and the distribution of these images to social media and their ensuing digital circulation” (Bargu 2016). Curfews and emergency measures taken by the governors in Kurdish-dominated cities like Diyarbakır, Şırnak, Hakkâri, Muş, and Dersim – where the HDP received 80 to 90 percent of the votes and garnered significant political support - led to violations of basic human rights, such as the right to life.²³

These curfews led to devastating destruction in the Kurdish region and became a reminder of the historical continuum of violence that has constituted the Turkish nation-state as a sovereign power in the region. A recent report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR 2017) indicates that between July 2015 and December 2016, some 2,000 people were reportedly killed in the context of security operations

²³ According to the report of the Human Rights Association (IHD), between 21 July and 28 August 2015, “47 civilians were killed, 2544 people were taken into custody and 338 were arrested.” For a report of the war crimes in the first 40 days of the conflicts:

<http://www.ihddiyarbakir.org/Content/uploads/441c33e2-df5b-48d2-8f74-6245c184582f.pdf> (Last access on January 8, 2016).

in southeast Turkey (Kurdish region) and a series of laws adopted on 23 June 2016 created an atmosphere of “systematic impunity” for the Turkish security forces.

It was in this context that organized attacks erupted against the HDP and Kurds in Turkish-dominated cities following the PKK’s Dağlica attacks in early September 2015. The HDP reported that during 7–8 September their party buildings were attacked in 128 different places, while HDP offices in Alanya and the capital Ankara were attacked and torched.²⁴

The demonstration in Çeliktepe described above was thus a part of these systematic attacks as the wheels of war began turning once again, in the Kurdish region and western Turkey in different yet interrelated forms. In this political and historical context the notorious 1990s came to constitute a frame of interpretation through which affective contours and meanings were understood, produced, and reproduced.

Punishing Sarı Komiser: Theorizing Agency and Interpretation

“...[A]n experienced event,” wrote Walter Benjamin, “is finite – at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it” (1968, 202). According to most of my interlocutors, Sarı Komiser was punished with the loss of his ear on a day he was at a bar with some friends, or walking along the Bosphorous. How the narrators defined the perpetrators of this act however, varied significantly. For some, it was one of the workers who experienced torture during the

²⁴ Turkey’s pro-Kurdish party shaken by night of ‘lynching’ September 9, 2015. <http://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/turkey-pro-kurdish-party-shaken-by-night-of-lynching> (Last access on September 12, 2015).

1990s; for others, it was a member of “the Party” (i.e., PKK). For yet others, it was a strong Kurdish mafia boss who cut off the ear. In all of these explanations, the actor’s identity is unknown to the narrators, yet in most of the stories of punishment that I have listened to over the course of two years, the actor was defined as “one of us” or “one of our kids.” Almost all forms of this narrative end with the joy of making fun of Sarı Komiser, who retired and “never messed with the Kurds again.” Those who cut off his ear forced him to promise that “he will never do it again.” And, apparently, he kept his promise.

One of the most significant aspects of the narrative of Sarı Komiser is that of the mutilation of his body. The cutting of an ear has a different grammar from that of beating or shooting. Mutilation of the body is a common practice among the soldiers in the war between the Turkish army and the PKK. There have been numerous cases where soldiers have used ears as emblems/badges of honor to prove their bravery and prowess during wartime. In his anthropological research, Hişyar Özsoy locates the bodies of dead Kurdish guerillas at the center of the Kurdish conflict. He argues that the Turkish nation-state strives to create death that will keep the murdered guerillas’ bodies outside of the symbolic order, making them abject and non-human. This means killing them twice. The first death is biological and is a result of the exercise of the juridico-political right to kill; the second is a symbolic death, in which the guerilla bodies waste away and are “relegated beyond the symbolic order” devoid of meaning, value or utility (Özsoy 2010:32). Özsoy analyzes the Kurdish uprisings (*serhildan*) during the war to reclaim the bodies of the guerillas and their funerals. Yet war creates excess. It is striking that one of the war crimes perpetrated by Turkish soldiers is condensed into the body of the police chief, in revenge for his humiliation and torture of Kurdish migrant workers. This mimetic act not only

undermines the state's monopoly on violence, but also symbolically registers the Kurdish struggle for recognition.

Specifically for the younger generations, who never met Sarı Komiser nor experienced his brutality, this story works as an empowering narrative demonstrating the importance of communal solidarity, self-defense, and communal care. The narrative structure is inclusive in the sense that it invites the younger generations of migrant workers to enjoy the overtly masculine pride of self-defense and moral struggle against oppression. In different versions of the narratives one sees political agency located in the hands of the Kurdish migrant workers, members of the PKK, or some strong Kurdish mafia bosses. It is hard to analytically pinpoint the political position or sense of belonging of the different groups telling this now epic tale of Sarı Komiser, yet certain things are clear. The first group stresses the self-defense and power of the migrant workers and identifies with the perpetrators of this mimetic act on a collective basis. While I listened to these stories I noticed a significant masculine pride in the very act of telling the story, since the individual identities of the narrators are closely related to the story's imagined perpetrators (or heroes). In this regard, narrating the story and – carving out authority and attentive silence in an otherwise noisy coffeehouse – is a way of asserting the masculine self.

In the second version of the narrative, political agency is located in the PKK. This version represents the party as the sole protector of the Kurdish people and acts as part of a larger metaphor of the empowerment of the Kurdish people through the PKK. In this version, the Kurdish political movement becomes the Messianic savior for the Kurds. In an interview I conducted with a 38 year-old Kurdish construction worker in 2014, economic hardships of his life and political difficulties of being a Kurd in inner-city Istanbul are intertwined:

I shined shoes by the police station when I first came here. The cops would come by to get their shoes shined and break my box right after getting the work done. Most of the time, I was spending my earnings on these broken boxes. One of these cops was Sarı Komiser... One day I heard that a member of the party [PKK] punished Sarı Komiser. You know, our situation used to be terrible. When we talked in Kurdish among ourselves, they [the Turks] would give us nasty looks and often silenced us. Whenever there was a problem in the neighborhood, they used to blame us because they saw us as terrorists. They used to come together and attack us. It was frustrating but there was nothing we could do. I think the struggle of the guerillas and the start of legal politics improved the conditions of Kurds. Through their struggle we learned to support and back each other. Our community grew and got stronger. Nobody can fool us anymore.

In this narrative, Kurds acquire political agency and make their own history through the struggle of the PKK. This was a common narrative among the Kurds of Çeliktepe during the peace process. However, telling this tale became dangerous with the resurgence of war and public circulation of this version of the tale decreased significantly with the intensification of fear, even though people would still whisper it to each other's ears. This form of the narrative displays crucial similarities to the myth of *Blacksmith Kawa* in Kurdish mythology, in which Kawa rebels against a tyrant and kills him on 21 March. This act of killing, according to the myth, laid the foundation for the liberation and freedom of people. Every year, Kurds celebrate the coming of the spring (Newroz) on this day. Newroz is conceived as a day of rebellion and resistance for liberation by most Kurds around the world.

The third version of the narrative represents Kurdish mafia bosses as anonymous saviors. In the world of masculinity, the mafia bosses occupy the *manliest* category. These mafia relations and the associated underground/illegal economy are imagined as routes of escape from poverty and hard labor. They are the working-class shortcuts to a life of worldly pleasures, extravagance, and the masculine power of just violence against injustice and impunity. A week after the demonstration, a Kurdish master in the vegetable market told this version of our tale for his apprentices and me:

Sarı Komiser once arrested 15 of our teenage guys. Then two men, a rich contractor from Bitlis and a mafioso from Ağrı that everybody respects here, came to the police station. He [the mafioso] swore at Sarı Komiser in front of all of us, he swore at his mom and his whole family. A lot of our people were there at the police station, too. I think that the cops were also afraid. They let the kids go free. Later, I was told that he [the mafioso] was the one who taught Sarı Komiser a lesson.

The fascination and secret admiration of the public with the figure of the “great” criminal, notes Walter Benjamin, “can result not from his deed but only from the violence to which it bears witness” ([1921] 1996:239). Mafia bosses appear as the figures upon which the fantasies, desires, and hopes of male workers are projected in most of the conversations among Kurdish migrants. Yet in contrast to the first two versions of the narrative, this version does not entail a *telos* of liberation through collective action.

All this makes clear that in addition to its physical reality, violence also has a symbolic reality. The narratives of self-defense produce (and are produced by) a common lexicon among Kurdish migrants. This lexicon is productive both in terms of self-fashioning individuals as ethical subjects, asserting selves, creating social relations, and building a collective identity. Yet depending on the time and context of telling, an act of self-defense against police violence or hostile crowds can be narrated as a political and/or practical lesson to defend one’s self and community (as in the case of an approaching crowd), or as a sign of the masculinity of the self and/or community (in a workplace or coffeehouse performance for the fellow workers). As Veena Das notes in her discussion on time and subjectivity, “the point is not that there are moment-to-moment beliefs and then there are stable temporal maps, but rather that the particular mode in which the subject is immersed in the temporal shapes the contour of the event” (2007:97).

Conclusion: Reading Violence

In “Reading Violence,” Carol Greenhouse (1992) challenges the assumption that words and violence belong to different domains and shows how the textuality (writtenness) of law connects it to other texts and forms of life. She points to the importance of the ways violence is understood and scripted into communal narratives of various kinds. For her, the textual reality of violence is key to the symbolic languages and narratives of communities in context. Following her provocation to “read” violence, I argue that the Kurds of Istanbul write their histories of Istanbul and inscribe their collective identity through narratives of self-defense. The violence of self-defense is regarded as a relation that *anchors* time, space, and political subjectivities. In contrast to the structural forms of violence to which they have been subjected for many years, Kurdish narratives of self-defense mark a temporal threshold of a dignified presence in the city; they are *making* the history of a colonized people at the center of the metropole. Most of my interlocutors refer to this act of extra-legal punishment as the beginning of the history of Kurds in Çeliktepe, a history of communal care, self-respect, and honor as opposed to a history of oppression, suffering, and assimilation.

Violence is intrinsic to the lives and historical narratives of the Kurds in Istanbul. It is through these narratives that one learns what violence and self-defense mean to them and how these notions are bound up in their sense of individual and collective selves. The making, circulation, and reproduction of these narratives of self-defense not only lay the basis of an alternative writing of urban and Kurdish history but also, as psychologist Jerome Bruner puts it, “these narratives, once acted out, ‘make’ events and ‘make’ history. They contribute to the reality of their participants” (cited in Rosaldo 1989:129). In his influential critique of the

marginalization of narratives in ethnographies, Renato Rosaldo notes that “stories often shape, rather than simply reflect, human conduct” (1989:129), conceptualizing narrative analysis as a crucial tool and form of social analysis.

Such narratives contribute to the refashioning of selves and the creation of a Kurdish migrant community in Istanbul. The making of Kurdish selves and a political and moral Kurdish community in Istanbul and the writing of this marginalized history rely on the circulation of narratives of self-defense. Narrators and listeners of these stories are in this sense also “historical actors.” The notion of self-defense is powerful in so much as it encompasses the use and threat of violence. For my interlocutors, maintaining a diverse and vibrant urban space thus depended, paradoxically, on violence. The notion of self-defense had potency in as much as it encompassed the use and threat of violence. Narrating their experience of the violent nature of self-defense helped shape conduct and make urban space.

The history of violence in inner city Istanbul is counterbalanced by the self-defense of Kurdish migrants attempting to share urban space and struggling to enter the labor market. This confrontation lays the foundation for migrant settlement and constitutes a significant dimension of community making for Kurdish migrants in Istanbul. Urban space is neither a neutral place for newcomers, nor is it the natural product of a coming-together of diverse ethnic and religious groups. Rather, it is shaped through various encounters, conflicts, and negotiations between diverse groups of migrants, locals, and refugees. Their encounters and conflicts are key to the formation of collective urban identities and differences. The narratives of self-defense and the Kurdish struggle to claim urban space link the unfinished histories of migrant settlement to the political agency of migrant workers and the making of an urban Kurdish community.

Kurdish workers consistently told me that although conflicts between communities mostly stem from economic issues or more “banal” everyday problems, during the 1990s these conflicts were transferred to an *ethnically* politicized realm by law enforcement and public authorities. This was suggested, for example, in the narrative of Serdar, an older worker from Bitlis. In a conversation that took place in his coffeehouse, which turned into the local election office of the HDP before the June 2015 elections, Serdar told young Kurdish migrants about his experiences of a fight between Kurds and immigrants from the Black Sea over the ownership rights of inner city minibuses. His story demonstrates the significance of the conflicts between different migrant groups for entrance into the urban labor markets. Self-defense, in Serdar’s narrative, appears as the only possible alternative to protect Kurdish migrants’ rights, jobs, and livelihoods.

Some of our young men began venturing into the minibus (transportation) business. We were doing it illegally, as the state hadn’t issued us the M license plates. At that time—it was maybe 1993 or 1994—the migrants from the Black Sea arrived and were trying to forcibly take the routes from us... We were the ones to bear the brunt of illegal work, [and then] the state makes a tender offer for a route and these guys try to take it away from us for free. Anyway when we saw they had their eyes on our means of subsistence, they started attacking us. And what do you do when someone attacks you, when they try to snatch your bread [means of subsistence]? So we started fighting against these guys. One day I smashed the windows of 24 minibuses in the Sanayi District! ... May God grant that no one ends up on the second floor of the Çeliktepe police station. It’s a torture house...

Serdar indicates an area of about 3 or 4 square meters with his feet and hands, checking whether the young workers around us are paying attention to his story. Since his age on his ID was younger than he actually was, Serdar was transferred to juvenile court; otherwise he “would have been sentenced to 25 years.” Convinced of his audience’s curiosity, Serdar continues telling his story with great enthusiasm:

They tied my arms around my wrists. Then they stripped me naked. I said to myself “these bastards are going to fuck me.” I’m like this [holds his hands up]. They lifted me

up a bit, then made something touch my feet. [Laughs] Every time they touch me, my entire body jerks. I'm being destroyed. Then they drop me down, kick me all over. Also, since the issue is political, you know Kurds and Turks were fighting, I was in jail for 35 days like that.

The state used ordinary problems like a fight among children in a soccer game, manly competitions "over a girl," and banal difficulties among neighbors as excuses to show the Kurds the limits of their existence in the city. In cases of institutional mediation or intervention, the acts of law enforcement and authorities almost always reiterated the discriminatory practices of the state.

"They would have lost us, if we were not the majority here," Serdar says. The other elder migrants nod. Even though Kurds have never been the majority in Çeliktepe, they still have a large community. "We paid the price [for living here], we will pay it again if needed," he says, looking into the eyes of young Kurdish migrants in the office. After a moment of silence, Serdar remembers another time he was taken into custody because he fought a Turkish guy over the girl he loved. He smiles, remembering an ironic question of Sarı Komiser's during the torture, blaming Kurds for the violence and war: "Isn't it enough that you fucked the East, now is it Istanbul's turn?" Going back to those days, he says, "I don't really know who fucked whom."

Chapter 2

FAMILY LABOR, RELATEDNESS, AND LIVING “AS IF”

A Workday in the Market

Sen hâl deyip geçme abi, hâl var ya dünya borsasıdır. (Don't you dare look down on the wholesale market, it is the world stock market.) Servet

It was almost 2 a.m. on a cold winter night when Servet and I picked up his brother Mustafa, and apprentice Harun from the neighborhood of Çeliktepe. Servet, in his early 40s, is an experienced Kurdish stallholder in Istanbul's neighborhood markets. We left the empty streets of Çeliktepe behind and drove to the Bayrampaşa Wholesale Vegetable Market. Servet was driving the truck, Mustafa was in the front seat with his brother, while Harun and I were in the vessel of the truck, traveling with the empty cases that had been used the day before.

The wholesale market for vegetables and fruits in Bayrampaşa covers a significant part of the fruit and vegetable needs of the European side of Istanbul, a population of 9 million people (approximately two thirds of the whole city population). The wholesale market for vegetables is comprised of 572 identical shops each of which buy and sell a minimum of 30 tons per night. Depending on the kind of vegetables they bring and the trade capacity of the retailers, the volume of their transactions fluctuates from 30 to 150 tons per night.

In half an hour we had arrived at the wholesale market. Servet left the truck to Harun so that he could return the cases that had been used the day before. While Harun waited more than two hours in a crowd of thousands of trucks, Servet, Mustafa and I went shopping in the market. The whole shopping process in the wholesale market lasted for more than four hours.

The crucial part of the day for business often takes place within the first two hours of shopping taking the form of extended searches for the right goods along with prolonged

bargaining. A significant part of the retailers there are from Bitlis –a city with a Kurdish majority in southeastern Anatolia and Servet’s hometown- and Siirt –a city of Kurds and Arabs to the south of Bitlis. Servet knew almost everyone in this huge market. Ties of their hometown and years of trade with one another ease the ways they negotiate over goods and prices. After bargaining with many retailers, Servet turned to his brother Mustafa and told us that the prices change every single minute and pointed to the importance of details in bargaining. He warned me since I was a newcomer to the market, “Sen hâl deyip geçme abi, hâl var ya dünya borsasıdır” (Don’t you dare look down on the wholesale market, it is the world stock market).

As I learned during fieldwork, an important part of the mastery of stallholders is the ability to buy the right goods at the right time. This economic skill totally relied on one’s social skills and relationships. Servet told me that he had been bringing Mustafa to the market for the last two years so that his brother could learn the basics of the job and develop good relations with the retailers. These relations, he told me, were key to building a social milieu (*çevre kurmak*) and getting things done (*işleri halletmek*) in the market place. Relations are indeed of crucial importance to the prospects of livelihood and labor of Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul, plagued as they are by legacies of a violent history of ethnic oppression and assimilation, rebellions and massacres, forced migration, and market fluctuations.

In this chapter I explore the patterns of employment and upward mobility, struggles for subsistence and dignity, and the modalities of social relations among Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul’s service economy. These are some key questions guiding my inquiry. (I) What are the strategies of survival that Kurdish workers made use of after the forced migration? (II) Why is kinship a privileged mode of relations among Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul? (III) How do different modalities of relatedness affect the making of labor hierarchies and the markets? (IV)

How do Kurds experience and make sense of the changes in their political and economic realms?
In what ways are political and economic shifts intimately linked to the organization of labor?

I engage these questions from the perspective of a day's work in the wholesale market and in a neighborhood market. Drawing on my fieldwork in the neighborhood markets and participation in laboring processes for two years, I argue that it was first and foremost through mobilizing kinship (family) relations as work relations that Kurdish migrants responded to the huge displacement wave of 1990s, political and economic inequalities between the Kurdish region and Turkey, and the economic restructuring of the country. Other than kinship (*akrabalık*) relations, ties with people from the same home region (*hemşehrilik*), shared belonging to Sufi orders (*tarikat*), neighborliness (*komşuluk*), and ethnic/linguistic bonds are the main modalities through which daily wage workers, stallholders, and retailers related to each other in the market. Relations occupy a crucial, yet ambivalent and contradictory place in the economic and affective wellbeing of Kurdish migrant workers, as well as in the patterns of social mobility, employment opportunities, and economic exploitation. A particular mode of existence, that I call living "as if," sustains the making, continuation, and reproduction of these relations notwithstanding the immanent tensions, contradictions, and ambivalences.

A Strategy for Economic Survival for the Displaced: Family Labor

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Kurds of Turkey have been steadily impoverished by the rise of the regional political economy and deep inequalities. Insufficiency of industry and infrastructure, as well as the preservation of the old land regime in the Kurdish

region led to underdevelopment of the Kurdish region. Between the 1960s and the 1990s the rate of landless villagers in the Kurdish region was higher than the rest of the country (Yadırgı 2017). Economic and political inequalities and urbanization led to a movement of Kurdish landless villagers away from their local economies to the industrial centers in western Turkey. Impoverishment and de-development of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (north Kurdistan or the Kurdish region in different sources) was a conscious choice by the Turkish state that prevented the institution of an economic basis of support for an indigenous independent existence and for the demands of political pluralism (Yadırgı 2017).

Beginning in 1984, the war between the PKK and the Turkish state led to massive destruction throughout the Kurdish region, precipitating a huge wave of displacement and dispossession for the rural Kurds. The forced migration of the Kurds radically altered the ethnic composition of the urban working classes in Turkish metropolises as well as the class structure of Kurdish society. Since there was already a significant Kurdish population in the city, Istanbul became one of the main destinations for those displaced by war during the 1990s. Kurdish workers, who had fled political violence in the Kurdish region during the conflict-ridden 1990s, told me that the neighborhood fruit and vegetable markets were one of the key sectors in which the migrants of the era found a place. The key reasons that many Kurds clustered in this sector, I was told, were the presence of prior Kurdish migrants, large Kurdish family structure, and the availability of cheap labor (mostly young men and children) within these families.

Rural Kurdish families who migrated during the 1990s were familiar with communal farming with their own relatives, villagers, and tribe members. Their loss of houses, land, means of agriculture and animal husbandry transformed Kurdish agricultural laborers into wage-

laborers in the cities. Servet's urban experience was not an exception, as he told me more than once:

We arrived at the city without a penny in 1992. We didn't even have the money to buy bus tickets, but thanks to my uncles who rented an apartment for us in Çeliktepe, we started working here. We pretty much worked every single job. We worked as shoe shiners, porters; we did everything we could do. Finally, we started working at the neighborhood markets.

Life stories of middle-aged and older Kurdish male workers that I listened to during my fieldwork began with narratives of the loss of their homes, the humiliation of expulsion from their own land, economic dispossession, lost houses, burned animals, gardens, and fields. The feelings of longing for the lost home and indignation against the injustices and humiliations of the 1990s, so palpable in these stories, were followed by the masculine pride of building a new home and claiming urban space and markets for themselves. Claiming urban space and markets, as I discuss in the first chapter, constituted self-defense against ethnic hatred, discrimination, and state violence for Kurdish migrant workers. However, it entailed more: the challenges of poverty, unreliable urban wages, and the everyday struggle for economic survival were the fundamental elements of these life stories.

As the skills and experiences of many rural Kurds from older generations were rendered useless in the urban context, these generational differences put economic responsibilities on the shoulders of the sons of the families (for similar dynamics and differences in generational work patterns in Adana and Istanbul see Darıcı 2009, 2013; Kılıçaslan 2015).²⁵ Life stories of Kurdish

²⁵ In her discussion on the effects of generational differences in political mobilization among Kurdish forced migrants in a slum neighborhood of Istanbul, political scientist Gülay Kılıçaslan (2015) argues that the second-generation Kurdish migrants are much less active in the political mobilization of the Kurdish movement since they shoulder their family's economic responsibilities by working in the informal sector. This enables the first generations to commit themselves to political participation and to further extend the Kurdish struggle to western cities in Turkey. Anthropologist Haydar Darıcı (2009, 2013) points to a similar dynamic in terms of the distribution of work among the first and second generations of forced migrants in Adana where he conducted his ethnographic

workers to which I listened during fieldwork entailed collective struggles of Kurdish families as a mode of survival. Younger generations – as in the case of Servet, Ramazan, Harun, and many others -- acquired greater responsibility as they took on more work. Most of the daily jobs open to the Kurdish workers demanded hard labor and younger bodies. I was told many times that the accumulation of economic capital and the route to upward social mobility depended on “ailenin bir arada olması / birlik olmak” (the unity of the family), and the solidarity of the family members.

During my fieldwork, most of the Kurdish stallholders in the vegetable and fruit markets would bring their male family members (sons, brothers, and male cousins) to work with them. Child workers, like Servet’s children, would often participate during the day to help sell goods but were not involved in heavier laboring processes like carrying material to construct the stalls or loading the trucks. In the neighborhood markets of Istanbul, working as family units distinguished Kurdish workers from their Turkish counterparts. Most of the Turkish laborers attributed the Kurdification of the stallholders and workers in the vegetable markets and the resulting decrease in wages to the Kurdish use of child labor. The large size of Kurdish families and the use of child labor have been associated with backward traditions of Kurds by their Turkish co-workers and middle class customers. Child labor is regarded as a consequence of ignorance and backwardness on the part of Kurds working among the Turkish stallholders - a

research. However, Darıcı’s conclusions regarding political mobilization are in stark contrast to Kılıçaslan’s work. Darıcı argues that the politicization process of children and youth of Adana challenge conventional power relations within their families, the Kurdish movement, and Turkish politics. In Darıcı’s ethnography, the violent struggle of Kurdish children and youth against the Turkish security forces emerges as a powerful critique not only of Turkish politics but also of the Kurdish community “informed by age and gender hierarchies” (2009) and the legal Kurdish political parties where “adults see politics as a game” according to the militant Kurdish youth (2013). Although I am not focusing on the political mobilization of different generations, it is safe to say that at the time of my research there was no contrast between different generations in Çeliktepe in terms of political mobilization. As I explored in the first chapter, the continuities between different generations were important and decisive in inner city Istanbul.

discourse that neglects the historical conditions that led to family labor as well as the use and abuse of child workers.²⁶

After the massive flow of Kurds to the city with the huge wave of displacement in the 1990s, the availability of a large reserve of labor drastically eroded the profits of Turkish stallholders and workers. I was told many times that during the second half of the 1990s and in the early 2000s, Kurds acquired a significant majority of stalls and jobs in these markets. One day, Harun's cousin (and his ex-boss) Ramazan explained with pride how they had parlayed hard work and family labor into a successful strategy of economic survival:

They say that the fruit and vegetable business is now in the hands of the Kurds. Why? That's because we were the only ones to put our hearts and souls into this business, and [because we] suffered a great torture that no one else would put up with. We also have the rights and freedom [to go out and enjoy life]. But we work. We make about 3 cents of profit per kilo of produce and we go to great pains, by working 19-20 hours a day with our families, to even make that much money.

When describing their urban labor experiences, Kurdish migrant workers convey a multiplicity of differences in their sense of ethnic and political belonging. Claims to identity are strategically deployed, and they fluctuate as people traverse neighborhoods, the market place, and encounter state institutions. Migration and movement generate novel modes of ethical self-fashioning, community building, and modalities of relatedness (Thiranagama 2011). The travails of the market as well as the temporary work contracts and fragile work conditions are experienced through social relations (Han 2012). The migrant Kurds of Istanbul realized, experienced, and responded to the effects of political violence, displacement, material

²⁶ There was nothing surprising in these critical discourses and resentment among the Turkish workers given the official discourses about the Kurds. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic the state discourse associates Kurdishness with regional backwardness, feudality, ignorance, and separatist violence (Yeğen 1996). The Kurds have been defined as uncivilized, non-modern, uneducated, and eradicated. The intermingling of discourses of underdevelopment and terrorism in state discourses criminalized the Kurdish problem by concealing socio-economic roots and political antagonisms (Günay 2009). That means a closure of the political for Kurds by identifying them as ignorant and backward people whose political subjectivities, needs, and desires can easily be disregarded.

dispossession, and market forces through kinship relations and other forms of relatedness.

Kinship relations, ties with people from the same home region, and the ethnic difference that makes Kurds into targets of political violence have become world-making categories, offering meaning and orientation to the changing environment for Kurdish migrants facing a variety of uncertainties and difficulties in new urban spaces. These bonds not only provide the basic means to constitute their new sensitivity to and growing awareness of a community, but also the ethical substance through which labor hierarchies and market relations are formed and understood.

Modalities and Ambivalences of Relatedness

That day I went to the wholesale market with Servet and his apprentices, his social relations enabled Servet and others to bargain, to negotiate the prices and the value of the goods, and to arrange the terms of debt to facilitate the economic transactions. During fieldwork, I would often see retailers set different prices for different buyers just based on their social proximity and the depth of their relationships. Retailers from Bitlis (Servet's hometown) would often give him better prices, or simply tell him *not* to buy certain goods that weren't of good quality by saying, "Bu mallar sana gelmez abi" (Brother, those goods would not be right for you). Some retailers with whom Servet had been conducting business for years would make similar offers to him. Those social bonds were expressed in some physical gestures and signs or sayings like "Senin müşteri o malı sevmez abi, sen bana güven" (Brother, your customers would not like that, trust me) along with the strategic code-switch from Turkish to Kurdish.

During their bargainings, Kurdish retailers and stallholders would use Turkish and Kurdish interchangeably, or quite often mix the two together. Ordinary interactions between the retailers and stallholders took place in a mixed language dominated mostly by Turkish. Kurdish was used as a second language that conferred power on those who knew it. Many times I saw that Kurdish retailers would sell a unit of the same good for “çar lîra” (four liras in *Kurdish*) per unit to the Kurdish stallholders vs. “beş lira” (five liras in *Turkish*) per unit to the Turkish stallholders. The use of the Kurdish language in bargaining provided both parties a sense of solidarity and trust along linguistic/ethnic lines. Retailers and stallholders had most of their daily conversations, joked, and talked about the quality and the origins of goods in Turkish. They would then switch to Kurdish to bargain and talk about the reasons why they could not offer discounts, or which goods would sell better in the specific neighborhood markets at which the stallholders would be selling their goods on a particular day. Servet was asked to buy wild mushrooms, artichokes, avocados, and fresh thyme for the luxury neighborhood markets where wealthy urbanites could afford these items. Given the huge number of customers (approximately 4000 I was told that day, mostly stallholders, their apprentices, as well as the owners of restaurants, supermarkets, and groceries) and the volume of transactions in the wholesale market during the day, it was impressive to see how “the world stock market” in Servet’s terms was governed by different modalities of relatedness.

Most of the *pazarci*²⁷ saw Servet as a charismatic man. There were several important reasons for his good reputation. Servet would always pay off his debts at the time that he

²⁷ Although I use the terms “worker” and “stall holders” to describe separate roles in the vegetable markets, the Turkish term *pazarci* linguistically accounts for everyone working in the vegetable/fruit markets and could signify both roles. Moreover, the fact that most stallholders work in other people’s stalls during particular days of the week makes it more difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between workers and stallholders. I keep using these terms rather than *pazarci* to keep the analytical distinctions in ethnographic instances and descriptions that I draw from my fieldnotes.

promised, pay his workers wages on a daily basis, and mobilize his economic, political, religious, and social relations for other stallholders, workers, and retailers who were in need. His strong presence within a powerful religious group, the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order, and political ties with the district municipalities through the networks of the Menzil community gave him the opportunity to consolidate his position among the *pazarcıs*. The legality of the business depended on social connections. Due to the abundance of socially legitimate, yet illegal practices (like child labor, extending one's own stalls at the expense of invading public space, legal uncertainties of the stall-ownership documents), these relations and ties with municipal officials allowed Servet (and his friends, relatives, and acquaintances by extension) to move across the fluid and porous boundaries of legality -- an important asset in Istanbul's neighborhood markets.

Whenever we would go to the Bayrampaşa wholesale market, it was always Harun who would stay with the truck and empty the bed for re-loading. Although Mustafa also knew how to drive and had the same "apprentice" status as Harun, the work was divided according to family relations. Almost all of the stallholders with whom I went to the massive Bayrampaşa market were determined to teach the job to their brothers, sons, and cousins. The teaching process entailed an organic transmission of the mastery of forming social relations that was of crucial importance for their economic lives. Priority in teaching the job was almost always given to family and relatives. In his new job, Harun had no opportunity to form relations and to get to know people, thus there was no chance for upward mobility.

As the relation of Harun and Servet implies, there are some workers and stall holders who chose to work with non-relatives. However, these relations were based on ties with people from the same home region, ethnicity, and bonds of neighborliness or religious orders when not on

kinship. Stallholders did not like to work with outsiders since it was very difficult to exert paternal-like authority over them or to directly exploit their labor. Harun had uncles and cousins who held stalls in the markets, however, he was working with Servet to earn more money by having regular payments that were independent of the earnings of the day. Harun told me that he chose to work with Servet in order “to escape from his family,” which could produce relations of exploitation and humiliation. The problems, he told me, were not only the exploitation of his labor or insults to his personality but also that he felt overwhelmed by the necessity “Ramazan’ın bana her dediğine kafa sallamak, eyvallah demek canımı çok sıkıyordu” (to nod and to accept everything Ramazan was telling me).

As I observed during my fieldwork, Kurdish family labor denoted connection, belonging, and care on the one hand; hierarchy, exploitation, disregard, and exclusion on the other. As scholars like Janet Carsten (2013: 246), Veena Das (1995), Jeanette Edwards and Marilyn Strathern (2000), and Michael Lambek (2011), have already noted, anthropologists tend to write extensively about generative sides of kinship while ignoring the ambivalent or negative qualities of kin relations. Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul developed an elaborate anthropology of their own. They had a metanarrative on positive aspects and ethical values of kinship relations that they often performed in public. At the same time, their everyday conversations with their co-workers and myself were full of references to exploitative relations and labor hierarchies among kin, as well as disregard, abuse, and disconnection within the family.

As I heard those public performances and hidden critiques over time, I became interested in what my interlocutors did with the ambivalences of their relations and how they retooled these ambivalences as they navigated labor hierarchies. The absence of ethical submission, and yet the practical necessity of participating in exploitative kinship-labor relations and reinforcing an

image of ethical submission produced an embodied politics of pretense and dissimulation, what I call living “as if” (pretending all were well even though the individual was straining under the tensions). However, as I show ethnographically in this chapter, there were moments of defiance, resistance, and escape in which people fail (or refuse) to deal with these tensions and contradictions in kinship-labor relations.

The difference among the ways Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul talk about family labor in public, among themselves, and with me, as well as the difference between what they say and what they do is key to understanding their complex subjectivities, immanent potentialities, and escapes. This difference is analogous to James C. Scott’s (1990, see also 1985 and 2009) well-known distinction between public and hidden transcripts among subordinate groups. Dominant groups, Scott notes, “often have much to conceal, and typically they also have the wherewithal to conceal what they wish” (1990:12). While *public transcript* denotes the hegemonic appearances of things, relations, and discourses; the *hidden transcript* is a backstage discourse of the subordinate groups that cannot be spoken in the face of power. The inevitability of domination, Scott writes, does not make it necessarily just or legitimate in the eyes of subordinate groups (1990:79). Departing from thick and thin theories of false consciousness, theories of misrecognition of social reality and ideology, and Gramscian theories of hegemony, Scott searches for radical thought and restricted action in the discourses and practices of the subordinate groups. Short of actual rebellion and political explosions, powerless groups have “a self-interest in conspiring to reinforce hegemonic appearances” (1990:xii) writes Scott.

Looking from a long-term historical perspective Scott argues that open political opposition is a rare and recent phenomenon. Taking an analytic lens that only focuses on revolts and rebellions of the subordinate groups, he argues, is “to miss the immense political terrain that

lies between quiescence and revolt and that, for better or worse, is the political environment of subject classes. It is to focus on the visible coastline of politics and miss the continent that lies beyond” (1990:199). Although I follow Scott’s critique of such narrow conceptions of the political field, the ethnographic material I present in this chapter complicates his account in two significant ways.

First, blurred and porous boundaries between the workers and stallholders in Istanbul’s neighborhood markets - as between the daily-wage workers and middlemen in the construction sector and subcontracting companies- make it difficult to establish a clear-cut distinction between the ideal types of the subordinate and the dominant. Unlike factory workers or poor peasants, most of the urban working classes in Istanbul’s service and construction economies do not see the members of the dominant classes in their everyday interactions and work relations. Instead, they see their cousins, relatives, friends, and neighbors in layered hierarchies and exploitative relations. Most of the Kurdish migrant workers saw family labor and direct exploitation of one’s own kin as the only way to get out of the inequitable labor market and to start one’s own business. “Everyone waits for their own turn,” Harun said once. Producing a public appearance of ethical submission in the present prepares the ground for one’s demands for submission, and thus material appropriation, in the future. That expectation further unsettles the ideal types of the subordinate and the dominant in Scott’s formulation.

Second, the rupture between the “emotional self” and the “tactical self” in Scott’s terms - or the split between the ethical and the political- can become unbearable and lead to personal turmoil for the workers, leading to searches for refuge from exploitation, humiliation, and abuse. Harun’s escape from exploitative work relations within his family was a move between different modalities of relatedness in order to find a job and earn his own living. However, escapes are not

necessarily forms of insubordination, concealed forms of resistance or hidden transcripts; they can take many other forms. During my research, these escapes included open or concealed forms of defiance, changing one's social network, involvement in underground and illegal economies, substance abuse, adventures of various sorts, excursions into urban night life, commitments to revolutionary politics, and, in a few cases, suicide.

Harun's Escape and Repentance

During the final two hours of our visit to the wholesale market, Harun and Mustafa loaded the truck bed with more than 6 tons of vegetables. Before he started loading, Harun and I had approximately twenty minutes to grab a sandwich (prepared by Servet's wife) and to chat. While Servet and his brother Mustafa drank tea and had a conversation with a retailer, Harun explained to me the reasons why he was working with Servet instead of his own family. He told me how his cousin Ramazan would shout at him and make fun of him in front of the other workers in the market: "Working with your relatives is hard. I had very tough time with my cousin Ramazan. He used to insult me in front of others. He totally messed up my psychology (*Ramazan benim psikolojimi bozdu*). I fell into a void. I got depressed, and that is how I started doing drugs."

After taking a sip from his tea, he continued: "You know we are cousins, but he was exploiting me. He was not properly paying me, but I had to put up with him since my dad owed him money." As Ramazan's humiliations increased over time, Harun could not bear working with him anymore. Finally one day, he stopped going to work and did not answer Ramazan's

calls for a while. He did not want to have an open confrontation with his kinsman. His father sent Harun's brother İlhami to work with Ramazan after they figured out that Harun had quit his job.

As I heard from his brother İlhami and Harun himself, his explanation to his own family for quitting the job was radically different from what he told me. Harun told his father and relatives that Ramazan would not let him pray during the day. In the religious cosmology of the neighborhood of Çeliktepe and in the moral universe of his pious family, this reason was more legitimate than any personal conflict with a kinsman. After quitting his job with Ramazan, Harun spent his savings on drugs within a couple of months. He was also caught by the police while he was smoking at a park, and was put on probation. His family asked Harun to join the religious Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order and to repent. "After that, the father of the Menzil community saved my life," said Harun. He told me that he went on a little pilgrimage to Adıyaman (a city in southeastern Turkey where the leader of the Menzil community was living) and witnessed miracles with his own eyes. "Menzil healed me," he repeated referring to his repentance. Looking at me and trying to figure out whether I was convinced or not, he fervently told me how the prayers and voluntary work at the Menzil village with the leader of the order had healed him. Moreover, after coming back to Istanbul and joining the local branch of the Menzil community at Çeliktepe, he found a job at the market stalls of Servet – a fellow disciple and a Sufi brother in the religious order.

Like his boss, Servet, who enjoyed more social and economic capital, Harun and other daily-wage workers also depended on the ability to move between different modalities of relatedness and their mastery of mobilizing these relations for work. In Harun's own words, "your social milieu [*çevre*] is the most important thing, if you know the right people you will never fall out of work." What he described by social milieu was a flexible, fluid, and constantly

changing combination of ties of kinship, friendship, neighborliness, and bonds with people from the same home region, or belonging to the same religious order. What keeps these social relations alive and this social milieu intact for the daily-wage workers like Harun is the “as if” mode of existence.

Harun was known as a hardworking worker in Çeliktepe. He was also a member of large and well-connected Sert family from Bitlis. However, these affiliations were not enough, as being a known drug-user would not help Harun in the market. To find a job and earn a living, he had to repent. His repentance was not only a religious awakening. Repentance for Harun entailed being a part of a community and locating himself in social and economic relations. He knew that the possibility of finding jobs for a daily-wage worker depended on his name, reputation, and connections in this social milieu. The mastery of situating oneself in a web of relations was key to the making of social relations and economic subjectivities among the neighborhood markets of Istanbul. When I was hanging out with Harun in his dense social milieu, I was reminded of Elyachar’s work on economic life in Cairo in her powerful book, *Markets of Dispossession*. There are remarkable resonances between the modalities of relatedness, and the making of social relations, and markets among the working classes in Istanbul and Cairo.

In her ethnographic work Elyachar characterizes relational value as an important vantage point to analyze the process of market expansion in the workshops of neoliberal Cairo. For her, much of social life in Cairo “revolves around the cultivation of relationships through ongoing exchanges of things, money, sociability, and emotion” (2005:137). She underlines the significance of the concrete actions and practices that create, extend, and reproduce relationships in the workshops over time. Analyzing the production of value among the Egyptian popular classes both on material and symbolic planes, Elyachar shows how relationships are situationally

produced and performed. These relationships are “not a store of value, let alone a store of capital, that masters can cash in.” They are neither a resource for the use of an individual nor “a thing that exists outside a previously existing individual and subjectivity” (2005:145). It is through these relations that economic subjects of the workshops in Cairo take form and acquire attributes. The ability to transfer wealth and power from one sphere of life to the other, what Elyachar calls modulation from one mode of value production to another, is an indispensable component of mastery over social capital, and it turns into a new model for the new wave of market expansion.

The biggest wave of Kurdish displacement during the 1990s coincided with the greatest wave of market expansion in the Turkish economy. After the coup d'état in 1980, the subsequent government launched neoliberal policies that opened Turkish markets to global economic flows, accelerating exports and imports. This era witnessed the privatization of state-owned enterprises, declining formal employment, rapid mechanization of agriculture and a parallel decline in agricultural subsidies, and increasing urbanization. These policies also re-structured capital-labor relations through temporary flexible employment schemes, deteriorating employment-based welfare programs and rights, the political repression of labor unions and left-wing parties, and labor militancy.

The employment structure shifted from secure jobs to temporary ones. Contract work and the subcontracting system were the two basic forms of temporary jobs. On the eve of privatization of state enterprises, the government initially hired blue-collar workers through temporary contracts. Sürhan Cam (2002) shows that the number of employees working under this system increased from 20,000 to 500,000 between 1985 and 1996. Similarly, *taşeron* laborers employed by subcontracting firms in the construction industry increased from 550,000 to 1.2 million between 1983 and 1997. In Turkey, temporary employment has risen from 5

percent in 1985 to 21.95 percent in 1999 while more than 300,000 workers were dismissed from state economic enterprises during the same period (Cam 2002, OECD). The percentage of temporary employment is likely even higher as Ferhunde Özbay (1990) argued, since employment for women in the home-based jobs of the textile industry was often not declared in labor surveys.

The historical coincidence of economic restructuring and forced migration of Kurds, writes sociologist Erdem Yörük, “facilitated the almost unprecedented ‘success’ of neo-liberal capitalist accumulation in Turkey” (2012:179) by creating a significant reserve army of labor; dispossessed Kurdish migrants formed a massive supply of cheap labor. According to Yörük, “the globally competitive sectors of the Turkish economy, i.e. textiles and apparel, construction, shipbuilding, and electrical equipment production, depend largely on subcontracting chains based in the informal economy, and on an informal working proletariat, which has crowded the slum areas of big cities in the 1990s” (2012:158). This macro story, however, doesn’t have much to say about production of relational value essential to both community and the market as Elyachar (2005) shows in her work. To understand the complex dynamics of relational value production among Kurdish migrants, I unpack a key distinction between different forms of work (working for oneself and working for others) in Istanbul’s neighborhood markets, as Harun explained to me.

El Kapısı: Working for Others

As we walked towards the truck on that day at the wholesale market, I asked Harun how he was feeling about working for Servet. Checking around to see whether there was anyone close to us, Harun turned to me to say, “after all, it is *el kapısı*, you can’t really rely on it. In the end, his brother will have the connections for business, not me. I will keep working like a porter [*hamal*].”

El kapısı has two meanings in Turkish. The first one is the place where one works for another to earn one’s living. The second one is the house of a bride’s in-laws. Both of the meanings signify the absence of one’s own family in a particular setting. By porter, Harun referred to the lack of opportunities for social mobility more than the physical quality or salary of the work. His comment entailed a double critique of both his own family and of his boss with whom he had developed relations in the religious community. He criticized his own family for its lack of unity, since his uncles and cousins pursued individual gain at the expense of others. Unlike Servet, who would invest in his brother’s social skills, Harun’s family was not interested in his future.

Servet and Harun called each other *sofi* (Sufi: a follower of a mystical form of Islam) and Servet would tell us that he couldn’t see any difference between his brother, Mustafa, and other *sofis* from the Menzil; yet differences between Mustafa and Harun in terms of the organization of labor were obvious. In our interviews Harun would blame Servet, telling me he felt like a porter whose labor could simply be bought and sold. The distinction was not only symbolic. Harun wanted to acquire a social milieu (*çevre edinmek*), buy market stalls and a truck, and work for himself and his family. His dream was to open a grocery store with his brother İlhami so that

they would no longer have to work for others. The striking contrast between working for oneself (and one's own family by extension) and working for others among Kurdish migrant workers recalls the distinction discussed by anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff between work and labor among the Tshidi-Barolong, a South African Tswana people. The Comaroffs argue that, "work contrasts with labor as does self-construction with self-destruction" (1987:192). While work for oneself meant making of self and others in the course of everyday life through alliances and symbolized the creative processes of production and reproduction, labor done for whites symbolized exploitation and alienation among the Tshidi.

Among the Kurdish workers of Istanbul, work for oneself (and for one's family) designates a creative process of value production and entails opportunities for upward mobility mostly through the appropriation of the surplus value produced by other family members (such as children, youth, and women). Alternately, work for others is seen as a process of physical self-destruction that one should endure only if he/she can establish social relations and accrue economic capital to start one's own business. Servet provided no access to social relations for Harun that would allow him to get free of the unjust labor market. Nevertheless, Harun would still behave as if there was no problem. Not because he did not recognize the direct exploitation of his own labor, or believed in the ideology of religious brotherhood. His father's debt and his family's fragile economic position did not allow him to act otherwise.

After loading tons of vegetables, there was only space for one person in the truck's bed, Harun stayed there and I sat with Servet and Mustafa in the front. We drove to Sarıyer market as the first light of day rose over the city. Servet told me with pride that he gave the job to Harun, because Harun's own cousin, Ramazan, did not let him pray properly, criticizing the other members of the Sert family for being overly involved in worldly concerns at the expense of their

Islamic prayers and worship. The proof, for Servet, was Harun himself. For Servet, members of the Sert family did not have unity among themselves and each member was pursuing individual gain at the expense of others. Mustafa nodded.

We arrived at the neighborhood market around 7 a.m., set up the stalls and carried in the vegetables. Servet's three sons (between the ages of 10 and 15) came to help us from 9 a.m. till late evening. We stayed there over 12 hours outside in the cold weather to sell the goods. In the working-class districts of Istanbul, neighborhood markets were very popular and crowded since they provide the cheapest good quality food. During workdays, customers in the neighborhood markets were mostly women. While some women prefer to come alone or with their children, others come to the market with their husbands after work hours and during the weekends. Knowing customers by their names, addressing them with kinship terminology, and developing personal relations is key to the success of stalls' daily sales. Stallholders and workers address those women who come alone as *abla* (elder sister) and *yenge* (sister-in-law) if they come with their husbands.

The use of kinship terms allows affectionate and intimate relations without sexual connotations, even though flirtatious relations between the sellers and customers were not rare. If they want to flirt and think that it is convenient, many young workers immediately shift to address the women as Ms. or Mrs. "*hanımefendi*" or with their names. Even in gigantic markets, Servet, Mustafa and Harun would try developing these relations since the business relied on personalized contact as much as the quality and prices of the goods. This aspect of work in the neighborhood markets would not only increase the bargaining power of the daily-wage workers in their negotiations with bosses, but also let the workers expand their social capital to start their own business and work for themselves.

In the evening Servet burned some of the old wooden crates, Servet's children, Mustafa, and I alternately warmed our frozen hands. Harun cleaned the greenery in large water containers, selling the leaves after getting rid of the mud. His hands were turning black and blue due to the cold weather; he did not approach the fire since the warming might have hurt more. In the meantime, we were trying to convince customers that this stall had the best vegetables among thousands of different sellers. Nineteen hours of work included tons of loading, convincing people, and selling goods at high speed, developing highly personalized relations with the customers, staying outside in the freezing weather during fall and winter. During short breaks, Servet, Mustafa, and Harun would go to the mosque to pray, leaving the stalls to Servet's children and me. Most of the time, we would eat as we worked. We hardly found time to talk, and most of the conversations were about the leader of their religious brotherhood and his miracles. Around 7 p.m., Harun and Mustafa started loading the bed of the truck with the unsold goods, empty crates and some of the heavy materials that were used to set up the stalls. It was almost 9 p.m. when we arrived back at Çeliktepe, almost nineteen hours after we had left the neighborhood.

Almost every worker and stallholder I met and interviewed in the neighborhood markets had a herniated disc or neck pain due to the enormous amount of weight they lifted, carried, and loaded during a workday. Harun's uncles Ali and Kerem, both in their 50s, had serious health problems due to the hard work conditions in the markets. His elder uncle Kerem was no longer able to work in the market, since his herniated disc did not let him carry anything or remain standing for extended periods of time especially during on cold days. However, he and his sons did not want to lose the many customers who knew and trusted Kerem for years. Since his doctor had told him to stop working, Uncle Kerem did not have a lot of options. Still he kept coming to

the market and engaged with customers as much as possible to help his sons earn more and to keep the costs down.

Most of the Kurdish stallholders like Uncle Kerem participated “part-time” in the market with the hope of deterring serious injury and health problems during or after their 50s. What they define as part time is to come to the market around 8 a.m. and to sell goods till evening (usually 6 or 7 p.m.) before the younger workers start unpacking the stalls and loading the trucks. In most cases, workers over the age of 40-45 would be regarded as *emekli* (retired) or *iskarta*, which literally means “discarded” or “waste” in Turkish. In some cases, they would go to the Bayrampaşa wholesale market for bargaining and drive the truck, but young family members, relatives or daily wage laborers would do most of the hard labor.

In the market place, I heard over and over that one’s youth is the time to earn money when one is still physically strong. Older generations saw younger family members as a source of security in a socioeconomic setting where the bodies of older workers *wear out* under the weight of years of labor. In the absence of health benefits, employment-based welfare rights, and a decent retirement, procreation was a future investment. I next examine the ways the unity of family is imagined and experienced by Kurdish migrant workers to understand how political and economic shifts are intimately linked to the organization of labor, kinship relations, and social bonds.

“The Unity of Family” and Gendered Appropriation of Value

Listening to the older workers and stallholders, I learned that the profitability of individual stallholders and wages has fallen consistently since the second half of the 1990s. Stallholders were no longer expecting to make huge profits on their own. While work in vegetable markets has always been associated with hard labor and dire working conditions, those who have worked in these markets used to make significant profits before the arrival of Kurdish migrants who came to the city with nothing but their labor. Most of the early migrants -Turkish and Kurdish- who moved to Istanbul during the 1960s and 1970s saw their labor in the vegetable market as a form of transitional work through which they would accumulate economic and social capital to invest in other sectors and buy their own houses. From the second half of the 1990s onwards, declining profits and wages in the neighborhood markets (for a similar pattern of decreasing real wages for workers in the Turkish economy during the 1990s, see Cam 2002), as well as the scarcity and booming costs of housing, drastically reduced the opportunities for upward mobility for new migrants, especially during the 2000s.

Hüseyin, a Turkish worker from Kastamonu in his late 40s who had been working in the neighborhood markets for the last three decades, explained the decreasing profits. His narrative reflects a shared sentiment among the Turkish stallholders and workers in the neighborhood markets.

This is an extremely difficult occupation, there is no future here. In the past, those who had stalls used to buy apartments and construct their own houses in 8-10 years. After that they were dealing with their hernias in the neck or disc, yet at least you knew that you earned enough for your family. At least your kids didn't have to be workers in the market anymore. With the 1990s, there has been tremendous migration. The ones who came started to work for very low wages. And that was the end of our occupation. Look, the

market is full of kids now. How would you make money? The guys would bring the workers free of charge. They decide on the prices of goods and do their business as such.

The uncertainty of the future of the occupation was the other main reason that most of the Turkish *pazarcıs* got out and started other businesses or found jobs in different sectors.

Neighborhood markets had been established during the 1960s by municipalities in response to demands from neighborhoods. Stall places were given without payment to people who demanded that job. From the 1960s on, stallholders would acquire a document from the municipality to claim the right to use the stalls. The municipality would keep stallholders under surveillance and get money from them for municipal services like maintenance of the stalls and daily cleaning. However, this document was not a certificate of ownership. It simply documented the right to use the stalls among third parties. The first groups of stallholders did not pay anything to the municipalities. However, they could rent their places out with these documents; there is no more space for new entrepreneurs in most of the neighborhood markets. New entrepreneurs who want to rent a place to work in the bazaar can apply to the General Street Markets Vendors Chamber. The municipalities can technically abolish these documents arbitrarily without making any payment to the vendors/merchants in the market. Since they don't have any definitive legal status, the stallholders live in a constant state of uncertainty.

Several other factors also contributed to the decrease of profits in the markets since the late 1990s. First, the rise of supermarket chains brought further competition to neighborhood markets, reducing profitability. Although this was not the case in luxury bazaars, in big neighborhoods like Kağıthane and Sarıyer supermarkets lowered the prices of vegetables and fruits by more than half on the days of neighborhood markets. Second, the uses of credit cards made shopping in the supermarkets easier for the urban poor. Third, owners of supermarkets

forced district municipalities to abolish neighborhood markets and contributed to the making and circulation of public discourses on the dirt, mess, and disorder of these markets.

~ ~ ~

In *A Conveyor Belt of the Flesh*, Utku Balaban (2011) analyzes the contribution of urban dynamics to the proliferation of informal industrial labor practices in Istanbul by focusing on a factory, three sweatshops, and a home-based work network in the garment industry. Balaban ethnographically demonstrates how family labor is used in a sweatshop owned by two Kurdish men in Bağcılar (2011:193-207). Both owners of the family sweatshop were Kurdish migrants from Diyarbakir, whose villages had been evacuated by the Turkish military forces and who were forced to migrate during the second half of the 1990s. One of the owners started working at a sweatshop immediately after the forced migration while the other tried his luck at the wholesale vegetable and fruit market – yet he quit that business due to fierce competition and gun fights. Although the dynamics and work organization of the garment industry are quite different from the vegetable and fruit markets, opportunities for social mobility are similarly imagined through the collective work of family members among Kurdish workers. Balaban writes: “To own a sweatshop is the dream of most [male] apparel workers. In the case of Kurdish workers, this dream becomes a collective project for all family members: They see the sweatshop not only as a means of [limited] liberation from proletarianization, but also as a venue where they can have autonomy from the inequitable labor market” (2011:208). Yet when the scope of the production in this family sweatshop requires the employment of unrelated workers, the atelier turns into a larger production unit where women become the first to be sent back home and male members of the family become foremen in the organization of work.

In the neighborhood of Çeliktepe, the domestic work of women enabled the existence of working family units. Breakfast tables prepared during late night, pre-prepared lunch boxes and sandwiches, many forms of domestic work, and daily care of children were crucial parts of women's labor. Female domestic work would constitute the conditions in which the male Kurdish workers could reproduce their labor power. Mothers and elder sisters shouldered almost all of the responsibilities of children in large Kurdish families. For young Kurdish women, the domestic work was coupled with the requirements of informal jobs in the textile workshops, sweatshops or home based work networks. Their incomes, although a matter of debate among Islamist circles and religious families, made up a significant part of the income of the families. I did not have access to the women's work since I did my research in a more conservative setting in which any relation with the sisters or wives of Kurdish migrant workers could have been perceived as inappropriate. Most of my requests to interview them – let alone engage in participant observation -- had been ridiculed and rejected by the male workers. It was not common among the male workers to acknowledge their sisters' economic contribution to the family during our conversations and interviews, and I listened to several Islamist workers criticizing other families who let their daughters work on religious grounds.

I heard many stories about exploitative fathers, uncles, and male cousins who took advantage of their children's and women's domestic labor in the market. On one hand, there were the stories of men who lost their family's savings on poor investments, or wasted their money gambling or cavorting in taverns. In our conversations, most of the young workers who didn't work with their kin emphasized the importance of staying away from kinship relations due to exploitative relations in the family. On the other hand, I heard stories of families who succeeded in accumulating wealth and investing in profitable sectors and getting out from the

grip of poverty and the inequitable labor market – although these narratives were not as common as the first type. In both of the narratives, elder men (fathers, uncles, and elder brothers) *appropriated* wealth. Even in stories of upward social mobility, the increasing wealth of the family would not create substantial changes in the lives and working conditions of women and young men.

In one of the earliest economic anthropology studies of Turkey, anthropologist Jenny B. White (1994) discusses family labor in the organization of piecework and small-scale commodity production in Istanbul's squatter districts. While the percentage of working women was increasing due to the worsening of economic circumstances among the working classes and middle classes during the 1990s, Islamic discourses on "good" Muslim wives regarded work outside the home among strangers as a morally suspect position in Turkey. For White, it was the conflation of women's labor with their traditional identity that enabled the formation of a loyal workforce, keeping production costs low in working class districts of Istanbul. Female workers were considered daughters, wives, mothers, and neighbors, not workers. Although these moral standards enabled women to contribute to the wellbeing and income of the family by providing additional income, the burden women carried increased while they created high profits for distributors, intermediaries, merchants, and exporters as well as fathers, uncles, sons, and other men of the family. The surplus value of women and children's labor was extracted by the male members of the community under the name of solidarity and reciprocity.

White's critique of existing research on family labor and small-scale commodity production is twofold. On the one hand, she criticizes the tendency among scholars to situate the household and family relations in contrast to market relations. On the other hand, she argues that the family does not try to maximize the benefits of its members in total. Rather the family is an

institution involving inherent tensions and contradictions among members. “The relations of production in small-scale production in Istanbul are *not* based on aggregate group ownership of labor power and the means of production. Rather, they are based on the right of the group to have use of (usufruct rights in) the means of production and labor power of its individual members” (1994:154).

For White, the logic of kinship as euphemization of the relations of labor and a heightened solidarity among the exploited and the exploiter characterizes the moral economy of production in small-scale commodity production in households, piecework, and ateliers in textile industry. The tensions and contradictions of Islamic discourses and material conditions, for White, result in the de-valuation of women’s labor and exploitation of their labor. Yet as long as the relations of labor in individual production, piecework, and atelier labor were euphemized as the expressions of group identity and solidarity, they were counted as morally and socially legitimate among the working women according to White. My question is not that of legitimacy, but of the sustenance of unequal and exploitative relations and gendered appropriation of value in the unity of family labor.

In the aftermath of forced displacement and dispossession during the 1990s, work with one’s family became the medium through which Kurdish migrants of Istanbul found a place for themselves in the economy. That was one of the reasons that against the expectations of modernization theorists the size of Kurdish families in the working-class neighborhoods did not get smaller through urbanization. However, “the unity of family” was not only a mode of survival for the Kurdish migrants in Istanbul. Ethnographically, it was also means of gendered appropriation of value, not only men’s appropriation of women’s income and production of relational value, but also powerful men’s appropriation of younger men and children’s income

and production of relational value. The material appropriation of value and symbolic domination among kin (biological, fictive, and religious) generated tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions in these relations. To explore the contradictions and ambiguities in the formation of this social milieu and economic space as experienced by daily-wage workers as well as the ways people deal with these tensions, I return to the market place once more.

Living “As If”

Harun worked with Servet for a couple of months. Towards the spring of 2014 the elder members of the Harun’s family (Sert family) asked him to stop working with Servet and start helping his cousin Bayram in the market. They asked him *as if* Harun would be working *with* Bayram instead of working *for* him. This word choice mattered since they are relatives (cousins) and also Harun was older than Bayram. It was a hard decision for Harun. From the outside, he seemed to be doing well with Servet. Servet let him pray and would pay him regularly. Yet virtues of hard labor and honesty did not translate proportionately into income or a change in his status. As Servet’s profits increased significantly over time through Harun’s hard work, Harun’s apprentice wages did not increase even a little, as he had hoped. Harun did not want to drive to the wholesale market almost every night of the week, something Servet demanded. While he could earn 90 liras (approximately 45 dollars at the time of my research) for a day that began at 2.00 a.m., apprentices working in the bazaar between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. would earn between 60-70 liras (35 dollars) depending on their experience. That difference of 20 liras (10 dollars), was not “worth giving up sleep” for Harun. Yet Harun had to do the driving for Servet. Servet was also criticizing Harun for smoking too many cigarettes – an affective symbol of manliness

among the workers, which was also a significant cost for stallholders, since they were expected to pay for the cigarettes of their workers.

Harun never argued with Servet in the workplace, coffeehouse or the religious order. He acted as if there was no problem. He told stories about his own repentance and how Servet helped him. He was telling people that Servet was not only a boss, but also religious kin to him. He would approve every single critique Servet offered with exaggerated symbolic gestures, telling him “you are right, brother.” (He would use the word *abi*, which means elder brother in Turkish. It is regarded as a sign of respect and social proximity.) Yet Harun kept smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. He also made Servet wait in front of his house when they would go to work in the middle of the night - telling him that he could not wake up. Harun told me that the fact that his praying (thus breaks from work) lasted longer than those of Servet made his boss nervous. For that reason, Harun told me that Servet warned him a couple of times in person. But since Servet was a respected figure of the religious order, it was not socially legitimate for him to voice this critique more strenuously in front of others. In our private interviews, Harun was overtly critical of Servet for taking advantage of their religious brotherhood and social relations engendered by the Menzil community. When I would meet him on Tuesdays, the only day he had off during the week, Harun told me how Servet was taking advantage of their relationship, exploiting his labor, and not letting him acquire a social milieu in the market.

Discrepancies between Harun’s critical discourses and practices, his public performances, and our own interviews revealed to me a way of living “as if” in Istanbul. I often observed this discrepancy between the actions and thoughts of Kurdish workers in Istanbul’s service and construction economy and came to understand it as the key to their economic subjectivities. This divergence is key to understanding the ways different modalities of relatedness affect the making

of the labor market and hierarchies, extracting economic value, and transforming the market. This discrepancy contrasts with the ethnographic and sociological descriptions of workers' subjectivities in Turkey. The misrecognition of a social reality (i.e. relations of labor exploitation, material appropriation, and symbolic domination), one that is not recognized and acknowledged by the interlocutors, yet revealed and made intelligible by anthropologists and sociologists, is key to these studies (White 1994; Durak 2011). The characteristic aspect of this body of literature is the claim of practitioners of social sciences to reveal the truth of mystification within labor hierarchies, to unmask the relations of domination and exploitation euphemized under relations of family, religion, and nationality. My interest, however, is *not* to reveal the truth of the mystification of the relations of exploitation and domination, which are legitimized and justified through euphemization and misrecognition in sociological models. Instead, I seek to uphold "an equality of intelligences [by] rejecting the division between those who know the world and those who must simply struggle to survive it" (Biehl and Locke 2017:29). As James C. Scott (1990) poignantly argues, the inevitability of an unequal relation of power, be it domination or exploitation, says nothing about its legitimacy or justness in the eyes of subordinate groups.

In the working-class districts of Istanbul, as in Elyachar's description of workshop life in Cairo, it is clear that "neither 'the gift' nor 'the market' is an adequate concept with which to think about what is at stake" (2005, 140). Value, in Istanbul's neighborhood markets, lies not only in "extending the self through ties of interdependence" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1987:197), but also in mastery of mobilizing different modalities of relatedness for work (Elyachar 2005) and in the ability to handle the immanent tensions and contradictions of these modalities as epitomized in the ambiguous politics of "as if." Control over the labor force is not only a market

mechanism but also a question of survival for the Kurdish migrant community of Istanbul. However, in a resource-poor context in which fragile and temporary work patterns, health problems, and an enduring economic indebtedness are significant aspects of everyday life, the familial, communal, and religious forms of control of laboring subjects both intensify the feelings of debt and obligation, and frequently make these relations unbearable (see also Han 2012).

The self is always simultaneously enmeshed in multiple social relations, writes anthropologist Clara Han in her ethnography on neoliberal Chile. The market forces, state violence, political changes, and economic precarity are not external forces that are merely imposed on the selves. They are experienced in sets of relations that include the possibilities of solidarity, cooperation, and reciprocity as well as the threats of fraud, moral pressures and shame. Han describes her ethnography as an attempt to consider these lives “in their singularity” (2012:169) with particular attention to time. Focusing on time and relations, her ethnography elucidates the ways “specific institutional arrangements of state and market are lived through these relational modes” (2012:234). These relations, Han argues, entail the possibilities of hope and solidarity as well as denial and disconnection.

As I learned from my ethnographic research in Istanbul, the issue at stake is not false consciousness or the misrecognition of the truth of material appropriation and symbolic humiliation by Kurdish workers. The practical necessity of entering into exploitative kinship-labor relations and reinforcing an appearance of ethical submission in its absence characterize the politics of living “as if.” As they profit from it, impoverished Kurdish workers perform ethical submission notwithstanding their critical attitude. This mode of existence is not only critical to economic survival. Living “as if” has a political force of its own. It turns the work

relations and everyday life into sites of practical and constant negotiations. It allows the Kurdish migrant workers to navigate amongst different principles of different forms of relation making and rules of market, making use of their ambiguities and indeterminacies yet not preempting the possibilities of self-defense and resistance. On a plateau of multiple, diverse, and contradictory world-making forces, and ethical-political discourses on how to relate to others (urban markets, political Islam, and the Kurdish movement to name a few), an “as if” mode of existence allows them to strategically move between these multiple claims to truth as these movements show the very fabrication of the truth and false. This ethnographic reality is in stark contrast to Karl Marx’s definitions of capitalist relations in which we do things without being aware of them.

If the politics of “as if” characterize the moral imagination of relational value production (through family labor and other forms of relatedness), as well as its immanent tensions, contradictions, and ambiguities, escapes constitute the limits of this form of politics. These escapes and swerves, however, are also subject to mechanisms of social and political control, and they can help one grasp the trajectories of affect and control (Deleuze 1995). Discrepancies between Kurdish workers’ practices and ethical discourses, and the ways they deal or fail to deal (or refuse to deal) with these discrepancies, have significant social and political consequences. Ethnographic attention to these discrepancies offers understanding of the ways a worker asserts his particular desires, a particular form of life into undifferentiated abstract human labor, thus living labor’s contradictions, ambiguities, and escapes.

~ ~ ~

In his critique of political economy, Karl Marx locates the illusion of abstract labor at the base of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production. “Labor in general” means abstract human labor, made possible with the emergence of capitalist wage labor. By the act of

exchange, the social character of labor comes into play; “we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labor, the different kinds of labor expended upon them” (1978:322). Equivalence between different kinds of embodied labor is reduced to abstract human labor. And the exact measure of equivalence is materialized in money. Value appears *as if* it is an attribute of commodities and the money appears *as if* the money itself is productive. For Marx, capitalist relations are axiomatic relations; they are more concerned with actual practices rather than beliefs. “We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it,” (1978:322) notes Marx.

Value, for Marx, is expressed as a relation between things rather than persons via things. In Marx’s theory of labor, abstract labor means the general source of wealth, and interests of capital, while living labor denotes the poverty and the needs, demands, and desires of workers. The antagonistic logic of the capitalist mode of production is the conflict between the tendency of capital to reduce living labor and increase surplus value and the tendency of living labor to increase necessary labor and the significance of needs and desires, namely the conflict between the capitalist valorization and self-valorization (Read 2003).

In *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present*, philosopher Jason Read argues that Marx’s analysis owes as much to Ricardo as to Hegel. “The Hegel side corresponds to the interchangeability, the reduction of diverse bodies to units of abstract labor, while the Ricardo side refers to the potentiality and flexibility of labor power: its ability to exceed the given” (2003:76). For Read, living labor in Marx’s thought is an operative framework and critique of the idea that “human beings are primarily ‘*homo laborans*’ and [it] seeks to undercover the historical, political, and cultural transformations that have reduced human beings to ‘organs’ of labor” (2003:76). While living labor contains the seeds of resistance and

subversion in the production processes, without its domination and exploitation would not be possible in the capitalist mode of production. “Living labor confronts abstract labor as its internal condition and its constitutive outside,” notes Read (2003:82). The dependency of capitalism on the laboring subject and its need to control and discipline that subject constitute the complexity of the problem of labor.

In his critique of Marx, Slavoj Žižek argues that when people no longer believe in the ideological presuppositions regarding truth. For him, the problem of labor is no longer a question of masking reality. In his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, he situates ideology, fantasy and illusion at the center of the construction of social reality. There is no clear line of demarcation separating ideology from what we experience and articulate as reality in social life. Žižek argues that “misrecognition of the social reality is part of the reality itself” (1989:25). Ideology is already at work in everything we experience in the cultural and symbolic order. By revealing the ways ideology is at work in the construction of reality, Žižek makes a decisive move away from Marx’s focus on the one-sided illusion of knowledge to the double illusion of activity and knowledge. “The illusion is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of reality itself, of what the people are doing. What they do not know is that their social reality itself, their activity, is guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion. What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity” (1989:29-30).

Following Jacques Lacan’s definition of the unconscious and of the relation of the unconscious to the mystical basis of authority, Žižek claims that “the lesson to be drawn from this concerning the social field is above all that belief, far from being an ‘intimate,’ purely mental state, is always ‘materialized’ in our effective social activity: belief supports the fantasy

which regulates social reality” (1989:33). Reality is founded on the repression of these unrepresentable and non-symbolized social divisions and antagonisms. “The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel” (1989:45).

Among Kurdish workers of Istanbul, living “as if” does not provide an escape from reality. Nor does living “as if” construct social reality as an escape either. On the contrary, it is a way of facing social antagonisms and divisions and yet living with them. These antagonisms are key to the social relations and production of relational value that are of crucial importance to the uprooted lives and migrant labor of the Kurdish workers in the city.

In the context of my research among Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul, the ambivalence of these relational modalities, their potentialities, promises, and collapses generate a politics of pretense. Even during times of familial crisis, disregard and disconnect, most of the Kurdish workers would not criticize the foundational values of these relations. Harun never brought up how he was humiliated by his cousin Ramazan in his family. He did not talk about the ways he was exploited by Servet in the religious order. Some days he talked about these problems with his fellow workers, peers, and me. From a long-term perspective, his ethical submission to the moral economy and labor hierarchies in the present would enable him to demand material appropriation and symbolic submission from his kin, religious brothers, or friends in the future, or as he put it, when his turn comes. That expectation was key to the politics of “as if.” It did not legitimize or justify the hierarchical relations of exploitation for the Kurdish workers, but it can help us understand the endurance of these relations and their contradictions that generate affects, swerves, and escapes.

Servet was surprised and angry with Harun since he had not expected him to quit work. The spring was coming and the volume of transactions was increasing in the vegetable markets. During spring and summer, stallholders would need more workers. The changing seasons increased the bargaining power of the workers and helped remake social relations and labor hierarchies. In Servet's eyes, Harun had betrayed him. However, Servet was a powerful man. After two weeks, he brought two new workers to the market. One was from the Menzil community, and the other one was one of his nephews. For Harun, his escape from Servet was a temporary relief. He told me that he was tired of working without sleep and acting as if Servet was a good boss. However, he added that it was not Servet's personal fault. His exploitation was an inevitable price of working for others according to Harun. "There will always be more people to pile the work on people like us. If you don't have unity in your family, others will exploit you anyway."

Due to the history of displacement and dispossession, Kurdish workers typically saw kinship relations as the most appropriate route to find work among other modalities of relatedness. The accumulation of the economic and social capital and the route to upward mobility depended on "the unity of the family," and the mutual support of the family members and relatives. Harun's hard labor, strong bonds with his social milieu and the plasticity of social relations in the neighborhood and the religious order allowed him to find a job outside his family network, to earn his living, and to criticize his family for the lack of unity among his relatives. However, he felt compelled to turn back to work with his family, this time with Ramazan's younger brother Bayram. Harun quit his job with Servet and started *helping* Bayram. His experience with Bayram did not help Harun either. His long depression, escape into the world of drugs, and healing through repentance in a Sufi order is the topic of the next chapter.

Interlude

MOURNING HASAN AND HARUN'S ESCAPE

June 17, 2014 – My phone rings. It's Ali. He asks me to come to Çeliktepe. "Ramazan's nephew Hasan died. Everyone is at the funeral. People will head back in an hour. You may want to come." I ask him whether he knows the cause of Hasan's death. "I don't know yet. They told me that he died at work," Ali says. After a moment of silence, he adds, "They told me that his father, Kenan, isn't doing well. The kid was only seventeen years old." I immediately head over to the neighborhood. After the funeral, the male members of the community meet at a coffeehouse which functions as a community center for residents of Bitlis, a Kurdish city in southeastern Anatolia. Located on the ground floor of a building in a working-class district, the coffee shop transformed into a makeshift funeral parlor whenever someone from the community died.

The first person I see is Ramazan, the uncle of the deceased young man. In his late 30s, Ramazan has become a close friend of mine and introduced me to his family and the Kurdish community in Çeliktepe. In front of the building, Ramazan is crying his heart out. Over the course of the five years we have known each other, I had never seen him so sad and exhausted. We hug each other. I offer my condolences. Ramazan looks into my eyes with gratitude. He tells me that Hasan had been working for a construction company in Gebze, a district of Kocaeli situated thirty miles east of Istanbul, on the northern shore of the Sea of Marmara. "He was learning how to use a crane so that he would have a proper job in the future. They called us today and said that he got crushed under a crane. We brought his body and buried it here." The family doesn't know the details of the accident. Ramazan is angry. The bosses of the company, he says, helped them bring Hasan's body to Istanbul and were present at the funeral. "We will settle our accounts with them after the mourning," he says. He thanks me for coming. "Thank God, our

people came and did not leave us alone.” I leave him with other guests and walk towards the building.

Then I see Harun, Ramazan’s cousin, sitting on the steps. I had met him about a year ago at a meeting of the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi tarikat (*tariqa* in Arabic).²⁸ Ramazan had suggested that I go to these meetings to “witness the moral life of the Kurdish community.” Harun participates in the meetings of this religious order in his free time. Throughout the past year, he had been asking me to be a part of the Menzil community that has a strong presence in his neighborhood. As I approach him, I see that his eyes are red. He has a strange smile on his face. He looks at me, saying, “You were asking questions about our life, now you see it: This is our life.” He laughs out loud. I had gotten to know him well over the past year, since we spent a lot of time working at the vegetable markets and attending the meetings of the Menzil community together, yet there is something unfamiliar and unsettling about him today. He continues to laugh as people turn to stare at us. The way he laughs transgresses the boundaries of religiously acceptable behavior in a mourning house. I feel uncomfortable and go inside to participate in the prayers and to offer my condolences to Hasan’s father Kenan, Ramazan’s older brother.

Inside the meeting room I see Umut, İlhami, Bayram, and Aydın, Hasan’s younger cousins. Their ages range from 13 to 24. Like Hasan, they are daily-wage laborers, who work without any health benefits or social protections. They know that what happened to Hasan could

²⁸ The Arabic word *tariqa* (plural *uruq*) means a spiritual path, a mystical method or system associated with a great Sufi master. However, a relatively large number of only loosely related branches may be associated with one *tariqa*, as in the case of the Naqshbandis. In common parlance, the term is also used for these branches, not for the path only. From now on, I will use the English term *order* when referring to the Naqshbandis, and the term *community* when referring to the subsections of this order. My informants mostly refer to the Menzil branch of the Naqshbandi order as the “Menzil community” (*Menzil cemaati*) or “Menzil order” (*Menzil tarikati*) and I do not change their usage in the interviews.

very well have been their own fate, too. They are crying for their cousin as they prepare the space for the members of community who will visit the family during the three prescribed days of mourning. They shop for food, prepare tea, and clean the small room next to the meeting room for prayer. Every time a new guest or a group enters the room, an imam recites the opening chapter of the Koran, and the community repeats it silently. I do the same. Immediately after the recitation, İlhami brings me a cup of tea. I ask him about Harun's behavior, wondering whether he was close to Hasan. "This happens to him sometimes, don't worry. I will tell you later," he says. I drink my tea slowly and try to catch Kenan's eyes so that I can talk to him. It takes a while for him to see me in the big meeting room. He walks toward me and asks: "If it is our fate, what can we do?" This is a question that I came to hear more often during my fieldwork. Hasan's death and his father's despair fill me with intense sorrow and indignation. Yet I can't find the right words to express my feelings. I feel as if my words would not mean anything. I keep silent and nod. We hug each other. Like his brother Ramazan, he thanks me for coming and being with them. After a moment of silence, I walk out for a smoke with the others.



Hasan's parents and the elders of the Sert family continue to receive visits from their relatives, villagers, fellow workers, friends, neighbors, and Kurds from Bitlis and other cities. I stay there until dinner then leave the mourning house together with Osman, who is from the same village as the Sert family, and a fellow worker at the vegetable market. Like the Sert family, Osman was also compelled by state violence to leave Bitlis with his family during the forced migration of the 1990s and came to Istanbul totally dispossessed. We start walking uphill towards the neighborhood. The steep hill is full of concrete buildings and is grey like the rest of the neighborhood. Children use the streets as their playground. We talk about Hasan on our way.

I had seen him once at the vegetable market, when he came to help his cousin Bayram for the day. I remembered him as a shy and respectful young man. Osman confirms my account of him. We remain silent for a while and walk until we arrive at the coffeehouse. We sit outside and order two cups of lemonade. He lights a cigarette: “We have lost many of our children this way. We have lost so many of them. We lost the best ones.” While I expect him to talk about these “work accidents,” the sudden death of the young man instead brings back the memories of a mass killing in Bitlis during the violent 1990s. He says,

Once the soldiers killed 22 guerillas. Before burning down our village, I remember how the soldiers came over to our village and asked us to bury the guerillas they had killed. They had killed them all. When we went there, we saw that all of the bodies were disfigured. I was ashamed of my humanity. You wouldn’t have been able to look at them. We built walls around them and made a mass grave. If you were to go to Bitlis now, I am sure it is still there.

June 18, 2014 – I go to the place of mourning in the morning. The guests will come later. Ramazan and his uncles Kerem and Ekrem (Harun’s father) are talking nervously to each other in front of the building. I go inside. Bayram approaches me and says: “Harun came earlier. He was high *again*. His eyes were red. He tried to come inside, but Uncle Kerem got really upset. He took Harun outside and beat him up. Then we sent him back home.” He explains to me that being high in a place of mourning is a sin that goes against the will of God. Although I knew that Harun used to do drugs before joining a religious order, I still found it surprising, since I had come to know him as one of the most pious young men in the order. He had spent months convincing his relatives, friends, and me to come to prayers and join the religious conversations. He participated in almost all of the gatherings of the order. “He started taking bonzai again,” explains Bayram. “That is why he was behaving so strangely.” Bonzai is a very cheap drug, a synthetic cannabinoid akin to “spice” in the United States. I hadn’t realized Harun had started

doing drugs again. The older disciples of Menzil community always presented him as a successful example and a role-model penitent, one who saved himself from drug abuse after joining the religious order.

The Sert family is a big family in Çeliktepe. The place of mourning has been full of people coming and going for three days. Since most of the men in the family worked at the vegetable markets in Istanbul—some as stallholders, some as daily wage laborers and some both—they had access to a huge socio-economic network. Servet, a friend of Ramazan, and a fellow worker in the market, is in his late thirties. He and Aydın are smoking and talking about Harun. Rumors of Harun's behavior spread quickly. Aydın, a drug addict and fellow laborer in the vegetable and fruit markets, works two days a week so that he can smoke weed and bonzai during the rest of the week. Criticizing Harun's transgression of moral-religious norms, he says, "One should know how to behave in a community." Servet gives a sign of approval. Aydın goes on, "I won't lie, brother. I have been a worker for years and this is the first time I am hanging out with our people. People are surprised when they see me here." He tells me that he has been using drugs every day for a decade, but that he now understands the importance of having a community. "During the funeral and mourning, our people never left us alone. People watch each other's backs. They care about each other. You see all these guys who come from different parts of the city. The way Harun behaves is a disgrace to our family."

Servet and I are both puzzled about Aydın's interpretation of the mourning and the ease with which he and Harun seemed to have changed their roles in the community. However, we were both familiar with this kind of performance among Kurdish workers. We know that roles can change multiple times in contradictory and unexpected ways. Servet contributes to the conversation by explaining the importance of being together and standing in solidarity for the

community: “Our people help each other, they find jobs for each other.” He recently bought a house and proudly tells us how much money he borrowed from the community. While Servet gives a detailed account of the budget, Aydın gets bored and lights cigarettes, one after another. “The most important thing for me is the people you hang out with [*çevre*]. Look, I could find money for another house in two days, but our community has no tolerance for those who do drugs, drink alcohol or gamble.” Since Aydın has lost his interest in the conversation, Servet changes the topic and asks me questions about his children’s education. Servet had started working and earning money at an early age, and he is afraid that his son will also lose his interest in education and leave school early, like the other kids in the neighborhood: “When our boys find money while they’re still young, they go nuts and do stupid things. I am afraid that he will end up the way I did. You see our life.” He is worried about the future of his children and doesn’t want them to end up like him, a worker at constant risk of potentially fatal work accidents.

June 19, 2014 – For three days, Harun’s father tries to find him a job at a supermarket or a grocery store through his connections. He is worried that daily-wage labor is giving Harun free and unstructured time to do drugs. The weddings and funerals in which the community members come together are regarded as the most convenient occasions to find jobs or business partners. Harun comes back that afternoon. He had been planning to get married in early July to his uncle’s daughter. He does not talk about what happened yesterday. He looks very sad. “We cancelled the wedding and are only going to have *mevlüd*,”²⁹ he reports. “It will be more

²⁹ During special days (circumcision ceremonies, the fortieth day following a death, or the return from pilgrimage) as well as sacred nights, the *mevlüd* ceremony (also spelled *mevlit*, *mevlüd*, *Hasan*, from the Arabic *mawlid*) involves the recitation of texts narrating the birth of the Islamic prophet Muhammad within a certain musical form (*makam*, *maqam*). In this context, it refers to an evening of speeches (sometimes carried on late into the night) concentrating on the life, virtues and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad. The Kurdish *mevlüd* text was written by Melayê Batê, a native of Hakkari.

appropriate this way according to our religion.” It is as if someone else is talking through him. I look at him, confused. “And cheaper,” he adds, smiling cynically. “Why did you start doing drugs again?” I ask. He looks at me as though he is looking far into the distance: “I wanted to escape.”

Chapter 3

HEALING THROUGH REPENTANCE: SUFİ ORDERS, DRUGS, AND KURDISH MIGRANT WORKERS

In the Naqshbandi Lodge

“Our life is an ordeal,” said Harun. It was my first day at the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order, toward the end of 2013. After three months of doing fieldwork with Kurdish migrant workers and several invitations from my interlocutors “to witness the moral life of the Kurdish community,” I went to the Menzil community’s lodge (dergâh) after a long day of work with Harun’s brother İlhami. I first met Harun at the lodge. He asked me questions about my research and myself. As he had already heard a lot about me from his cousin Ramazan, he was very curious about the specifics of my research. After hearing the details of my research on Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul, Harun defined Kurdish life in Istanbul as follows: “What Kurds go through in Istanbul is an ordeal. We take on the most difficult jobs. We do the work that nobody else is willing to do.” He paused, and posed a question with an expression of great pleasure in his face: “Will you write a book about us?” I smiled and said yes. He immediately started telling his own story:

The 1990s were so difficult. We could not speak our native language. I was nine years old when we first came to Istanbul. I would sell lemons at the neighborhood markets. I would put lemons, garlic, and parsley in the pockets of my apron to sell. Whatever problems there were in the city, they would blame it on the Kurds. One day, someone stole a woman’s bag at the market, and the cops gathered all of the Kurdish children who sold lemons. They beat us all until they found the thief by chance. I have been working for 20 years and I already feel old. And the difficulties that we have to endure are not even worth it.

“What has changed since the 1990s?” I asked. Harun kept silent for a moment. “In the past, these Sufi lodges and Koran classes were not allowed by the government. They either

didn't exist or operated secretly. The current government let them work freely, so now we get to practice our religion freely. These places have become our social outlet. We hold on to them.”

The Menzil community has separate lodges for men and women in almost every working-class neighborhood in Istanbul. The one that I visited during my fieldwork was for male disciples and was located in a residential area on a steep hill in Çeliktepe. It comprised two stories of an old building. *Sufis*³⁰ used the ground floor for prayers and the Naqshbandi practice of *sohbet*,³¹ which is a religious conversation under the guidance of an authorized deputy (*vekil*) or religious teacher (*molla*) who has received official permission (*icazet*) from a sheikh to teach an order. Other Sufi rituals, including ritual invocations (*zikir*) or the specifically Naqshbandi practice of “binding one’s heart to the master” (*rabita*), also take place here.

Down in the basement *sufis* come together, to eat, smoke tobacco, and drink tea, sing religious songs and hymns, dance, have non-regulated religious and worldly conversations among each other, or continue their *sohbet* with the deputy. The kitchen, restrooms and multiple sinks where people perform ablution are also located on this larger floor. Inside the large hall where people meet, there are shelves for the religious journals and books sold by the order. Moreover, in a refrigerator were dairy products, honey, olives, and similar items for sale. These products also come from the *Semerikand* conglomerate, a corporate group that belongs to members of the Menzil community.

³⁰ Sufi (Sofi): As distinct from the general definition of the term as a follower of a mystical form of Islam, among Kurds, the term is generally used for the members of the Naqshbandi order and can also be used for old and pious men.

³¹ *Sohbet* (Arabic *suhba*) is a significant devotional practice in the Naqshbandi order. It consists of “keeping the company of the shaykh and of one’s fellow disciples in accordance with precise behavioural norms” (Algar, 1992, 213). Anthropologist Brian Silverstein (2008, 121) termed *sohbet* as “companionship in conversation.” Drawing on his research among the followers of the İskenderpaşa community of Naqshbandi order, he argues that in the Sufi practice of *sohbet*, “the kinds of relationships formed in the act of the oral transmission of texts and their interpretation are considered liable to constitute a morally structured disposition in the devotee and are the object of careful cultivation” through what he proposes to call as “disciplines of presence.”

The disciples and the irregular visitors of the lodge were mainly members of the working class, the unemployed, and craftsmen. As I learned over the course of my fieldwork, the Menzil lodge has particular importance for the temporary Kurdish migrant workers, since it is a meeting point that helps them maintain ties of solidarity with each other and to acclimate to the urban environment. There was stark opposition between the daytime and the evenings – as well as nights. Even though many times over the course of the two years I saw the *sufis*, particularly the older men, having conversations throughout the day, constantly refreshing and rebrewing tea, it was mainly during the evenings that both of the floors were crowded with workers who came to pray, eat and drink, and listen to the *sohbets*. I was told that the teachers who led the *sohbets* were educated in the *madrasas* (school of higher religious education) in the village of Menzil near Adıyaman, a Kurdish city in southeastern Turkey, and in the *madrasas* of Samarkand in Uzbekistan, a city that gave its name to the television, radio, and business conglomerate owned by members of the Menzil community.

Most of the time I visited the lodge after long workdays with Kurdish workers -- following them from their workplaces to the hub of their leisure hours. The number of participants changed significantly depending on the social and political context and seasonal intensity of work for the daily wage laborers. However, at least fifty men would join the prayers and *sohbets* almost every evening. The Kurds and (non-Kurdish) migrants from the Black-Sea region of Turkey constitute the main body of the disciples (*mürîd*) of the Menzil community in Çeliktepe. Although massive rural-to-urban migration changed the dynamics of social organization and the terms of recruitment, kinship relations and local or regional ties still occupied a crucial place in the organization of the Naqshbandi order.

In the cultural and political landscape of this urban working class neighborhood, the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order has a strong reputation for “curing” the ill, and healing the social outcasts of the city. The Menzil community differentiates itself from the rest of the religious communities and Sufi orders in Turkey, by being the only one that accepts drug and alcohol users, gamblers, and people with criminal records of theft and murder. One day Harun and I were walking on the streets of Çeliktepe and saw a group of followers of the İsmailağa community of the Naqshbandi order, who are known for their long beards and “Islamic outfits,” their radical critique of modernity, and their Islamist militancy. At the time we saw them, Harun was trying to convince me to become a disciple of the Menzil community myself. Looking at them, he explained the difference between the communities to me: “What our people do is to straighten out the bent nails; they [İsmailağa] just hammer straight nails into the wall.” His metaphor of the bent nails referred to the urban poor, members of the working class, the unemployed, and the social outcasts of the city who did not cultivate their inner selves according to the Islamic teachings and practices. In contrast, the straight nails indicated those who live and practice according to Islamic morality and mode of conduct, and who struggle for the good and future of Islamic Ummah. Men from lower classes who experience problems with drug use, habitual drinking, urban nightlife, and gambling are asked by (or forced by) their families, mostly after getting caught by law enforcement, to visit Menzil lodges.

Epidemiological data regarding substance abuse in Turkey is a recent undertaking with limited data and findings. When Turkey was heavily invested in the process of European Union ascension, statistical data concerning drug use, drug-related crimes and associated incarceration, as well as public health impacts of drug consumption began to emerge. Just as the Justice and Development Party (AKP) began its rise to power, the European Union sponsored the Turkish

Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (TUBIM) -- a branch office of the Directorate General of Security. State reports produced between 2006 and 2014 indicate a rise in drug addiction and consumption, especially among the urban poor and the youth.³² The key findings of TUBIM's reports were the dramatic lowering of ages when children were first exposed to drugs, the rising rates of overdoses, and the alarming rates of addiction.

Although there are significant criticisms of the reports concerning the validity of their claims, selection and use of primary data and demographics, and inconsistent measuring figures, newspapers began to tout dramatic increases in drug use in their headlines (Evered and Evered 2016). In their powerful analysis of TUBIM reports, critical geographers Kyle T. Evered and Emine Ö. Evered (2016:9-11) reveal the extent to which these reports suggest erroneous impressions about the scale and scope of Turkey's drug problem. However, these reports and their selective circulation in the media outlets generated a public effect of political urgency, they argue, "without rigorously evaluating root figures/trends asserting their exigency" (2016:10). Thus, drug addiction turned into a grave problem for Turkey at the discursive level, and the government's war on drugs (also on alcohol and tobacco) gained further legitimacy through the production of statistics and scientific data.

As media headlines pointed to increasing consumption of synthetic marijuana, (especially bonzai) after 2013, much of the charity work carried out by Islamic orders became linked to the "war on drugs." Some of these orders started to operate as spiritual treatment centers for marginalized and working class drug users. In this chapter, drawing on two years of anthropological research, I ethnographically document stories of depression, drug use, and

³² In TUBIM's 2011 research with more than 11 thousand respondents, it was found out that "being in the 15-24 age group, being male, being single, having an income less than 500 TL (<200 Euros or 250 USD at the time of the study), using tobacco, alcohol and unprescribed drugs [all] increase the risk of drug addiction significantly."

spiritual recovery among the Kurdish migrant workers of Istanbul during their attempts to escape the pressures of their urban work lives. Through the analysis of these narratives and participant observation at the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order, I focus on the prevalence, historical roots, and healing practices of Islamic orders, with an eye to the ways people craft new forms of religious and political subjectivities in the context of dispossession, political violence, and substance abuse. Specifically, I explore the politics involved in the formation of these “para-infrastructures” (Biehl 2013) and the therapeutic roles they take on to fill a gap in the state’s care for drug users. Departing from the anthropologists of Islamic movements and Sufi orders, who turn the study of Islam into a critique of Western liberal secularism and associated notions of agency, I situate healing practices, moral economies, and ethical formations in Islamic orders of Turkey in a larger framework of political economy and history.

Located at the nexus of the medical, political, and religious, these healing practices provide a relatively unexplored and fertile terrain of investigation in anthropology and the social sciences. Through ethical practices, cultivation of pious subjectivities and collectivities, journeys to the Menzil village and rituals of repentance, the Menzil community aims to control the *dangerous* classes of the city, discipline their labor power, and contain Kurdish dissent as a part of the Turkish state’s project to control the urban Kurdish population. These mechanisms of discipline and control, however, are open to contestation, resistance, and escapes.

In many (if not most) scholarly works on Sufi orders and their followers, pious selves and religious subject formation form the focus of the study, while the social, economic and political dimensions of Sufi lives are largely missing. This absence usually produces one of several contradictory results. Western academic and popular accounts feature romantic descriptions of Sufi spirituality, arts, and ethics, in which scholars discover radical alterity or a distinctive and

almost revolutionary ethics that transcend social and moral horizons (Mittermaier 2014a, 2014b). At the other extreme is the problematic image of an unquestioning, uncritical, and obedient follower of religious authority (Bruinessen 1992). My critique of these works diverges from recent anthropological accounts that emphasize the ways Muslim subjects cultivate virtuous selves through devotional practices and obedience to religious authority (Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006). Unlike these approaches, my aim is not to recuperate Muslim agency through their obedience to religious authority.

In contrast, I present pious subjectivity cultivated in an Islamic order *not* as a stable plateau to be reached regardless of the historical and socio-economic context; but rather as an elastic and intersubjective ethical form that is highly responsive to the political and socio-economic circumstances of “as-if” migrant living. It is only through the exploration of these circumstances among the multiplicity of ethically available languages and political discourses, that one can understand the contours and formation of pious subjectivities. As Harun’s stories of depression, drug use, repentance, recovery, and multiple escapes reveal, pious subjectivity can also be a biographical moment or defining period in one’s social life, and it, therefore, has to be situated within its connections to time, space, and politics.

Drug Use and Spiritual Recovery

In Çeliktepe, drug users and alcoholics are expected to join the Menzil community, to repent for their past sins, and to become productive and docile members of their communities. Most of them take a twenty-hour-long bus journey from Istanbul to the Menzil village of Adıyaman to

see the community's Kurdish sheikh, *Sayyid Abdülbaki Erol*, and to do penance (*tövbe*), a public expression of conversion to a more pure life and a foreswearing of all sins. These buses leave from various neighborhoods of Istanbul on a weekly basis and take disciples of the order as well as urban outcasts to the heart of the Menzil community. Every week, different district municipalities provide buses for the Menzil community to go to Adıyaman. For Çeliktepe, the AKP-led Kağıthane municipality provides the buses. The district municipalities of the AKP government are known to enjoy powerful relations with the Islamic orders; they provide services such as these tour buses, help the poor members of the orders find jobs, and award public tender to the companies of the disciples. However, it is not only the Islamist government party, but also the secularist-nationalist Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Turkish far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) that provide buses in the districts and the cities they administer. With the notable exception of the pro-Kurdish Leftist People's Democratic Party (HDP), three out of the four political parties represented in the Turkish parliament strive in this way to establish strong ties with the religious orders. Since 1945 with the beginning of the multi-party era in Turkish politics, writes historian Feroz Ahmed (1991), the Islamic orders historically collaborated with the right-wing populist, nationalist, and/or Islamist political parties depending on the political context.

The Menzil community's struggle against substance abuse goes back to the 1970s when the sheikh first opened the doors of the order to drug users. However, the political and public support for the order today that I describe in this chapter should be located in the present moment of the Turkish state's war on drugs in the post-AKP era. Several TUBIM reports (2007, 2012, 2013, 2014) and Turkish parliament's reports (2009) on substance abuse proposed awareness raising campaigns for the Ministry of Education, incorporation of anti-drug messages into

sermons for the Directorate of Religious Affairs and for the imams, and promotion of family and moral values for the Radio and Television Supreme Council. There has been encouragement for more direct use of other state social services and appropriate NGOs. As the 2009 report of the Turkish parliament on substance abuse makes clear, “In society, those people and institutions who aim to fight against evil are the real friends of the nation and the state” (TUBIM 2009:32).³³ State discourses about the urgency of the problem and the relative weakness of state institutions’ capacities and infrastructure to handle substance abuse characterize the present context in which the Menzil community’s mission to fight against drug use among the urban poor and young migrant workers has become prevalent.

An overwhelming majority of the Sufi disciples in the Menzil community used to be drug users. Almost all of the conversations that I heard at the lodge included tales of the miracles (*keramet*) performed by the sheikh, stories of sinful pasts, and narratives of transformation into moral selves. People told detailed stories of drugs users and alcoholics healed by the sheikh. They told stories of couples, who had difficulties having babies and found a miraculous solution in the sheikh’s lodge after many failed attempts with medical doctors. Harun’s brother İlhami repeatedly told the story of the serious accident that took place on the road to Menzil in which *magically* nothing happened to the sheikhs’ followers. The journey to the Menzil village constitutes a significant temporal threshold in the lives of the sufis. It marks the beginning of the eradication of their ignorance and bad habits, as well as the moral education of their sinful desiring selves (*nefs*). Repentance (*tövbe*) has to be done in the presence of a sheikh or deputy, to whom one becomes a disciple from then on. Those who do not have the time to go to Adıyaman

³³ The report of the parliament is bilingual, however there are many mistakes with translations. In order to give a more accurate sense, I translated from Turkish. Here is the English version used in the original text: “In the society, the people and institutions who aim at fight to harm are real friend of nation and country.”

repent in the presence of the local deputies in each lodge, although the deputies suggest they become enlightened with the holy spirit of the sheikh as soon as possible.

The penitents tell their stories with passion and love in the intimate space of the lodge. The Menzil community provides a large social network and helps create a web of spaces and alternative forms of sociability for the sufis. As people begin to flow into the lodge in the evenings, all the sufis perform service for their Muslim brothers in the lodge. For sufis of the Menzil community, service (*hizmet*) to each other means service to God, and it is the ultimate aim of these sufi disciples. Some prepare the food, some wash the dishes, some brew the tea, some fill the tea glasses over and over; as they share the stories of the day with the aim and expectation to teach and learn moral lessons.

The sense of companionship that Cemal Kafadar, the eminent historian of the Ottoman Empire, describes in his reading of the diary of a Naqshbandi dervish in the seventeenth century is still alive in a Naqshbandi lodge of a working-class district of modern Istanbul. Sufis of the Menzil community in Çeliktepe, as in the diary of the dervish, appear “to have drawn an intense pleasure in human solidarity, in being with brethren” (Kafadar 1989:147) in a shared and close-knit social universe. Similarities in sufi practices across centuries are striking. The sense of companionship and communal harmony, pleasure in human solidarity, and partial withdrawal from the material social world appear to be the characteristics of Naqshbandi orders not only in the diary of Kafadar’s dervish in Istanbul in the seventeenth century, but also in the fieldnotes of an anthropologist in the twenty-first.

Kafadar portrays the feeling of the dervish and the overwhelming sense of the communal harmony in the order as follows: “If unique personal experiences of a mystical nature are not recorded, perhaps it is because for our diarist the true path to the good life lies not so much in

individual experiences as in communal harmony—a sensibility that was rather common in Sufism which, even though it valued a certain degree of asceticism and occasional withdrawal from social life, did not condone rupture from society as in Christian monasticism” (1989:147). As in the Kurdish coffeehouses that I described in the first chapter, sufi lodges are social spaces that connect bodies, jobs, resources, and news among Muslims. Sufi communities constitute networks for social relations, political and economic connections. They not only provide shelter for the poor during the cold days of the fall and winter but also offer opportunities for upward mobility. Unlike the coffeehouses, they also provide free food and tea alongside uninterrupted religious conversations. Following a formal religious conversation (*sohbet*), supplicatory prayers (*du'a*) are recited. Then they recite the *hatme-i hacegan*, “an invocation of the memory of earlier pious personalities, with special emphasis on figures in the Naqshbandi order’s chain of initiation” (Silverstein 2007:42), and practice *zikir* (recollection of God’s names). Sufis then move to the ground floor where they can roll their tobacco, drink tea, and have more mundane conversations with their friends and other sufis. Within a few minutes, they have emitted a thick cloud of cigarette smoke that lingers in the air for hours.

On one such evening when I attended the Menzil lodge, the sufis began singing songs and dancing for their sheikh. Harun sat next to me and started talking about the Menzil community and his life: “This is the only place we can be happy. We can’t control ourselves outside. You know, we are young. People talk about women in the coffeehouse. They go after prostitutes. Everybody you see here used to be sinners. For example, I myself used to do drugs in the parks. Some of them were alcoholics; some of them were thieves. But it is good here. It is nice, *inshallah*.”

I asked him how he realized that he was leading a sinful life. “I felt that something was wrong,” he said. When he started to offer me more spiritual answers, I insisted on my original question. Seeing my dissatisfaction with his answers, Harun rolled another cigarette: “You know, I first smoked weed. Then I started smoking bonzai and taking ecstasy. It is horrible; you start creating problems at work. Then you get fired and lose your job and money. Istanbul is a tough city, if you don’t work, your pockets will be empty in a week or two.” He took a deep drag from his cigarette, and went on: “Then my father got mad at me. Then he and my uncles asked me to come to the lodge. That is how I started coming here.” Harun’s story of drug use and recovery is not exceptional among those who frequent the Menzil lodge.

One night, three Kurdish boys between the ages of 15 and 18 came to the lodge. Harun winked at me, since they were from Diyarbakır, which is also my hometown and symbolic capital of the Kurds and Kurdish political activism. The connection to my hometown was a crucial factor in gaining access to my interlocutors during fieldwork. The three boys worked at a textile workshop in Kağıthane. One of them had been severely beaten by his father. All of them were sent to the order to find the right path. *Tarikat*, or sufi order, literally means a path or way and refers to the mystical, spiritual path taken by a number of disciples under a leader or sheikh to whom they pledge allegiance as their spiritual guide.

The boys stood in front of everyone and told us that they used to do drugs, and that they began doing drugs with their Gypsy (*Çingene*) friends. They told us that they used synthetic drugs like bonzai and ecstasy. When their pockets were finally empty, they took a cab and stole the driver’s money after beating him up. The taxi driver followed them and somehow found their address, after which they were summoned in to court. The young boys told us that they came to the Naqshbandi order to repent. One of them was still shaking with fear, probably a result of his

family's fierce reaction, the potential legal consequences of his actions, and the uncertainty of his future.

The deputy listened to the boys in front of everyone with rapt attention and started to talk very slowly: "Our Holy Perfect Teacher Gavs³⁴ tells us 'to be with the Sufis, stick with the good people, go to the foundation (*vakıf*), say your prayers, and carry out your rituals.'" Then he continued and posed a question: "Let's assume that I know medicine pretty well, that I'm a pharmacist, and let's say that I have a headache. You don't know much about medicine, but you also have a headache. What happens if we both take the same pill?" He glanced at the crowd and answered his own question: "The drug will have the same effect on both of us. It will cure us both. That is why we should listen to our Perfect Teacher. We should obey him so that our service to God is complete." The cure for social problems and addiction, for the deputy, begins with obedience to religious authority. Obedience is the *sine qua non* of the healing process as well as the inner cultivation of a pious subjectivity, and thus service to larger Islamic Ummah and God.

Seeing that the crowd was engaged, he explained the importance of being a part of an *order*, again using medical analogies: "Let's say I have twenty different types of pain killers. What would happen if I mix them all?" Without much of a pause, he proceeded: "I would feel sick, I would be poisoned! This is exactly what will happen to you if you go and listen to other sheikhs or other mullahs."³⁵ His analogy resonated well with those who were there to be healed,

³⁴ *Gavs* means the one who has deep knowledge and is willing to help others find the right path. Many times I heard that during *rabıta* rituals, where the *mürıds* are expected to imagine themselves face to face with their sheikh, they imagine their sheikh with some holy light emanating from his face. In line with these practices, many students and the deputies of the Menzil community refer to their sheikh, *Sayyid* Abdalbaki Erol, as the Holy Perfect Teacher Gavs, or *Gavs Hazretleri*.

³⁵ Although I met a few people participating in the gatherings of different orders, "mixing communities" was not a common practice. Deputies and teachers emphasize the importance of following one sheikh and obeying his authority in their lessons and sermons.

who wanted to (or were forced by their families to) bury their past of razor cuts, drugs, coffee, smoking, marijuana, and adventures with sex workers.

The Ethics and Politics of Everyday Life

Human beings live by breathing, and we don't even acknowledge the importance of this natural state of being. The Naqshbandi principle of *hûş der-dem* is the recognition of divine presence in every single breath. For Naqshbandis, respect for every single breath and acknowledgement of Allah's divine presence is crucial to the Sufi path. We remember Allah in every single breath. We have to live our lives with the recognition of this principle.

An in-depth attentiveness to the presence of the Divine in the ordinary is key to the Naqshbandi order, as implied by these words, spoken by a *mullah* I saw at the Menzil lodge, implied. In the gatherings of the Menzil community that I attended, deputies and teachers focused on everyday ethics and ordinary concerns during the *sohbets*. The most significant ethical virtues that they aimed to cultivate had to do with refraining from the sins of the urban life, the importance of ritual purification, and attendance at prayers, as well as obedience to religious authorities. Once a month, teachers divided their sufi community into "honeycomb cells" (*petek*) of six people each and employed tests composed of twenty questions concerning Islam, worship, and the Naqshbandi order. The teachers were not happy with the results in general. On quiz days, teachers emphasized the necessity of literacy, the significance of religious education and wisdom. They argued that without reading the religious texts and contemplating their interpretations, one cannot practice one's religion *consciously*. However, even they did not really expect the disciples to read those texts. They told me that this was the case in most of the poor neighborhoods. Harun, his brother İlhami, and some of my other interlocutors would ask

me to buy the community's books and journals both to help the order financially and for me to learn about Islam and the Naqshbandis more properly. In doing so, they referred to my position as a researcher, and my connection to the university and the world of literacy. They would call themselves and the other disciples "ignorant" for not reading the religious texts. They would also make jokes about their grades in secular educational institutions in the past.

Unlike the orders that had middle-class and upper-class disciples and followers, textual transmission through journals and books did *not* constitute a significant part of the transmission and circulation of the religious knowledge among the disciples of Menzil community in Çeliktepe. It is mainly through the *sohbets*, prayers, and religious practices conducted under the guidance of the deputies that they cultivated their pious selves. The face-to-face conversations, discussions, and debates about correct practice constituted a significant part of the religious training of the Menzil community. Religious and ethical concerns such as how to perform ablution, how to pray, how to act within the community, how to behave in front of the elderly, how to obey the religious authority of the learned teachers and deputies, how to interact with relatives, strangers, and women, how to use social media, how to understand the tattoos of the young generation, how to manage urban life, and shared business transactions of the disciples or their laboring experiences were the daily topics in congregational *sohbets* and private conversations. The Naqshbandi order, among other Sufi orders, claims to transmit and circulate the wisdom of better (i.e., "more Islamic") way of doing things. In this regard, these conversations involve examples from the lives of the Prophet, the Caliphs, and the saints or sheikhs who belonged to the Naqshbandi chain of spiritual authority leading back to the Prophet.

Like the other Sufi communities and orders, the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order follows a "discursive tradition," as Talal Asad (1986) noted in his now seminal essay on

the idea of an anthropology of Islam. Discussions about the ways Muslims act—the determination of what constitutes morally good and bad practices—always make reference to the tradition of the past. To belong to a tradition, as Brian Silverstein put it (2007:40), “involves sincere commitment to the value and normatively binding character of past precedent and to the validity of the discussions and debates received from the past.” However, discussions and moral judgments about correct practices change over time through engagement with the changing world and ongoing sets of discussion. Stasis is not a characteristic of tradition.

In the tradition of the Sufi path in general and Naqshbandi order in particular, this space of interpretation of the past (which includes the re-reading of sacred texts and the re-interpretation of the lives and practices of holy figures) for the here-and-now includes vast and endless cultural and political creativity, and is of crucial significance for the adaptation of the Sufi path to immensely diverse geographies, temporalities, and political orders. This elastic space of interpretation (and re-interpretations) of the ethics and politics of everyday life and moral Islamic conduct both depend on the dynamics of the relations of the sheikhs (and their authorized deputies) to their followers. The ways these interpretations take shape and are implemented have significant consequences for the disciples of the order.

In the Menzil community, drug and alcohol users are also included in the “honeycomb cells,” in which everyone is responsible for each other. The penitents are expected to hang out with the more experienced Sufi disciples or madrasa educated mullahs even when they are not at the lodge. These combs create a powerful surveillance mechanism and extend the relations formed within the order to the outer social world. The elder and more committed members of the cells stay in communication with the families of the repentant members to check on their situation. However, the Menzil community does not regulate the population of working-class

neighborhoods and cure addiction by means of surveillance mechanisms alone. They also try to change the ways the social outcasts of the city think about themselves and others through the *sohbets*, prayers, ethical training, and more broadly through the communal harmony and sense of companionship within the order.

However, these techniques of spiritual treatment have their own material, political, and affective limits. As in Harun's escape from the norms prescribed by the order, the death of a young cousin in a "work accident," extended periods of unemployment, fierce family problems, transgression of gender roles with the participation of female relatives in the urban workforce can subvert the ethical training in the order and the surveillance mechanisms that extend beyond the lodge. People with whom I worked during my research opened different ways of imagining political subjects. They were not merely overdetermined political subjects of ethnic oppression, economic subjects of their laboring processes, or pious subjects of religious orders. Amongst the multiplicity of contradictory political discourses and ethically available languages (of the masculine world of the streets, of the Kurdish political movement and its anti-colonial discourses, of religious orders and Islamic movements, of social mobility and yearning to become middle class urbanites), people creatively filled a space of maneuver. As in João Biehl's and Amy Moran-Thomas's ethnographic descriptions of their interlocutors' lives, my ethnographic characters "break through forms and foreclosures and define a kind of subjectivity that is as much about swerves and escapes as about determinations" (2009:282). However, as Biehl and Moran-Thomas aptly put it, these lines of flight and creative actions can become deadly as much as vital forms of experimentation.

There is a stark contrast between the way Menzil disciples treat drug and alcohol users on the one hand and the state's biomedical models of substance abuse treatment on the other. In

Menzil, a typical recovery story is not only an individual narrative of transformation that follows a linear trajectory from addiction to abstinence, but part of a collective becoming in which most members share similar (hi)stories. A remarkable feature of the Menzil community, however, is that the teachers avoid the language of moral shame and stigmatization associated with uncontrolled substance abuse, and instead think of the healing process itself as a precondition of being part of their own community. During the informal conversations that take place outside of *sohbets*, disciples tell each other their own stories of substance abuse and sexual adventures with great pleasure and masculine pride. However, these stories feature dramatic turning points after disciples' past selves inflicted harm on loved ones, parents, wives, and children.

In this discourse, substance abuse and sexual adventures are naturalized as significant elements of an ignorant youth and a desiring masculine self that all share. The shared quality of their dangerous and sinful pasts unburdens them of individual responsibility. One is expected to repent from his past sins and become a responsible member of the community from the point he enters the door of the Menzil lodge. As soon as he enters the door of the lodge, the question for the penitent becomes the moral education of the sinful and desiring self. Spiritual recovery stories are narrated with gratitude for the sheikh, deputies, and other members of the Menzil community. The commonality of masculine pasts and the liminal period of recovery bring "spiritual brothers" together and help form this close-knit social universe. This moral education is supposed to take a lifetime and there is no expectation of totally eliminating the sinful self; deputies and teachers emphasize that the sinful self can only be controlled. They may suggest a radical break from their pasts of ignorance, addiction, and other mistakes, yet neither the deputies nor the teachers of the order expect immediate miracles. Most of the repentant members escape, "going back to their sinful lives" in a couple of weeks or months (as the three textile

workers from Diyarbakır would go on to do), and only some of them come back to the Menzil lodge.

Over the course of two years, I witnessed many young men like Harun moving back and forth between substance abuse and the spiritual treatment of the Menzil community. Many disciples left the Menzil community in favor of pursuing their desires for nightlife, the underground economy, and substance abuse; or they left disappointed by the hierarchies of social relations and implicit political discourses in the order. These escapes are of importance to the spiritual healing practices and public discourses of the Menzil community. If the order can cure anyone who has depression, drug or alcohol use, it becomes another miracle of the sheikh. The penitent turn into moral examples for the rest of society, and through their temporary or permanent recovery, the Menzil community further legitimizes its existence and mission. If the penitents fail and go back to their “sinful” lives (or simply escape from the order), teachers and disciples of the order consider these failures and associated problems in these individuals’ lives as the natural consequence of the ignorance of the drug users and the degeneration of Islamic values in modern society, not a result of factors inherent to the community. In the context of substance abuse and the Turkish state’s war on drugs, the negativity of drugs and their effects in the making of the social are of crucial importance. The negative as materialized in the forms of drugs, overdoses, and incarceration comes to be the ground on which social relations and political connections are built.

The generosity of the sheikh and Naqshbandi order, seen as a sign of God’s benevolence to him by his followers, is crucial to the Menzil community’s discourses of their war on drugs and spiritual treatment of the drug users. The economic, social, and therapeutic functions of the order, the deputies and the teachers argue, are the miracles of the sheikh and gifts of the Menzil

community to the global Islamic community (*Ummah*). So was written on a signboard located next to the door: “*Bilen bilir, söze ne hacet. Gelene ardına kadar açıktır kapımız, Bilmeyenler gelsin, bulsun muhabbet*” (Needless to say for those who know, our door is wide open to whoever wants to enter. Those who don’t know us should come and find *muhabbet* [affection, conversation and love] here). Menzil is not the only Sufi group that preaches generosity without reciprocity, or what might be called the “free gift” in anthropology.

Is Free Gift Possible?

In her essay “Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: The Egyptian Uprising and a Sufi *Khidma*,” Amira Mittermaier explores the ethics of giving and Islamic charity at a Sufi *khidma* in Egypt. In Arabic and in Turkish, *khidma* (Turkish *hizmet*) generally means “service,” but in this Egyptian sufi context, the word specifically refers to “a space where food and tea are served and guests find a place to rest and sleep,” what might be referred to as an *imaret* or *zaviye* in the Ottoman context. In her interrogation of the practices of giving, and alternative modes of relationality and “modes of being in the world” at the *khidma* of her interlocutor, Mittermaier argues that the kind of giving evidenced in the simple act of serving food practiced at the *khidma* “differs from everyday acts of hospitality” and “runs counter to the logic of reciprocity” (2014a:56). The Sufi practice of giving, she claims, exemplifies a radical orientation toward the present that does not entail “the logic of sustenance and productivity” (2014a:64). In the context of the Egyptian uprising, the *khidma* and its mode of giving can illuminate a different meaning of justice, she argues. The simple act of serving food to whoever walks through the door is the expression of what she calls an “ethics of immediacy”: “Here food is connected to *baraka*, divine blessings,

and sharing food means becoming enmeshed in social relations and spiritual communities. The food that is shared is neither regulated nor calculated. It is about the here and now, not a better future” (2014a:64).

In the Sufi practice of giving and the ethics of immediacy, Mittermaier finds in the *khidma* of her interlocutor Nura a *free gift* that runs counter to the logic of reciprocity and obligation:

The kind of gifting enacted by Nura is provocative because it evades the logic of reciprocity so often highlighted in the anthropology of the gift. While Marcel Mauss called for a society in which “the rich should come once more, freely or by obligation, to consider themselves as the treasurers, as it were, of their fellow-citizens,” Nura’s embodied ethics is even more radical by refusing the very distinction between rich and poor. To her the point is not attending to the Other as an Other, but being enmeshed in social and spiritual relations... Giving is not based on an endless growth of the market but relies on God’s generosity (*baraka*) [2014a:72].

What we cannot learn from her essay is the answer to a very simple question: Where does the food come from? The reader never learns the source of the free gift or the material roots of God’s generosity. Is it Nura’s personal wealth? If so, is her wealth limitless? Does she get the ingredients for the food through the alms and personal donations she collects? Does her sheikh financially help Nura? These are the questions that remain outside the scope of an embodied ethics of immediacy where “mutual care, sharing, openness, generosity, and attunedness to Others” (2014a:68) prevail. It is also not clear what the social effects of Islamic giving are, and how they relate to the articulations of social justice in Egypt. Mittermaier argues that Nura never expects gratitude from the poor, but the reader never learns how the poor feel as a result of these practices of care. Do they feel indebted? What are the results of these alternative modes of togetherness on the poor neighbors of Cairo’s cemetery neighborhood, “in which over a half million people live in and amongst tombs?” (2014a:54)

The gift is central to Sufi service. But organizing *khidma*, serving meals to whoever walks through the door, and arranging festivities during the larger celebrations of the religious holidays require considerable financial resources. In a variety of different contexts, the sheikhs provide sustenance to the needy. The economic well-being of the sheikhs traditionally owes a lot to private gifts, although this has been changing with the orders' incorporation into capitalist economy. The wealth of the sheikhs is a result of (and a reason for) their positions as mediators, arbiters, and political notables in diverse local and national contexts. Yet, followers and disciples consider the sheikhs' wealth to be a sign of God's generosity (*baraka*). In her detailed study of the multiple branches of the Khalwatiyya order (*Helvetiye tarikati*) in contemporary Egypt, Rachida Chih explains the success of a local branch of the order in terms of the multiple social, economic, and therapeutic roles played by the sheikh in the context of the failure of the state to fulfill these functions. She argues, "whereas the state has been failing as a provider of social security and of redistribution, the shaykh has stepped in and assumed these functions" (2007:32) in the successful development of a rural branch of the order in Egypt.

Chih shows that the management of the sheikh's religious authority and symbolic capital, which he may turn into material capital, is redistributed among his faithful followers. Sociologically speaking, this takes the form of a patron-client relationship: "The shaykh protects the interests of the village and in exchange the people show him their recognition and allegiance" (2007:33). In short, the allegiance between the sheikh and the disciples relies on reciprocal adherence to a contract.³⁶ In this light, the euphemism of the "free gift," the dismissal of the

³⁶ Chih's description of these multiple forms are illuminating. "In the Khalwatiyya, there are also different degrees of attachment to a master. One can be the *murid* (disciple, pl. *muridin*) of a shaykh or simply his *muhibb* (devotee, pl. *muhibbin*). At the moment of affiliation, a *murid*, a person who commits himself to the mystical path, concludes a pact (*'ahd*) with his shaykh and submits himself to the master by an oath of allegiance (*bay'a*). The term *'ahd* can also mean "contract," and the term *bay'a* carries the connotation of an agreement between buyer and seller, as Denis Gril has explained (1996:92). The *murid* thus submits himself to the shaykh and through him to the Prophet and to

larger political context in which the Sufi *khidma* operates, and the social effects of the relations within the *khidma* on the poor enable the construction of the radical ethics of *khidma* that Mittermaier's examines.³⁷

Present forms of Islamic giving to the poor -both public, through the state and municipalities, and private, through business empires- coincide with the restructuring of the welfare arena in Turkey. Scholars attribute the growing presence of faith-based organizations in the Turkish welfare system to “an increased demand for social assistance occasioned by economic liberalization and deregulation; and the predominance of religion in the political sphere after the 1980s and the subsequent restructuring of social policy under the rule of pro-Islamic political parties” (Göçmen 2014:99). In his detailed and comprehensive analysis of welfare provision in Turkey, sociologist Erdem Yörük argues that to contain the Kurdish unrest the state's social-assistance programs are directed disproportionately at the Kurdish minority and the Kurdish region of Turkey, especially to the internally displaced Kurds in urban and metropolitan areas. The Islamist AKP government, Yörük notes, “seems to give social assistance not simply where the people become poor, but where the poor become politicized” (2012:538).

Similarly, during my fieldwork, I encountered many Kurdish migrant workers who felt obliged to vote for the government party since a change in the government could end the social assistance they receive from the state (especially in the form of help for the elderly, the ill, physically disabled family members, and natural gas heating during the winter). In the context of economic restructuring and the rise of poverty and youth unemployment in Turkey, state-based

God. The shaykh commits himself in exchange to guiding the disciple on the path but also to protecting, supporting and helping him” (2007:27).

³⁷ In another essay “Beyond compassion: Islamic voluntarism in Egypt,” Mittermaier presents a *distinctive* Islamic ethics of giving. For Mittermaier this kind of Islamic voluntarism is beyond given social and moral horizons, and can help with a “critique of the liberal, humanist, and universalist underpinnings of compassion” (2014b:520).

Islamic charity not only produces an economically dependent population, but also furthers political subjection through patronage and indebtedness. Kurdish migrant workers who became penitents did not see social assistance as a right of citizenship or as a function of the welfare state. On the contrary, they interpreted state assistance as a conditional gift that brings the obligation to vote for the government party.

~ ~ ~

In his classical work on the gift, Marcel Mauss ([1954] 2000) insists that there is no free gift. Each gift puts an obligation on the shoulders of the receiver to give back. In this respect giving is also a way of keeping and possessing. A gift that lacks a counter-gift constrains the freedom of the receiver by turning into a debt that is directly related to the prestige, wealth, and loyalty of both parties. It turns into a legitimate relation of symbolic possession through one's own material dispossession. A system of exchange, Mauss notes, both includes the economic in the narrow sense and exceeds its terms by reintegrating the discontinuous aspects of the social. Gift exchange, for Mauss, is religious, economic, juridical, political and aesthetic at the same time. Thus, the social system and gift exchange, for Mauss, can only be captured and grasped as a total system.³⁸

In a system of exchange, notes Pierre Bourdieu, “if the system is to work, the agents must not be entirely unaware of the truth of their exchanges, which is made explicit in the

³⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss claimed that it is this move of Mauss's, his imposition of the notion of the total social fact and his attempt to understand the social in its totality, that opened a space for “an *anthropology*, that is, a system of interpretation accounting for the aspects of all modes of behaviour simultaneously, physical, physiological, psychical and sociological” (Lévi-Strauss 1987:26). Lévi-Strauss appraises the value of *The Gift* as a book inaugurating “a new era for social sciences” (1987:41) by opening up a place for the complex investigation of the total social facts and their systemic character. Although this is a big step for the social sciences and theory making, Lévi-Strauss argued that Mauss could not productively exploit the results of his own contribution because he raised the Maori *hau* to the status of a general explanation in the exchange of gifts. The *hau*, characterized as the spirit and the moving force beyond the circulation and exchange of things by Mauss, was turned into “an emotional-mystical cement” (1987:58) that becomes a means to overcome the contradictions inherent in the system of exchange.

anthropologist's model, while at the same time they must refuse to know and above all to recognize it" (1977:6). It is *as if* the practices of the agents are organized in such a way that the truth of their practices is concealed from them. All exchanges function as ideological machines by legitimizing relations of domination -the state of affairs which are of unequal balance of power- "by transforming a contingent relationship into a recognized relationship." Bourdieu argues that the "as if" character of social reality and the collective misrecognition of the work of denial turn into "the source of social alchemy" (1977:195). The legitimization and the neutralization of the relations of domination take place through the ideological and practical effects of the mechanisms of misrecognition. The social reproduction of the relations of domination is bound by the official truth produced by the collective work of euphemization.

Bourdieu's model offers a productive critique of the naïve empiricism of restoring subjective experience as the truth of people's practices. An imagination for total transparency is a fundamental trap for the anthropologist: The desire to capture the indigenous subjective perception can lead the social scientist to conceal the relations of domination reproduced in the relations of exchange. However, euphemism is not necessarily a refusal to know or to recognize the truth of human practices; it can also be thought of as an effort to make harsh realities (i.e., political and economic inequalities, domination, oppression, alienation) bearable at a linguistic and cultural level, when people do not feel that they have the option to escape or to live otherwise. Instead of building a model of illusion (and misrecognition) in which our interlocutors refuse to know and to recognize the truth of their practices while anthropological models make systems of practice intelligible, I argue that it is through the divergence of what people do and what people say, that anthropologists can theorize the "as if" quality of life.

In this chapter, I am less interested in constructing a total social fact or a social structure implied in the models of Mauss and Bourdieu than I am in pointing to multiple and contingent ways in which Sufi orders, their devotional and spiritual practices, ethics of giving, moral discourses, and practices are tied to the larger socio-economic processes or political projects and located in historical contexts. Specifically, I focus on the contingent connections of the ethical to the political in a specific Sufi order, and explore the socio-economic and political effects of the Menzil community of the Naqshbandis at the present moment of a long history.

The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam

Talal Asad's seminal 1986 essay on the idea of an anthropology of Islam launched a proliferation of anthropological studies of Islam concerned with ethics and religion in modernity. In his essay, Asad criticized the literature on the anthropology of Islam and the underlying assumptions of the liberal-secular tradition: "I find it impossible to accept that Christian practice and discourse throughout history have been less intimately concerned with the uses of political power for religious purposes than the practice and discourse of Muslims" (Asad [1986] 2009:5). Asad's powerful critique of the scholars of the Middle East and his interrogation of the genealogies of religion opened a new way of thinking about Islam as a discursive tradition which connects practices with "the formation of moral selves, manipulations of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges" (1993:10). For him, "the world of Islam" is not a collective agent, it is an ideological construct and a discursive representation. And the way this discursive tradition is framed has political and epistemological consequences. Declarations of moral neutrality, writes Asad, have "no guarantee of political innocence" (1993:24).

After Asad, scholarly work on the multiple and contingent histories of Islamic tradition demonstrated that the bounded notions of religion and politics (as well as the separation of the public and the private) are themselves the products of specific historical processes in the Christian world. This literature demonstrated that locating religion in the private, and thus the institutionalization of the distinction between the private and the public, are central to the functioning of liberal political culture (Silverstein 2008:119). Scholars (specifically anthropologists) of Islam turned, now, to the formation of moral selves through Islamic practices. The ways Muslim subjects cultivate the ethical self through practices became the focus of this new and critical literature (specifically see Mahmood 2005). After September 2001, this significant body of scholarship in the anthropology of Islam gained a new momentum to criticize the foundations of Western secular-liberalist thought, as well as American policies in the Middle East. In the intellectual history of the anthropological discipline, it was an important political intervention into the state of affairs in a time when Islamophobia had reached its peak in the United States.

This literature has also significantly contributed to scholarly and public discussions on ethics, religions, subject formation, and agency; however there has been an important drawback. This body of work has decontextualized the public effects of the Islamic movements in their own geographies. The ethical formations of Muslim subjects have been thought about in relation to the policies and the politics of Western secular liberalism. The subject formation and agency of Muslims are examined *as if* the recent rise of political Islam had nothing to do with Islamic practices, discourses, and ethics; without serious attention to the local and national power relations that create and/or maintain the social conditions in which Muslims live. In this regard, the effects of larger political forces and historical contexts that contribute to the rise,

refashioning, and remaking of political Islam remain largely absent in this body of work. The uncritical reception of decontextualized scholarship on Islamist movements also emphasizes a particular imagination of the Muslim other: the Other that has been taken out of its context and turned into a mirror in order to understand the construction of the Western self and to criticize the secular, humanist, and universalist underpinnings of Western liberalism.

The anthropological search for radical alterity and a distinctive Islamic ethics coincides with a remarkable disciplinary division of labor among the social sciences and humanities. Whereas anthropologists of Islam have recently focused on the study of ethics and practices, sociologists and political scientists have explored the reasons for the successes and failures of Islamist politics, mostly through electoral politics. The recent turn in the anthropology of Islam is a legitimate and necessary political intervention in the Western (specifically American) world to recuperate the agency of Muslim subjects in the context of rising Islamophobia and anti-terrorist rhetoric. By contrast, sociologists and political scientists examine the political discourses of Islamist movements, their ideological hegemony, organizational capacity, provision of social services, reputation, and various structural factors. Specifically, such studies explore the organization of physical infrastructure, local networks, cellular organizational structure, committed cadres, and financing (for recent reviews and critical interventions see Masoud 2014; Pepinsky et al. 2012; Cammett and Luong 2014). In an effort to integrate these two as-yet segregated kinds of inquiry, I pursue the intersection of the ethical and the political that remains largely unexamined, given the boundaries of disciplines and division of labor between social sciences and humanities.

Moral Education of Desiring Self (*Nefs*)

It was a Saturday evening in the end of February 2014. After an 18-hour workday at the neighborhood market, Harun, his cousin Bayram, and I were discussing what to do after work. Bayram's hands were red and full of cracks from washing and carrying tons of vegetables in the cold weather for hours. Like us, he was very tired. Yet he still wanted to go to Taksim, the center of Istanbul's nightlife. He wanted to walk around, have a beer, and probably see a sex worker. Harun opposed Bayram's idea vehemently. "My uncle gets angry that Bayram spends all his money on stupid things: Internet Café, bars, girls, etc. And you know, these are sinful." He suggested we go to the Menzil lodge. Bayram became convinced after he realized that Harun might mention his secret trips to Taksim to his father. It was almost 10 p.m. when we arrived at the lodge. When we entered the room, an old mullah was already giving a sermon: "Your *nefs* is your essence. It is your inner self that always rebels against God. It is your sinful self and your biggest enemy. One can educate his *nefs*, and you have to learn to live with it."

After this brief introduction, the mullah turned to the part of his sermon that dealt with the practical application of this concept: different types of orgasms and the ways of purifying oneself after orgasm, the most important ritual of cleansing the body. The young men in the audience immediately started making fun of the situation and talking about their unconventional orgasm stories. One young Kurdish porter explained that semen would come out of his penis while he carried very heavy items. There were multiple interpretations about intentionality, yet he was asked to perform ablution each day after the work, and not to pray without performing the ablution. One young construction worker gave the example of having an orgasm simply after seeing attractive women in public transportation. "It is the devil that appears in the form of

women,” said one of the leading figures of the community, repeating a very common way of thinking about women who do not conform to Islamic dress codes among the members of the Menzil community and other religious orders in the neighborhood. As the giggling among the young workers increased, multiple stories of orgasms abounded. “It is normal,” the mullah responded. “You are young men and you get excited about city life, but one has to think about the afterlife too.”

In most of the gatherings and *sohbets* of the Menzil community in which I participated, the key issue was the regulation of everyday practices, the disciplining of one’s desires, and moral education of one’s *nefs*. *Nefs* is an Arabic word; it is used in the Qur’an, and has a prominent place in the Sufi tradition of Islam. In its noun form, it means soul, self (used as a reflexive pronoun), psyche, one’s inner self, spirit, mind, life, essence, nature, inclination, appetite, proclivity, and personal identity. In the verb form, it means to seek, to desire, to strive, to aspire, to compete, to fight, and to struggle. Unlike anthropologists, my interlocutors and deputies of the order were interested in defining an essence of the self. The masculine self, in the Sufi description, is regarded as a sinful and desiring self that will bring a person to complete destruction unless educated, repressed, and kept under control. The solution, in the Naqshbandi order, is to follow the right path of the sheikh and other learned Sufis, and to become a new self through one’s attachment to the religious leader and participation in the religious community.

In the social gatherings of the Menzil community, which are held almost every day after the prayers, the hilltop neighborhood Çeliktepe is depicted as an ethical minefield for young people. It was described as a neighborhood confined on both sides: “It is a trap,” said the mullah. “On the upper side you see the brothels, splendid buildings, and immoral women. On the lower side, there are drug dealers, gambling houses, and street gangs. You are young, you are ignorant,

you want to have those things. But don't go astray. It is the Naqshbandi path that will help you find the right path." The way he describes women refers to their secular clothing and outfits. However, his critique also entailed a component of social class: His description of brothels refers to the business districts, skyscrapers, and expensive stores with rich customers.

Seeing Bayram's hands turn black and blue in the warm room, Harun sent him downstairs so that he could rub his hands with cold water. He turned to me. "You see our situation," he said. "Nobody would want to work like us. We take refuge here. Our life is difficult. Yet still I thank God. Those who take the right path have to carry a bigger burden. This is our fate; it is how our Almighty God tests us." The moral education of *nefs* entails being contented with one's own livelihood for the urban poor in a highly divided city. Çeliktepe is ten minutes' walking distance from the tallest skyscrapers, business districts, and the most expensive shopping malls in the city. In their everyday life, the young workers see how the rich live. The moral education of *nefs* requires thanking God for what you already have. It teaches the urban poor and the working class to live frugally, to accept their inevitable fate and come to terms with the belief that the order of things is not easy to change. For the Kurdish migrant workers, this moral education refers to the disciplining of any desire, temptation or escape that is disruptive for the social and political order.

Joining a Sufi order can also bring spiritual authority or material wealth for the poor who don't have other forms of capital. Many times I witnessed that those who did more service for the other sufis, community, and God were the poorest young migrant workers and the unemployed. Becoming the follower of a powerful sheikh can turn into a means of gaining some status and religious authority without addressing or questioning the worldly structural

inequalities or becoming a follower can lead to socio-economic upward mobility through economic and political connections (Bruinessen 1992; Yavuz 1997).

The mullahs who come to teach religion to the workers and social outcasts of the city are extremely careful about developing a sensible relation with drug addicts, thieves, and the “immoral,” with the aim of including them both in the order and the moral community of the order. Considering drug addiction, fornication, and gambling as the greatest sins that any young man can succumb to, the Menzil community calls for repentance and for the restoration of communal order. Through ethical practices, cultivation of pious subjectivities and collectivities, journeys to the Menzil village and rituals of repentance, the Menzil community tries to control the *dangerous* classes of the city and regulate any desires that may be disruptive to the moral and political order. And it is not the only institution that does so.

Aside from being considered as immoral among the Muslim communities, substance abuse and addiction also prevent the social reproduction of labor power. As Harun and other repentant followers in the lodge told me, after they started doing drugs intensively they were not able to continue in their labor-intensive jobs. However, most of the displaced Kurdish families and the families of temporary migrant workers rely on the salaries and remittances of their young children in the city – one of the key distinctions between the Turkish and Kurdish working classes that I discussed in detail in the second chapter. Most of the Kurdish men work the most difficult and labor-intensive jobs without any insurance or health benefits. After 25-30 years of hard work, many of them are no longer able to work in these highly labor-intensive jobs. Child labor is another important strategy for the economic survival of many Kurdish families and provides them a competitive advantage. In that respect, reproduction is seen as a future investment in the absence of social security and health benefits.

Most migrant workers find their jobs through relatives, or work together with family or community members. These trust relations are embedded in the ties of kinship and community, and demand productive, laboring bodies. Performances of masculinity and stories of sex, drugs, and gambling in the public sphere are counterbalanced by pious stories of repentance, the values of a moral family life, and counter-narratives of social and personal decay, in both public and private spaces. The typical “success stories” that circulate among these institutions include moral lessons from the lives of repentant workers who succeeded and became good merchants and family heads after their sinful youths.

In working class neighborhoods of Istanbul, substance abuse and addiction are also forms of working class resistance to labor and fleeting escapes from the material difficulties of life. As Harun again and again told me, Kurdish migrant workers take on the most difficult jobs and do the work that “nobody else is willing to do.” Cycles of intense political violence and economic dispossession produce large waves of displaced people in the Kurdish region. Displaced Kurdish migrants constitute the lowest segments of the urban labor markets upon their entrance to the urban spaces in the Western metropolises of Turkey. The physical intensity of the hard labor, political violence against the Kurds in the city, and the substantial decrease in the opportunities for upward mobility as a result of the restructuring of the Turkish economy lead to escapes from work and resistance to urban laboring practices.

One day, I was with a group of Kurdish construction workers. They were smoking bonzai during their day off, and telling me not to smoke it since it is much stronger than weed and can harm me. I thought of it as a good opportunity to ask why they smoke it, a silent young worker at the age of twenty responded: “You see our situation. We’ve been crushed under the weight of the

world and crumbled into dust. What would *you* do if you were in our shoes?” The question lingered in the air for a while.

Kurdish migrant workers’ escapes, drug use and dependence are situated at the nexus of the intimate, social, economic, historical, and the political. “A society, a social field does not contradict itself, but first and foremost, it leaks out on all sides,” notes philosopher Gilles Deleuze ([1976] 2006:127) in his review of Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*. In contrast to Foucault’s conception of society, Deleuze emphasizes “the primacy of desire over power” ([1976] 2006:126). For him, society is made of lines of flight. There are all sorts of flows, financial, ideological, and material. Society, for Deleuze, “is something that is constantly escaping in every direction” ([1976] 2006:280). In his schema of thought, the question of power comes later. Escapes, flows and leakages are of crucial importance for power arrangements. Desire, Deleuze argues, is part and parcel of drug assemblages. In his exploration of pharmaceutical subjectivity in the Global South, João Biehl calls for new analytical tools “to address drug consumption and dependence as a combined chemical/intimate/social/economic matter and chronicle the particular ways historical changes and techno-political apparatuses coalesce around drugs and in the emergence of new kinds of subjectivities and social pathways” (2011b, 70).

In the context of the rapid rise of political Islam in Turkey, the moral education of *nefs* for drug users in the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order refers to a way of imagining and forming a moral and political community and disciplining the labor force of the urban economy. Furthermore, the ethical cultivation of obedience to authorities (religious and political) and loyalty to the Turkish state in the Menzil community helps contain Kurdish dissent in the working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul. In order to understand the last element, we have to go

back in time and outline the history of the Naqshbandi order in Ottoman Kurdistan and modern Turkey. It is not my aim to provide a comprehensive history of the origins of the Naqshbandiyya from the twelfth century on, nor the unbroken connection of the order with Turkey and Kurdistan since the fifteenth century. In the following section, I rather provide a selective historical reading of the Naqshbandi order with a focus on its ability to adapt to historical and political circumstances (elasticity), contingency of this history, and its local, national, and international connections, as well as its social and political effects in the present.

A Long History of the Present: The Naqshbandi Order in Turkey and Kurdistan

During my fieldwork, I heard again and again the view that Muslim and Sufi orders were the victims of Mustafa Kemal's project of the secular Turkish nation-state. The abolition of Sufi orders and lodges as well as the persecution of their religious leaders in the early years of the Republic were presented as proof. In everyday conversations and sermons of fervent teachers, Sufis considered the Kurdish problem and insurgency a result of the policies of the secular Turkish state even though they were totally opposed to the use of violence by the Kurdish movement. The Islamic legacy of the Ottoman Empire and Muslim Brotherhood among the Sufis were to be a solution to the ethnic problems and Kurdish rebellions that have been continuing since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In theory, Kurdish nationalism, for Sufis, was as problematic as the secular Turkish nationalism. In practice and politics, Sufis were hostile to Kurdish nationalists and specifically the PKK, for their resort to violence. They viewed the Islamist government as a former anti-Kemalist opposition group that has succeeded in integrating into the system without violence.

Many times during the sermons, *sohbets* and daily conversations I heard the teachers describe a crucial story about the previous sheikh and his exile by the Kemalist generals. The sheikh's loyalty to the state was a moral/political lesson for the Naqshbandi followers. Three years after the military coup d'état of 1980, on 18 July in 1983, the Menzil village had important visitors. The head of the gendarmerie in Adıyaman went to the village in order to send sheikh Muhammed Reşid Erol to exile in Gökçeada (Imbros), formerly a Greek island in the Northern Aegean sea, that is more than a thousand miles away from his village. Muhammed Reşid Erol was the religious leader of the Menzil branch at that time and was the cousin of the current sheikh Abdülbaki Erol. As the Kemalist junta found the activities of the Menzil community suspicious, the sheikh was sent to exile. In exile, the sheikh was on probation, and everyday he went to the police station in order to report to his probation officer. One day, the police had a request. Since the sheikh was old and ill, maybe they could bring the necessary documents so that he could sign them at his home. The sheikh responded: "No! My state commanded me to come here, I will come to the station everyday." When the police insisted, he said "no" again: "I would walk not 100 but a 1000 km if it's the state's security guard that's commanding me, let alone the police or the soldiers.

The sheikh's exile lasted more than three years. Semerkand TV produced documentaries about the exile in which his followers repeatedly explain that they never heard any complaint from him against the state or bureaucrats. "With all his strength, his Excellency [the] sheikh held on to patience and gratitude," notes his son Fevzeddin Erol. His concern was that, "In that period, the state did not take the peaceful effect of his Excellency into account properly."³⁹ After

³⁹ Sultan Seyda Seyyid Muhammed Raşid El-Hüseyn. Hazretleri | Cennet'e Giden Yol <http://cennetegidenyol.blogspot.com/2014/08/sultan-seyda-seyyid-muhammed-rasid.html> (Last access on March 21, 2017).

his death, the sheikh's legacy and his obedience to the state's authority were shown as important assets for the Turkish state in its fight against the Kurdish insurgency, specifically in the Islamic press. Thus wrote the Naqshbandi *Altınoluk* journal: "During a time when different meanings are imposed upon the East, his village became the destination of a movement of love from different parts of the country even though he was living in the East. This fact entails hints that point to the salvation of Turkey... In Menzil's climate there is no enmity between the Turks and the Kurds." Their criticism found a response in the post-coup political atmosphere of Turkey. Through political and economic connections, Menzil's climate increasingly affected the whole country in the decades following the sheikh's death in 1993, and came to be thought of as a way to contain Kurdish dissent in the context of the rise of Turkish right-wing populism and political Islam. The post-coup period in Turkey witnessed the increasing activities of the Sufi orders in religious education (Qur'an classes for kids), organization in student dormitories (high-school and university), charity through foundations and associations, and trade through integration into the capitalist economy.

The generals of the 1980 coup d'état, self-proclaimed champions of Mustafa Kemal's secular republicanism, committed to structuring "their conception of the ideal citizenry—an obedient "civilian" population that totally identifies with the armed forces—the generals co-opted the citizens' Islamic heritage to foster national unity. By forging an alliance with the religious sponsors of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, the military set about reinventing a more politically docile Turkish polity" (Kaplan 2005:124).⁴⁰ Sociologist Yildiz Atasoy (1997)

⁴⁰ Historian and political scientist Hamid Bozarslan considers the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as the official doctrine of the Turkish nation-state. This vague and contradictory system, founded and elaborated by Ziya Gökalp during 1910s and 1920s and developed by right-wing intellectuals during 1970s, was adopted by the military generals during the 1980s who relied on the basic goal of arriving at "a synthesis between the Westernizers, Islamists and Turkish nationalists" (1996:137). For Bozarslan, its goals were "to bring maximum legitimacy to the state by

considers the political rise of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis in the Turkish state structure a result of the Islamic popular movements against the Kemalist nation-state. The decades following the 1980 coup d'état witnessed the increasing effect of religion in political life as a measure against a "communism threat" and the rising Kurdish insurgency. The Turkish state wanted to control the Kurdish population and insurgency by instrumentalizing political Islam, as secular Turkish nationalism never found any significant response in the Kurdish East and Southeast of the country. In the Kurdish region, religious authorities and specifically the sheikhs of the Naqshbandi order have been extremely influential for specific historical reasons. Their relations with the state during the Ottoman Empire and their continuing influence in the Turkish Republic have a long and multifaceted history, much beyond the limits of this chapter; in the next few pages I outline the foundational reasons for their authority and long-lasting impact.

Scholars of early Kurdish nationalism characterize the Kurdistan of the second half of the nineteenth century as the era of the authority of the sheikhs (Jwaideh [1960] 2006; Olson 1989; Bruinessen 1992). As a result of the encounter between Christendom and Islam, and the losses of the Ottoman Empire in its struggle with colonial Western powers, the Ottoman state started to restructure its administrative apparatus in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Modernization and centralization efforts undertaken by the Empire included overthrowing the Kurdish emirates that had governed Kurdistan for the previous four centuries. Kurdistan had a special status between the beginning of sixteenth century and the late seventeenth century: Semi-independent Kurdish local rulers and notables governed the frontiers between two sovereign dynasties (the Ottoman and Safavid Empires) in exchange for political loyalty. By the eighteenth century, the difficulties that the Ottoman Empire experienced led the Kurdish princes to rebel against the

assuring the alliance of the Turkish and Sunni populations and to persist with the leadership of the Westernized bourgeoisie and elites" (1996:138).

central government and to enjoy autonomy until Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) brought them to heel (Tucker 1989). As a part of the centralization and administrative reforms, Sultan Mahmud II abolished Kurdish emirates. In the absence and weakness of political authority, religious authorities gained farfetched political power and dominance through piety, personal charisma, matrimonial alliances, and wealth in Ottoman Kurdistan, where the central government was not trusted.

The Kurdish sheikh Mawlana Khalid initiated the most important movement of Sufi renewal in the early nineteenth century. His long journey from Kurdistan to Delhi (India) and back to Sulaymaniyah (a Kurdish city in the contemporary Iraqi Kurdistan) coincided with a volatile moment in the political and social history of the Ottoman Empire and Kurdistan. In his exploration of the Naqshbandi order in Republican Turkey, Berkeley professor of Islamic studies, Hamid Algar, argues that his regeneration effect was so strong that the Khalidiyya became virtually synonymous with the Naqshbandiyya in all Western Asia in a century: “Some of his disciples took the Naqshbandiya to Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, and the Crimea, but more important and numerous were those who implanted his branch of the order in all regions of Kurdish population and throughout Anatolia and Rumelia” (1981:4). Mawlana Khalid was initiated into Naqshbandi order in Delhi, and the characteristics of the order were products of the Central Asian and Indian circumstances. In his work on the development of order in Kurdistan, Ferhad Shakely reveals the extent to which the new Kurdish environment shaped Kurdish reality: “the adjustment did not involve the principal conceptions or teachings of Sufism, but mostly concerned the practical aspects: silent or vocal dhikr, the attitude towards other sects and communities, the Shi‘a and the Qadiris, or the stance that should be adapted on politics and political authorities” (1997:95).

While most of the historical work locates the personal charisma and organizational skills of Mawlana Khalid at the center of any explanation for the development of the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya in the Middle East, the historical context in which this Sufi renewal movement took place is of particular importance to this contingent history. In *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, Dutch anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen (1992:233-234) describes the historical and sociological reasons for the rise of the sheikhs in Kurdistan. I quote him at length:

Missionary activity and fears of Christian domination due to European influence made the Kurds especially susceptible to propaganda stressing their Muslim identity and directed against Christians. The general chaos and lack of security that followed the decay and collapse (or destruction) of the Kurdish emirates made many people turn to religion (i.e. to the shaikhs) to find the security and assurance that was so lacking in their daily lives. Thus the influence of shaikhs among the population at large increased. Due to the absence of the strong authority formerly provided by the *mirs*, there was a dramatic increase in the number and seriousness of tribal conflicts and of power rivalries between competing petty chieftains. Shaikhs were the only authorities who, by virtue of their being outside the tribal organization, could bring such conflicts to an end. By doing so, they often managed to add to their own influence and riches at the expense of the rival parties. Shaikhs thus became the most influential indigenous leaders in Kurdistan, and the obvious focal points for nationalist sentiment. The land registration gave many shaikhs the opportunity to consolidate their worldly powers and become recognized landlords.

In the midst of a power vacuum, people turned to sheiks because the *mirs* had lost power and tribes were in flux. Elasticity of the devotional and spiritual practices as well as fealty to the state played key roles in the rise of the Naqshbandis to power. As a part of the reforms in the capital of the Empire, the Janissary army was abolished with great tumult, bloody slaughter, betrayals, and murders in 1826, and many Bektashi dervish lodges were confiscated during this era (Ortaylı 1997:67-68). The proselytizing activities of the sheikh-khalifas of Mawlana Khalid in Kurdistan and Anatolia overlapped with this era. According to Hamid Algar, “loyalty to the Ottoman State, viewed as an instrument for the implementation of the sharia and the exaltation of Islam, caused the Khalidis to welcome the military reforms of Mahmud II, who repaid their

interest by frequently visiting the Selimiye tekke of the Khalidis in Üsküdar” (1981:5). Most of the Bektashi lodges were confiscated and turned over to the Naqshbandi order as a reward for their active participation in this process and loyalty to the state. Naqshbandiyya became the mainstream, and semi-official, order of the Ottoman Empire.

In addition to the social and political circumstances in the Empire and the Ottoman Kurdistan, the flexible characteristics of the Naqshbandi were key to its rapid spread. Its organizational pattern, Bruinessen argues, was more efficient for autonomous growth and rapid dissemination. Instead of the hereditary sainthood, Naqshbandi sheikhs were appointing *khalifas* (authorized deputies), and it was through these sheikh-khalifa links that they “formed a rapidly growing network which soon covered most of Kurdistan” (Bruinessen 1992:226). It is not a coincidence that the Naqshbandi sheikhs and their families became key figures in the development of Kurdish nationalism. The unintended effect of Ottoman reforms for centralization was the increasing political power and economic wealth (through land registration) of the Naqshbandi sheikhs. The effect of the sheikhs, and the identification of their followers with them have to be situated in this new political economy and material transformations. The elasticity to change and ability to adjust to changing historical, social, and political contexts is the key element to the success and longevity of the Sufi path over centuries and across continents (Chih 2007; Silverstien 2007, 2008, 2011).

Scholarly work on Sufism as a category of comparative analysis in the study of contemporary societies and religion shows that, as Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell argue, the Sufi path has “no necessary political stance or doctrinal coloration. Nor is it fixed immutably to local cultural traditions” (Bruinessen and Howell 2007:16). The considerable diversity of the ways people of different geographies – from North Africa to the Middle East and

from India and Southeast Asia to Western Europe and the United States -- have improvised with social forms in diverse Sufi paths attests to its radical elasticity. The flexible reorganization and adaptation of the large repertoire of Sufi devotional practices and spiritual techniques elucidate the temporal endurance of the Sufi path from the twelfth century to the present and its dissemination over immense geographies.⁴¹

From the beginning, Kurdish nationalism and religion became intertwined (Jwaideh [1960] 2006; Olson 1989; Bruinessen 1992). Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri, Sheikh Said of Palu, and Mullah Mustafa Barzani, the leaders of important nationalist movements and Kurdish rebellions in the Ottoman Empire, and in Turkish and Iraqi Kurdistan respectively, were the descendants of sheikhs who had received the Naqshbandi order through Mawlana Khalid (Bruinessen 1992:224). However, the ways in which the local Kurdish populations responded to the political authority of the Kurdish rulers or the Ottoman Empire, or to the religious-political authority of the sheikhs, are largely absent from the scholarly literature. Although we get a sense of the macro history and the aims of the political-religious leaders through the analysis of subsequent Kurdish rebellions between the late nineteenth century and the early years of the modern Turkish Republic, we don't learn much about ordinary people's subjective perceptions of the rebellions or their cultural meanings.

Anthropologist Lale Yalçın-Heckmann (1991:106-109) criticizes Martin van Bruinessen's work on Sheikh Said's rebellion on the grounds that what van Bruinessen depends

⁴¹ In their introduction to the edited volume *Sufism and the Modern in Islam*, Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell point to the paradigmatic concepts that shape social relations and ritual practices wherever people draw on the Sufi heritage: "the need for an intimate relationship of affection and trust between a spiritual guide (shaykh, murshid, pir, etc.) and a seeker (*murid*, *muhibb*, etc.), and the inevitable blossoming of bonds of solidarity among fellow seekers under the guidance of a particular master. These relations require, and typically find, a meeting place that provides a physical locus for the enactment of those relations (*zawiya*, *pesantren*, etc.), and the gifts and hospitality that support and literally feed those relations." Against this background, anthropologists and historians of Sufi *turuq* refer to the incredible variety of the ways people create these bonds, "responding to local historical, cultural, and political circumstances" (17).

on is an ideal model. This model assumes that conflicting endemic loyalties lead messianic Islamic movements to suffer from particularistic elements of nation and nationalistic movements to suffer from tribal divisions. In her exploration of Kurdish Islam in Hakkari, she argues that Islamic loyalties do not have to oppose ethnicity, as these theoretical ideal models assume. This scholarship, as Yalçın-Heckmann rightly argues, emphasizes mechanical qualities tenable only because the authors fail to address “the complexity of the social reality” and associated problems that arise from “working with ahistorical and non-contextual models” (1991:108). She claims that the social movements like that of the rebellions of the Kurdish sheikhs have to be explored with a focus on “the multiplicity of rhetoric, the fragmentation or homogeneity of discourse, the co-existence under certain circumstances of apparently incompatible ideologies” (1991:118) rather than through official ideology and rhetoric.

Similarly, in his critique of *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, anthropologist Hişyar Özsoy (2010:153-154) points to the methodological problems in Bruinessen’s selection of sources. Özsoy’s (2010:153) critique of Bruinessen’s work is significant since it accounts for the absence of social history and the absence of a multiplicity of perspectives.

Bruinessen’s use of Cumhuriyet, then the official daily of the regime, as an independent source is a scandal in itself, yet the problem in his anthropological method is graver. Approaching the event through an empiricist-rationalist perspective, he easily sacrifices “the legendary” for the sake of authentic historical truth. [2010:154]

For Özsoy and historians of the era, the rebellion of Kurdish Sheikh Said of the Naqshbandi was a key turning point for the relations of the Kurds and the new Turkish Republic (Bozarslan 2004; Olson 1989; Tunçay 1999). It not only brought the Kurdish-Ottoman alliance of the last four centuries to an end, but also had crucial repercussions for the Kurds and the Sufi orders.

“Spiritual Police Stations”: The Naqshbandi Order, the Kurds, and the Modern Turkey

In most of the gatherings of the Menzil community, deputies emphasized the moral superiority of universalism in Islamic solidarity and the Muslim brotherhood over sectarianism and ethnic nationalism. Any claim to ethnic difference was considered a sign of racism (*ırkçılık*). Unlike most of the other secular contexts that I am familiar with in Turkey, teachers of the Menzil community did not necessarily see racism as a form of discrimination and oppression by a dominant group. For them, differences between the distinct nationalisms of the oppressor or the oppressed are insignificant. The use of the Kurdish language was not a problem—the leader of the order himself is Kurdish—yet any claim to translate this linguistic difference into a marker of political identity can be seen as a political move motivated by a racist ideology aiming to divide the Islamic Ummah.

However, there were significant inconsistencies between the idealized versions of Islamic teaching and the way people imagined pious subjectivity, the role of religion, themselves, and others. In the order, most of my Kurdish interlocutors regarded themselves to be more religious than the Turks although they considered themselves to be a part of the universal Islamic Ummah. Pious Kurds articulated ethnic boundaries in terms of their devoutness and the moral conformity of Kurdish communal life to Islamic teachings, not in terms of linguistic difference. Although most of them had been living in the city for decades, to them, the Turks were more urban and more immoral. The secular and Westernized modes of urban life, heavily criticized by the religious teachers, have been associated with the Turkish culture in the social imaginary of Kurdish Sufis. The sheikhs are powerful not because Kurds are more religious, backwards, and feudal, as portrayed in the secular Turkish imaginary, but as a result of the historical legacy of

the political authority of the sheikhs in the nineteenth century Ottoman Kurdistan, as well as the special status of the Kurdish region in modern Turkey.

Under the “Millet System” of the Ottoman Empire, communities were defined in terms of religion, not in terms of ethnicity or linguistic differences. Kurds belonged to the Muslim core of the Empire, mostly as a part of a broader Sunni orthodoxy, while Christian (e.g., Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians) and Jewish communities held the status of legal minorities. While the relations between the Kurds and the Ottoman Empire was managed through Sharia law and the twin institutions of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, non-Muslim ethno-religious communities enjoyed official recognition by the Ottoman administration that enabled them to have administrative and judicial autonomy in their own communal matters. After the Lausanne treaty and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Kurds were incorporated into the Turkish nation by virtue of their Muslim heritage, as a legacy of the Ottoman millet system. Özsoy (2010:144-145) locates the Sheikh Said rebellion and its long-lasting effects into this specific historical context.

Republican reforms, especially the abolition of the Caliphate, the ban on religious organizations and the introduction of a unified secular Turkish education system in March 1924, crushed all public vestiges of a separate Kurdish cultural ethno-political existence. The banning of madrassahs meant the elimination of the only educational institution where Kurdish language was used. The Constitution of 1924 equated citizenship with “Turkishness.” The words Kurds and Kurdistan were removed from books and maps. The abolition of the Caliphate replaced the idiom of Islamic brotherhood with the “unity of Turkish nation and state.” This was the destruction of the “historical bridge” between Kurds and Turks. The Sheikh Said rebellion was practically a last hit at this already ruined “historical bridge,” creating a point of departure for Kurdish claims for an independent state.

As Özsoy points out, the Sheikh Said rebellion is a haunting force for the Turkish nation-state. Kurdish claims for an independent state and the political force of Islam – intertwined forces that characterized the rebellion -- shaped the strictly secularist and nationalist claims of

the early Turkish Republican era. The ruination of the historical bridge between the Kurds and the Turks and the re-definition of the state's Islam had important consequences for the Sufi orders and popular Islam in modern Turkey.

Feroz Ahmad, the writer of *The Making of Modern Turkey*, argues that it was after the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 that the new Turkish state and its founder Mustafa Kemal recognized the significance of religion in the Kurdish revolt and the vital role played by popular Islam in the lives of the masses. "They responded by abolishing the Sufi orders and closing down their lodges (30 November 1925), forcing the shaykhs and their devotees to go underground" (Ahmad 1991:7). According to the scholars of the era, the Sufi orders went underground and functioned as a "public secret" until the 1950s, when the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party (CHP) came to an end (Silverstein 2008; Yalman 1969; Algar 1981; Ahmad 1991). There are no reliable statistics about the participation in Sufi orders regarding this era, and scholars have diverse and contradictory estimates. While for some, participation in Sufi orders was not a mass phenomenon in Turkey (Silverstein 2008:124), for others the Republican reforms and the persecution of the orders did not greatly affect popular interest. In fact, they strengthened religious enthusiasm in some respects (Yalman 1969:47). Naqshbandi's ability to perform silent *zikir* allowed them to conform to this era of suppression better than the others. As Hakan Yavuz argues, Mawlana Khalid's interpretation of *zikir* and *rabita* did not require any outward manifestation of religious rituals. "Their recourse to inner spirituality made it easier to survive under the pressure from the secular authorities" (1997:135).

In his exploration of the Turkish political system and the Kurdish issue, Hamid Bozarslan points to another important development. For him, as early as the 1946 election, political parties tried to secure Kurdish clientele groups: "The integration of the traditional Kurdish actors,

namely in the case of the family of Sheikh Said, symbolizing two banned ideologies from the republic—Kurdish nationalism and religious opposition—signified a real enlargement of the political space” (1996:141). The plasticity of the political system integrating Kurdish actors and the *subtracted* existence of these actors in the Turkish political parties (without any claim to ethnic-linguistic differences) played a key role in “the legitimization of the system” (1996:142) in the Kurdish region.

After the 1950s, the Islamic orders collaborated with the right-wing populist, nationalist, and/or Islamist political parties depending on the political context. While the political parties cultivated and provided patronage to religious orders due to the ongoing ban, “the Sufi orders were able to take religion (and politics) to the grass-roots and counter the influence of secular parties” (Ahmad 1991:17). As Ahmad notes, with the exception of the 1970s, when socialism and social democracy were the strong ideological currents, Sufi orders were the main tools for the right wing political parties to check and regulate the politicization of the people and to fight against the left. In the Kurdish region, the activities of the Sufi orders and Islamic movements were much more powerful. A Diyarbakır saying, noted by Harvard anthropologist Nur Yalman in his study of land disputes in the end of 1970s, attests to the enduring power of the sheikhs in the Kurdish region (Eastern Anatolia in Yalman’s own language): “Şeyhi olmayanın, Şeyhi şeytandır” (The Seyh of him who has no Seyh is Satan) (1979: 277). Hamid Algar also explains the reasons for relative multiplicity of sheikhs in the Kurdish areas as a result of “the particular and lasting impact of Mawlana Khalid on his fellow Kurds, and also to the less rigorous enforcement of anti-*tarikāt* measures in the east and south-east of Turkey (for a variety of reasons)” (1981:14).

Although Algar does not go into details in exploring these reasons, I argue that the most obvious one is the failure of the Turkish nation-state formation and consequent absence of state legitimacy in the Kurdish region. As secular Turkish nationalism in the early Republic was born as a failed project in the region, the only solution for the state was turning a blind eye (or helping them through political patronage) to the activities of the Sufi orders and Islamist movements on condition that they refrain from the claims of the Kurdish nationalism.

Nur Yalman also noted that the sheikhs and *tarikats* provided an “acceptable local legal system” (1979:298) given the weakness of the Turkish state’s ability to maintain law and order in the region. For him, there were two reasons for this weakness of political and legal authority that contributed to the proliferation of the intermediaries and increase of their power. The first one was the linguistic barrier between the villagers and the administration (district officers, the law courts, and judges, as well as the gendarmerie). The second reason was the discrepancy between the national codes and local customs – a key and general characteristic of Turkish modernization. Moreover, for Yalman, the land disputes and violence in Eastern Anatolia were a result of special characteristics of Islamic society to a certain extent: “the fierce manly pride; the ideas of honor and the blood feud; and patterns of loyalty to leadership” (1979:299). For him, the sheikhs and other religious figures became repositories of alternative local morality and law. Instead of seeing the prevalence of violence and the significance of religious and political intermediaries as a result of the weakness of law and order, I am reading this history as an intrinsic part of the construction of the Turkish state’s law and order in the Kurdish region.

Although here, following Lale Yalçın-Heckmann (1991:116), I should note that the Turkish state policies are more fragmented and heterogeneous (and contradictory I would add) on Islam than they are on ethnic difference. The exile of the Menzil’s sheikh, Muhammed Reşid

Erol in 1983, and later the Turkish state's incorporation of Sufi orders in the Kurdish region are illuminating examples in this regard. An extreme example was the alleged use of the Turkish radical Islamist organization Hizbullah (there is no link to the Hizbullah organizations of Lebanon and Iran) by the Turkish state as a counter-insurgency measure against the PKK during the notorious 1990s.⁴²

In the context of the armed Kurdish insurgency after 1984 and the harshest years of war between the PKK and the Turkish state during the 1990s, the Turkish state's ability to produce consent among the Kurds was significantly compromised. It is the elasticity of the Naqshbandi order that allows me to claim that intensive ethical cultivation among the Kurds in the Menzil community becomes a part of the Turkish state's project to control the Kurdish population and contain Kurdish dissent. One of teachers of the Menzil community explained Menzil's effect in the Kurdish region (and among young Kurds) to me as such: "You know the problems in the East. Each Menzil lodge works like a spiritual police station against terrorism." For him, the Menzil community was "an antidote against the effect of separatism and terrorism among the ignorant youth." Teachers and deputies of the Menzil community consider any sign of political dissent, specifically among the Kurdish youth, a symptom of ignorance that has to be eradicated, properly reeducated, and suppressed. It is neither the ideology of political Islam nor a transcendental program of the Naqshbandis that shapes its political alignment in the ever-changing political sphere. It is rather the political work that it does in this specific historical moment that allowed the Menzil community to prosper in recent decades.

⁴² A Human Rights Watch reports the situation of the time as such: "In the early 1990s, when the Turkish government's conflict with Kurdish separatists was at its most fierce, a right-wing organization called "Hizbullah" began attacking suspected sympathizers of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Young assassins operated in broad daylight in the mainly Kurdish cities of southeast Turkey. People who opposed the government's policy were being killed at the rate of two a day; in all, more than a thousand people were killed in street shootings from 1992 to 1995." What is Turkey's Hizbullah? (Human Rights Watch, February 16, 2000) <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2000/02/16/turkey3057.htm> (Last Access on August 18, 2007).

During the last three decades, Menzil became one of the most important religious communities, perhaps the largest one in Turkey, through religious-moral education (in the lodges for adults and in the local Qu'ran classes for children and youths), financial and political resources (*Semerkan*d conglomerate of companies, strong connections with the political parties, members of the parliament, and the ministers), spiritual treatment of drug users and alcoholics, as well as large hospitals. It has millions of sympathizers and hundreds of thousands of followers. Exact numbers are not available, and the figures in circulation are mostly unreliable, as they are used to prove the power of the community and its alliance with the far right nationalist Turkish parties⁴³ like Great Unity Party (BBP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and recently the Islamist government party (AKP). Even though there has been significant research on Sufi orders in Turkey and Kurdistan, the absence of any scholarly work on Menzil community is striking.

I believe that this absence stems from two interrelated reasons. First, the Menzil community always abstains from party politics, and does not give public support to any political party. The separation of politics and religion is central to their public discourse. As the deputies constantly reminded everyone in the gatherings that I attended during my fieldwork, “*dergâhta siyaset yasak*” (Politics are banned in the lodge). Unlike the İskenderpaşa community of the Naqshbandis that has been raising and supporting the elite cadres of political Islam (see Silverstein 2011) or the Fetullah Gülen movement that has been organizing within the state bureaucracy and the army for decades (Yavuz and Esposito 2003), the Menzil community typically refuses to make any public gesture regarding elections or political parties. Although the

⁴³ For an interesting testimony of the members of the far right nationalist Turkish groups in the Kurdish-speaking Menzil community, see an ex-member of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)'s memoir on Menzil. Fahrettin Öztoprak, *Nakşibendi Kollarından Günümüzdeki Halidi Kürdi Tarikati: Menzil* <http://fahroz25.blogspot.com/2013/05/naksibendi-kollarindan-gunumuzdeki.html> (Access June 2017)

Menzil community is a powerful actor involved in contestations over ethics and politics of everyday life and grassroots politics, their seemingly apolitical character significantly reduces the interest of sociologists and political scientists in the study of the Menzil community. This is a result of historical processes in the last two centuries, consequent waves of secularization in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, and the changing relations of the Naqshbandi Order's relations with the Empire and the secular Turkish state.⁴⁴ I argue that this is key to the operation of the Naqshbandi Order in Republican Turkey where the orders are abolished and the lodges have been closed since 1925, and also to the twilight decades of the Ottoman Empire where the Naqshbandis became the largest order.

The second reason is a methodological one. Most scholars follow the religious communities and orders through their political and economic connections – to the state and big companies and banks⁴⁵ -- and do not study the ways they organize locally. How they recruit new disciples, build economic and political connections in locales, shape social relations, and manage populations as well as the ways people conform to, negotiate with, or resist these micro-technologies of power are, thus far beyond the scope of most scholarly work. As Chih argues, “the less tangible, more informally structured and perhaps less accessible orders have received less scholarly attention” (1997:22). The sociological and historical tradition in the study of these orders in Turkey and Ottoman Kurdistan relies on textual readings of Islamic publications that provide idealized concepts for the study of Islam. Scholars often read these publications much more carefully than the Sufi disciples, which helps create idealized descriptions of Islamic

⁴⁴ In his long term and detailed analysis of continuities among waves of secularization between the Republic and the Ottoman Empire, Şerif Mardin (1991) locates the roots of the secularization process within an Islamic history and the administrative reforms of the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁵ The Semerkand Group that belonged to the Menzil community are (or used to be) economically less visible than the companies that belonged to other religious groups like Gülen movement, at least that was the situation before the failed coup attempt in July 2016.

practice (Çakır 1990; Ayata 1991; Acar 1991; Günes-Ayata 1991; Saktanber 1991). In the absence of ethnographic research,⁴⁶ the ethics and politics of the everyday life, moral foundations of the grassroots politics of Islamic orders as opposed to their relations to party politics, as well as the moral regulations and the resistance of populations have been largely neglected in the current literature.

Harun's Escape: Being, Becoming and the Self

Five months after Hasan's death, I was finally able to reach Harun again. I learned from his cousins that he was back on the streets after losing his job. During this time, he was also caught by the cops and put on probation. A month before, his cousin told me, his father and his uncles talked to him and threatened to annul his marriage as he was not able to support his household. They found him a job at the grocery of a nearby supermarket. They preferred the discipline of a regular job to the flexibility of daily wage-labor where he could make more money while working with his relatives. They wanted him to spend less time in the streets. His uncles also sent Harun back to the lodge of the Menzil community. After I saw him at the lodge one night, he agreed to meet during his lunch break the next day. I told him that I had been trying to reach him and I was really worried about him. "Don't worry," Harun said. "I did not smoke everyday. Maybe two or three times a week. It could have killed me if I smoked everyday. I heard all the

⁴⁶ One notable exception is Brian Silverstein's work (2008, 2011) on the İskenderpaşa community of the Naqshbandi order, whose members have played an important role in the political and economic life of the country during the past decades. His work focuses on the everyday ethics, disciplinary practices, Islamic discourses and spiritual exercises in the İskenderpaşa community as they relate to the discussion of Islam and modernity in Turkey.

news about the death of smokers. I was trying to be careful.” I asked him the reason he started doing drugs again. Harun was not willing to talk, “I don’t know,” he said.

He stopped and put some sugar in his tea. After a minute of silence, he found an explanation for his escape. Losing his job after being fooled by his cousin Bayram as well as the death of Hasan created too much despair and anguish in his life. Harun’s brother was doing his military service. Harun was married, and was spending his money for his own household. His father recently found a secure job as a garbage collector at the AKP’s Kagithane municipality through the family’s connections with the Menzil community. However, his income was not enough for the family. His parents depended on the income from his sister. Like many other displaced Kurdish families, urbanization and transformation of young Kurdish women into members of urban working classes triggered moral confusions over “the proper roles of men and women and the boundaries between public and domestic” as Aihwa Ong eloquently shows in another context (1990:266). The feminization of labor produced a crisis of identity for pious Kurds like Harun’s family. In Harun’s story, this crisis of personal, masculine, and religious identity was to overlap with other problems in his life.

Harun: Why did I start again? It is about your social milieu (*ortam*), it is all about your social environment (*çevre*). I left the Menzil lodge. I also got married, you know. After I got married, we started having some problems with my in-laws.

Onur: Like what?

C: Her family does not like me since I am broke (*gariban*). That was the reason why I got depressed. First, they wouldn’t let her get married with me. When we got married, they didn’t come to our house. They didn’t even want to see us. I also had problems with my sister. I asked her not to go to work, but she kept working.

O: Why don’t you let her go to work?

C: When she starts working, I can’t recognize my sister. She changes. Do you understand what I mean? The way she talks changes, the way she acts changes. She was working at McDonalds, you know. First, they ask the workers to work for 8 hours, and then they ask them to stay there for the cleaning and other tasks. At the end, workers end up working for 13-14 hours. Sometimes she comes back home around 4 am at night. I remember, the shuttle would drop her off at around 4 a.m.! Can you believe that?

Her mood, her respect for me, and her personality changed considerably. We didn't let her go to work for the last 2-3 weeks, and things started getting slightly better. I asked her, "Do you want cigarettes? I can buy cigarettes for you. It is not a big deal. But please do not go to work. Stay at home and help my mom."

O: Why?

C: Brother Onur, if you were in my place, you would have gotten depressed. She was seeing my cousin, and they were serious. But one day, I caught her with another guy. I talked to her, but she did not get it. Another day, I saw her holding hands with the other guy. I was angry; I asked, "What's going on with you?" The other guy is also a relative, but a distant one. It does not matter if we talk to her or beat her. My brother, Said, who has been educated in the madrasa, almost quit the religious school due to her behaviors. It bothers my conscience to leave her on her own.

In Kurdish society, Islamic law operated as a set of rules, discourses, and regulations that defined a man's identity and authority through controlling female desires and sexuality in the household, preparing sons for independent households and providing economic support for the whole family. However, once Kurds entered into the urban sphere as a result of forced migration, Nazan Üstündağ (2005) argues, they were rendered urban "waste" as de-skilled workers. The skills and experiences of rural Kurds from older generations were regarded as useless in the urban context, creating a generation of weak fathers. Moreover, daily and irregular jobs available to the new comers of the city demanded hard physical labor and younger bodies. That displaced some of the responsibilities of the fathers in the Kurdish families onto the shoulders of their sons.

The control of female desires and sexuality has been at the center of efforts to strengthen a sense of weakened male authority, protect group boundaries, and remake the Kurdish community in its struggle for cultural survival in new urban spaces. Through displacement and urbanization, interpersonal relations, socio-economic bonds, responsibilities and moral codes were also reworked in Kurdish families. Harun's struggle to control his sister unfolded in the absence of his brothers (one in the military, the other in the madrasa) and the silence of his father. "You know, my father never says anything to my sisters," he added shrugging his

shoulders. “Is that the reason you started doing drugs? Harun, were you looking for an excuse?” I asked.

C: No brother, everything just overlapped. During the religious festival we went to see my wife’s family, they completely ignored us. My wife was crying all the time, and she was mad at her parents. Her psychology was also affected severely. It affected me too, naturally.

O: Harun, you knew that.

C: I did not have a job. My brother, İlhami, was away, doing his military service. So I was penniless. I got depressed; I started taking Ecstasy pills and smoking bonzai. There was nothing else to do.

O: I saw you at the mourning. Probably you don’t remember seeing me.

C: No, I remember! It was after Hasan’s funeral.

O: Yes, I saw you there. You were pretty high at the mourning.

C: I was feeling really bad. Unemployment, my wife’s family, my sister’s problems, and Hasan’s death. They all overlapped. I never went through anything like that, you see? I don’t know, maybe I have always lived like that.

All of a sudden, I grew tired of myself; no longer felt my life was worth living. Do you get it, brother? It was as if I fell into the void. And I stopped going to the lodge.

(Birdenbire kendimden soğudum, hayattan soğudum. Anladın mı abi? Boşluğa düştüm yani. Dergaha da gitmeyi kestim.)

Harun told me that now he was working from 7a.m. to 9 p.m. in his new and “more comfortable” job. He was going to the *sohbets* briefly during late evenings and nights, once or twice a week. “I don’t have time to spend with my friends and relatives, I can’t even go to the lodge very often, but at least I earn my livelihood. I thank God for that.” I was confused by the ease and speed through which Harun was becoming different characters, having crises, escaping, and recovering.

During my fieldwork over the course of two years, I witnessed Harun escape from a number of different circumstances. Harun escaped from working eighteen hours almost everyday, carrying loads by the ton, exploitation in the work place (vegetable market, groceries, supermarkets). He escaped from the exploitative relations that are disguised under the name of kinship, community or religious brotherhood. Yet the world of drugs was not the only route of escape. His community, religious brotherhood, family, and relatives constituted other routes of

escape as I documented in the second chapter. His escapes, Harun thought, were doomed to failure, as his situation did not improve over time. Yet these escapes let him “breathe,” even if just for a short time. His escapes and accompanying failures, I would argue, demonstrate the structural character of the inequalities in which his life is embedded as well as his struggle, agency, and desire to claim his life. Harun’s escapes also invite us to imagine subjectivity under a new light, as he is looking for ways to endure, to constantly re-form social bonds, and to craft religious and political belongings amidst macro historical shifts and political transformations.

Escape, writes philosopher Emmanuel Levinas ([1935] 2003:55), is “the need to get out of oneself, that is, *to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself* [soi-même].” The need for escape, for Levinas, indicates the insufficiency of being. He is writing against the ideal of individual self-sufficiency and eternal self-contentment that is at the heart of the bourgeois spirit and its philosophy. Levinas’ concept of escape challenges the ontological philosophy of Martin Heidegger that dominated the European philosophy for decades in the second half of the twentieth century, and leads us into the heart of philosophy – allowing us “to renew the ancient problem of being qua being” ([1935] 2003:56). Where Heidegger and his followers see self-sufficiency, harmony of human beings and the world, and peace-with-self, Levinas saw dissatisfaction, discontentment, and the need to seek refuge in something other than oneself. Escape is a search for refuge from the immanence of the self, malaise, and self-enclosure. It is not renovation or creation. The need for escape is an “affective translation” ([1935] 2003:58) of being’s finitude. Rather than embracing being and claiming its infinitude and self-sufficiency, he situates the discontent with it and the labor of seeking otherness and transcendence at the center of his analysis of self and being.

Levinas locates the disquiet and dissatisfaction with self and the need to transcend the limits of finite being at the heart of subjectivity. For him, escape is “an attempt to get out without knowing where one is going, and this ignorance qualifies the very essence of this attempt” ([1935] 2003:59). For him, becoming does not refer to a pre-planned path of change, or a new state of being that is capable of sufficiency. Becoming, Levinas argues, is *not* the opposite of being. “In escape the I flees itself, not in opposition to the infinity of what it is not or of what it will not become, but rather due to the very fact that it is or that it becomes” ([1935] 2003:55). The extreme case of malaise is the state of nausea, and is intrinsic to the experience of pure being. This affective state of “nothing-more-to-be-done” is the mark of a limiting situation ([1935] 2003:67), and constitutes the main drive for the I to flee itself. In its finitude, pure existence of being is powerless, and that is the root of all need. “It thus appears that at the root of need there is not a lack of being but, on the contrary, a plenitude of being” ([1935] 2003:69). That need is a search for pleasure. Therefore, in pleasure, he notes “an abandonment, a loss of oneself, an ecstasy: so many traits that describe the promise of escape” ([1935] 2003:61). Thus, pleasure is the process of liberating from being; it entails attempts to break up forms of being. Yet, affectively it is disappointment and deceit. “For it is an escape that fails” ([1935] 2003:62). The promises of escape are never kept.

Levinas sees the inadequacy of satisfaction to need, and thus the need to escape as the most fundamental element of the human condition. His account opens an alternative way of imagining being, becoming, and the self. The self is in constant flux. Being always already entails the potential of becoming as well as its realization of open-ended and multiple becoming. However, the weight of being and its seeming universality in Levinas’ philosophical account does not do any justice to the multiple and diverse ways people are burdened by *the weight of the*

world in relation to the weight of [their own] beings. Those who carry the weight of the world are indiscriminately subsumed under the universality of being.

On our way back to the supermarket where he works, Harun asked me whether I would include those details in my book after our interview. I was surprised since I was asking his permission before every single interview. I nodded and said “yes.” He responded without waiting a second: “I talked to Kenan. They won’t sue the company for Hasan’s death. The construction company paid 200 thousand liras (\$90,000 at the time of this conversation) as blood money. This is how much our lives are worth.” Apparently Kenan and other elder members of the Sert family talked to the owners of the company after Hasan’s death. I was told that the family negotiated with the company because they had other relatives working for the same firm and they did not want to put their relatives’ work and livelihood under jeopardy. Nobody was punished. Kenan bought a new house outside Istanbul to escape his hard life in that city. Harun wanted to record Hasan’s death and his blood money in his own story, and probably in history.

The way I see it, escape does not belong to the realm of the experience of a universal being as in Levinas’ account, but rather to the complex experiences of people in particular places and time. In this context, I conceptualize escape as a form of recognition of the overwhelming presence of structural inequalities and relations of exploitation and domination as well as the need to do something about it. Escape is not an abstract and universal (and deceptive) process of liberation from being. Rather, it is a search for refuge from the state of specific forms of social being. It is relational and contextual. Escapes entail vital and deadly experiments, multiple, unfinished and open-ended becomings (Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009), as well as the immanent human potentiality of making things otherwise. I use the term as an analytical construct to explore “the complexity of people’s lives and desires – their constraints,

technologies, subjectivities, projects – in multi-layered and ever-shifting social worlds” (Biehl 2011a:22). Harun’s escape coincided with other escapes and macro political transformations of utmost importance for the Kurds, Turkey, and the Middle East.

Other Escapes: Rojava and Politics

One of Harun’s brothers is a young mullah educated by the sheikh and the mullahs of the order in Menzil village. When he was back in Istanbul, Harun encouraged me to talk to Said and to learn more properly about the Kurds and the Menzil community: “I talked about you with Said, I told him that you are writing a book about the lives of Kurdish workers in Istanbul.” We went to the lodge the night, Said was leading the *sohbet*. The number of Kurds in the order was substantially lower than their typical gatherings. On the part of the Kurdish disciples, there was tension, absence of participation, and even critique within the order during the peak of the war in Rojava (Western Kurdistan / Northern Syria).

The most important reason for the end of the peace process and the resurgence of the war between the PKK and the Turkish state was the war in Syria and the destabilization of the whole Middle East as a result of the changing balance of forces at local, national, and international levels. To understand this particular context, I go back to the siege of Kobanê and the war between the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (IS - also known as ISIL, ISIS, or DAESH) and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). IS militants launched the siege of Kobanê Canton, the de facto autonomous region of Rojava on 13 September 2014. Islamic State militants progressed and displaced more than 300,000 Kurds in less than a month. However, Kobanê

became a crucial battleground and a turning point in the war against the IS. The retreat of jihadist organizations began with their defeat by Kurdish forces backed by Syrian rebels and American airstrikes.

The Turkish prime minister at the time (and current president), Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was critical of the support given by the American and Western powers to the Kurdish YPG, since Ankara saw the YPG as an extension of the PKK. Criticizing American airstrikes, on 7 October 2014, he argued that “Kobanê fell, it is almost falling.” For him the solution was helping the other Islamist rebel groups in Syria who were fighting against the IS. After the progress of the IS in the siege of Kobanê and the unwillingness of Turkey to open the border for the Kurdish peshmerges to cross the Iraqi-Turkish border and back up the YPG forces, Turkey witnessed the Kurdish rebellions for Kobanê on 6th and 7th of October 2014, which ended with the death of 42 people, injuries to 682 protestors, and 1024 arrests in a week. In addition to Kobanê protests, there was also considerable international pressure since Kobanê was of crucial importance for the IS due to its proximity to the Turkish border.

As a result of these national and international pressures, Turkey opened the border and the Kurdish forces were able to stop the Islamic State – for the first time in the short history of the IS. Erdogan was criticizing the West, and the protestors during the Kobanê rebellion: “I don’t understand what does Kobanê have to do with Turkey, what does it have to do with Istanbul or Ankara, what does it have to do Siirt, Diyarbakır or Bingöl?” He was critical of the efforts of Kurdish forces in the formation of a politically autonomous Kurdish administration – the long-term nightmare of the Turkish nation-state. What Erdogan missed was that Kobanê’s relation to the Kurds of Turkey was integral. The Kurds were divided under the colonial rules of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kobanê represented not only a

political alliance, the Kurds of Kobanê were relatives of the Kurds in the border regions of Turkey. The battle of Kobanê in Rojava was considered “a war of existence” for the Kurds.

A significant part of the Kurdish fighters who fought against IS in Syria and joined the Kurdish forces in Rojava were from the Kurdish region of Turkey. Hundreds of dead fighter bodies went back to the Kurdish region of Turkey for the funerals. These funerals turned into affective spaces that not only intensified resentment against the Turkish state and the AKP government but also radicalized a Kurdish nationalism that leaked across the borders of nation-states. Growing ethnic consciousness and cross border nationalism among Kurds (enabled by the struggle of the Kurdish forces in the Syrian War) in Kurdish areas was being transmitted to the metropolitan areas via the movement of temporary migrant workers. Moreover, Kurdish migrant workers in the western metropolises of Turkey, including two of my interlocutors, were joining the YPG forces in Rojava.

These political developments had consequences of importance for Rojava, Syria, Turkey, and the larger Middle East. In the Turkish political arena, the Islamist parties typically rely on a significant part of the Kurdish votes. In an article explaining the success of the Welfare Party (predecessor of the AKP government) in the Kurdish region, sociologist Hamit Bozarslan (1996:144-145) explains Islamist political success among Kurds as a result of two factors: (I) aspirations for a universal Muslim Brotherhood of the two peoples, that ironically Mustafa Kemal developed in 1919 and 1920 during the Turkish Independence war, and the historical strength of religious orders among Kurds, and (II) relative autonomy of the Islamists from the Turkish state, and Islamists’ self-representation as “an opposition group that nevertheless has succeeded in integrating into the system without violence” (1996:146). Although the dynamics of the Kurdish issue changed substantially during the next two decades, Kurdish support for the

Islamists political parties remained the rule until the escape of “pious Kurds” from the Islamist government party in June 2015 general elections – a topic that I cover in the next chapter.

After his fervent sermon about the importance of obedience to religious authority, I talked to Said, asking what the Menzil community wanted to do with their young followers. He responded very seriously: “Look, you know that these young men are ignorant. Terrorists are using them. They are sending them to the mountains and into Northern Syria.” We both knew that two Kurdish migrant workers from Çeliktepe joined the Kurdish YPG forces in Rojava to fight against the militants of the Islamic State. For Said and other teachers of the order, the participation of youths from among the Kurdish forces was a sign of ignorance and manipulation. What the young workers needed, for the Menzil community, was the cultivation of obedient and loyal subjects through the order’s moral education.

During the peak of the war between the Kurdish forces and the Islamic State in Rojava, there were more people joining the ranks of the Islamic State than the YPG from the neighborhood in which I did my fieldwork. However, there was total silence on the question of the Islamic State among the Islamic orders. This was in contrast to religious sermons severely criticizing the Kurdish political movement. What was missing in these religious accounts – including that of Said’s -- appeared in street conversations. Kurdish migrant workers were *not* simply a passive and malleable audience that followed their sheikhs with blind obedience and absolute submission. Some of the Kurdish migrant workers desired to be otherwise; some of them joined the ranks of YPG, others became a driving force of the legal Kurdish political party in the city, and yet others – like Harun -- remained within the Sufi community but with more distance towards the politics of the order. These escapes of “pious Kurds” not only brought about

one of the most dramatic vote turnouts in the recent history of Turkey, but also changed the grounds on which the game of politics is played.

Chapter 4

ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AND ETHNIC POLITICS

There has been immense scholarly interest in the mass appeal and electoral success of Islamist movements in the Muslim world. Scholars have addressed this question in various ways; however, a key aspect of Islamist movements has been significantly underexplored in the current literature: Islamists' promise to resolve ethnic questions, which remain unresolved in secularist nation-states. In this chapter, I argue that the extent to which Islamists resolve (or fail to resolve) ethnic questions significantly shapes their electoral success and ability to establish broader hegemony. Based on ethnographic and sociological data, I explore a recent electoral puzzle that reveals the limits of the scholarly literature on Islamist political advantage and examine the ethnic politics of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey.

As political scientist Tarek Masoud (2014) notes in his recent work, a social phenomenon like Islamist success may admit of multiple explanations. However, the abundance of potential explanations notwithstanding, the current literature fails to account for variations in popular support for Islamists. My purpose in this chapter is to contribute to the literature by bringing the ethnic politics of Islamists movements into conversation with the multiplicity of existing explanations, and thus to better understand the temporal and spatial variations of Islamists' success. I explore the rapid changes in electoral performances of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP) during the June and November 2015 general elections in Turkey. I argue that the success of the AKP government has been conditioned by the party's (in)capacity to resolve the Kurdish ethnic question. Specifically, AKP promised to resolve the Kurdish issue, firstly, through ethnic and class-based inclusion through Islamic solidarity and secondly through repression, appealing respectively to Kurdish or nationalist Turkish

constituencies. I deploy anthropological and sociological data and analyses to show that the success of the Islamist mobilization and political configuration of diverse electoral performances depend on the realization or failure of this promise.

Ethnic Politics: A Missing Link in the Islamist Political Success

In explaining the rapid, parallel, and global rise of political support for Islamist parties and movements, scholars refer to the anti-Western position of Islamic parties, the religious nature of the discourses of the Islamist movements, their ideological hegemony, organizational capacity, provision of social services, reputation, and various structural factors, as well as the existence of a devout bourgeoisie. The strong performances of Islamists has convinced most scholars from various disciplines that there is an “Islamist political advantage,” that Islamists are uniquely positioned and equipped to garner greater popular support in comparison to other political movements.

The first group of explanations for Islamists’ successes builds on discursive advantages, cultural repertoire, and ideological hegemony. For them, Islamists gained power because they represented themselves as a counterforce against Western hegemony (Lewis 1990; Ayoob 2004; Esposito 1992). Contemporary political Islam is not a revival of traditional Islamic values, but a product of modernity itself (Roy 1994). Some argue that Islamic politics appeal to Muslims of different nations because the notion of an Islamic brotherhood erases national differences and provides a universal signifier, the Ummah, opposed to the alienating West (Naqvi 1984). Others articulate the moderation hypothesis, which asserts that successful political moderation of radical claims enable Islamist parties to succeed in electoral politics (Brocker and Künkler 2013; Sokhey

and Yildirim 2013; Gürses 2014). For some scholars, Islamists successfully locate their political message within the community's cultural codes and norms without imposing an external ethos (Razi 1990; White 2002). Although these accounts have significant explanatory power, they risk essentialism (Said 1978; Wedeen 2002), and potentially reduce Muslim voters to what Sadik J. al-Azm (1997) has called "Homo-Islamicus" regardless of historical and socio-political contexts.

By contrast, material explanations of the Islamist political advantage refer to growing poverty and inequality as the basis of the success of Islamists. By promising to herald an era of justice, equality, and welfare, Islam is said to be seen by many as a main counter force to neocolonialism and corrupt regimes (Ismail 2001) and has replaced socialism as the new emancipatory ideology of the oppressed, working classes, and the urban poor (Kepel 2002; García-Rivero and Kotzé 2007; Sadowski 2006; Turner 2003). For many scholars, non-state social welfare provisioning is a critical platform through which Islamists appeal to the poor. As the neoliberal state has withdrawn economically, Islamists effectively filled this vacuum with extensive provision of goods and informal welfare services to those unable to afford them (Harik 1994; Ismail 2001; Bayat 2002; Walsh 2003; Harrigan and El-Said 2016; Davis and Robinson 2012). In Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, and Palestine, Islamists developed wide networks of social provisioning for the poor, among whom they gained broad popularity (Mujani and Liddle 2009; Noor 2003; Misra 2003; Amuzegar 2007; Mishal and Sela 2006). The reasons why political competitors of Islamists do not fill the same void remains a central question and lead many scholars to explore their organizational structures.

Islamists have superior organizational resources and capabilities when compared to other political groups due to their successful organization of physical infrastructure, local networks, cellular organization, committed cadres, and self-financing (Ayubi 2003; Shadid 2002;

Wiktorowicz 2004; Mandaville 2010). A devout bourgeoisie is considered a necessary component of the Islamist success as it provides necessary financial and network resources (Tugal 2009; Nasr 2005; Gumuscu and Sert 2009). As good party organizers, successful Islamist parties have optimum combinations of local mainstream elite recruitment strategies and internal party cohesion (Ocaklı 2015). Also, Islamic party platforms function as informational shortcuts for Muslim voters and confer a political advantage when voters are uncertain about parties' economic policies (Pepinsky et al. 2012). However, recent work suggests that the organizational reach of the Islamists has been overstated within the literature. Cammett and Luong (2014) locate the Islamists' reputation for good governance –competent, trustworthy, and pure -- as the proximate cause for their political success in the streets and at the ballot box. However, this argument does not allow any distinction between different Islamist parties and candidates. Moreover, it does not explain the persistent electoral success of the Islamist government parties after corruption scandals. For example, the AKP government of Turkey increased its votes after the massive corruption scandals of 2013. In *Counting Islam*, Masoud (2014) emphasizes the critical role of structural factors and explores the role of development in shaping the social and political institutions in which Egyptian voters and political parties are embedded.

The most important problem of the current literature is the failure to explain change and variation in the popular support for the Islamists over time and space (Masoud 2014). There is a key factor that explains temporal and spatial variance in Islamist political advantage: Islamist political parties' promise to resolve existing ethnic questions. This ethnic politics of Islamists, underexplored in the literature, contributes to the Islamist success in the Muslim dominated nation-states. Many secular nation-state governments have long endeavored to tackle national independence movements and ethnic unrest, but most of them have failed. Islamists have gained

prominence in countries such as Indonesia, Morocco, Iran and Turkey by promising to develop inclusion mechanisms for ethnic groups and incorporate the ethnic and linguistic differences under the banner of Islamic solidarity and Muslim brotherhood.

The combination of rising Islamist parties and the ethnic question is a broader pattern in the Muslim world. In Indonesia, the emergence of various Islamist political parties in governing coalitions has been accompanied by compromises to the separatist Aceh-Sumatra ethnic movement (Aspinall 2009; Kingsbury 2007). In Morocco, the moderate Islamist governing Justice and Development Party has adopted both repressive and inclusive relations with the Polisario Front movement, which demands separation for Western Sahara (Sater 2009; Spector 2011). Similarly, in Iran, the Islamic regime has followed twists and turns in its compromising and repressive approaches to the Kurdish minority. Most critically, the regional autonomy that Kurds in Iran expected to gain before the revolution and partially attained afterwards contributed to the continuance of the Islamist regime (Hassan 2007; Samii 2005; Tezcür 2010). Despite these examples, the relation between the success of Islamist politics and ethnic issues has not been theorized. To fill this gap, in this chapter I focus on the relation between Islamist parties' electoral success and their capacities to deal with ethnic conflict.

AKP, Ethnic Politics, and the Kurds

Resolving the Kurdish insurgency has been essential for the AKP to establish political hegemony for a number of reasons. First, Kurds constitute 18 percent of Turkey's population and are thus a critical electoral bloc. Second, Kurdish uprisings in Turkey have always constituted a significant threat to political stability, economic growth, and governmental legitimacy. The armed conflict

between the Turkish army and the PKK has cost over 50 thousand lives and close to 500 billion USD since 1984. Finally, the AKP's national hegemonic project has been based on the realization of a broader neo-Ottomanist imperial project, in which ethnic and national differences would be potentially erased under the Islamic universalism of Ummah. Islamists in Turkey understood Kurdish insurgency as a natural consequence of secular Turkish nationalism. They idealized the multicultural Ottoman past and the *millet system* in which Turks, Kurds, and other Muslim groups were presumably treated as equal members of the Ummah. In this scenario, a Kurdish-Turkish peace agreement in Turkey would have potentially convinced the Muslim population in Turkey and in the world that the AKP could unite Muslims of various nations.

Islamists' promise that religion could help bridge the ethno-national differences between Turks and Kurds found both positive (White 2013) and critical responses among the scholars (Houston 2001; Sarigil and Fazlıoğlu 2013). Today, after the resurgence of war between the Turkish army and the PKK, "it is no longer possible to claim that AKP has been successful in employing Islam as a tool of conflict resolution" (Türkmen-Dervişoğlu 2016:9). Recent research shows that Islamists – media outlets, politicians or religious elites -- are not better equipped to accommodate ethnic pluralism than their secular counterparts (Türkmen-Dervişoğlu 2016; Somer and Glöpker-Kesebir 2015), and Islam's role as peacemaker has been overstated (Gürses 2015). As in Iran and the Sudan, Islamists in Turkey do not necessarily perform better in terms of resolving ethnic-national problems (Somer and Glöpker-Kesebir 2015, Gürses and Rost 2016). However, the existing literature on Islamist political mobilization in Turkey does not explain the variation in Kurdish support for Islamists. Reasons for long-standing Kurdish support for Islamists and the sudden and drastic decrease in this support in June 2015 remain as a puzzle to be explained.

In the next section, I define this electoral puzzle, which reveals the limits of the current literature. Then, I explain the political and socio-economic reasons for Kurdish support for the AKP during the 2000s, as well as its rapid decline in the June 2015 elections. In the last section, I explore the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in July 2016 and trace the origins of the reconciliation of Turkish nationalism and political Islam. As such, I focus on the role of ethnic politics in Islamist political mobilization and the remaking of national unity in Turkey. I discuss the broader social and political context within which ethnic electoral realignments occurred, but then empirically focus on Istanbul, since Istanbul has almost perfectly represented national vote trends during the last decade and can provide insights into political preferences generalizable to the entire country.

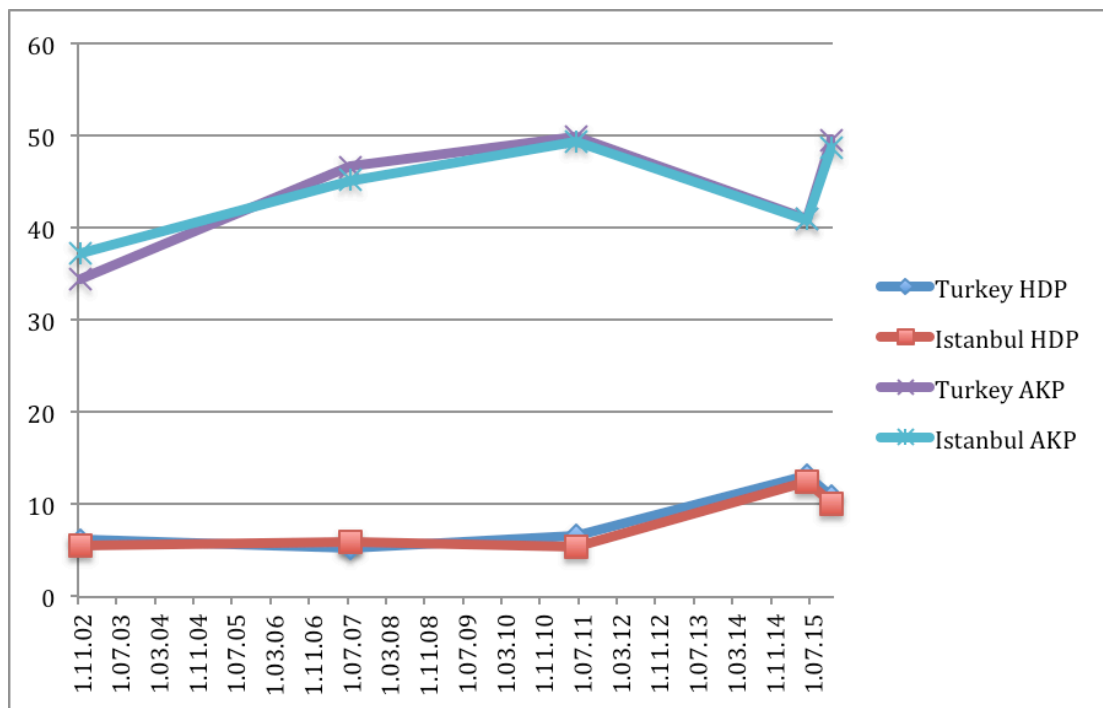


Figure 1: Vote trends for AKP and HDP in Istanbul and Turkey in 2002, 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections

Swing Votes: An Electoral Puzzle

Turkey's ruling AKP government is known worldwide for running a successful economy, emerging as a regional power, and displaying authoritarian policies. The AKP is also known for its uninterrupted single-party rule and expanding electoral support over the course of the 2000s. However, the party experienced a dramatic 9 percent fall in the June 2015 national elections and a sudden recovery in the early elections of November 2015.

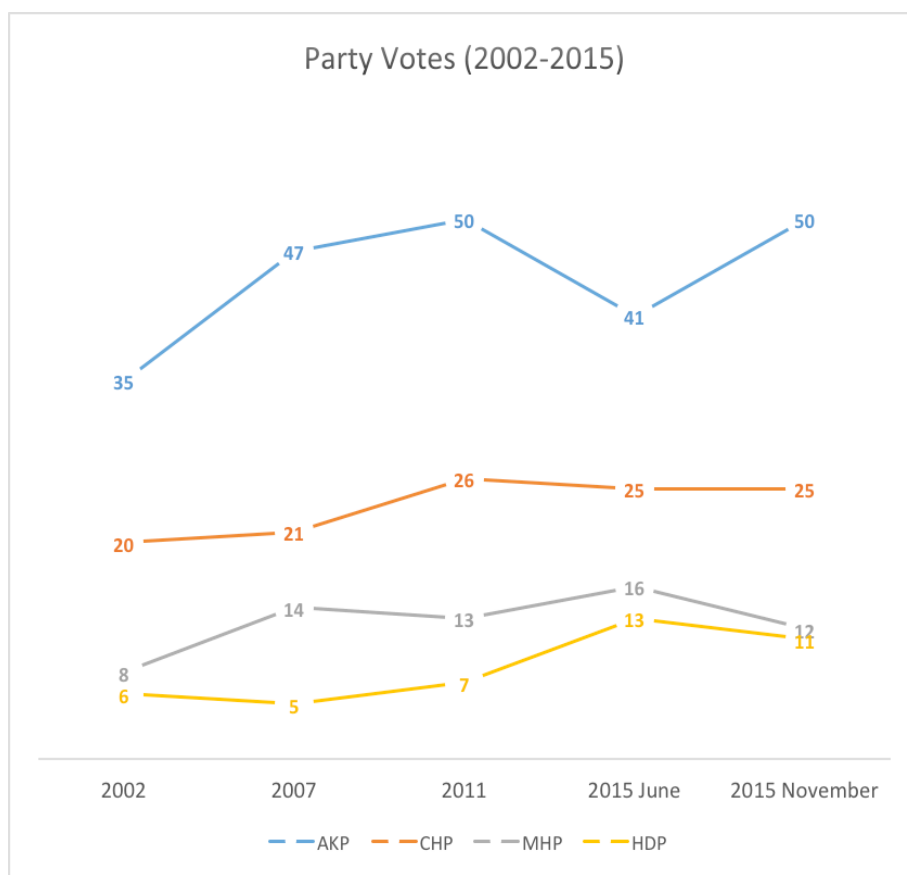


Figure 2: Vote rates of major political parties in Turkey (2002, 2007, 2011, June and November 2015 elections)

In the June 2015 elections, the most important factor in AKP's defeat was that one fourth of Kurdish votes in Turkey shifted from the AKP to the pro-Kurdish, leftwing People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi* – HDP). Compared to the 2011 elections, the pro-Kurdish HDP doubled its vote share and gained 13,12 percent of the votes. The majority of new HDP votes came from the AKP in both eastern Kurdish regions and in western metropolises like Istanbul where the migrant workers reside. Only in Istanbul, AKP votes dropped by 520,000, while HDP votes increased by 600,000. (Meyersson 2015).⁴⁷ The AKP, which used to count on at least half of the Kurdish votes, lost its broad electoral hegemony with the realignment of its Kurdish constituency. In November 2015 elections, the AKP managed to gain 49 percent of the votes cast, this time receiving new support from nationalist Turkish voters in place of Kurdish ones. What caused the abrupt swing in votes in June and November and what were the underlying sources of Islamist electoral expansion, contraction and re-expansion? I explain this electoral puzzle by unpacking AKP's shifting strategy towards the Kurds and answering three concrete questions: First, why did the majority of Kurds in Turkey support the AKP until 2014? Second, why did the Kurdish support for the AKP dramatically fall in June 2015? Third, how did these escapes and swing votes redefine the political field in Turkey?

The AKP government has utilized a repertoire of tactics and strategies to govern the long-lasting Kurdish issue, which has involved fluctuating usage of repression and inclusion. I use a synthesis of sociological and anthropological perspectives and methods to shed light on the complex interactions among macro political-historical processes and everyday experiences that gave rise to long-standing Kurdish support for the AKP, and the sudden drop in this Kurdish

⁴⁷ Meyersson points out that HDP gained votes most importantly from the AKP. According to the IPSOS pole, 50 percent of those who voted for HDP in 2015 voted for the previous pro-Kurdish party in 2011 elections, 22 percent voted for the AKP, 14 percent for other parties, while 13 percent were first time voters. This indicates approximately 3 percent swing vote from AKP to HDP. According to the analysis of Talha Öz, of the 6.6 percent increase in HDP votes, approximately 4 percent came from the AKP (Öz 2016).

support from the AKP electoral constituency and its replacement by Turkish nationalism. I combine macro-level statistical data on elections, surveys, and ethnographic data from working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul to set up this micro-macro link and analyze the ethnic politics of the AKP. By ethnic politics, I mean the set of political practices, tactics, and strategies of governmental and non-governmental actors that are directly or indirectly related to ethnic identities, cleavages, and conflicts (Günay and Yörük forthcoming).

My ethnographic fieldwork coincided with four elections in Turkey: local elections in March 2014, a presidential election in August 2014, and general elections in June 2015 and November 2015. Electoral politics inevitably became part of my anthropological inquiry. Moreover, my ethnographic presence in one Islamic order during this period allowed me to further reflect on the relation of Kurds to the Islamic orders and Islamist mobilization in everyday life. The macro-level sociological inquiry in this chapter is based on existing quantitative analyses of the June and November elections (Meyersson 2015; Öz 2016; KONDA 2015b; KONDA 2015a; IPSOS 2015), which described the demographic and sociological profiles of party voters and vote shifts.

Why did the Metropolitan Kurds Support the AKP?

The AKP government gained political support from a majority of Kurds until late 2014 by promising the Kurds the opportunity to blend into the larger society on both ethnic and class grounds. I describe (I) forms of class inclusion, such as social policies, anti-elitist mobilization, and clientelism and patronage networks, and (II) forms of ethnic inclusion, such as membership in Islamic orders, as well as the political opportunities created by the peace process.

(I) Class based Inclusion – Anti-elitism, Populism, and Welfare: In inner city Istanbul where a significant part of the Kurdish migrant workers reside and work as daily wage laborers, the AKP government's policies of resource distribution enabled the government party to maintain a strong relation with Kurds. Serdar has been a local of Çeliktepe, and the larger Kağıthane area, for the last 22 years. In his early forties, he has worked in many different sectors, including construction and service sector jobs. He came to Istanbul from the predominantly Kurdish city of Siirt in eastern Turkey during the forced migration of 1990s. In an interview, Serdar explained the reasons for past failures of the legal pro-Kurdish parties in the metropolitan areas:

Our parties [Kurdish parties] only talk about the mother tongue and language education. These are valid forms of propaganda in Kurdistan [South East and Eastern Anatolia]. In Istanbul, you can still talk about them but nobody will listen to you unless you start talking about bread and butter.

This political failure opens a space in which the AKP could successfully mobilize the support of urban Kurds by recognizing their class identities. Until the June 2015 elections, pro-Kurdish political parties managed to receive only up to one quarter of Kurdish votes in Istanbul, while the rest of the Kurds voted almost exclusively for the AKP. While Serdar and most of the other migrant Kurdish workers interviewed during my fieldwork support the struggle of the Kurdish movement for the recognition of Kurdish identity and language, their precarious working class position makes them susceptible to populist policies, social assistance programs, and an anti-elitist rhetoric, which make up the class-based inclusion policy of the AKP. The war in the 1990s, the concomitant forced migration of Kurds and the economic restructuring led to the creation of an informal working class Kurdish population in western cities of Turkey. This process has imbued a class dimension into contemporary Kurdish identity: Being Kurdish structurally denotes a working class position in an urban setting. The AKP government cultivated

a successful relation with Kurds through the promise of an all-inclusive political platform for this ethnically and economically marginalized group.

As the basis of an alternative class-based Islamist populism, Islamists mobilized class identities of the urban poor, and especially the Kurds, to a contest over identities of a non-economic sort, including the politicized binaries of secularist-Islamist, urban-rural, and center-periphery (White 2002; Tugal 2009). In its political competition with other political parties, the AKP endeavored to politicize the class divide with the claim that it represents the lower classes while the secular political opposition represents the economic and political elites. Coming from a working-class neighborhood, the leader of the AKP, Erdoğan, had the ideological instruments, images, and discourses to continuously perpetuate his rhetoric of being “a man of the people.” The famous motto of the AKP, *Milli İrade* (The Will of the Nation) referred to the people, the Muslim lower classes as opposed to the secularist economic and political elite (Aytaç and Öniş 2014: 45). The AKP strategically deployed class differences to create a sense of commonality over its heterogeneous constituency -- at the expense of Alevis, non-muslims, and secular Kurds and Turks.

During the economic growth that labeled Turkey an emerging market sustained with the help of the liquidity flows from global financial markets, employment opportunities flourished, rendering ethnic hierarchies much less visible in the labor market. Our ethnographic evidence shows during the last two years up until the recent economic recession, Kurdish workers came to believe that work and wealth were equally available to Kurds and Turks. Looking for networks of solidarity and patronage, Kurdish migrant workers filled the ranks of religious orders and many informants mention that members of Islamic orders indeed usually found jobs through their networks in these groups. These orders function as “non-party affiliates” through which the

AKP outsources the distribution of the material benefits for appealing to poor voters. The governing BJP of India, as shown by Tariq Thachil, uses a similar strategy. In his discussion on the support of poor voters for elite parties, Thachil (2014) argues that elite parties linked to religious social movements outsource the task of mobilizing poor voters to their non-electoral organizational affiliates. This enables them to sustain a core elite constituency while recruiting masses of poor voters.

The fact that Kurds are predominantly working class makes them more susceptible to this sort of populism and generates an ever-expanding competition between AKP and Kurdish parties over the Kurdish electoral constituency. The analysis of electoral polls shows the AKP and pro-Kurdish HDP are largely supported by lower classes, while the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) depends on a middle- and upper-class constituency. Both AKP and HDP votes are negatively correlated with income and education while CHP represents an opposite trend (KONDA 2015b; SAMER 2014). The AKP government has been channeling the rapidly expanding social assistance programs to Kurds in the Kurdish region as well as in metropolitan areas in a rather clandestine way; the programs operate on an ethnic basis and are disproportionately directed to Kurds. The AKP has politically instrumentalized welfare provisions in its efforts to contain the Kurdish unrest and gain the support of the Kurdish poor. Previous quantitative research shows that Kurds are twice as likely to benefit from the extensive free health care program, controlling for eligibility related factors (Yörük 2012).

(II) Ethnic inclusion - Muslim brotherhood, Critique of the Secular State, and the Peace

Process: The AKP differentiated itself from previous right-wing governments by providing freedom for Islamic orders and communities in which ethnic inclusion could occur. Both in the

teachings of religious leaders and in the discourses of the Kurdish workers, the freedom to organize under the banner of religious communities of Islamic orders are considered a sign of the emancipatory potential presented by the Islamist government. The government and AKP's municipalities both morally and financially support these Islamic groups. As important institutional bases of Islamic solidarity, the religious communities became dominant actors in the organization of religion and building support for the government. This Islamic solidarity model, in turn, portrayed "itself as the only viable option for a peaceful resolution to ethnic conflict" (Candas and Bugra 2010:293). An inclusive project of living together and resolution to the Kurdish conflict were being offered through the notion of "Muslim brotherhood" and the integration of the Sunni components of the Kurdish population – at the expense of Alevi and secular Kurds.

My research in Istanbul showed that Islamist orders and communities (like the Naqshbandis and the Menzil community) constituted the main grassroots institutional base to garner Kurdish support for the Islamist movement. In the cosmopolitan western metropolises of Turkey, Islamic solidarity laid the groundwork for relations between Turks and Kurds in everyday urban life. Islamic solidarity offered a language of coexistence as well as an inter-communal form of law that regulated everyday interactions and conflicts. Inter-ethnic conflicts, problems between the Kurdish and Turkish youth were de-ethnicized with a claim to the unity and solidarity of the Islamic nation. AKP recognized the existence of the "Kurdish problem" and offered a solution to it through more inclusive Islamic solidarity in the metropolises, and hence became "the representative of the metropolitan Kurds."

Unlike the previous Turkish governments of 1990s that intensified the war with the PKK, the AKP was more pragmatic and risk-averse in its position on the Kurdish conflict. The AKP

government launched different waves of reconciliation projects under different names, including the “democratic opening,” “national unity and solidarity,” “the Oslo process,” and “the Peace Process” to resolve the Kurdish issue. For metropolitan Kurds, expanding Kurdish rights is a byproduct of the AKP’s political choices, which enabled the translation of the Kurdish struggle into the language and rubric of cultural and political rights. As the questions of a pro-AKP Kurdish worker about the peace process succinctly put it: “Before the AKP, don’t you think that the Kurdish movement was struggling? Don’t you think that the guerilla was strong before this government?” Until late 2014, this was a common feeling among the Sunni Kurds.

Moreover, there was fear among the urban Kurdish community that popular support of pro-Kurdish parties would increase ethnic tensions and make Kurds more vulnerable to Turkish nationalist attacks in working-class neighborhoods of the major cities. “Kurdish Istanbul” is full of narratives in which the political activists of the Kurdish parties were under constant threat by the police officers (as in the story of Sarı Komiser), mob violence, and ethnic discrimination during the 1990s. This fear also had a significant effect shaping the electoral trends of the older generations among Kurds.

For the Kurds of Istanbul, the secular nationalist Turkish parties represented a return to the notorious 1990s, an era during which state violence and discrimination against the Kurds reigned. Workplace and coffeehouse conversations among the Kurdish workers always include politics. On such a day, after the death of Berkin Elvan,⁴⁸ some supporters of the Kurdish movement and the AKP alike criticized the involvement of the HDP in anti-government protests

⁴⁸ Berkin Elvan was a 15-year-old Turkish boy who was hit on the head by a tear-gas canister fired by a police officer in Istanbul while out to buy bread for his family during the June 2013 Gezi protests in Turkey. He died on March 11, 2014, following a 269-day coma. Widespread demonstrations erupted following his death.

during and after the Gezi protests. Ali, a young Kurdish worker from Iğdır was highly suspicious of the Gezi protests and the Kurdish involvement in them:

Look, for God's sake, I never supported Tayyip Erdoğan in my life. Yet if these protests [Gezi] ended up overthrowing him and brought MHP [ultranationalist] and CHP [secular nationalist] to the government, would the country be in a better position? Does not our party [HDP] remember the 1990s? Aren't they [Turkish nationalist parties] our murderers? This is the first time someone [Erdoğan] takes you seriously, openly, and officially negotiates with your leader [Abdullah Öcalan]. And do you want to overthrow him and bring back the murderers and the gunmen of the 1990s?

A pro-AKP old Kurdish man sitting at the next table responded him immediately, "Erdoğan bavê Kurdan e" (Erdoğan is the father of the Kurds). Although Ali and other HDP supporters rejected this idea, they used to think that Islamist Erdoğan was doing much better than the nationalist Turkish parties and their leaders in terms of ethnic politics. In their electoral propaganda for the Kurds, the AKP criticized the oppressive state tradition of the secularists. The AKP's recognition of the state's past massacres and disasters -- even if in limited, hesitant and highly convoluted forms (Bilgin and Hakyemez 2013) -- was producing and sustaining an image of a government different from previous ones in terms of ethnic politics. AKP's selective critique of state violence fortified the promise of peace among Kurds and provided further legitimacy to the government party (Günay 2013). Moreover, Islamists claimed to be the victims of the same secular state tradition that oppressed the Kurds.

So, Islamists electoral success among the Kurds depended on the belief that the AKP government was uniquely willing to solve the Kurdish question of Turkey, albeit slowly. Various forms of this political discourse were repeated in most of the conversations among Kurdish migrant workers, ethnographic encounters and interviews. There was a strong belief among Kurds that it was the AKP that granted Kurds linguistic and cultural rights, including the freedom to speak Kurdish in public as well as the Kurdish broadcasting state television, language

schools, and elective Kurdish courses. Not surprisingly, the AKP activists in the field also promoted this idea vehemently, particularly during the elections. This promise and its partial realization through certain cultural rights, but *not* collective political rights, effectively drove metropolitan Kurds to the AKP.

In contrast to the academic and journalistic representations, the Kurds of Istanbul did not support the AKP simply as a result of their religious sectarian differences or their conservative ideology. On the contrary, metropolitan Kurds felt that they could comfortably experience their Kurdish ethnicity under Islamic solidarity, while their class position was being strengthened through material networks of the AKP.

Why did Kurds Stop Supporting the AKP?

Scene I – It is May 2015; political parties and activists are working for the critical June elections. In Çeliktepe, most of the young Kurdish migrant workers are helping HDP activists run their electoral campaign. In some of the other neighborhoods around Çeliktepe, there are assaults against the political activists of HDP. I join a group of young migrant workers to go to Gültepe to see the situation there. Around the corner from a public park where the HDP activists are distributing their brochures, there are groups of young men displaying their knives and guns with hostile looks. A local activist tells us that they are the members of the youth gangs in that neighborhood. In an hour, tens of young Kurdish men come from Çeliktepe and fill the park. Most of them are not activists and they don't even participate in the electoral campaign. They heard of the situation from rumors and came here with their knives and guns. In the beginning they all wait, but after a while, one of the leaders of the Kurdish groups (most of them are the members of immigrant Kurdish families – who historically support conservative right-wing parties using Islamist discourses) approach the Turkish gang members and ask them to leave the park. After minor scuffles, Turkish gang members are forced to leave. Later, seeing my curiosity to talk, the leader who started the conversation and fight briefly tells me, “I have no interest in politics, yet I can't allow them to attack my people.”

Scene II – It is almost midnight. There is no traffic on the street. Most of the Kurdish migrant workers who worked in daily jobs during the day and evening are back. They are hanging HDP flags on the buildings next to the street. One woman from a nearby building is yelling at them: “You cannot hang the terrorist flags on my building.” She is yelling as hard as she can in the silence of the night. While the migrant workers remain

silent since they are advised not to respond to any provocation, an old Kurdish man at his seventies who is accidentally there at that time responds to the woman immediately: “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself. You call me ‘uncle.’ This is our flag, you have to learn how to live with that.” Migrant workers are confused. They later told me that like most of the older immigrants, the old Kurdish man used to be a supporter of the Islamist AKP government. They keep hanging the flags.

June 7 elections brought a halt to the long-standing AKP rule, which was for the most part caused by the dramatic increase in HDP votes. While the HDP increased its votes from 2.3 to 3.2 million in the Kurdish region of southeastern Turkey, the most unexpected rise in votes came from the western metropolises of Turkey where the migrant workers reside and work: from 2011 to the June 2015 general elections, HDP votes increased from 530 thousand to 2.8 million. In Istanbul, where 18.5 percent of the country’s valid votes were cast, HDP increased its votes from 0.4 million (6.58 percent) to 1 million (12.14 percent). A close look at the June 2015 election results demonstrates that the AKP government lost its votes from the poor metropolitan neighborhoods in the western metropolises and the Kurdish region, where it used to get at least half of the votes (Meyersson 2015; Öz 2016; KONDA 2015b; IPSOS 2015). In this section, I ethnographically document the dynamics for the change in the Kurdish votes in Istanbul.

The most significant reason for the loss of Kurdish support for the AKP was the AKP’s stance during the Battle of Kobanê. After the Islamic State (IS) attacked Kobanê, a Kurdish city in northern Syria/western Kurdistan (Rojava), Kurdish votes radically swung from AKP to HDP. The survey data suggests that the Kurdish vote rate for the AKP declined from half to one-fifth during the course of eight months following the battle (KONDA 2015b).

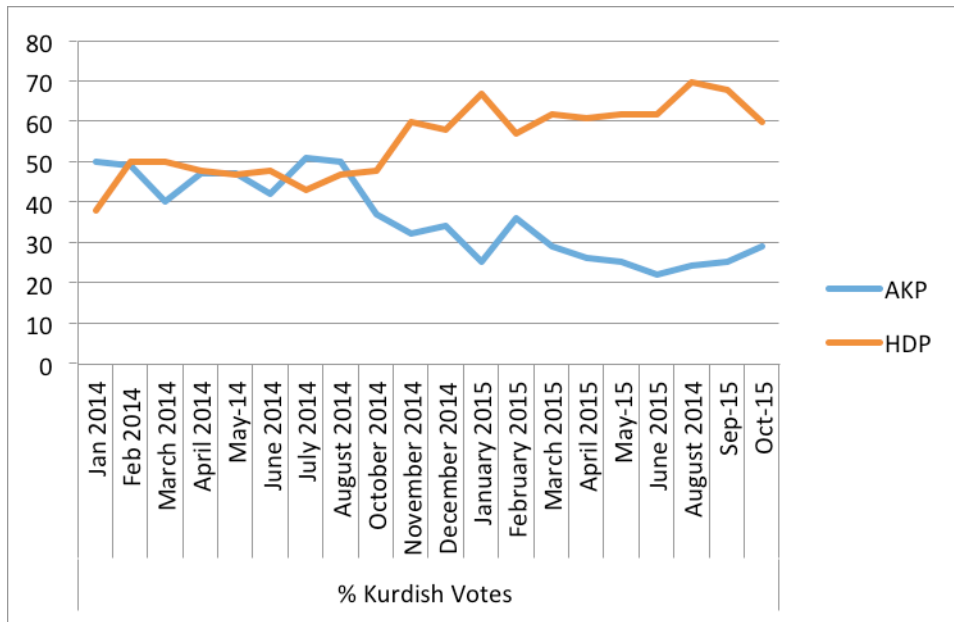


Figure 3: Changes in Kurdish Votes for the AKP and the HDP (Jan 2014 – Oct 2015) Source: (KONDA 2015b)

The AKP government's perceived support for the jihadist organizations—specifically ISIS—during the Syrian war, and the resistance of the Kurdish fighters in Kobanê and the defeat of ISIS in Rojava significantly diminished support for the AKP among the Kurdish population in Turkey. The battle of Kobanê turned out to be “a war of existence for Kurds” in Syria, as my interlocutors call it. A significant part of the Kurdish fighters who fought against ISIS in Syria came from the Kurdish region of Turkey and hundreds of dead fighter bodies went back to the Kurdish region of Turkey for the funerals. These funerals turned into affective spaces that not only intensified resentment against the Turkish state and the AKP government but also radicalized the Kurdish nationalism sentiments that bypass the borders of nation-states. Growing ethnic consciousness and cross border nationalism among Kurds (enabled by the struggle of the Kurdish forces in the Syrian War) in Kurdish areas was transmitted to the metropolitan areas via

the movement of temporary migrant workers.

Kurds came to think that the implicit Turkish nationalism within Islamic solidarity became much more visible during the battle of Kobanê, undermining the very idea of equality among Muslim members of Islamic communities. As observed during my fieldwork, participation of the Kurdish members of the religious communities had fallen drastically during the harshest moments of the war in Kobanê. Non-participation in the religious rituals and community gatherings was the fundamental mode of disobedience and opposition to the religious authorities for Kurds. The Kurdish grievance, in turn, became the basis of a split and tension within the Islamic community as well. As observed in my research, when a Kurdish member of an Islamic community voiced a critique of ISIS's attacks on the Kurds, it was dismissed by the mullah of the community as a sign of Kurdish racism (*ırkçılık*). The mullah angrily shouted at the young boy who voiced that critique: "Don't be a racist!" After the battle of Kobanê, Kurds grew to believe that Turkish national supremacy is reproduced under the guise of Islamist brotherhood. A significant part of Islamic communities and orders did not voice a critique of ISIS policies nor of ISIS attacks on the Syrian Kurds. This led the pious Kurds to question the Islamic solidarity model offered by the AKP government.

The lynching of Kurds that occurred during the riots in October 2014 transformed Kurdish perceptions about being a part of Turkey as well. During those riots, a Kurdish construction worker was lynched in Esenyurt district of Istanbul on October 9. He was undressed, beaten, and stabbed in 10-15 different parts of his body. His story widely circulated in Kurdish coffeehouses and workplaces and many Kurds identified with his ethnic and class background, as most of my interlocutors did. The belief that the AKP would work to give Kurds

their rights and make them equal citizens with the Turks was losing its hold on the metropolitan Kurds.

This belief was most critically undermined in March 2015, three months before the elections, when the president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan denounced the peace negotiations between the PKK and the Turkish state and called for an end to them. The Turkish president even refused to acknowledge the existence of a Kurdish problem, echoing the violent 1990s. This “unexpected turn” seriously harmed the hopes of Kurds for an AKP-led peace. Also, during the electoral campaign, the HDP volunteers and politicians were subjected to various violent attacks. Adana and Mersin headquarters of the HDP were bombed, a party member was executed in Bingöl, there was an organized lynching effort in Erzurum, and in the biggest rally of the party in Diyarbakir — the symbolic capital of Kurds — bombs killed four and left more than two hundred people injured. The repetitions of the massacres, executions, murders and lynchings created a fear of “return to the violent 1990s” among the Kurds. The AKP government that had received significant support from the Kurds with the promise of solving the Kurdish issue and with a critique of the Turkish state and the dirty war of the 1990s, lost much of its credibility among Kurds in a relatively short time period.

In the poor, urban working-class districts of Istanbul, such as Bağcılar, Sultanbeyli, Ümraniye, Kağıthane, Esenler, and Sultangazi, where the AKP received between 50 and 70 percent of the votes in 2011, the numbers and the percentage of AKP votes declined drastically. Statistical analysis demonstrates that in these neighborhoods the HDP gained large sums of votes from the AKP in June 2015 (Meyersson 2015; KONDA 2015b). This is where temporary migrant workers from Kurdish regions had a decisive role during the elections. These workers became the motor of the electoral campaign and carried the political radicalism of the Kurdish

region and Rojava to the heart of Turkish metropolises. Their energy in the door-to-door electoral campaigning in 2015 influenced other Kurdish migrants, especially those of older generations who had previously migrated to the cities.

The dissolution of the class-based inclusion of Kurds in Turkish cities is also critical in explaining the eroding Kurdish support for the AKP. During the 2015 economic recession, economic resources and employment opportunities in religious communities and the party cadres began to be unequally distributed among the Kurds and Turks. This became a source of disappointment for the Kurds within the Islamic solidarity project. The following encounter of a Kurdish and a Turkish worker demonstrates the revitalization of ethnic hierarchies in the labor market during the economic stagnation, which was a force driving the Kurdish swing votes.

Kerem is a pious Kurdish worker in his late twenties. He has been working in many different sectors for the last 15 years. Like many other workers in the informal sector, he has no job security. In the summer of 2014, he was fired from his job in a supermarket. He was totally depressed and worried about his future. While walking in the neighborhood, he talked about his plans for marriage and life. He said that he had to save money for marriage but he could not find a stable job. Then we ran into Hasan from the same religious community. He is a Turkish bazaar worker from Giresun in his early forties. We learned that the AKP-led municipality hired him and his brother. He was happy about his new job and the social security it provides. He said that they got their jobs through some connections in the religious community. Then, Kerem's sister came and we walked towards their home.

Remaining silent for a while, Kerem turned and said: "If you ask them, we are all Muslims. Whenever there is a job or economic opportunity, our Turkish fellows get them. I don't really get it!" he said. Like Kerem, his friends and other young people had difficulties finding

jobs. Indeed, the drastic decrease in the economic growth rate from 10.3 to 2.1 percent between 2011 and 2015 has invigorated ethnic hierarchies within the labor market and the distribution of economic resources. “A shrinking economic pie” has revitalized ethnic hierarchies, which had long been covered under Islamic solidarity during periods of economic growth. Kurds started to face again discrimination and exclusion in the distribution of employment opportunities. This led Kurdish workers like Kerem to question once more the sincerity of Islamic solidarity and the AKP’s reconciliatory gestures and shift their electoral choices. Kerem’s position is crucial since during the June 2015 elections, he and millions of other metropolitan Kurds voted for HDP. These reservations are coupled with resentment produced by the absence of Kurds in high positions of the AKP’s party organization both at the local and national levels. The unequal distribution of economic and political resources was a significant reason for the recent failure of the Islamic solidarity among the Kurds.

The Resurgence of War and the Remaking of National Unity

After their defeat in June 2015 elections, the AKP developed a new mode of ethnic politics based upon the repression of the Kurdish opposition as the central strategy for garnering ethnic Turkish nationalist support. Following the AKP’s electoral defeat in June and failed attempts to form a coalition government, Erdoğan called for early elections set to take place in November 2015. These elections would take place after a resurgence of war between Kurdish insurgents and Turkish armed forces and extended political turmoil. AKP votes, which radically declined to 40.9 percent in the June 2015 elections, increased back to 49.5 percent with the shift of Turkish

nationalist votes, following an anti-PKK military campaign. AKP, once again, exercised ethnic politics, this time negatively through repression to consolidate its political power.

The influx of Turkish votes was to a large extent a result of AKP's anti-PKK campaign, experienced by the Turkish nationalist electorate as a sign of AKP's capacity to restore political stability and to resolve the ethnic conflict through repression. The vast majority of new votes that brought the landslide victory to AKP in the November elections were Turkish voters, who either did not vote in June or voted for other Turkish nationalist and conservative parties. According to KONDA (2015a) and Meyersson (2015), in November elections, a large majority (87 percent) of new votes for the AKP came from mainly three sources:

1. Turkish nationalist MHP (10 percent of MHP votes went to AKP in November).
2. Turkish nationalist and Islamist votes mostly from Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* - SP) and Great Unity Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi* - BBP) (61 percent of those people who voted for small parties in June elections, voted for the AKP in November elections).
3. AKP voters who did not vote in June elections (71 percent of those, who did not vote in June and voted in November, voted for the AKP in November).

This new support for the AKP has continued since the November elections. As such, the percentage of ethnic Turkish votes in total AKP votes increased from 81 percent to 90 percent during the course of the 12 months that followed the June 2015 elections. Hence, the AKP constituency has lost much of its ethnic heterogeneity.

The period between the June and November elections of 2015 and the period after the November elections witnessed the escalation of political violence and terror to levels unprecedented in Turkey. During the period of ethnic turmoil, between the June and November elections, 925 people were killed, mostly PKK activist members but also 169 civilians, and around 3,600 people were detained in security operations (Aktan 2015). The armed conflict

between the Turkish army and the PKK began in July 2015, one month after the elections, following the Suruç massacre. In Suruç, on 20 July 2015, a suicide bomber associated with ISIS killed 34 leftwing and Kurdish university students (mostly HDP members) and injured over 100 in this Kurdish town on the border of Turkey and Syria. The Suruç massacre was followed by the Ankara massacre organized by ISIS on 10 October which left 102 leftwing and Kurdish activists dead and hundreds of them injured. These massacres triggered an escalation of armed conflict between the PKK and the state. Public discourse rapidly came to be dominated by anti-terrorism campaigns. “International observers of the November elections are at a consensus that the campaign period was surrounded by ‘a climate of violence and fear’ [...] More than any other election in the post-1980 period, the November campaign was marred by violence, polarization, and inter-ethnic conflict” (Esen and Gumuscu 2016:15). Nationalist mobilization manifested itself not only in the ballot box, but escalated mob violence against Kurds and the HDP on the streets. From June 2015 until the completion of this dissertation in fall of 2017, there have been over one hundred attacks on HDP buildings and branches.

The anti-Kurdish movement campaign of the government helped mobilize Turkish nationalist voters on the grounds of an engineered fear of prolonged instability and national disunity. Politics of fear and violence as well as accompanying concerns about economic and political instability helped the AKP and Erdoğan restore their power. The AKP deployed a “narrative of stability” arguing that this political instability and Kurdish insurgency could only be fixed by bringing the AKP back to power, and the nationalist-conservative Turks who used to support other right-wing parties bought this argument (Grigoriadis 2016; Sayarı 2016). The Turkish public resentment against the Kurdish demands for self-government and autonomy, which is at the heart of the Kurdish question, found its expression in the AKP’s war on terror.

This trend accelerated after the November elections, and particularly after the failed coup attempt in July 2016. Following the coup, AKP launched a crackdown on all kinds of political opposition going far beyond members of the Fethullah Gülen community⁴⁹ who were held responsible for the failed coup attempt.

National Unity, Kurds, and the Failed Coup

July 16, 2016 - I met Harun at the religious Menzil community of the Naqshbandi Sufi order, almost three years ago when I started doing fieldwork. In the local, presidential, and general elections that took place during my fieldwork, Harun and his family swung between the Islamist AKP government and the pro-Kurdish HDP as these were the only two political parties that offered any political project other than the different variants of Turkish nationalism (MHP and CHP). Or at least, that was what Harun told me. He is an official member of the AKP since his father found a job and became a garbage collector through their connections in the Menzil community, which is strongly connected to the government party. The day after the failed coup attempt, I met Harun to have dinner together. Talking about the failed coup, he told me that during the night of the coup, he received a message from the local branch of the AKP yet he thought that it was a regular meeting and dismissed it. However, after having dinner with his wife and baby, he received another call from Menzil order and went there. It was there Harun was told that the religious leader sent a message to the members: “For the sake of Allah, we have to take to the streets against the putschists.” The Menzil order has approximately 3 million

⁴⁹ Fetullah Gülen community is a religious group that has been leaking into the bureaucracy and army of the Turkish state for the last four decades to break through the rigid secularism of the Turkish state. They have been educating religious cadres for bureaucracy and army to dismantle the secular and Kemalist elites. The AKP government had a long-term coalition with the Fetullah Gülen community from 2002 to 2013.

sympathizers in the country, is well organized among the Kurds, and has at least one place of worship in every single neighborhood of Istanbul and rest of the country. He followed the rest and went to the bridge on the Bosphorous. Where the AKP organizations failed, the religious orders took responsibility and invited many people like Harun to join the crowds.

July 20, 2016 - Harun called me to meet at the lodge of the Menzil community that I had been following for the last two and a half years. We went there together. The Menzil community of the Naqshbandi *tarik*at (order) has been very well connected to the right-wing, conservative and nationalist parties, and thus to the Turkish state. One of the older members of the community approached Harun and me. His name is Ahmet. Although it is typically banned to speak about politics in the order, he directly started talking about the coup attempt: “Our aim is to follow the orders of Allah. Tarikat is just a means to do that. If that means becomes the end, you will get lost. Look at the Fetöists.” For Ahmet, the members of the Fetullah Gülen movement were fascinated with the allure of worldly possessions and state power. This interpretation resolves the contradiction of the AKP’s long-term collaboration with the Gülen movement among the Islamists.

Ahmet told us that he had been participating in the “democracy watches” for the last three days. He suggested that we participate in democracy watches as well and warned us not to attack anyone who does not look like us. “You are young and ignorant, be careful. Look at all these people who resist the putschists: Sufis (followers of orders), bearded Muslims, the ones who display their bodies and asses (he is referring to the women with secular outlook, wearing t-shirts and jeans, etc.), Turks and Kurds. Everyone is there. There were *even* ladies. Think about the veiled lady, driving a truck and carrying protestors.” He was moving back and forth, getting excited as more people are listening to him now: “It is this national unity that they are afraid of.

Those who are against this unity are the traitors, terrorists. Those who divide it as Turks and Kurds, or Sunni and Shia are traitors.” We were in the room of prayer. Now almost 40 men between the ages of 16 to 80 were watching us and listening to him. Another man, entranced by Ahmet’s talk, shouted: “Allah is great.”

In the Menzil community, older members and local leaders asked everyone to take their relatives (and friends) and go to Taksim, the cultural center of secular Istanbul. We left the order with Harun’s younger brother İlhami who just joined us. On our way, Harun called his cousins, asking them to come without explaining what is going on. Three of them immediately showed up. From our previous conversations, I know that two of them are supporters of the Kurdish movement and the HDP, and the other one is a drug addict with no interest in politics or religion. They were critical of Harun and his involvement with the Menzil community and the AKP, yet they were curious to see what was going on in Taksim. We took the subway [which was free for weeks to let people participate in democracy watches] and went to Taksim. There were approximately two thousand people, most of them waiting in the lines for the free food offered by the municipality. After looking at the crowd, the drug addict smiled and said, “like us, they are all poor fellows.” Harun and İlhami were excited. On Taksim Square, they see veiled women, poor working-class men with whom they can identify. İlhami immediately got a Turkish flag, and started waving it, unlike his cousins who support the HDP, he wanted to be a part of this national unity.

We decided to walk on the Istiklal street to see more and to wait till more people would come and join the crowd. On our way, we saw the grey wolves shouting against the Kurdish movement and the HDP. There were hundreds of people around the statue of Mustafa Kemal: They brought their own flags and banners, the biggest one reads: “Our aim is Turan, and our

guide is Kuran – Sedat Peker.” Turan refers to the homeland of all the Turks and is the ancient Iranian name for Central Asia. Politically, it refers to Turkish racial unity, and the name for a Turkic state that aims to bring all the Turks together. Sedat Peker is an ultra-nationalist mafia don who recently threatened to kill the academics who signed a petition against state violence and war in the Kurdish region. His name also has great significance for the Kurdish workers, as the mafia dons are loaded symbols through which different groups represent themselves in the local masculine worlds. İlhami and Harun were disappointed by that banner. As we started to walk on the İstiklal Street, we saw the party members of the Islamist AKP government and the ultra-nationalist MHP, coming in groups, holding Turkish flags and making Grey Wolves’ signs. Their cousins started making fun of Harun and İlhami: “Say hi to your friends.” They laughed. After a couple of minutes, İlhami left the flag silently, and we started walking back to the square. At the Taksim Square, the crowd got larger, there were approximately 5 thousand people. One of Harun’s cousins told us, “They may bomb here, let’s go, I don’t wanna die in an AKP meeting.” We left Taksim.

That night, the AKP government declared a state of emergency and “temporary” suspension of democracy; the crowds in the democracy watches celebrated the state of emergency till the first lights of morning. In the wake of the failed coup, temporary suspension of democracy led to the imprisonment of journalists, academics, Kurdish and leftist politicians, and 12 parliamentarians including HDP’s co-leaders Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ who received more than 6 million votes in the June elections. Although it was against the constitution, the AKP lifted the political immunity of the members of the parliament with the help of the ultra-nationalist MHP and secularist nationalist CHP. Meanwhile, 85 municipalities governed by the Kurdish movement have been put under the control of government-appointed

officers. Hundreds of left-wing and Kurdish NGOs have been closed. Kurdish cities were heavily destroyed and made inhabitable by the military crackdown during the curfews imposed by the state. A recent report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR 2017) indicates that between July 2015 and December 2016, military operations claimed the lives of 2,000 people and displaced half a million others, and a series of laws adopted on 23 June 2016 created an atmosphere of “systematic impunity” for the Turkish security forces.

What led to political anger among the HDP supporters and disappointment among the more conservative Kurds – and part of them used to be (or still were) AKP supporters -- were not the results of a single Friday night, or the political developments following the failed coup attempt. Rather than considering July 15 as a turning point, I trace the origins of the recent Turkish secular nationalist and political Islamist reconciliation to a shared and more-entrenched anti-Kurdish agenda. I argue that the post-July 15 politics of “national unity” and the resurgence of war with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey are the continuation of a more complicated response of the Turkish political establishment towards the electoral success of the HDP in the June 2015 elections and Kurdish political gains in Northern Syria (in alliance with the United States and Russia).

With the unleashing of violence during the night of 15 July it was the same politics of fear that were mobilized by the AKP. Any political force against the government was criminalized as terrorist through the help of nationalist and secularist opposition parties. The new “national unity” of Islamist movements and Turkish nationalism after the coup has been facilitated by Erdoğan’s turn to Kemalists and anti-Kurdish movement agendas of the government and opposition parties. There is nothing new about the political exclusion of the

Kurdish movement and millions of Kurds supporting the legal and illegal Kurdish movement. However, the position of Harun was crucial since during the June 2015 elections, Harun, İlhami and millions of other metropolitan Kurds voted for HDP and these swing votes significantly reduced the long-standing Kurdish support for the AKP in the western metropolises. The failure of AKP's more inclusive project of Islamic solidarity (through which they mobilized more than half of the Kurdish constituency between 2003 and June 2015) as well as the loss of a significant part of Kurdish votes and the consequent turn of the AKP to the Turkish nationalist voters make the Turkish political regime more brutal and bloody, yet more unsustainable and fragile than it may look at this moment.

Conclusion

My ethnographic evidence suggests that in explaining a multifaceted phenomenon as the success of Islamist movements, ethnic politics has been one of the key components, largely unexplored in the current literature. Islamists promise to resolve the ethnic conflicts, and the political configurations of their diverse electoral performances depend on the realization or failure of this promise. Between June and November of 2015, Turkey's AKP government faced a rapid decline and lost the majority of its Kurdish constituency, and then recovered by mobilizing Turkish nationalist votes. In this chapter, I examine this electoral puzzle by exploring the changing ethnic politics of the AKP. As I discussed, growing scholarship on Islamists and the Kurdish issue in Turkey fail to account for the variation in support for Islamists. Why do the Islamists experience rapid declines and increases in electoral support in consecutive elections? How can we explain these variations?

My analysis shows that fluctuating support for the AKP government has been conditioned to a large extent by the way the party dealt with the Kurdish question via different modes of ethnic politics, including changing configurations of repression and inclusion. Islamists grew in power when they presented a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish ethnic question through ethnic and class-based inclusion for the Kurds within the Islamic solidarity project. Islamists lost their Kurdish voters—and thus broader hegemony—when they failed to realize the promise of equality between Kurds and Turks during the Battle of Kobanê, the end of the peace process and the economic recession. Islamists regained national power when they managed to mobilize Turkish nationalist support in place of Kurdish votes through anti-Kurdish repressive politics. The revitalized Turkish-Islamic synthesis (reconciliation of Turkish nationalism and political Islam) became the response of the Turkish state to the changing dynamics in the Middle East and the Kurdish swing votes and led to the resurgence of the war with the PKK. The resurgence of war means increasing political violence and repression not only for the Kurds but also for everyone who opposes the AKP government's policies including academics, journalists, and activists. However, if the Islamic solidarity project collapses, the use of excessive political violence against the politically organized Kurdish population will not be a sustainable position for the Turkish state within the constantly changing political field of the Middle East.

Conclusion

CONTRADICTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

“Was it a fictitious coup?” Harun asked.

“I don’t know. We will probably never find out what exactly happened that night,” I said.

He repeated his question, “was it Tayyip’s fiction to get more power?”

I repeated my answer: “You were at the bridge fighting the putschists, you probably know the situation better than I do.”

Harun laughed and then added: “I think it was a fiction, nevertheless I went there. I think the army should be in the barracks, not on the streets. That is why I went there.”

We met in a Kurdish coffee house in Istanbul, a week after the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016. After six months of dissertation writing, I was back to a continuously changing political field in Turkey, ever mindful of how my Kurdish working class interlocutors were navigating this volatile environment and going on with their lives.

I was surprised to hear Harun characterizing the coup as false since I knew he had gone to most of the anti-coup demonstrations and participated in the “democracy watches” organized by the AKP government and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. But then it also made sense.

Although Harun was adamant that the coup attempt was a fiction meant to further enhance Erdoğan’s power, he participated in the demonstrations *as if* he believed in the official discourse. It made sense for as I came to see over time during my ethnographic research in Istanbul’s service and construction economy, living “as if” (or with an everyday politics of pretense as I call it) was the practical response that Kurdish migrant workers articulated as they

faced and lived with a vast array of irreconcilable contradictions in urban markets and kinship networks. In the immediate aftermath of the failed coup attempt, a politics of pretense was also guiding Harun's response to the country's altered and highly polarized political field.

The discrepancy between Harun's actions and my ethnographic reflections also spoke to an ambiguous politics of secrecy and exposure that he enacted in his multivalent relations with his family, religious order, and the anthropologist.

I asked Harun: "Does your brother Mullah Said think like you?"

He laughed again and said, "I don't speak about it [the fictiousness of the coup attempt] with my brothers or Sufis at the lodge. They would get hurt, if I do speak." Maybe laughter revealed Harun's unwillingness to lose the religious order to which he belonged and couldn't risk losing... maybe it also evinced the unknowable that was his sole property to cherish.

One of the greatest challenges of my ethnographic study was to find ways to attend to and make sense of the inconsistencies, uncertainties, and ambivalences in people's discourses and to avoid trying hurriedly to solve, as if one could, the contradictions between what they said and what they did. With time and an intense multi-sited immersion in my subjects' travails, I sketched the multiple ways that Kurdish migrant workers deal with the discrepancies between the actual conditions (of their lives, labor, and relations) and the ethical (how these conditions and relations should be). In doing so, I was also able to grasp some of the intensities and stakes of their human plasticity at the intersection of state, labor markets, and an altered urban space. The ways Kurdish migrant workers address these contradictions and live with them complicates and expands our imagination of the politics of ethnicity, urban labor, and kinship, political subjectivity and people's agency.

In a resource-poor context, Kurdish migrant workers experience and react to the workings of late liberal capitalism, state-sponsored violence, and displacement through social relations (framed in terms of kinship, ethnicity, religious affinity, or neighborliness). These relations carry the burden of the inherent tensions and contradictions of exploitative and destructive political-economic forces. However, these contradictions and how people deal with them also lead to new openings and becomings, and, in turn, impinge on macro political and economic processes. People's immense creativity and plasticity help them negotiate the terms of their lives and laboring practices and remake social relations. Their strategies are of crucial importance to the making of urban space and labor markets and in the politics of ethnicity.

The lives and labor of male Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul are located at the crossroads of many different world-historical trajectories, political and economic forces, material and social milieus. The lives of Harun, Ramazan, Bayram, Azad, Metin, Servet and others introduced in this dissertation and the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish migrant workers like them are marked by political violence, issues of state sovereignty, colonial policies of labor and resource extraction, and political-economic inequalities between the Kurdish region and the Turkish cities. Yet, these processes do not overdetermine them all the way down. Their ordinary desires and invented social relations reconfigure and redirect, at least partially, these overwhelming and consuming realities. In Kurdish Istanbul, my interlocutors live in and experience multiple social worlds at the same time: Masculine and violent street culture, travails of the urban markets, kinship and religious networks, lures of urban life and the city's night scene, underground economies and the world of drugs, therapeutic religious orders and rising political Islam, legal and/or revolutionary politics of the Kurdish political movement. Kurdish

Istanbul is not only an ethnic space; it is the conjunction of these political, social, and economic connections.

The chapters of this dissertation speak of the multiple social and economic worlds I lived in and the peoples I was fortunate to engage with during my long-term ethnographic research and bring forth the critical theorizing that emerged from this shared labor. The discourses are structured around core themes that crosscut the uprooted lives and exploitative labor of Kurdish migrant workers. The first chapter investigates dynamics of violence and self-defense and the revitalized memories of displacement in the context of the resurgence of the war. The second chapter examines the labor markets, kinship networks (and other modalities of relatedness), and economic subjectivities in the service economy of Istanbul. While the third chapter explores everyday politics of Islamic orders, substance abuse, and pious subjectivities in the working class neighborhoods and among the Kurds, the fourth chapter is a more macro-level investigation of the place of ethnic politics in the rise of political Islam and the changing dynamics in Turkish electoral politics. The seemingly separate spheres of ethnicity, violence, labor and urban economies, kinship, substance abuse, religion and politics are all interconnected *in vivo* as I learned from my ethnographic subjects. In the intersections of the multiple life-worlds, and conflicting political and ethical discourses and practices, Kurdish migrants workers' mastery of moving between these worlds, and strategically making use of available discourses and practices is of crucial importance to their struggles to claim agency and carve out life chances. This mastery of negotiations is a key aspect of the lives, labor, and politics of the Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul.

The Kurdish question in Turkey is a multi-faceted, complex and dynamic issue that not only entails the recognition of cultural and linguistic differences after decades of official denial,

but also a problem of national and territorial sovereignty, collective rights, self-government, and autonomy. Historically, the Turkish state and secular nationalism relied on a denial of the Kurdish ethnic identity as well as other ethnic and linguistic differences, whereas the political Islamism of the AKP government promised the inclusion of the Kurds in the Islamic Ummah and a limited recognition of the Kurdish identity under the banner of Islamic solidarity. The negotiations and the peace process between the Turkish state (under the AKP government) and the PKK carried the hope of peace among the Kurds. The irreconcilable mismatch between Kurdish demands for regional autonomy and collective rights and the Turkish state's reluctance with respect to actual decentralization blocked the road to peace. Moreover, the AKP government was hoping to increase the Kurdish constituency and electoral support during the peace process while the Kurdish movement formed a new legal political party increasing its support among the Kurds of Turkey.

The recent Syrian War and the Rojava Revolution in the Middle East changed the terms and contours of the Kurdish issue in Turkey irreversibly. Before 2014, the Kurdish question was mostly framed in terms of denial of ethnicity, and recognition of cultural and linguistic difference in the Turkish political arena. However, the defeat of the Islamic state by the Syrian Kurds and the international legitimacy of their self-government increased the aspirations for autonomy, self-government, and independence among the Kurds of Turkey (this effect is intensified by the political developments and the coming independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan on September 25, 2017). In contrast to the expectations of the Turkish state and the AKP government, the question was no longer defined simply in terms of the recognition of cultural difference, but in terms of sovereignty. The Battle of Kobanê between the United States backed Kurdish forces (YPG and YPJ) and the Islamic State (IS) marked the end of peace

process in Turkey and the resurgence of war between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement.

My ethnographic research in the interstices of war and a fragile peace helped me understand not only how the question of violence (state violence, anti-colonial struggle) and ethnic politics are closely tied together but also the ways an imagination of “just violence” and self-defense among the Kurdish migrants of Istanbul are related to the questions of collective rights, self-government, and autonomy. My first chapter examined the ways ongoing cycles of violence, displacement, and community self-defense in shifting locations from Kurdish villages to urban Istanbul, from the 1990s to the 2010s, are constitutive of Kurdish political community as a collective force and a key part of working class in Turkey. My interlocutors’ experiences and narrations of violence and self-defense in Istanbul raise an urgent issue for critical inquiry and politics alike in the ways in which the justness of violence is imagined, enacted, and narrated in self-defense against state violence – and in the kinds of social relations generated in response.

Self-defense, drawing on my interlocutors’ understandings, is the capacity of a community (or a person) to mobilize violence and protection against those whose violence is directed against the community’s (or person’s) very existence. Self-defense is a claim to justice and equality for those who are under the threat of imminent violence, be it state, political, or mob violence. It is an ethical as well as a practical response to a regime of impunity in which those who have the authority to punish the perpetrators of violence stand on the same side as the perpetrators. Keeping loved ones safe and caring for other members of one’s own community are profound ethical imperatives repeatedly raised in violent encounters of everyday life for Kurdish migrants. The justness of violence enacted in self-defense and narrated in stories of self-defense appears as the ethical substance for self-making, self-assertion, and the practices of care for other

members of a community that was itself formed as a result of state violence, displacement, and dispossession.

Through their narratives of self-defense, Kurdish migrant workers write their own histories of settlement into Istanbul and characterize a genealogy of a diverse urban space. I read their narratives as an attempt by “the peoples of the periphery [to] return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis” (Bhabha 1990:6). Narratives and ambivalent uses of self-defense are key to the ethical formation of Kurdish subjectivities, self-assertion, and the making of a political and moral community. Ethnographic attention to the category of self-defense rather than resistance illuminates a Kurdish political agency, its contingencies and contradictions, and moral mechanisms of futurity. Violence as self-defense is conceived as a form of care through which Kurdish community is built in Istanbul, the world’s biggest Kurdish city. Care for others is an ethical practice that leads to the formation of a moral and political community, though not one that is free of uncertainties and contradictions. In the rise of Turkish Sunni nationalism and Islamist authoritarianism, this question of self-defense is at the heart of the Kurdish question in the destabilized Middle East and Turkey.

In my second chapter, I argued that Kurdish migrant workers deployed kinship ties and other modalities of relatedness in the labor markets as strategies for survival. These relations are key to the prospects for livelihood and labor of Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul, plagued as they are by legacies of a violent history of ethnic oppression and forced migration, dispossession, and market fluctuations. A particular mode of existence, that I called living “as if,” sustains the making, continuation, and reproduction of these relations notwithstanding the immanent tensions, contradictions, and ambivalences. Contradictions between Kurdish workers’ practices and ethical discourses in the labor market are key to understanding the ways different modalities

of relatedness affect the making of the labor market and hierarchies, extracting economic value, and transforming the market. My interest is not to reveal the truth of the mystification of the relations of exploitation and domination, which are legitimized and justified through euphemization and misrecognition in sociological and anthropological models. As James C. Scott (1990) poignantly argues, the inevitability of an unequal relation of power, be it domination or exploitation, says nothing about its legitimacy or justness in the eyes of subordinate groups.

The issue at stake is not false consciousness, or the misrecognition of the truth of material appropriation and symbolic humiliation by Kurdish workers. The practical necessity of entering into exploitative kinship-labor relations and reinforcing an appearance of ethical submission in its absence characterize the politics of living “as if.” As they profit from it, impoverished Kurdish workers perform appearances of ethical submission notwithstanding their critical attitude. This mode of existence is not only critical to economic survival. Living “as if” has a political force of its own. It turns work relations and everyday life into sites of practical and constant negotiations. It allows Kurdish migrant workers to navigate amongst different principles of different forms of relation making and rules of market, making use of their ambiguities and indeterminacies yet not preempting possibilities of self-defense and resistance. On a plateau of multiple, diverse, and contradictory world-making forces, and ethical-political discourses on how to relate to others (urban markets, political Islam, and the Kurdish movement to name a few), an “as if” mode of existence allows them to strategically move between multiple claims to truth; their movements showing the very fabrication of truth and falsehood.

In the third chapter, “Healing Through Repentance: Sufi Orders, Drugs and Kurdish Migrant Workers,” I explore healing practices of Islamic orders, with an eye to the ways people

craft new forms of religious and political subjectivities in the context of dispossession, political violence, and substance abuse. In the cultural and political landscape of this urban working class neighborhood, the Menzil community of the Naqshbandi order has a strong reputation for “curing” the ill, and healing the drug and alcohol users, gamblers, and people with criminal records of theft and murder. Located at the nexus of the medical, political, and religious, these healing practices provide a relatively unexplored and fertile terrain of investigation in anthropology and social sciences. I argued that through ethical practices, cultivation of pious subjectivities and collectivities, journeys to the Menzil village and rituals of repentance, the Menzil community aims to control the *dangerous* classes of the city, discipline their labor power, and contain Kurdish dissent as a part of the Turkish state’s project to control the urban Kurdish population.

In many (if not most) scholarly works on Sufi orders and their followers, pious selves and religious subject formation form the focus of study, while the social, economic, and political dimensions of Sufi lives are largely missing. This absence usually produces one of several contradictory results. Western academic and popular accounts feature romantic descriptions of Sufi spirituality, arts, and ethics, in which scholars discover radical alterity or a distinctive and almost revolutionary ethics that transcend social and moral horizons (Mittermaier 2014a, 2014b). At the other extreme is the problematic image of an unquestioning, uncritical, and obedient follower of a religious authority (Bruinessen 1992). My critique of these works diverges from recent anthropological accounts that emphasize the ways Muslim subjects cultivate virtuous selves through devotional practices and obedience to religious authority (Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006). Unlike these approaches, my aim was not to recuperate Muslim agency through obedience to religious authority.

In contrast, I presented pious subjectivity cultivated in an Islamic order *not* as a stable plateau to be reached regardless of the historical and socio-economic context; but rather as an elastic and intersubjective ethical form that is highly responsive to the political and socio-economic circumstances of “as-if” migrant living. It is only through the exploration of these circumstances among the multiplicity of ethically available languages and political discourses, that we can understand the contours and formation of pious subjectivities. Stories of depression, drug use, repentance, recovery, and multiple escapes, from one of my key interlocutors show that pious subjectivity can be a biographical moment or defining period in one’s social life, and this moment, therefore, has to be situated within a particular time, space, and politics.

In the fourth chapter, “Islamist Movements and Ethnic Politics,” I explored the place of ethnic politics in the rise of Islamist movements by focusing on political Islam and Kurds. There has been tremendous scholarly interest in the mass appeal and electoral success of Islamist movements in the Muslim world. Scholars have addressed this question in various ways; however, a key aspect of Islamist movements has been significantly underexplored in the current literature: Islamists’ promise to resolve ethnic questions, which remain unresolved in secularist nation-states. In this chapter, I argued that the extent to which Islamists resolve (or fail to resolve) ethnic questions significantly shapes their electoral success and ability to establish broader hegemony.

A particular social phenomenon like Islamist success may admit of multiple explanations. However, notwithstanding the abundance of the explanations, the current literature fails to explain variations in popular support for Islamists. My purpose in this chapter is to contribute to this literature by bringing the ethnic politics of Islamists movements into conversation with the multiplicity of existing explanations, and thus to better understand the temporal and spatial

variation of Islamists' success. In order to do this, I explored the rapid changes in the electoral performances of the AKP during the June and November 2015 general elections in Turkey. I argued that the success of the AKP government has been conditioned by the party's capacity to address the Kurdish ethnic question. Specifically, AKP promised to resolve the Kurdish issue, firstly, through ethnic and class-based incorporation on the basis of Islamic solidarity and secondly through repression, appealing in each case to either Kurdish or nationalist Turkish constituencies. The success of the Islamist mobilization and political configuration of diverse electoral performances depended on the realization or failure of this promise.

These social worlds that Kurdish migrant workers occupy inscribe deep pain and scars on Kurdish workers' bodies and yet create desires, movement, possibilities of hope and solidarity. The given name and the naming practice of the character that opened this dissertation with his multiple scars are emblematic of these dynamics. Azad's real name is a Turkish one, as the Kurdish children in Turkey can't be named in Kurdish legally. While his given Turkish name literally means "victim and sacrifice" in Turkish, the Kurdish name (Azad) that he chose for my ethnography means "emancipated." As if in the ethnographic storytelling, the sacrificed body could become the subject of freedom and emancipation. These sharp contradictions between a reality that is all consuming and the work of desire are not easily bore and resolved in Kurdish Istanbul, where everyday life and urban labor are questions of constant negotiations in the dearth of economic resources and the overt presence of political repression. In this sense, my dissertation is an attempt to understand the ways Kurdish migrant workers in Istanbul appropriate contradictory political and ethical discourses and strategically turn their everyday lives and laboring practices into sites of negotiations in which *the* ethnic identity, *the* state, *the* market, and *the* city become less definitive. At the same time, I also look for openings where

ethnographic attunement to micro-stories, singularities and everyday negotiations reveal how ordinary people and their lives break through and impact society and politics writ large.

Bibliography

REFERENCES

- Ayata, Sencer. 1991. "Traditional Sufi Orders on the Periphery: Kadiri and Nakşibendi Islam in Konya and Trabzon." In *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*. Richard Tapper, ed. Pp. 223-254. New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Ayoob, Mohammed. 2004. "Political Islam: Image and Reality." *World Policy Journal* 21(3):1–14.
- Aytaç, S. Erdem and Ziya Öniş. 2014. "Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo." *Comparative Politics* 47(1):41–59.
- Ayubi, Nazih. 2003. *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*. Routledge.
- Balaban, Utku. 2011. *A Conveyor Belt of Flesh Urban Space and the Proliferation of Industrial Labor Practices in Istanbul's Garment Industry*. Istanbul: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Association, Turkey.
- Bargu, Banu. 2016. "Another Necropolitics." *Theory & Event* 19(1).
- Bayat, Asef. 2002. "Activism and Social Development in the Middle East." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34(01):1–28.
- Beauchamp, Zack. 2015. "Why Turkey's Election Results Shocked All the Experts." *Vox*. November 2. <http://www.vox.com/world/2015/11/2/9659540/turkey-election-november-2015>.
- Belge, Ceren. 2016. "Civilian Victimization and the Politics of Information in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey." *World Politics* 68(2):275–306.
- Benjamin, Walter. [1921] 1996. "Critique of Violence." In *Selected Writings*. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds. Pp. 236-252. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press.
- _____. 1968. *Illuminations*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1990. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." In *Nation and Narration*. Homi K. Bhabha, ed. New York: Routledge.
- Biehl, João and Amy Moran-Thomas. 2009. "Symptom: Subjectivities, Social Ills, Technologies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38:267-288.
- Biehl, João and Peter Locke. 2017. "Ethnographic Sensorium." In *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming*. João Biehl and Peter Locke, eds. Durham: Duke University Press.

Biehl, João. 2011a. "Having an Idea in Anthropology Today." *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 100:20-24.

_____. 2011b. "CATKINE ... Asylum, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Pharmacist, I and the Cure: Pharmaceutical Subjectivity in the Global South." In *Pharmaceutical Self: The Global Shaping of Experience in an Age of Psychopharmacology*. Janis Jenkins, ed. Pp. 67-96. Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press.

_____. 2013. "The Judicialization of Biopolitics: Claiming the Right to Pharmaceuticals in Brazilian Courts." *American Ethnologist* 40(3):419-436.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1999. "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field." In *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*. George Steinmetz, ed. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Bourgois, Philippe. 1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1996. "Confronting Anthropology, Education, and Inner-City Apartheid." *American Anthropologist* 98(2):249-58.

Bozarslan, Hamit. 1996. "Political Crisis and the Kurdish Issue in Turkey." In *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East*. Robert Olson, ed. The University Press of Kentucky.

_____. 2004. *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-sacrifice*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener.

Brocker, Manfred and Mirjam Künkler. 2013. "Religious Parties Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis1 - Introduction." *Party Politics* 19(2):171-86.

Bruinessen, Martin Van and Julia Day Howell. 2007. *Sufism and The 'Modern' in Islam*. New York: I.B.Tauris.

Bruinessen, Martin Van. 1992. *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*. London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books.

Burawoy, Michael. 1976. "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material From Southern Africa and the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 81:1050-87.

Çakır, Ruşen. 1990. *Ayet ve Slogan: Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

- Cam, Sürhan. 2002. "Neo-liberalism and Labour within the Context of an 'Emerging Market' Economy--Turkey." *Capital & Class* 77:89-114.
- Cammett, Melani and Pauline Jones Luong. 2014. "Is There an Islamist Political Advantage?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 17(1):187-206.
- Candas, Aysen and Ayse Bugra. 2010. "Solidarity among Strangers: A Problem of Coexistence in Turkey." *Constellations* 17(2):293-311.
- Carsten, Janet. 2013. "What kinship does—and how." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3(2):245-51.
- Çelik, Adnan and Namık Kemal Dinç. 2015. *Yüz Yıllık Ah! Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde 1915 Diyarbakir* (A Century-Long Curse! The Collective Memory of 1915 Diyarbakir) Onur Günay, ed. Istanbul: Ismail Beşikçi Vakfı.
<http://aciktoplumvakfi.org.tr/pdf/100yillikahibv.pdf>
- Chatterjee, Moyukh. 2017. "The Impunity Effect: Majoritarian Rule, Everyday Legality, and State Formation in India." *American Ethnologist* 44(1):118-30.
- Chih, Rachida. 2007. "What is a Sufi Order? Revisiting the Concept through a Case Study of the Khalwatiyya in Contemporary Egypt." In *Sufism and The 'Modern' in Islam*. Martin Van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, eds. Pp. 21-39. New York: I.B.Tauris.
- Clastres, Pierre. 1987. *Society against The State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. New York: Zone Books.
- _____. 2010. *Archeology of Violence*. Introduction by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, translated by Jeanine Herman. Cambridge, Mass: distributed by the MIT Press.
- Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff. 1987. "The Madman and the Migrant: Work and Labor in the Historical Consciousness of a South African People." *American Ethnologist* 14(2):191-209.
- Connell, Raewyn W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Daniel, E. Valentine. 1996. *Charred Lullabie : Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Darıcı, Haydar. 2011. "Politics of Privacy: Forced Migration and the Spatial Struggle of the Kurdish Youth." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13:4:457-474.
- _____. 2013. "'Adults See Politics As A Game': Politics of Kurdish Children In Urban Turkey." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45:775-790.
- Das, Veena and Deborah Poole. 2004. "State and Its Margins: Comparative Ethnographies." In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Veena Das and Deborah Poole, eds. Oxford: James Currey.

Das, Veena. 1995. "National Honour and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children." In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, eds. Pp. 212–33. Berkeley: University of Cal. Press.

_____. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

_____. 2015. "What does ordinary ethics look like?" In *Four Lectures on Ethics*. Pp. 53-125. Chicago: HAU Books.

Davis, Nancy Jean and Robert V. Robinson. 2012. *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare in Egypt, Israel, Italy, and the United States*. Indiana University Press.

Dekmejian, R. Hrair. 1995. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*. Syracuse University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. [1976] 2006. "Desire and Pleasure," "Michel Foucault's Main Concept," and "Foucault and Prison." In *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. Pp. 122-134, 246-265, and 277-286. New York: Semiotext(e).

_____. 1995. "Control and Becoming." In *Negotiations: 1972–1990*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Devereux, Georges. 1967. "Elicited Countertransference: The Complementary Role." In *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences* 3:234-251. The Hague: Mouton & Co.

Durak, Yasin. 2011. *Emeğin teşekkülü: Konya'da İşçi-İşveren İlişkileri ve Dindarlık*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Edwards, Jeanette and Marilyn Strathern. 2000. "Including our own." In *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Janet Carsten, ed. Pp. 149–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ehteshami, Anoushiravan. 2005. "Islam as a Political Force in International Politics." In *Islam in World Politics*. A.H. Johns and N. Lahoud, eds. Pp. 29–53. Routledge.

Eley, Geoff. 2005. *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Elyachar, Julia. 2005. *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo*. Durham: Duke University Press.

_____. 2010. "Phatic Labor, Infrastructure, and the Question of Empowerment in Cairo." *American Ethnologist* 37(3):452–64.

- Ercan, Harun. 2013. "Talking to the Ontological Other: Armed Struggle and the Negotiations Between the Turkish state and the PKK." *Dialectical Anthropology* 37(1): 113–122.
- Ericson, Richard Victor. 1982. *Reproducing Order: A Study of Police Patrol Work*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.
- Erik Meyersson. 2015. "Kinky Voting and Turkey's 'Sultans of Swing.'" *Erik Meyersson*. November 9. <http://erikmeyersson.com/2015/11/09/kinky-voting-and-turkeys-sultans-of-swing/>.
- Esposito, J. L. 1992. "Islam and the State: Dynamics of the Resurgence." *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*. Pp. 77–118.
- Evans, Martin, and John Phillips. 2007. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*. Yale University Press.
- Evered, Kyle T. and Emine Ö. Evered. 2016. "'Not Just Eliminating the Mosquito but Draining the Swamp': A Critical Geopolitics of Turkish Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction and Turkey's Approach to Illicit Drugs." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 33:6–14.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Pref. by Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press.
- Fassin, Didier. 2013a. *Enforcing Order: An Ethnography of Urban Policing*. English ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- _____. 2013b. "On Resentment and Ressentiment: The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotions." *Current Anthropology* 54(3):249–67.
- _____. 2015. "Troubled Waters. At the confluence of ethics and politics." In *Four Lectures on Ethics*. Pp.175-210. Chicago: HAU Books.
- Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Fischer, Michael M.J. 2009. *Anthropological Futures*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. [1983] 2003. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress." In *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*. Volume I: *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose. Pp.253-280. New York: New Press.
- Garcia-Rivero, Carlos and Hennie Kotzé. 2007. "Electoral Support for Islamic Parties in the Middle East and North Africa." *Party Politics* 13(5):611–36.
- Gilsenan, Michael. 1996. *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton. "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Frame for Understanding Migration." In *Towards a Transnational*

Perspective on Migration. N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch, and C. Blanc-Szanton, eds. Pp. 1-24. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Göçmen, İpek. 2014. "Religion, Politics and Social Assistance in Turkey: The Rise of Religiously Motivated Associations." *Journal of European Social Policy* 24(1):92–103.

Greenhouse, Carol. 1992. "Reading Violence." In *Law's Violence*. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns, eds. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press.

Gumuscu, Sebnem and Deniz Sert. 2009. "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45(6):953–68.

Günay, Onur. 2009. *Political Debt and Development Discourse: Translating Incommensurable Worlds in Diyarbakir*. Unpublished Master Thesis. Istanbul: Boğaziçi University.

_____. 2013. "Toward a Critique of Non-Violence." *Dialectical Anthropology* 37 (1):171–82.

Günes-Ayata, Ayşe. 1991. "Pluralism Versus Authoritarianism: Political Ideas in Two Islamic Publications." In *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*. Richard Tapper, ed. Pp. 254-280. London: New York: I.B. Tauris.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1992. "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1):6-23.

Gürses, Mehmet and Nicolas Rost. 2016. "Religion as a Peacemaker? Peace Duration after Ethnic Civil Wars." *Politics and Religion*. Pp. 1–24.

Gürses, Mehmet. 2014. "Islamists, Democracy and Turkey: A Test of the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis." *Party Politics* 20(4):646–53.

_____. 2015. "Is Islam A Cure for Ethnic Conflict? Evidence from Turkey." *Politics and Religion* 8:135-154.

Hakyemez, Serra. 2017. "Turkey's Failed Peace Process with the Kurds: A Different Explanation." *Middle East Brief* No. 111. Crown Center for Middle East Studies: Brandeis University.

Han, Clara. 2012. *Life in Debt : Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Harik, Judith. 1994. *The Public and Social Services of the Lebanese Militias*. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies.

Harrigan, Jane and Hamed El-Said. 2016. *Economic Liberalisation, Social Capital and Islamic Welfare Provision*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Hassan, Hussein D. 2007. "Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities." In DTIC Document. <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA469079>.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1985. *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hirschkind, Charles. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Holmes, Seth. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Houston, Christopher. 1999. "Civilizing Islam, Islamist Civilizing? Turkey's Islamist Movement and the Problem of Ethnic Difference." *Thesis Eleven* 58(1):83–98.
- Houston, Christopher. 2001. *Islam, Kurds and the Turkish Nation State*. Oxford, New York: Berg.
- <http://junctures.org/index.php/junctures/issue/view/11/showToc>.
- IPSOS. 2015. "Post-Election Poll for 2015 Elections (2015 Genel Seçim Sandık Sonrası Araştırması)." IPSOS. Ismail, Salwa. 2001. "The Paradox of Islamist Politics." *Middle East Report*, no. 221: 34–39.
- Jongerden, Joost. 2007. *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War*. Boston: Brill.
- Jwaideh, Wadie. [1960] 2006. *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development*. Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press.
- Kafadar, Cemal. 1989. "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature." *Studia Islamica* 69:121-150.
- Kaplan, Sam. 2005. "Din-u Devlet All Over Again? The Politics of Military Secularism and Religious Militarism in Turkey Following the 1980 Coup." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34:113-127.
- Karakoç, Jülide. 2014. "The Failure of Indirect Orientalism: Islamic State." *Critique* 42 (4): 597–606.
- Kearney, Michael and Carol Nagengast. 1989. Anthropological Perspectives on Transnational Communities in Rural California. Working Group on Farm Labor and Rural Poverty. Working Paper 3. Davis, California: California Institute for Rural Studies.
- Kearney, Michael. 1986. From the Invisible Hand to Visible Feet: Anthropological Studies of Migration and Development. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15:331-361.

- Kepel, Gilles. 2002. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Translated by Anthony F. Roberts. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.
- Kingsbury, Damien. 2007. "The Free Aceh Movement: Islam and Democratisation." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 37(2):166–89.
- Kılıçaslan, Gülay. 2015. "Generational Differences in Political Mobilization among Kurdish Forced Migrants: The Case of Istanbul's Kanarya Mahallesi." In *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: A Spatial Perspective*. Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, eds. Pp. 157–184. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- KONDA. 2015a. "Analysis of 1 November Elections (1 Kasım Sandık ve Seçmen Analizi Raporu)." KONDA.
http://konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar/KONDA_1Kas%C4%B1m2015SandikveSecmenAnaliziRaporu.pdf.
- KONDA. 2015b. "Analysis of 7 June Elections (7 Haziran Sandık ve Seçmen Analizi)." KONDA.
http://survey.konda.com.tr/rapor/KONDA_7HaziranSand%C4%B1kveSe%C3%A7menAnaliziRaporu.pdf.
- Lambek, Michael. 2011. "Kinship as Gift and Theft: Acts of Succession in Mayotte and Ancient Israel." *American Ethnologist* 38(1):2–16.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1987. *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*. London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. [1935] 2003. *On Escape*. Translated by Bettina Bergo. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1990. "The Roots of Muslim Rage." *The Atlantic* 266 (3):47–60.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mandaville, Peter. 2010. *Global Political Islam*. Routledge.
- Mardin, Şerif. 1991. "The Nakşibendi Order in Turkish History." In *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*. Richard Tapper, ed. Pp. 121–145. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Marx, Karl. 1978. "Commodities." In *Capital*. Volume I: *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Robert Tucker, ed. New York; London: Norton and Company.
- Masoud, Tarek E. 2014. *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt*. In *Problems of International Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Masquelier, Adeline. 2000. "Of Headhunters and Cannibals: Migrancy, Labor, and Consumption in the Mawri Imagination." *Cultural Anthropology* 15:(1):84–126.
- Mauss, Marcel. 2000 [1954]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- McGranahan, Carole. 2016. "Theorizing Refusal: An Introduction." *Cultural Anthropology* 31(3):319–325.
- Meyersson, Erik. 2015. "How Turkey's Social Conservatives Won the Day for HDP." June 8. <http://erikmeyersson.com/2015/06/08/how-turkeys-social-conservatives-won-the-day-for-hdp/>.
- Mishal, Shaul and Avraham Sela. 2006. *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Misra, Ashutosh. 2003. "Rise of Religious Parties in Pakistan: Causes and Prospects." *Strategic Analysis* 27(2):186–215.
- Mittermaier, Amira. 2014a. "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: The Egyptian Uprising and a Sufi Khidma." *Cultural Anthropology* 29(1):54–79.
- _____. 2014b. "Beyond Compassion: Islamic voluntarism in Egypt." *American Ethnologist* 41(3):518–531.
- Mujani, Saiful and R. William Liddle. 2009. "Muslim Indonesia's Secular Democracy." *Asian Survey* 49(4):575–90.
- Nagengast, Carole. 1994. "Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23:109–36.
- Naqvi, Dr Ali Mohammed. 1984. *Islam and Nationalism*. Islamic Propagation Organization.
- Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native Is a "Native" Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* (New Series) 95(3):671–686. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/679656>.
- Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza. 2005. "The Rise of 'Muslim Democracy.'" *Journal of Democracy* 16(2):13–27.
- Noor, Farish A. 2003. "Blood, Sweat and Jihad: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) from 1982 Onwards." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 25:2:200–232.
- Ocakli, Feryaz. 2015. "Notable Networks Elite Recruitment, Organizational Cohesiveness, and Islamist Electoral Success in Turkey." *Politics & Society* 43(3):385–413.

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2017. "Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey - July 2015 to December 2016" http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf
- Olson, Robert. 1989. *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Ong, Aihwa. 1990. "State versus Islam: Malay Families, Women's Bodies and the Body Politic in Malaysia." *American Ethnologist* 17(2):258-276.
- Ortaylı, İlber. 1997. "The Policy of the Sublime-Porte towards Naqshbandis and Other Tariqas during the Tanzimat Period." In *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia: Change And Continuity*. Elisabeth Özdalga, ed. Pp. 67-73. Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.
- Ortiz, Sutti. 2002. "Laboring in the Factories and in the Fields." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31:395-417.
- Öz, Talha. 2016. "Vote Transitions in Turkish General Elections (2011-2015)." Accessed February 2. <http://talhaoz.com/?p=735>.
- Özbay, Ferhunde. 1990. "Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdışı Uğraşlarındaki Değişme." In *Kadın Bakış Açısından: 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadınlar*. Şirin Tekeli, ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Özsoy, Hişyar. 2010. "Between Gift and Taboo : Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey." Unpublished PhD Dissertation. University of Texas, Austin.
- Pepinsky, Thomas B., R. William Liddle, and Saiful Mujani. 2012. "Testing Islam's Political Advantage: Evidence from Indonesia." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3):584-600.
- Ralph, Laurence. 2013. "The Qualia of Pain: How Police Torture Shapes Historical Consciousness." *Anthropological Theory* 13(1-2):104-18.
- Razi, G. Hossein. 1990. "Legitimacy, Religion, and Nationalism in the Middle East." *The American Political Science Review* 84(1):69-91.
- Read, Jason. 2003. *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present*. State University of New York Press.
- Roger, Rouse. 1995. "Questions of Identity: Personhood and Collectivity in Transnational Migration to the United States." *Critique of Anthropology* 15(4):351-380.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Roy, Olivier. 1994. *The Failure of Political Islam*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Sadowski, Yahya. 2006. "POLITICAL ISLAM: Asking the Wrong Questions?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9(1):215–40. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.070204.083812.
- Sainsbury, R. M. 2002. "Concepts without Boundaries." In *Departing from Frege: Essays in the philosophy of language*. Pp.71-84. New York: Routledge.
- Saktanber, Ayşe. 1991. "Muslim Identity in Children's Picture-Books." In *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*. Richard Tapper, ed. Pp. 171-189. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- SAMER. 2014. "Social Profile and Political Tendencies of Voters, Class, Ethnicity, Religion, Ideology and Gezi Events (Seçmenlerin Toplumsal Profili Ve Siyasal Eğilimleri Sınıf, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Etnisite, Din, İdeoloji Ve Gezi Olayları)." http://www.ssamer.com/Rapor_Detay-Se%C3%A7menlerin_Toplumsal_Profili_Ve_Siyasal_E%C4%9Filimleri_S%C4%B1n%C4%B1f,_Toplumsal_Cinsiyet,_Etnisite,_Din,_%C4%B0deoloji_Ve_Gezi_Olaylar%C4%B1-1017-3.html.
- Samii, A. William. 2005. "The Nation and Its Minorities: Ethnicity, Unity, and State Policy in Iran." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 20(1):128–37.
- Sarıgil, Kenan and Ömer Fazlıoğlu. 2013. "Religion and Ethno-Nationalism: Turkey's Kurdish Issue". *Nations and Nationalism* 19(3):551-571.
- Sater, James N. 2009. *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity*. Routledge.
- Scholars For Truth, Justice and Peace. 2015. "Report On Recent Incidents Of Violence Against Hdp And Kurdish Citizens in Turkey." <https://barisistiyoruz.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/report/>
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shadid, Anthony. 2002. *Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam*. Basic Books.
- Shakely, Ferhad. 1997. "The Naqshbandi Sheikhs of Hawraman and the Heritage of Khalididiyya-Mujaddidiyya in Kurdistan." In *Naqshbandis in Western And Central Asia: Change And Continuity*. Elisabeth Özdalga, ed. Pp. 89-101. Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.

Silverstein, Brian. 2007. "Sufism and Modernity in Turkey: From the Authenticity of Experience to the Practice of Discipline." In *Sufism and The 'Modern' in Islam*. Martin Van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, eds. Pp. 21-39. New York: I.B.Tauris.

_____. 2008. "Disciplines of Presence in Modern Turkey: Discourse, Companionship, and the Mass Mediation of Islamic Practice." *Cultural Anthropology* 23(1):118-153.

_____. 2011. *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simpson, Audra. 2007. "Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship." *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9:67-80.

_____. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Sokhey, Sarah Wilson and A. Kadir Yildirim. 2013. "Economic Liberalization and Political Moderation: The Case of Anti-System Parties." *Party Politics* 19(2):230-55.

Soleimani, Kamal. 2016. *Islam and Competing Nationalisms in the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Somer, Murat and Gitta Glöpker-Kesebir. 2015. "Is Islam the Solution? Comparing Turkish Islamic and Secular Thinking toward Ethnic and Religious Minorities." *Journal of Church and State* 58 (3): 529-555.

Spector, Samuel J. 2011. "Negotiating Free Association between Western Sahara and Morocco: A Comparative Legal Analysis of Formulas for Self-Determination." *International Negotiation* 16(1):109-35.

Steedman, Carolyn. 1986. *Landscape for a Good Woman*. London: Virago.

Strathern, Marilyn. 1987. "The Limits of Auto-Anthropology." In *Anthropology at Home*. Anthony Jackson, ed. New York: Tavistock Publications.

Striffler, Steve. 2007. "Neither here nor there: Mexican immigrant workers and the search for home." *American Ethnologist* 34(4):674-688.

Sutton, Constance. 1987. "The Caribbeanization of New York City and the Emergence of a Transnational Socio-Cultural System." In *Caribbean Life in New York City Sociocultural Dimensions*. C. Sutton and E. Chaney, eds. Pp. 15-30. New York Center for Migration Studies.

Taussig, Michael T. 1986. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tezcür, Günes Murat. 2010. *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: The Paradox of Moderation*. University of Texas Press.

Thachil, Tariq. 2014. "Elite Parties and Poor Voters: Theory and Evidence from India." *American Political Science Review* 108(02):454–77.

Thiranagama, Sharika. 2011. *In My Mother's House: Civil War in Sri Lanka*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Thompson, Edward P. 1966. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books.

_____. 1993. *Customs in Common*. London: Merlin Press.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press.

TUBIM National Reports (2007, 2012, 2013, 2014). Ankara: Türkiye Uyuşturucu Ve Uyuşturucu Bağımlılığı İzleme Merkezi.

Tucker, William F. 1989. "Introduction." *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*. Robert Olson, author. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Tuğal, Cihan. 2009. *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*. Stanford University Press.

Tunçay, Mete. 1999. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması (1923-1931). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

Turkish parliament's reports (2009). Summary Of The Parliamentary Inquiry Commission Report. Ankara: TBMM.

Turkmen-Dervişoğlu, Gülay. 2016. "United in Religion, Divided by Ethnicity? Why Islam Fails as a Supranational Identity in Turkey." Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Yale University.

Turner, Bryan S. 2003. "Class, Generation and Islamism: Towards a Global Sociology of Political Islam." *The British Journal of Sociology* 54(1):139–47.

Üstündağ, Nazan. 2005. *Belonging to the Modern: Women's Suffering and Subjectivities in Urban Turkey*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Bloomington: Indiana University.

_____. 2016. "Self-Defense as a Revolutionary Practice in Rojava, or How to Unmake the State." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115(1): 197-210.

Walsh, John. 2003. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood." *Harvard International Review* 24(4):32.

- Weber, Max. [1919] 1994. "The Profession and Vocation of Politics." In *Political Writings*. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, eds. Pp. 309-69. New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 2002. "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 96(4):713–28.
- Weisberg, Robert. 1992. "Private Violence as Moral Action: The Law as Inspiration and Example." In *Law's Violence*. Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns, eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- White, Jenny B. 1994. *Money Makes Us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- _____. 2002. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics*. University of Washington Press.
- _____. 2013. *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2004. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Indiana University Press.
- Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press Morningside Edition.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yadırgı, Veli. 2017. *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yalçın-Heckmann, Lale. 1991. "Ethnic Islam and Nationalism among the Kurds in Turkey." In *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*. Richard Tapper, ed. Pp. 84-102. London; New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Yalman, Nur. 1969. "Islamic Reform and the Mystic Tradition in Eastern Turkey." *European Journal of Sociology* 10(1):41-60.
- Yalman, Nur. 1979. On Land Disputes in Eastern Turkey. *Research in Economic Anthropology* 2:269-302.
- Yavuz, Hakan and John L. Esposito. 2003. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: the Gülen Movement*. Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press.
- Yavuz, Hakan. 1997. "The Matrix of Modern Turkish Islamic Movements: the Naqshbandi Sufi Order." In *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia: Change and Continuity*. Elisabeth Özdalga, ed. Pp. 129-147. Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.

Yeğen, Mesut. 1996. "The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity." *Middle Eastern Studies* 32(2):216-229.

Yörük, Erdem. 2012. "Welfare Provision as Political Containment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey." *Politics & Society* 40(4):517-47.

_____. 2012. *The Politics of the Turkish Welfare System Transformation in The Neoliberal Era: Welfare As Mobilization And Containment*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London; New York: Verso.