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Soundscapes of Trabzon: Music, Memory, and Power in Turkey

Michailidis, Nikolaos

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Soundscapes of Trabzon

Music, Memory, and Power in Turkey

(Volume 1-2)

Nikolaos Michailidis

A DISSERTATION
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Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnographic exploration of the practices, affective meanings, and personal and political stakes of music making and listening in Turkey. At the center of the ethnography's musical soundscape is the kemençe of Trabzon, a three string bowed instrument, and the people who play, listen, and give meaning to it. This study focuses on a number of people whose ways of feeling, ideas about history and belonging, concepts of morality and "good life" among other, shape and are shaped by the sound of the kemençe.

The dissertation is not about "music" per se but about people who engage in this fascinating and mysterious activity we conventionally call music. To paraphrase one of Geertz's captivating statements, what do the people in this ethnography believe they do when they listen to and play kemençe?

The dissertation explores the ways in which acts of musical listening relate to issues of power and politics, to ownership, transformation, subjectivity and agency. At the center of my investigation I place the listening actor and his ideas and actions. My informants are kemençe music listeners; the performers are listeners too—listeners of themselves and of other performers. Thus the acts of kemençe listening and the remaking of sensory cultures are central in this study of musical practices in Turkey.

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Finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of the man who shaped my character and worldview as no one else could. His passion for life, work, music, and friendship has been for me a source of inspiration and strength throughout my life. His integrity, pride, discretion, and compassion for his fellow man made him a model person. His struggle for

survival since his early childhood prevented him from attending any school, but despite this, he insured that I would have the education that he could not. I am sure that he would be very proud to see me reach this stage. I dedicate my dissertation to the memory of my beloved father Kyriakos Michailidis. This Ph.D. degree is yours.

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INTRODUCTION

The place and its people

In recent years the provincial town of Trabzon on the northeastern Black Sea shores of Turkey has become the locus of debates about national history, Greeks, music, and fervent patriotism. The very idea of Trabzon still occupies an ambiguous, liminal position in the popular imagination of various constituencies in the country, as the place of "converted Greeks" who are now "fanatic Turks." For others, the people of Trabzon have always been the anchor of Turkish patriotism and the guarantee of the country's unity and future. The ambiguity surrounding its inhabitants' cultural background is "counterbalanced" by excessive display of nationalist ideals.

Trabzon is a northeast province of contemporary Turkey with a population of 740,000 inhabitants. The city of Trabzon alone hosts 292,000 citizens. Almost half of the population in the province lives in cities and towns on the Black Sea shores, and the other half in the villages of the mountainous rural zone of the interior. Scattered in the interior rural zone and also in the cities, as a result of internal migration, can be found thousands of Muslim Pontic-Greek speakers, remnants of the conversions of the previous centuries. Valid, indisputable, or official statistics about this linguistic group are not available.

Trabzon is represented in mainstream media as the "stronghold of Turkish nationalism," as well as the region to which the most famous mafia leaders of the country trace their descent. Extremist, racist right-wing organizations have a strong influence especially among the youth. Rumors about the underground cooperation between mafia, ultra-nationalist groups and the security forces have been circulating extensively, especially among left-wing and liberal groups in the province. The assassination of the

Turkish-Armenian journalist and human rights activist Hrant Dink in 2007 that shook the country and made headlines in international news outlets, was executed by a young Trabzonian member of the local ultra-nationalist organizations. Moreover, the most visible organizations after the political parties in Trabzon are the various religious orders of Sunni Islam, which in recent years have developed extensive networks and have expanded their influence on the population.

To get a general sense of the social and political worldviews in Trabzon one can take a look at the voting behavior of its inhabitants. Thus, according to the 2007 general election results, the inhabitants of this province overwhelmingly voted for right-wing parties, either for the so-called political movement of "soft Islam" of Recep Tayip Erdogan and other smaller Islamic parties, or the ultra-nationalist, racist MHP [Nationalist Action Party] of Devlet Bahceli and other smaller ones in the same ideological line. These parties received altogether almost 81% of the votes. About 18% of votes went to the CHP [Peoples' Republican Party], once the stronghold of the Turkish armed forces, and exponent of the strict secularist, nationalist authoritarian Ataturkist ideals. Different left-wing and liberal groups received less than one percent of the votes. In the most recent turbulent and violent national elections of November 2015, the parties of the Islamic and nationalist spectrum increased their influence and grip on the society even further.

Although Trabzon until today remains under the tight control of mainstream ideologies and political groups, dissident voices and forms of activism started re-emerging especially in the area of arts and writing. Younger musicians and their listeners, as well as writers and researchers from the bilingual community of Trabzon [Pontic-

Greek and Turkish speakers] together with left-wing activists from other linguistic communities, have started raising their voices, challenging official historical narratives and discourses of national belonging. The gradual popularization of Pontic-Greek songs and frequent visits of individuals from Greece have contributed to the intensification of discussions about the city's and the whole province's past, present and future. Moreover, the liturgy in the Orthodox monastery of Panagia Sumela [Virgin Mary] in Trabzon in 2010 for the first time since 1923, in the presence of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the world spiritual leader of the Orthodox Church, was widely covered in the local and national media outlets. Moreover, these developments brought this province to the center of nation-wide attention, rekindling discussions about its "ambiguous identity," history and culture.

Migration

The eastern Black Sea district of Turkey comprises of a long mountain range along a lengthy coast that does not leave much space suitable for the development of farming or creation of large residential zones. The steep slopes of the mountains make the creation of inhabitable zones there even more difficult. Long rivers running from the mountains' tops down to the shores cut the mountain range and shape many valleys that define and separate the zones in which human communities live. This fascinating, but difficult landscape historically had and still has an important impact on the production and exchange activities of its inhabitants.

With the port city of Trabzon as the capital of the district, many smaller towns developed along the coast line, the inhabitants of which are employed mainly in fishing,

trade, small-scale local production units, some tea factories, and the service sector. In the mountainous zone, there are rural communities that had been practicing, until three decades ago, transhumance and small-scale farming for individual consumption purposes. Cultivation of hazelnuts and the more recent (since the 1940s) cultivation of tea for commercial purposes integrated some of these communities in the national economy and provided them with cash that supplemented the remittances from male members of the family who had migrated to the country's western metropolitan centers or to western Europe and Russia (Ildiko Beller-Hann 2003). However, wars, fluctuations in the national and international economy, the introduction of new technologies, combined with the region's harsh natural conditions, made this district of Turkey one with the highest rates of emigration since the beginning of the 20th century up until the 1990s (Bakirezer 2009; Kolivar 2012).

Based on the maintenance of active links with the region of origin, there are two kinds of migration, permanent and temporary. There are those who migrated and settled in the new regions making these their new homelands, integrating themselves, without maintaining much contact with their region of origin but only with some relatives. It is characteristic that the graves of most of the members of these communities are situated in the new regions to which they migrated (Biryol 2007; Kolivar 2012:330). And there are those who migrated for the purpose of accumulating some capital and later, when and if conditions are favorable, return back to their homeland. In the meantime, and when financial and working conditions permit, they pay regular visits to their villages and towns in the Black Sea, especially during the summer, where they spent their time between the village and the highland settlements, socialize with friends and relatives and

participate in the local festivities organized by the municipalities (Biryol 2007; Kolivar 2012)

This dual nature of migration from the east Black Sea district is described in the local idiom by two different terms: *göç* and *gurbetçilik.* The first denotes the permanent character of migration, it is descriptive and without much emotional load. However, the second term is emotionally highly charged and denotes the temporary character of migration, the maintaining of active links with the homeland, and the wish to return sometime in the future. This expectation of return that keeps getting postponed due to economic difficulties creates an ethos of nostalgia and pain for those whose "bodies live here but their minds and hearts are in Trabzon and in their villages," an ethos that is also captured by the term *gurbetçilik.* The Trabzon music repertoire is full of songs about *gurbetçilik* that attract thousands of listeners.

While in Istanbul and in other urban centers, the immigrant communities gradually developed their own networks of mutual assistance and socialization. Initially these networks of relationships used coffeehouses established by their compatriots as points of reference and gathering in the complex urban space. These spaces were frequented exclusively by men of the same village or town and were also used for *kemençe* playing and listening. With time and the increase in number of immigrant communities in Istanbul in the 1960s, the coffeehouses began losing their significance as points of reference for the male members of the communities, and were gradually replaced in this role by the newly-founded associations (Kolivar 2012). The women had the chance to socialize mainly with other relatives in the neighborhood by paying a visit to their house. Both men and women of the same Trabzonian community would

occasionally meet at wedding or circumcision ceremonies, or even at funerals. Later on and with the establishment of the local associations, “dance nights” would become another context of social interaction.

These immigrants for many years would mainly maintain relations with their Trabzonian compatriots in Istanbul and rarely with citizens that were coming from other parts of the country. This form of “mixed” socialization would appear much later, but even then it would not become a dominant pattern. Additionally, in these early stages of emigration, settlement in the city was following particular patterns. People from the same village or town from the Black Sea would settle either in the same or in nearby neighborhoods thus facilitating their interaction in the urban space.

The higher degree of contact of the “temporary immigrants” with Trabzon combined with their experiences of life in major urban centers like Istanbul, has gradually produced new “Trabzon cultures” in the urban centers. These new cultures of “Trabzonians in Istanbul” feature movement back to Trabzon every summer, and have a significant impact on the local cultures. It should also be noted that with the successive immigration currents from Trabzon, those who remained behind were mostly elder members of the communities, whereas the younger members tended to leave. The “new Trabzon” created in Istanbul was the outcome of the dynamism of these young migrant groups.

People and musical praxis

Kemençe is a three string bowed instrument and the musical symbol of the north eastern Black Sea provinces of Turkey. Once stigmatized by Islamic piety and marginalized by the modernization project in Turkey, to the point that it almost reached the brink of extinction, kemençe music has become more popular among certain segments of the population in recent years. The people of the rural zones of Trabzon proudly claim that their province is the "center of kemençe" in the country and that the best performers originate from there. The rising popularity of the instrument and of the genre it represents is accompanied by strong debates about its history and its proper style of performance and usage, while antagonisms between opposing political groups and ideologies have turned kemençe and its sound to a disputed symbol of national/ethnic belonging and political loyalty.

Kemençe musical practice was transformed by a number of interrelated factors, including migration from Trabzon to urban centers, state policies of musical westernization, the media, commercialization and technological changes that impacted music-making and distribution.

The musical genre that was produced out of rural experiences gradually went through changes to meet the new ethos of rapidly urbanizing audiences. As many of my informants accept and as I myself have witnessed, from the 1980s onward the bulk of kemençe music was produced by people living in Istanbul and was sent back to the Black Sea as "Trabzon" or "Black Sea music." From there, it was re-appropriated as such by the local, remaining inhabitants. The transfer of the center of kemençe music-making and listening from the villages of Trabzon to the working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul has

led to the creation of a new kemençe style. As a result, players and listeners gradually started differentiating between the old and new styles by inventing new musical terms. Thus the Trabzon village style is now described as *yöresel tarz* which means a local, "authentic style" of kemençe playing. The other is the *Istanbul tarzı,* the Istanbul style, where the kemençe has incorporated performance techniques from the violin and is accompanied by other instruments in studio recordings with professional sound engineers. Additionally, in this new style song themes have diversified, and the new repertoires include the narration of urban experiences, while the references to nature and rural life have gradually decreased or changed.

The *yöresel tarz* is currently directed toward smaller audiences that usually maintain strong links with Trabzon or live there, especially in the rural mountainous zone, whereas the makers of the Istanbul style try to appeal to larger audiences, even outside of the immigrant Trabzon communities. However, it should be noted that these distinctions are not strictly tied up to the geographical regions from where they sprung. A kemençe performer who lives in Istanbul may well be willing to record a CD with *yöresel tarz*, whereas a performer living in Trabzon might decide to record a CD in Istanbul style, depending on their own musical tastes, target audiences, references and ideas about musical quality, and aspirations for popularity and profit. Thus kemençe music has been taken out of its initial rural context and has gone through a process of reinvention that still continues, causing debates about "degeneration" and the meaning of "musical authenticity" in the community of performers and listeners.

The audible traces of nationalism and profit

The introduction of new technologies such as microphones, pickups, loudspeakers, and sound recording and reproduction systems seriously disrupted the dynamics of the "authentic" rural playing techniques and musical ethos, as well as the interactions with the listeners. These developments in sound technologies were accompanied by state and market interventions that had a tremendous impact on the shaping of the kemençe musical practices.

In the context of nation-making and modernization, the Turkish public radio and television broadcast company (TRT) played a central role in the creation of a homogenized "Black Sea music" genre that incorporated songs from the different linguistic groups of the northeastern provinces of the country. The sonic differences that were the result of the use of different instruments and performance techniques from the diverse groups of the eastern Black Sea, were smoothed through the use of the *bağlama,* supposedly the Turkish national instrument, accompanied by big orchestras. In other cases, Trabzonian songs were performed in these orchestras by the *kabak kemane,* a different three-string bowed instrument whose sound slightly resembled that of the kemençe. The latter's sound was either absent or completely marginalized in these orchestral performances. The sonic homogenization of the diverse ethnic musical genres was also made possible by softening the local vocal performance styles through intervention and change into the local techniques of larynx use for the production of sound, and by eliminating the traditional free and improvised character of the songs and turning them into standardized melodies of three-to-five-minute length with a fixed structure. TRT internal regulations were established to define the accepted ways of

performing a song, melodies were written down and were standardized in western notation, and singers and musicians employed by the government were trained to perform them according to the rules, in public performances supported by state networks (i.e. TV, radio, festivals, and concerts.) In this way the diverse oral musical cultures of the various linguistic groups of the eastern Black Sea were turned into standardized, controlled, and written "national folk songs" (see Stokes 1993).

TRT also created its own "stars" out of individual singers trained in universities and conservatoires. In its programs, it gave very limited space to the village kemençe players who, in an official musical idiom that clearly reflected a hierarchical and colonial categorization, were called *mahalli sanatçılar*, "neighborhood/village artists," and were considered unsophisticated instrumental practitioners without any theoretical training. These village artists were also turned into primary "sources" by state scholars and researchers in their attempts to record, write down and reproduce the "folk musical culture."

The TRT musical genre mainly impacted mainly the "educated" westernizing audiences in urban centers who considered it as a kind of mainstream standard. This homogenized genre, however, did not manage to become popular among the rural audiences of Trabzon as I learned during my fieldwork with the dwellers of the villages. Locals did not take TRT Trabzon music seriously and they kept listening to the old style, "authentic" kemençe performed by its local players. For many of my interlocutors this "fake music" of TRT was the first step towards the "degeneration" of kemençe music.

TRT lost its monopoly over the definitions, making and dissemination of music when private recording companies entered the scene. Though I will discuss the role of

music industry in the initial popularization and later de-politicization of kemençe music in chapter four, it is important to briefly refer to the industry's role here in connection with its impact on the sonic character of this musical genre.

After the 1970s, private recording companies started transforming Trabzonian music into a commodity. This also changed its sonic character and the forms of sociality that it enabled. In their attempt to expand audiences and profits, record companies imposed other instruments and aesthetic priorities on the levels of melody, rhythm, lyrics, and instrumentation.

Thus synthesizers started being used to accompany the kemençe, and in many recordings they were even becoming the main instrument. This change was so great that younger generations of listeners and dancers had difficulties dancing by following the kemençe player alone, which was how their parents' generation kept rhythm while dancing. As many of my performer interlocutors told me, some younger dancers would even tend to belittle the kemençe player and would request a synthesizer drum beat to keep the rhythm and help them dance. This became the "modern" Trabzon music genre that has gained popularity among the younger generations of Trabzon origin and other Black Sea immigrant audiences in the cities. Beyond the synthesizer, the bağlama instrument, the staple of state television performances, acquired some popularity in Trabzonian music, and in the 1970s it was followed by the electro-bağlama. In my discussions with some of my interlocutors—musicians and producers who played a significant role in making and popularizing these "new Trabzonian musical genres"—I learned that in their attempts to become famous and make money, they employed every possible means that they thought would help them achieve their goals, which often meant

following trends in other mainstream genres. Thus, in their performances they started using synthesizers and bağlama. In a sense they were "pioneers" who temporarily transformed the sonic character of Trabzon music for a certain period of time. However, as I was able to observe during my fieldwork, the genre they created is now being severely criticized and accused of having degenerated the Trabzon musical ethos.

The creation of night-life stars in kemençe music in Istanbul, following the trends in other more mainstream genres in the country, also contributed significantly to the popularization of this new kemençe style. Night clubs for kemençe performance, with disco balls, multicolored lighting and hired female escorts, shiny costumes, loudspeakers and microphones, alcohol and cigarette smoke, and of course the complete sonic dominance of the singer over the player and over the audiences—who could barely communicate due to the high volume of the sound—constituted the "modern context" for many kemençe performances in the city.

The star system that was created through this night-club networks and through the use of the newly established Black Sea media in Istanbul, removed kemençe music out of its initially dispersed, participatory, rural, and decentralized context, and confined it within a centralized structure comprised of private companies and fame-making networks and practices.

The audiences of kemençe music, more in the new places where they migrated and less in their original villages, started developing a different relationship with their music and they gradually became its consumers, buying cassettes and hiring stars to come perform to their weddings and festivals. Their beloved kemençe music could no longer be

enjoyed for "free," and its character started changing, both sonically and thematically, as their social interactions, experiences and ideas of themselves started changing too.

Marketization also impacted the way kemençe music was made. While making a song, instead of drawing on personal experiences, thoughts and emotions, as was the case in the past, kemençe players began making musical decisions based on assumptions about potential audience preferences and marketability. However, these target audiences are now shaped by a multitude of forces such as TV shows, magazines and newspapers, internet, and global cultural industries. They are exposed to different life styles and ideas. These meaning-making practices and networks are beyond the reach of the local kemençe music-makers. Thus, some kemençe players think that if they follow the fashions shaped by these powerful networks, they will become successful. As a result, they have begun to use synthesizers and electronic sounds, they dress as "modern city guys" (with some even wearing earrings), they produce music videos in big cities, using urban symbols such as expensive cars and luxurious houses with swimming pools, and of course in the clips they show lightly dressed women dancing in a sexually suggestive way. All these practices and representations run contrary to the rural Trabzon musical ethos and "seriousness" that was dominant until almost two decades ago.

Music and meaning

There is a general agreement among scholars and music practitioners that music has meaning/s for performers and listeners: there are those who argue that musical meaning is derived only from the work itself, while others add that human activities, practices, location of performance, presentation, and reception contribute to the creation

of musical meaning. The first category of understanding is born out of the study of classical Western music, while the second category comes from the examination of every other musical genre around the world.

Since the late 1950's, going contrary to the era's mainstream spirit, a new way of thinking about music emerged. According to this new thinking, the absolute meanings and referential meanings are not mutually exclusive; rather they coexist in one and the same piece of music. Both types of meanings are not "natural" or "universal" but are based upon learning. It is pointless to ask what the intrinsic meaning of a single tone or a series of tones is and that "purely as physical existences they are meaningless and they become meaningful only in so far as they point to, indicate or imply something beyond themselves" (Meyer 1956). Attempts of scholars and critics of classical music to "discover the meaning" of a composer's "musical work" was a cultural practice of meaning-making itself and that it would be productive to re-evaluate and analyze these practices from an anthropological perspective, placing them in broader conceptual and social contexts. Scholars and critics were not "discovering" the meaning of a composer's "musical work" but they were actually giving meaning to it, through their talk and writing.

Indeed, posing questions about the meaning of a music or its function in human life are the wrong questions to ask since music is not a thing but a form of interaction and a human activity invested with meanings. What we, in ordinary language, call music

> is a figment, an abstraction and a reification of an action whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it at all closely. The habit of thinking in abstractions, of taking from an action what appears to be its essence and of giving that essence a name, is an old intellectual habit which, though it might useful in categorizing things and

> conceptualizing the world, it brings with it a certain danger, that of reification. It is easy to come to think of the abstraction as real, as having an autonomous life, as if it exists in itself (Small 1998:2).

The reification of musical practices impacted the way we conceptualized and studied them. Classical Western music became the only legitimate object of study in musicology, leaving to ethnomusicology the study of all the other forms of musical life around the world. Moreover, scholars of this genre uncritically had come to believe that musical meaning resides in the musical scores and that it has nothing to do with all the other activities that relate to musical practice. This way of thinking objectified music and left the human actor outside of the picture. Musicologists were studying not the people who make and listen to music but the pieces of music themselves, as autonomous entities and completely de-contextualized. (Small 1998:4). This peculiar, culture-specific idea that musical meaning resides exclusively in music scores entailed certain intellectual consequences. Thus scholars were not interested in studying performance and listening practices. These were simply thought of as the channels for the transfer to the listener of the supposedly self-contained work. The dominant thinking posed that there was an "inner meaning" in music and that only those who could read the score had access to this. Musical performance was conceptualized as a one-direction system of communication, with the performer as an intermediate between composer and listener. The listener, too, was completely stripped of any agency he had in his engagement with musical sound. It was only the composer's work out of which meaning was spreading. This also suggested that musical practice was an individual matter and that composing, performing and listening take place in a social vacuum (Small 1998: 5-6). Thus, researchers came to think

that each musical work is autonomous and that it exists without reference to any kind of context or field of human activity such as religious, social, and political beliefs or any ritual. However most of the people around the world play and listen to music drawing on remembered melodies and rhythms or inventing their own within the context of their musical culture and tradition, and without any reference to music scores (Small 1998:6-7).

Scholars eventually came to realize that in order to understand the phenomenon we call music we need to conceptually liberate our selves from this culture-specific view of music as an autonomous "product" and place it within its broader context, viewing it not as a thing but as a human activity that relates to other fields of social life. Thus, rather than limiting their focus on forms and structures, pioneer scholars have attempted to analyze the emotions and values of non-Western musical traditions (David McAllester 1954, in Seeger:2004: xv). The work that really opened the path toward establishing music as facet of social life was Alan Merriam's pioneering *Anthropology of Music* (1964) which placed emphasis on all aspects of musical production and function (see Seeger:2004: xv). John Blacking's *Venda Children's Song* (1967) described the non-musical sources of the sounds of songs in this community's children. Later in his career, Blacking focused his research on the study of emotion, bodily movement, and the cultural and social context in which music is performed (1973, in Seeger:2004: xv). Steven Feld in his *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (1982) and in subsequent studies (1984) revealed the strong connections between emotions, metaphor and social contexts in the societies he studied (in Seeger:2004: xv). Ruth Stone (1982) and Ellen Basso (1985) also focused their analysis on the symbolism

of sound production in connection to performance genres, adding in the picture, especially the former, the interactions of performers and audience (in Seeger:2004: xv).

Another scholar in this intellectual genealogy, with a great contribution to the understanding of the importance and nature of performance contexts, is Anthony Seeger whose highly influential *Why Suya Sing* (1987) was based entirely on the ethnographic study of a single performance event, a ritual of this Amazonian group of people (see also Seeger 1979; 1980a). Arguing against an anthropology of music advocated by Merriam (1964), who brought to the study of music the concepts, methods, and concerns of anthropology and placed musical practices in the context of culture and social life, Seeger coined the concept of musical anthropology and tried to see how musical performances themselves create many aspects of culture and social life. Rather than examining music *in* culture as was the case with Merriam's work, Seeger's musical anthropology attempts to study social life as a performance. Instead of assuming that there is a pre-existing social and cultural matrix within which music is performed, he analyzes how music is part of the very construction and interpretation of social and conceptual relationships and processes (Seeger 1987 [2004]: xiii-xiv).

Seeger (1980) argued that every performance constitutes a particular mixture of musical traditions, of the performers' virtuosity and of the varieties of styles that are staged. He insisted that instead of trying to define the nature of the context, which is very difficult, it would be more fruitful to look for answers to the following ethnographic questions: what is performed, where, how, when, from whom, to whom and why. The context is neither simply the place where a musical performance takes place nor its outcome. It is defined from the combination of many factors such as time, place,

performers, audience and intentions. Different societies have varied musical practices and ideas about their meanings. In stressing the performance contexts, Seeger directs our attention to the importance of the relations between genres, performers and audiences for the formation of musical meanings and for the understanding of the relationship between societies and musical sounds (see also Seeger 1987 [2004]: 128-140).

Though I agree with Seeger that context is important in the understanding of musical practices and their meanings, I believe that it would be useful to think of context as something much larger than the combination of the things Seeger has enumerated, as described in the previous paragraph. We need to look at the activities, for example, of governments, of religious networks, of private industries and other human networks that try to use and interpret musical practices for their own purposes. It is not enough to look only at the immediate context of musical performances, especially now that music, through technological mediation, travels quickly and it can be used in diverse ways in different contexts, and in faraway places.

Theories of performance have become quite influential in the study of musical practices in recent years.[1] Nevertheless, I argue that the approach which treats social life as performance is problematic in the sense that it is an instance of scholars using a

[1] Anthropologist Kelly Askew (2002) makes extensive use of the concept of performance in her study about music, power and politics in Tanzania. She informs us that performance as a focus of analysis has been approached from two major theoretical angles (Askew 2002:18, see also Drewal 1991, Carlson 1996, and Schieffelin 1998.) One that originates in language and communication theory, as well as sociolinguistics and folklore. This perspective on performance is characterized by scholars as a means of communication (Austin 1965, Searle 1969, Hymes 1964, Bauman and Briggs 1990.) The second can be found in Goffman (1974, 1980), Turner (1974, 1986), and Schechner (1985, 1988). This second angle relates performance to an understanding of social life as enacted, as "social drama" and as a continual "presentation of self." Each perspective privileges a single metaphor for conceptualizing performance: language and theater. For more on this see Askew (2002: 18-26.)

metaphor to understand complex human interactions. If we think of everything in social life as performance, then we run the danger of limiting our analytical engagements and of pre-defining the outcomes of our research. Notions that attempt to capture whole, complex interactions, should be used with caution. I prefer to use the more neutral, open and dynamic term "expressive practice", as I will explain later in this introduction.

It is more productive to examine musical practices and their contexts both synchronically and diachronically, in different places and times, and to see how major political and other transformations have impacted musical practices and meanings. In this ethnography, readers will see how, for example, religious conversion to Islam and the making of the nation-state in Turkey had established a new context in which kemençe musical practices had to be radically re-interpreted, re-invented or even censored. From this observation comes another one: both anthropology of music and musical anthropology are complementary in our endeavor to understand the mysterious musical human practice. The broader context, as established by the activities and interventions of powerful institutions, impacts the performance and listening of music, as I show in various chapters. But individual musical practices such as listening, playing, talking about music etc. can also plant the seeds of personal cultural change that might lead to broader social transformations.

In the following sections I present the texts and ideas that have impacted my thinking while I was working to understand kemençe musical practices in Turkey.

Music talk

Clifford Geertz opens his essay entitled "Art as a cultural system" by writing that art is very difficult to talk about, especially in the fields of painting, music and sculpture or any form of activity humans accept as art (Geertz 1983:94). Despite this difficulty and the Western belief that art "speaks for itself" people keep talking about it. The meaning and importance of art for human experience make people talk about it in various possible ways. People invent theories about creativity, perception, and social function of the arts, they classify and compare, they use metaphors (i.e. art is language, feeling etc.), and they describe and judge (Geertz 1983:95).

People in different societies talk about art in various, different ways. Technical language about art though is insufficient to a comprehensive understanding of it because its aesthetic power is not located in the formal relations among sounds, images, or gestures (Geertz 1983:95). Other sorts of non-technical talk about art link artistic activities to the general dynamic of human experience. This kind of talk attempts to place art within the context of other expressions of human purpose and the pattern of experience they collectively sustain. As Geertz characteristically states "aesthetic objects cannot be left to float outside the general course of social life, they demand to be assimilated." (Geertz 1983:95).

Definitions of art in any society are only marginally intra-aesthetic. Artistic activities acquire cultural significance when they are placed within the other modes of social activity and get incorporated into the texture of a particular pattern of life. This kind of placing, according to Geertz, is always a local matter for every society (Geertz 1983:95). He states

> What art is in classical China or Islam, in the highland New Guinea or in Pueblo southwest is not the same thing. And talk about it is different too. The critique of Western conceptions about "art talk" that focuses almost exclusively on technical matters, stresses that people around the world talk about art as they talk about anything else that passes through their lives and moves them, is striking or suggestive. They talk about how art is used, who owns it, when it is performed, who performs or makes it, what is its role in this or that activity, what it may be exchanged for, how it began, what it is called, and so forth and so on (Geertz 1983:97).

In order to understand this fascinating expressive form of human activity we conventionally call art, we must give more attention to talk, and in particular to other sorts of talk beyond the recognizably aesthetic (Geertz 1983:102). As the readers will themselves realize in subsequent chapters, the people for whom I write talk a lot about "art." They do not talk in abstract but in very personal terms. They talk about kemençe music which they consider theirs and the core of their culture. They express their disapproval of its commodification and "degeneration," they link it to memory and family, they describe its sound as a strong reminder of village life, of uniqueness, difference, and pride, they praise it, they try to restore its "authentic character," and much more.

Talk about kemençe music and doing things with it became for me an important entrance point that allowed me to understand and analyze other domains of local life in Turkey. My informants, even the most musically trained ones, never talked about kemençe music in any kind of technical terms. They always used daily language and

linked it to different domains of their concrete lives and daily experiences and to the country's political processes. And this is one of the main reasons why readers will not find any music notes and technical analysis of sound in this text, something quite unconventional for such a type of study. The other reason is my own experiential knowledge of kemençe music, as is the case for most of the performers of my generation both in Greece and in Turkey, which was obtained outside conservatory and the technical language of music theory. This was, and continues to be to a large extent, a music learned through the ear, not through the vision or the reading of notes. But it is also my conviction that, following my informants, Geertz, and my own experience, the human activity we conventionally call music, cannot be understood through reference to the internal organization of sounds and the use of the technical language of music theory. I think this tells us nothing about how, for example, illiterate villagers in Trabzon enjoy and do things with their musical sounds. Music notes, that is, the visualization of musical sounds and its inscription on paper, can serve other purposes of, for example, hierarchy construction, control, objectification, inscription, information transfer, reification, exclusion and communication among "specialists," but I think it cannot serve a cultural analysis of the dynamic musical practices of our "theoretically illiterate" informants. Most listeners, as the ethnomusicological literature has by now shown, deeply engage with music without any knowledge of "music theory." The latter is an invented form of language in which only few have different levels of fluency. The kemençe music practitioners in Trabzon, the few who have the relevant knowledge, rarely talk and think in music-theory terms.

The conceptualization of expressive practices from the perspective of Western aesthetics emerged in the mid-eighteenth century along with the notion of "fine arts." The rise of this form of thinking led to the disregard of any other possible forms of data that could help us build a comparative understanding of art and "thus scholars had been left with an externalized conception of the phenomenon supposedly under intense inspection but actually not even in their line of sight" (Geertz 1983:98).

The feeling for life animates the means of an art, and these two are inseparable. As we cannot understand speech as a "parade of syntactic variations, or myth as a set of structural transformations," one cannot understand expressive, artistic, practices as pure, isolated and abstract forms (Geertz 1983:98). The study of an art form entails the exploration of a sensibility. Such a sensibility is collectively formed and

> the foundations of such a formation are as wide as social existence and as deep. This realization will protect us from the view that aesthetic power is a grandiloquence for the pleasures of craft, and from its opposing functionalist view which approaches works of art as elaborate mechanisms for defining social relationships, sustaining social rules, and strengthening social values (Geertz 1983:99).

Geertz argues that the various forms of human activities we call art concretize a way of experiencing and bring a particular cast of mind out into the empirical world of objects, where people can look at it, and for the purposes of this dissertation, where people can listen to it (Geertz 1983:99). He also reminds us that

> The capacity, which varies among peoples and among individuals, to perceive meaning in pictures, melodies, poems, buildings, pots, dramas, statues etc., is, like all other fully human capacities, a product of collective experience which far

> transcends it. And it is out of participation in the general system of symbolic forms we call culture that participation in the particular we call art, which is in fact but a sector of it, is possible. A theory of art is thus at the same time a theory of culture, not an autonomous enterprise (Geertz 1983:108-109).

In thinking about how to study and understand the meanings that kemençe music bears for my informants, I was inspired by Geertz's overall approach to the arts. Thus in this ethnography I sought to place this instrument and its sounds not in an "invented world of dualities, transformations, parallels and equivalences" (Geertz 1983:108-109) but in the real, concrete world where people perceive through their senses and interact.

If, according to the conventional Western view, the purpose of art is to affect the "sense of beauty," Geertz argues that this sense too is a cultural artifact like the objects and devices used to "affect" it and that "the artists work with the audience's capacities with understanding, capacities to see, or hear, or touch, sometimes even to taste and smell. Art and the equipment to grasp it are made in the same shop" (Geertz 1983:118). Though he did not engage in depth with this, we can glimpse the connection that Geertz draws between human perception, the senses, experience and culture, which is very important in understanding and analyzing the multiple engagements of humans with musical sound.

He calls for a semiotic approach to art that entails a deep engagement with signs and symbols that are the vehicles of meaning. These signs and symbols play a role in the life of a society and it is that which in fact gives them their life. In this dissertation the kemençe and its sounds are the central symbols and signs around and with which my informants develop various kinds of activities invested with certain meanings. Here

meaning arises from use, and it is by tracing the uses of kemençe as exhaustively as one might for irrigation techniques or marriage customs, as Geertz convincingly points out, that we are going to be able to find out anything about this form of human activity and the ways of life it entails. So in this dissertation, following Geertz's call, I conduct a cultural analysis of musical practices by placing them in the concrete, ordinary world in which my informants listen, look, imagine, name, fear, aspire, feel and interact, and while they attempt to make sense of their lives, past and present, and shape their future. And that is a world where the senses, hearing in particular, play a central role.

Geertz was aware, even though he marginally touched upon it, of the role of the senses in the signification of art, and their importance for what we call emotion. His awareness became visible when he wrote that "certain activities everywhere seem specifically designed to demonstrate that ideas are visible, audible, even tactile, and that they can be cast in forms where the senses and through the senses the emotions, can reflectively address them" (Geertz 1983:119-120). He argued that the variety of conceptions people have about the way things are produces a variety of artistic expression that we encounter across and within different societies (1983:120). Thus, by analyzing how people in Trabzon engaged with kemençe musical forms, I hope to show to my readers how my informants thought and coped with power and politics, migration, fear, memory, language, religion, belonging, transformation, ownership, and profit. Musical practices have become, with the help of Geertz's thinking, the big window that allowed me to enter the conceptual world and the sensibilities of my informants, and to understand the broader contexts in which their lives unfolded.

Since the 1990s scholars started becoming more aware of the importance of talk in the production of meaning in musical practice. Music has meaning despite its lack of the referential density found in words or images, and musical meaning can be made more explicit by language. The process of verbalization of the musical experience involves a form of peculiar "translation" which, itself, has a signifying potential. Verbal attributions of meaning to music function as constructive descriptions: They do not "decode" the music or reproduce a meaning supposedly already in it but attach themselves to the music as an independent form (Kramer 2001). Constructive description is a fact of musical life and one of its foundations. Particular descriptions can be either informal or scholarly, improvisatory or deliberative. In short, music does important cultural work by being spoken of and would not be what we call "music" otherwise, according to Kramer (2001). Words situate music in a large variety of cultural contexts and in the process invest it with the very capacity to "speak" of its contexts that it is usually thought to lack. Neither the speech nor the contexts are "extrinsic" to the music involved; the three terms are inseparable (Kramer 2001).

Religion, ethos and music

Throughout this ethnography, but more so in the first two chapters, readers will clearly see the multiple connections between religion and musical practices in Turkey. Though before going to my field I was not well aware of the importance of religion and its impact on music-making and listening in Turkey, my research experience made me fully cognizant of these strong connections. Geertz's ideas have proven fruitful for explaining them. His analysis of the relationship between religion and values are an

important inspiration. What I do is to add to this analysis the component of musical practice. The richness of my ethnographic data point towards a strong interconnection and mutual influence between these domains of human experience. But in what ways do musical practices interact with religious beliefs?

Religion fuses ethos and world view and thus makes a set of social values appear as objective. The objective appearance of these arbitrary social values is what gives them the power to be taken for granted by people and to shape their behavior (Geertz 1973: 131.) He further argues that

> A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is an underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their idea of the way things in actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society, and it contains their most comprehensive ideas of order. The ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the worldview describes, and the latter is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression (Geertz 1973: 127).

Among other things, religion is, in part, a practice with which societies maintain, remind, and circulate the meanings in terms of which humans interpret their experience, structure their time, and shape their behavior. Religion has the power to relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality. Morality is a kind of simple realism, a practical wisdom. And the value system that a people construct cannot be independent of any metaphysical referent. Thus, ethics always comes with an ontology (Geertz 1973: 127-129).

Religion structures social behavior by presenting a world in which such behavior is considered common sense. And it is common sense because "between ethos and world view, between the approved style of life and the assumed structure of reality, there is conceived to be a simple and fundamental congruence such that they complete one another and lend one another meaning" (Geertz 1973: 129).

Religion is a good example of the power of the human imagination to construct an image of reality in which "events are not just there and happen, but they have a meaning and happen because of that meaning" (Weber in Geertz 1973:131). Moreover

> The need for such a metaphysical grounding for values seems to vary quite widely in intensity from culture to culture and from individual to individual, but the tendency to desire some sort of factual basis for one's commitments seems practically universal. Conventionalism satisfies few people in any culture (Geertz 1973: 131).

The Geertzian frame invites us to interpret symbolic human activities such as religion and art—music for my purposes here—as practices that provide orientation for an organism which is unable to live in a world it does not comprehend. The use of the analytic terms ethos and world view, though imprecise and vague, as Geertz himself accepts, can assist us in the study of values and help us clarify the processes involved in the normative regulation of human behavior (Geertz 1973: 140-141). The role of expressive practices we call art, music for my purposes here, and especially the acts of music listening, become crucial for the shaping and support but also for the undermining of the ethos that Geertz has been talking about. And this is not without broader implications for societies. The rise of new musical genres and the transformation of the listening habits of humans cannot be interpreted as simply a change of individual tastes

and preferences. They relate to broader social changes by which they are motivated but also help to shape, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters.

There is, then, a very strong connection between religion and music. How is human behavior impacted and what happens to the musical practices of humans when they convert to another religion? And how do musical practices reinforce or challenge and undermine a religiously made ethos? What are the stakes of such encounters and transformations? Answers to these questions will be given in the various chapters of the dissertation and in the conclusions.

Listening, memory, emotion

My analysis is also inspired by, and contributes to, a new strand of thinking about the cultural shaping of the senses and their importance in the formation of human experience, emotion, memory, and subjectivity.[2] My focus here is on the different acts of kemençe listening, and their meanings and stakes. Thus, a few words about the analytic focus on listening are necessary here.

Anthropologists have come to realize that it is possible to conceptualize new ways of knowing a culture and of gaining a thorough understanding of how the members of a

[2] Starting from a critique of the basic assumptions about the centrality of the visual perception in the West (Classen 1993, Stoller 1989) anthropologists turned their interest to cultures with different prioritization of the senses. The centrality of visual perception in the West for the construction of knowledge and the perception of the world is not universal. Other cultures make different selections regarding the evaluation and prioritization of the senses and their perception and the symbolic meaning with which they are invested (see works on groups of the tropical forest Feld 1980, Seeger 1975, Roseman 1984, Gell 1995.) Influential work in the field of the senses has come out of Howes (2003,) Geurts (2002,) Sermetakis (1994,) Taussig (1993,) Classen (1993,) Stoller (1989.) For a review on the literature on the senses see Classen (1997.) For a similar focus on listening and music see the works of Austern (2002,) Baumann and Fujie (1999,) Feld (1996,) Wegman (1998a,) and Seeger (1981.)

society know and interact with each other (Erlmann at al 2005:3). Studying the ways humans listen to human and non-human sounds—for our purposes here how they listen to music—provides fascinating access to diverse domains of human experience. This realization of the importance of listening for human experience and knowledge has a certain intellectual trajectory that I will briefly describe.

Anthropologists have opened a new path for the development of the cultural study of sound (see Feld 1982 [2012]).[3] This approach engaged with the socio-acoustics of expressive forms that were between language and music, and at the intersections of verbal art, poesis, and vocalized performance. It also concerned the inter-animation and inter-articulation of human and nonhuman sounds in the community setting of a rain forest environment (see Feld 2012: xxiv). Feld described how sentiment is shaped through sound and how sound is an aesthetically coded sentiment. He convincingly showed how ideas generate actions and how those actions are purposive, expressive forms that constitute an ideology of emotion. The patterning of expressive forms

[3] Though the two pioneer scholars who critiqued visualism, thought and wrote about the importance of auditory perception and its impact on knowledge and experience were the philosopher Ihde (1976) and the composer and scholar Schafer (1977,) it was after Feld's work that anthropologists and other scholars started locating sound ever more seriously in transcultural and transdisciplinary research, and thus relevant work started proliferating, see Anthropology News 2010, 2011; Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, and Porcello 2010; Diehl 2002; Fox 2004; Greene and Porcello 2004; Hirschkind 2006; Meintjes 2003; Mora 2005; Panopoulos 2003; Samuels 2004; Solomon 2000; Weisetchaunet 1998; Yamada 1997, Schieffelin 2005. There is also an ever growing and fascinating interdisciplinary sound studies literature. For works on sound engineering, technology, aurality, noise, and hearing see Augoayard and Torgue 2006; Bijsterveld and van Dijk 2009; Erlmann 2010; Schwartz 2011; Smith 2001; Sterne 2003; Taylor 2001; Theberge 1997; Thompson 2003. On sound art see Chion 1994; Dyson 2009; Kahn 1999; LaBelle 2010.

embodies and communicates the most deeply felt sentiments in Kaluli social life (Feld 2012: 217-213). [4]

More particularly his ethnography explored how the New Guinean Kaluli music was interwoven into all the associations that Kaluli learn to feel between birds, weeping, poetics, and song (Feld 1990:215-217 in Finnegan 2012:356). The Kaluli lived in and through a complex sonic world which Feld's analysis uncovered. He analyzed how they described and experienced their sonic world, the dynamics stirred by the sorrowful songs, the tears they caused to their hearers, the reactions of the participants based on their mythically informed experiences, and the acoustic epistemology that resonated through their lives (Feld 1990:215-217 in Finnegan 2012:356). The thoughtfully composed and deliberately rehearsed songs seek to make the listeners sad and nostalgic, to shape feelings of sadness and rage, and in the end to move them to tears. Thus the way they are performed by a dancer is meant to create an image of loneliness and isolation (Finnegan 2012:356). What is dominant during the event and what is remembered during its

[4] Feld further developed his work and moved from an anthropology of sound to an acoustemology and anthropology in sound, by trying to develop new perspectives on Bosavi's ambient, verbal/vocal, and musical/instrumental sounds (see Feld 1987, 1988, 1990b.) He explains that he coined the term acoustemology to join acoustics with epistemology and to argue for sound as a capacity to know and as a habit of knowing. He attempted to find new ways to talk about how, within a few seconds and often in the absence of coordinated visual cues, the Bosavi people knew precisely many features of the rain forest world such as the time of the day, weather history, and the season. Feld linked this kind of tacit knowledge, as well as active ecoacoustic knowing, to expressive practices, to the way Bosavi listening habits and histories figure in the shaping of poetic, vocal, and instrumental practices (2012:xxvii.) On ecological and aesthetic coevolution see Feld 1996a; on vocality, gender, emplacement, and memory see Feld 1996b and 1998. He went further to argue that sounds habituate local listeners to a sense of place and produce consciousness of space and time, see Blau et al.2002, 2010; Feld 2004-2007; Scaldaferri 2005. Also in his more recent work on jazz cosmopolitanism in Accra, Ghana, that is also presented in sound, film, and text (Feld 2009, 2012a, 2012b) he showed how sound connects to ecology and cosmology.

aftermath is how the songs moved the audiences and induced them to cry (Feld 1990:215-217 in Finnegan 2012:356).

The study of the relation between music and emotion that moves beyond the examination of texts, composition or even performance and focuses on the subjective experience of humans as listeners is attracting growing interest and becoming an increasingly interdisciplinary field of study (see Juslin and Sloboda 2010 and Finnegan 2012). Despite this development, there is still resistance, on the part of musicologists especially, to place the study of these connections at the center of their research. The reasons for this resistance lie in the still dominant presence in Western thought of the "value-laden opposition between mind and body, intellect and emotion, meaning and feeling" (Finnegan 2012:353). Romanticism adopted and reproduced these polarities by supporting the emotional side. Reason was set on top, and was given the role of controlling humans' supposedly lower "animal" nature and of leading upward into the scientific, emotion-free enlightenment of human intellect (Finnegan 2012:354).

Finnegan (2012) argues that the scholarly interest in the cognitive and non-bodily features of music led to an exclusive focus on composition, written scores and the rationality of classical music theory and that it was these aspects, and not the "primeval" emotions, that were thought of as being the proper subject of scholarly analysis. Emotions were not irrelevant in traditional musicology, but as something supposedly bodily and opposed to the intellect, they were thought to be something that needs to be controlled and refined by reason. Hierarchies between "classical" music as "true" music as opposed to unwritten forms like jazz, rock or African drumming seen as irredeemably

"physical," were based on these modernist dichotomies between the intellect and emotion (Finnegan 2012:354).

These ethnocentric assumptions have been seriously challenged. Scholarly research on music now places people's varied practices at the center of analysis. Experience and emotion too are taken more seriously in the study of "people's everyday actions and are not considered matters of speculation or mystery, or even worse, as confined to the sensibilities of elite and self-selected authorities" (Finnegan 2012:354). These works suggest that we can productively focus not on trying to penetrate and pin down hidden internal states but rather on the *manner variably* practiced and conceptualized in different contexts, in which people are personally involved in their musical engagements. This may be varied and complex but it is something that can be observed and discussed (Finnegan 2012:354-363)[5].

The contribution of anthropologists to the critique of the ethnocentric views about emotion has been very significant.[6] Their detailed ethnographies have revealed that,

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[5] For some of the studies of musical experience that attempt to transcend old dichotomies see Ottenberg 1996; Kotthoff 2001; Cavicchi 1998; Magowan 2007; Finnegan 1989; Hennion 1997; Petrovic in Baily 1995; Kalberg 1994. Another rising feature in the research agenda is the potential of music for group-aggregating experience, harmonious and/or divisive. Musical performances have been seen as occasions for exploiting the encompassing capacity of sound to marshal a sense of communitas, of trance or of transformation from one state to another where, as Leeuwen (1999 in Finnegan 2012) suggests "listening is connection, communion."

[6] Anthropologists have noted links between ritual and sentiment. Later in the twentieth century they started engaging with the subject of emotion more explicitly. In her brief review of the matter Finnegan (2012:355) informs us that anthropologist John Blacking (1977:5) pointed to experiential processes like falling in love, ecstasy, or joy in dancing, and his analysis of music (1973, 1987) connected body and thought, feeling and practice. In the meantime, Victor Turner was developing his anthropology of experience (Turner and Bruner 1986) and since the 1980s anthropological work on emotion started to proliferate, see Heelas 1996; Lutz and White 1986; Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Schwartz et al. 1992; and for more recent works see Klima 2008; Lindholm 2007; Magowan 2007; Milton 2002; Milton and Svasek 2005; Wulff 2007.

contrary to previous assumptions, emotions were not universal facts of nature but differently formulated in different times and places. In Finnegan's own words

> …we *learn* how to feel, and how to deploy particular emotions in ways and contexts appropriate to our situation. People also learn the discourses through which their emotions are more or less verbalized... And it is not just a matter of passive feelings but of the active "management" of feeling. Emotions can be socially arranged and manipulated (Finnegan 2012:355).

Emotions can no longer be regarded as something innate and inward. They are a mode of experience that is culturally interwoven and constructed (Kotthoff 2001:169 in Finnegan 2012: 356).

However, the importance of aural perception and its connection to emotions, power and politics cannot be fully understood unless we introduce into the equation issues of personal remembering, what scholars have called memory. The relation between music listening, remembering and power is a theme that has not received much attention in the literature, but it is present throughout most of the chapters of this dissertation.

As Qureshi (2000:811) has argued "affective memories diverge between social constituencies and even between generations in accordance with the different pasts to which they are able to connect the present" (see also Halbwachs 1980; 1992). Since national movements and nation-states have been interested in the control of this mnemonic diversity, they have used cultural institutions and educational networks to institutionalize collective memories and to inscribe them as history (Qureshi 2000:811, see also Anderson 2006; Habsbawm&Ranger:1992). However, the discursive and hegemonic definition of a nation's past requires a political suppression of oppositional or minority pasts (Qureshi 2000:811), or what Michel Foucault (1980) has called counter-

memories. Yet Foucault did not go as far as to ask how these counter memories are preserved, stored and even strengthened or revived. Here we need to start thinking about the importance of the senses in this process. Memory is not just a mental, abstract process that evolves and lives around narrative. It is interwoven with the senses; memory, and maybe history, can be sensually experienced.

The work of anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis has helped me think through these connections. Her approach pushed me to think about the extent to which the senses are entangled with history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence, and the extent to which the experience of and the capacity to narrate history is tied to the senses. We need to think "whether memory is stored in specific everyday items that form the historicity of a culture, items that create and sustain our relationship to the historical as a sensory dimension" (Seremetakis 1994:2-3).

She argues that the capacity of humans to remember is linked to their sensual perception of the material world. By using the ethnographic example of the vanishing of a certain type of local peach from the Greek market and its replacement by imported ones in the context of EU reform policies, Seremetakis asks about the experiential levels on which large-scale economic and social transformations are felt. In the context of these transformations the vanishing of tastes, aromas, smells, sounds, and of course images, and their replacements with new ones, deconstruct a certain "sensual regime" (as I would like to call it) and create another. She also wonders how history is experienced and thought of on the level of everyday and what elements in a culture enable the sensory experience of history. Her focus was on taste; mine is on musical sound. So I would answer her question by saying that music listening can be an experience of history, as I

show in my ethnography. The term history is another abstract concept, another reification of the human mind that begs some concreteness and "tangibility." The examination of musical experience in this dissertation provides an opening, I hope, for this sensed, more concrete dimension of "history." This approach also ethnographizes "history" and saves it from its abstract text-and vision-related associations.

Leaving these aside for the moment, we return now to Seremetakis's ideas about the interconnections between social transformation, the senses, and memory formation. Mass transformation projects like the EU—and for my purposes here, "modernization" and westernization in the case of Turkey—led to the undermining of the sensory premises on which the memories and perceptions of history of the local, peripheral groups were based. The capacity of these groups to reproduce their social identities might have been altered as a result (Seremetakis 1994:3). It is worth thinking about sensory displacement and its stakes in concrete ethnographic contexts. For example, the replacement of the regional kemençe music genre with another or its alteration through instrumental mixing, as readers will see in this ethnography, can be thought of as a sensory, in this case acoustic, displacement. What does this entail? And what are the stakes of the activities of my informants in reversing this sensory displacement and in re-placing and remaking older musical styles and sounds that are perceived as "authentic?" Is "authenticity" the residue of past acoustic experience transformed into narrative in the present and an aspiration of "return" for the future? Return to where and what? And how does nostalgia relate to these processes? I hope that the ethnography will illuminate these questions.

The senses generate meaning and they operate beyond consciousness and intention and "the interpretation of and through the senses becomes a recovery of truth as

collective, material experience. The senses are also implicated in historical interpretation as witnesses or record-keepers of material experience" (Seremetakis 1994: 6). I want to add that it is not only the material experience that is kept by the senses but also sonic experience, and music in particular.

Furthermore, she argues that the body communicates with objects, and the person with the outside world in a corporeal way and this "points to the perceptual construction of truth as the involuntary disclosure of meaning through the senses. And though the senses are a social and collective institution like language, they are not reducible to language. What is being said may be relativized, contradicted or confirmed by embodied acts, gestures, and sensory affects" (Seremetakis 1994:6). Musical experiences, though they may in many cases contain words in the form of lyrics and can be exhaustively "talked about" by individuals, can always escape discursive "entanglement." It therefore becomes difficult both for informants and for researchers to understand this experience, and many times we resort to reifications: Music *is* identity, emotion, pleasure etc. Musical experience goes beyond language and the attempts to capture it through discourse always limits its dynamic and implications. We need to think further what the attempts to say the ineffable entail.

This frame of thinking about the senses helps us to link large-scale changes to the level of the everyday. For people who have been through colonial and post-colonial experiences of transformation, the experience of "tastelessness" can be self-imposed because they have internalized the "eye of the other" and see their own culture and residual experience from a position of de-familiarization and estrangement. Let me directly quote Seremetakis here

> Particular and now idiosyncratic cultural experiences are described as having long disappeared, as lost, when in fact they are quire recent and their memory sharp. As one moves deeper into conversation with people, their intimacy with these distant practices comes out as fairy tales, anecdotes, folklore, and myth. The historical repression of memory that the cultural periphery can impose on itself is as rapid, shallow, profound and experientially painful as any other disorienting penetration of metropolitan modernity. The discourse on loss is an element of public culture, an official ideological stance taken towards the past that aligns the speaker with the normative view of the present, i.e., modern times. Yet as the discourse of loss congeals into an element of public culture, that which has never been lost, but which can no longer be said, shared and exchanged, becomes the content of unreconciled personal and privatized experience (Seremetakis 1994:6-7).

She also argues that the senses cannot be lost but the memory of the senses can and that "the erasure of this memory renders the senses as imperceptible as the passing of the Greek peach" (Seremetakis 1994:7-8). So in this dissertation, among other things, I ask what the stakes are in state-promoted "musical modernization" on the one hand, and in the reconstruction of the sensory memory through kemençe musical practices on the other. This might also help us conceptualize of a politics of affect and its social ramifications.

We already know that state-sponsored organized forgetting cannot completely erase other cultural memories because "there is an inherent conservatism in affective memories, fed by habitual practices and embodied in "materials memory"" (Qureshi 2000:811, see also Connerton 1989 and Terdiman 1993 in Qureshi 2000). A musical instrument is both a physical body and a source of sound with a certain acoustic

character. Thus it is doubly meaningful for people as both a material product and as a tool for the articulation of cultural meaning through sound making and listening (Qureshi 2000:811). Thus a musical instrument can potentially become a valuable repository that serves the retaining and reviving, or rather the remaking, of cultural and social memory in the face of hegemonic acoustic, that is sensory, re-significations and reorganizations (Qureshi 2000:811).

Throughout this ethnography, readers will see how my informants, the protagonists in the different chapters, engage in intense remembering and experience and express nostalgia, pain and pride, among other feelings. They often relate kemençe music to this certain repertoire of emotions, the violation of which is described as "cultural degeneration" and assimilation, and something which is perceived as a serious personal and social existential threat, stemming interchangeably from three powerful networks: religion, nation-state and private music industries. Based on the ethnographic evidence I present in this dissertation, I conceptualize emotions and their "tuning" through musical practice, as strong experiential conditions through which fundamental human beliefs about what constitutes a meaningful life are either reinforced or challenged, bearing significant personal and social stakes.[7] In this ethnography, among other things, I attempt to more explicitly connect the discussion about music and emotion to power and politics. I am trying to ethnographically show the close interconnection of music listening, subjectivity and agency with political dynamics and power. In the following section I

[7] My thinking about music as a symbolic tool through which humans create their subjectivities, bares some similarities with sociologist Tia DeNora's approach of music as a "material that actors use to elaborate, to fill out and fill in, to themselves and to others, modes of aesthetic agency and, with it, subjective stances and identities…a resource for producing and recalling emotional states, see DeNora 2000 cited in Finnegan 2012:361.

address these issues and the interpretive and theoretical openings that my ethnography enables.

Culture, politics, music, commodities

Geertz reminds us that it is common for people to engage in "struggles for the real." Humans compete to impose upon the society their own conception of how things essentially are and to impose the rules of social conduct. Moreover, he argues that

> The political processes of all nations are wider and deeper than the formal institutions designed to regulate them; some of the most critical decisions concerning the direction of public life are not made in parliaments and presidiums but in the un-formalized realms of what Durkheim called the "collective conscience." And rivalries take place not merely for "political" and economic power, but for the right to define truth, justice, beauty and morality—the very nature of reality—and most of the times outside of the context of formal political institutions and structures (Geertz 1973: 316).

His re-conceptualization of politics and culture are analytically very useful for the study of the interconnections between power, politics and music. As he eloquently put it "culture is not cults and customs but the structures of meaning through which humans give shape to their experiences; and politics is not coups and constitutions, but one of the principal arenas in which such structures publicly unfold" (Geertz 1973:312). This dissertation provides a cultural analysis of politics and power through the medium of musical practices and experiences.

In this ethnography, as I have stated from the beginning, I focus on the musical experiences and the creative, expressive practices of individuals and the stakes they

entail. My analytic focus on the individual does not mean that I subscribe to the naïve view of individualism—quite the contrary.[8] After many years of personal experience as an amateur musician, and taking under serious consideration my informants' lives, activities and ideas as I experienced them during my fieldwork, and of course considering the numerous instances analyzed in the literature, we can definitely state that musical experiences, even the most "individual" ones like the act of playing music and listening to yourself without the physical presence of others, are profoundly social, because experience and emotions are made in the presence or in the absence of other human beings. Some of the main, beloved themes of the repertoire of the kemençe musical genre I examine here are that of loneliness, loss and nostalgia. All these presuppose the experience of at least an Other who has become absent. So far I have not heard of, at least in the musical genre I studied and in others I have been listening to, any songs that talk about the loss of a material object and the deep pain it caused. Durkheim has insisted that humans are, above all, social beings. And to go further back and to pay, again, tribute to Aristotle, humans are political animals, of the polis. If we withdraw the political what remains is simply an animal. We are not only meaning-making but also relation-making creatures. The complex and very dynamic network of signified human relations is what we call "society," running again the risk of reification. So by focusing in this study on the individual is not to deny his profoundly social dimension and the shared nature of meanings through which he lives his life, but to try to think of the dialectic between "culture and agency" (see Berger 2007:104 in Finnegan 2012:361).

[8] For a discussion on the individual in musical ethnography see Rice and Ruskin 2012.

Culture is not simply something constraining, though it can be this too. People can make and remake the meanings through and with which they live. Musical practice is an ideal domain where this can be concretely, ethnographically observed and experienced. Musical experience itself pushes us to reflect on whether and how meaningful it is to live "a-relational," that is, lonely, self-centric, egotistic lives.

In order to address issues of power, agency and transformation through musical praxis, I use the culture concept not in the sense of cultural "systems" but put the emphasis on the meaning-making individual (see also Ortner 1999; 2006). My informants, kemençe players and listeners, are meaning-makers themselves, though most of them have never thought of themselves as such. For example, kemençe music makers can become extremely influential social actors, especially when their music shapes the sensibilities and imagination of large audiences. Listeners, too, have agency and can be very influential in the definitions of this musical genre, even by going against its initial makers by criticizing their musical practice and aesthetics and by disrupting their semantic load. The issue of meaning-making is also central to questions of power and its effects. The conceptualization of individuals as active makers of meaning was already present in Geertz's work with respect to issues of political ideology, as I mentioned earlier in this introduction. Scholars by now have come to accept that people are embedded in larger networks and affected by "large-scale" circumstances, but they also have the capacity to transform them (Ortner 2006; Dirks et al 1993).[9]

[9] For a review of the discussions of the theoretical dilemmas of structure-action and the attempts to overcome them through practice theory see Ortner 2006:1-18. For a discussion on power and agency see Ortner 2006:129-153.

In this dissertation I have tried to place the cultural analysis of individual acts of kemençe music making and listening in a broader context of religious and political transformation: conversion to Islamic religion and the establishment of the Turkish nation-state. I think that without doing this historical contextualization it would be difficult to understand the stakes of the musical interpretive battles my informants have been engaging in. The definition and interpretation of the meaning of things is at the center of political struggles at the level of the everyday. For example, readers will see how kemençe musical genres are at the center of intensive interpretive action and competition about the meanings of this music. This interpretive battle is not without serious stakes and consequences, as we will see.

As I mentioned earlier while discussing some of Geertz's ideas, humans are vulnerable to conceptual chaos and disorder and they need meaning—purposeful activity, order and reason—to orient themselves and to survive (Geertz 1973:87-125). The assumption that human beings "weave fabrics of meaning no matter how fragile and fragmentary, in their attempt to make sense of their lives and their social environment still holds despite the critique of the notion of culture" (Ortner 1999:9).

However, if meanings are a set of culturally constructed and historically specific frames and guides for human feelings, intentions, and actions, something that both defines and gives life its purpose, we have to pose another question that I think was not posed, at least not explicitly, by Geertz and by those of us who follow his interpretive paradigm, but that can have interesting analytic consequences for our understanding of issues of music, power and individual agency and subjectivity: If humans fear conceptual chaos and meanings are important in order to organize their lives and actions and give

them purpose, what are the roots of this fear? This leads us to ask about the fear or anxiety of the reality of death and its important role in the formation of these apparatuses of meaning. Of course Max Weber in his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* analyzed this relationship. But when we are thinking about issues of power, politics and transformation in relation to music, I think we need to ask what happens when other forms of human activities and practices, for example music-making and listening, can cultivate doubts, challenge and undermine the certainties of those fundamental religious beliefs that provide a stable set of meanings and guides that are based on a "rationalization" and explanation about "life after death." These explanations provide certainties to humans about their daily conduct, and their fate after their "biological death" as Geertz has argued.

Musical practice can draw on this cultural source and either re-produce its power or challenge and undermine it by cultivating doubt. How does the cultivation of the "memory of death" through musical practice relate to the dynamics of power and politics? Can the daily act of the musical cultivation of awareness of human mortality contribute to the reinforcement and to the destabilization of an apparatus of meanings over which "political and economic regimes" are based? What are the stakes of the collapse of those "webs of meaning"? What is the role of the musicians, those peculiar culture hackers and makers, in these processes of semantic disruption and reconstruction? Kemençe music is for many of my informants a sonic reminder of the passing of time and of the approach of death. In this sonic reminder of mortality, personal values are remade and orientations are re-designed. This personal cultural transformation might produce longer-term social outcomes. The question of what is life worth living for is constantly

dealt with in this musical genre, and emotions and orientations are "tuned" according to the answers. The constant questioning of the meaning of life and the remembering of mortality through song texts and musical practices have stakes that I hope become emergent in various parts of this ethnography.

In conventional daily discourse, but even in scholarly treatments, politics has come to be almost exclusively associated with power and music with emotion, while the two are usually kept conceptually and analytically apart.[10] These associations are indeed valid, but they are not exclusive. Politics and power are thought of as being about "hard facts," with music and emotion being about the "softer" side of human experience. This is a distinction and a categorization that is premised upon certain cultural understandings. What about considering politics as relating to emotion and music as relating to power? What about politics as an art? Geertz's thoughts are very relevant here too. He maintained that

[10] The political properties and potential of music have been the subject of thinking for few philosophers and social theorists, ancient and modern, such as Aristotle 1962; Plato 1961; Rousseau 1998; Weber 1958; Nietzsche 1999; Dewey 1954; Adorno 2002; Attali 1985. For a discussion on the reconceptualization of the political in political philosophy see Heller in Held 1991:330-342. For comprehensive reviews of the thinking on the relationship of music, politics, and power see Street 2007 and Sue Love 2014.In their attempts to conceptualize the relationship between music and power scholars have been inspired by the work of Gramsci 1971; Foucault 1977 and 1980; Bourdieu 1984 and Geertz 1973. For a detailed discussion on this relationship from the perspective of political science and on the conceptual separation of the two domains of human experience and activity see Street 2012. For the role of musicians in political participation see Street, Hague, Savigny 2008. Among the pioneer writers from ethnomusicology and musicology we can refer to Turino 1983, 1984, 1990, 1993, 2000; Agawu 1992; Stokes 1992, 1994, 2004; Bolhman 1993 but see also Sullivan 1997a; MacLeod and Harvey 2000; Berliner 1977; Erlman 1985; Waters 1985; Kaemmer 1989; Schiller&Fouron 1990; Waterman 1990; Garofalo 1992; Lipsitz 1994; Taylor 1997. For more recent, regionally focused empirical research on this topic see Nooshin 2009 and Randall 2005. See also the important and pioneering work of Qureshi 1986, ,2000, 2002, as well as the most recent discussions on music, power and the ethnomusicological study of politics and culture Berger 2014; Mahon 2014; Wong 2014; Guilbault 2014.

> No matter how much we focus our attention on the supposedly hard facts of social existence such as the ownership of the means of production, the control of guns, institutions and media, the supposedly soft facts of that existence such as what people imagine human life to be all about, how one ought to live, what grounds belief and legitimizes punishment, sustains hope or accounts for loss, will always disturb simple representations of might, desire, calculation and interest (Geertz 1995: 43).

He critiqued the scholarly treatments of power that disconnected it from the immediate conditions of its generation and application because

> this disconnection leads to a vision of power as a unitary, abstract force defined by its effects, like magic, glamour or the popular idea of electricity. And this usually leads to a mechanic scholarly depiction of power as something that elites monopolize and of which masses are deprived, centers wield it and peripheries resist it, authorities brandish it and subjects hide from it, but what it is still remains mysterious (Geertz 1995:26).

He invites us to move beyond the binary question of where power comes from and where it is directed, to conceptually move outside of the institutional networks and governmental offices, and look into the daily activities of humans, which have more to tell us about power and politics "than do Leviathan tales or stories of the shifting fortunes of political celebrities" (Geertz 1995: 26). He added that

> the depiction of power as a kind of featureless, universal force that produces an abstract and invariant relationship called domination blocks our perception of both the texture of politics and its reach and leaves us only with a few clichés like "big fish eat little ones, the weak go to the wall, power tends to corrupt, uneasy lies the head, and master and man need one another to exist"—the dim banalities of theory.

> The politics of a country lie everywhere within it, not just in the institutions, this monarchy or that republic, under which, for the moment, they are more or less focused and somewhat organized. And though they change they do so at the speed the country changes, not that at which leaders, policies, or even regimes do (Geertz 1995: 40-41).

In this dissertation I have tried, among other things, to show how musical practices constitute such fruitful sites, one of those "everywhere" within which Turkey's politics lie and how cultural change might become the precursor of social transformation.

Relevant to the issue of power here is the issue of resistance. The interdisciplinary field of resistance studies, and especially its most influential texts, have been criticized for having depicted power relations through the simplistic binary of domination versus resistance and for being severely limited by the lack of ethnographic perspective (Ortner 2006: 42-44). Domination was described as a relatively fixed and institutionalized form of power and resistance was thought of and depicted as organized, institutionalized opposition to power.[11] These studies were also criticized for being ethnographically thin and for failing to appreciate and analyze the internal politics and the cultural richness of the dominated groups, while also "overlooking subjectivity, that is, the diverse intentions, desires, fears and projects of the social actors engaging in resistance activities" (Ortner 2006:61-62).

The ethnographic data presented here show us that "resistance" can be more than opposition and can be constructive and transformative for those engaging in it. I have tried to understand how the shaping of subjectivity, primarily through engagements with

[11] For a discussion of how the work of Michel Foucault and James Scott changed this binary thinking see Ortner 2006:42-62.

kemençe music, provides my informants with incentives to act, not just to change themselves but also to transform what they consider as their social environment. Thus, subjectivity and agency emerge as central issues in the ethnography and provide some interpretive and theoretical openings. Agreeing with Sherry Ortner, I think of subjectivity as the culturally and historically created and constantly remade personhood, in which affect, desire, imagination, perception and fear are interwoven and provide the basis for intentional action. The engagement of my informants with various forms of kemençe musical sound "tunes" their sensibilities, stimulates their imagination and creates the desire to act.

In many scholarly treatments of the relationship of music to politics the central theme is that peculiar thing we call ethnicity.[12] Max Weber (1968: 385-398, 926-938) whose writings placed "ethnic groups" in the agenda of social analysis, had serious doubts about ethnicity as an object of analysis. He wrote "if we define our terms exactly, the ethnic group is unsuitable for rigorous analysis" (Weber 1968:395 in Comaroff 2009:38). I am in complete agreement. In this dissertation I problematize this tendency to take "ethnicity" for granted and treat it as an object of analysis in relation to music. This conceptual frame produces simplistic representations of musical practice as reflections of an underlying, reified ethnic identity. Rather I focus on the individual actor and his attempts to create meaning and new relations through the medium of music.

Finally, another important theme that emerges out of the ethnography is the commoditization of the expressive practice of kemençe music and the attempts to own it.

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[12] There is a rich interdisciplinary scholarly production on this particular dimension of the relationship of music to politics. For a comprehensive review see Martiniello and Lafleur 2008:1191-1215. On the political dynamics and consequences of musical revivals see Livingston 1999:66-85.

Scholars have argued that the moving frontier of what may legitimately be owned in the field of ideas and aesthetics is an ongoing site of fierce struggle (Coleman 2005 in Comaroff 2009). Others have expressed doubts about the possibility of owning expressive acts and of limiting their form and iteration (Derrida 1988:30 in Comaroff 2009). I bring ethnographic evidence to discuss what happens when the expressive, creative acts of music making, and listening, get objectified in order to be owned with the expectation of profit.

Structure of the dissertation

My dissertation draws on nineteen months of fieldwork research, conducted in 2009 and 2010, and in the summers of 2012 to 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey, Thessaloniki, Greece, and in the Black Sea district of Trabzon in northeastern Turkey.

In chapter one, using ethnography, primary historical sources, and secondary historical literature, I show how the gradual conversion to Islam since the 17th century impacted the contemporary musical culture of the Pontic-Greek speaking population of Turkey. Pontic-lyra music, once at the center of social life and a symbol of pride, is re-interpreted by religious authorities and experienced by my interlocutors as a social stigma, with consequent restrictions on certain forms of musical creativity and expression, as well as on certain forms of social interaction-and even certain forms of social relationships.

In chapter two I use the life stories, memoirs, and current musical experiences of kemençe listeners in Trabzon to describe instances where music listening activates intense remembering and reinterpretation of past family experiences, becomes the sign of

personal uniqueness, and strengthens the desire for, imagination and enactment of cultural difference, thus challenging mainstream narratives of cultural homogeneity and historical continuity.

Chapter three explores the reproduction of a strong regionalism and of a Trabzon-specific ethos that is based on the refashioning of emotions and values through the making and listening of "authentic rural musical sound." My interlocutors in this chapter are performers and listeners of kemençe who imagine, create, experience, and promote a particular technique of "authentic performance" that they link to particular emotions and to a nostalgia for a vanishing rural lifestyle. At the same time their musical practice becomes for them a lived, embodied critique of westernization and urbanization that was promoted over the last eighty years.

In chapter four I describe the complex encounter and interaction of kemençe performers and other "ethnic musicians" with the profit-oriented industries of Istanbul, that gradually turn their music into normalized commodities, stripping them of their initial meanings and political connotations.

Drawing on ethnography and primary historical sources, chapter five describes the impact of post-1923 state policies on kemençe music and its implications for new forms of political activism. I analyze contemporary struggles of politically opposite groups in Trabzon to appropriate the instrument and its music, re-define its meaning, and use it to promote mutually exclusive political agendas and visions of cultural homogeneity and pluralism.

CHAPTER ONE

CONVERSION AND MUSIC

During one of his public speeches in Turkey, then prime minister and current president Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticized the protesters at Gezi Park in Istanbul for a slogan that was written as graffiti. The slogan read "Zülüm 1453'te başladı" which translates as "Oppression started in 1453." This is the year of the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans that marked the end of the Byzantine rule and era. For Islamists and nationalists in contemporary Turkey this date constitutes a landmark in "Turkish history" and is generally narrated as a historical turning point that supposedly led to the "liberation of the peoples of the region from Byzantine rule" and to the dominance of Islam over Greek-Orthodox Christianity. The neo-imperialist nostalgia of mainstream Turkish political elites and networks was further strengthened after the rise of the Islamist party to power in 2002, when the celebrations for the conquest of Constantinople took a more triumphal and official form, enjoyed further publicity, and received stronger state support.

The slogan received such wide publicity by the pro-Islamic media outlets and newspapers that it also attracted the attention of the top official of the country, who felt that he should comment on it during one of his public addresses. Those writing the slogan were accused of being traitors, supporters of Christians or even being Christians themselves and "Bizans tohumu," that is "the seeds of Byzantines." Probably written by leftist protesters, the slogan disturbed the mainstream nationalist and Islamic narratives

and perceptions of history, belonging and freedom.

The ethnographer of contemporary Turkey cannot fail to notice how conflicting historical narratives and interpretations occupy a central place in public debates and discourses. The obsession with history in Turkey is a sign of an ongoing "meaning crisis" relating to issues of national attachment, religious affiliation and state sovereignty and legitimacy. Every activity that might disturb state-sponsored perceptions of the "Turkish past" and the feelings associated with it, especially when this activity has the potential to address and impact large audiences, is perceived as a potential threat to "national unity" by mainstream actors and networks.

Music making and listening constitutes one such activity with the potential to produce destabilizing and delegitimizing ambivalence. Kemençe musical practices, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, constitute, among other things, ways of experiencing and remaking history at the level of the everyday. The musical sound of this instrument provokes the recollection of past experiences and memories that are heavily loaded with a strong regional, local flavor that makes it unique to the ears of its listeners. Due to religious conversion during the centuries of Ottoman colonization and to the project of nation-making and westernization in Asia Minor/Turkey, kemençe music's "emotional load" and meanings became the target of manipulation by powerful religious and state networks. However, kemençe musical practices also became tools of cultural reconstruction and have been interpreted as resistance to "Islamic and Turkish nationalist" assimilation by contemporary individual performers and some small networks of listeners that were established around them.

Thus I argue that the multiple meanings and various stakes of contemporary

kemençe music-making and -listening in the eastern Black Sea province of Trabzon, as well as the meanings of other local genres in the broader region, cannot be understood unless they are placed in a historical perspective and context. We will not be able to understand contemporary kemençe music and broader political dynamics in Turkey if we do not consider the consequences of the conversion to Islam in previous centuries and the assimilation and homogenization policies of the Turkish Republic in the 20th century.

Thus, in the first part of this chapter, drawing on the work of historians and on some primary sources, I describe the process and consequences of conversion to Islam of the Greek-speaking Christian population of Asia Minor and of Trabzon in particular, from the 11th up to the 19th century. In the second part of the chapter I focus my discussion on the consequences of conversion on music-making and -listening in contemporary Trabzon. In this part I will employ a historical source from the late 19th century, but I will mainly base my arguments on the ethnographic data I collected during my fieldwork in Turkey.

Transitions

In this section, drawing on various primary, archival, sources, on the writings of historians and anthropologists who worked in the area of the Black Sea, and on my own fieldwork observations, I describe how the conversion of segments of the Greeks of Trabzon to Islam gradually produced an interesting cultural mixing and a new way of being that impacted the musical practices of these groups. A set of beliefs and practices, remnants of previously held beliefs and practices, filtered into the "new" faith and life. This cultural mixing is evident even today as I have personally witnessed, and is

something that makes many Pontic-Greek speakers of Trabzon appear as a comic peculiarity within the dominant, mainstream conceptions and practices of Turkishness and Islam in contemporary Turkey. My informants do not use the term "cultural mixing" to describe their situation. They simply live with the values that were transferred to them by the elder members of their families and village communities. For them it is a way of life—what it means to be from Trabzon and an "original Trabzonian". The contact of this population with Islam produced new ways of being that were gradually absorbed by the members of the community and became the new life-style and value system for subsequent generations. Though there still exist various "gaps of meaning" (as I call them) in their new cultural world that sometimes makes them question themselves and their values, they have managed to create a new balance that, they say, allows them to live and feel happy and proud. But let us take a closer look at this long process of cultural transformation before we talk about its consequences on music making and listening.

The transition of the eastern Mediterranean from Byzantine to Ottoman rule starting in the 11th century was a complicated process that disrupted demographic balances, merged settled with nomadic populations, led to the transformation of cities and villages, and gave way to the gradual dominance of Islamic religion over Orthodox Christianity. For the imperial systems, religious adherence was an important sign of political belonging and loyalty.

The Byzantine defeat at Mantzikert in 1071 and the influx of Turkic pastoralists in Asia Minor formed the basis for the gradual socio-cultural transformation of the region. Historians argue that by the thirteen century, significant parts of Anatolia had been under Turco-Islamic rule for more than a century, while the Turkish language and

Islamic religion were spreading.[13] This shift of balance in language and religion did not always come about simply with the displacement of the older inhabitants of Byzantium and the influx of new Turkic groups. The gradual conversion to Islam of local Greek- and Armenian-speaking groups and their acquisition and use of Turkish contributed significantly to this transformation.[14]

The medieval Anatolian Greek population was demographically strong during the Byzantine period. However, the predominantly Orthodox Christian population of Anatolia gradually converted to Islam, thus shifting the balance between the two groups. This conversion of the populace to Islam led to the merging of cultures and to the gradual making of a folk Islam infused with previously Christian beliefs and practices. More particularly, as a result of the extensive intermarriage between Christian women and Muslim men but also between male converts or Christian men and Muslim women, many Christian features were introduced in Muslim family life and popular religious usage. The large-scale conversions to Islam in subsequent centuries had the same effect. However, this remained an "incomplete Islamization" of the Christians.[15]

Though not discernible in the formal religious life of the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks, Christian influence could be easily traced in popular, folk Islam.[16] The power of folk religions is such that the formal religious institutions either acknowledge it openly or pretend to ignore it and thus absorb them because they cannot eliminate them (Vryonis 1971:481). And this was the case for both the Christian church in Byzantium and Islam in

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[13] Cahen 1968:145-155; Vryonis 1971; Meeker 2002.
[14] Bryer 1975; Lowry 2009.
[15] For a detailed discussion of this see Vryonis 1971.
[16] For a pioneering and detailed study of this phenomenon in Asia Minor and the Balkans see Hasluck 1929

the Ottoman empire. Christian practices, beliefs, and forms which are the basis of a substantial portion of popular Turkish Islam, entered Islam as a result of conversions, intermarriage, the everyday contact of Muslims and Christians, and through the religious mixing of the popular dervish orders (Vryonis 1971:480).[17]

This "borrowing" was also the outcome of the large scale appropriation and confiscation of the churches and monastic buildings themselves. These were converted into mosques, shrines, and lodges. In many instances "Muslims appropriated characteristics and peculiarities attendant upon a particular Christian sanctuary along with the building itself (Vryonis 1971:482). This "mixing" was a geographically and chronologically widespread process that frequently resulted in the synthesis of the old and new religious elements. The transfer of Christian practice, associated with a church converted to a mosque, was usually intensified or facilitated whenever conversion and intermarriage occurred (Vryonis 1971:484).

The equation of the saints of one religion with those of the other is also a characteristic practice in different parts of Anatolia that reveal this inter-religious synthesis and the complex relations among people of different faiths. Various sources from the fourteenth century and earlier attest to this phenomenon (Vryonis 1971: 486-487).[18] Many Muslims of Anatolia believed in the efficacy of Christian religious power, and Christian saints and sanctuaries were thought to be possessed of both evil and beneficial power. The influence of various local Christian saints among the Muslims was particularly strong in the "medicinal" realm. In the thirteenth century the Emir of Sivas, a

[17] For a critical discussion of the term syncretism in historical studies of the Ottoman Empire see Krstic in Shankland 2012.
[18] Vryonis 1971:486-487

small city in Anatolia, sent his wife, who was supposedly possessed by demons, to be cured by the prayers of the Christians. Upon her arrival to Trabzon in the Black Sea, she went to the monastery of St.Phocas and to the tomb of St Athanasius where she was supposedly healed (Vryonis 1971: 486-487).[19]

A source from the fourteenth century describes how Muslims participated in a pilgrimage to a church in Ankara because of a stone inscribed with a cross there, which was believed to have healing powers. The visitation of Christian shrines famed for their cures was a living tradition among Anatolian Muslims event in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Vryonis 1971: 486-487). [20]

Another Christian practice appropriated by some Muslims, according to the sources, is that of baptism. Some Muslims had adopted baptism as early as the twelfth century, at which time the Byzantine canon lawyer named Balsamon commented on the invalidity of such baptism. Here is a description of the phenomenon by Balsamon himself

> In the days of the most holy patriarch, lord Loukas, Agarenes appeared before the synod. Upon being requested to receive baptism they replied that they had already been baptized in their own lands. On their being asked how, they answered that it is the custom for all the infants of the Agarenes to be baptized by Orthodox priests. But they—and their explanation—were not accepted. For they heard that the baptism which the unbelievers demanded from the Christians was not demanded by reason of good disposition and Orthodox purpose but for healing of the body. For the Agarenes suppose that their children will be possessed of demons and will smell like dogs if they do not receive Christian baptism. Accordingly they do not invoke baptism as a cathartic of all spiritual sordidness and as the provider of holy light and sanctification, but rather as a remedy or magical charm. Some of these Agarenes said they had Orthodox mothers and it was as a result of their mothers'

[19] Vryonis 1971:486-487
[20] Vryonis 1971: 486-487

care that they were baptized by Orthodox priests. (Balsamon in Vryonis 1971: 488.) [21]

Muslims continued to baptize their children a century later and the practice was so common that Greek canon law forbade priests to baptize the children of the "Turks" under pain of defrocking (Vryonis 1971:488). [22]

Another site where this cultural mixing can be traced is food and alcohol preparation and consumption. The preparation of seafood and winemaking were the expertise of Christians. Muslim rulers had difficulties in suppressing the use of wine among the new converts. This and other practices, habits of the local Anatolian Christian daily life, were maintained by the new convert communities of Muslims (Vryonis 1971: 483). The economic life of the Ottomans was significantly determined by the Christian peasants and city dwellers too. The Byzantine influence was particularly strong in agricultural and village life, but also in the cities with their craft and commercial traditions. In these urban traditions however, there was a significant admixture of Islamic urban elements. The economic practices of Byzantium had as well impacted the Turkish tax structure and administration (Vryonis 1971:483). The widespread absorption through religious conversion and linguistic Turkification and the partial survival of Christian populations had a marked effect in the spheres of Turkish family life, popular religious beliefs and practices (Vryonis 1971: 483). At this point I should add that in some regions such as the Black Sea, this Christian effect could be detected in the field of musical cultures too, for which I will say more in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

[21] Vryonis 1971:488
[22] Vryonis 1971:488

The numbers of Turks who converted to Christianity were much smaller than the Christians who were Islamized. Converted Turks were primarily soldiers who eventually settled in Europe (Vryonis 1971: 442).[23] Despite the various measures which the Byzantines undertook to preserve Anatolian Christianity, Islamic religion dominated and achieved political victory. Thus conversion of the local Christians to Islam played a pivotal role in the rise of a Muslim majority in Anatolia. This majority subsequently constituted the social foundation upon which the Turkish nation was based.

But how did this conversion take place? The conquest, colonization, and settlement caused major dislocation and destruction to the Christian society of Byzantium. The Turkish conquest lasted almost four centuries, during which the once unified Byzantine administration was replaced by countless smaller, unstable political entities that were in an almost constant state of war with one another (Vryonis 1971: 443; Brice 1955; Inalcik 1954: 103-124). Much of Anatolia was transformed into a continuous battlefield. This condition, together with the rising Muslim hegemony, seriously disturbed and destabilized the bonds and sentiments that held the Christian communities together, and made their members more vulnerable to religious conversion. These political and historical events destroyed the Greek Church as an effective social, economic and spiritual network and institution. Since religion permeated and shaped many aspects of the Medieval society and life, the decline of the Church signaled the gradual disappearance of the Byzantine character of Asia Minor (Vryonis 1971: 499).

This political turmoil led to the isolation of the Orthodox Christian rural society from its administrative center in Constantinople. Thus, Christian peasants in various

[23] On this topic see also Bilgin 1990 who presents a different argument, though without presenting substantial historical sources.

provinces were deprived of ecclesiastical leadership. This paved the way to their gradual absorption to Islam. Islamic institutions, based securely on the economic possessions and revenues formerly belonging to the Christian Church and on the support by various Turkish principalities, accelerated the cultural transformation by converting Christians to Islam (Vryonis 1971: 500).

Additionally, the migration of Muslim religious scholars and dervishes to Anatolia after the establishment of Turkic states in the region since the 11th century, facilitated the process of conversion. The rulers of these small states confiscated the vast majority of Christian lands, revenues and buildings and conferred them to their Muslim followers. As a consequence, mosques, madrasas, lodges, hospitals and other Muslim institutions spread across Anatolia and played a major role in the absorption of the unorganized and isolated Christians (Vryonis 1971: 500).

Conversion in Trabzon

During the 13th and 15th centuries, the northeastern coastal region of Asia Minor was the center of a state known as the Greek Empire of Trabzon (1204-1461). This was the last part of Byzantium to remain outside the influence and control of the rising Turco-Islamic states of the Anatolian interior. It surrendered to Sultan Mehmet II in 1461. Nevertheless, the Byzantine inhabitants of the Greek Empire of Trabzon, though incorporated into Ottoman administrative structures, remained relatively unaffected by Ottoman rule for more than a century (Bryer 1975:116-117).[24] During the the second century of Ottoman rule, as a result of both conversion and immigration, the balance

[24] For a discussion about the reasons for this "delayed" rise of Islam in the area see Bryer 1975, and Planhol 1963a, 1963b, 1966a, 1966b.

between Islam and Christianity started shifting in favor of the former. However, substantial numbers of these Muslims, most of them descendants of older Byzantine peoples, continued to speak mother tongues other than Turkish (Bryer 1975; Planhol 1963a, 1963b, 1966a, 1966b; Meeker 2002). Muslims started becoming majority in this region in the 16th century, almost four hundred years after the rest of Anatolia. Even then, the inhabitants spoke a variety of languages, including Pontic-Greek, Laz, Hemshin-Armenian, Georgian, and Turkish.

This linguistic plurality has survived and reached our era, almost six hundred years after the capture of Trabzon by the Ottomans and ninety-one years after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and the implementation of the "nationalization" project. As I experienced during my fieldwork in the region, there is even a strong revival of interest in those languages and the cultures in which they developed, and a number of activists engage in "cultural re-making" despite the pressures and restrictions by the authorities.

Regarding the use of the local Greek in Trabzon in the period after the Ottoman conquest, the Ottoman tax registers of year 1554 reveal that the population of the city of Trabzon was still largely Christian, while almost thirty years later, in 1583, it was more than fifty percent Muslim and yet remained about seventy percent Greek-speaking (Lowry 1977: 243-244).[25] The Christians of Trabzon were first Islamized, then gradually Turkified linguistically. The ethnically Turkish input was relatively small, and the factor most responsible for the growth of the city's Muslim community was Christian apostasy (Lowry 2009:166). This was not a sudden process that occurred in the wake of the city's

[25] For a discussion of other districts of Trabzon see also Umut 1951; Bilgin 1990; Sevket 1867

conquest in 1461 but it took place gradually over the next one hundred twenty-five years. As a result of this lengthy process of conversion to Islam Trabzon became a city with a Muslim majority but retained much of its pre-conquest character. Thus, the "Turkification" of the city was still in its very early stages in the end of the sixteenth century (Lowry 2009:207). It is important to note that in places where Islamization took place but Greek language among the converts continued to be spoken, old toponyms remained in use. Thus, the name of the city, Trabzon, which was given by its ancient Greek founders (the Greek original was Trapezous), remained the same for centuries and remains today in its Turkish form "Trabzon."[26]

The process of conversion and transformation occurred in other nearby areas too, including the small provincial town of Matsouka (Turkish Maçka) and its surrounding rural communities, a few miles east of Trabzon. The Ottoman tax registers that refer to that region reveal that in 1553, ninety-two years after its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, the Matsouka valley still had a Christian-Muslim population ratio of 25:1 in favor of the indigenous Christian inhabitants. The four percent of the inhabitants who were Muslim are largely identifiable as local converts to Islam (Lowry 1986:127). In 16th century Matsouka the spoken language and the religion of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants remained Greek and Orthodox Christian, respectively, and "the thin Ottoman veneer superimposed on the area must have caused few ripples on the traditional surface of the Matsoukan society" (Lowry 1986:127).

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[26] See Brice 1955. It should also be noted that the province of Trabzon is the area with the largest concentration of Greek toponyms that had been gradually changed via government intervention throughout the 20th century, however their inhabitants still use the old toponyms. On toponyms and other words that entered Turkish from Pontic-Greek see also Emiroglu 1989; for general information on the policies of name change in Turkey see Tuncel 2000; Nisanyan 2011; Brendemoen 2004; Karagoz 2003 and 2006; Coskun 2013.

Another district of Trabzon where conversions took place but Pontic-Greek remained the spoken language (through today) is the district of Ophis (Turkish "Of"). The inhabitants of this region are famous for being among the most faithful Muslims of the Black Sea. This is not a surprise if one takes a look at the history of this region. By the middle of the 18th century at the latest, the district of Of had become famous for its many specialists in religious teaching and learning, to a degree that was almost unparalleled in any other rural area of Asia Minor (Meeker 2002:164).

Centers of religious study were distributed all over the district, both in the lower and upper valleys, but were especially concentrated in the upper western valley, where Pontic-Greek was more commonly spoken than Turkish. Sermons were delivered in Turkish but also commonly in Pontic-Greek [with Koranic citations in Arabic in both cases]. Koranic texts as well were discussed in Turkish but also commonly in Pontic-Greek (Meeker 2002:165). Meeker (2002) informs us that the descendants of the Pontic-Greek speaking Christians appear to have made an important contribution to the tradition of religious study in the villages of this district. The Trabzon yearbook for 1888 states that lessons in the religious academies of Of were sometimes given in Pontic-Greek, even though most of the population in the district was also Turkish-speaking. Up to the 1960s, much of the population in the district still spoke Pontic-Greek in their families and villages (Meeker 2002:165).[27]

My own field experiences confirm the place of religion among the Pontic-Greek-speaking communities in the Of district. During my stay in these areas for my field research in 2009, Pontic-Greek was still used by many families in different villages.

[27] For the use of Pontic-Greek by Muslim preachers and teachers see also Poutouridou 1997; Asan 1996; and Umur 1951.

Many of my own informants in the area reported that they remember sermons given in Pontic-Greek in the near past. Also, I personally heard stories by Pontic-Greek-speaking locals about the peculiarities of Pontic-Greek-speaking Muslim preachers giving sermons in various villages. These stories still circulate in the local communities and cause much laughter. Additionally, the stock character of the *Oflu hoca*, the preacher from Of, is very famous in the broader region. Jokes about different aspects of this character, even his sexual appetite, are central in the joke repertory of the eastern Black Sea.

An interesting source about the background and the intense religiosity of the people of Of is the report of the British consul Alfred Biliotti, who traveled to Trabzon and its nearby districts in 1885 and wrote his experiences and the educational system in this part of the Ottoman Empire. The existence of various linguistic minorities in the region must have attracted the attention of various embassies of western countries that were interested in drawing the Ottoman Empire into a coalition against Russia. Moreover, Britain and Germany were competing for influence in the region, and detailed knowledge of the diversity of the local populations must have been an important asset for the design and implementation of policies. This is shown, as I will explain in more detail below, by the existence of documents from British and German authorities. It was not only diplomats who were interested in this area and its people. As early as the 19th century, the Pontic-Greek speakers of the region also attracted the interest of scholars studying Greek dialects and their connections to ancient Greek. More on this later in the chapter.

For his part, Billioti had the following to say about the inhabitants of the eastern districts of Trabzon in 1885:

> The number of medreses [higher religious schools] is especially great eastward of Trabzon. The majority of the inhabitants of these districts are the descendants of

Byzantines who began to embrace Islamism about 150 years since [1885-150=1735]. Numerous medreses may have been necessary at that period for the purpose of instructing proselytes, but their usefulness is no longer apparent. One of the present undeniable results of these institutions is to enable the youths attending them to evade conscription. Another problem result is to entertain a feeling of hostility toward Christians at large, for hardly any live in these districts. Furthermore, no progress seems to be made in good moral, as the native population eastward of Trabzon is more addicted to brigandage and murder than in any other part of the Vilayet (province). Not withstanding their so thoroughly learning in Turkish language, they continue to use in familiar intercourse, a corrupt Greek dialect called Lazico, of which I shall speak later. Another remarkable fact is that with all their fanaticism they still stick to Christian customs and traditions, and that the families that furnished Christian priests in bygone times, are those in which the greater number of mollahs (hodjas) are to be found. They preserve with reverence their sacred books, the sacerdotal vestments and emblems of their forefathers and put the greatest faith in their healing power. They impose the former on sick persons and to drink in a communion cup is reserved as the last hope of recovery in desperate cases of disease. Pilgrimages with offerings in a renowned Byzantine monastery, that of Soumela, at 8 hours distance from Trabzon, dedicated to the Virgin, are not unknown occurrences. But in spite, or perhaps, because of all this, the Musulmans eastward of Trabzon, especially those of Of, are the most fanatical in this vilayet.[28]

[28] PRO FO 195/1521, "Report on the Schools in the Vilayet of Trabzon," May 1885. In Meeker 2002:266

The fact that Billioti uses the term Lazico to refer to the Pontic-Greek used by the people of Of makes me believe that his informants were different from the Greek-Orthodox minority of Trabzon, who would certainly know that their language was a dialect of Greek called Romeyka, or Pontic-Greek. Lazico is the name of another very different language spoken by a different ethnic group, the Laz, who live farther to the east of Of. Despite this minor inaccuracy, Billioti's descriptions, read together with the findings of Byzantine and Ottoman historians previously presented, must reflect the realities of the region. Until quite recently the people of Of, like others in Trabzon, believed in the curative powers of Christian priests and preserved Christian relics which they used as charms for cures. According to reports in the 1960s, there were observant and knowledgeable Muslims who carried with them small interlocking silver ornaments, said to be useful as prophylactic devices, that they had purchased from Christian priests (Meeker 2002:271).

Regarding the reasons for and character of conversions to Islam, there is a general agreement among historians that mass, sudden or forced conversions were very rare. There were instances of direct forced conversion, especially in the Black Sea region imposed by local governors, reflecting local dynamics, but these were exceptions to the rule. Even if zealous local administrators applied pressure on Christians to convert, mass Islamization was prevented, and those who attempted it were punished (Adiyeke 1999:161-162).[29] The lack of a systematic policy of forced conversion on behalf of the central Ottoman authorities is attributed by scholars to the fact that Christians paid the "head tax," one of the major sources of income of the treasury. So long as the Christians

[29] On the Turkish methods of colonization and the slow process of Islamization among the elites of the conquered groups see Inalcik 1954:103-129; Barkan 1942; and Menage 1979.

were not dangerous, they could be "milked" better than true believers, and conversion en masse was to no-one's interest (Hasluck 1929:469, and Mazower 2002).

Scholars argue that the process of conversion to Islam progressed over decades and centuries. A factor that facilitated this development was the creation of stronger Islamic religious and communal institutions and the collapse of the Christian Church's structure.[30] I think that the obligation of Christians to pay higher taxes was also another significant factor that might have pushed them towards conversion, though the sources I engage with do not directly substantiate this view. The indirect pressure to convert due to economic difficulties constitutes in my view a kind of structural violence that was quite efficient. It was certainly cheaper to be a Muslim, or at least to appear in public as Muslim.[31]

The extent to which conversions were "real" or just superficial (i.e., a tool of weak Christian peasants in their struggle to survive) is not totally clear.[32] As I will show in the next section, the fact that various communities of converts to Islam decided to declare in the 19th century that they were actually Christians who were pretending to have converted to Islam in order to survive, tells us that for some of these communities, passing as Muslim was just a technology of survival for the underprivileged. For others it might well have been a sincere commitment to the new religion. We should always keep in mind, as historian Maria Todorova argued, that "the Ottoman Empire was, first and foremost, an Islamic state with a strict religious hierarchy where the non-Muslims

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30 See Levtzion 1979 and Vryonis 1971

31 See the penetrating views of Lowry 1981.

32 Some scholars stress the phenomenon of "superficial conversion" that produced various kinds of local "syncretisms" see Norris 1993 and also Mazower 2002, who argues that in remote areas of the Balkans and Anatolia there occurred a "slippage of religions." Peasants who were asked whether they were Christian or Muslim, could reply "we are Muslims but of the Virgin Mary."

occupied, without any doubt, the back seats. The strict division on religious lines prevented integration of the population, except in cases of conversion."[33] This structural inequality certainly contributed significantly to the gradual rise in the numbers of the adherents of Islam.

Conversion, from the perspective of many Orthodox Greeks of the region at the time, must have meant an alliance with the Ottoman ruler and conversion was later on described using the derogatory word "*Tourkepse,*" ("he became a Turk"). Nevertheless, the crossing of this crucial religious borderline by an individual did not automatically mean that he would suddenly abandon all his previous habits, ideas, social connections and way of life. Oral testimonies from the Pontic-Greek refugees of 1923 in Greece as well as memoirs written and published by educated members of the community attest to the fact that various degrees of ties and collaboration between new converts and their Christian relatives were maintained in various places in eastern Pontos/Black Sea.[34]

Crypto-Christianity

The rise of national liberation movements across the Balkans and the Middle East and competition with other big states in the 19th century destabilized the Ottoman administration and challenged its legitimacy and authority over its subjects. The loss of lands to the national movements added to the sense of decline and collapse among

[33] Todorova 1996; see also Adiyeke 1999.

[34] For the similar cases of the island of Crete Molly Green argues that conversion did not automatically create a fierce and brutal divide between the two communities 2000:107. It is possible that these conversions created a set of networks that maintained connections and mutual help between groups, see also Barkey 2008.

Muslim bureaucratic elites.[35] In an attempt to enhance the loyalty of its Christian subjects, to weaken their national movements and to maintain the control over its vast territories, the Ottoman administration announced in 1839 the beginning of a period of reforms that would culminate with the proclamation of the first constitution in 1876. In 1844 the Sultan Abdulmecid I promised to ban the legal execution of apostates from Islam, creating hopes that this would lift the fear of those Muslims who were willing to convert to Christianity. In 1856 the Reform Edict officially declared the freedom of religion and with the constitution of 1876 religious freedom was supposedly guaranteed.[36]

In this context, the official declaration by the highest authorities that each Ottoman subject was free to practice whatever religion he or she chose, together with the spreading belief that the death penalty was no longer the punishment for apostates, produced some most likely unforeseen results. People across the empire who had been officially Muslims, now declared that they had been secretly Christian all along and wanted to be recognized as such (Deringil 2012:110).[37] This situation panicked the administrative elites who feared that the further "Christianization" of their subjects would de-legitimize their authority and further jeopardize the sovereignty of the state (Deringil 2012:110-111). A memorandum issued by the sultan in 1898 stated that "Although the

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[35] Greece was founded in 1833, followed by other nation-states in the region. See also Deringil 2012.

[36] For a thorough discussion on this subject see Deringil 2012, Introduction. This section has benefited much from Deringil's findings.

[37] Deringil also provides an extensive relevant literature that documents the various cases of crypto-Christianity across the Ottoman Empire, see Dawkins 1933; Bryer 1983; Tzedopoulos 2009; Zhelyazkova 2002; Skendi 1967; Somel 1999; Simonian 2007; Mouradian 1997; Velkov,Radusev, Siljianova 1990; Meeker 2004; Mazower 2002; Hasluck 1929; Fotiadis 1997; Reinkowski 2007.

Sublime State cannot force anyone to accept Islam, we can never tolerate the conversion of Muslims to Christianity".[38] In the turbulent 19th century in the Ottoman Empire, religion became a marker of national identity in unprecedented ways.[39] As Deringil points out

> In the earlier centuries, the sixteenth, seventeenth, and even the eighteenth, conversion was seen as an undesirable development. Priests and other members of the community or congregation saw it as a bad thing because it reduced their numbers and demoralized them.[40] Yet when we come to the nineteenth century, religious identity is linked to national identity to such an extent that conversion to Islam and, after 1844, potential conversion from Islam to Christianity were seen as a loss of identity, a harbinger of greater catastrophe, that is, potential de-nationalization.[41]

Additionally, non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire who were involved in conversion and apostasy disputes in the 19th century could claim the protection of one or the other of the Great Powers, especially the Russians, who claimed to protect the Orthodox Christian subjects of the empire. Deringil continues on the matter

> For the Muslims who were the dominant ethnie, the apostasy of a Muslim, already a mortal offence by religious law, became a double insult because it challenged their sense of their assumed superiority. If the offender in question was backed by

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[38] BOA. YEE A-24/X/24/132, 28 Kanun-u Evvel 1314/11 January 1898, in Deringil, 2012:110.
[39] On this issue see Kitromilides 1994; Adanir and Faroghi 2002; Mazower 2001; Todorova 2004; Aleksov 2005; Riis 2002.
[40] For conversion to Islam in earlier periods and in different provinces of the Ottoman Empire see Kristic 2009; Greene 2000; Barkey 2008; Adiyeke in Anastasopoulos 2008; Baer 2008;, Strauss 2002; Gara 2005/06; Jennings 1993.
[41] Deringil 2012:4.

> a foreign power, the representatives of that power could also become the targets of the Muslims' vengeance. The social and political tensions caused by conversion and apostasy cases led ultimately to their being perceived as an "Imperial Headache" (Deringil 2012:7).

There were even recorded cases where the burial of a deceased person, officially Muslim, became a matter of dispute between local Christian and Muslims. Faik Hurşit Günday, a Turkish bureaucrat who served in the district of Of in Trabzon at the beginning of the 20th century, published his memoirs in 1960. In this memoir he argues that immediately after the announcement of the restoration of the constitutional monarchy in 1908, Muslims in the Trabzon districts of Matsouka, Tonya, Yomra and Sarli started declaring that they would convert to Christianity.[42] Various incidents occurred because of this declaration. For example, when a person died, the Orthodox Greeks would claim that the deceased was a Christian, and the Muslims would claim that he was a Muslim. Then they would both claim the right to bury him. After government officials carried out an investigation in each case, the right to bury the deceased would sometimes be given to the Christians and sometimes to the Muslims. And in some instances, when the dispute could not reach a resolution, the deceased would get buried by the government. Günday describes the following

> These people were registered in the official documents with Muslim names and their fathers' names appeared as Muslim too. Despite this, they claimed that they were Orthodox Christians, that they had Greek names like Yani and Niko, and that in order to survive they had to live as Crypto-Christians. They also pointed out that

[42] A.Faik Hurşit Günday, *Hayatım ve Hatıralarım* (My Life and Memoirs), Istanbul, 1960:21

> they were the "Muslims of Osman Pasha" and until the constitutional period, despite the fact that in reality they were Orthodox Christian, they would publicly appear as Muslims. They said that they had managed to maintain their Christian faith secretly. Osman Pasha, the governor of Trabzon in 1844, had forced the Orthodox Christians of the aforementioned districts to convert to Islam. With the declaration of the constitution and incidents of apostasy from Islam, the truth was revealed. It was also found that in the aforementioned districts and especially in the parts where apostasy incidents occurred, there were no mosques, religious schools or preachers (Günday 1960:21).

Historian Anthony Bryer (1983) writes that the Crypto-Christian experience was very similar in different parts of the empire. They had double names, Christian and Muslim. They were baptized and kept the fasts, while some of them would undergo circumcision or hold Christian and Muslim wedding ceremonies. Moreover, their daughters did not marry out and Muslim brides brought in were secretly baptized. They prayed at the mosque, especially during the month of Ramadan. Sometimes they were buried in a Muslim cemetery but with a simultaneous Christian service. The Crypto-Christians also had a "cant language, which they used in front of real Muslims" (Bryer 1983:15-21 in Deringil 2012:112).

Despite the abolishment of the death penalty for apostates and the governmental declarations of freedom of religion, the social stigma against apparent conversion to Christianity remained very powerful in the society throughout the empire (Deringil 2012:113). Moreover, instances of arbitrary and violent treatment of the "apostates" on the part of state authorities did not cease. For example, according to a Bulgarian source,

villagers in the Balkans in 1840 publicly declared that they are Christians and not Muslims. Despite this, they were exiled to Anatolia. Great powers intervened against the Ottoman government, and the exile was lifted, allowing the Christians to return "but during their exile and return they were subjected to ill-treatment and half of them perished" (Deringil 2012:115).

Other instances of attempted "apostasy" are recorded among the Islamized Armenians of the eastern Black Sea provinces. After the Reform Edict of 1856 some Hemshin-Armenians of this region revealed their intention to return to their "true faith" to three state officials who were visiting their area. The matter was discussed publicly in Trabzon. Some Muslim preachers from the villages of the neighboring Of district, who were participating in this meeting, stood up and announced that if the Armenians were allowed to return to Christianity so should they, as they had been converted from Greek Orthodoxy. The preachers of Of were very well known for their zealous, even bigoted, Islamic faith. The officials, fearing the scandal of the prospect of the famous preachers of Of becoming apostates, abandoned the area. (Simonian 2007 in Deringil 2012:116).

Various cases of "apostasy from Islam" during the late 19th century are recorded in Greek and Ottoman archives, referring to the Greek-speaking communities of various districts of Trabzon.[43] It is interesting to note that in some cases in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Ottoman officials would issue decisions ordering local authorities in Trabzon to force populations that showed tendencies of "apostasy" to send their children to school and give them Muslim names, and to send reliable Muslim preachers to their

[43] For detailed analysis of the Greek Crypto-Christians in Pontos/Black Sea see Fotiadis 1997 and 1993; Husluck 1929; Dawkins 1933; Bryer 1983; Tzedopoulos 2009.

villages to strengthen their Islamic faith.[44] High ranking Ottoman officials were worried that "apostasy" might spread and ordered the authorities in Trabzon to investigate in detail whether more Muslims were about to abandon Islam and embrace Christianity. The governor of Trabzon, in one of his reports to the government in Istanbul in 1900, wrote that he was closely monitoring the population in various districts under his jurisdiction. Though his was aware that about eighty years ago there were instances of apostasy, he reassured the government that due to the attention given to the matter since then, Christianization ceased to occur (Deringil 2012:125). It was also reported that in some Muslim villages of these areas there were no places of worship other than churches and no schools other than those of the Christians (Deringil 2012:125-126). He warned that the governmental indifference for these Muslim villages might push parts of the population to Christianize in the future and suggested that the only solution was to provide Muslim schools and small mosques to these areas.[45]

This matter became so important for the government that even a committee to investigate relevant cases was established. In one of its reports about instances of apostasy from Islam in communities from the Trabzon province, the committee reached the following conclusions

> Those people who Christianized and became apostates were actually [originally] Orthodox, who quite some time ago took on Islamic names, studied in Islamic educational institutions, attended the mosque and for years fulfilled the obligations of Islam. But they avoided taking brides from those who had always been Muslims

[44]Deringil 2012:125. The same historian also argues that the whole region comes up in dispatches very often, regarding the issue of "apostasy"
[45]See BOA Y.MTV 209/89, 8 December 1900, presented in Deringil 2012:126

> or giving brides to them, marrying only within their own group, thus abstaining from forming true material and moral ties [with the real Muslims]. After the war of "Ninety-three" they started going to the mosque sometimes and sometimes to the church, following the rites of both religions. In their community they would be called by their old [Christian] names and among the Muslims they would be called by their Muslim names.[46]

Under these turbulent conditions, with Ottoman state structures collapsing and loyalties and alignments constantly subject to renegotiation, Ottoman officials were afraid that mass "apostasy" would occur, further de-legitimizing their authority. However, this did not happen. The crypto "movements" either remained hidden or were controlled through governmental intervention (Deringil 2012:155).

Those crypto-communities that revealed themselves and who demanded (and finally managed) to get registered as Christians were deported to Greece in 1923 after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne that held provisions for the so-called exchange of populations. Those communities who, for various reasons, did not "come out" and were officially registered as Muslim until 1923 were not "exchanged" and remained in their lands. Some Crypto-Christians' fear for their lives, belongings and property in the turbulent late 19th century must have played a significant role in their decision not to reveal themselves. While such individuals might have hoped that conditions would improve and stability re-established, this is not what actually happened (Fotiadis 1997). Instead, with the rise to power of the dictator Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his ultra nationalist cadre, the project of creating a "Turkish nation" in Asia Minor would now

[46] BOA DH.MKT 494/18, September 1901, in Deringil 2012:129

target their Pontic-Greek dialect, as it did with numerous other non-Turkish languages and dialects in Anatolia.

During my fieldwork in Turkey I heard stories from interlocutors about whole Greek village communities who migrated to nearby areas where they were unknown and unrecognizable, presenting themselves as Muslims, in order to avoid deportation or "exchange" in 1923. These stories can still cause disagreements and disputes in the Pontic-Greek speaking communities, many members of which support a more mainstream narrative of events about their origins that claims that their ancestors had come from central Asia and that they were "pure Turks." Ninety years of national indoctrination have produced a strong alignment with Turkish nationality. However, the survival of the Pontic-Greek dialect in these communities can sometimes destabilize their sense of Turkishness, and various theories about this dialect's character and survival are invented in order to explain the big "why" for its existence.

Pontic-Greek as a threat

The use of the Pontic-Greek dialect by converts in Trabzon during the 19th century did not constitute a major concern for the authorities, since religion was the primary indicator of political and communal loyalties. Unlike apostasy, linguistic alterity was not always perceived as a threat. For example, the Trabzon Yearbook published by the province of Trabzon contains an interesting passage that reflects the mentality on the issue of faith and its primacy over language in determining social and political loyalties. In its 1888 edition we read:

> The fact that the inhabitants of Of still employ Greek as their mother tongue confirms the view that true religious faith resides in the heart of man and has no

> connection with language. In other words, language is not connected in any way with true religious devotion. Moreover, although Turkish is a very old language, it is not the language of our religion. The language of our religion is essentially Arabic, but all Arabic speakers do not have the good fortune to be Muslims. Consequently, the fact that the mother tongue of the inhabitants of the region in question is Greek does not imply that the population lacks true religious feelings. On the contrary, the Muslims in this district are generally noted for their firm religious faith, their extremely strong religious fervor, and their strict observance of the religious law (Emiroğlu 2002)

However, this approach was to change at the beginning of the 20th century, just a few decades later, when the Young Turks and their political descendants came to power, and started implementing their nationalist, assimilationist agenda towards the multilingual populations of Anatolia. In this new context of nation-building, linguistic homogenization and standardization became a priority and linguistic difference was perceived as a threat to "state and national unity" and was severely stigmatized and punished.[47]

This rapid change in the mentality of the authorities regarding the danger posed by the existence of different languages, and Pontic-Greek in particular, within the new state's territory, is reflected in the era's news releases about the activities of various bureaucrats. For example, the Trabzon newspaper *Yeniyol* [New Route] published on 21 September 1926, three years after the proclamation of the Republic, reported that a team of civil bureaucrats, teachers and a deputy gendarme commander visited the Pontic-Greek speaking communities of Tonya, west of Trabzon. There they delivered a speech to the

[47] For more on language policies since the early 20th century see Sadoğlu 2003.

locals, in which they praised the reforms and initiatives of the Republican regime. They also stressed the importance of avoiding the use of Pontic-Greek and called the villagers to "work freely and generously in the atmosphere of freedom and liberty created for them by their blood brothers, the Turks" (Tarakçıoğlu 1986:81 in Asan 2013).[48]

The event narrated by this newspaper clearly reflects the willingness of the officials, in the context of a state-designed policy, to alienate the inhabitants of this region from their native Pontic-Greek dialect and have them all use Turkish. Tonya was, and today still remains, a district with a large Pontic-Greek-speaking population. Some of my interlocutors from the region had told me that these communities were Christians who migrated here from another Trabzon district and presented themselves as Muslims in order to avoid deportation in early 20th century. They maintain the Pontic-Greek dialect and some among the community are famous for being very dissident, secular, and refusing to go to the mosque. Today, Tonya is also described by many as a "small Moscow" because of the association of some of its inhabitants with communism. While this does not apply to the entire population of this small town, its association with these characteristics remains.

There are other sources from the early 20th century that indicate this radical shift in the perception of linguistic pluralism. In 1926, during the 3rd conference of the *Türk Ocakları* [Turkish Hearths], an organization that was promoting Turkish nationalism and linguistic assimilation, a concern was expressed for the presence, among others, of this Pontic-Greek speaking Muslim population in Trabzon. One of the delegates from Trabzon, informed the participants that despite the purging of Orthodox Christian Greeks

[48] See also Asan 1996.

in the broader areas of Trabzon and Sürmene by 1923, there still remained 90.000 Muslims who spoke Pontic-Greek as a mother tongue and even used it to designate villages, cities and landscapes in the broader area. He also criticized some of the local bureaucrats for not being aware of this "dangerous situation."[49]

The interest and deep concern about the use of this Greek dialect by a significant number of inhabitants in Trabzon remained alive for many decades among local scholars who also assumed influential positions. Hasan Umur, a local historiographer, theologian and bureaucrat from Of, wrote the following, regarding the use of Pontic-Greek by the people of his region:

> That the language situation in the upper villages of the Solaklı Valley progressed in this way can be regarded as a natural and inevitable process, but a regrettable aspect is that when, after the whole of the local population had become Muslim and Turkish and when scholarship and learning in the mosques and medreses had attained a high degree of excellence, the dominant position should still [in 1951] be held by a foreign language [Pontic-Greek] (Umur 1951:23-24).

It is not surprising that Hasan Umur expresses his repulsion for the survival, and still in his time, dominant position of this "foreign language." A faithful Muslim and patriot, himself a native speaker of Pontic-Greek, Umur served as a preacher, teacher, and mayor in another town on the west coast of the Black Sea. Thus, he was a man of the regime and of the mainstream. It was surprising to him that after all these centuries the local population still maintained Pontic-Greek as its first language in daily interactions

[49] Türk Ocakları Üçüncü Kurultayı Zabıtları, 1926:72-73.

but also, and maybe more surprisingly, in the famous local madrasas. Umur's texts clearly testify to the persistence of the Pontic-Greek among his fellow villagers:

> In Of, until quite recently, the testimony given by some witnesses in the courts of law had to be translated. Although the Muslim religion completely swept away Greek identity together with the Christian religion, the language has continued in use up to our own time [1951], together with its peculiar accent, without the slightest loss (Umur 1951:13).

His attitude towards Pontic-Greek reminds us that not all members of a community will have the same approach on issues of language use. Factors such as education, political affiliations, professional and political proximity to the state apparatus, to mention a few, play a significant role in the way individuals conceive of themselves and their cultural characteristics. As I witnessed during my fieldwork among these populations in Trabzon, ambivalence towards their dialect is high, and different opinions and visions about its future are created and circulate. Some of my interlocutors in Trabzon refused to draw any connections between language, history and "ethnic roots." They would even refuse to acknowledge that they speak Pontic-Greek, claiming to be "pure Turks," and making language a marker of political loyalty. Others would downgrade the dialect to the level of a local idiom with some influences from their old "Christian neighbors." But all accepted that Pontic-Greek (Rumça) was a language spoken by their Christian neighbors from whom they supposedly learned it, without expressing any further knowledge on the issue. They would usually finish their statement by saying "We speak Pontic-Greek, too, but thank God we are Muslims." Finally, some of my interlocutors made allusive references to Pontic-Greek as being the "language of our ancestors." The attempt to trace the history and situate Pontic-Greek in particular

cultural contexts, to give it a definite name and stabilize it as a category, still constitutes a sensitive issue that might cause intense disagreements among those involved. It is even more challenging for the locals when a foreigner expresses interest in the dialect. Suspicion might be the initial reaction on their behalf, and might escalate to more aggressive behavior and end up to reporting to the local police authorities. During my fieldwork another colleague from France was doing ethnographic research among another linguistic minority group east of Trabzon. Some locals reported him to the police and he was deported. Non-Turkish language use as a marker of cultural difference in this districts was and still remains a sensitive matter associated with issues of security and state sovereignty.

Another characteristic case of the sensitivity of the issue of Pontic-Greek, especially in politically unstable times, is the experience of Michael Defner.[50] He was a German linguist who was sent to Trabzon by the academy of Berlin in May 1876 to study the Greek dialects of the Muslims in Trabzon. Defner was particularly interested in the Greek dialect of the Muslems of Of because he believed that it maintained the infinitive and other elements of the ancient Greek language. He lived and worked in Trabzon for five months, where at the end of July 1876, he met a Greek named Ioannis Parharidis[51] who became his local assistant for the collection of linguistic data.

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[50] The discussion in this section is based on a text written by German linguist Michael Defner and published in 1877 in the Greek journal *Hestia*. For an English translation see Meeker 2004.

[51] Ioannis Parharidis was born in Trabzon in 1858. His father was a merchant originally from the Greek village of Kromni in Argyroupolis, travelling often to Russia for his business. Parharidis lost his father in the age of six and he was raised by his mother and elder brother. He studied at the Frontistirion Trapezountas, the famous Greek school of Trabzon until the second class of secondary school. After his graduation he was appointed and worked for two years as a primary school teacher in the nearby village of Ziseno in the region of Of, few miles east of Trabzon. The inhabitants of that community were mixed, Christians and Muslims, and both speakers of the local Pontic-Greek dialect. Defner and Parharidis developed a strong friendship and Parharidis

During his five month stay in Trabzon in 1876, Defner decided to undertake a trip to the region of Of together with Parharidis in order to examine first hand the Greek dialect of its Muslim inhabitants. Here is how he describes Of's landscape and its inhabitants:

> Under the commuting conditions of that period the district of Ophis [Of] lied about fourteen hours east of Trabzon and stretched southward about the same distance from the coast into the interior. Two rivers, separated from each other by ranges of mountains which peter out toward the coast, run through it in parallel courses. The westernmost of these bears the name Ophis, which in Greek means snake, because of its serpentine course, from which the entire district is called Ophis. The easternmost river is called in Greek kriopotamos [cold river]. On the banks of these two rivers as far as the slopes of the mountains, are the many villages of the Oflu people, of which over half (of the villages) have borne Greek names. The villages on the river Ophis, which is the longer, are forty five, while those on the cold river are twenty. In them dwell from ten to twenty thousand originally Greek families,

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followed Defner in Athens, where he lived at his place and finished high school and the first two years of university. During that period he became fluent in German. Throughout these years he continued training Defner in the Greek dialects of Pontos. In 1881 Parharidis returned to Trabzon were he was appointed as the head of the committee for the restructuring of the Greek primary school system of the city. In 1884 he started editing, together with another local Greek scholar, Theodoros Grammatikopoulos, the weekly literary journal "Astir tou Pontou"[Star of Pontos]. Parharadis served as teacher in various Greek schools in the Ottoman empire. In 1894 he returned to his native Trabzon where he started serving as a teacher and director at the local Greek school. Parharidis was a very active member of the scholarly elite and of the broader Greek community in Pontos. His research on the local Pontic-Greek dialects was honored by an award from the Filologikos Sillogos Konstantinoupoleos (The Literary Society of Constantinople). He also served as chair in various Greek associations of the region. He passed away in 1910.

> of which however only a hundred-fifty have remained Christian until today, scattered through eight different villages. According to tradition, which is closely guarded by them, the Greeks who came here ages ago as immigrants from the different Greek cities of the southern shore of the Black Sea settled on the banks of the two rivers. It is not surprising that they have kept identical traditions, of which one hears from their own mouths the story of Odysseus against the Cyclops, exactly as Homer tells it. The villagers of Ophis embraced Islam a hundred-eighty years after the fall of Trabzon [1461+180=1641], while those of the Cold River were persuaded much sooner immediately after the city's capture. Consequently, those living on the Ophis river have preserved not only the Greek language, but also both Greek and Islamic customs and ways, while those on the other river became entirely Turkish, losing utterly all traces of their Greek heritage.

After few weeks of training with Parharidis, Defner made plans to undertake a trip to Of with the Greek teacher, accompanied by rural police because of the unstable circumstances. That was a period of tense relations between the Ottoman and Russian Empires which would lead to war only a few months later. In order to have full protection, Defner went to the governor of Trabzon, Ahmet Rasim Pasha, to whom he brought a letter of introduction from the Grand Vizier, stating that he was planning to go to Of and spend some weeks there for his research. He begged the governor to give him letters of introduction to the district officer of that region and some guards for protection. The governor told him that the unrest in this district was so great that it would be impossible to get there unharmed, even if he was given guards. The governor made it clear that he could not take responsibility for Defner's security if he should go despite his warnings. He advised him to stay in Trabzon and go to Of a year later for his research, if

the unrest died down. “Language is not a thing which is transformed or corrupted from one year to another. Work here as long as you can and come back next year” the governor told Defner. The Greek consul also dissuaded him from making the trip. But what really convinced him not to go to Of was the arrival of hundreds of new conscripts from that and neighboring districts in Trabzon, madly waving their scimitars in the air, dancing about and shouting, “Death to infidels!”

Parharidis volunteered to go to Of without Defner to collect the information he wanted. He was confident that he wouldn’t run any risk because people there knew him as a teacher of both Christian and Muslim children in his school. However, things did not evolve as he expected. His linguistic research in the area caused serious unrest. Some locals accused him of being a spy who was studying their language and customs in order to give the information to the Russians. He was arrested and kept in prison for few days until he was eventually released after Defner petitioned to the authorities.

The Islamic religion was the primary marker of political loyalty among the Pontic-Greek speakers of Of in the late 19th century and especially under the unstable conditions that prevailed. Competition and tension with the “infidel Russian” who was the major enemy, must have certainly caused people to further cluster around Islam.

The use of Pontic-Greek under such unstable circumstances can become a politicized marker of difference and a potential sign of political disobedience, that might jeopardize the position of a liminal group like the Pontic-Greek speakers, either in the eyes of the authorities or of any other “mainstream” groups. Expression of zealotry, higher public expression of support for imperial goals and “state patriotism” among these

individuals might have been a choice that would further secure their life under unstable circumstances.

The songs of Of

So far in this chapter I have discussed how conversion to Islam in Asia Minor and in Trabzon in particular shifted the demographic balances between Christians and Muslims in favor of the latter, creating a kind of cultural mixing among the convert communities. Religion became the primary marker of political loyalty in the turbulent 19th century. The Crypto-Christian communities of the eastern Black Sea provinces posed challenges to imperial authority which took measures to contain them. During the transition from the 19th to the 20th century and the rise of Kemalist nationalism in Turkey, the use of Pontic-Greek gradually came to be seen as a threat to national unity. Religious conversion would be followed by attempts to linguistic conversion in the 20th century.

Conversion to Islam also impacted musical expression. Music in this new context became an ambivalent sign of cultural alterity, and a source of suspicion and criticism from mainstream religious networks in Turkey. My ethnographic work focused on the reproduction of ambivalence, and, more fundamentally, on the process by which musical practices acquire new meanings in the new religious context. But for now let us return to Parharidis, and the songs he heard from the people of Of.

This section is based on a text written by Parharidis in the late 19th century but published in 1928, eighteen years after his death, in the Greek journal *Laografia* [Folklore]. In that text Parharidis describes the musical life of the Muslim Pontic-Greek speakers of Of, as he experienced it first hand during his long professional activity in the

district as a school teacher, and provides some interesting interpretations about how the conversion of this community to Islam impacted their musical culture. Here I present some of the narrative and arguments from this text relevant to the theme of this chapter and add my own comments. Parharidis' narrative should be definitely read with a critical eye and distance, taking into consideration his own social position and cultural background. Even if some of his statements sound exaggerated, the information he provides is valuable for understanding the musical culture in the region.

Parharidis describes the people of Of as "bilingual Greeks who converted to Islam" adding that as a result, their language contains many ancient Greek and Turkish words and that it is difficult for the inhabitants of Trabzon to understand the Greek dialect of the people of Of, and vice versa. During his stay with the Muslim Greek speakers of this region, Parharidis observed that they rarely sing songs that had been created in the past and never memorized songs. Rather, they constantly created new lyrics while they sang, or, as he vividly put it: "The people of Ophis do not create in order to sing, but they sing in order to create." This kind of song making is characteristic of the rural areas and differs rapidly from that of the city of Trabzon, where songs are produced by the pen of a composer and of a lyricist. Parharidis observed that songs created in the villages of Trabzon were often memorized and reproduced by the people of the city. There is a "spontaneity" in song making in the villages not to be found in the urban center.

Parharidis, having done extensive research in the Christian villages of the broader region of Trabzon, found that in these villages there were various songs that were memorized and sung. These songs were related to historical events, usually of patriotic

character. Nevertheless, he was unable to find such "heroic-historical songs" among the Muslim Pontic-Greek speakers. The explanation he provided is that this happened because these Greeks converted to Islam, and since those songs referred to things Christian, the rise of Islamic religiosity gradually pushed them to the margins until they completely disappeared from the memory of the people. Parharidis argues that a similar process of forgetting was under-way in the field of language, too, where Pontic-Greek, identified by local preachers with Christianity, was gradually being replaced by Turkish, identified with Islam. He was also unable to find, among the Muslim Pontic-Greek speakers, tales told by all other Greeks of Trabzon. The converted Greeks, as he characterized them, narrated tales taken from the Islamic tradition, such as those of the famous Nasrettin Hodja.

Parharidis also attributed the vanishing of memorized songs to the abandonment of the local dance culture that was put under the strict regulation and prohibition of the new religion. It was locally not very acceptable for a pious Muslim to use his or her body in excessive ways that might arouse sexual desire. From what he has observed during his various trips to different parts of Trabzon, it was mainly the Christians who danced, and rarely the Muslims, and when the latter did so, they danced to the accompaniment of a drum and of the kaval, a local flute, whose soft sound did not allow for much singing. Christians meanwhile danced to the Pontic Lyra/kemençe whose sound was very strong. Parharidis concluded that the Pontic lyra had almost disappeared from the musical culture of the Muslims of Of. Finally, he attributed the vanishing of memorized songs in this community, to the prohibition of alcohol consumption in Islam. "Alcohol raises the spirits and creates an appropriate mood for singing and dancing among the Christians, but

for the Muslims it is strictly prohibited" he wrote. The constant remembrance and reproduction of older songs needed a constant repetition in social gatherings, where alcohol was usually consumed. Thus, the prohibition of its consumption must have certainly played a significant role in the ways music was made and listened to in social gatherings in this community. However, this prohibition was not absolutely successful. The consumption of alcohol nowadays in these communities has not entirely been eliminated. I recall how some of my informants in a Pontic-Greek speaking village, which is well-known for its religious devotion, would consume whiskey from a can of Coca-Cola during our musical gatherings. One of them approached me and whispered in my ear, asking if I wanted to drink some, with a conspiratorial smile. He also expressed his satisfaction that he was able to drink alcohol in front of the elderly, deeply religious members of the community and some preachers, thus successfully "deceiving" them.

Parharidis tells us that the converts would never sing alone, but that there had to be at least two people in order to sing to each other. When they did so, they would criticize, curse or praise each other and satirize and express their approval or disapproval of what was going on around them. This practice of *atışma* (they used a Turkish word) which used to be very popular in that locality, is actually a ritualized dialog (literally "battle of words"), where usually two individuals, men or women, sing and try to provoke and tease each other on various issues using arguments in spoken rhyme. *Atışma* includes many references to the participants' personal characteristics, virtues and disadvantages. One has to be very "fluent" in terms of poetic language use, imaginative and fast in order to be able to compete. There is a gradual escalation in the magnitude of things said, which sometimes even ends up in quarrels. However, most of the time the

atışma ends when one of the two participants is not any more able to produce new "lyrical arguments" in response to what has been said by his interlocutor. This process might last from few minutes to few hours. It used to be a practice that attracted large audiences from the rural communities. Spectators would separate into two groups, supporting one of the two *atışmacı* (performers of the *atışma*). During this process, words that would normally not be publicly used and things not normally said, can be sung, pushing and challenging the local ethical boundaries. However, people are not supposed to be offended by this, since they all know that this is a "musical game" between two people who compete and offer laughter and amusement to those watching and listening.

Its improvised nature, the sense of humor and outspokenness invested in the lyrics invented and sung, meant that *atışma* challenged ethics. People, as Parharidis tells us, would even make direct reference to their sexual organs and activities and curse each other heavily without any embarrassment. It is worth asking about the origins of this outspokenness in a context of pious Islamic religiosity developed in the Of region. Parharidis does not offer any interpretation in this regard.

My own interpretation, based also on the information gathered from my interlocutors, is that the *atışma* would not take place in the presence of preachers or other elders of the community who held a strict religious ethos and sense of ethics. Additionally, even though Islamic beliefs had pushed parts of the musical culture to oblivion, I argue that it was impossible to completely erase and eliminate it from the community's life, as we see today. Thus the *atışma* managed to survive up until our days and even the Pontic-Lyra/kemençe is reviving among the descendants of these communities. However, this needs more research to reach more secure conclusions. What

is important here is to think of how such a musical practice survived in the context of strict ethics and religiosity. But let us get back to Parharidis' time and views.

Parharidis wrote that most of the songs sung by the converts in Of are cheerful and that he never came across any sorrowful songs among these people. Though their lives were moderate, they ate and dressed poorly and they worked hard, the converts of Of were, in his view, happy and cheerful most of the time. The emigration of a beloved person caused pain and unhappiness for a time, but most of those who migrated would return after a short period of time. They never married outside of their community. Those who died were immediately forgotten. Thus, a very significant source of grief, death, did not exert a lasting impact on their daily routines, according to Parharidis' observations and narrative.

The issue of the oblivion of the deceased is an important one here. In the Christian communities, there used to be a very strong practice of lament during someone's funeral. This tradition has survived among some convert communities up to our day, too, despite the efforts of the local preachers to stigmatize it as a Christian practice from which a faithful Muslim should abstain. According to the contemporary, local understanding of death promoted by the preachers in Trabzon, people should not lament the death of their beloved, since the deceased was going to find God. I was told by some informants how preachers in their villages would oppose this practice but could not impose a formal ban since it was very deeply rooted in the local ethos and practice. The practice of lamenting over the dead body is still alive in some Pontic-Greek speaking villages in Trabzon and continues to be accepted as "an old local tradition" that people like to follow.

Parharidis wrote that the relationships among men and women in the convert communities were quite open. He observed that they flirted freely and developed erotic relationships with each other, even outside of marriage. He also wrote that it was acceptable for a man to marry to two or even three wives of his age or older. Men usually married sometime between their fifteenth and twentieth year. Many women who were already married to younger men, developed erotic affairs with more mature men during the course of their lives. Parharidis also observed that, unlike Muslim women in Trabzon, who covered their entire face, women in the converted communities of Of covered only up to their mouth "leaving their eyes exposed to the erotic signals of men." For Parharidis this freedom of relations between men and women was also a source of happiness for the converts contributing significantly to the cheerfulness of their lives. Despite the legal ban on multiple marriages today, I also came across some individuals who had two or three wives in Trabzon, living in separate houses. Polygamy is not very widely practiced today, and men would sometimes joke about contemporary instances of multiple wives.

Parharidis tells us that the converts sang either in Turkish or in Pontic-Greek, resulting in the emergence of an interesting linguistic blending, with Hellenized Turkish words appearing in songs with Pontic-Greek lyrics. Those who lived closer to the shore sang in Turkish most of the time, whereas those on the upper valley in the interior sang mainly in Pontic-Greek. However, the former, while in the presence of Christians, they mainly spoke and sang in Pontic-Greek. This blending of languages and words provided them with greater poetic fluency in the spontaneous creation of songs. The converts usually found the opportunity to sing every Wednesday, when they walked down to the sea in groups to purchase goods from the local market. Weddings, travel, and working

hours in the fields, forests and mountains also provided good opportunities for much "collective" singing, flirting, teasing or laughter. Women would sing to women, expressing their sexual desires and competing for the same lover; sons would sing to fathers competing for a woman; and a man would sing to a woman flirting and expressing sexual desire. In this form of ritualistic singing, things that would otherwise would not be said, would be sung freely, sometimes leading to misunderstandings and quarrels.

Parharidis lived with these communities in a very turbulent period, the end of 19th century, when the Ottoman state had lost territories, and was in constant competition and even conflict with its big competitor in the region, Russia. The incidents of "apostasy" from Islam also added to the already tense conditions and the insecurity of the elites. Islamic preachers in such a context must have been instrumental in the struggle of the administration to maintain peoples' Islamic faith and political loyalty, two things that were closely inter-related, as I wrote earlier in the chapter.

The retreat of the local dance culture in Of, the lack of the Pontic-lyra/kemençe from the community's musical repertoire, the prohibition of alcohol consumption, the absence of memorized songs and of songs about historical events, the existence of tales from the Islamic tradition, the fast oblivion of the deceased, should all be interpreted as the outcome of conversion and more importantly of the activities of the local preachers to transform the converts into "good Muslims."

This conversion triggered a process of long cultural transition, which was incomplete in the sense that it did not manage to incorporate and change completely all aspects of life. Meanings and practices of life associated with them such as the *atışma,* the public expression of sexual desire and open reference to sexuality, flirting, the

survival of Pontic-Greek and its blending with Turkish, are some indicators that this "partial" transition is still on-going. The outcome of this was a local cultural complexity that combined Christian and Islamic elements in new forms. This "new culture" of the community was still alive and observable during my field research. A new type of Muslim rose in Trabzon among these communities, one that sometimes deviated from the monolithic, centrally designed notions of Islamic piety and personhood.

Nevertheless, this "new culture" is still not fully accepted by local preachers, whose criticism of certain musical practices is directed against "deviant" musicians. In the following section, I focus on these dynamics as I experienced them and as they were described by interlocutors during my fieldwork in Trabzon.

Stigma and oblivion

Oral history and current musical and dance practices in the Pontic-Greek-speaking communities are two sites where one can currently trace the impact of conversion to Islam. All my informants from the kemençe performers community narrate stories about how, even today, Islamic preachers in the bilingual communities in the rural areas of Trabzon spread the view that it is a sin to play the kemençe, because they consider it to be a *gavur aleti* [instrument of the infidel] associated with practices such as alcohol consumption and low ethical standards that do not conform with Islamic norms.[52] This

[52] The "sinfulness" of kemençe playing and listening was a widespread view in the broader Trabzon province. Local authors from Trabzon have also affirmed this reality, however they don't attempt to investigate and interpret its historical trajectory, its socio-cultural and political underpinnings and consequences. There is a popular saying that in order for someone to be able to learn how to play the kemençe, one has to commit at least seven serious sins. For a discussion about the perceptions of kemençe as a sin in the local communities see also Duman 2004; Emiroglu 1989; Karadeniz 1998; Bilgin 1990.

stigmatization of the kemençe resulted in the marginalization and stigmatization of the kemençe performer in the local societies. The popular view of the kemençe player was that of a poor, uneducated, lazy alcoholic, interested only in having fun and in flirting with women; according to this mentality, one would become a kemençe player only if he could not find something better to do with his life. Nobody would allow his daughter to marry the kemençeci, the kemençe player. He became the scapegoat of the community of believers.

As a result of intensive preaching in the villages of Trabzon and of local interpretations of Islamic faith, some of my informant kemençe performers who describe themselves as faithful Muslims came to believe that, by playing this instrument, they actually commit a sin. They excuse themselves, however, by saying that as human beings they are not perfect and that everyone is sinful; at least they are sinful because of music and not for any other reason, hoping that God will forgive them when they die. Some also believe that people should avoid listening to old recordings made by now deceased kemençe performers; additionally, those who currently perform should avoid playing melodies composed by deceased performers because they believe that this will cause them constant suffering in the other world.

During one of our gatherings at a cultural association in Istanbul with many performers, one of them, Mehmet, a quite popular performer, shared his views about his recording activities, half jokingly, half seriously:

> If I were to start my career as a performer now, I would not record any cassettes or CDs, so that I wouldn't leave anything behind me when I die; but I was very young when I started. I was not aware; I didn't pay attention. Now it's a bit late, and I have many recordings. May God forgive me.

He also told me how, years ago, a very famous *kaval* [flute] player from Trabzon named Afatzan requested that her recordings be destroyed after she died so that people wouldn't listen to her and cause her suffering in the other world.

Mehmet urged his younger colleagues not to use the melodies of deceased players in their performances and in their CDs, if they wish to record any at all. He called them to create their own, new songs. Some of his colleagues, though agreeing with him in principle, believe that it is very important to remind their audiences about the existence of these old, now-deceased performers, so that they know what this music is about and where it comes from; "this is our musical tradition and culture," as they succinctly put it. Turning deceased performers into "musical tradition," into a "canon," presupposes the constant performance of their melodies and their maintenance in performers and audiences' memory. It is an act of constant remembrance that runs against musical oblivion. Mehmet's approach, on the contrary, privileges only new musical creations and reinforces the oblivion of past melodies and performers.

Musical oblivion and stigmatization are not the only outcomes of conversion to Islam. The segregation of the sexes in dance is yet another one. Musical performances are occasions of emotionally intense exchange and socializing. Musical events can bring individuals together, creating sociality and a sense of community, as we saw in Parharidis' narrative. But in some rural Pontic-Greek speaking communities of contemporary eastern Trabzon, there is a strict code of male-female interaction.

During my fieldwork I attended a musical event during summer in one of these communities. Some friends who were preparing to go to the military had invited me to play kemençe at the *asker uğurlama töreni,* the ceremony of the soldier sendoff, that

would take place at the village's school yard. A young guy came and picked me up from Trabzon to take me to the village where the ceremony was taking place. I had few friends there and I did not want to reject their request, though it would be awkward for me to play the lyra at a ceremony with militarist connotations, according to my understanding. For the local people, however, it was an ordinary ceremony for the younger members of the community who were about to fulfill their duty to the homeland.

Almost the whole village had gathered at the school's yard. A huge Turkish flag was hanging at the front of the entrance door, big loudspeakers had been brought and people were waiting for the start of the ceremony. Murat, the presenter of the event, announced the names of those who were going to the military and for whom the ceremony was prepared. He then introduced and thanked me and others for being there to play for them. Murat, who knew that I would sing in Pontic-Greek and aware of the potential negative reactions by some "conservative" villagers and the local authorities, made the necessary announcements. He said that the state shouldn't be afraid of this language because it is simply part of the local culture and in no way undermines the patriotic feelings of the village's inhabitants. During my performance people reacted very warmly, coming closer to take a picture of me and record me. Some of them started dancing. Others were listening carefully, trying to understand the lyrics of my songs. When they could understand, they would cheerfully applaud. After I finished playing another kemençe player followed. Men starting dancing in circles at the yard. Women were watching them. A few minutes later, Murat picked up the microphone and announced that if there were any women willing to dance, they could go inside the school

building to do so. A few of them stood up and went into one of the school's rooms, without lighting, and started dancing away from the men's eyes, in the dark.

A lonely voice

Now let us take a closer look on these dynamics through the experiences and ideas of one of my main informants, the kemençe performer and singer Adem.

A kemençe player, song writer, and singer, Adem became the protagonist in the revival of Pontic-Greek song lyrics in present-day Turkey. During my fieldwork he was in his early 30s, from the Beşköy villages, a rural bilingual community in the region of Sürmene, just few miles east of Trabzon, and a citizen of Turkey. The old Pontic-Greek name of his own village was *Kalis*, and it is still used by its inhabitants more often than its new Turkish one, *Yilmazlar*.

Adem leads a modest life. He does not drive a car, and never received a driving license. He either uses public transportation or is given a ride by his friends and relatives. He does not like spending money on things he considers unnecessary, and does not take pleasure from consumption. His food is modest too, mainly soups, vegetables and fruits. He is not a committed "vegetarian," but this is the lifestyle he learned while living in the village.

Though a regular user of the internet, Facebook and YouTube for professional reasons, he prefers direct human communication and exchange. The big grey buildings of his neighborhood in Istanbul depress him. He prefers to spend his time walking in the village, among trees and flowers, the names and characteristics of which he knows in great detail. It is easier for him to navigate in the forest of his village than in the forest of

buildings in Istanbul. He seems not to fit in the ethos of the city. In our discussions during fieldwork he told me that his dream was to go back to the village at some point and spend the rest of his life there, writing songs and making music for the local people. He migrated to Istanbul with his father and mother after finishing high school in late 1990s, following other fellow villagers in search of a better life. But living in the crowded western working-class suburbs of Istanbul is not a very pleasant experience for him. He feels like he lives in *gurbet,* in a foreign land.

Adem is strongly attached to his native village and to his relatives and friends, many of whom live either in Istanbul or in other cities in Turkey and Europe. Most of the people with whom he socializes in the city are either relatives or friends from his own or neighboring villages, or migrants from the broader Trabzon province. His friends are of different ages, younger or even much older than him. When they come together they mostly talk about particular fellow villagers who did something that was considered funny; they will tell jokes and laugh, talk about their village's problems and disputes among its people or play kemençe and sing. They seem not to care much about what goes on in other parts of the country, and they are very absorbed by their own experiences and affairs. These socializing gatherings take place either at private houses, coffee shops, restaurants, or the facilities of the *dernek,* the cultural association of the Beskoy people housed in a building that sits by the ruins of the city's Byzantine walls, in the historic district of Byzantine Constantinople. It is very rare to see a woman participating in these gatherings. Women usually stay at home or visit their relatives who live in other parts of the city or in the same neighborhood.

Adem is often the center of attention since he is the lead singer and kemençe player of the community. He is also an amazing story teller with a great sense of humor. His sharp memory, his focus on detail and his theatrical style make him an ideal narrator of village stories and jokes that make his interlocutors burst into laughter that can last for many minutes. He is loved by many, but many others, usually those who do not know him personally, criticize or disparage him for singing in Pontic-Greek in public.

He divides his time between Istanbul and his village in Trabzon, about fifteen hours of travel by bus, since he avoids using the airplane. But he also goes wherever he is invited to perform, and he spends a great portion of his life traveling on the roads of Anatolia. He makes a living playing the kemençe and singing songs at weddings, dance nights, festivals, small gatherings in private houses, night clubs, restaurants and on private local radio and TV shows. The places where he performs range from Turkey, Greece and Germany to, more recently, Canada and the United States, where a Christian Pontic-Greek diaspora lives. He mainly sings in the Trabzon idiom of Turkish and, depending on the audience, in his native Pontic-Greek. His patrons, like most performers, are usually either cultural associations or individuals. He was rarely invited to perform in events organized by Turkish authorities and had not appeared on state television or radio networks until quite recently.

Adem learned Turkish at school and graduated from the *Imam Hatip Lisesi*, the Islamic high schools of Turkey. He frequently makes fun of the way he speaks Turkish (due to his Pontic-Greek accent), but he does not want to get rid of it. “All these years at school and I still didn’t manage to learn proper Turkish. Your Turkish is better than mine, believe me. My Turkish is ruined by my Pontic-Greek,” he would tell me when

discussion turned to language. This blending of Turkish with Pontic-Greek in Trabzon produced a hybrid idiom locals call "Trabzon Turkish", that is easily recognizable and open to ridicule by outsiders.

Though his village currently falls within the administrative division of a small town called Sürmene, his family and all the Pontic-Greek speaking communities of the nearby villages claim that they are from Of and that they have relatives there. He laughs at the stories he learned while at school about their supposedly Central Asian Turkish roots. His father was an Islamic preacher, a *hoca*, and Adem himself grew up in a quite religious environment. He keeps fasting during the Ramadan, and he occasionally goes to the mosque to pray. At the same time, he has an interest in Orthodox-Christianity and has read a lot about its history, its dogma and its ritual practices. His intellectual curiosity and knowledge distinguish him from other fellow villagers of the same age and background. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that he knows more about Orthodox-Christianity than many contemporary Greeks. He has visited the *Hagion Oros* [Holly Mountain, the center of orthodox monasticism in Greece] at least twice, and one of his closest friends in Greece is an Orthodox priest of Pontic-Greek ancestry. He has a unique ability to navigate successfully among people with different religious and ethnic affiliations and to create empathy and love. The only thing that has stigmatized him in the eyes of some fellow villagers and rendered him "dangerous" was his willingness to sing songs in his native Pontic-Greek dialect in public performances and gatherings. For some he became a hero who was bringing Pontic-Greek to public awareness, while for others he was a potential threat to national unity and the *Beşköy* community whose "cultural peculiarities" he was supposedly "exposing" to mainstream Turkish audiences. But

neither of these was really his intention. The only thing to which he aspired was the freedom to sing in the first language he learned from his mother and father, *Romeyka* [Pontic-Greek.]

But singing publicly in Pontic-Greek was not the only problem he faced during his career as a musician. Long before he became well-known, he faced his father's negative attitude towards kemençe. His father was a very faithful person, he served the community as a hodja and was also a very good hafiz.[53] Because of his religious beliefs, his father did not like the kemençe but he liked the *kaval* and the *tulum* (local bagpipe) the two wind instruments used by the community. Aware of his father's disapproval of the kemençe, Adem tried to hide from him that he was learning how to play this instrument. Other members of the community who played the kemençe had similar experiences with their fathers, who were faithful Muslims and did not approve of their sons' playing this instrument. As Adem put it, "It was as if kemençe was something that was poisoning people."

Adem's oldest brother, Cevat, was the first in the family to play kemençe and keep it a secret from his father. Cevat did not have his own instrument, so he asked one of his carpenter friends to help him build one. He hid the kemençe in the ceiling of their house. When his father was away, he would take it out and play. However, one day his father discovered it. He was so angry that he broke the instrument and kicked Cevat out of the house for several days as a punishment for playing kemençe and for disobeying him.

[53] The person who has memorized the Quran

After Cevat it was Ali, the second elder brother of Adem who started playing the kemençe secretly. Ali, aware of what had happened to his older brother Cevat, hid the kemençe in their stable, covering it with grass and tile. When their father was away, he would take it out and play. Adem, around nine years old back then, would listen to him carefully playing various melodies and would memorize them. The first time he had listened to kemençe was at a summer festivity at the *parhar* [highland pastures] by an old man who impressed him a lot. Then it was the influence of his brother Ali. For several years Adem would take Ali's kemençe and go into the forest, away from the house, in order to play the melodies he had memorized. He would walk almost fifty minutes every day in order to hide himself in the forest so that his father or anyone else would not hear him playing. This way he learned to play few songs. At some point his father heard from someone else that Adem was playing the kemençe. Rather than saying anything to him directly, he asked his wife to tell Adem to stop playing or else he would punish him. His mother told Adem that his father knew that he was playing and urged him to be more careful and to hide himself well when he went out to the forest to play. Adem did not feel guilty because he never thought that he was doing something bad by playing this instrument. Nevertheless, he was always very careful when playing so that his father would not hear him.

With the passing of years and his constant practice in the forest, Adem improved and his fame among the younger in the village grew. His father never told him anything directly, pretending that nothing was going on. People from the village would ask Adem to play for them at the nighttime gatherings in the highlands once a while. In this way he became more popular. He was the only kemençe player in his village from his generation.

When Adem recorded and released his first cassette his mother told him that his father learned about it from his friends and went to buy a cassette to listen to what his son had done. He never scolded Adem for his disobedience. Relatives had told him that he should not punish him, because he was the youngest child in the family and should be excused. That allowed Adem to progress and become a well-known performer and singer, especially among the Pontic-Greek speaking communities of his district.

It was almost impossible for people to gather and play kemençe in public in the village because it was considered inappropriate by the elders of the community. The houses of the village were dispersed in the forest, and there were no organized spaces for common, public use. The people frequenting the small coffee-shop in the nearby village did not always allow kemençe performances there. So the musical gatherings would take place in the highland pastures, especially in summer, in public and at the local coffee shop there, usually away from the ears and the eyes of those who dissaproved of these practices. Adem had very fond memories of those highland musical gatherings during summer. For him, as for every child of the village, winter was a period of low socialization and isolation at home, and religious ethics did not allow for much musical activity.

This mentality of stigmatization and indirect restriction of kemençe playing and listening in these rural communities continued even after the migration of some members of the community to Istanbul and to other urban sites Moreover, life in a new and unknown context in a big urban center like Istanbul made many of these immigrants embrace their religious values more closely. Many of them entered religious orders that cultivated a strong sense of Islamic religiosity and solidarity among their members.

Nevertheless, they would still listen to the kemençe even if they felt hesitation and a sense of guilt.

While in Istanbul, Adem was invited to perform at a wedding ceremony in one of the city's poor neighborhoods at the densely inhabited western suburbs, the participants of which were members of such an Islamic order. Before the performance, the imam present called everybody to follow his prayer. This lasted for several minutes. Such is the strictly followed practice in the social gatherings of these communities. After the imam finished, it was Adem's turn to play. When he started playing it was the men who stood up and started dancing in circles keeping hands tightly, in fast rhythm and with severe moves. He was singing mainly in Turkish and secondarily in Pontic-Greek. While he was playing a woman approached him and told him that they also wanted to dance. Adem told her that she could dance if she wanted since he was already playing, but she responded that it is a sin to dance in the same room with the men and in front of their eyes. She requested that Adem make an announcement asking the men to leave the room so that the women could dance. After a while Adem stopped playing. Men finished their dance and returned to their tables, on which there were non-alcocholic beverages, sweets, and colorful balloons. He took the microphone and announcing that it would now be the women's turn to dance, he requested the men to leave the room. Then the woman approached Adem again and asked him, too, to take his microphone (pick-up), move out of the room and perform from outside so that eye contact with the dancing women would be avoided. Adem laughed and responded that he did not have a long cable. They finally agreed that he would stay on the stage and perform from there, but that he would not face the dancing women, and that he would keep his head and his eyes down. And so he did.

During his performance he raised his head slightly to see how the dance was evolving in order to decide whether he should speed up or slow down. The women reacted by shouting at him and requested that he should not do this again because it was not appropriate for him to see women dancing.

Tight religious control over musical and dance practices was not always the standard. The cultivation of strong religious feelings and the politicization of religion had its ups and downs in the country. One of the outcomes of the 1980s military coup was the rise of a state-controlled religiosity that impacted many aspects of daily life, musical practices included. Older informants related to me that in the past men and women would dance together, singing to each other freely and flirting, but now it was very different, because people had become very "conservative." They held responsible for this the activities of the religious orders in urban centers. These organizations played a central role in creating a neo-Islamic ethos that distanced and alienated many people from their kemençe musical culture and their Pontic-Greek language.

Performers also complained that people attending weddings, especially those connected to these religious orders, almost did not know how to dance, while they criticized the segregation between men and women. One of them characteristically said to me "If it is a sin for women to dance in front of the eyes of men, then why is the opposite not a sin? This is such a cultural degeneration!" However, they felt unable to do anything about this, since the mentality of male-female segregation was cultivated and promoted by influential religious groups that were backed by the Islamic government of R.T Erdogan. Adem himself went through similar experiences many times. Moreover, some of his song lyrics were not always received positively since their content did not

completely abide by the Trabzon-style Islamic ethos.

Lyrics beyond limits

Adem says that the Quran dictates that people should not cry for their dead because the "dead" are actually alive, even though those who are biologically alive cannot see them. The dead, however, can see and hear those still alive. Nostalgia for the deceased might lead to tears, and this is not acceptable for a faithful Muslim, according to local imams, whose interpretations of the Quran have reached many people in Trabzon. Expressing nostalgia or praising a deceased person in one's songs is also even more unacceptable for pious individuals and local imams, because the extended circulation and emotional power of these songs might undermine the religiously made ethos of their audiences.

Some of Adem's listeners once approached him to express their disagreement with one of the songs he had included in his most recent album. The song was about Bahattin Çamur Ali, a legendary kemençe player from the villages of Sürmene, east of Trabzon, a fellow countryman of Adem but much older than him. Bahattin Çamur Ali was born during the 1930s in Trabzon and died in the 1990s in Istanbul. He was widely famous as a kemençe player and singer, and many of his recordings still circulate among his older and younger fans in private recordings and on YouTube. He is still considered by many contemporary players a "classic" performer, one whose style they try to imitate. However, his proclivity to alcohol and the rumors about his supposedly flirty character—a rumor that applied to many kemençe players—were not well perceived by pious individuals.

In one of his songs, Adem praised Bahattin Çamur Ali for his music and fame. Here is the translation of the lyrics from Turkish:

In the year 1931,
a sun rose for us,
a master for the Black Sea
was born in Sürmene.

Chorus: On the soil of Sürmene,
Çamur Ali was raised,
with his bass kemençe
he addressed the whole world.

Bahattin Çamur Ali is from the village of Çida,
the roads of Sürmene,
await him.

The songs of this master,
became a saga in peoples' mouths,
the master with his songs
established his kingdom in peoples' hearts.

The master dedicated,
his whole life to kemençe,
he transplanted to us
the love for kemençe.

Bahattin Çamur Ali,
your name remained in peoples' mouths,
your creations
became our legacy.

Hey Çamur Ali,
words can't describe you,
you passed away and became saint,
your friends are sad.

Bahattin Çamur Ali,
may paradise be your place,
may my song be a present,
for the friends who love you.

Some older, very pious locals criticized Adem for recording and releasing such a song. They told him that he shouldn't have praised a dead person in public like this, because it was a sin to do so. Adem replied that he did not have any bad intentions and that he simply wanted to praise Çamur Ali's artistic value and express his admiration for his work. For Adem, Çamur Ali was still alive since he could listen to his voice in the various recordings and feel moved by his songs; he did not think that he was "committing a sin."

Adem related to me another similar event. He had gone to his home town, Sürmene, and there, at the town's center, he came across an imam who used to be an old fan of Bahattin Çamur Ali. The imam approached Adem and expressed his love and respect for him and his family. But also he criticized his decision to record and release such a song.

> Imam: I wish you wouldn't have done this Adem. You praise a dead person.
> Adem: My master, I didn't do something bad, I sung the words that I should have sung for Tsamur Ali while he was alive, but back then I didn't have the chance to do it, so I did it now, after his death.
> Imam: But all these words might not be appropriate, you don't know all the details of his life. He was drinking, he might have slept with many women, and you praise him in your song, you say that he got God's grace, how do you know that his sins were forgiven?

The imam was worried that Adem presented Çamur Ali as a model person to be imitated by younger generations, and for him that was unacceptable. Adem, however, wanted to praise Çamur Ali for the songs he left behind and for his overall contributions to the musical culture of the kemençe. Moreover, for Adem the feelings that Çamurali was expressing in his songs—nostalgia for his homeland, strong connection to his life-

style, his village, and his beloved—was something very positive that needed to be praised. These were positive values for Adem that needed to be transferred to younger generations, and he thought that Çamur Ali should become a symbol of all these. The imam was not convinced by Adem's explanations and told him that it would still be better had he not recorded and released this particular song, but since he did it and it was out on the market, there was nothing that could be done.

Though he respected the views of the imam, Adem did not agree with him. He did not believe in the idea that if he playd the songs of old, deceased players, he would cause them suffer in the other world. He was also in disagreement with the village imams' interpretations of musical activity. "If this was true then I should expect that I will suffer a lot after I pass away. Every album I make adds to this suffering. People will probably listen to my albums in different parts of the world for years to come. I am ruined!" he told me and laughed.

Beliefs about the sinful character of kemençe music have distanced many pious individuals in Trabzon from this musical culture and have changed the listening habits of others. And inevitably this had its own impact on the kemençe players too. Some of my informants pointed in this direction and to the internal schism they experienced as a result of these beliefs. The difficulty of reconciling two very important elements of what they considered as their culture, Islam and kemençe music, pushed some of them either further away from the former or the latter. Others continue to live in a quandary.

Adem had been plagued by similar thoughts and feelings when he was younger, but now he feels more secure about what he does. However, many of his listeners still experience these contradictions. He explained these to me in his own words:

> These beliefs are quite widespread in our communities in Trabzon. That if you listen to songs and the voice of a deceased kemençe player, if you sing his songs, you cause him suffering in his grave. If I was to think like this I shouldn't have recorded anything, not even our discussions here. Though these beliefs are widespread in our communities, many people still continue listening to kemençe and to old songs of deceased players. They acknowledge the existence of these beliefs but they keep listening. People want to dance but when they are constantly told that this is a sin, they will be reserved. Even when they dance, they question their decision to do so. Their legs get tangled, they are in conflict with themselves. They are almost completely controlled. If you want to follow Islam's rules and to be a faithful Muslim, you will have to forget some of your past habits. So they say don't dance, don't play, don't sing, don't listen to kemençe. This leads to the control of peoples' memory. If they cannot follow and apply the rules of the religion as they are dictated to them by religious authorities, then they will feel that they are unfaithful. This way people quite, and thus they do what they are told.

Kemençe musical culture has survived in these communities thanks to the people who listen to it and thus support it, despite pressures from religious networks to abandon it because it supposedly constitutes a sin. However, these pressures were partially successful in that the stigma attached to this instrument and its music is still present and has influenced the way many people think and feel about it. Thus we can conclude that there is an undeclared, ongoing, low-intensity conflict between the kemençe player and the preacher in the locality. Both play an important role in the production and circulation of meanings through which individuals live their lives.

From the perspective of a musician like Adem, who has experienced these cultural battles, the role of the kemençe player is very central in maintaining and reproducing the songs and the worldview and values that are embedded in them. People who grew up in this musical culture "find themselves in these songs," as Adem puts it, whereas for outsiders, this instrument, its sound and its music would not have the same meaning and importance. It is not accidental that many outsiders with whom I spoke make fun of and characterize the sound of the kemençe as noise that "scratches ears."

Additionally, musical creativity as expressed in Adem's work and activity could be interpreted as an exercise in personal freedom. Adem is a constant producer of meanings through his music and lyrics. Though his creativity is shaped within the value system in which he was brought up, there is always space to add and to modify. This is the power that the creative individual has. Thus Adem, as a performer and singer, is at the center of a relationships network comprised of individual listeners who are linked through musical sounds, and the memories and values expressed through them.

On the other hand, the preachers' insistence on promoting a vision of this instrument and its listening as a sin is a practice that attempts to enforce oblivion and to construct conformity with a set of standardized values and beliefs that are not open to critique and doubt. One either believes and follow them, enabling access as a member of the community of believers, or one does not, making himself vulnerable to stigmatization as "not-so-good-a-Muslim." This conformity with a fixed set of values has also the potential to re-shape human interaction and relations. The separate dancing of men and women in these communities, as I described earlier in this section, is an important example of this.

Adem's lyrics do not always conform to the religious worldview and value system promoted by local preachers in their attempt to impose a monolithic understanding of what constitutes a "good Muslim." Thus his songs bear the potential to undermine the homogeneity of meaning that is imposed on the population by larger power networks, and to delegitimize, and destabilize the centrally devised political visions of community and belonging. Moreover, songs that do not conform to mainstreams might even have a destabilizing effect on the conceptualizations of being, of what it means to be something as a human (i.e. a good Muslim, a moral person etc.)

Dancing separately, not knowing how to dance and sing and underestimating kemençe and its music all constitute a condition that many performers, Adem included, call "cultural erosion." Notions of "forgetfulness of dance and language" and perceptions of "rising Islamization" and "religious conservatism" as signs of "loss" and "cultural erosion" are constantly discussed among individuals within the community of kemençe performers and singers, regardless of their political positioning. Either left- or right-wing, all my performer interlocutors agreed that this Trabzon style of piety has caused "cultural erosion" in their communities, and this had a negative impact on their work and prestige as musicians too. Despite the public calls from members of the Islamist party AKP—even from the prime minister himself—from preachers and commentators for "mutual respect and acceptance of fellow Muslim brothers, regardless of ethnic origin and native language" something that has gradually become the mainstream discourse that replaced the nationalist one of "one language, one nation," a new Islamic mainstream has replaced the previous secularist one, creating new kinds of exclusions, othering and marginalization. A mainstream that demands and imposes a monolithic conformity with

its own values and beliefs. Many musicians from the Black Sea, though supporters of the Islamic party, believe that the rise of political Islam, though initially gave them some space to act, might become a threat to "native cultures" due to its "assimilationist momentum."

A minority of left-wing musicians in the kemençe music scene believe that the AKP government is implementing a well-planned project to eliminate any kind of artistic, cultural and ethnic difference in the country through the promotion of piety and market values (This will be discussed more in subsequent chapters).

What my interlocutors describe as "cultural erosion" is the imposition of new meanings and ways of being on them and on their communities that force them to abandon their previous ways of feeling and thinking. Adem has his own explanation about the consequences of this erosion. Let us listen to his voice again:

> If there was not any pressure from the society about this music I think that people would express their feelings more easily. So when people are constantly told not to listen to kemençe, not to play, not to dance, not to record anything, of course sooner or later they will get afraid and will distance themselves from this music. And I think this is a way of controlling peoples' memory. Maybe this is a way to keep people in a particular track. This is a break with one's past. With time you can't think of the past, you lose knowledge of it. All this may also shape an individual's future. How is a human's personality shaped? By the relations he forms with other people. To be able to exchange ideas and to look to the world with an open mind. But when you cannot express and exchange ideas, because it might be considered as a sin, then your thinking is controlled too. Your memory and personality is also controlled. In this way a new human is created, people get reshaped and changed.

Conclusions

This chapter started with a description of the slow process of conversion to Islam and a discussion of its consequences, with a particular focus on the Pontic-Greek speaking communities of the province of Trabzon on the eastern Black Sea coast of the late Ottoman empire and modern Turkey. In many cases conversion was a conscious strategy of the Christian peasants of Trabzon to survive against local administrative arbitrariness and heavy taxation, being aware that as Christians they would always be in a disadvantaged position in the context of an Islamic state. With the passing of time and the change of generations, this initially "fake" conversion resulted in a cultural mixing that gradually became the new culture of the converted communities in Trabzon. After centuries, as the sources show, Pontic-Greek speakers became Muslims, but not completely conforming to a standard type of Muslim. They maintained their cultural "idiosyncrasy" such as the use of the Pontic-Greek language and the kemençe, among others that I have not mentioned in this chapter. In some other cases, Christian belief and rituals had been maintained secretly.

In the turbulent 19th century, under fear of the anti-imperial and anti-colonial liberation movements that were threatening the existence and the territories of the empire, the Ottoman sultan declared, at least in theory, the freedom of religion and his intention to draft and implement the first constitution that would guarantee the life, security and equality of Christian and Muslim subjects. Taking advantage of these promises some of the converted communities declared that they had been "fake Muslims" and demanded to be recognized and registered as Christians. State authorities became very worried that this

tendency might spread and further threaten the legitimacy of the sultan and the Muslim character of the empire, and they tried to implement measures to avoid further Christianization of the population. The role of local Islamic preachers in this process was very central. In the late 19th century the Islamic religion was further politicized and became the primary marker of political loyalty. In this context imams in the rural areas of Trabzon intensified their activities to make the converts conform to a standardized understanding of Islamic personhood and eliminate any signs of their Christian past that might function as markers of difference. It is in this context that the stigmatization of kemençe and its music took place.

In the Of community this policy succeeded in making the population loyal to the imperial power. Despite their use of Pontic-Greek, the people of Of were represented as faithful Muslims fully integrated in the Muslim community of believers. For some scholars and observers of that period, that seemed an interesting paradox. Their language became the object of study since it was considered as a repository of ancient Greek linguistic elements and a residual of the population's "past Greekness." During the transition from the empire to the nation-state in Asia Minor from the 19th to the 20th century and with the rise of Kemalist nationalism in Turkey, political authorities and their social networks gradually came to perceive the use of Pontic-Greek by these communities as a marker of cultural difference, a sign of potential political disobedience, and a problem for "national unity." Thus, religious conversion was followed by state-sponsored policies for linguistic Turkification during the 20th century through today.

In the second part of this chapter I focused on the presentation of historical and ethnographic data to show the consequences of conversion on the local musical culture.

The retreat of the local dance culture in Of as witnessed by Parharidis in 1870s, the lack of the Pontic-lyra/kemençe from the community's musical repertoire, the prohibition of alcohol consumption, the absence of memorized songs and of songs about historical events, the existence of tales from the Islamic tradition and the quick loss of memory of the deceased should all be interpreted as the outcome of conversion and, more importantly, as the outcome of the activities of the local preachers to transform the converts into "good Muslims." This conversion triggered a process of long cultural transition which was incomplete in the sense that it never managed to incorporate and change completely all aspects of life. Meanings and practices of life associated with them such as the *atışma* in musical expression, the public expression of sexual desire and open reference to sexuality in songs, flirting and the survival of Pontic-Greek and its blending with Turkish are some indicators of this "partial" still on-going transition. The outcome of this was a local cultural mixing that combines Christian and Islamic elements. This gradually became the "new culture" of the community, still alive and observable during my field research. A new type of Muslim rose in Trabzon among these communities, who sometimes deviates from the monolithic, local imam-promoted notions of Islamic piety and personhood.

Ultimately the imams in Trabzon, in their attempt to erase the converts' cultural traces of the past, to create a controllable, obedient Muslim personhood and to secure their political loyalty, intervened at a philosophical level. They mobilized the fear of death and of Godly punishment to attack music's ontological and subversive power. Music-making and listening are practices that cultivate and express the limitless human potential for imagination, the desire for and the expression of personal difference and of

freedom. Music is a shared idiosyncrasy, personal and public, and its meanings can always escape control from mainstream networks that try to impose any uniformities. Musical practice can be thought of as a repository of memories, habits and ideas, and because of these it is also an endless possibility of transformation. Music is a human technology for the remaking of meanings, social relations and lives. Despite years of assimilation policies, under Islamic or secular/nationalist masks, the kemençe musical culture and the meanings associated with it are still present, with a potential to become a catalyst of change, depending on the creative powers of individuals and on their will to produce visions and desire for the reshaping of their future lives. This potential for transformation and change is the theme of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

A PALIMPSEST OF MEMORY

The stigmatization of kemençe playing and listening as a sinful act from local preachers as well as their call to the people not to play and listen to songs of deceased players because this was meant to "cause them suffering in the other world" produced certain outcomes. It imposed a partial forgetting of the musical culture of previous generations; it broke the links with the past and curtailed the interest to investigate it, thus taking memory hostage; it confined the repertoire of feelings publicly expressed and shared; it reduced the interest for this music among the population and imprisoned musical creativity and imagination. Thus it paved the way for its extinction. In the new Islamic context, the kemençe and its music were filled with new meaning with negative connotations. From an instrument that was central in the musical culture of these communities it became a symbol of the "infidel other," a residual and a reminder of the reprehensible Christian past, and a danger for the Muslim present.

With the establishment of the Kemalist Turkish Republic in 1923 and the politics of modernization and Turkification, a second major current of cultural assimilation unfolded. Historiography, language and music became core sites of political intervention. The policy of one language, one music, one history constituted the central element in the nationalist Kemalist leadership's attempts to create a "homogenous" Turkish nation throughout the 20th century.

However, this project of massive cultural homogenization continues to be challenged by individuals and groups who re-define their mixed cultural practices and their notions of self and the past. This chapter discusses the experiences of people in contemporary Trabzon in dealing with family narratives as opposed to official historiography, ambiguous religious practices, bilingualism and linguistic plurality. In this context of ambiguity and uncertainty, of challenging meaninglessness for individuals, music listening becomes for my informants a practice that helps them give answers to their destabilizing questions, to re-interpret their liminal experience and re-shape their sense of self and community. Thus, in this chapter I examine the affective power of music and its transformational potential for people in liminal positions. Here I approach music as a powerful acoustic sign of locally rooted cultural difference and as a catalyst that mobilizes interpretive action on behalf of individual actors.

A place of ambiguities

Contemporary Trabzon is a fascinating palimpsest. It still bears the imprint of its cosmopolitan past despite its, sometimes aggressive, nationalist and parochial present. Old Greek houses and Orthodox Christian churches-many of them converted to mosques-remnants of the city's once populous and vibrant Greek community and constant reminder of its Byzantine roots and connections, are still very visible in the city's space, despite years of indifference and even deliberate destruction.[54] Imposing private residential buildings of the nineteenth century have amazing ionic columns that once signified their aristocratic residents' allusions to ancient Greek roots. Other edifices of

[54] On the Byzantine monuments and topography of the Pontos region see Bryer 1985.

elaborate archaic architecture that once served as the Greek community's schools are scattered throughout the city, now providing space and shelter for the state's public administration and educational activities as well as for private commercial purposes. Buildings constructed by the city's Greek community have been used since 1923 by the Kemalist governments for activities (museums, journalism and schooling) aimed at erasing the traces of the Greek presence, or even cultivate an anti-Greek sentiment. This certainly constitutes a major irony of history, even a cultural parody. Additionally, since the rise of the Islamic movement in the early 2000s, efforts to restore Ottoman monuments and promote the Islamic facet of Trabzon have intensified. Even the famous Byzantine church of Saint Sophia, for decades a museum, was turned into a mosque, prompting negative reactions from the city's left-wing and other liberal groups.

The highly visible remnants of the Byzantine walls add a strong medieval or imperial flavor to the city's complex taste. Despite decades-long abandonment and in some cases deliberate efforts by state authorities to distort their face and falsify and erase their history, Byzantine Churches and monasteries, old Greek private and communal buildings—simply put, the city's and the whole province's Greek remnants, constitute the most important built attraction and source of revenues for the region's promising tourism industry. The whole of Trabzon is a fascinating open museum.

In one of these historical Greek buildings in the center of the city is housed the Trabzonspor Kulubu. During my fieldwork in Trabzon I occasionally went to this place to meet friends and informants. This is the club of the beloved local football team of Trabzon, where one can eat and also drink alcohol. It is one of the few places in the city where one can consume alcohol openly. The people who hang out here usually define

themselves as "modern," secular and Ataturkist. It is very rare in this club to come across individuals who associate themselves with political Islam and the local religious orders.

To my eyes, at first, it was just another bar of a small provincial city filled with people dressed in European and American style clothes, eating, smoking, drinking, flirting and occasionally dancing. The *Trabzonspor Külübü*, as a place and practice of sociality, is something very ordinary according to the "western" standards of social life and practices. But for many inhabitants of Trabzon, it is not. For those who identify with political Islam and the local religious orders, it is outside their moral norms. Men and women share the same space, the same tables, and smoke cigarettes. My secularist informants describe the club as a "free place," free of any strict Islamic moral restrictions that shape public behaviors outside. The bright makeup on women's faces, their elegant thin cigarettes and their western type of dressing, sometimes quite revealing, alongside the flamboyant males with their cigars, make the external observer feel that Trabzon is full of contradictions.

Those who frequent this place are mainly young people somewhere between eighteen and forty-five. The prices of the products sold here are much more expensive compared to other bars and restaurants in the city. It is considered as a "high quality" place appropriate for "modern urbanite Trabzonians" who also have the money to spend on drinks and food. This club is the reflection of Turkish modernity in its provincial context, in which "villagers" and their aesthetics cannot easily fit. Despite the fact that there is a very close geographic proximity and interaction between Trabzon and its surrounding rural communities, there exists a quite sharp, hierarchical, distinction between urban and rural life-styles. British, American and Turkish pop was the music

that one could expect to hear in the Club. Turkish folk music was rarely played here. Kemençe music, the epitome of village culture, was almost completely outside of the Club's musical radar.

This is where I met with my informant Ayşe, spending hours discussing history, language and music. Though we would occasionally take long walks in the streets of the city, she preferred to sit in the Club. This was a place in which she "felt relaxed and safe." Her cosmopolitan and modernist sensitivities were better accommodated in such a place. Though she also liked spending time at the bar of the city's five-star hotel, the Trabzon Club was her first choice.

Before she became my informant, Ayşe had listened to my kemençe music and was familiar with my songs in Pontic-Greek. Her interest in her own and her family's past made me a valuable source of information for her. We occasionally communicated on Facebook, chatting about the history of Trabzon, about kemençe music, and the similarities and differences between Greeks and Trabzonians and between life in Trabzon and in Greece. I was very struck by the fact that these were the main themes that Ayşe herself wanted to discuss with me during my stay in Trabzon. Not only Ayşe, but many of the people with whom I socialized during my field research, focused their discussions on these matters. Many visitors from Greece had similar experiences in the city. Not only was I learning from them, about them, but they too, my informants, were trying to learn from me about themselves. This made me more aware of the current cultural importance of historical narratives and memory for the shaping of local subjectivities and loyalties. It also helped me realize the potential, unintended, impact of my dual identity as a researcher and kemençe performer whose music had already reached large audiences in

the province years before I started my research.[55] This realization created in me a greater sense of responsibility towards my interlocutors as well as a reluctance to freely express my personal opinions about these thorny issues.

The fact that I was singing in Pontic-Greek piqued Ayşe's curiosity and strengthened her willingness to meet me in person. I had told her that I was in Trabzon for my field research and that I would be glad to learn more about the city's musical culture and life from her own perspective and experience. She expressed her enthusiasm and her commitment to help me as much as she could, because, as she claimed, my music had played a pivotal role in raising public interest in and awareness of the remnants of the Pontic-Greek culture in the region. Her belief that I will also "write a book about this culture" and reach out to broader educated audiences in the Europe and the U.S., and thus disseminate knowledge about it further, strengthened her desire to contribute to my research. Besides, for Ayşe, I was researching something that she considered her own culture. For my part, this was a great opportunity to learn about people and life in Trabzon through the eyes of a local woman who was also curious and anxious to learn more about her family's past and her own "roots."

Learning about local life from a woman's perspective was not easy, especially in the rural areas where I worked, where men almost monopolized public life and

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[55] My musical activity contributed to the rise of curiosity about the Pontic-Greek dialect in Turkey and the history of the people who spoke it. A dialect that was severely censored and people were afraid of using it in public musical performances was now coming to the front. My presence as an anthropologist intensified this interest among my interlocutors. I gradually realized that my music had contributed to the undermining of the until then taken-for-granted mainstream assumptions about community and local identity, and to the gradual formation of a new "ethnic" consciousness among certain segments of the Pontic-Greek speaking population in Turkey. When I returned to Turkey as an anthropologist, I realized that for some of my interlocutors I was a source of "serious information and knowledge" about their history and culture and whatever I was saying was taken seriously and reproduced among themselves in their own small networks.

discourses. Talking to women in the village, especially for the purposes of interview, was not an easy task. It would take months of familiarization, unless you already had very close friends who trusted and knew you well and might be willing to grant you access to their families and especially the female members. Ayşe, though raised in the context of a city, had close relations with her family's village and was knowledgeable about women's lives in that context, as I gradually came to realize. Her interpretive skills, her desire to give voice to those whom she considered silenced, her curiosity and willingness to expand her knowledge, her participation in and knowledge of both the urban and rural cultural environment in Trabzon, made her a valuable informant. Above all I thought that her life experiences, contradictions, and aspirations were a good reflection of the Turkish modernity project on the Trabzonian women of her generation and background. But who is Ayşe? A few words about her past life are necessary here to open up our discussion.

Ayşe

During my fieldwork Ayşe was in her early 40s. She was born and raised in the city of Trabzon. Decades ago, before moving to Trabzon, her grandparents used to live in the villages of the Maçka district, about a thirty-five minutes' drive east of Trabzon. Ayşe's knowledge about the recent past was quite vague and sometimes confusing for her. When she would ask about the village, she would receive diverse and sometimes conflicting information from her immediate familial environment. Some said that they came from the Larhan village of Maçka, while others said that they came from Siran, further south; a grandmother had told her that they came from Tonya, further west, while others said that they originated from nearby Sürmene. Despite the conflicting information

about the place of origin, what was intriguing to her was that in all regions and places mentioned by her relatives there were significant Pontic-Greek speaking Muslim populations. Besides, the older generations of her family too were fluent in Pontic Greek, or Rumca, as they called it.[56] Language use in the locality, as we shall see later, was a central site of investigation and questioning for all those searching for their family's past.

After finishing high school in Trabzon, she studied economics in Eskisehir, another Anatolian city, about a fifteen hours' drive westwards. Then she went on to study pedagogy at the Black Sea Technical University, thinking, as many young Trabzonians did, that it would be a good life-choice to become a schoolteacher. In the meantime, she worked for a local newspaper in Trabzon by contributing articles. Her relationship with reading and writing was quite strong since her college years.

As a young student who was living alone and for the first time away from home, Ayşe loved spending time outdoors with friends, entertaining herself in coffee shops and bars. Her love for traveling and discovery inspired her to work in the tourism industry for few years on the Mediterranean shores of the country, where she worked for hotels and various tourism companies as a dancer, as an events organizer and administrator. She was very successful in combining entertainment with profit-making. She had gained experience, knowledge and fame in tourism industry, which made her a sought-after

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[56] From now on I will be making use of the local term Rumca or Romeyka to designate Pontic-Greek. Rumca in the local idioms means "the language of the Rum." The term Rum is a remnant of the Ottoman conceptualizations of group identity and was used to designate the Orthodox Christian Greeks of the empire. Though the term Rumca is still used extensively by Trabzonians to designate the Pontic-Greek dialect, most of them, especially the more religious and right-wing leaning ones, refuse to make connections between language and identity, claiming that above all "we are Muslims." Additionally, until few years ago, any association of Rumca with Greekness was unthinkable. But for people like Ayşe, this association started looking very appropriate. More on the language issue in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

employee for many business owners. She was very young and eager to make more and more money. But she could also get bored of a job soon after she started. Thus, she changed jobs quite frequently.

The 1980s economic reforms in Turkey, with the massive privatizations and new investment opportunities, had created a new "adventurous" and profit-oriented ethos that was attractive for many young and ambitious people. Moreover, the privatization of the economy offered more opportunities for employment outside of agriculture. Especially for people with rural backgrounds, this looked like a promising opportunity. Trabzon and the eastern Black Sea at large was one of the regions severely affected by the economic restructuring of the 1980s.

Due to these economic developments, to the political oppression of the junta, and further imposition of Islamic values in the 1980s, massive migrations from rural to urban areas of Turkey took place.[57] Escaping village and provincial town life became a dream for many people. Ayşe was not an exception. Her secularist and modernist ethos and ideology further facilitated her decision to leave "small and provincial" Trabzon and seek her dreams elsewhere. However, she never completely abandoned Trabzon. She would go back and forth, visiting old friends and relatives, maintaining her ties with the city.

At some point in her life, and following her family's call to return, she went back to Trabzon and started working for a pharmaceuticals company as a sales director for the whole eastern Black Sea region. Her interest in human anatomy and in medical issues made this job a pleasant learning experience. Ayşe was an explorative spirit. She would

[57] There is a growing literature on this topic, see Onder 2015; Cosar&Ozdemir 2012; Ozden&Akca 2013; Atasoy 2009; Balkan 2009; Saracoglu 2010; Tok 2010; Yalman 2009; Unay 2007.

travel frequently all around the Black Sea region in order to supervise the local representatives of the company. However, after a few years on the job, she started feeling that it was tiring and that it was not paying a high enough wage. She also got bored of having to deal with the same people again and again. Trabzon seemed, again, too small to accommodate her dreams, aspirations and desire for a fulfilling life. She then decided to go back to the tourism sector. Due to her previous connections she immediately found a job and started working as a director at a three-star hotel in Kemer, a small town on the most cosmopolitan and touristic Mediterranean shores of the country. She became so deeply associated with this city and its lifestyle that she decided to apply for residence so that she could vote there and live like a *Kemerli,* like a local. After all this time and experiences in the Mediterranean, she actually considered herself a *Kemerli* and a cosmopolitan Turk.

Moving from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean was not only a geographical transition, but also a transition to another ethos and life-style. She had left Trabzon, a small provincial city with a decadent economy and strong local religious, kinship and nationalist affiliations and values, and had moved into a cosmopolitan, wealthy, touristic city of the Mediterranean, where people could easily walk around in their bathing suits. In Trabzon, she would see women in hijab every time she left the house. Bathing suits and hijabs represented completely different worlds, and Ayşe unequivocally wanted to belong to the former, without refusing the right of other women to belong to the latter. She never felt close to Islam and she had reasons for that. Until few months before we met, she had defined herself as an ardent secularist, Ataturkist and atheist. This is how she explained to me her sympathies and affiliations:

> I still have some sympathy for Ataturk. I am a communist… or better, a socialist; Ataturkism is closer to socialism but it is not exactly that; it contains nationalism too. Let me put it straightly: I never felt close to Muslims. This might be because of the way I was raised. You know our older generations…When a person willingly converts to another religion he or she internalizes their new faith, it becomes a significant part of themselves. But when a person is obliged to convert to another religion he or she becomes rebellious and swears; sooner or later they will react. I experienced this with the elder members in my family. They would constantly curse to God. I can't say the curses they would use, it is beyond my character, I can't, it is very offensive, I can't. In Islam you cannot be rebellious against God, it's a sin. If there is something you don't like you will say "thank God", and you don't have a chance to be rebellious and to curse God, because if you do…

Her stance towards Islam was defined to a great degree by the stories she learned about her family and their conversion in the past. However, she maintained respect for the values and ideals in which other people believed. She simply wanted to be different from those other women.

The Mediterranean and the Aegean constituted the "ideal model life" in the imagination of many secular, western oriented Ataturkist citizens outside of Trabzon. To outsiders, the Black Sea represented a place of extreme nationalism, provincialism, underdevelopment and strong religious affiliations, not proper for western-minded Turkish urbanites. Ayşe did not agree with this leveling rejection of everything Trabzonian. For her, Trabzon was not just a place of religious fanatics, though there were certainly plenty of them, but also a place with a "deep, hidden history" and an

aristocratic, cosmopolitan ethos which was lost. Finding that "hidden history" and cosmopolitan ethos had become her central preoccupation after years of wandering and exploration, during which she accumulated knowledge of different lifestyles and experiences that shaped her future life. In search of this "hidden past," she decided to go back and settle in Trabzon permanently.

Many Trabzonians would go and live in different places and at some point in their lives they would return back and re-settle in Trabzon. The ambition to "be successful" pushed many of them outside of the confines of their towns and villages of the province. Economic success was identified with exodus from Trabzon. But the ties with the beloved city and its people remained strong, and nostalgia always accompanied them and made many go back at some point in their life, especially after their retirement. Many of my informants had followed a similar path. Ayşe grew bored of the "superficial life" along the Mediterranean shores and of her work in the tourism sector in which she could not fully unfold her creativity and intellectual capacity, as she came to realize. The blaze of her youth was gradually fading and the "dolce vita" in which she threw herself was replaced by a pursuit of "mature relations" and a different, slower life-style. The modernist, future-oriented aspirations of her early youth, though, were always accompanied by an interest in the family's history and past life. This aspiration for the future and interest and questions about the past made her experience various contradictions, as I will explain later on.

While getting older and more mature, her nostalgia for her family and Trabzon was increasing, leading her to reshape her values, orientations, plans, and expectations about her future life. Ayşe was ready and willing to return. This return however was not a

simple geographic transition but an existential and cultural one that started reflecting on her life choices, tastes, and preferences. The growing maturity and nostalgia for family, and her wish to return to Trabzon was accompanied by Ayşe's more conscious return to the local kemençe musical genre, after a long journey into the melodic and rhythmic worlds of American and British pop and techno. Though she was still fond of these genres and would occasionally listen to their songs, she completely quit dancing to them. Now that she has "grown up", as she emphatically claimed, she has turned exclusively to horon, the famous local Trabzon dance.

"This is our music!"

Though she had become more passionate about kemençe, Ayşe still did not possess specific knowledge about the musicians in the kemençe music and the specifics of this genre. Her main source of information was YouTube, through which she had learned about some famous old performers in Turkey and Greece. She did not consider herself a "professional listener," in her words. Here she used the term "professional listener" in order to contrast herself from a growing number of young kemençe fans in Trabzon who had developed a much deeper engagement with and knowledge of the dynamics of this music. There is an important generational difference among listeners regarding their degree of engagement and association with kemençe music. I want to stress this because it will help readers understand the context and importance of the individual experiences I describe here. Like many kemençe listeners of her generation and background, Ayşe did not bother to learn more details about it. This music simply reflected the rural background of which people had fond memories but which they

preferred to preserve in their private spaces. The feeling of pride for kemençe and its rural connotations was kept private or was shared with relatives and friends of similar background. Public expression of attachment and pride for kemençe music outside of these small intimate spaces was indirectly censored due to the state-imposed urban life-style and aesthetics which had associated kemençe with provincialism, backwardness and "simple-mindedness." These associations had imposed a self-censorship onto individuals that constrained their behavior in public urban spaces.

As we saw in the first chapter, kemençe playing and listening was stigmatized as a sinful activity, remnant of the region's Christian "infidels". Now the new modernist re-signification produced a new stigma for kemençe, that of backwardness and of the obstacle to "progress." The modernist aspirations of individuals made them distance themselves from kemençe and pushed them to western musical genres that were symbols of a "modern future." Embarrassment would prevail over pride for the local musical culture. However, the balance between embarrassment and pride dramatically shifted in favor of the latter among the younger generations of kemençe listeners, who, as I will show in the following chapter in detail, take pride in kemençe as a "unique instrument" and a symbol of a "rural life," the meaning of which they try to re-define. Through kemençe music, younger generations of listeners actually redefine notions of rurality and urbanity, as well as modes of belonging and feeling. This new re-signification of kemençe music is accompanied with and reflected in higher degrees of engagement with the musical genre and its instrument. Younger fans have detailed knowledge of individual performers and songs or more lyrics memorized, while some have become avid collectors and created large personal archives which they exhibit with pride to their friends, as if

they possessed something very valuable. Many have started learning how to play, and many kemençe schools have sprung up in areas where Trabzonians live. They follow relevant kemençe musical events passionately and are aware of the relevant musical productions. Moreover, the members of this new audience have developed very strong opinions, interpretations and theories about this music's history, qualities and supposed "superiority" over other genres.

Ayşe does not take such a strong stance against other musical genres. For her, "musical beauty" can be found in foreign genres, too, such as rock, which she defines as "global." Though she has strong attachments and feelings toward the kemençe, and she can identify with the passion the younger generations of listeners for kemençe, she is intrigued and surprised by the fact that many of these younger fans of kemençe reject or overlook other foreign musical genres. The rise of a young audience, both in rural but even more in urban contexts, that maintains and cultivates an exclusive passion for kemençe music is a phenomenon that surprises, positively, many Trabzonians. The "return back" to kemençe has become a trend among the youth. But this sonic return of kemençe is accompanied with the rise of particular emotional and aesthetic repertoires that are strongly linked by audiences with notions of "Trabzonluluk," the qualities associated with "being from Trabzon." The sound of the kemençe is becoming emblematic of a certain way of being for these younger generations of listeners.

Ayşe had her own description of and explanation for the affective power of kemençe's sound: "This is such a joyful music, even when songs talk about dramatic experiences, there will be a sense of joyfulness in the melody and in the rhythm. It is not fatalist. The melody is slow initially, the *uzun hava* [long song], and then gradually

becomes more rhythmic and faster. I like it. It is much more appealing. I like it so much." The sound of kemençe induces great nostalgia and makes her imagination travel back to old times, to deceased beloved relatives. It is difficult to talk about one's musical experience and even more complicated to describe my informants' musical experience, so let's listen directly to Ayşe and see what position the sound of the kemençe occupies in her imagination:

> This is our music, with its beautiful rhythm and humorous lyrics. It is as if this music is in our blood. Kemençe for me is a way of life, something that has been used and performed for centuries, something very old, a long tradition that reached our time totally unchanged, and maybe the most beautiful thing is that people have not forgotten the kemençe, but it still exists in their lives. Every time I listen to the kemençe, old times come to mind. For example, I imagine how it would be to have lived two hundred years ago, on the mountains, to be free and relaxed.

The performance techniques and tuning of kemençe, and its old repertoire, make its sound unique and not easily imitated by other instruments. Younger audiences have developed a great receptivity and sensitivity towards this uniqueness, which also constitutes a great source of pride for them. The kemençe's sound is perceived as inimitable and incomparable by its strongest supporters. Debates about the quality of sound and the use of other instruments in the repertoire initially performed only by kemençe, have intensified in recent years as a result of attempts by performers to "enrich" the sonic world of Trabzon music by adding other instruments, performance techniques and melodies. Some musicians have claimed that "Trabzon music" should not be exclusively identified with the kemençe, but also with the bağlama, the long-necked

lute that has been widely considered as a core symbol of Turkish nationhood and musical culture.

However, there was wide agreement among Trabzonians as to the centrality of the kemençe in the musical culture of the rural zones of Trabzon. Oral testimonies from inhabitants in the region indisputably supported this view. The bağlama made its presence audible in the locality just few decades ago, mainly as a result of state policies and the profit-seeking music industry. Ayşe strongly believed that the kemençe was the only instrument played in her family's villages in Maçka, with the kaval [flute] and the tulum [bagpipe] following. Her opinion was based on her memory of the elder members of the family who would play and listen to kemençe:

> The bağlama is not ours, the bağlama is not ours. There is no bağlama in our culture. I don't know if it exists in other parts of Trabzon, but in our villages it does not. I remember this very well from the past. The kemençe was everywhere, here and there in our villages in Maçka. The kemençe was always present in our communities.

Compared to the kemençe's deep affective impact, the bağlama was not an instrument that Ayşe enjoyed. Its sound was a reminder of *arabesk*, a popular musical genre comprised of Arabic melodies with Turkish lyrics that decry bad luck or fate and poverty and marginality in urban centers. The mixture of electric and acoustic instruments and the hybrid sounds that were produced instilled in Ayşe feelings of boredom and depression.

The love for kemençe and the rejection of bağlama did not make Ayşe an uncritical listener of the former who would consume anything that passed as kemençe

music. Contrary to the "easy listeners," who constituted the majority of the audience and were thrilled by the use of electronic disco-style instruments and lyrics far from the "spirit of the old songs," she dismissed such hybrid sounds as "noise" and did not recognize its performers as "real kemençe players." To her ears this was a corrupt style produced by ignorant persons that damaged to the melodies and the lyrics. But for Ayşe this cacophony was not only a matter of aesthetics, but also of politics. She was suspicious that there was a deliberate plan to marginalize and finally exterminate kemençe through supporting and promoting low-quality productions that would gradually make audiences distance themselves and throw the instrument to oblivion:

> By doing this they want to disfigure, marginalize and make our culture disappear. When they bring the music to such a bad condition, then people won't like it and they won't listen to it, so the audiences will decrease and the people who play it will become fewer and fewer. So what will happen over time? This musical culture and its instrument will be forgotten and become extinct. This is an assimilation strategy, that's what I think. You sit and listen to older kemençe performers and styles and you see that they are much more beautiful, and when you come to modern times, listen what is out there, a bunch of stupid things, ugly. They make funny things, they try to make a kind of local rock music with the kemençe. Though I love original rock, to listen to this Black-Sea rock with kemençe and local accents is funny and stupid. I like the old, authentic sound of the kemençe. I prefer it, without any changes and additions, either in Pontic Greek or Turkish. But if it is Turkish, it should be in the local Trabzonian accent, not the standardized one of Istanbul. It has to be old, original.

In their attempt to explain the current state of "Trabzon music" and the broader context in which it evolves, listeners engage in interpretive activity. The boundaries of Trabzon music are first demarcated by the instruments used. Kemençe is considered the dominant instrument, followed by bagpipe and the local flute (though even these last two possess a trivial place in her musical imagination). The bağlama is completely excluded based on oral testimony and memory, as well as by its affective nature and consequences. The bağlama is experienced as something that causes boredom and depression and is associated with a fatalistic ethos and worldview that is completely incompatible with the pioneering, explorative spirit and dynamism of the Trabzonians.

Reinterpreting kemençe as culture and history

For Ayşe and others among my informants, the kemençe is strongly identified with an "inner, deep self," with "old times" and a very strong sense of regionalism. The inimitable sound of kemençe is a metaphor for the uniqueness of "Trabzon culture" and a sign of a strong sense of cultural difference that sets kemençe listeners apart from outsiders. This uniqueness and sense of difference is highly valued and constitutes a source of great pride. Here the sonic outreach of kemençe demarcates the limits of self and community. Kemençe listening in the contemporary context is a constant ritualistic demarcation of imaginary boundaries that produces concrete consequences for the way people think of themselves and their social environment, and interact with others. The kemençe's sonic revival also constitutes a critique of and challenge to the project of Turkish modernity as it was implemented in Trabzon and it is an initial sign of future cultural and social transformations.

But in order to be able to fully understand the importance of this return of the kemençe we need to take a look at the broader socio-cultural context in which has evolved. Official explanations about the region's "history and culture" do not provide convincing answers to the quest for belonging among local individual actors such as Ayşe and others, as we shall see. Their daily encounters with others brings them face to face with and strengthens their own sense of cultural difference. They find themselves in a liminal position that is quite destabilizing. They try to find convincing answers to questions of history and cultural practices that will help them create a new narrative and explanation of "what happened" and why they are different from other Turks. In subsequent sections, I analyze the "meaning gaps" experienced by my interlocutors in the fields of historical knowledge, language use and other cultural practices.

There is a strong and rich oral memory repertoire in the rural communities of Trabzon, especial among the bilingual ones—Pontic-Greek and Turkish speaking—that is currently selectively unearthed by younger generations and which in many cases runs against official narratives about the region's past. Kinship networks play an important role in the transmission of historical knowledge. The elders of a family are viewed as a source of knowledge about things that were never taught to the younger family members at school. Love and nostalgia for "old times" has become for many of my informants a central local idiom that serves a trend to revive "old customs" and ways of life associated with past village experience. This nostalgia for the past shapes local subjectivities and also provides a pool out of which a criticism against "modernization" is being shaped. This interest in local memory, which is actually family memory, evolves around three generations, grandparents, parents and children/grandchildren. Parents are the

"intermediaries" who had surrendered to the modernist project that caused them "cultural amnesia" and are now the target of their children's criticism for not being interested in learning more about the local past and their own ancestors. Here, knowledge about the past is something very concrete: It is knowledge about older family members and their experiences in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Curiosity about older Ottoman periods can only be satisfied through books and archival materials, as I will show later. And it is the grandchildren that are doing the searching for the past.

Meaning gaps in Trabzon's history

The events that have left their imprint on local memory and are still matters of discussion among individuals in Trabzon are those related to the complex and violent transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. The events of the First World War and the place of Russians and Armenians in them are central in the local narratives. In the villages of Maçka, east of Trabzon, many locals did not abandon their villages during Russian occupation of the region in the early 20th century and never became "refugees," as the official discourse has it. As in Ayşe's family, some male members of families left the area, not in order to fight against Russian occupation but in order escape recruitment from the Ottoman military, also taking their male children with them. When the Ottoman military officials would come to their villages to enlist them, they escaped to the mountains and become bandits who clashed with the Ottoman military. This information runs against the patriotic official narratives that describe the entire local population as "Turkish patriots" completely loyal to the Ottoman army.

The memory of the genocide of the Armenians was also strong among the local Muslim Trabzonians in Ayşe's village. Individuals of the older generations had very close relationships with their Armenian neighbors who were killed during the genocide and many of them had even witnessed those violent events. Ayşe's grandfather had witnessed Armenian orphans, whose parents had been murdered, who were walking around dead bodies, hungry and destitute. One of Ayşe's uncles took one Armenian little girl to his home and raised her and when she became a woman she got married. It is common knowledge among the locals that there was no animosity between ordinary Christians and Muslims in the locality, and that it was the Ottoman military that clashed with bandits. Those who decided to become bandits did so in order to avoid enlistment to the Ottoman military or to protect their villages from other bandit groups and from the Ottoman military's violent attacks.

Contrary to contemporary state-inspired hostile discourses against the Armenians, in some villages of mixed Muslim and Armenian population, there is still a fond memory of Armenian neighbors. When Ayşe's grandmother would mention her Armenian friends, she would neither refer to them as "the Armenians" nor as "infidels," as the popular current nationalist description would have it, but rather use their first names. Ayşe's grandmother would always speak fondly of her Armenian friends, their daily interactions and routines and the foods they would prepare together.

Turkish nationalist discourses at schools and the media portray Armenians as violent aggressors who had "massacred Turks." This would occasionally become a matter of discussion among members in Ayşe's family. Some would support the official narrative, but when asked whether anyone was killed in their family by Armenians, they

answered in the negative. The explanation that nationalist members of the family gave for the lack of victims was that though Armenians had massacred Turks in general, they would not cause their neighbors any damage. Armenians and the events in the First World War were a constant theme in family discussions in the Maçka district, and for the youth and the children, this repetitive storytelling would occasionally get boring and uninteresting. However many of these stories had been imprinted in their minds and as they grew older those narratives became a source of questioning of their communal and family past.

The "middle generations" of parents in Ayşe's family, despite some divergence, would usually espouse the official narrative of events. As I mentioned earlier in this section the generation of Trabzonians who were born and raised after the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923, people like Ayşe's father, experienced a "memory loss" that led to an erasure or at least distortion of the local narratives about the past in their imaginations. It was as if there was no past for them, only present and future. Those generations almost completely embraced, at least in public, state narratives of history and started thinking of themselves as members of the "eternal Turkish nationality." The Kemalist modernization and nationalization project was imposed quite successfully on those generations. This was partially the result of the state's intensive indoctrination activities via schooling, public propaganda and public rituals of commemoration of the "heroic Turkish historical events." Many had even forgotten, or pretended to have forgotten, the old name of their village in Rumca, and were using only the "modern" Turkish one. Even when they would speak with their "strange local accent" and use words that were Rumca, they would describe this as "Laz sivesi" [Laz accent], a kind of

Trabzonian linguistic idiosyncrasy completely stripped of any allusions to ethnic difference. Sometimes jokes about "Pontic-Greek roots" on behalf of parents was accompanied by statements of loyalty to Islam.

Another theme where there is discrepancy between official discourses and local memories in Trabzon is the ways the Russian invasion is remembered by the older generations who experienced the events of the First World War. In an attempt to cultivate the patriotic feelings of Trabzonians who live in the two major urban centers of the country, Istanbul and Ankara, and also in Trabzon, state-sponsored pubic celebrations of the "liberation of Trabzon from the enemies" started taking place annually, but without much success. I had participated in few of these during my fieldwork and saw firsthand the low participation of people and the disappointment expressed by the organizers. Even those who were participating were more interested in the food, music and the socializing aspects of the celebrations rather than to its indented ideological and historical message. One Trabzonian journalist who participated and was well connected with the institutions that organized the events wrote in a local newspaper that these celebrations are disappointing and don't attract the interest of people. Attendance these events, he wrote, is lower even than the most simple dance nights organized by village cultural associations.[58]

Though the celebrations are wholeheartedly supported by right-wing political and social groupings and media, of either Ataturkist or Islamist persuasion, ideologies that most of the Trabzon Dernekleri [Trabzon Associations] espouse, the participation is still very low. However, it is not only the indifference of ordinary citizens towards the

[58] Sirin, Bülent, March 3, 2011, Trabzonu Kurtardık (?)…[We liberated Trabzon(?)], Salpazarihaber, accessed September 2013.

"liberation celebrations" that make them a failure. Left-wing groups are strongly opposed to these celebrations, accusing the organizers of inventing the "myth of liberation" in order to promote nationalist and militarist agendas among the Trabzonians and cultivate hatred against Greeks and Armenians. They go even further, arguing that these right-wing state supported celebrations mask the actual events of that period and their meaning. According to them, Trabzon was not "liberated" due to any serious resistance movement form the local Muslim population. Rather, it was the collapse of the Tsarist regime and the rise of communists to power in Russia in 1917 that led them withdraw their forces from the region and strike a deal with Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. After the Russian withdrawal the massacres against the Armenians and Greeks continued.

This narrative constitutes an anathema for nationalist circles in contemporary Turkey. The struggle for the interpretation of those events and the control of their meaning constitutes a priority for state authorities who have invented the "liberation celebrations," which have also spread in neighboring Black Sea cities. This activity has been accompanied by an increase in state-sponsored conferences in local universities about local history as well as in publications that support the monolithic nationalist viewpoint.

Contrary to the dominant discourses that describe the Russian invasion and subsequent occupation of Trabzon in the First World War as an act that led to the torture and massacre of local Muslims, local oral testimonies and memory reveal a quite different, not so heroic, picture. Many old people of Trabzon with whom I spoke had quite fond memories of the Russian occupation. Ayşe's grandparents narrated stories to the younger members of the family about how the Russians treated them very well,

protected them from bandits and saved them from starvation. This made them perceive the Russians not as enemies and invaders, but as friends. As a child Ayşe was quite confused by these narratives and started thinking that the Russians were of Turkish origin, too, since they had helped her ancestors.

Despite the attempts of the authorities to give a heroic and patriotic meaning to the Russian retreat from Trabzon and to the military events at large of that period, stressing the loyalty of Trabzonians to the nation and to the state, local memories "resisted" and undermined those attempts. There is still a quite well known story that circulates in Trabzon that was communicated to me by various informants about an event that took place during the celebrations of the "liberation." During one of those celebrations, the authorities invited an old man, who had supposedly fought against the Russians, to address the audience and explain the heroic ways in which Turks fought against Russians in 1917. The old man took his place at the podium and started narrating the events he had experienced during the war "when we saw the Russians approaching we were so afraid that we started running away to save ourselves." The organizers of the festivity immediately interrupted and removed him from the podium, obviously embarrassed. This story is narrated by many Trabzondians and is followed by burst of laughter. Laughing is a form of indirect resistance against and undermining of official narratives that do not conform to local experiences.

Meaning gaps in identity

Another interesting discrepancy between official historical discourses and local memories is the terms local people use to describe those who are thought of as belonging to a different "ethnic group." This terms are remnants of the Ottoman past and are still in wide circulation. Though official historiography and discourses describe all the people living in the Black Sea region, and Trabzon for our purposes now, as Turks, there exist various terms that people use to describe their cultural "others." For example many of my informants outside of Trabzon would call Trabzonians, in a rather ironic mood, as "Rum donmesi" that is "converted Greek," a description that many Trabzonians, but not all, vehemently reject. My informants from Trabzon also had their own terms to characterize their cultural others. The groups east of Trabzon are described as Laz, converted Georgians or converted Armenians. The notion of conversion to Islam is still embedded in popular memory across various segments of Black-Sea society and is revealed in the use of these terms. Another interesting term that Trabzonians use to describe "real Turks" as cultural others in the western districts of Trabzon is the term Oğuz. The Oğuz were a Turkish nomadic group that reached the Black Sea and Anatolia after years of migration from Central Asia. Their existence is well documented in various historical sources. There are actually people who define themselves as such. What is interesting is that Kemalist official historiography defines all the Black-Sea inhabitants as descending from the Oğuz. However, the term Oğuz was used in a very derogatory way by older Trabzonian from the rural bilingual communities, especially when they wanted to curse at someone. For them it denoted someone brutal, without cultivation or manners.

Another term that is used somewhat derogatorily to describe the "Turkish other" by contemporary Trabzonians with whom I worked, is the term Çepni. The Çepni were another nomadic Turkish group that migrated from Central Asia and settled on the western districts of Trabzon. My informants who considered themselves to be indigenous to Trabzon inherited from their ancestors the view that the Oğuz and the Çepni were latecomers to Trabzon, or even outsiders who are made fun of. And finally, some of my Trabzonian informants would either call themselves simply Trabzonian or Muslim, avoiding the use of any other term that would either clearly identify them with Greekness and Christianity or Turkishness. It is also worth noting that adherence to Islamic values by the same people is considered as something separate from ethnic Turkish affiliations. Mutual attributions of names that denote group identity are signs of complex modes of belonging in Trabzon that separate groups and regions from each other. These terminologies, remnants of the pre-Kemalist cultural and social milieu, still circulate widely among younger generations, sometimes causing confusion and debate about cultural affinities and loyalties of the different groups.

But the rich palimpsest of local memory does not end here. In the villages of Maçka, among the older generations of the Muslim inhabitants, there used to be strong affinity and devotion to the figure of the Virgin Mary and the nearby monastery that was bearing her name. The Virgin Mary was referred to as "our mother Mary" and was considered as a very holy person whose powers would be invoked in times of difficulty. This strong affinity for a Christian figure among the elders caused confusion to the younger community members, especially as they grew up and realized that the Virgin Marry came from the Christian tradition. Young children growing up in this cultural

milieu would consider it "normal" to hold Virgin Mary in such a high esteem. As Ayşe once told me, as a child she had come to believe that Virgin Mary was the Prophet Mohammed's wife.

Older generations also performed celebrations on various dates and about events that were either completely absent or were celebrated differently and on different days in the Islamic calendar. For example, new year's eve was celebrated on the 12th of January according to *Rumi takvimi*, the old Orthodox Christian calendar, which was, of course, very different from the Islamic one. During those celebrations various kinds of activities were taking place, related to it, and although they remained in the memories of people and were still practiced, they had lost their meaning and simply described as "local traditions." Another practice that is also remembered in the locality is the painting of red eggs during certain days of the spring. This is an Orthodox Christian custom related to Easter celebrations. All of these are remembered with nostalgia by elders, and some younger members of the village communities currently engage in practices of revival of those celebrations, using oral memory as their main source of information. Though these currently revived celebratory rituals are practices for the creation of cultural difference and a source of pride, participants usually associate them with their village's "past customs" that were erased by "modern life," without further researching their social and cultural etymologies. They are accepted as part of the local repertoires of life. Moreover, those celebrations are remembered as occasions for dense social interactions, dance, music, and food and alcohol consumption, something that gave additional pride to the elders who did not have any affinity for Islamic values. There still is a rich repertoire of celebrations and rituals in the rural zones of Trabzon where the bilingual communities

live that are associated with various beliefs and expectations for life that are unique to this place and are not related to the Islamic tradition. These practices seem odd to an outsider and are described as "folklore" by a certain modernist Ataturkist discourse.

Local oral memories are strongly sustained by the sounds of the kemençe. My informants fondly remember the intense gatherings among relatives and friends in the village, where food and alcohol was consumed regularly to the accompaniment of kemençe's melodies, which would in turn occasionally lead to extensive dancing with men and women in big circles. Music was present even in the most personal moments of an individual. Happiness and sorrow were expressed and shared through the singing of well-known local melodies. The old generations of women in the villages of Maçka are remembered as being adventurous and flirty. They would occasionally flirt with the kemençe player and they would make sexual jokes publicly. Nobody would ever feel uncomfortable or offended by these jokes. Joking about sexual matters publicly was considered an accepted behavior on the part of both men and women. For my younger informants, all these past local habits and lifestyle are thought of as a kind of a "golden era" of freedom and joy that contradicts in their imagination the current more restrictive way of life, under the new Islamic government.

Gaps of meaning in official histories

Decades of strong Ataturkist indoctrination, censorship, propaganda and repression has not managed to eradicate local memories, habits or, more importantly, question marks about belonging and history in many of my informants' minds. The minute discrepancies between local routines and habits on the one hand and state-sponsored narratives and explanations on the other have maintained what I call "gaps of

meaning" that made my informants question the ways they were thinking of themselves and their families and villages' past. This cultural battle for meaning is a highly political process that shapes views and feelings about self and community.

Ayşe's generation was educated and shaped with the post 1970s renovated Ataturkist spirit, which promoted a nationalist and secular outlook, at least in appearance. It also cultivated strong loyalty to the military, ironically perceived as the guarantor of democracy, to the mystified "state" and to the glorified Mustafa Kemal Ataturk [father of Turks], who had replaced God, causing the explosion of anger of faithful Muslims. Ataturkism, this "secular religion," nurtured a fervent, racist nationalism in those who accepted its tenets, leaving no space in the imagination or in real life for the survival and existence of any forms of cultural difference. Youth were raised thinking that everyone living on the soil of Anatolia was a "pure Turk" and what great an honor it was to belong to this nation. According to this narrative of the Turkish greatness, a large number of nations around the globe were of Turkish origin too, such as Etruscans, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Finns and even some of the Russians. This racist ideology also categorized people according to their facial characteristics. Thus many of my informants were taught that because of Ataturk's facial characteristics, "real Turks" were blond, with pale skin and blue eyes. The pledge that was supported Turkish superiority was "I am a Turk, I am right, I am industrious."

Despite these strong indoctrination policies, elusiveness and doubts about "roots" and belonging persisted during family gatherings and discussions. Doubting their "Turkishness" and wondering about the past and connections to Orthodox Christianity inspired further curiosity, suspicion, fear and excitement. The fact that this issue

constituted a preoccupation for my informants' families in Trabzon, and for many families in general, is a proof of the limited success of the modernization/Turkification project in Anatolia after 1923. To put it in different terms, such preoccupations are a serious sign of a current crisis of state-imposed interpretations and meanings about history and belonging.

The official Ataturkist narrative is also fed by a strong anti-Greek discourse and sentiment. Though the anti-Greek discourse had become very influential in the Trabzonian mainstream society, it helped to further question this narrative's validity and to undermine its contribution to nationalist loyalties among my informants. The Ataturkist doctrine was made to provide answers to every possible question about history, culture and community that might be asked. Doubt and questioning about roots in Trabzon had become a dangerous sign of future political disobedience, so the regime tried to provide answers and to avoid encouraging doubt. This policy for the control of meanings and interpretations was of course accompanied by tight surveillance of "dangerous individuals" through censorship and repression. Fear among the generation of Trabzonians that came before Ayşe made many of them internalize those discourses and explanations and transmit them to their children in order to protect them. Doubts remained but were kept private and discussed only among relatives.

The Ataturkist narrative portrays Greeks as enemies of the Turks, as traitors who, after collaborating with foreigners and losing out in the postwar settlement, abandoned Trabzon. Turks had no friends other than themselves, they fought for freedom against the western imperialists and Ataturk was the great leader who made all these a success. In the battle for cultural transformation and homogeneity, the regime tried to erase remnants of

the past and to win the minds and hearts of the ambiguous Pontic-Greek speaking Muslim groups in Trabzon. In the context of these policies the regime invented and implemented new historical narratives and national rituals to celebrate them, prohibited the use of Pontic-Greek in public, and it also passed laws for the change of family names and toponyms, that were remnants of the Greek and Orthodox Christian presence in the region. Let us listen from Ayşe about the experience of assimilation:

> Okay, we were told that there were Greeks who lived in this area too, and that we learned Pontic Greek from them, and that this was not our native language; besides they [the Greeks] betrayed us, they left this place, they wanted to leave. When I would hear these explanations, at these moments, I thought that I had finally found the answers to the questions that were bothering my thought for years. They had answers for everything; for example, if I would question my external appearance as a blonde woman, they would tell me that there were blond Turks too; if I would question the language and the way we use it in Trabzon, and particularly the non-Turkish words we were using, they would tell me that these are actually Turkish words; if I would ask about the history and roots of the kemençe, they would tell me that this instrument was brought from Central Asia by the Turks. Then they would tell me that these questions and doubts were a result of the Greek government's propaganda in our region and that whatever the Greeks and the West were arguing about these issues were absolute lies.

Despite state propaganda, however, in local memory and narratives, especially among the more pious generation of Ayşe's grandparents, Ataturk was a much-hated atheist. Jokes about his alcoholism and sexual preferences and practices circulated widely. On the other hand, Greek neighbors were always remembered and talked about

fondly. The gap between Ataturkist narratives and oral memories about the Greeks constituted a source of curiosity and doubts for my younger informants, who kept looking for answers.

The commonality of experiences regarding the "search for roots" among informants from different parts of Trabzon and of diverse backgrounds and aspirations is, I believe, a good sign of a rising trend among the younger population. The discussion of "roots' has recently become more visible, and public confessions that "Trabzon is a city searching for its roots," though opposed by right-wing groups, has entered public debates for good.

Gaps of meaning in language

The discrepancy between the ideology regarding history and culture and the anti-Greek sentiments promoted through public education on the one hand and the real experiences people carry from their families and small communities in Trabzon on the other has further prompted a constant "search for roots." In the previous pages, we met Ayşe. Another characteristic case is my informant Yunus. He is one of the many young Trabzonians whose curiosity about his family's past resonates well with Ayşe's experience. During my fieldwork, Yunus was an undergrad studying engineering at the technical university in Trabzon. He was born in 1984 in the Kurdish region of Van, near the Turkish-Iranian border. His family, like many families from the same village, were relocated from Trabzon to Van in 1964 after a natural disaster destroyed part of their village.

The community is comprised of one hundred houses and all the inhabitants have Romeyka [Pontic-Greek] as their first language. They learned Turkish at school, but many older members of the community never managed to learn it, so they would only speak Romeyka. Yunus's grandmother and parents never learned Turkish. However, surrounded by Kurdish villages and having to socialize with Kurds outside of the village, some of the older members of the community also learned Kurdish. It is a common belief in the community that because of their strong Islamic sentiment, piety and loyalty to mainstream political parties, state authorities relocated them in this Kurdish-inhabited region at the border in order to facilitate the assimilation of the Kurds. Some members of the community work as teachers at schools with Kurdish students. Many teachers from Trabzon had been sent to serve at the Kurdish provinces. But almost the opposite happened. Instead of Kurds being assimilated to the mainstream, many Trabzonians were influenced by local habits. This socialization with the Kurdish population had another interesting outcome too: It made many members of this Pontic-Greek speaking Trabzonian community re-think their own past, values and loyalties.

Yunus was very inspired by and attached to Turkish nationalist ideals. He had an atlas at home showing the territories that used to be under the control of the Ottoman empire. At school he had learned that these territories, together with Central Asia from where the Turks had come, were Turkish and he strongly believed that they should be controlled by the Turks again. Despite his fanatic attachment to such neo-imperialist ideals and his great pride in being a member of the "glorious Turkish nation that one day will dominate the world again," Yunus's sense of self was constantly challenged and destabilized in the classroom. Many words he would read in science class sounded very

familiar. He was very much impressed when for the first time he read the word *psikoloji* in a class. After recalling the word they used in his community for the soul, *psi*, he made the connection. In another class, he encountered the word *anemometer*, from the words *anemo* [wind] and *meter* (measurement), two words that were also used by his grandmother and parents in their daily interactions. He was able to decode and understand the etymology of other words too, including *polyandry* [poly=multiple, many and andry=men] and *polygamy* [gamy=sexual intercourse and marriage]. This added to his linguistic pride, curiosity and confusion: How was it possible for his illiterate grandmother to use words that he was reading in a science book?

He asked his teacher and some of the older members of the community why he was able to immediately understand the meaning of those words and associate them with his native Pontic Greek, while his Kurdish fellow students could not. They all told him that these were Latin words and that they were completely unrelated to Greek, discouraging him from thinking about such connections. The false etymological identification of many science words with Latin and the avoidance of any reference and links to Greek has been reported to me by other informants too who had similar experiences in classes. It was either the result of misinformation and ignorance or a conscious attempt on behalf of those who produced these educational materials to avoid any association with Greek language and culture.

But Yunus kept wondering whether it was possible that his native language, Rumca, which was described by the teacher as a "Turkish dialect of Trabzon," might have any connections with Latin. There were rumors among his peers in the village that their Rumca was somehow related to Greek. That frightened Yunus, who had learned to

dislike everything Greek. He found a book with text in Latin and tried to read it but was not able to understand a word. This increased his doubts, curiosity and anxiety.

Censorship and linguistic repression at schools had long since become a routine practice. There was strict surveillance and punishment at schools against students who spoke Rumca during class breaks. This practice remained in the memory of the elders as the "Rumcayla mucadele kolu," which means "Fighting front against Pontic Greek." Some students, designated by their teachers, were responsible for listening to who spoke Rumca during the breaks and notify the director in order to punish them. Despite stigmatization and oppression however, Rumca remained the main medium of communication in the village, and it was like a "secret code," kept only within the confines of the community, which took special care not to use it in the presence of outsiders. But the love for their native language was accompanied by a meticulous rejection of any possible connections to Greek.

Faced with the persistent questions of his students as to whether the language they were speaking in the village had any relation to Greek, the teacher decided to take action. One day he brought a TV and a video player to class to show his students a recorded Greek news program, in order to convince them that Rumca was not related in any way to Greek. The students watched the news for ten minutes and did not understand anything. This convinced them that Rumca was unrelated to Greek and that they shouldn't question their past and their cultural affiliations. This unstable certainty lasted until they went to high school.

The Kemalist regime, tightly controlled by the army and its political puppets, kept cultivating a fanatic anti-Greek discourse and sentiment among the whole population and

especially among the Pontic-Greek speakers of Trabzon. This state-sponsored anti-Greek fanaticism was promoted by nationalist and Islamist networks outside of the classroom. This paranoid stance was reinforced by the violent clashes taking place in Kurdistan between the state army and Kurdish guerilla forces. In this climate of violence and high political tension, state propaganda against local linguistic pluralities and their supposedly "separatist potential" had taken concrete and intense forms in society. In Trabzon in particular, nationalist networks continue to organize public lectures and seminars at the local university and in other public spaces, where they supposedly exposed the "subversive, secret Greek policies and aspirations in the Black Sea" and encouraged the youth to embrace their Turkish identity and to support their state, also warning them to be aware of harmful communist and ethnic ideologies. Suspicion was also cultivated by the local press against Greek tourists visiting the area in order to see the lands where their ancestors lived. According to many of my local informants, such Greek tourists were usually under the strict surveillance of the local authorities. It was even reported to me by various interlocutors that members of the local intelligence service and the police had tried to recruit Pontic-Greek speakers who were in contact with Greek tourists in order to gather information. There had been a wide spread conviction among the Kemalist cadres that the Pontic-Greek speakers and other linguistic minorities of the eastern Black Sea provinces might one day revolt against the state, following the example of the Kurds. The cultivation of fear and paranoia was constant through local and national media and a sense of constant crisis was prevalent in Trabzon for a long period. The stigmatization of Pontic-Greek through degradation, censorship through the spread of threats, false information and the cultivation of fear via the media, accompanied by the constant

surveillance of the rural communities and of the city's cultural life, led many Pontic-Greek speakers to avoid speaking it in public and to even deny that they speak it at all. In Yunus's village, as a result of all these, many young girls stopped speaking Rumca and used exclusively Turkish in every interaction. Moreover, they started speaking Turkish not with the local village accent but with the Istanbul accent, trying to hide any signs of linguistic alterity and provincialism. All these strong pressures to conform produced mixed reactions in the local population, ranging from rejection of local language and complete compliance, to wholehearted embracement of the Rumca and search for its cultural roots and connections.

From language to cultural knowledge

Despite long-term policies of linguistic assimilation, Pontic-Greek remained a vernacular in the rural zones of Trabzon and in their diaspora communities. Speakers would use it for communication only within the community, while they would speak Turkish—albeit with a very characteristic Pontic-Greek accent—in their interactions with outsiders. Over time, a different form of Turkish evolved in these communities, one that had phonetic, lexical and grammatical influences from its speakers' Pontic-Greek native language. Generations grew up believing that their vernacular was simply a local Turkish variation whereas questions about its history and character would only be asked by "dangerous" left-wing thinkers and activists, but even these would remain confined to a small circle of people. Their accent in Turkish had become the object of ridicule by outsiders and a sign of "rural backwardness."

Some families from the Pontic-Greek speaking communities who had moved to the city tried to abandon Rumca completely and avoid the use of the Trabzonian accent, replacing it with standard mainstream "Ataturkist" Turkish. Abandoning Pontic-Greek and the accent associated with it was also considered a "guaranty" for the children's better future and development. As one of my informants constantly reminded me, "Rumca'nın bir faydası yok" that is "Pontic Greek is of no avail." But this rejection of Pontic-Greek by many families was not enough to make the language and the curiosity of younger generations vanish.

The rise to power of the Islamic party of R.T. Erdoğan in 2002 was accompanied by many promises and expectations for democratization. This promise for change and some legal steps that had been taken for the free public use of the Kurdish language, encouraged many Trabzonians to engage more freely and critically with Pontic-Greek. The approach itself to the language started changing too. From a burden that was not providing much for the youth's future, it started becoming a source of pride, a sign of a unique cosmopolitan identity. The use of the internet and contact with Greeks have certainly strengthened this interest. Websites and Facebook groups are now created for the exchange of ideas about this language and its preservation. An interest in linguistic revival is gradually taking shape and becoming more visible among individuals from these communities, especially among the younger generations.

As I was able to observe during my fieldwork in different parts of Trabzon, even youth are familiar with, and use, the old Pontic-Greek toponyms. Names of lakes, rivers, hills, random places in the forest and villages, constitute a rich local terminological repertoire that is unknown to outsiders and which adds to the Trabzonian "peculiarities."

The attitude towards old toponyms among youth varies from indifference to strong attachment. Ayşe is proud that she learned the old toponyms from her grandmother and still uses them, because they give her a sense of continuity in time. The act of embracing and appropriating the old names is also perceived as a marker of autochthony that differentiates "locals" from "late comers," i.e., from the heterochthonous nomadic Turkish groups that migrated from Central Asia. Here is Ayşe's logic

> the fact that my grandmother and others of her generation, even my parents later on, would use these archaic words in their daily communications says a lot about who we are. If you were a Turk, you might learn one, two or few of these words. If we are Turks who migrated here from Central Asia and conquered this place, as we were told, then we should have changed the Greek names and used the Turkish ones from our supposedly native language; and let's suppose that we did not change some of the very historic toponyms of this region, then we should at least have used Turkish names for lakes, trees, flowers. But even this did not happen. Our elders still use non-Turkish, mainly Pontic-Greek and some Armenian words. We still use the word *manusak* for a particular kind of flower which is very common in our region. I did not know what this word meant until I learned that it denotes the violet that grows on the highlands.

Rising awareness of linguistic difference and plurality is experienced as uniqueness by my informants, and conscious efforts to strengthen it are supported by a strong belief in language's centrality as an important factor for the making of self-knowledge and awareness. This rising linguistic awareness is described by some as a

gradual "politicization" that entails the undoing of the official schemes of thinking, understanding and narrating of themselves and their village communities.

Ayşe has gradually developed her own schema of interpretation. What was once taken for granted was now doubted and subjected to scrutiny. What once constituted peculiar, unknown words used by her grandmother was now becoming an object of research in dictionaries and texts, and a source through which knowledge and re-interpretations about history and pride about "roots" were crafted.

My meetings with Ayşe would almost always develop into effervescent etymological exercises and into practices of mutual affirmation of knowledge. The moments of mutual linguistic discoveries became for both of us a source of excitement and even pride. Here is a part of our dialogue:

> A: My grandmother and others in the family were using the word *Limn*. Later, I checked the dictionary and I realized it was Greek, *limni*, which means lake. They would use many old, archaic Greek words.
>
> N: Yes, we call it *limni* in modern Greek too. Can you give me some more examples of these words?
>
> A: Okay, do you remember the other day when we were talking about this again, and I mentioned to you the words *kodespana* and *kokir*? *Kodespana* means a woman who takes good care of her house, and *kokir* is the equivalent for the man.
>
> N: Yes, I see, *oikodespina* and *oikokiris*. Amazing! I did not know you used these words.
>
> A: We use the word *kalogria* for a woman who did not get married and stayed home.
>
> N: *Kalogria*? My God, in modern Greek it means nun, the woman who lives in a Christian monastery and is unmarried.

A: Yeah, you see? In our village the woman who wouldn't get married would be called *kalogria*.

A: For example another word is *handoseros*

N: *Handoseros*? Hmm, what's that? I cannot recall.

A: It is that small animal that walks slowly and whose body is covered with spines.

N: Ahh, okay, now I remember. Iin modern Greek we call it *skantzoheros,* hedgehog. Oh Ayşe, this is amazing!

Ayşe made fun of me for not being able to remember the word *handoseros* immediately: "Well Nikos, I feel for you; we, as more original Greeks than you, know these words better"—and she burst into laughter. Here "original Greek" meant linguistically closer to ancient Greek.

A: I have more words to tell you, listen. *Pedaliza*, which means butterfly. *Iskepid* is what we call a bee.

N: Oh yeah, I know these words: *Pedaliz* in modern Greek is *petalouda*, and we call the *iskepid eskepid* in Pontian Greek. My God, the same words!

A: there are so many words—animals, plants, toponyms. For example, we use the word *mora* for berries.

N: It is that small fruit, we eat it. Yeah, in modern Greek, we call it *moura*.

A: *Puli* means bird and *kosara* means chicken.

N: yeah I know both of these, we use them too with exactly the same meaning.

A: We also say *fol, folea,* meaning nest.

N: Yes, yes, in modern Greek, it is *folea.*

A: Another word we use is *leftokar*, which means hazelnut.

N: This is a beautiful and ancient word. I think it is compound word, *lepton* and *karion*. Yeah, huzelnut, the same meaning.

A: Do you know the word *kofos?*

N: Of course I do. We use it too, it means deaf. *Kofos* in Pontian Greek, *koufos* in modern Greek.

A: Hahaha, you see, amazing! So many old words, so many…

Passionate discussions about the meaning of words consumes a significant portion of time when Greek visitors come to Trabzon and meet locals in public places. I have observed many such interactions, and they all have a common structure. People start pouring out old Pontic-Greek words, trying to see whether the other side knows its meaning. When they agree on the meaning, a strong laughter bursts out, an indication of great satisfaction that establishes a bond of affinity that makes the two sides, in their words, feel like relatives. This facilitates discussion and socializing. For a visitor who comes from Greece, discovering the survival of the same words in the vocabulary of people who live many miles away in Turkey, constitutes a great surprise and a source of thrill and provides verification for a certain interpretation of historical events based on the many stories they have been hearing since childhood about the "converts of Trabzon and their culture." The discovery of linguistic affinities with Greek visitors is certainly a great shock for my Trabzonian interlocutors too, and often times a source of anxiety and bewilderment about what ought to come next. I know cases of young bilingual Trabzonians whose initial encounter with Greek visitors and the realization of linguistic

affinities led them to a dogmatic, more aggressive embrace of Turkish nationalism and even engagement with extreme political groups.

For Ayşe, the result was the opposite. She became completely dissatisfied with official discourses of nationhood. This dissatisfaction created a desire for alternatives, and language was the first site to examine. She became an avid collector of words and phrases and shared with me her dream—to publish a dictionary—and asked for my contributions. She started seeing herself as someone who was undertaking a great mission to collect words and save them from extinction, with the hope that her future dictionary would contribute to the revival of Pontic Greek in Trabzon. The passing of older generations of fluent speakers, once a normal, inevitable process, is now perceived as a "threat" to the "Pontic-Greek linguistic treasure."

This gradual re-signification of linguistic practices and experiences by Ayşe is accompanied by a historical narrative and interpretation about language use in Turkey. Turkish was once understood as the "eternal language of the nation," but in her new narrative, Turkish is described as "a ninety-year-old language" constructed after the collapse of the empire. Before that there was Ottoman, a mixture of Arabic, Turkish, Persian and other languages. Ottoman was the language used by the people in the high echelons of the bureaucracy or some particular "upper-class" segments of the population, some of them related to religion or state authority. Ottoman was not the language of the masses; its reach had never expanded deep into local communities. The people of Anatolia spoke their own languages among themselves. The realization of linguistic plurality in recent years in Turkey was the result of the activities of different scholarly and activist communities struggling for recognition. These activities created a network of

knowledge-making and distribution that has affected many people, Ayşe being one of them.[59] It has also created a new frame of interpretation. Whereas in the recent past the vernaculars of the eastern Black Sea region—Rumca [Pontic-Greek], Hemşince [Black Sea Armenian], Gürcüce [Black Sea Georgian] and Lazca—were described by mainstream linguists in Turkey as local variations of Turkish, or *yerel ağızlar* [local idioms], they are now conceptualized and approached by activists and independent researchers as languages completely different from Turkish.

This frame of interpretation is spreading in society, contributing to the remaking of subjectivities and senses of belonging. Higher social interaction among individuals from the different linguistic communities of the eastern Black Sea and the rise of social media, facilitated the realization of cultural difference and plurality in the region. Especially in Istanbul, where great numbers of immigrants from those communities live, thicker interaction among them did not lead to assimilation to the mainstream, but to further differentiation. The self is realized and created through the relationship with the other.

Self through the Other

In the Turkish nationalist narrative, Greeks are portrayed as "traitors to the Ottoman state" and "collaborators of western imperialists who slaughtered Turks." The Greek War of Independence, as well as the Armenian and Kurdish revolts of the 19th century are presented as a "western conspiracy" aiming at the partition of the Ottoman Empire, which according to the official narrative, was a paradise of "multicultural

[59] For writings on linguistic pluralism in the Black Sea on behalf of young activist scholars and artists see Kolivar and Çelik 2007 and Asan 2006.

coexistence." The severe violence exercised against Christian minorities by the Ottoman state and its paramilitary networks, which led to their almost complete extermination and expulsion, is described as a legitimate reaction on the part of the state for security reasons, and Christians are deemed responsible for the destruction of their own communities in Anatolia. The strong anti-Greek sentiment that was cultivated through education and state-sponsored rituals and activities has played a central role in the shaping of the historical and political consciousness of many Trabzonians. And efforts to erase remnants of the Greek presence in the city and the broader region used not to meet with any reaction from most segments of society, with the exception of left-wing groups and liberal individuals, who only recently managed to raise their voices—but without much success.[60]

Turkish nationalism's "other" were the Greeks and other groups of Anatolia. Growing up in such a socio-cultural context had imprinted a strong anti-Greek feeling, especially among the younger generation who had not experienced life with Greeks, while the older generation who had directly experienced the events, was more reluctant in embracing this anti-Greek narrative. Many young people like Ayşe grew up within this culture of hatred and suspicion. However, doubts about the validity of official narratives and a questioning of feelings would rise every time the family gathered. Endless discussions about the physical and cultural differences between their family and other Turkish groups in the province strengthened Ayşe's questioning of her "roots" and sense of herself. Even then, she still considered herself a "proud Turkish" young woman.

[60] Many churches were converted into mosques or stalls for the animals, while many old Greek buildings were destroyed and archeological sites remained unprotected and abandoned for the shake of "economic development."

Her bewilderment grew larger when she left Trabzon and settled to Eskişehir, a city about 1000km westwards, to attend the local university as an undergraduate student. Her interaction with people outside of her immediate environment in Trabzon was an emotionally destabilizing experience. In Eskisehir she became friends with local people who defined themselves as Tatar Turks. "I felt as if I was in Japan. The eyes of the people I met in Eskisehir were slanted. They looked like the typical Turk I had in my mind, and then I realized that we, in Trabzon, are different." But it was not only the facial characteristics of the people in Eskisehir that increased her confusion but also their attitude towards her as soon as she told them that she was born and raised in Trabzon. Her friends started teasing her by calling her "a converted Greek" simply because she came from Trabzon. Joking about the "Greek roots of Trabzonians" was something I encountered many times during my fieldwork in different contexts.

Jokes about the "roots and loyalties" of Trabzonians sought to mock, and thus challenge, their extreme expression of nationalism. The anxiety to present themselves as the most "patriotic Turks" is also reflected in a very popular saying that circulates widely among these communities: "Trabzon Türkiye'nin çimentosudur" [Trabzon is the cement of Turkey]. The meaning of this is that the people of Trabzon should be considered as the guarantors of the security and unity of the country. This is a recent slogan invented by nationalist circles to portray Trabzonians as loyal to the state and to national ideals, as opposed to the Kurds, many of whom have revolted and have been fighting for the last three decades against the state military forces, demanding further democracy and autonomy.

Attributions of cultural characteristics and local knowledge about "who is who" have become more intense in recent years, as I was able to learn from many informants. Trabzonians describe those living eastern of Trabzon as Laz, Georgian and Armenian, while those in the west are described as Çepni, "the real Turks," as my Pontic-Greek interlocutors would tell me. There is a an awareness among my Trabzonian informants that they are certainly different from all these other groups, and informants from the other groups were clearly defining Trabzonians in general as *Rum dönmesi* [converted Greeks]. But this "rumor" had spread well outside of the eastern Black Sea provinces, as Ayşe's experience testifies, though she would vehemently oppose it. "I do not accept these arguments about my past and my identity," she would say. "I am not a converted Greek. I am a Turk."

Mixed religious practices and ideas about religion inherited by younger generations from the older ones in Trabzon reveals an ambiguity which, to the eyes of outsiders, makes Trabzonians look somewhat awkward. Members of Ayşe's family still tell a story, filled with nostalgia and humor, that reveals the blurred boundaries in perceptions of Christianity and Islam in rural communities of Trabzon in the past. This story, I think, interestingly reflects the liminality and ambiguities in which past generations lived and which were inherited by Ayşe and others of her age in the family. Here is how Ayşe narrated the story to me:

> In the past, the rural communities in Maçka consisted of both Muslim and Christians. There was an Orthodox Christian priest in our village in Maçka. One of the Muslim inhabitants went and asked what he thought about the difference between Islam and Christianity. The priest responded by narrating a short story. Once upon a time there was a horse that was pulling a wagon. The horse pooped

> on the road. Later another horse came with its wagon, and the wheel of that wagon cut the piece of poop in two. So, my boy, Christianity is one half and Islam the other.

The story was shared during family gatherings and was always accompanied by strong laughter. For Ayşe this narrative gradually became an important sign that needed further interpretation. Her interest in it was not theological—besides, she was not a believer—but rather cultural, historical and deeply personal. This story was a source of questioning the religious affiliations of the family's ancestors.

Ayşe defined herself as a secular Turk, without any sympathy to Islam or to religion in general. The Ataturkist radical secular spirit with which she was educated had strengthened her negative feelings and her critical stance towards religion, but her ambivalence towards Islam dates back to an experience she had during her early youth. Her mother had told her that for the Muslims there is a particular night, during which, if they pray, they willgo to sleep and see the Prophet Mohammed in their dreams. She followed her mother's advice, but that night, instead of Mohammed, she saw Jesus in her dream. Ayşe told her grandmother what had happened and she replied that this was okay, because Jesus was also one of their prophets. That was an experience that still haunted her. She felt that, somehow, Islam was a religion made for the Arabs in particular, and that it was unsuited to her family's lifestyle and mentality. Gradually her appreciation for Jesus grew larger:

> I would occasionally see Jesus in my dreams, and I started thinking that Jesus loves me, and that he gave his life for us humans. He was not like Mohammed; he did

not have ten women. The hodjas here in Trabzon are superficial, fraudulent types. Even in the Quran, Jesus is highly appreciated.

Ayşe referred to some excerpts from the Quran in order to prove her argument about the position of Jesus in Islam. Religion was a permanent theme of discussion, though I was completely ignorant and could not contribute anything other than my willingness to listen and to learn. Ayşe found in me a good listener who was interested in hearing her stories and then transfer them to the world. She would constantly repeat her desire to share all this so that people would learn what is happening in Trabzon. Her distancing from and critical position towards Islam grew further due to her resentment for Mohammed for having many wives, one of them being six years old. Her mother had tried to excuse and justify him, saying that he was a prophet and his deeds shouldn't be questioned, and that for sure at that time, there must have been some reason for this, but for Ayşe, this was something repulsive.

Doubts and questions about religious belonging and practices grew after her discussion with her friend Ahmet from Antalya, on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. They would discuss the First World War and its victims. Ahmet, expressing his pride and patriotism, mentioned to Ayşe that there was a military cemetery nearby, where many soldiers were buried in their shrouds. The phrase "buried in their shrouds" was something more than a description—it was an expression that revealed a strong attachment to the dead and to their patriotic deeds. Ayşe picked up on the phrase, paused a bit and expressed her surprise, asking Ahmet why the dead soldiers weren't buried in coffins. Ahmet burst into laughter and responded mockingly, "What coffin are you talking about? How is it possible in Islam to bury the dead in coffins?" Ayşe disputed his claim,

providing examples from her experience in Trabzon: “Come on, don’t talk nonsense, it’s impossible to bury the deceased without a coffin. In our village, we do not take the dead body out of the coffin. We don’t burry it simply with a shroud, we burry it in a coffin.” Ahmet was shocked but did not believe Ayşe, arguing that for sure she was wrong and did not remember correctly. She insisted that she was right. The discussion ended in strong disagreement.

For mainstream Muslims in Turkey, the deceased body, after being washed, is enshrouded, placed in a coffin, and after a prayer at the mosque, is carried to the cemetery. There, the enshrouded body is taken out of the coffin and placed in the earth. The empty coffin is taken back to the mosque to be washed for use at the next burial. For many Muslims in Trabzon, however, this was not exactly the way funerals took place. Many of my informants witnessed the burying of the deceased in their villages with their coffins. Ayşe was no exception. Ahmet’s reactions further raised her curiosity. When she returned to Trabzon she asked her father about the issue. He assured her that in their village they buried the deceased with their coffins. Ayşe provoked him further, saying that in Islam it was not allowed to bury the body with a coffin. Her father justified this burial practice by telling that they had to do it this way in their villages because, due the moist character of the soil, they wanted to avoid the immediate decay of the dead body. But if someone wanted to bury his relative without the coffin they could do it, as an exception. What was a burial rule for other Muslims outside of Trabzon was an exception for Ayşe’s family and for the relatives of her village. The encounter with different descriptions of burial practices further diminished her belief in the official explanations

and destabilized her sense of "who I am," leading her to further question her current loyalties and ideas about the past.

However, Ayşe is not the only one whose encounter with "otherness" outside of her immediate environment in Trabzon destabilized her attachment to "Turkish nationhood" and the sense of herself. Yunus, whom we met earlier, as well as other informants, went through similar experiences. As mentioned above, Yunus used to live in the predominantly Kurdish-inhabited region of Van, near the border between Turkey and Iran. Many families from his village in Trabzon were relocated here after a natural disaster destroyed large parts of their Pontic-Greek speaking community. While in school, his Kurdish classmates would constantly tease him by calling him and his fellow villagers *Rum*. In Yunus's community, *Rum* referred to the Pontic-Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians, so it was a term associated mainly with Christianity. Near Van, it was an insult for a Muslim to be called *Rum.* The behavior of his Kurdish classmates made Yunus start wondering why he spoke *Rumca*. Under the influence of Kemalist propaganda and decades of repression and censorship by state authorities, fear and negation of any potential connection with "Greek cultural elements" was so widespread in these communities that many people would avoid calling their native language *Rumca* because this would make them look suspicious in the eyes of the mainstream. They preferred calling their language *Lazca,* which was a term that (falsely) designated all the inhabitants of the eastern provinces of the Black Sea. Though in reality, the Laz are a separate linguistic group, in the context of the Black Sea, it could be used a homogenizing "neutral" term and that was not stigmatized as "nationally dangerous."

Constantly vexed by Kurdish students, Yunus complained to his grandfather and asked him whether he and his family were *Rum.* His grandfather tried to calm him down by explaining (in *Rumca*, since he did not know any Turkish), *"Afson ata pulim, emis Musulman imes"* [Don't bother with these my bird, we are Muslims]. For the grandfather, as for many of his generation in the village, religious affiliation was the most important thing characterizing humans, not language. This was a continuation of the official Ottoman categorizations that were based on religion.

Younger people in this community were usually afraid to ask the elders questions about origins, identity and history in public, because they would be told off, so that they would be protected from dangerous exposure to state authorities, whose surveillance over the community was very tight. Extreme nationalist and Islamist networks had expanded their reach in Pontic-Greek speakinng communities, creating greater pressure against those who might express "dangerous" views about history and language. Everyone conformed to state propaganda, with the exception of some brave communists, whose voice was either not heard loudly or completely silenced by years of imprisonment.

Explanations given about the use of Rumca were not different from those in other communities of Trabzon. This was supposedly a language they had learned from their Greek neighbors, with whom, it was said, they were trading. The standard narrative, which I heard many times during my fieldwork in various villages, was that these communities had arrived to Trabzon from Turkey via the city of Maraş, further south. But younger people could not explain why their grandmothers, who had never had any interactions with Greeks since they were always staying at home, could only speak Rumca. Various conflicting answers and interpretations, even during my fieldwork time,

circulated in the community. Yunus and some of his peers were perplexed and tried to find answers. Access to books other than those published by state authorities was impossible, and the Internet had not yet made it to the village. However, a music cassette which entered the community one day would break the "isolation" and change everything. I turn now to the discussion of the experience of affective musical encounters with contemporary Greekness.

Music in the gap of meanings

Yunus had never been a fan of the kemençe. He was not moved by its sound. He loved the kaval, the local flute, because its sound reminded him of his village, family, relatives and friends. He had no knowledge of the kemençe music repertoire and had never purchased an album with kemençe, nor had any songs saved in his hard drive, like many young Trabzonians. Until then, other than the kaval, Yunus would listen to Turkish folk music and the bağlama. He never listened to pop music, because of his religious upbringing. For him this music was inappropriate for his lifestyle and ethos. Since the 1960s, the bağlama instrument started intruding almost every house in Yunus's community. The first bağlama was brought to the village by a left-wing member of the community. At that time, the bağlama was not only associated with Turkish national folk music, but it was also appropriated by the Ataturkist Turkish left and was turned into a class symbol, "the instrument of the people." In this way it became a peculiar kind of fashion. To be a leftist, you had to play or listen to bağlama. But of course the opposite was not true. What is interesting is that people would play local repertoires with the bağlama, singing in Romeyka. Later, they would start playing other songs from different regions of Anatolia, too. Gradually repertoire in Turkish from other parts of Anatolia

gained dominance over the local repertoire. Many local songs, lyrics and Pontic-Greek words were forgotten because of this shift of balance in the songs the community sang. So Yunus, as many people of his age, found himself into a changing musical soundscape where local musical sounds were were being replaced by state-imposed repertoires of bağlama. The first kemençe album he ever acquired was my own. My album had reached the village few years before I went there for fieldwork, in early 2000s. It was brought by Yunus's uncle, who purchased it from one of his fellow villagers who had gone to Istanbul and had accidentally found it at a cassette shop there.

Yunus's uncle Mustafa enthusiastically told him that he had brought a cassette with songs in Romeyka but that he had difficulties in understanding all the lyrics. He asked Yunus to listen with him and see what he could understand. He also asked Yunus's mother, Fatma, whose Romeyka was much better, to listen and tell them what she understood. Women, due to their isolation in the village, remained more fluent and knowledgeable in Romeyka.

When they realized that the person who was playing and singing on the album was a young man from Greece, they were shocked. "It's impossible—who is this guy who speaks our language?" said Yunus, with his eyes wide open, full of surprise and enthusiasm. Until then "their language" was only theirs, it was like a secret code used only among the members of their community. It was beyond their imagination that other people, and even more so from Greece, could speak a similar language that they could understand. This listening experience, their first exposure to an album made by a Greek musician, with songs in a language they could understand and describe as their own,

provoked enthusiasm, discussion and many question marks about the community's history, about themselves and about the language they used.

For months, people would gather in houses for hours to listen to the cassette and to try to understand the lyrics. Some of them could understand most of it. One night they gathered again to listen to the cassette. Yunus's grandfather was present too. In one song, he heard the word *kortsopon* [young girl] and immediately recognized it, sharing it with the others. His intervention was like a confirmation of the feeling that there was something important in this album. Yunus's family would become very enthusiastic each time they could understand the lyrics or even some parts and words. They tried to write down the words to see how certain sounds could be written. Listening and discussing the lyrics of the album had become a main preoccupation not only for Yunus, his family and his relatives, but also for other members of the community, who had made many copies of my album. Within few days of its initial arrival, the album had reached every house in the village. For almost three months, people would listen to it and discuss it every day. Yunus's uncle was so enthusiastic that he installed a tape player in his tractor so that he and others could listen to it while driving and working in the farms. People in the village wanted to find similar albums and listen to them to check if they could understand the lyrics. But it was impossible, because there were no others on the market. My album was the only one circulating for a few months, until it was unofficially banned and removed from the few music stores in Trabzon.

Many younger people in the village, who had become very enthusiastic with the arrival of my album, renewed the debate as to how close their language was to Greek, and not to Latin. Yunus's ability to understand some of the lyrics on my album made him feel

like there was a special cultural bond between us that he could not explain with words. There were still those in the village, however, who continued to identify closely with Turkish nationalism and did not accept any affiliation with "the infidel." They tried to degrade and "criminalize" the album and myself, publicly claiming that this cassette was a part of a broader plot designed by the Greek government in order to divide Turkey. How? Those circulating this theory argued that the government of Greece was sending young musicians to the Black Sea to collect songs with lyrics in the local Romeyka idiom. Then they were going back to Greece to record the songs with the lyrics and the accent they had learned in Trabzon. The aim of this, according to this narrative, was to convince listeners in Turkey that this was the Greek language and that those speaking it were of Greek descent. Since the release of my album, these conspiracy theories, accompanied by accusations against me, have never stopped.

In Yunus's village the entrance of my album marked a turning point in the ways people thought and felt about their language and the history of their community. The gradual popularization of YouTube and Facebook among the youth in the village further broke their isolation and brought them in contact with kemençe players and singers from Greece. Even those who had initially reacted very negatively and had made fun of Yunus and others for listening my songs now started listening to Pontic-Greek music. Slowly they acquired a deeper knowledge of this musical scene in Greece. They started engaging with the meaning of the lyrics and would discuss them with their friends. This engagement took up a significant portion of their daily lives. The continuous discussion and engagement with Pontic-Greek lyrics was accompanied by a greater acceptance that

their language, Romeyka, was somehow related to Greek, and this acceptance put an end to any reactions in the community. For many, it gradually began to be taken for granted.

Yunus described this album as a revelation. After it monopolized his interest and captured his imagination for months, he started listening to music from other countries, too. He also decided to go a step further and to read books and articles about his language and the history of his region. The only written text he could find, however, reproduced the same mainstream ideology. "You get the sense that they were all written by the same person," he complained about the luck of literature in this field. Yunus wanted to find answers to the following questions: What exactly is the language he speaks? Who else speaks it? What is the history of the language and of the Greeks of the Black Sea? Finally, he wanted to understand why his community had Romeyka as a mother tongue and not Turkish. His questions pushed him to make friendships with many Pontic Greeks on Facebook and to start learning some modern Greek. The desire to go and study in Greece for a master's degree grew larger. Financial restrictions, however, prevented him from following through.

I met Yunus through a common Greek friend with whom he had developed a strong friendship. Yunus was told by his Greek friend that I would be in Trabzon to perform at a restaurant with a group of visitors from Greece. The possibility of meeting me excited him, as he later admitted, since he would meet the person whose music album had "opened his eyes" and made him realize "who he is." Our initial encounter was very moving, with intense discussions about history, word exchanges (as with Ayşe earlier) and lots of kemençe playing and singing. A very strong bond was immediately created, and we started calling each other brother. Since then, every time I was in Trabzon during

the winter I would stay at his place, an old, moist house in the center of the city. The humidity in the house, the smell of the burnt wood coming out of the wood stove that was heating us in the cold winter nights, the view of the roughened waves of the Black Sea out of the window, the frugal meals, the alcohol and the melodies of the kemençe were infused with great nostalgia for a now-vanishing Trabzon. Everything we were experiencing was infused with a nostalgic mode, a strong longing for something we could not easily put in words. Our frequent nights of collective singing in the house became long rituals of longing for "the old days," which we could only imagine, since we had never experienced them. We were imposing nostalgia on ourselves. Yunus's fellow students would occasionally come to the house to listen to the "Greek kemençe player was conducting research in Trabzon." I had become a kind of "attraction," a source of pride for Yunus and, as I learned much later, a potential source of trouble.

During the *kurban bayramı*, the festive of the sacrifice, a very important celebration for pious Muslims, I was invited to his house in the village in Van to meet his family, relatives and friends. He told me that it would be very important for him and for the people in the village to meet me and hear me play live. My album had already created strong feelings for me in the community years before my fieldwork began, and when Yunus told them that he had met me in Trabzon and that we had become friends, they asked him to invite me to the village. During my stay in the village I was always invited to different houses to perform, sing and talk with people. Discussions about history, politics, habits and customs and language filled the breaks in the music. Strong disagreements about history and other things that separated us melted away as soon as the sound of my kemençe permeated the air. The event I narrate below is from a *parakath*, a

practice of daily socializing in different private houses in the village during winter nights. Relatives and friends gather to talk, drink tea and discuss various topics, say jokes and laugh and narrate stories from the past as well as experiences from the present. The whole area was covered by thick snow, and freezing winds blew every day. This was a typical day on the mountains of Kurdistan at the province of Van. All the inhabitants had plenty of time for relaxing and socializing since agriculture was mainly carried out during the spring and summer. The circle of discussion, kemençe playing and singing was repeated every day for about seven to eight hours during the three days I stated in the village. Below I briefly describe such an encounter in Yunus's house in the village with some of his relatives. This is a good example of the unifying power of shared, collective musical experiences that can transcend other dividing lines such as rigid religious or even national affiliations.

The discussion was getting tense as Ahmet started praising the Ottomans: "The Ottoman empire was very tolerant towards the Christians," he said. "But the Greeks, with the support of the western imperialists who wanted to divide and control the empire, revolted against the Ottomans and established another state, Greece. Had this not taken place, we would still live together like brothers." I strongly disagreed with Ahmet's statement, a forty-year-old primary school teacher: "The Ottoman empire was a colonialist force that occupied foreign lands and people, converted many of them to Islam, exploited and oppressed them. Thus, it was the natural right of the Greeks, and of the other peoples who were the indigenous populations of the region, to revolt against the colonialist regime of the Ottomans and demand their political independence." I replied strongly, showing my disagreement and irritation. We clearly had very different

approaches and interpretation of historical events. This made me feel very angry and offended, because I thought that Ahmet should have been aware that he was speaking to a Greek whose understanding of history was quite different from his own. But Ahmet wanted to express what he thought sincerely. And of course I should have controlled myself and refrained from responding aggressively to his statements, remembering that Ahmet was a primary school teacher and a Muslim who was speaking from that particular position. Though Yunus had warned me about the "nationalist inclinations" of some of his relatives and some of the older people in the village, I had the impression, due to Yunus's own critical approach, that I would encounter an audience that was more flexible and open to more diverse interpretations of the historical past.

A short awkward silence covered the room and those present started looking at each other as if they were trying to find out what to do next to break this deadlock. For a moment I felt that my relationship with my hosts was jeopardized due to my irritation and strong expression of negative feelings about the Ottoman Empire. Yunus, trying to reduce the tension, intervened by telling Ahmet that we needed to examine the past without fear and in an objective a way as possible, indirectly supporting my view. Ahmet stepped back, thought for few seconds and addressed me again: "Well, I am not sure what exactly happened back then, who were the Ottomans, who are the Turks, who are the Romeyka speakers? I don't know my roots for sure, but I want to learn, and because I don't know and I am not sure, I say that I am a Turk." He accepted that he was full of contradictions, like many members of the community.

"Let's stop talking about politics and history, Niko, and let's listen to your kemençe and songs," said Ahmet concluding our debate. We were sitting around the

wood stove at Yunus's house with ten of his relatives, discussing, drinking tea, eating *leftokar* [hazelnuts] and singing in Pontic Greek. They requested that I sing in Pontic Greek, especially songs that we sing in Greece, so that they would check if they could understand the lyrics. Every time I sang they would extend their necks and turn their ears towards me, a sign that they were trying to listen carefully. When they would understand some of the words I was using, or even the whole verse, they would look at each other with a big smile and satisfaction, repeating the words, expressing acknowledgment until the next verse. They would ask each other about the meaning of particular words and wonder how they would say them in their dialect. They became very enthusiastic when they realized that they could understand and agree on the meaning. It was usually the elder and the women, the connoisseurs of the language, who would state and confirm the meaning of words. They would occasionally stand up and start dancing, men and women, clapping, singing with me and teasing each other for their dancing capabilities. I could tell that some of them became really moved, since their eyes were turning red and tears were filling them.

During my fieldwork, I witnessed many encounters between visitors from Greece and the locals of Trabzon. Interactions would usually start with the exchange of Pontic-Greek vocabulary and the testing of eachothers' knowledge of words. Discussions about lifestyle, habits and customs, food and of course music would then follow. Stronger bonds were shaped when participants discover common musical repertoires and start singing together. This initial interaction might last from a few minutes to few hours. In the end, the initial mutual suspicion is overcome and a sense of strong connectedness arises. Individuals become more friendly and they exchange phone numbers and promises

to maintain contact and meet again soon. I have observed that the act of singing together or listening to music together demolishes the walls constructed by competitive national and religious political discourses. Yunus put it in his own words: "In music people are not looking for a logic, it is not something rational. It is very important to listen to songs and be able to understand at least some of the lyrics that are in your native language. It causes a great excitement. Music is extremely powerful." It is very hard, both for the ethnographer and the informants, no matter how eloquent they are, to put such an experience into words, to verbalize the feeling. But we can at least comprehend the transformative power it exerts by observing what people do, think and say after the crucial first encounter.

The initial exposure of the community to an album with Pontic-Greek lyrics and kemençe a few years ago had prompted a series of interactions, questioning and thoughts among its members that led to their gradual emotional and intellectual transformation. The fear of not revealing their language to outsiders and their hesitation to move outside of the given forms of thought about their history and character had given way to public expressions of pride and further interest in their relation to Greek. Many of them have now become friends with people in Greece via Facebook. They exchange music videos on a regular basis, discuss lyrics and build vocabulary. Moreover, the more visionary among them have started investing time in recovering the songs of their village that had been relegated to oblivion. Kemençe has now become a beloved instrument for Yunus and for others like him in the community. Once seen as a barrier to their children's development, Romeyka is now seen as an asset by many parents.

Informants like Ayşe, who, though not native speakers of Romeyka themselves, maintain the memory of Romeyka words and expressions from their grandparents, had similar "illuminating" first musical encounters that were imprinted on their mind and strengthened their desire to "search for roots." During one of her summer vacations on the Aegean coast, Ayşe came across a group of tourists from Greece. It was the first time she met Greeks. When the Greek tourists found out that Ayşe was from Trabzon they were overjoyed and became interested in her. Ayşe was also surprised by their increased interest. Somebody from the group asked her whether she knew any songs in the "old language," in Pontic Greek, and Ayşe was able to recall one she had heard from her great grandmother, something very short. She could not recall all the lyrics other than a few words, which she spelled out to the Greek visitors. Then an old lady from the group stood out, embraced and kissed her. After that initial encounter, and for the rest of its presence in the city, the Greek tourist group continued to bring Ayşe flowers and ask her to keep in touch.

Ayşe's encounters with Greeks continued later online. After she returned and resettled in Trabzon, Ayşe started spending lots of time exploring the Internet, particularly watching music videos on YouTube in an attempt to learn more about the local music. During her search on YouTube one midnight, she came across a video with kemençe performers from Greece. That was a huge surprise—she could not believe to her eyes and ears. "I said to myself, who are these people? And why are they playing the kemençe? I had heard of Pontic Greeks, and we were taught about them at school, but I had never seen any playing kemençe''

In those videos she closely observed how "Greeks played kemençe, sung and danced." Their accent in the songs sounded familiar, reminding her of her grandmother's speech style. She was also able to understand some of the words in the lyrics. That first musical encounter on the Internet was a "great shock." She stayed up to four o'clock in the morning watching videos with Pontic-Greek performers. She thought that they looked very "similar" to her family and felt a great intimacy to the people she was watching on YouTube for the first time in her life. This shocking experience triggered her curiosity and increased her excitement. After this incident, Ayşe began to watch these and related videos on YouTube every day and night, for many hours. Her shock was transformed into an even stronger desire to find answers to the pressing questions about herself and her family. This was a process that she defined with a metaphor, "the search for roots." Ayşe started thinking about the possibility of collecting information and then writing a book about her experiences and ideas.

Searching for roots in Trabzon

The cultural practice of "searching for roots" by locals in Trabzon had become a highly sensitive issue that had attracted the attention of state authorities, who associated this "curiosity" with "ethnic-minority" propaganda. Right-wing nationalist discourses that circulated extensively through local media and the web also defined this "search for roots" as a "scratching of old wounds" whose aim was to cause confusion in the minds of the people of Trabzon and make them doubt their affiliations and their loyalty to the state. Deviation from and questioning of the official historical narratives and explanations about culture and belonging have been stigmatized as "separatist activity." State-sponsored conferences on local history and book publications had intensified, and

Trabzon was constantly represented in mainstream discourses as the "undisputed center of Turkish patriotism and activity."[61] A climate of tight emotional pressure and censorship had been cultivated for years. Moreover, I was informed about a French ethnomusicologist who, at the same period with me, was conducting musical research among the rural communities close to the Georgian border. After a complaint against him was made to the local police station, he was arrested by Turkish authorities and deported. Academic research in these areas caused suspicion and researchers were closely monitored. This was also the feeling I would get from many interlocutors, who always warned me to be careful, not to open up and not talk to many people. They were convinced that I was under strict police surveillance because I was "a researcher, a Greek and a kemençe player," and thus a "threat" to state security.

This climate of suspicion and fear in Trabzon was reinforced by rumors about the local networks and activities of a secret organization named Ergenekon. This was a terrorist organization that had recently come to public attention due to its violent activities in the Kurdish region, where it was implicated in the assassination of Kurdish

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[61] During his speech at a conference in Trabzon in 2006, Ümit Özdağ, professor of international relations, leading figure of the radical right-wing Nationalist Action Party and director of various Turkish think-tanks that were funded by the security forces and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made some very interesting statements in this regard. He argued that Trabzon and the eastern Black Sea provinces are crucial for Turkey's political and geopolitical security and that any crisis that would erupt here would have a tremendous impact on the whole of the country. He praised the people of Trabzon for their "loyalty to the state" and their fervent patriotism, and stressed this city's role in the national security. He claimed that in the last fifteen years various foreign intelligence services and local collaborators have been trying to break the morale, influence the local population and to decrease its nationalist sentiments and attachment to the national state. He also revealed that the security forces [making an indirect reference to the Turkish intelligence service] approached and asked him to organize a series of conferences and other activities in Trabzon, with their support, that would counterbalance the effects of the "propaganda of foreign states" on the local population. See Yeni Safak, 22 January, 2007, *Ozdag: Trabzon direnisin merkezi* [Trabzon is the center of resistance,] http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/ozdag-trabzon-direnisin-merkezi-25779, accessed in April 2012.

intellectuals and activists. Ergenekon was presented by media as an illegal network within the state bureaucracy and a self-appointed protector of the "interests of the Turkish state." My informants considered it a shadowy terrorist group run by the intelligence services, whose aim was to politically and socially marginalize and silence oppositional ideas and activities.

Ayşe's friends warned her not to conduct her research about her family's history because this would make her look suspicious to the local authorities, and might even put her in physical danger from Ergenekon's local networks. Mohammed, a medical doctor and university professor and one of Ayşe's closest friends in Trabzon, tried to dissuade her from undertaking her research and book project, arguing that Atatürk had faced many difficulties in keeping the country unified and that there was no reason to open up these kinds of "ethnic issues" in the region at this moment. For her part, Ayşe did not think that her intentions would damage anyone:

> I told my friends that I am not doing or saying something wrong, and that I am not offending anybody. I am just going to do historical research and my intention is not to offend any culture or anybody. For example, I have many Turkish friends, and I am telling them that I love Turkish culture too, and that I am not against them.

I understood that for Ayşe, historical knowledge, group affiliations and cultural diversity should not be thought of as early signs of potential future "political disloyalty." She considered herself a loyal citizen of Turkey with a strong interest in the well-being of its society, but she found herself in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis mainstream definitions and practices of Turkishness. She felt very different, and she was not the only

one. Some informants in Trabzon confided in me that they were full of contradictions, that they had unanswered questions about their "roots," and that they doubted whether they "are Turks." They believed that many inhabitants of Trabzon would go through the same experience of "searching for roots"; there were so many unanswered questions about their history, local lifestyles and practices that, sooner or later, they would "reach the surface and start bothering the mind." Existing explanations were confusing and unsatisfying for my interlocutors.

These were not issues one would discuss with everyone in Trabzon but only with people whom one could trust. My own background and connections with the region, but more importantly my musical activities as a kemençe performer and singer, had created strong bonds with many interlocutors, who considered me almost like one of them. Music helped build trust. Ayşe also felt very comfortable discussing these matters with some of her close friends, with me and with family members. Raising these issues with strangers in Trabzon might create tensions. The high political polarization between the Kurdish political movement and the mainstream Turkish political parties and organizations had cultivated a climate of insecurity, fear and aggression. The specter of ethnic separatism haunted Trabzon, creating a deleterious climate that could escalate to violent confrontations between oppositional groups in the streets or in the local university campus. Thus, in such an electrified context, "doing research about history" or even asking people simple questions about their past could provoke suspicion and even hostile behavior.

Not everyone is so suspicious and aggressive, however. People who describe themselves as predominantly Muslims in Trabzon would not typically bother asking

questions and thinking about "ethnic roots," because they were content to be members of the greater Islamic family. Some pious individuals even told me that their ancestors were possibly Orthodox Christians who converted to Islam, but what was important for them was to be Muslim, to be "on the correct path," expressing at the same time their happiness for their ancestors' right decision to convert. Those who were inspired by the Ataturkist ideology and consider themselves Turks were much more sensitive to issues of "national history" and "ethnic roots" and more "vulnerable" to the questioning of their cultural belonging. Their secularist ethos made them more prone to ask the question "Who am I?" Ayşe too, as described in earlier sections of this chapter, would consider herself an Ataturkist and a Turkish patriot, albeit in a peculiar, liminal way, due to her family's background.

Every time we met she repeated her strong desire to go to the "state archives" in Trabzon and elsewhere, although she was not sure how people there would treat her. There were incidents of other individuals from Trabzon who were similarly "searching for roots" and were trying to find information about their family's past, but the staff at the archives rejected their request, telling them that such information did not exist. Ayşe also made plans to go to Greece in the future and try to find texts about Trabzon and her village in particular, since many Christian Greeks were relocated from Maçka to various provinces of Greece after 1923. She had a strong belief that, contrary to what had happened in Trabzon, people in Greece would have certainly done their best to "preserve their memories," especially because they did not face any pressure to forget. She asked for my advice and for contacts. I felt that I had an obligation to help her do what she wished. I shared some of my ideas with her, without thinking of the potential

consequences. Besides, I believed that she was an independent-thinking person who would critically examine whatever I would claim.

In the meantime, I was in and out of Trabzon following other informants and attending various activities. I would communicate with Ayşe via email and meet her every time I returned to Trabzon. She was also anxious to see me and share with me her new findings and progress in "finding her roots." Walking around Trabzon, observing its old Greek buildings trying to image who lived there and what kind of life they led, and imagining city life in the past had become a main "nostalgia-production practice" for both of us, and a source of ethnographic experience and knowledge for me. When I was away, she would occasionally email me the titles of electronic books and articles she found on various websites, asking for my opinion. In one of her emails she wrote the following "…I tried to construct a family tree to understand our genealogy. I was able to go back to 1840s. I could not find any information after that year. Later on I learned that there was a fire in Trabzon that burned almost all the archives."

The Internet was a significant source of information since there she could find various texts about Trabzonian Pontic Greeks who had been relocated in Greece. She found some web sites in English with relevant information and started translating them into Turkish. She even managed to produce a partial translation of some short texts from Greek using Google Translate. Translation and the creation of her own archive of texts had become a major preoccupation that was consumed a significant portion of her days and nights. Months passed, and we kept emailing, discussing the same issues again and again. This is how she described her "progress" in one of her emails:

> From what I could read, the different stories, I started realizing that things are quite different from what I had learned to believe. Then a greater interest for history rose

> in me and I started researching. The Ottoman archives were gradually opening, too, and I thought this would be very helpful; then I started reading different history books about these topics and I continued researching on the Internet; in Turkey it was not easy for me to find every book on this matter, and especially here, in Trabzon, it is much more difficult. They do not allow these books to reach people here in Trabzon, and if there are any books on these topics, people won't share them. They are afraid, they remain secret, they hide them. I started reading and reading as much as I could.

She would read every book she could find in Turkish about life in Trabzon in the Ottoman period and on general Ottoman history. The text that shocked her, as she strongly claimed, was one book translated into Turkish, written by Princeton historian Heath Lowry, about the conversion of Trabzon to Islam in the 15th and 16th centuries. This was a revelation for her. The arguments of the book could be easily doubted because they were based on Ottoman sources. When I responded that I had worked with this professor, and that we had become friends, Ayşe got excited and expressed her willingness to meet him and learn more. In this book she found answers to almost all of the questions she had constantly asked herself about conversion to Islam.

In subsequent emails she told me that she wanted to move further back, to learn "who has been living in Trabzon before the arrival of the Turks." In her quest she encountered ancient Greek narratives about the region. She read the recent Turkish translation of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, which describes how Greek soldiers, during their return to Greece from Persia after the war, encountered the Greek inhabitants of Trabzon and other local groups. Later on, I learned from other informants that Xenophon's

Anabasis was becoming quite popular among educated young Trabzonians, who were becoming more curious about Trabzon's ancient history.[62] We exchanged e-mails discussing the things she was reading and her impressions. She got more excited when she found out that Xenophon's soldiers passed through Maçka, where her great parents' village was. At the same time she collected stories from the people in her immediate environment and tried to compare them with what she was learning in the books. Being aware of the sensitivity of the issue, she did not dare interview people outside her immediate environment. In the meantime, her personal collection of stories, articles, photos and books was gradually increasing, occupying further space on her hard drive and in her room. Ayşe was creating her database on which she would base the book she wanted to write.

Ayşe, in her quest for comprehensive information about the inhabitants of Trabzon, would also read texts written by Turkish authors from the nationalist and religious right-wing political spectrum. This form of propagandistic writing and publication constituted, until recently, the majority in the relevant book market she was interested in. In her email, she explained her reaction to these texts: "Whenever I read about something I knew very well and I was sure about, it was described in a totally different way by these nationalist writers. They lost any credibility I might have had for them." The engagement with texts, words and oral narratives was described by Ayşe as a "deep dive" into meanings. She was trying to combine different sources, connect them

[62] It is worth noting that recently various publication houses in Turley have been translating and publishing more books on ancient Greek history and arts, especially those texts that are related to the history of Asia Minor and Pontos. Many of my informants have been following these developments and their interest in ancient Greek history and archeology has been rising. Moreover, a few of them started learning modern Greek in Istanbul.

and juxtapose them like pieces of a big puzzle that were now fitting together. "I entered into the meaning of one word, traced it back, connected it with stories I heard and read, and in this way things started making sense, things I could not explain, things that seemed meaningless to me," she said. Ayşe was actually engaging in a process of contextualization of her experiences and of the stories she had heard from family members. This contextualization helped her give meaning to the initially meaningless stories and practices she had encountered and heard about such as words, ways of thinking, customs and behaviors, as described in previous sections in this chapter.

The more she read, the more she felt that something stronger connected her to the Pontic Greeks who lived in Greece. "I realized that these people [the Pontic Greeks] are from us, like us, or, we were from them, we were like them," she said. This question of "who came from whom," which came up numerous times during my encounters with various informants in Trabzon, was actually a metaphor for community. Ayşe thought that she had much in common with these "other" Pontic Greeks in Greece. This sense of commonality, of shared practices and ethos, constitutes a strong bond between individuals who start thinking of themselves as members of the same community. Ayşe was looking for this "community," and, as she wrote me " I am humanist who is looking for the truth, not a racist who looks for any kind racial purity. I might end up finding that my ancestors were Africans, or something else, that's fine; actually in the past, I had thought that we were Georgians." This "truth" she was looking for, as I interpret it, is another metaphor for meaning. What for me, an ethnographer, is a human activity that constructs meaning, is for Ayşe a search for truth.

Communication with Ayşe via email continued for few more months after I left Turkey and returned to Princeton. I could also follow her on Facebook. In the months after my departure from Turkey, she developed an extended network of Pontic-Greek friends, and visited Greece several times, staying for a few weeks with her new Greek partner. Her Greek friends visited her in Trabzon. She started making marriage plans with her partner. She was entering into a "new community," a new network of interpersonal exchanges and a new world with its own values and meanings.

One morning, while sitting in my office at Princeton, working on my field notes, I took a break to check my email and Facebook. Ayşe's profile was full of recently uploaded photos. I opened them and looked closely, also reading the comments. I saw Ayşe wearing a thin, long white dress, standing in an Orthodox Church, surrounded by well-dressed people who looked very cheerful. A priest was sprinkling water on her forehead. Under the photos people, wrote messages of congratulations on her baptism that took place in a Greek church in Germany. Ayşe had taken a new Christian name, Sumela, the same as the famous monastery's name in her native Maçka in Trabzon. From now on she was one of the members of the small community of Orthodox converts living in Trabzon. In her last email, she told me that after all the research, reading and experiences she accumulated, she had reached some "final, undisputable" conclusions about her family. This is what she wrote:

> Approximately a hundred-fifty years ago our native language was Pontic-Greek, a version of ancient Greek. In the past we were Orthodox Christians, and before that we were pagans; and some of our pagan traditions still exist, or to put it better, some of our ancient Greek vocabulary…I don't know, there is so much on my mind. For example, when there is a lunar eclipse, our people start shooting to the

sky so that the moon will be uncovered, as if they were to liberate the moon. This practice seems to me very primitive, and is not found in Islam or Christianity. It might be a pagan practice; I am not sure.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn out of this chapter. Though I, as an anthropologist, approach the "search for roots" on the part of my informants as a meaning-making practice that leads to their self-transformation, for them it is a crucial, existential struggle that has real consequences in their lives. In such a context, individual actors look for an "essence," a "deep self" which was lost in the wake of modernization and Turkification and which they try to "re-discover." Informants think in essentialist terms, they speak and feel from within particular socio-cultural positions. Ayşe takes what she does very seriously, and she makes decisions for her future based on her "findings." In this sense the thing we variously call "ethnic identity" is something very real, not simply imagined as an abstraction and certainly not as a "fake" to be measured against something "authentic." It is a mode of human interaction legitimated in the eyes of participant social actors by a set of beliefs and meanings. The difference is that most of these actors cannot see that they are the creators of these beliefs and meanings. Instead, they tend to believe that it is something externally given. By getting baptized, Ayşe believed that she had "found her roots and identity" that had been lying hidden.

I argue that the incomplete cultural transformation and assimilation of segments of the Pontic Greek-speaking Muslim population of Trabzon put them in a constant liminal, in-between position, in a state of questioning and doubt regarding their sense of

belonging and their imaginings of the past. The discrepancy between family narratives, memories, local experiences and cultural practices on the one hand and the encounter with official historical explanations and with cultural "otherness" in different non-familial contexts on the other prompted the collapse of the existing, hierarchically imposed frameworks of interpretation. Thus people like Ayşe and Yunus, along with many others whom I did not explicitly mention in this chapter, found themselves in the midst of a state of meaninglessness, not being able to explain their own intimate experiences to themselves. For my informants, kinship became the basis upon which interpretations of the past and belonging were reconstructed, challenging state-imposed macro-narratives of nationhood.

In this context of the search for meaning, the experience of kemençe music listening becomes a source of cultural reconstruction. The sound of the kemençe activates memories of something very intimate and familiar. The kemençe becomes a sign of community and locality that can even break competitive national and religious barriers. It is something very personal and unique, a representation of the local Trabzonian ethos that cannot be easily described in words, the expression of a "deeper self." Music becomes a sign of differentiation and at the same time a symbol of conscious or unconscious resistance to top-down homogenization. The sense of uniqueness and difference is constructed and experienced through the kemençe's musical sounds, which also become a source of publicly expressed pride. Uniqueness and difference are highly valued by informants and are two crucial elements here for the understanding of the importance of musical sound in the reconstructions of the sense of self and community. My informants use musical sound to restore their belief in values and practices, to feel unique and

different and thus proud. Music listening in this context can be thought of as a ritual of constant reaffirmation of meanings and values through which individuals live their lives. Music is both a source of values and meanings and a catalyst of interpretive and social action. It can shape and engage personal desire and shared action, as we will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

SOUNDSCAPES OF AUTHENTICITY

The reproduction of a strong regionalism and of a Trabzon-specific ethos is based on the refashioning of emotions and values through the making and listening of "authentic rural musical sound." In this chapter, performers and listeners of kemençe imagine, create, experience and promote a particular technique of "authentic performance" that they link to particular emotions and to a longing for a vanishing rural lifestyle. At the same time, their musical practice becomes for them a lived, embodied critique of westernization, migration and urbanization. Insisting on "musical authenticity" is, for them, a tacit political struggle against homogenization and assimilation.

Night-club kemençe

I occasionally followed some of my informants when they went to listen to the kemençe to various events and places. Live kemençe performances in local night clubs and restaurants in Istanbul usually occur on Friday and Saturday nights. One Friday night I went with two young Trabzonians, Mustafa and Nedim, to the night club *Karadeniz Sofrasi*—Black Sea Table—to listen to Tahsin, a kemençe player in his early forties whom my two friends liked a lot because they considered him an "authentic player." Moreover, as many listeners who listen to local-style kemençe prefer to listen to players from their own region, Nedim and Mustafa wanted to listen to Tahsin, because he was from the neighboring villages of Of, in the eastern parts of Trabzon province, and thus he

knew the local playing style that could satisfy them both very well. When we reached the club we were seated at a table just across the small stage. The place was not full, and only a few tables were occupied by customers. The room was dark with some soft colorful lighting, characteristic of this type of night club. Alcohol was not served, as in most places like this, since it goes against religious ethics.

We ordered food, the classic Black Sea dish, the hamsi, a small Black Sea fish, with some onions and bread. Before the program started, a middle-aged man jumped to the scene and picked up the microphone, requesting that the audience listen to his announcement. He was the chair of a Trabzon association in Istanbul. The man told us that the following week, towards the end of February, the federation of Trabzon associations in Istanbul was to co-celebrate the conquest of Trabzon in 1461 by Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the great leader of the Ottoman Empire, along with the liberation of Trabzon from the Russians in 1918. He urged people to bring their children because he believed that Trabzonian society was going through a crisis and that younger generations should further embrace the national and religious values of this great country. Then he gave the microphone to the singer, Çengiz. Çengiz was a young man from the bilingual communities of Trabzon who had recently acquired some popularity. He started singing in such night clubs together with Tahsin, who would accompany him on the kemençe.

It is very usual for the singer to thank the customers present by mentioning their family name on the microphone and by welcoming them. The world of Black-Sea music is relatively small, and those who are in the center of it are familiar with those who frequent these events. Moreover, this is part of a networking strategy for the singer, who wants to cultivate good relations and to please his listeners, especially those that might

give him a job by inviting him to perform at the events they organize. After Çengiz personally thanked all those who were present, especially the chair of the association, the program started at around nine o'clock.

After they played some "slow" pieces—songs meant for listening, not for dancing—they started the horon, the dance. The kemençe was accompanied by a synthesizer that provided an electronic rhythm. Nedim and Mustafa complained to me that the sound of the synthesizer was very loud and annoying. Nedim was not satisfied and he did not stand up to dance. Mustafa decided to dance. After a while I also stood and entered the dance next to Mustafa. The tempo was too fast for me. I began to sweat immediately and after about thirty minutes, I returned to the table. Mustafa continued to dance for about one and a half hours at this fast tempo. Nedim kept complaining about the sound of the synthesizer. I was annoyed, too, because I couldn't hear or enjoy the sound of the kemençe very well. This style of performance with the synthesizer is called *piyasa tarzı*, or "commercial style" in night clubs and festivals, where the synthesizer provides the necessary rhythmic intensity and helps coordinate the dancers. The program ended at one o'clock in the morning. People left immediately, but we stayed, because Mustafa and Nedim wanted to talk to Tahsin and the other musicians. We went to their table, where they started eating. Tahsin complained about the fact that he is obliged to play in these kinds of places in order to make money. He claimed that he does not like playing with a synthesizer, but that he had no choice, because people nowadays demand it, as if they consider the sound of kemençe alone inadequate for dancing. With the kemençe alone, they would get confused, but with the synthesizer, which sounds like disco music, they have a better sense of the tempo and can dance. Tahsin thought that this

was a degeneration. Nedim and Mustafa shook their heads, expressing their agreement. Tahsin picked up the kemençe and played a bit in the "authentic style" to show us how kemençe should sound and how he likes it.

On our return home, Mustafa, Nedim, Apo (the guitar player) and I walked for about three hours in the historic part of Istanbul, where Saint Sofia is located, in order to take time to talk over the evening. When we reached the Bosphorus, we stopped at a street vendor who was selling wrapped fish to eat. For three hours we had been talking about the degeneration of kemençe music, the problems created by the synthesizer, and what should be done to change this situation. We were all very enthusiastic about kemençe music and committed to coming up with solutions to what we considered its problems. Around four o'clock, in the empty streets in historic downtown Istanbul, when people would soon start waking up to go to their jobs, we were discussing "our mission" and the future of the kemençe. The future of kemençe was the main theme of discussions every time we met in different places and contexts, as if they did not face any other challenges and problems in life. Their main preoccupation was how to make the old-style kemençe sound relevant again for larger audiences in Istanbul and elsewhere and thereby bring back the "authentic Trabzon spirit."

Old-Style kemençe

The kemençe has three strings that are tuned in fourths and to various pitches. The two major characteristics of the old, village technique of playing are: the simultaneous sharp bowing on two strings—and in certain occasions on one string—for the production of sound; the "double string," as it is called by the performers; and the production of

embellishments with a tremolo, the rapid reiteration of a note, touching either one or two strings simultaneously. These two fundamental techniques, combined with the free, improvisational style, has constituted the specific sonic character of kemençe for decades. The kemençe, moreover, is a fretless instrument, a feature that provides the player with a vast array of possible finger positions, sonic combinations and techniques and significantly expand the canvas of sounds that can be produced.

During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to play kemençe and have extensive discussions with some of the elderly players who were still playing in the old style. I personally witnessed their virtuosity, but also their bitterness at the degeneration, as they called it, of contemporary kemençe music in the hands of younger players, whom they accused for only caring about fame and money. There was also a striking difference in the quality and techniques of playing found in old recordings that informants shared with me, compared to the contemporary recordings and orchestrations of kemençe music. Despite the efforts of some younger performers to maintain the old style, which is still alive in villages and some city neighborhoods, the majority of players and recordings follow the spirit of the "new fashions," as I will describe them in the next section. For now, let me describe the main characteristics of the old-style kemençe performance.

Until the 1970s the dominant musical paradigm in kemençe music was that produced by the local kemençe players in the rural communities of Trabzon and by those who had recently migrated to the country's western metropolitan centers but continued playing in the same way as they did in the village technique. By musical paradigm. I refer to the dominant, mainstream technique of playing, the song themes and the context and purposes of performance. The kemençe player always played alone, without the

accompaniment of other instruments. Most of the time he (and it was always a "he") would also sing. According to elderly performers and their listeners with whom I worked, it was very rare to see a player playing for another "singer" in a performance. It was considered derogatory to play for someone else, while it was considered a virtue to be able to play and sing at the same time, i.e., to accompany yourself. It was a matter of pride and personal status. Of course, other people in the audience could sing along with the instrument, but the player always led the performance. It was only laater, with the professionalization and the commercialization of kemençe playing, that individual singers made their appearance on the musical scene.

This dual character of the kemençe player as instrumentalist and singer defined the dominant playing and singing techniques for many decades. Playing while singing obliges the performer to follow his voice closely. Vocal performance and kemençe performances were almost identical in the sense that the voice would follow the kemençe and vice versa; it was very hard, almost impossible, to sing and at the same time improvise with the instrument. Instrumental improvisation would take place only between the singing parts. Additionally, while singing, the performer had to simultaneously play the kemençe, otherwise the voice would sound "empty," and avoiding this was very much appreciated by the listeners. If he was playing for people to dance, then it would be completely inconceivable to stop playing while singing, because this would disturb the flow of the dance and might confuse the dancers. Occasionally, when the player was singing, he would stop playing for few seconds hit his bow on the *kemençe* rhythmically in order to give rhythm and facilitate the dance before assuming normal playing again.

Also the player had the luxury of deciding by himself how to shape the process of performance, the interaction with the listeners, the song lyrics, the duration and the speeding up or slowing down of the rhythm. He was the leader of his own performance. He could play as he wished, without any prior rehearsal or preparation. This gave him greater liberty to improvise, in both his vocal and instrumental performance. Performing alone and improvising freely left such a huge imprint on the character of this musical genre and on the ethos of the players that even today, many players have difficulties "tuning" themselves and playing with other musicians together. And of course for elderly kemençe performers, who were thoroughly invested in free improvisational performance, it was very hard and for some almost inconceivable to engage in rehearsals with other musicians for the purposes of a musical collaboration, which were themsleves very rare. Kemençe players were, and to a great extent still are, musical loners. One of my informants, a sound engineer working at a recording studio in Trabzon, told me that most of the kemençe players he worked with had difficulties recording in his studio because they could not follow the metronome. Even the most musically educated ones, who have experience in collaborations and in playing with other musicians, find it difficult to confine themselves, and usually their role in an orchestra or in a recording is that of the first instrument, which provides the melody and is accompanied by the other instruments. The kemençe player has still not been "domesticated," despite the musical modernization imposed by state authorities all these decades.

The old-style player often had to play standing on his feet and walking around the circle of dancers so that they could hear his instrument and his voice. This forced him to play in a more simple way, without the elaborate embellishments produced by the fingers

touching the strings to produce the melody. When playing while standing, the kemençe would be kept and supported by one hand only, so the player would be unable move his fingers down on the neck of the instrument to produce higher pitches. Instead, he would use a particular, confined area of the neck and of the strings. Improvisation and embellishment in this case would be realized through bowing, which also defined the rhythm and the speed of the dance. Furthermore, such improvisation was mainly rhythmic, not melodic, and much simpler. However, when the player was sitting, he would placing his kemençe on his leg or between his legs, thus facilitating the use of the instrument's whole neck while he could press on lower parts of the strings and produce more complex sonic combinations. Even in situations where the player was stable and sitting on a chair, however, playing for people who were not dancing but listening, embellishments would follow particular patterns and would rarely depart from the standard repertoire.

Beyond the playing technique, in the village style, until the late 1970s, the themes of the song lyrics evolved around a particular thematic canvas: the experience of immigration and longing, unfulfilled love, life in the village and on the highlands, praise for the beauty of a woman, the death of relatives and separation, the passing of time and loneliness, braveness and, of course, the beauty of nature. Lyrics were full of metaphors from nature, erotic desire (usually expressed in indirect "polite" ways), the use of the first person and a long narrative of experiences and feelings that might last for twenty minutes with one single melody. The kemençe player/singer would narrate his experiences and feelings freely and continuously, without considering the reactions of potential listeners. He would stop when he did not have anything else to add to his narrative. Most of the

more recent songs made by immigrant players in Istanbul, however, last from three to five minutes maximum, following the standardized commercial styles of song making.

Before the massive migrations, kemençe music was an integral, "natural" part of daily life of the rural communities of Trabzon. People would play and sing in public spaces or at the local tea houses, frequented by men, or at the highlands during the summer. Playing, singing, listening and dancing mainly took place in the context of small groups, and it was highly participatory and "communal" in the sense that people would tease each other while singing or creating lyrics and even melodies. In such contexts, the division and the boundaries between player/singer and listener were blurred.

Music making and listening was very localized. Locally made songs were considered to be the music of "our village," and not even of Trabzon in general. People would not listen to other kinds of music or players from outside of their village. And since the landscape and the lack of communication technologies prevented the development of thicker interactions with villages outside of a particular valley, performance styles were very localized too. Every valley, consisting of a number of different villages, had its own players, more or less well known in the locality, who would play at various events and gatherings. It was rare for a player to receive an invitation from villages outside of the valley to perform. Thus, every valley and to a great extent every village in it was musically "autonomous." This condition enhanced creativity and allowed the creation of different performance styles and songs.

Creativity and originality were also enhanced by the individual learning of each player. Until the late 1980s, every player would learn the kemençe by himself, something which helped him create his own style, without imitating other players. Being self-taught

was also, and still is, considered in very high regard by players and listeners alike, since it enhances creativity and plurality, away from the standardization that was to come later. Everyone had his own unique style and voice, both of which were recognizable by his listeners. Only later, with the establishment of private courses by some players in Istanbul and the high circulation of cassettes, did the learning process change. A person willing to learn in this new context would now go to one of the "teachers" and listen other players on the tape recorder to try and imitate them. In this context he would learn a standard body of popular melodies, at which point he could then continue by himself. This gradually created a standardization and homogenization in the performance style that seriously disturbed the earlier plurality and creativity. Today the production of new "good" songs has been severely limited, and many of my informants complained that "song production is over."

In the old musical paradigm, a player had the chance to become popular only after making his own songs, which he would constantly present in musical gatherings in his village. Those who did not make their own songs, but who would rather play the melodies of others, were not very highly valued and were called "*taklitçi*," imitator. More importantly, those who had the capacity to play and produce lyrics at the moment of performance and to improvise without prior preparation of the melody were also very highly respected and admired.

The amateurish spirit was also an important factor in the creation of the old village style**.** Until recently, all kemençe players were amateur performers, each of whom had his own professional occupation in the locality. Making money with the instrument had not become yet an accepted and widespread practice. Players were not "performers"

or musicians in the modern sense, but rather kemençeci, that is, kemençe players, instrumentalists. And music was not a product that could be exchanged for money. Kemençe music was a local sonic world deeply embedded in and created by daily life routines and by interpersonal exchange in various communal rituals. Though crafted by individuals, it drew on a shared lifestyle and experiences and was affirmed or rejected by the local community of listeners while being produced, in real time, without any mediators or discursive elaboration. More importantly, it was not "made" with a particular audience in mind, bur it was a spontaneous, ad hoc expression of feelings and narratives about local life and experiences, a kind of ritualistic dialogue among individuals.

A characteristic genre of this ritualized dialoguse that has by now almost vanished from the local musical culture and is fondly remembered, is the *atışma*. This literally means "battle of words", that is a poetic competition of arguments accompanied with kemençe music, where usually two individuals, men or women, sing and try to provoke and tease each other on various issues. There are many references to the participants' personal characteristics, virtues, and disadvantages. One has to be very "fluent" in terms of poetic language use, imaginative, and fast in order to be able to compete in this. There is a gradual escalation in the things said and sometimes this has ended up in quarrels. However most of the time the atışma ends when one of the two participants is not any more able to produce new "lyrical arguments" in response to what has been said to him by his interlocutor. This process might last from few minutes to few hours. It used to be a practice that was attracting large audiences in the rural communities, people would separate into two groups supporting one of the two *atışmaci,* the performers of the atışma.

During this process words that would normally not be publicly used, things not be said, are being sung, pushing and challenging the local ethical boundaries. However, people are not supposed to get offended by this, they all know that this is a "musical game" among two people who compete and offer laughter and amusement to those watching and listening to them. Though a very dominant practice in the past, *atışma,* due to its free, non standardized form, its rural ethos, sense of humor, and outspokenness, did not make it into the new commercial genre of the standardized, prepared, three-to-five-minute length songs, appropriate for the new life in the cities.

It should be noted that despite the marginalization and stigmatization of kemençe playing and listening by local Islamic networks, as I described in chapter one, a few kemençe masters saved the instrument from total extinction and contributed greatly to its revival in the 1980s. Migration to urban centers contributed significantly not only to this revival, but also to the transformation of kemençe musical practices.

New lyrics and sounds

Song themes have exhibited some degree of change in the Trabzon musical genre. Whereas in the past longing, mortality and *gurbet* constituted the main themes of songs made by kemençe players in the rural communities, contemporary song themes have diversified. Some kemençe players and singers, in their attempt to follow the "spirit of modern times" and become popular, make and sing songs about material goods or about practices and experiences that used to be condemned on the basis of ethics. For example, there now are songs about cars and *la dolce vita* in Istanbul or about extra-marital relationships.

Other singers record and circulate songs with "easy meanings" that attract broad, younger audiences. There is no central scenario in the lyrics and no story that is being told. There are disjoined words with plain rhymes. For many contemporary players and performers in this genre, song making is not based upon the existential need of the player to express and share feelings, beliefs, ideas or stories, as was the case in the past. Rather, it is based on the desire for recognition and popularity and on commercial considerations.

Some singers, who publicly claim strong attachment to Trabzon and who have achieved high popularity among larger audiences in Turkey, believe that they can become "cosmopolitan" by singing songs from other countries and musical traditions. They usually fill in their repertoires with some flavors of kemençe music in order to connect with local audiences as well. Their claim of musical cosmopolitanism is also legitimized by their downplaying of the old-style, "authentic" kemençe music which is deemed inappropriate for larger audiences outside of Trabzon. The kemençe, according to their mentality, should be accompanied by other instruments and should play other repertoires in order to get accepted by diverse audiences outside of Trabzon and to gain extended recognition.

Such discourse about musical cosmopolitanism is not innocent, however. It also entails the wish of these professional musicians to enlarge their audiences and thus to increase their profits. This musical philosophy and practice actually condemns in advance the potential of the rural kemençe style to gain audiences outside of Trabzon. I believe it is also a strategy to monopolize the practices of music making and dissemination and to exclude "traditional musicians" from demanding bigger shares in this rising market. One is obliged to ask why the plain sound of kemençe should not be enjoyed by "foreign"

audiences, and why the desire to open up to other audiences is accompanied by significant changes in the initial performance technique and sonic character of this music.

The claims to musical cosmopolitanism and the desire to enlarge one's audience are also associated with and accompanied by the introduction and use of the technique of the vibrato in kemençe playing. This is a violin technique that was never used by the kemençe players until recently. As I described earlier in this chapter, playing on the double string is one of the main characteristics of the old style, while the intense use of the vibrato makes playing on one string inevitable. Vibrato and the one-string technique make the kemençe sound closer to the violin. For some kemençe performers the imitation of the sound of the violin is a sign of the kemençe's musical value and depth, whereas for others it is a sign of degeneration and parochialism. The former believe that the vibrato technique, because of its association with the violin, adds an "artistic" flavor to kemençe. In their line of thought, there is a modernist schism between "art," represented by vibrato and the technique of playing on one string, and "traditional music," represented by the rural performance techniques of the kemençe, the "double string" and the tremolo.

The debates about the extensive use of the vibrato in kemençe have led to the creation of two camps, the *yenilikçi*, the modernists, and the *gelenekçi*, the traditionalists. Despite the fact that the former still constitute a minority in the community of performers, they have managed to popularize their style with the support of media networks and the music industry. The latter, though the majority, have remained confined to smaller audiences who maintain stronger ties with the rural lifestyle and who have not managed to attract the support of mainstream media networks and music industries. The changes in the sonic character of kemençe go beyond the use of the vibrato, however.

In the early 2000s, a new "Black Sea music" genre started gaining greater popularity with the support of private radio and television stations. It was described as *pop Karadeniz*, that is pop Black-Sea music. The repertoire was confined to high speed, recently created melodies. The kemençe usually played in very high tones, accompanied by disco sounds and beats. This genre can be heard in music videos which present not only the singer, generally a fit, handsomeman, but also professional dancers, whose style is reminiscent of American pop singers.

It is important to note that the demographics of the kemençe performer community have changed significantly in recent years and that this has had a significant impact on the music as a whole. For the younger generations of the Black Sea immigrant communities in Istanbul and elsewhere, the kemençe gradually started becoming a symbol not just of Trabzon, as it used to be, but of the whole of the eastern Black Sea province. The instrument began to be acquired by aspiring young people who were learning how to play in Istanbul. Such younger players did not grow up with the old, Trabzon-style kemençe, but were rather influenced by the new styles produced by the recording industries in Istanbul. Their parents had migrated to Istanbul not from Trabzon, but from other smaller towns of the eastern Black Sea. Their varying musical experiences and tastes, cultural backgrounds and aspirations impacted the way they understood and played the kemençe. In their hands this instrument lost its Trabzon-centric character and acquired a new sonic personality and became associated with different meanings. While the Trabzonian kemençe players in Istanbul tended to use synthesizers and the bağlama to accompany them, producing a genre derogatorily described by its opponents as

arabesque, the immigrant performers from other towns of the Black Sea incorporated the kemençe into rock bands. Both make extensive use of the vibrato technique.

These two Istanbul-made kemençe genres differ not only in style and aesthetics but also in the discourses that accompany them. Proponents of the "arabesque" style make strong claims to "being modern" and try to make use of the existing channels and codes in order to incorporate themselves into the mainstream. They do not attempt to produce an alternative, but actually copy from pop music genres in their attempt to gain recognition and popularity, and to make profit. They imitate in order to re-package the kemençe as a "modern" instrument. Their song themes usually revolve around issues of longing for the village life, poverty, migration, marginality and aspiration for a better economic status in the city or a hope for return to the village. Most of this genre's performers with whom I interacted during my fieldwork usually associated themselves, openly or tacitly, with Islamic and nationalist political ideas and practices. Their audiences are usually people who claim some kind of attachment to Trabzon and are of various ages. On the other hand, those who invest kemençe music with "rock-style" sounds identify with left-wing movements and ideals and who see their music as a form of critique of the musical and political mainstreams. They, too, imitate, not pop music, but foreign rock bands, in order to make a direct "political intervention," as they imagine it, through their lyrics. Their main target audience is the younger, secular and western-oriented generation. Both genres created their own networks and places where they could be heard. The "arabesque" style is more frequently heard in night clubs and at dance nights organized by Trabzon immigrant associations on the outskirts of Istanbul. The "rock style" is more often heard at concerts organized by students at universities or by

private concert companies in mainstream night clubs in downtown Istanbul or in open concert spaces.

The rise of different kemençe musical styles and genres does not mean that those that preceded them will totally vanish. There is no linear "progression" from one genre to the other. They currently all co-exist—the "authentic," the "arabesque," and the "rock"—each with its own audiences, performers and ethos, and with individual debates about styles, authenticity and the future of kemençe music raising the spirits of its fans, supporters and practitioners.

The making of kemençe music in Istanbul was very much influenced and shaped by private radio and TV stations. The rise of these networks in the 1990s seriously challenged the hegemony of the music industry and destabilized its monopoly over the production and circulation of musical genres. Some of these radio and TV programs contributed significantly to the revival of a longing for the "authentic" village life and experience. Various TV stations, with names that made a clear reference to the Black Sea region such as "Black Sea TV", "Rize TV", "Çay TV,"[63] among others, made their appearance and started gaining large audiences through satellite broadcasting in Turkey and abroad, where many Trabzon and generally Black Sea immigrants lived. Music shows, serials, films, travel shows and news programs became the medium through which the large immigrant communities were to "feel" and maintain imaginary links with their homeland back along the shores of the Black Sea.

[63] Rize is the name of a small town on the Black Sea district of Turkey, few miles east of Trabzon, "Çay" means tea and it is the most commercialized local product completely identified with this region.

Music shows were among the most popular, and a number of new artists made their first live appearance on such shows, reaching extended and dispersed audiences, something that had been impossible before the establishment of these electronic networks. The influence of TV and radios on music making and listening as mediators and creators of images, sounds and meanings was such that artists were now compelled to make an album in order to gain access to a live music show and from there to broader audiences. Many of these shows presented *atma türkü* and *muhabet* songs, both Trabzon musical genres based on free improvisation that were very popular in the rural communities in Trabzon before their migration. This genre had gradually lost its popularity because of migration and because of its exclusion from the music industry and the TRT, which found the genre's "untamed" nature to be an obstacle to making a profit and constructing a national culture. The presentation of this genre on TV shows brought the imaginary "home" even closer to the immigrants. Additionally the private "local" TV and radio stations contributed to the creation of a strong longing for "village life" in Trabzon. This longing was based on the direct experience of the older generations who were born and raised there and on the imagination of the younger population born and raised in the urban centers or abroad. This longing in turn facilitated the return of the "traditionalist" musical genre with the "old" and "authentic" kemençe style at its center. In the rest of this chapter, I focus on the various meanings that this "authentic" style has for my informants, both performers and listeners.

Televised authenticity

Şeref is a kemençe player and singer in his early fifties and the most famous representative of the "authentic" style of kemençe. His audience consists mainly of people who are over forty years old and who are *gurbetçi*, immigrants like himself, people who "find themselves" in the experiences he sings about. His "authentic style," both in kemençe technique and in lyrics which use local words and idioms not known to people outside of his locality, along with his "sincere" narrative style that openly describes his experiences, create a very strong sense of locality with which the immigrants identify. Some of his listeners do not understand every word in his lyrics, and they call him to ask about their meaning. Şeref believes that he is helping his listeners to better grasp "their past and culture."

When he performs live on television on the weekly show that he himself presents, he maintains the same "authentic style." His viewers from the Trabzon diaspora from all over the world send messages of support and love via mobile phones and email, also requesting that he play some of his songs. The name of his TV show is *Bir Yudum Muhabbet,* which means a "sip of musical togetherness." The show is presented on one of the Black-Sea private TV stations in Istanbul, broadcast via satellite to Trabzon immigrant communities in many parts of the world. In his show Şeref tries to represent and revive the old musical gatherings of his village. His songs escape the standardized commercial song format of the 3-5 minute length and are closer to the free improvised styles people sang in the villages before migration. Şeref usually presents different guest artists who are not that well known, because they play "authentic" rather than

"commercial" music. He himself plays and sings alternately with his guests, while sometimes they play together. He only invites "authentic" artists to his show. The discussion section is limited. Şeref will introduce his guests, they briefly discuss their current activities and then they move on to playing and singing. Interrupted only to advertise the program's sponsors, the show might go on for two or three hours.

The studio is decorated with large pictures depicting cows and huts on the high pastures, flowers and trees, and scenes from the highland life. Some pieces of corn are placed on the table in front of the presenter, strengthening the village flavor. Sometimes Şeref invites dance groups from different parts of Trabzon to perform on the show. Though there is a synthesizer in the studio, it has a secondary role, which is to accompany the dancers and provide the rhythm with its electric drum if the davul, the original village drum, is not present.

Şeref rarely presents any of his few music videos. In these videos, he is always depicted walking on the highlands, looking at cows, touching the grass and the soil, looking at the mountains and the approaching clouds, playing kemençe and singing in front of an old, abandoned house, always dressed in a pair of jeans and a dark shirt. At times, the video shows two old people, a man and a woman, in black and white, representing his dead parents who are no longer on the high pastures to welcome him.

It is not marketable enough to remind people of the passing of time and aging, the separation from the parents and the beloved ones and the approach of death. But Şeref does not care at all about the "market." Rather, he wants to sing what he has in his heart, as he repeatedly told me. Şeref's songs tell stories that run contrary to the "modern ethos" of the city, an ethos that tends to forget or overlook human mortality and suffering. It is

an "ethos" that pushes people to live in the present and plan for the future, forgetting the past. Şeref's "authentic" songs go against this modernist oblivion. Besides, for him, the future means aging and the approaching death, not the accumulation of wealth. His TV music show "entertains" by creating longing for Trabzon and the village lifestyle, and by reminding his listeners of a fundamental characteristic of that village culture: the sense of one's mortality.

Şeref

Şeref is a retired shuttle driver and kemençe player, singer and song maker. His name means "honor." He was born in 1960 in the Maçka district of Trabzon. Until he was fourteen years old, he lived in a village, where he finished primary and middle school. That period of his life was spent between his village and the highland pastures, where his family would settle, together with their animals, every summer. Transhumance shaped his childhood and his character.

His father had migrated to the city of Zonguldak, about 559 miles west, in order to work as a coal miner and send money to the family in Maçka. He lived there until 1966. His income was the family's only source of cash. Agricultural products from the family's farm and animals were mainly used for internal consumption and secondarily, rarely, for commercial purposes.

Şeref takes pride at his birth place and refers to his village in both its old Pontic-Greek name, Mesohor ("Middle Village"), and its new Turkish name, Konaklar ("Mansions"). He is particularly proud of the area's long river, named Galyan, a common reference point for all the inhabitants of this mountainous landscape. Rivers in this region form the site of various activities and create a sense of a larger community for the

surrounding villages. The expression "we are children of the same river" is a usual mode of identification. Şeref, like most of the region's inhabitants, acquired a spatial vocabulary from previous generations that enables him to navigate in the forest and on the mountains as easily as if he were walking among the rooms of his house. This close contact and knowledge of nature is a source of great pride and pleasure that is imprinted on Şeref's character. Life in these villages required other kinds of knowledge and expertise, not easily comprehended by urbanites. It was a completely different lifestyle closely tied to and dependent on nature and cattle.

Mesohor is located in the mountainous zone of Maçka district in the hinterland, about 16 miles away from the port city of Trabzon. The steep slopes of the mountain and the lack of arable lands there obliged the inhabitants to have small parcels of fields around their houses for cultivating their crops. The villagers grew corn, beans, potatoes and cabbage, out of which they made their daily meals, which comprised of different kinds of soups and stuffed dishes. Wheat and rice was very rare until the 1960s, and these were considered a luxury, coming only from outside. The three or four cattle kept under the house provided the faily milk for cheese and yogurt. If there was any surplus in cheese, the family would occasionally sell it on the local market in the nearby town of Maçka or in the city of Trabzon. Matches were also difficult to find, and the locals invented various ways of using a match more than once.

Sugar was a luxury. It was very precious and was used as a drug for various illnesses, since the locals believed that it had therapeutic powers. If a family had the luxury of using sugar in their tea, it was considered "rich." Şeref's uncle, who would travel out of the village to Trabzon and elsewhere, would occasionally bring sugar to his

sister, Şeref's mother, wrapped in paper. His mother would lock it high in a cupboard so that the children wouldn't find and eat it. Every time Şeref asked his mother why she hid the sugar—an act that captured his imagination together with the sugar's taste—she would tell them that she was going to use it as medication. If somebody got poisoned, she would take some sugar, mix it with water and give it to the poisoned individual to drink and recover.

The family owned a small warehouse and a *serander*. The *serander* is a small room made of wood, based over four wooden legs, used to dry the corn. After it was dried, the corn was taken to the village's shared mill near the river, to be turned into flour. *Serander* is a word used only in the local Trabzon idiom, it comes from the Greek word *Ksairaino* (to dry). The experience of using the *serander* was very vivid in Şeref's memory and formed the basis for his strong criticism against contemporary, corporate, food production, which he called completely unnatural.

The villagers would not visit the nearby town of Maçka or the city of Trabzon often, because in terms of food production, they were quite self-sufficient. Moreover, in the 1960s, it was not easy to travel through the mountains to reach the nearby markets. The only food product they would take from Trabzon was hamsi*,* the anchovy-like fish for which the Black Sea was famous. Another product purchased from the town was the kerosene for the house lamps.

In groups of five to ten people, men and women, relatives or neighbors, they would travel with their baskets on their back for two days and nights, together with their horses and mules. They would stop to rest for few hours during the nights at the *hans,* the local road houses that were dispersed in various places on the way to the city. "Resting"

in this context means sitting on the ground next to the animal, trying to relax from walking and maybe take a short nap.

When they would reach Trabzon, they would go to the port, where the fishermen had spread the hamsi, which was in great abundance at those times. The Turkish expression "*hamsi karaya vurdu*" (the anchovies washed ashore) was a very widespread saying in Trabzon denoting the abundance of this fish, which was also a sign of local prosperity. Şeref's mother and her company would fill their baskets with fresh hamsi. They would get very wet carrying them, since they did not have nylon to cover the basket and protect themselves from the water pouring from the fish.

Child care, field cultivation, the collection of crops and food production were almost the exclusive duty of the women, while men would help with the animal work and chopping wood in the forest, when they were not absent in remote places to work or busy with *muhabbet*, the local male gathering for the purpose of socializing, chatting, drinking alcohol and, of course, playing the kemençe and singing. Children, when not at school, would either play or help their mothers. However, a significant amount of the time would be spent indoors due to heavy snow and rain.

From the late spring until early autumn, when the whole community would migrate to the highlands with their animals, life would change. The weather conditions and the landscape enabled a tighter social life and exchange at the local "tea houses" for the men, at the open fields for all, and at neighboring houses. For few months the isolation of village life would give way to thicker social interaction, to more play, better working conditions and more kemençe music.

Since his childhood Şeref would listen to elders in the village play the kemençe and developed a great love for the instrument and its sound. Despite this affection, he did not dare to start learning how to play it because of the general mentality that was prevalent at the time in the village. Many elders did not approve of younger people playing kemençe, because they considered it dangerous for their morality; the kemençe would push them to "bad habits" such as alcohol consumption, something completely unacceptable for the faithful Muslims of the community. The more religious one was, the less affection one had for the kemençe and the activities surrounding it. Despite this climate, there remained some older people in his village playing the instrument, but they were not respected by many members of the community.

When Şeref turned 14, he migrated to Istanbul to work, together with one of his friends from the village. The experience of moving out of one's immediate community of family and relatives in the village to an urban center, is described in Turkish by the word *gurbet.*[64] Gurbet is a painful experience for thousands of people from Trabzon and it constitutes one of the main themes of popular songs with the kemençe. Those who live in a state of gurbet constantly think of their villages and the moment they will return. Şeref was not an exception.

When he moved to Istanbul to work in a factory he took with him a kemençe that was given to him by one of his friends, who had initially bought it for himself but never managed to learn how to play. Since he was now living as a bachelor, and far from the gaze of the village's elders, Şeref was free to start playing his beloved instrument. This freedom and the difficulties he was facing in Istanbul, combined with his great longing

[64] Gurbet means both "foreign lands" as well as the experience of migrating and living away from one's village and family.

for his village, pushed him to start trying to play melodies with the kemençe and to come up with lyrics describing his longing for his family and his childhood. This experience left a strong imprint on Şeref. He started learning melodies and creating his own. He played only for himself, in order to relieve the pain of the experience of gurbet. At the time, it had never occurred to him that the kemençe playing and singing could become a more engaged and professional activity from which he could also benefit financially.

While in Istanbul, he heard that there are opportunities for profitable work in Libya and made the big decision to move there, even further away from his village and family. However, he had his kemençe with him to accompany and console him. In Libya he worked as a truck driver at a construction company. There was a small community of Turkish immigrants, though not from Trabzon, for whom Şeref would constantly play the kemençe. Since there was no other social life for them and the kemençe was the only instrument that was linking them with their country, they started loving the instrument. Şeref was surprised and also proud that he managed to make these non-Trabzonian immigrants love the kemençe.

Life in Libya was difficult. After two years of hard work and loneliness, Şeref decided to return to Istanbul, where he started working as a private shuttle driver. A few years later in 1988, after having lived in gurbet for fourteen years, and with the encouragement of his father, he decided to return to his homeland, Trabzon, where he continued working as a driver for the municipal shuttles.

Searching for authentic style

It was after his return to Trabzon that Şeref started engaging with the kemençe in a more professional way. His performances at local festivities, dance nights and weddings now provided him with valuable extra income beyond his main job as a driver for the municipality. His small audience expanded gradually. Şeref created his own style, singing songs about his youth, *gurbet,* the passing of time, unfulfilled love and the longing for the life in the village that was now vanishing under the rapid socioeconomic transformations. These themes and the emotions that accompanied them touched a particular audience, those with similar experiences and of the same generation as Şeref. Thus, kemençe playing and singing, something which had started as a private activity to ease the pain of immigration and "cure" longing for the homeland, evolved over time into a public musical genre that gathered listeners who were living away from Trabzon, in major urban centers or in other European countries. Şeref found himself in the middle of musical creativity and in a network of listeners and small patrons that would further support him with his work.

Since 1988, Şeref has recorded and released twenty-seven personal albums which include only the kemençe and his vocals, without the accompaniment of any other instruments. This is a genre called "*otantik*," or "authentic," in the local musical idiom. From the approximately one hundred songs of these twenty-seven albums, both the lyrics and the melodies of ninety songs were created by Şeref. For the listeners and performers of his generation those who create new songs are respected, praised and loved by the listeners; they are creators that leave their stamp on the acoustic environment of Black-

Sea music and become leaders of the musical genre. Those who simply perform and sing the melodies of others were not as highly regarded as the authentic creators and relegated to secondary importance. Being brought up in such an environment, Şeref believed that it was always important to create new, original songs that would be loved by the listeners. Originality and creativity are virtues that make the performer and singer a real artist, and not merely a *taklitçi*, an imitator of the songs of others.

Despite his local record company's encouragement to include some other instruments in one or two of his songs on every album for commercial purposes, Şeref has refused, since he believed that this would disrupt his authentic style and his fame. He considers himself a local *şair,* a local poet and song maker who transforms into songs the experiences of his life. The older generations of kemençe performers from his village are his "teachers" and the people whom he takes as an example. That generation always played the kemençe without the accompaniment of any other instrument. This style is described as "*doğal*," natural. Şeref started his artistic career with this "natural" and "authentic" style and he wants to finish it in this way, without any "deviations."

Şeref shares and echoes the anxieties of a considerable number of performers and listeners about the degeneration of the kemençe, its performance style and sonic quality, and the overall ethos of this musical genre with the introduction of songs that have nothing to do, according to this approach, with the life, experiences and culture of the people of Trabzon. Şeref has often travelled abroad and met many kemençe performers, both from Trabzon and from Greece, and has reached the conclusion that those who still maintain the authentic style are the Greek performers, as well as some performers in his native Maçka, Sürmene and Çaykara, where a Greek-speaking Muslim population

currently lives. It is a duty for Şeref to continue producing music in the authentic style, the same way that his ancestors did it, maintaining and continuing their own "authentic style." For Şerefö the past and its performance style is the locus of authenticity and a point of reference. Authenticity is not only a matter of performance technique, rhythmic quality and song themes, it is also related to the performer's character.

The ethos of the kemençe player

The kemençe has been overlooked for many years in Turkey, and its music was not considered "art," but either an "unsophisticated activity" for the amusement of villagers or simply "our local instrument" for the inhabitants of the Black-Sea region. This powerful discourse and its distinctions have an impact even on those who play it. There are many who claim that the kemençe should be used and presented in ways that enable it to be taken seriously by other audiences as a form of "art." To be taken seriously by other urban, western educated audiences has been an issue of consideration and anxiety for many (but not all) performers and singers. This "elevation" of the kemençe to the level of "art" is also dependent on the behavior and the ethos of the performer.

Şeref makes a sharp distinction between what he calls "commercial" and "artistic" life. For someone to be a real artist, they need to base their activity on their local, Black Sea culture and be very sensitive regarding its values. Şeref believes that he has followed this rule throughout his life. The fact that this small instrument with the three strings can by itself address large audiences of thousands of people creates an extra burden and duty to the performer that pushes him to be more responsible than other musicians. The fact that the kemençe performer can play alone and for large audiences without being

dependent on the accompaniment of other instruments is a source of pride for Şeref and others who think like him. This is an ethos of independence for the performer and the instrument that is highly valued by performers and listeners. To be a real artist, however, it is not enough to play in this lonely, authentic way and sing well. The kemençe player also has to be tied to the customs, traditions and habits of his homeland, Trabzon in particular, which is imagined as a place whose men are serious, sincere, and fair. This "model of the Trabzon man" must be the kemençe player's reference point of behavior; the performer has to possess this "standardized" Trabzon character and ethos.

Şeref imagines the ideal performer as a person with great responsibilities as well as with the capacity to fulfill them. For him the kemençe artist is the mirror of the society to which he belongs. He presents himself in front of large audiences and he has to be careful in talking to, behaving with and looking at other people. At the center of this is his interaction with other women in different contexts, including weddings, dance nights and festivals. The artist must know how to behave towards the mothers, sisters, wives, cousins and daughters of the participants at an event. He should not flirt with them, because this would stigmatize him and the whole community of kemençe performers and their art.

With the exception of strictly male gatherings for the purpose of listening to the kemençe and the consumption of alcohol, where the codes of behavior can be more "relaxed," all other gatherings in the presence of kemençe are "family attended," and strict moral codes are implemented due to the presence of women. In these contexts, if the kemençe player flirts with a woman, this will be severely disapproved by her male relatives and the performer will be criticized, stigmatized and, depending on the

seriousness of the incident, even attacked verbally or physically. Many injuries have been reported at these kinds of events, since many participants have the habit of bringing with them their personal guns, which they do not hesitate to use in case of "emergency." Thus, protecting one's reputation also means protecting the prestige of the community of performers.

Şeref was once invited to perform at an event in a European country. There, he heard some of the attendants talking very derogatively about another kemençe player whom he knew because of the latter's flirtatious behavior with a woman. He felt very embarrassed and started wondering whether people would think similarly of him, as a kemençe player. He worries about keeping up his reputation and is always very careful in interacting with his audiences. He is also constantly concerned with what his impact and legacy will be.

Şeref believes in two central prerequisites for authenticity: To play in an authentic way is one facet, but this has to be accompanied by the "authentic" Trabzonian male ethos described above. Şeref strives to continue and end his career without any "deviations" from these rules, values and forms of behavior.

Making songs

For Şeref, singing means narrating personal experiences and feelings with the accompaniment of the kemençe. Depending on the experience and the feelings described, the melody is either slow, "nostalgic" and "plaintive" or fast and cheerful.

When Şeref drives alone to a village or to a nearby mountain, he likes to stop at isolated places where nobody can see him, take out his kemençe and play. He thinks of a

particular feeling, of longing, or of a past experience that causes him grief, and he tries to sing it in a way that will "satisfy his soul." Thinking of events or moments that cause him grief creates a highly emotional charge in him, something he feels gets discharged when he plays and sings about it. He cries sometimes when he goes through this process, but this only happens when he plays alone, and not in front of any audiences. Şeref considers it an embarrassment to cry in front of other people. This entire process "appeals to his soul" and is like an "antibiotic" for him.

This conscious emotional mobilization is also necessary for the production of new melodies and lyrics. Şeref can create new songs only when he is alone. His main purpose is to explain the life in the village in the past and the characters and lifestyles of the older generations, so that younger listeners will learn how their ancestors used to live. People who are younger than forty and were brought up in the cities after their parents migrated from Trabzon are not very aware of that old lifestyle, and Şeref hopes that his songs will teach and mobilize their curiosity about the old habits, customs and "traditions."

One of his favorite themes is the old wedding ceremonies in the village, which used to last for about three days in public but now last for three hours and take place in local "wedding halls". In one of his songs about weddings, he sings: "The old village weddings came to mind again / We would go and invite the people from the nearby villages / The drum, the zurna (a kind of local clarion) and the kemençe would decorate the wedding / We would dance for two days and two nights." Şeref's songs narrate stories in a very personal, intimate way. His way of singing his experiences is very effective in immediately capturing his audience, which responds with direct emotional involvement through the memory of shared experiences. Before he starts thinking of the lyrics, Şeref

tries to remember how the wedding would actually take place, reconstructing it in his imagination. After establishing this initial sequence of events and feelings in his mind, he then tries to produce the lyrics that will capture the entire story in a vibrant way.

Recalling and teaching the past through song has been a constant preoccupation and theme in his creations. Many of his songs last for about ten minutes, something which is unusual for other performers, who make songs that last a maximum of four to five minutes. This is an old, epic style of performance not easily consumed by larger audiences, who are used to listening to a commercial style: three- or four-minute songs with cheerful themes and accompanied by other instruments. Şeref with his kemençe and lyrics, reminds them of the past, of the passing of time, and of death, something that is not very pleasant, at least for younger audiences. This is one reason why his listeners are above forty years old. One might say that Şeref is totally "out of fashion," according to the musical trends in Turkey, but he does not care. What he cares about is to remind older people and to teach younger people.

Another favorite song theme is the memory of the activities of the old local craftsmen of his village, who made tools for daily use, such as baskets, sickles and rubber shoes. In Şeref's village there lived an old man by the name of Seyfettin Uncle, who did not have legs. In the early 1960s, rubber shoes began to replace the older rustic shoes. Seyfettin had developed a technique for replacing the damaged part of the rubber shoe and had thus become a point of reference in the village. Damaged shoes would need repairing, as buying new ones was no easy matter. The same was true for other tools of daily usage. Şeref always remembers with longing the way villagers dealt with these needs. On one of his CDs, he wrote the story of these craftsmen, so that next generations

would learn something more about such communities and their lifestyles. Şeref is very productive and can write a few songs for an entire album in just four or five hours, as long as he has in his mind the personal experiences he wants to narrate in the lyrics.

Unfulfilled love

The more painful the experience, the more productive Şeref becomes. Unfulfilled love is one such painful experience, and as many male informants told me, they and many of their friends have had similar experiences. There are numerous songs by many kemençe performers describing unfulfilled love in various ways. It is a very popular theme in the kemençe repertoire.

At this point it is necessary to get a glimpse of an aspect of Şeref's past in order to understand the depth of his musical engagement with the experience and emotional pain of unfulfilled love. As mentioned earlier, he grew up in a very poor family. Most of the families in the nearby villages villages were poor in the 1960s, a period when migration to Germany became an ever more attractive opportunity for many villagers. Until then, there was more or less an equality in material possessions and a similarity in lifestyle among the members of the rural community. When people began to migrate to Germany, new habits and new lifestyles entered their daily routines and gradually transformed them, pushing them away from their previous village mentalities and habits. This started creating a gap and a hierarchy between those in Germany and those who remained in the village. This gap would become evident every time the immigrants came together in summer on the high mountain pastures. This experience of differentiation and hierarchization due to migration to Europe was so strong that the locals who never

migrated to Germany but chose to stay in the village, invented a term in order to make fun of the new mentalities and behaviors of those who migrate: *Almanci*. In Turkish, "*Alman*" means "German," while the ending *–ci* here denotes someone who is an ardent supporter of something, or who takes pleasure from that thing. Almanci thus means someone who tried to become like a German.

Şeref fell in love with his neighbor's daughter when he was 12 years old. Communication between boys and girls was only possible during the summer life in the highlands, since life in the village was very isolated and girls were severely controlled by their parents. On the highlands, life and rules were a bit more relaxed. Şeref indirectly expressed his love for the girl by taking her handkerchief after she forgot it hanging on the fence after washing it one day. When she started looking for it Şeref looked at her and smiled. This was a clear sign that he had it. She smiled too and did not request the handkerchief back, a clear approval of his feelings and a sign of her own positive feelings towards him. If the girl was not interested in Şeref, she would have definitely asked for her handkerchief back. This was a very well-known cultural practice among boys and girls, even among young men and women.

Their love of course, under the moral values in the locality, could only remain at a platonic level until they would decide to get married. But of course among the youth of the village, it was known who loved whom, to avoid misunderstandings, confusions and other related problems stemming from not knowing. These platonic loves would sometimes reach the ears of the parents, too, but they generally would not intervene unless there was a "pushing" of the ethical limits on the part of the boy.

This way of falling in love with a girl—letting her know, receiving her approval and imagining her as your future wife—was a standard practice in the locality and throughout the mountainous rural communities in Trabzon. If a boy held the handkerchief of a girl, this meant that they loved each other and that they wanted to get married. Possessing a handkerchief was a powerful act of bonding between a boy and a girl or a man and a woman.

However, things where not easy for Şeref. One summer, a family that had migrated to Germany came back to the village for vacation. They knew the girl with whom Şeref had fallen in love. Their son was also interested in her, so his family went to the girl's family and ask her parents to give their daughter's hand in marriage. The girl's parents agreed to the marriage of their daughter. Nobody would have refused to give his or her daughter to a boy whose family had migrated to Germany, assuming that the latter had become wealthy by now and that their daughter would have a good life, even away from them and in a foreign country. Thus, the girl with whom Şeref had fallen in love for the first time in his life married another young man and moved to Germany.

This was devastating for Şeref and pushed him away from the village, to Istanbul, where he migrated to work and to forget. This experience of unfulfilled—even betrayed—love is vividly described in many of his songs. Below I provide, in rough translation, excerpts of the lyrics of one of these songs, "The Tired Man of the Highlands":

> Everything I experienced with you in every season has become a memory
>
> May God punish those who do not keep their word
>
> I lived for years in pain

Let people ask the blooming highlands about our love

Now moss has covered the rocks of the house in the highlands

The time has come when the birds are again chirping on the branches

The honeycomb has filled its honey from the different flowers, the village empties

There is no tomorrow for such a day

We were cutting the blooming flowers

You indisposed me from the roads of the highlands

In the morning the clouds would come down and the night was windy

Sometimes I go to the highlands to walk around like a foreigner,

Though there was a time we couldn't stay on the highlands in the absence of each other.

I made a fence around my house on the highlands.

You would hang your clothes there to dry after washing them.

One day the weather got rainy, she came to pick up the clothes from the fence,

She was so excited that she forgot her handkerchief hanging.

May those who separated us, my girl, never see the face of Paradise.

I kept your handkerchief and made it my pillow

I laid my head on it, pouring tears for you

You've turned my dreams into a hell.

Many years have passed since then

Your handkerchief lost its color a bit, I still have it.

You looked for your handkerchief all around,

And you pretended that you couldn't find it,

I looked at you smiling, and then you understood.

You did not look for me, you did not ask me, you went to the foreigners. Let them ask about our love to the people of the highlands.

Our love has become an epic on the grasses of the highlands.

Everyone still speaks about our love.

One day they accidentally asked me about you,

I said that your pain still lives in me, it hasn't died, the "bad pain."

I was cursing cruel Germany for years,

Fire and gunpowder can't live next to each other

I must abandon this village so that I won't keep remembering,

I experienced so many galls in this village.

For years I did not erase all those written in my memory,

My face is clear, my head stands up proudly, I kept my word,

Your mother gave you to someone else,

And you immediately forgot that you gave your word to me.

My song for you is not finished, I filled 21 cassettes.

There is a difference between us, you are an *Almanci*, and I am a villager.

Now it is time for you to experience some pain.

Years have passed and we have both gotten old.

Didn't you think about this day when you were abandoning me?

I could only sing a few songs, I was not a kemençe player.

You made me an immigrant when I was fourteen years.

You would visit the village with other girls.

Then you made fun of the village, you stopped drinking tea,

You didn't like it any more, as if you had always been drinking Nescafé.

Where is your arrogance now, the safe is now empty,

The shaft you opened to me became your grave, I kept you in my mind,

I was stubborn, I did not forget, my name is the tired man of the highlands,

I am the same, I haven't changed yet...

Şeref uses a very simple and descriptive language in this song and in every song he has made. Emotions are described in a straightforward manner, as expressed among friends and relatives, without pretention or hesitation. In this song one can discern what it means to be a "Trabzon man," according to Şeref. When you fall in love with someone and acknowledge this love, then you have to keep your word and get married to this person. Changing your mind is considered a betrayal and opportunistic behavior that is outside of the Trabzon ethos which Şeref espoused. Words must be kept, both by men and women, especially when they are about love and indirect promises for a future life. Şeref also criticizes the girl who married someone who migrated to Germany and for forgetting her culture and the kemençe. Instead of the local tea, she has begun to drink Nescafé, which becomes the symbol of Europe and foreignness. Şeref was deeply offended and hurt by the girl's behavior, and he is not afraid to state this openly in his song. However, he also stresses his pride in being sincere and in possessing the ethos of a villager, which for him is a great value, something opposed to the ethos of the *Almanci* girl, who betrayed him, married someone else and migrated to Germany, forgetting her roots. "Europeanization" is something negative for Şeref, not a value or something that someone should aspire to. "You do not become a human when you get Europeanized," he emphatically told me. One has to remain tightly bound to one's own local, "Trabzon culture" in order to lose himself. Becoming something else, assimilating, is equated by Şeref to loosing one's humanness.

My dialogue with Şeref continued long after I left Trabzon and returned to Princeton—through his songs, to which I would listen every day, trying to understand the

lyrics and the spirit in which they were written. Even I, a strong fan of the "authentic style" and a performer myself, had difficulties initially in connecting with his songs and melodies. My own kemençe culture and listening habits, shaped under different experiences and circumstances in an urban center of Greece, made listening to Şeref a difficult and at times challenging experience. My experience of standardized 3-4 minutes' songs, with rhymes and refrains, prevented me from appreciating the free, improvisational style of Şeref and his sometimes ten-minute sung narratives. But the more I got to know his life and his ideas, and the more I listened to his songs in the cassettes he gave me and on YouTube, the more I started associating with his music. My firsthand experience of various aspects of life in the rural communities of Trabzon during my fieldwork also helped me feel closer to his "authentic style." I slowly started getting into the "spirit" of this music, and gradually became a strong Şeref fan. This conversion made me abandon my previous musical attachments and practices and try to recreate my own style. I realized that the art of evoking strong emotions through the sound of the kemençe and sung narratives was more difficult than I had thought. It required sincerity towards yourself and your listeners, a constant questioning of the meaning of life and also the courage to expose and admit your own vulnerability and weaknesses in public. And this courage to expose yourself is what makes you a "real man," according to the old, "authentic" Trabzon ethos that is present in all the kemençe songs made by the older generations of players, whom Şeref followed closely.

Arothimia/Hasret (Longing)

Unfulfilled desire for a woman though is not the only strong emotion evoked by the "authentic" style. Longing for the village and for relatives is another. For a closer analysis of the musical production of this emotion, let us turn to the experience of a younger player and singer, Adem. Şeref and Adem, though almost thirty years apart in age, share common ideas and values about the rural lifestyle and "authentic kemençe music." They also share anxiety about this genre's future, and the "culture" it represents.

Though they had never met in person and were not well aware of each other's musical work, they had much in common. When making a new song, Adem first decides on the rhythm and then creates the melody. This is not a process of abstract thinking or a writing of notes on paper. The creation of a new melody takes place in practice, while Adem plays his kemençe and experiments with different combinations of sounds. It might take from few hours to few days or even months, depending on his mood and "inspiration." Inspiration here is a condition where Adem is in "communication" with himself, when he has a clear mind and can think without distraction on the past experiences about which he wants to sing. He then decides on a topic according to the feeling that the melody creates in him. If it is a fast, rhythmic melody, he will write about something pleasant, while if it is a slow melody, he will usually write lyrics about something sad. Then he calculates the syllables of the melody's flow in order to start thinking about how to write the lyrics and to create rhymes.

Adem has to be alone, without any distractions from cars, phone calls and noise, in order to write a new song. In this way he can get focused on the "plot." After he

decides on the topic, he either makes a "scenario" by recreating in his imagination some of his past experiences in the village or by creating new, imagined or potential experiences. For example, in his very popular song "My Eyes Are Filled with Tears," sung in Pontic-Greek only, he sings about his longing for his village life and for his parents. He concludes the lyrics by saying that he wants to be buried in his village. This is a slow melody that talks about his experience living as a *gurbetçi* away from Trabzon and his parents. After deciding on the emotion he wants to describe, here the longing for the homeland and parents, he creates scenes where he describes what it feels like to live away from home. He put himself at the center of the narrative:

My eyes are filled with tears,
I think and cry,
I will tell the world,
all my heart's pains.

Chorus: The village, the highlands,
They came to my mind again,
I miss my mother,
The mountains, and my father.

My heart's door,
Has been locked by the pains,
I am begging like a beggar
At the doors of strangers.

When I am hungry, I eat blood,

When I am thirsty, I drink tears,

My hair has turned gray,

I will die in foreign lands.

I look for things of the past,

I always think of these.

Come and smell me,

Feel how I bear the smell of the highlands.

If I die, hey, my friends,

Take me to the mountains,

I do not need water or food,

For me the birds suffice.

I visited and walked in villages and lands,

I haven't seen something like you in the world, oh Trabzon.

He does not use any abstract terms, his narrative is simple and easily understood by listeners. His metaphors are plain and his "scenes" descriptive.

When Adem makes a new song, he says that he never thinks of the potential audience. He only thinks about his feelings and how to verbalize and communicate them to himself with words and sounds. He does it for himself first; he is his own audience. If

the song touches him then he considers it to be successful and proceeds in playing it to friends, then to the public and finally in a recording studio for a new album.

It is not an easy task to make a new song, especially in the "authentic Trabzon music" style. Innovation in this context is quite difficult, yet those who succeed remain in the memory of the listeners and colleagues. Value is given to those who make new songs, not those who simply reproduce existing songs, no matter the success of the cover. And this kind of creativity is rare, especially among the younger generations. One has to use particular rhythms and playing techniques and to invent lyrics about the dominant themes in this musical genre: longing for the past, separation from a beloved, the sense of mortality and the futility of life and the expression of joy from experiences having taken place. Lyrics that move away from these particular themes are deemed inauthentic and not worth listening to by the fans and practitioners of this genre. Here, in *otantik Karadeniz muzigi* (authentic Black Sea music), which Adem claims to make, the idea of the past is particularly strongly represented in the lyrics.

The main theme in Adem's songs is longing, *arothimia* in Pontic-Greek and *haşret* in Turkish. Longing for everything, for his mother, for the life in the highland plateaus, for being away from the homeland, for a past love that wasn't fulfilled, a beloved friend or relative who passed away. Also central in his repertoire's songs are lyrics that remind the audiences, and to himself of humans' mortality. Longing is connected to this sense of mortality. As time passes, Adem contemplates his ageing and knows that his life will end sooner or later. This sense of mortality and of the passing of time are also very strongly present in the lyrics of songs made by older generations of kemençe players. Though there are references to God in the songs, Adem, like past

players, questions the existence of life after death and asks about the meaning of life. He says that he prefers to make and sing songs about experiences that cause him a "nostalgic pain" and make him think about life's meaning. Even when he makes rhythmic and joyful songs, there is longing hidden in the melody and in the lyrics.

The theme of longing for the homeland and everything related to it is central in the experience of the people of Trabzon, who have been migrating for years. By making these songs, Adem tries to reach out particularly to a Trabzon audience, without caring much about becoming popular to people outside of his region. His audience, even those who listen to the music outside of Trabzon, are attached to particular lands and more importantly to a way of life, an ethos and a worldview.

In one song on his most recent album, Adem sings about those who are obliged to migrate and to live in *gurbet*. The lyrics, written by Adem in the Black-Sea Turkish dialect, are quite revealing about how Adem and his listeners understand, and how strongly they feel about, this experience. The song's title is "Those Who Live in *Gurbet"*:

Ey Black Sea,
what was your sin,
all your villages are empty,
your people live in *gurbet*.

Your houses are locked,
all your villages are empty.
In the village old people stayed behind,
old husbands and wives.

Poverty throws people

to foreign lands,

people leave

to different countries.

The poor abandon the village

to make some money,

they work and they struggle

to create a future.

They leave behind

their children,

children await with teary eyes,

their parents' return.

Some grandfathers

long to return.

Poor kids,

they grow up like orphans.

For those who live in *gurbet,*

their soul is burning.

They await with longing

the days of their return.

Your mother brings you to life,

foreign lands get the most of you,

you return in your coffin

to the soil of your village,

they bring you and bury you,

in the soil of your village.

Adem uses metaphors and realistic descriptions to refer to the experience and feeling of *gurbet.* There is no pretention in his lyrics. The melodic verbalization of his feelings becomes more effective because of the successful combination of theme and melody. The structure of the melody is such that it arouses feelings of sorrow to those who are deeply socialized in the sonic meanings of this genre.

This song's primary audience is people in their forties and fifties who have experienced *gurbet*, something I witnessed during Adem's performances and in conversations with Adem's audience. Younger people born and raised in Istanbul or other urban centers and who did not experience life in the rural communities of Trabzon would not have the same degree of attachment to these kinds of songs, unless they were raised with a strong Trabzonian identity and maintain active links with the area. These are young people who have not become "modern," that is, those who have not appropriated the lifestyles and mentalities of the cities and haven't significantly changed their habits and ways of life. Adem's songs, either in Pontic-Greek or in Trabzon Turkish, constitute a reminder of the homeland, of the "old ways," and express a desire for return. This is a return not only in terms of geography, but also a return to a way of life before it was

changed by migration and modernization. Adem often told me that he wants to go back and live in his village. Istanbul was always *gurbet* for him.

Arothimia and *gurbet* are two central themes in the Trabzon music performed with the kemençe, not only by Adem but also by the previous generations of kemençe players and singers. Adem is simply following a long tradition. The gap between dreams, hopes, desires and expectations on the one hand and experiences in life on the other has produced a significant musical repertoire that has become the "tradition" in this genre both for performers like Adem and for listeners. It is not an exaggeration to argue that "authentic" kemençe music is the music of the unfulfilled.

The political stakes of authenticity

My informants associate the sense of authenticity with a strong sense of Trabzonian regionalism that makes them feel different from the other citizens of Turkey. The "authentic" here is also related to a strong attachment to family "history and culture." Şeref insists that people should not forget "their past"—their ancestors' habits, customs and ways of life, at the center of which stands music and the *kemençe*, the main instrument of this region. "Knowledge of the past" has become a very powerful discourse for Şeref and many of my other informants that is associated with an imagined and felt "locality," a way of being human that is now vanishing due to migration, and to the intrusion of new technologies and new ways of life. In this discussion about the past, the question of "were we came from" and the questioning of "roots" become a means of talking about belonging that is full of ambivalences. Şeref uses the dominant narrative about his own roots and those of his family, his village and Trabzon in general.

Nevertheless, he is not very sure about the degree of "truth" of such information. He says that Trabzonians came from Central Asia. However, he never uses the word "Turk"—what is of primary importance for him is "being from Trabzon." His words are characteristic of a confusion that is quite widespread in that locality, despite decades of mainstream propaganda regarding the "central Asian Turkish roots" of the people of Trabzon. Here are Şeref's words on the issue:

> How did your grandfather grow up and live, where did he come from and what kind of a person was he? First of all, one should never forget these. What was your music in the past? For example, for us it was kemençe. And what is kemençe? Well, I am talking only for myself, I am not sure, the information can be completely wrong, it can be inadequate, but when I researched this a bit, it came from Central Asia to Trabzon; then there was Pontos[65] here in Trabzon, it remained from them….eeeeh, I mean, as it is known, we now share a common culture with some people in Greece whose ancestors lived in Trabzon. Those who left to Greece and those who stayed here share the same Black Sea culture. But let's not call it Black Sea, let's call it Trabzon culture, because people don't listen to and play the kemençe in every part of the Black Sea. This is Trabzon culture, the music of our past is kemençe.

[65] As already described in chapter one, before the final domination of the Ottoman empire, there was a Greek medieval state extending throughout the Black Sea coast and its immediate interior. In 1461 it fell to the Ottomans. Pontos here, as mentioned by Şeref refers to the existence of that medieval state, however he is not quite clear about the people who were living within its borders. But what is important is to see how he employs this term and what kinds of meanings it is invested with. The Greek Orthodox population of the region that was relocated in Greece after 1923 is referred to as Pontian Greeks or Rum (Romans). There are also varying discourses in today's Trabzon about who these people were, stemming either from official networks or from independent researchers and writers of varying ideological persuasions (Islamists, nationalists, leftists).

Since the musical instrument is the marker of culture for Şeref, Trabzonians should certainly listen to kemençe, their region's instrument:

> Some of our elders were telling us that the kemençe came from Central Asia but of course, again, I am not sure how real this information is. Of course Pontic-Greeks here were playing kemençe, so I think that since they were playing the kemençe they, too, might have come from Central Asia. I do not know, this might still be inadequate, but I guess that the people of Trabzon must have come from somewhere in the past. These are the conclusions I reached in my research.

Some years ago Şeref had asked one of the famous old kemençe players of Trabzon about the roots of kemençe, and he told him that the instrument came from Central Asia. Another kemençe player from his own region in Maçka once told people in the locality that the kemençe had come from Central Asia, and Şeref now simply reproduces their narrative. However, he is not completely convinced that they were right, he still has his reservations. No matter what the "truth" is about where the kemençe came from, what is more important for Şeref is that Trabzon is the home of kemençe. And according to his narrative, the kemençe spread out to other places from Trabzon, and people who were relocated in Greece took the instrument there and made it popular, and those who remained in Trabzon continued playing it. Şeref's doubts about the history of the kemençe and the route it took is characteristic of a broader ambivalence among many Trabzonians about official history narratives and belonging, which I discussed in the second chapter. The authenticity he feels and imagines is not related to rural national Turkishness but rather to and ambivalent sense of being from Trabzon. I have witnessed

the manifestation of this strong regionalism in various aspects of the daily life of my interlocutors in Trabzon.

Şeref and others' insistence that the kemençe remain "authentic" supports and reproduces this regionalism through the creation of a unique Trabzon-centric soundscape. According to the supporters of the "authentic style," when the kemençe moved out of "its boundaries in Trabzon" and began to be played by others, it started to "degenerate." "Authenticity" in performance can only be found in what Şeref considers the kemençe's homeland, in Trabzon, and in Greece among those who trace their roots back to Trabzon. Thus space, people and sound are combined to create an imaginary map of "authentic performance," outside of which kemençe loses its original sonic character and ethos. Such "degeneration" has multiple meanings: a change in the physical appearance of kemençe, the shift of tuning from low and middle to higher pitches, a change in the content of the repertoire and the lyrics, changes in the performance style and context and the addition of new singing contexts. The kemençe has been "traditionally" used in two contexts and for two purposes in this locality: in "authentic folk music" (solo kemençe performances without accompaniment or dancing) or at weddings and festivals. Any use outside of these contexts will certainly lead to its "loss of authenticity," according to Şeref. The practitioners and supporters of the "authentic style" make fun of players who use other instruments such as electric drums, synthesizers and guitars to accompany the kemençe. For them, this ruins the "natural sound" of the kemençe.

My participation in various dance events during my fieldwork in Trabzon and in Istanbul provided me with a firsthand experience of the different dance dynamics that the inclusion of other instruments has created. For example, the use of the synthesizer

impacted the ways people dance too. In the past, people would dance only with the kemençe and they could follow its rhythm and its improvisations with their bodies. There was a "tuning" between the dancer's body and the bow of the player. Today, however, with the imposition of the synthesizer and the electric drums, people dance not according to the kemençe, as in the past, but according to the electric drum; if it ceases to play, they might "lose the rhythm." In this way dancing has lost its previous improvisatory richness of movements and has become a standardized, repetitive bodily practice. Dance movements are much less diverse and more homogenous as compared with those in the past. This rhythmic and bodily transformation is also experienced by my interlocutors as a "loss of authenticity." Dance, among others, is a form of interaction among participant dancers that establishes an ethos of sociality. A transformation of dance practices inevitably impact the ways people interact with each other at a dance event. With these transformations something is lost and something new is created at the same time. The body is re-shaped to adjust to the new style.[66]

The supporters of "modern kemençe" genre criticize the practitioners of the "authentic" style for not being adequately urbanized and mock them as being "primitive villagers." For the former, the transformations of social life through technology and migration to major urban centers or abroad inevitably bring about changes to the way people make and listen to music. For them, it is an anachronism to insist on the "old ways."

[66] I personally experienced this transformation during my long interactions with the people in villages. While I changed my dance style I realized that my ideas about dance ethos, what it means to be a good dancer, and why we dance, changed significantly.

People like Şeref are never offended by these accusations, though. They hit back by defending their insistence on Trabzonian musical "authenticity." Many of my interlocutors, Şeref included, have a very strong sense of humor and are very creative when it comes to satirizing imported and supposedly modern habits or aspirations to "become European." In order to ridicule these ideas and practices they use the term "*sosyetik,*" a derisive term for "high society" that is associated with affected "European manners." Through irony and humor that is a clear statement of the non-recognition of the supposed superiority of the "urban" and the "European" as opposed to the rural and Trabzonian, my interlocutors challenge cultural hegemonies not only in music but also in other fields of life. Their insistence on the idiom of "musical authenticity" is a practice and an ethos that helps them challenge the perceived "European hegemony" at large.

The rejection of the "European manners" by my interlocutors is the result of experience and comparison, and not of ignorance, as the accusations have it. For example, Şeref has traveled extensively and lived and worked in foreign countries, especially in Europe. For him Europe represents a completely different culture which is associated with unhealthy food and dress, as well as with "destroyed" social relations, especially between younger and elder members of the society. The new massive, corporate form of food production is perceived by him as a danger for human life, since individuals do not really know what they eat. Only a few years ago (as Şeref remembers) people in the villages would still produce their own food without the use of chemicals. Their food was completely "natural." A strong attachment to nature and its products is synonymous with wellbeing and health and is associated with the old local lifestyle, while imported European food is associated with human chemical intervention and

considered dangerous. Şeref is also suspicious about the clothes people wear today and the synthetic materials out of which they are made, which he thinks might carry "*radyasyon*" (radiation).

This overall suspicion against European ways in two critical domains of human life, food and clothing, make Şeref embrace his now vanishing local way of life further, which he tries to re-construct in his songs. The collapse of "traditional social hierarchies" as manifested in the "lack of respect" by younger members of society towards elder members, and the high prioritization of money-making—things that Şeref associates with "Europeanization"—push him closer to a longing for past time and local lifestyle.

In the context of social transformation and "degeneration" in health conditions, social norms and behaviors, "authentic kemençe music" is turned into the last resort of quality and good life. It is the last "castle" that should not fall prey to the "Europeanization" of the local lifestyle. The kemençe and its sounds are tools of "memory preservation" and a source of cultural reconstruction, a sign and practice of resistance to "Europeanization." Being Trabzonian is opposed to being European.

The sound of the kemençe evokes a strong sense of regionalism, a local world full of its own meanings, feelings, pleasures and interactions. Mixing the sound of kemençe with western electric instruments is a musical behavior ironically described by Şeref as *fantezi. Fantezi*, with its clearly foreign etymology, is used to ridicule the excessive, unnecessary decoration of the kemençe sound and melodies with sounds of other "exotic" instruments and techniques of violin playing. This sonic mixing disturbs the old listening ethos and the imagination and experience of Trabzonian regionalism and is thus rejected by the practioners and supporters of the authentic kemençe style.

However, the stakes of authenticity are not limited to those described above. Some of my informants connect the process of "musical degeneration" to the nationalist policies of assimilation and homogenization more explicitly. Here is how it was described to me:

> This is a mechanism of a dominant power to keep people under control. On the one hand there is an attempt to keep people under control through religion, and on the other it seems that there is a force that tries to alienate people form their original culture and the values that lie at its core, in order to put them into a mold and homogenize them. The state supports this, the system supports it too, and so the authentic kemençe music remains unprotected and weak against the other popular genres. But this authentic style has internal power, and if the other degenerated and degenerating genres were not backed up and supported by the system, then the authentic kemençe style would become dominant again. Because this authentic genre is fed by the people, from their core values. This is its source. But the other genres are not fed by the people. They are fake constructions.

Musical authenticity here is thought of as a strong element of cultural difference and uniqueness threatened by superior homogenizing powers that are supported by the state. Old-style kemençe music, according to my informants, has been purposely left aside and marginalized, since it was seen by the state as an obstacle to the assimilation and homogenization of its audiences.

Practitioners of this genre believe that the kemençe has reached the highest point of degeneration and that it is time for the "authentic style" to become more audible and popular again. They consider it as their mission to "save" this music from degeneration and restore the kemençe's fame and impact. This sense of duty is accompanied by a sense

of pride for kemençe music and for the lifestyle out of which it developed. “Authentic players” are not invested in becoming popular outside of their Trabzon audiences by incorporating other instruments in their performances. Their music is rooted in the life and values of the local Trabzon people. They consider kemençe music a part of the music cultures of the world, with its own special characteristics. Their music does not need any “foreign masks” in order to present itself to other audiences. It is there for everyone willing to discover it. The practitioners of this genre have a quite elaborate theory of music’s power and a strong sense of mission. For them playing the kemençe is like creating a world with particular values, feelings and meanings. It is these that need to be cultivated and not changed through musical mixing. Listeners are invited to “open themselves” and get transformed by the unique sonic character and affective power of kemençe and not vice versa; the kemençe’s sound should not face transformation because of its players’ expectation of larger audiences and profits.

Despite their current marginal position, the supporters of the “authentic style” are optimistic about their genre’s future. As I witnessed during my fieldwork following them in various performance contexts, wherever they go to play in the Trabzonian Diasporas, they encounter young listeners, the children of immigrants, who were born and raised in other cities and countries, and who have a passion for the kemençe and the old style of playing. As we saw in the experiences of Ayşe and Yunus, this style is gradually re-discovered and re-interpreted by the younger and more educated generations. The broader political consequences of this gradual return to the “authentic kemençe music” remain to be seen.

In the remaining sections, I delve into the sonic and imaginary worlds of two young kemençe listeners and fans of the "authentic style", Mustafa and Nedim, with whom I opened this chapter. Their practices and ideas about kemençe music are highly relevant for the broader community of the listeners of this genre. These two interlocutors invest their beloved kemençe genre with various meanings and cultivate aspirations to spread it to larger audiences, believing that they are carrying out a serious mission for the survival of "Trabzon culture" in the context of rapid urban transformations.

Selective listeners

Nedim thinks of himself as a selective listener. Though he used to listen to any kemençe recording he could find regardless of its style, he gradually started to reject most of it, especially after he decided to start learning kemençe in 2006, when he was sixteen. Nobody in his family played the kemençe, and his main contact with its sound while in Istanbul was the Internet. When he started trying to play himself, a whole new sonic world was opened to him. This is how he described it:

> Initially I would try to play very plain, simple tunes, those that were very popular. Progressing in my learning I realized that the tunes I was playing were very simple and deformed. I listened to the old kemençe masters and was now able to compare them with what I had learned to play. Listening to the masters made me think that this is how the kemençe should be played. I would listen to Yusuf Cemal Keskin—I still listen to him—then I discovered Bahattin Çamurali. I first listened to the song "*Ela Ela Elose*." Initially I found his voice unappealing. It took me some time to realize how authentic, natural and plain his voice was. I downloaded all of his songs on the Internet. With Çamurali, I said to myself that the kemençe was not an

> instrument to dance, but rather an instrument "of the table," of collective singing, of company, of friendship. I said this is an instrument through which you express your pains and your problems, that's it. Since then I try to play bearing in mind exactly this, that I want to express these particular conditions, my pains and my problems. This is my aim when I play.

After he discovered Çamurali, the legendary kemençe master of Sürmene, Nedim continued searching on the Internet for the other elder kemençe masters. He collected their songs and kept them on his hard drive to access any time he wanted to listen to the "real kemençe."

He selects the kemençe songs that he listens to based on what he calls "their quality." The criterion by which he decides whether a song has quality or not is the feeling it evokes. As he puts it:

> if a song does not move me, if it does not raise any feeling in me, if, for example the song does not remind me of the cows and their bell sound as I have experienced them on the highland pastures, if it does not make me feel all those emotions I feel while in the village or in the highlands, then for me this is not a song with quality. Or, to put it differently, if it does not make me feel longing, then the song is of no quality.

Nedim is moved every time he listens to the old kemençe master Tsamourali because he is reminded of Trabzon and his village. This kemençe master is Nedim's favorite because his sound incites in him the feeling of *efkâr*, a feeling of soft pain for one's destiny stemming from unfulfilled dreams, from failures of every kind in life and a

feeling of isolation, loneliness and marginality. This feeling is associated with particular kemençe sounds that follow certain musical paths. *Efkâr* is a central emotional trope in the authentic kemençe genre and every "knowledgeable" listener like Nedim is deeply moved by it. This same category of listeners describes the songs of the old masters as having *lezzet*, literally "flavor." And this "flavor" is strongly associated with the feeling of *efkâr*. This is a sense tied to very specific, local experiences.

Having grown up with a more "urban" version of kemençe style and sound in Greece and carrying certain assumptions of what constitutes "good kemençe playing," I was not at all impressed when I first listened to Çamurali and to other old players from Trabzon. I thought that their playing was very plain and repetitive, monotonous, noisy and annoying. It took me several months of listening to Çamurali's recordings to start taking him seriously as a performer. I visited his village and talked with his friends and relatives about his life and experiences, and only then could I somehow start to appreciate the art of his performance and voice. I also gradually started feeling the *efkâr* that Nedim was talking about when he listened to Çamurali. I gradually came to realize that the deeper I delved into the intricacies of Trabzon rural life, with its fascinating natural environment and its unique people, the more attached I became to the musical styles of the elder kemençe masters, and to Çamurali in particular. *Efkâr* became my favorite emotional trope in this music and, especially after my field experience, I consciously limited myself to playing only the songs that aroused in me this particular emotion.

For listeners like Nedim, "authentic kemençe music" was a product of two main human experiences: first, the experience of *kavuşamamak*, being unable to reunite with a

beloved partner or, more generally, being unable to fulfil a wish or desire; and second, *gurbet,* living away from one's homeland with a sense of constant longing and alienation.

Once nearly forgotten, the old, deceased kemençe masters are now being turned into mythical symbols of superb and incomparable artistic mastery. Their kemençe sound is described by my interlocutors as "mystic." When I asked Mustafa to explain what he meant by this, he started by describing the experience of being on the highland pastures:

> Imagine you are in a wooden house on the highland pastures. On the stove there is the *kafeka*—a type of local, small kettle. The water is boiling and while it evaporates, the steam's release creates a sound very similar to that of the *kaval* (local flute). I have experienced all these, and when I listen to *kaval* they all come back to mind; I feel that I am living in that wooden house without electricity again, that I am walking on the muddy streets. This experience gives me a very different taste. Living in such an environment helps one make good music. This is what our ancestors did. People would go to the stable to feed the animals. They could smell the scents and listen to the soft wind blowing. Our kemençe music came out of these experiences.

Of course my question to Mustafa to clarify what he meant by the term mystic was naïve: How can you verbalize the mystic? The sensory experience of music and the feelings it evokes are always described indirectly, through reference to concrete experiences that can be put in words. Mustafa, as a response, thus provided a description of multiple sensual experiences in the wooden house on the highland pastures of Trabzon. The direct link my informants imagine between musical sound, social context and emotion make them believe that it is impossible to create "authentic kemençe music" in

Istanbul. Also the sound of the old kemençe performers who were born in Trabzon but passed away in Greece incited in them the same feeling of longing for the village and carried them to Trabzon, to the mountains, to the highland pastures and to the cold waters. This affective impact of the Greek performers on my informants was enough to gain a place in their hearts and on their Facebook page where they were promoted as "authentic masters" like their Trabzonian colleagues.

Opposed to the "authentic style" and the affective worlds it evoked was the mixed-sound style of "kemençe rock," which only evoked anger and disappointment in my two young informants. Mustafa and Nedim were highly critical of those young non-Trabzonian Laz[67] performers who were the makers of this rock-kemençe style. The "mixed, scrappy sounds" of this style had no meaning for them. The style resembled neither rock, nor anything else. They defied categorization and naming, and these musical sounds were perceived as completely meaningless. As Mustafa put it:

> This is Trabzon music. When you combine rock sounds with kemençe, then it is difficult for us, the listeners, to give it a name. We can't call it Black-Sea music, so what should we call it? Another problem is that the electric sounds used are usually imposed over the kemençe's sound. Well, dear artist, If you want to do rock music you are free to do it by using its instruments, but do not use the kemençe. No matter what our ethnic origins might be, we are all people of the Black Sea. We do not want our music to be degenerated by the use of western,

[67] The Laz are a different linguistic group living in the provinces east of Trabzon. Many of the young musicians who came out of this regions started playing kemençe and using it to make a genre they called Karadeniz rock, that is Black Sea rock, that was a form of protest music. Young listeners and performers from Trabzon were opposed to this trends and always criticized the Laz musicians for appropriating the kemençe and "degenerating" its sound and transforming its meanings.

electronic instruments. Do not misunderstand me, we love those instruments, too, but they are appropriate for other kinds of music, not for ours.

More than aesthetics

Mustafa complains that his and Nedim's views about kemençe music are marginal within the Trabzon communities. This makes them feel weak and oppressed, while also leading them to think about how to change this condition:

> Trabzon is the homeland of kemençe. I am not saying whether the instrument is Greek or Turkish, that's another issue. Despite the fact that Trabzon is the historic center of the kemençe, today this instrument is not appreciated much nor listened to by its inhabitants. It is still derogatorily considered to be village culture, like our dance, the *horon*. The people who live in the city of Trabzon look down on kemençe, they belittle it and they do not allow it to be heard in any restaurant or night club in Trabzon. While in other cities of Anatolia the local instruments are supported and promoted, in Trabzon, in the homeland of kemençe, this instrument is completely marginalized. They make fun of it.

When Nedim tries to play his kemençe in front of other people, even in front of some Trabzonians, they make fun of its sound and laugh. His passionate talk about the kemençe and its sonic capabilities moved and intrigued me:

> What people think about kemençe isn't true. This instrument can produce so many different sounds. We could argue that it is even richer than the violin. The melodies that the violin plays can be easily played by the kemençe, producing the same sound and feeling, but the opposite can't happen. The violin cannot arouse kemençe-like feelings.

What was at stake for my interlocutors in the rejection and marginalization of the kemençe? Mustafa and Nedim are two young university students who have been living in Istanbul for several years. Their families migrated to the city from the Pontic Greek-speaking villages east of Trabzon, but they maintained very strong ties with their rural communities. Every summer they would spend significant amount of time in the village and on the highlands above Trabzon. At the time of my fieldwork they were both trying to learn kemençe. Our common musical interests and passion for this instrument strengthened our friendship and made us seek out eachothers' company more often. Our attachment to this music created a very strong bond, as if we had known each other for years. We discussed the present and future of "authentic style" endlessly in almost all of our gatherings. Discussions were complemented by short live musical examples where we were trying to understand how elder masters created and played some of our favorite songs. We would play to "make our moods" and to satisfy our curiosity. Short performance would first be followed by the expression of strong admiration for the song and its creator. Then, we launched into a lengthy analysis of the sound and the emotion it evoked. Then we went back to playing. This cycle was repeated for a few hours. These kinds of meetings and interactions had become a routine for a few months. We would meet in various teahouses in different parts of Istanbul during weekdays as well as at kemençe night events, usually held on Friday or Saturday nights.

Mustafa and Nedim say they feel different from other university students of their age. Living in a major urban center gave them plenty of opportunities to acquire diverse experiences and meet new people. Nevertheless, they preferred to dream and talk about

their plans for the coming summer, their visit to their villages of Trabzon and the bowing techniques of deceased kemençe players. They are not interested in Anglo-American music, like many of their peers in college are, and after classes, they usually spend time with people who share their passion for kemençe. It is not an exaggeration to state that their lives were unfolding in places where kemençe-related activities were always underway. Kemençe was like a magnet that attracted and guided them through the labyrinthine urban fabric of Istanbul, defining their routines and their networks of socialization. I could very easily sympathize with their practices, since I had gone through similar experiences as a college student in Athens. This state of being was quite familiar to me, and it was the result of our strong attachment to kemençe.

Mustafa and Nedim are "knowledgeable listeners," which in the local context meant that they had knowledge of and listened to old kemençe masters who were not very well known among the broader masses of listeners. They could reflect and comment on the techniques of playing and on its sonic outcomes. They would not use technical language, as they did not have any background in music theory, but they would analyze the sound by describing the emotions it evoked through reference to rural experiences. Though the experience of music is very difficult to talk about, they were finding a way to verbalize it.

They had detailed knowledge of the "who is who" in the "Black Sea" music genre, its complicated dynamics and even backstage information, which they had collected by asking older listeners and by socializing with kemençe players and singers. Proximity to these artists was important for them to gather information and to create and maintain the sense of being insiders. Possessing such information made them feel

different and even distinguished compared to less knowledgeable listeners. This also allowed them to consider themselves eligible to assume the responsibility to undertake something they considered a great mission: to "educate and enlighten" other Black-Sea music audiences about the qualities of the "authentic style" that would supposedly make them more selective and responsible as listeners. Selectivity here meant rejection of the arabesque and rock styles and the creation of a certain listening habit. Responsibility is about something broader: saving a lifestyle and an ethos associated with that listening habit. Mustafa and Nedim are two visionary young men who are hopeful about this genre's future. They make plans to shape it and, in this way, to impact their community. They are not passive listeners, but aspiring actors who want to shape their community's musical soundscape. Social and political activism has taken various forms in different contexts. However, Nedim and Mustafa make me think of a different form of activism, also deeply political: listening activism. Their intention to intervene and have a role in how kemençe should be listened by people make them, in my words, potential cultural leaders.

The "authentic" style that Mustafa and Nedim strive to popularize is the style of the previous generations of kemençe players who were born and raised in the first half of the twentieth century in the villages of Trabzon. Each one had developed his unique performance style and had created his own repertoire that is now being rediscovered and admired by the fans of this genre. The sound of the old style kemençe for those, like my informants, who live in *gurbet*—away from the homeland—carries them back to the Black Sea. That is what makes it so valuable for these listeners.

The elder masters are retrospectively imagined as this genre's "classics." I understand this as a signifying process that, under certain circumstances, could lay the foundations for the creation of an unofficial musical canon. The elder (and by now) deceased players are thought as teachers whose music can educate and shape the listening habits and characters of the younger generations of listeners and boost the creativity of contemporary kemençe performers.

To achieve their goals, Mustafa and Nedim created a page on Facebook with the aim of promoting the music of the old kemençe masters. Apart from uploading old recordings and short comments about each kemençe master, they wrote and shared texts on history and musical style, asking the members in the platform to comment. Thus they sparked dialogue and occasional debate. Their hope was that if listeners gained more exposure to the recordings of the old kemençe masters and became familiar with their repertoires, they would gradually acquire some standards with which to judge new creations. The more informed they would become, the less possible it would be for them to be deceived by younger players, who were appropriating old songs and presenting them as theirs.

As I was able to personally observe by browsing through the new CD releases, the majority of the kemençe recordings in recent years in Istanbul were either rock or arabesque style: completely alien to the "authentic sounds," as these are understood by Mustafa and Nedim. The overproduction and circulation of these styles was described by my interlocutors as "*kulak kirliliği,"* "ear pollution." They are hopeful, though, that their activities might trigger interest, and cultivate the curiosity of listeners and young performers to start searching for the "authentic kemençe music."

As described throughout this chapter, the introduction and use of bağlama, synthesizer and other instruments, as well as the use of the vibrato technique on kemençe gradually transformed the sonic fabric and the definitions of Trabzon music. This was not simply a sonic or aesthetic change. This impacted the making of new forms of subjectivity for the listeners that also involved important value shifts. The transition from the experience and subjectivity of a villager to that of the participant in a "modern" urban context such as that of Istanbul involves a huge transformation in values, habits and practices, in whose creation music played a very important role. As I was able to witness during my fieldwork, for some of my interlocutors, being in Istanbul was becoming more important than being from Trabzon. This transition was also reflected in their musical tastes and practices. Abandoning the old-style kemençe and embracing its more "modern" versions or even other genres of music was a sign of personal transformation.

This sonic transformation also involved issues of memory and recognition of which Mustafa and Nedim were very well aware. For example, older performers and their styles were forgotten, and for many younger listeners Trabzon music had become unthinkable without the use of the new instruments and techniques. Moreover the repertoires of these elder masters were appropriated and commercially exploited by younger singers and players who modified them slightly and registered the copyright under their names, thus acquiring another source of income beyond their significant material gains from live performances.[68]

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[68] I personally heard similar stories in my interviews with some old kemençe players who lived in the villages of Trabzon and did not have the means, knowledge and the networks necessary to protect and promote their creations. Thus sometimes their songs were stolen by famous artists in Istanbul. One of these players was living in the villages of Maçka in Trabzon. His name was Ahmet, a man of about 75 years in age. I went to meet him one night at the village's coffee shop. Mr. Ahmet had brought with him all his notebooks in which he was writing the lyrics of the songs

But my interlocutors worried not only that the elder masters would be forgotten, but also that the particular feelings that their songs evoked would fade away. Affective oblivion, as I wish to call it, was experienced and thought of as a serious problem of existential deformation. The attempts of Mustafa and Nedim to save the elder masters and their musical sounds and styles from oblivion and popularize them, also involved an effort to restore kemençe-specific affective memories that were fading away.

At this point I should note that that until recently, this sensitivity about the elder masters and the public recognition of their contributions was completely absent from many Trabzonian constituencies. Older performers were thought of as outmoded village kemençe players, irrelevant for the present and, more importantly, for the future of musical practices and life. Forgetting them and moving on with something else was considered inevitable, normal and even desirable.

However young people like my two informants are playing an important role in the re-evaluation of such practices and ideas. The characterization of this musical oblivion, appropriation and modification as unethical and the attempts to restore old kemençe styles so as to recreate certain affective conditions have started bearing fruit. These developments are impacting various segments of the Trabzonian communities in

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that he had made and the date in which they were concluded. He also showed me a package full of pictures and newspaper reportage that were a proof of his artistic activity and value. He used this written material as a proof of ownership to sue a very famous, and much younger, singer from the neighboring villages who was now living and performing in Istanbul. That singer, according to what my informant claimed, had listened one his songs at the village and then he recorded it without his permission. Of course he changed the lyrics a bit and he added various instruments besides the kemençe. That song became a big hit and gave him a lot of money and fame. Mr.Ahmet, who was living a modest life in the village, was very frustrated. He kept telling me how he had made this song and showed me the notebook with the lyrics and the date, almost crying, and complaining for his weakness and the injustice. Throughout my stay in the field the court had not yet delivered its final decision on the case.

Istanbul. I was able to observe this change while interacting with various informants in different contexts and by following their discussions on Facebook. Debates among young listeners and performers from different Black Sea regions about "musical authenticity and quality" have become a significant element of their cultural worlds. Interest in the elder masters has revived and new musical productions by younger performers and singers who included old tunes and explicitly acknowledge their initial creator have started to make their appearance on the kemençe music market.

The interest of my interlocutors in the "old ways" was not only confined to music but also involved dance. During my fieldwork I was struck by the excessive promotion from mainstream media of a dance named *kolbastı*, presented as the supposedly favorite dance of younger Trabzonians, as if all other forms of dance did not exist in this region. I had never seen *kolbastı* being danced in the rural communities of Trabzon, and all my informants unanimously rejected and made fun of it, calling it a "gypsy dance." For them it was something alien. As Mustafa put it:

> This dance does not have a history in our province. Its rhythm is completely foreign to the rhythms of our dances. This is a dance closer to the dance culture of the capital city of Ankara, not of the Black Sea. The existing recordings tell us that this tune was first played by the old kemençe master named Piçoglu Osman. Years later a music groups appropriated and reproduced it, making it more popular. But for sure this is not part of our culture. We see that mainstream media present it as the characteristic dance of Trabzon and they ignore the *horon*, our real dance. This damages our culture and confuses people. I am very annoyed by this, which is also a result of the dominance of the mentality of popular culture in Turkey. I've never

> seen my ancestors dancing this dance, so it can't be imposed upon us as a basic element of our culture. It is not!

Though Mustafa and Nedim did not offer me an interpretation for the reasons behind this strangely excessive promotion of *kolbastı* by mainstream networks, they were very worried that, as with the musical sound, the dance culture of young Trabzonians could be seriously "deformed."

The experience of living in Istanbul constituted a significant barrier in musical creativity for all my informants who supported and promoted the "authentic style." Living in the village was a critical condition for the production this musical style. This was attributed to the different affective status of village life as opposed to life in the city. Life was experienced differently in the rural and urban contexts, impacting the emotional worlds of their inhabitants. For example, the old-style kemençe repertoire was full of references to nature, something that is missing from the recent new styles and recordings. Life is certainly very different among forests and rivers than among high-rise buildings, polluted air and noisy cars. This hugely different life experience left its imprint on the emotional world and the musical practices of Trabzonians. My informants believed that it was almost impossible to evoke older, village-related feelings in the music made in Istanbul, something experienced as a great damage and loss.

Language use was also impacted by migration. As I have noted in previous chapters, Trabzon Turkish is quite different from other forms of Turkish. This linguistic uniqueness was also heard in the song lyrics of the elder masters. However some younger singers from Trabzon were trying to use a more standardized form of Turkish in their songs, and this had become an issue of consideration and debate among listeners and

performers. Use of standard Turkish as opposed to the Trabzonian idiom was perceived by my interlocutors as another form of deviation from the "authentic prototype." For example, an otherwise very beloved, respected, and famous kemençe performer and singer had recently released an album with lyrics in standard Turkish. The album incited huge disappointment among his fans and was immediately forgotten. The local Trabzon idiom together with the old "authentic style" of kemençe were two signs of a very strong regionalism, signs and practices of being from Trabzon, that my informants were not willing to abandon. They were a source of pride and a medium to express emotions in their own unique way. Again, uniqueness and difference are very important in this context.

Some of my interlocutors from the community of kemençe performers were seriously considering moving back to their villages to Trabzon, and few even did so, thinking that this would boost their inspiration and creativity. The wish and desire to return was also present among many others in the immigrant communities with whom I was in contact during my fieldwork. For Mustafa and Nedim, the solution to the lack of musical creativity and to the problem of "musical degeneration," as they imagined it, in the absence of the choice of return, lay in the somewhat romantic path to de-commercialize this musical genre and to "educate" the masses of listeners.

It is important to note at this point that after I left my field site and came back to Princeton, I observed a boom in the number of young people who started learning and playing the kemençe without any professional or profit-driven aspirations. Besides, until quite recently this music was made and supported by a network of amateurs. The return

to that status was seriously seen by my interlocutors as a solution to the "ear pollution" that had been imposed by the competition of performers for popularity and money.

Both Mustafa and Nedim shared with me their fears that if the musicians kept mixing sounds, then the kemençe would face the danger of near extinction and become an instrument only exhibited in museums. Furthermore, the "authentic sounds" and the sentiments expressed through them would become extinct, too. Thus, they were determined to "protect and save" both the old sounds and the feelings associated with them. Nedim used a nice metaphor to express the desire of both to make this musical style popular again: "I do not want the sound of the kemençe to be squashed between other unrelated instruments. I want it to be the main course and not the appetizer."

Conclusions

There are important stakes in the claim, re-making and promotion of "authentic" kemençe music. My interlocutors claim musical sounds to experience and maintain certain feelings that they relate to a particular way of being in the world. They think of that way as very different from the "modern spirit" of the urban centers, even if they are in Istanbul themselves. The stakes are not simply aesthetic and emotional, but highly political. Or, to put it differently, again using conventional categorizations, the aesthetic and the emotional are tightly intertwined with the political. Insistence on the old kemençe style for my interlocutors is a necessary act in embracing every aspect of a local lifestyle, thought as superior to the imagined European other and the popularized forms of urban and state musical production.

Authenticity as a claim and a musical style is very modern in the sense that it is the outcome of migration from the rural communities of Trabzon to Istanbul and to other

urban centers in Turkey and abroad. Claims to musical authenticity and practices to reconstruct it are forms of tacit political intervention that aim to remake a particular way of listening to, experiencing and signifying music, for the self and for the community. It is also a response to the sonic and affective alienation experienced by my interlocutors as a result of migration and modernization.

My interlocutors in this chapter are value-makers with great affective power. The desire as well as the act of peeling away the "polluting" sonic layers of the "degenerated" Trabzon music is intimate and personal. It is also a social and collective practice for the refashioning of emotions, values and modes of interpersonal exchange. The ideas and musical practices of my interlocutors are not simply attempts to define what kemençe music is and how it should sound and experienced. They are not only a mode of resistance to an imposed homogenization and assimilation of the aural sense. They also constitute attempts to define what a Trabzonian person is through the "retuning" and the re-evaluation of the sense of hearing. The central importance of the kemençe music in the lives and its role in the shaping of the worldviews of my interlocutors clearly shows that the remaking of a strong Trabzon-related regionalism that makes claim to cultural difference and uniqueness is strongly associated with the habits of music listening. The rhetoric and practice of musical authenticity and the calls to de-commercialize kemençe music and "educate" its audiences are highly political acts that involve the reshaping of life priorities, aspirations and ethics.

CHAPTER FOUR

NAVIGATING MARKETS

Kemençe players and music activists in Istanbul face challenges in their encounters with the profit-making music industry. In this chapter, I describe the interactions of musicians—amateur, professional and semi-professional—with networks of commercial music production and circulation. I discuss the effects of the commercialization of kemençe and other forms of rural and ethnic music in Turkey. The search for profit changes the priorities of music-making and its final outcomes. My informants' intention is to make music in order to share with audiences certain social ideals and to speak about exclusion, but they face various dilemmas and difficulties in doing so. The logic of profit-making in this context channels musical creativity towards certain standard musical practices that are assumed to be profitable. This produces repetition and homogeneity. In the case of explicit political activism through music, the industry, though initially bringing marginal genres and languages to public attention, has ended up normalizing and assimilating "ethnic music" as a product for profit-making. By turning kemençe music into another product among others, its initial political meanings and dynamics are lost and stripped away from its creators' initial intentions and aspirations.

Getting into night life

When Adem (whom we met in the previous chapters) settled with his father and mother in Istanbul in the late 1990s the news spread immediately among his fellow

villagers who were already living in the city. They began picking him up regularly to play at various gatherings, weddings and private events. Social and musical life was thicker and more intense in this city compared to the village. In this way Adem, without intentionally pursuing it, created in different neighborhoods of Istanbul a circle of friends and listeners who loved him and his music. All of them were either relatives or immigrants from the same village or from the nearby rural communities of Trabzon.

At the time, Adem was not a professional performer or singer. He would play the kemençe for personal pleasure and for his friends, like most performers at the beginning of their musical lives. He was an amateur young kemençe player and singer, an immigrant who loved the music of his village and brought it to Istanbul. His music was his connection to his village memories and life. Many of the songs he sang were about longing for rural life, loneliness and abandonment by his beloved. Since he moved to Istanbul Adem would sing for the life he was no longer living, for the things that were missing. His amateurism, his friendly and fun character, his "authentic village-style" kemençe and the pain expressed in his songs spoke to the heart of his fellow immigrant villagers in Istanbul and gradually provided him with a small network of fans who closely followed and listened to his music in various contexts.

At some point he was invited to play for a certain period at a bar named Lahana[69] in downtown Istanbul. Kemençe music in a bar was something unusual until the late 1980s and early 1990s. This type of urban night life was incongruous with the rural ethos of Black-Sea music. However, that was a period where bars and American-style disco

[69] *Lahana* means cabbage, and it is one of the staple foods in Trabzon cuisine.

and night clubs had made their appearance in the Black-Sea music scene in some neighborhoods of Istanbul, following the general trends in Istanbul night life.

These bars were housed in small halls, filled with cigarette smoke and the smell of alcohol. Red, green and blue lights, and a slowly spinning disco ball hanging from the ceiling, above the very center of the dance floor, reminded its customers that now Black-Sea music in Istanbul was following the most recent trends in nightlife and had thus become "modern." The bad sound of the kemençe coming out of mediocre loudspeakers poorly arranged, accompanied by the electronic drums of the synthesizer, filled the air. On the top of all that, in these bars, newly arrived prostitutes from the recently collapsed USSR kept company with middle aged men, married and bachelors, from the Black Sea, usually following them to some nearby hotels after the end of the bar's program. I had the chance to visit some of these places and experience first hand the atmosphere that was narrated to me by various informants.

Adem played in this bar for few months. Every time he was there he would see scantily dressed women with heavy makeup going in and out of the bar and wondered about what was going on. It took him some time before he realized what these women's role was. As he emphatically and ironically put it, "Who would have thought it, my brother, that kemençe and prostitution would come under the same roof?" This coexistence of kemençe and prostitution was a significant factor that further deteriorated the instrument's and the players' fame and alienated even larger segments of its audiences from the immigrant Trabzon population in Istanbul, not only those who were family-oriented and strongly attached to religion but also many young and educated constituencies.

One of the bar's frequent clients was a man named Zihni, the owner of the Black Sea TV channel and of a record company that claimed to specialize in the production of Black-Sea music. Zihni had listened to Adem singing and playing live one night at the bar. He then approached the owner of the bar and told him that he liked Adem's voice and asked him whether Adem would be willing to record a cassette with his company.

The bar owner told Adem that Zihni was interested in producing a cassette with him. However, he suggested that they first visit another producer, Adnan, who was his friend, before they went to Zihni. Adem had never thought of recording a cassette until then, though he had already created some new songs. He accepted the proposal without hesitation.

Cassette recording

A few days later they went to Adnan's office to discuss the possibility of producing Adem's first cassette. Adnan, at that time, was the owner of a big recording company that only recorded and distributed Black-Sea music. He was among the first who created this profitable industry for kemençe players and singers in Istanbul. The first question he asked was where Adem was from, expressing his satisfaction by saying that he was from a nearby village. Trabzonians always ask this question of origin when they meet for the first time. Being from Trabzon is a feeling that creates a sense of intimacy and, for some, solidarity in a chaotic socio-cultural environment like that of Istanbul.

When the bar owner told him the reason they had come, Adnan asked whether Adem had any songs for recording. After he received a positive answer he continued by saying that such productions were very costly and asked if Adem had a sponsor for this.

The bar owner intervened, saying that a wealthy Trabzonian businessman was a fan of Adem and that he would certainly be willing to sponsor his first cassette. Adnan was very pleased to hear that and told them to meet again to discuss the details, but this time he wanted them to bring the wealthy businessman with them so that they could settle the financial issues right from the start. Adem did not have the chance to say much during the whole discussion, as the issue had been negotiated by Adnan and Adem's "boss."

The bar owner was very upset with Adnan's request for sponsorship and regretted having gone to his office. He suggested they go and meet Zihni, the owner of the record company who had expressed an interest in Adem's musical talent, hoping that he would not ask for any money in order to produce the album. They agreed to go, and a few days later, the owner of the bar picked up Adem from his home and drove to Zihni's office in Unkapanı, the Istanbul district where all the record companies are located, in order to discuss the production of Adem's first cassette. During their discussion, Zihni requested that Adem prepare his songs, write them in a notebook and have them ready for review. Zihni did not ask for any money.

After their meeting, work progressed quickly. A few days later Zihni picked up Adem from his house and took him to Beykoz, on the other side of Istanbul, where Zihni's music director had his recording studio and all the company's music productions were prepared. The music director was a young man named Ayhan who played the synthesizer. He was responsible for the whole process of cassette production, from lyrics corrections to orchestration. He also owned a small bar where he would play at night. His studio was in the same building, behind the bar. At the time, the record company was preparing a cassette of "pop Black Sea" music. Ayhan told Adem that this "pop

kemençe" cassette would become a great success and bring a lot of money to the company. He made Adem listen to some of the recordings they had already done for this album. Adem was not very fond of this type of sounds and he did not pay much attention. He thought that Ayhan was trying to show off and to convince him about the importance of their company and of their work. Ayhan was thinking in terms of commercial success, whereas Adem was thinking in terms of the originality and quality of the kemençe sound, song themes and feelings.

Ayhan then asked Adem to prepare his songs and come back ready to the studio to start recordings immediately. "Prepare the songs" in this context meant simply choosing the melodies and their lyrics and being ready to perform them in front of recording microphones. No other detail had been discussed, either in terms of musical preparation and concept or in terms of financial compensation.

Adem returned home and looked back at his different notes where his lyrics were scattered. He collected and wrote them all on few pages in order to give them to the employees at the record company. A few days later he took the bus to go to the company's office and meet with the owner. There he also met with his secretary, a young man from the Anatolian city of Niğde, as Adem recalled with jocularity. As a Trabzonian with a very strong sense of local identity, Adem would occasionally joke about other cities and its people in the country. For him, as for many Trabzonians, being from Trabzon was a source of great pride and distinction.

He left the papers with his songs at the office and the secretary told him that he would read and evaluate them. He asked Adem to come back later in order to go to the

studio and start the recordings. Following his advice, two days later Adem visited the company and, together with the secretary and the owner, drove to the recording studio.

In the car, while on their way to the studio, Adem picked up the file with his songs to take a look at them. He realized that some of his lyrics had been changed. The Trabzonian idiom in the lyrics was changed too into more standard Turkish. Adem asked the secretary why he made these changes and the secretary told him that he did it in order to make the lyrics more intelligible to broader audiences. Adem asked the secretary where he was from and the secretary responded telling that he was from the city of Niğde. Then Adem replied that someone from Niğde would know nothing about music and songs from Trabzon and that he couldn't accept these changes in the lyrics. Besides, he was making this cassette for listeners from Trabzon and not from Niğde. The secretary responded that the Turkish in the lyrics was not comprehensible by outsiders, to whıch Adem replied that this was Turkish they speak in his villages in Trabzon and this is how he wrote them. The owner of the company also encouraged Adem to sing the songs in the new version as they were written by the secretary. Adem refusedö saying that he wanted to sing the songs he himself had wrıtten. Besides, even if he would agree to the new lyrics, there wasn't much time to memorize and sing them properly.

Finally, after continuous deliberation and debate, they agreed to let Adem sing the songs as he had wrıtten themö with the initial lyrics. Adem wanted to include four songs with lyrics in Pontic Greekö but he was told by the music director that these four songs were too much for such a cassette and that they might create a problem with the license of the album. They asked him to choose only one to sing in Pontic Greek and to provide them with the translation of the lyrics in order to include them in the file which they

would submit to state authorities to receive the necessary license after inspection by the Ministry of Culture.

The same day they started the recording in the studio. Adem played his kemençe and sang his songs in front of two microphones. After Adem was done, Ayhan added electronic drums from his computer to Adem's voice and to his kemençe. The cassette was almost ready. It took only two hours to finish. Most Black-Sea music recordings in Turkey were made in this way, and Adem's was not an exception. The only thing remaining before the final step of production was to come up with the cover and internal photos of the album. For this purpose Adem purchased a new nylon suit for twenty Turkish liras, a significant amount at the time. Then he went to a park with the company's secretary to take the photos. It was almost an unwritten rule to take photos of the artist in front of trees, on the grass and generally in natural settings. Since the kemençe was identified with rural life and the highland pastures, producers believed that it would be aesthetically more attractive and commercially more successful to represent various natural settings in the photos of their productions. The secretary took the photos with his own personal camera with Adem wearing his nylon suit and tie, lying on the grass and leaning against the park's trees. Now Adem had to wait for his first album to get released and circulate on the market.

Copyrights

A few months had passed and Adem had not heard anything from the company about his album. One day he took the bus and went to the office to ask about why there was such a long delay. There the secretary told him that they had not yet received the

license and that they had to wait a bit more. A few weeks later he went back to the office to ask them again, at which point he was told that the file had been returned from the Ministry of Culture because they had not provided translation in Turkish for the one song with Pontic-Greek lyrics. Adem wrote down the translation immediately and gave it to the secretary so that he would include it in the file and send it back to the Ministry of Culture for inspection.

In the meantime, Zihni made arrangements for Adem to go and play at a Black Sea TV show in order to promote his forthcoming album. At the statıon's studio Adem met another singer, İbo, who was there for the same purpose. İbo told him that he had also recorded a Black-Sea music album with Zihni's company and that his was about to get released. Adem was surprised to hear that because he started recording at the same period as İbo, who had recently moved to Istanbul from his village in Trabzon in order to start a career as a singer. He told Adem that he was temporarily staying with a friend and that he was looking for a house to rent and asked for his help. Adem, without hesitating, called a friend who was a real estate agent and asked him to find a place for İbo to stay.

A few days later Adem received a call from a friend who told him that he had heard one of his songs playing at a cassette shop but with someone else's voice and with different lyrics. That friend was familiar with Adem's song since he had heard it many times live from him. Initially Adem did not believe what his friend had told him, thinking that he was mistaken. But the friend insisted that it was Adem's song. Then Adem asked his friend to meet him few days later and to take him to that cassette shop in order to check whether his friend was right or not. At the time, Black-Sea music albums were only sold at particular spots in certain neighborhoods of Istanbul where significant

numbers of immigrants from the Black Sea were living. They went to the cassette shop and asked the owner to play that particular song. Adem's friend was right—someone else was singing his song with different lyrics. Adem was shocked. He asked who the singer was and which company had produced it. The owner told him that the name of the singer was İbo and that the company belonged to Zihni, Adem's producer. This made the shock even greater.

Early in the morning the next day Adem took the bus and went to the company's office to talk to the owner and express his anger. Zihni and his secretary tried to calm Adem down by telling him that they would give him one of İbo's songs to sing in his next album. Adem was furious but there was nothing he could do, since he had no contract or any other agreement that would bind them legally. He could only express his anger by shouting and cursing at them. A few minutes later, İbo arrived at the office. Adem immediately asked him why he agreed to sing his song on his cassette. İbo replied by saying that he had heard this song in his village and that he had been playing it for years, disputing Adem's claim to authorship. Then Adem grabbed him by the neck and shook him severely. He would have hit him had Zihni and the secretary not intervened, begging Adem to calm down and discuss a way to find a solution. Adem cursed at them and left the office.

That song became very popular and made İbo very famous among Black-Sea music listeners and secured him many jobs performing live. Adem's version in Pontic Greek, released few weeks later, did not manage to reach the same level of popularity. The world of Black-Sea music was rough and Adem was not aware of its intricacies and

challenges. The only thing he could do was to share his grievance with his relatives and close friends.

Serving Justice

Adem was quite popular among his relatives and fellow villagers, especially those who loved kemençe music. Atil, a middle-aged man and Adem's uncle, was one of his many fans. Atil combined his love for kemençe and for his relatives with his passion for guns and various kinds of undefined "business." There was a rumor about him that he led a wide network of young men who would "sell protection" to various businesses and individuals in Istanbul and elsewhere. He had once been arrested by the Erdogan government and was imprisoned for several months, having been accused of leading and managing a mafia group that had committed various crimes including murder. However, Atil managed to get released very soon thereafter, and all the accusations were dropped. People were not sure if he was released because of his powerful connections with the state's security apparatus or because he convinced the authorities that he was innocent. Though some people from his team were sentenced, the accusations against him were never proved.

The men of the Black-Sea region are notorious in Turkey for being fervent patriots. Various mafia groups that had committed murders against left-wing activists were led by men from the Black-Sea region. Newspapers, especially left-wing ones, accused these groups of working as a paramilitary state force, in collaboration with the intelligence service, and of doing the "dirty work" of killing political opponents such as Kurds, intellectuals, leftists, journalists and businessmen of diverse backgrounds. Atil

was involved in various incidents, but Adem never pressed for much information. This was a world with which he was not familiar and one of which he was afraid.

One day, Atil picked Adem up from his house in Istanbul and took him to a restaurant outside of the city to play kemençe. The whole way there, the others in the car spoke only of the latest models of guns and bullets. The restaurant was full of men with black suits and ties. “I guess it was a seminar for mafia leaders,” Adem joked later. Atil expressed his admiration and love for Adem, praising him in front of those in attendance. Atil also told Adem that if he ever had any kind of problem he should immediately tell him and he would help.

Several days after the quarrel with the record company Adem encountered Atil at a relative’s house in the neighborhood. Adem did not seem well, and Atil asked him what was wrong. Adem then told him what had happened with his album and Atil assured him that he would take care of it and left. A few days later, Zihni, the owner of the record company, came to Adem’s house and asked him to go with him to the office to discuss an issue. Adem’s album had been released without Adem’s knowledge. When they arrived at the office, Zihni asked Adem what kind of relationship he had with Atil. Adem said that he was his uncle. Then Zihni complained to Adem for having told Atil what had happened. Atil had sent some of his men to Zihni’s office, threatened him and ordered him to compensate Adem for his song and his album. He also took extortion money from him. Atil was very well known among record-company owners since he had taken extortions from others too, selling them protection.

Adem was surprised because he never thought that Atil would do something like that. Besides, he had never asked him to intervene, but simply told him what had

happened. Zihni was terrified by Atil's men and begged Adem not to say anything to Atil again. Zihni prepared a check of 300 million liras and gave it to Adem, asking him to forget everything and continue their collaboration harmonically. This was the first time in his life that Adem had seen a check. That was a huge amount of money for him, almost a whole year's work in a conventional job.

Kemençe and the market

Adem's stories narrated above are a clear proof of the transformations brought to kemençe music by the introduction of the logic of profit-making. During my fieldwork I would gradually visit night clubs and recording studios in Istanbul in order to observe the dynamics of music-making and -listening in these contexts. What I witnessed was not that different from what Adem and other informants working in this industry had told to me.

The rise of private recording companies in the 1970s and the commercialization of music was a milestone for artistic life in Turkey. The industry's impact was evident in every musical genre, including Black-Sea music. The industry played a central role in the making of new singer-stars in Trabzon music, a phenomenon that changed the whole ethos of this genre. Instrumentalists were relegated to a secondary position, since what the companies were actually selling was the voice of a singer along with his or her lifestyle. It was not enough to have a good voice in order to become a "star." Aspiring stars had to "sell" their entire selves, their beauty, even their private moments. A network of advertisement and promotion was established. The "star" usually sung songs made and performed by others, who mostly remained unknown to broader audiences. It is

characteristic that in many albums of Trabzon music of this style the names of the musicians who participate, among them the kemençe player, are either not mentioned at all or are written in a marginal space that does not attract the attention of the customer who purchases the album. Even when the names of the musicians are presented somewhere, that of the kemençe player is lost either in the middle or at the end, never in the beginning. The singer is the central figure around which a whole industry is developing, with a number of people working for the singer and the company, including as musicians, studio technicians, journalists and event organizers.

Regarding Black-Sea music in particular, the industry has developed two approaches in the making of albums. The first, as mentioned above, is the "star"-like approach that arranged Trabzon melodies in a pop and arabesque format, which were becoming very popular at that period of time. This was achieved using sonic materials from various instruments, sometimes without even using the kemençe. These were usually quite expensive productions requiring many hours of work, including recording and sound processing in high-quality studios. This genre managed to attract large audiences, in the cities and in villages, and to generate huge profits for the owners of the companies and for the "star" artists, but not that much for the performing musicians.

The second approach was the "traditionalist" approach, in which a "village artist," a kemençe player either alone or accompanied by a singer, will enter the studio and record some local melodies with his old "original" style, accompanied either by a synthesizer alone or without any other instruments at all. These were very inexpensive productions, since they did not require a significant amount of work or money. They were prepared in very short time and without much care on the part of the the company owner

or the studio producer and engineer. They were not, after all, expected to bring much money to the company and were not considered highly marketable products that could attract customers who lived in urban centers and had the financial power to purchase music albums. The potential customers of the "traditional" albums were either villagers or recent migrants to Istanbul and abroad. At that time, it was rare for village inhabitants to purchase a music album or, more importantly, a cassette player, due to financial constraints. Such albums were thus considered by people in the industry as a kind of sideline act to the mainstream "star" recordings. Adem was such a sideline when he was initially introduced to this world.

Companies prepared their musical products with a target audience in mind—the recent immigrants and the inhabitants of the urban centers—and in their efforts to gain them as customers, they followed a policy similar to that of TRT regarding the structure of the melodies and the lyrics, as described earlier in the dissertation. However, the big difference was that, while TRT sought to create a national culture, private companies were only interested in increasing their profits. For this reason the private music industry did not always follow the "elitist" musical norms of TRT, but was also moving away from those norms by producing pop or arabesque style Black-Sea music, thus reaching out to larger audiences. Black-Sea music followed the general trends in the mainstream pop music genres of the country, under the guidance of the private companies. When, for example, Turkish pop became popular, then a Black-Sea pop with kemençe would spring up. When ethnic music became popular, Black-Sea ethnic music would make its appearance. Based on sales and profit predictions, the trends in Black-Sea music would follow the general musical trends in the country.

Low-cost musical productions gradually became the norm in the relevant music industry. From then on, a Black-Sea musician wishing to release his work had two choices. The first was to make a cheap album, like Adem's, under bad recording condiitons, either by putting his own money down or through a sponsor. If he was lucky enough, the producer might cover the small cost. The other way would be to invest a lot of money in a single production, without guaranteed success. Since most of the cassettes and CDs produced by the industry were similar to Adem's first cassette—low cost, easily and quickly made—it became common among performers and listeners to think about kemençe recordings in this particular way, without imagining the possibility of other forms of music-making. This constrained kemençe music for several years. Even during my fieldwork this mode of kemençe music-making was still dominant.

Adem's first album brought him into direct contact with the market logic and the power relations that it entails. His subsequent albums were markedly different, closer to the "authentic style" he espoused. However, after having chosen to make kemençe music his profession, he had to balance between the desire for profit, which was dependent on audiences whose demands were shaped by a multitude of forces outside of his control, and his dream to make the "authentic style" of the village and Pontic-Greek lyrics popular again. And beyond the logic of the market, he had to face challenges from state and religious networks, as I described in previous chapters. The public circulation of his songs entangled him, beyond his will, in a complex nest of power relations where religious, state and market forces intersected and combined to block avenues of personal musical expression. Adem's power is his kemençe and songs. He is a lonely "fighter" for something he believes is just: his music and his maternal language.

Ethnic music activism

One afternoon in November 2009, while in Istanbul, I received a call from a man who identified himself as Mustafa, a musician. In our brief communication, Mustafa told me that he was looking for a musician to play a Greek song on a CD. Mustafa said he had my number from a common friend of ours, Ayşenur, a female, leftist human-rights activist and a vocalist from the Black Sea region. Ayşenur told him that I was a kemençe performer and that I might be able to contribute to Mustafa's project, which was about the "ethnic music" of Anatolia. He asked me to meet with him to discuss the project in detail. While I was enthusiastic about the possibility of entering a new network of musicians and finding new informants who would be willing to talk to me about their experiences in engaging in "ethnic" music-making, at the same time I was ambivalent about my participation in such a project due to its potential political ramifications.

The "ethnic" musical genre appeared in Turkey in its present form quite recently, and its very name, "ethnic music," carries significant sociopolitical connotations. This genre incorporates songs with lyrics in various non-Turkish indigenous languages of Anatolia, and it is a reminder that not all the citizens of the country self-identify as Turks. "Ethnic music" in Republican, nationalist Turkey is a marker of difference and implies a hierarchy of groups and individuals. More importantly, it poses a challenge and a potential threat to the official narratives of national consciousness and homogeneity.

Making an ethnic-music CD in Turkey is not an easy matter, and the interested party must do the following: find a recording company willing to invest money in a

project that is not expected to attract a large audience, and thus won't generate an economic return; find musicians or other knowledgeable individuals who speak the ethnic languages and are willing to participate, and to coordinate them; deal with problems that might arise during the recording process; and consider the potential reactions to such a CD and be prepared to take emotional, social, economic and political risks.

The recording, release and circulation of CDs with lyrics in indigenous, non-Turkish languages of Anatolia was legally prohibited until several years ago in Turkey. Additionally, musical performances in these "ethnic" languages in public spaces and events were under strict surveillance and restricted by state authorities. Many musicians had been detained and sentenced for daring to sing—even one song—in their native language in concerts, festivals or marriage celebrations. As a result of decades of deliberate state policies of musical appropriation and re-signification, linguistic assimilation and control of the arts, the act of singing in one's native language was stigmatized as "separatism" and was considered a direct threat to an imaginary "national unity," state security and sovereignty. In this way, musical lyrics had wider connotations and implications: They were perceived as subversive political acts mobilizing powerful emotions, and they yielded reactions of various kinds.

We arranged a meeting with Mustafa and Ali, the other director of the project, at a coffee shop on one of the side streets of Beyoğlu—the famous, crowded region in central Istanbul that is the meeting point for thousands of young people from around the city, and also the center of arts and cultural life in general. İstiklâl Caddesi, the main thoroughfare in Beyoğlu, is a long pedestrian street in the heart of Istanbul, full of different kinds of shops, busniness offices, residential units, bars, bookstores and publishing houses,

restaurants, cultural centers, cinemas, coffee shops and patisseries. Once the center of life for the non-Muslim inhabitants of the city—Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Western Europeans—Beyoğlu is now a symbol of Turkish middle-class, western-oriented lifestyles. Old buildings with different architectural designs remind the informed visitor of the area's multicultural past.

Many recording studios are situated in this area as well, and in many ways, music is an integral part of this landscape. While walking down the street, many different kinds of melodies emit from the loudspeakers of bookstores and music vendors, with lights, colors and smells accompanying the sounds. Thousands of people walk up and down for hours flirting, screaming or singing. Beyoğlu is a dizzying experience of urban effervescence, and a challenge for the senses; it is the epitome of leisure, modernity, youth and night life in Istanbul.

For these reasons, it is also the meeting point for many musicians: Various projects are discussed and planned in the small coffee houses of its many side streets, with the accompaniment of tea and cookies. In one of those beautiful coffeeshops, we discussed with Mustafa and Ali the possibility that Adem and myself might participate in their project.

From "indigenous" to "ethnic music"

Nation-making and musical "modernization" in Turkey relegated some musical genres and instruments to a marginal position within the dominant musical narratives, when they were not assimilated and censored altogether. The invention of a Turkish folk-music tradition in Anatolia between 1923-1950 became a very central tool of control and

assimilation of the diverse indigenous populations into a dominant, mainstream Turkish nationhood. These practices of musical Turkification continued up until the 1950s, when the gradual urbanization of the population gave rise to urban popular culture and related musical genres. However, the reverberations of these practices would reach up to the late 1990s.

In the 1950s, Turkey gradually moved from its one-party system to a tightly controlled two-party system. A party that appealed to religious Muslims came to power for the first time in 1950, and in 1952 the country became a member of NATO and the strict anti-communist coalition of Europe and the U.S. In the early 1960s, intellectuals, artists and activists from the leftist opposition forces dealt with the issue of "non-Turkish and non-Sunni Muslim identities" in the country; the heterodox religious community of the Alevis in particular started developing ideas and activities that made their cultural difference more visible in the public sphere. A similar phenomenon started taking place among Kurdish opposition activists. Activities such as research, translation, lectures and publication started gaining some significant ground. Nevertheless, the rising political tensions and the subsequent violence of the mid-1970s that culminated in the military coup of 1980 pushed the "cultural work" of this kind to the margins (Ozer, 2008: 192). With the coup, many leftist opposition activists who were previously engaged in such "cultural revival" work were either imprisoned or self-exiled, leaving empty space for pro-military social networks to come and acquire a dominant position in academia, the arts and other fields of public life.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of world politics contributed to the crisis of the class-based leftist movements and ideas in Turkey and a

shift to “ethnic” politics became more visible. The rapid rise of the armed Kurdish liberation movement in the 1990s gradually brought the issue of the “ethnic identities” of Anatolia to the forefront, and issues of ethnic identification rose high in the political agenda. This is described by local opposition scholars, writers and activists as the “discovery of identity” by people who now felt more free to express themselves (Ozer, 2008: 192).

The reverberations of these social changes on music were immediately felt. The traditional leftist groups that were controlling the making of political music in the country thus far started facing problems in addressing the rising new demands, trends and audiences. Famous protest-music groups, such as *Kızılırmak* (Red River), *Grup Yorum* (Performance Group), *Yeni Türkü* (New Folksong) and others, had never put the issue of ethnic identity high in their political agenda and musical repertoires, though they did give some space in their recordings to songs with lyrics in non-Turkish, Anatolian languages. In the 1990s, however, some musicians who later on broke from these groups produced musical works that dealt directly with cultural difference and ethnic identification (Ozer, 2008: 193-194).

Some important developments took place in the post-coup period of the mid-1980s that had a significant long term impact on music-making and listening. The conservative government of Turgut Özal abolished articles 141 and 142 from the junta-made constitution, thus putting an end to the penalization of communist beliefs. This facilitated the return of many exiled leftist opposition activists who started forming new networks that engaged in the organization of music festivals, dance nights and exchanges

among artists in Turkey and those in the diaspora in various European countries (Ozer 2008: 193).

The gradual neo-liberalization and opening of the Turkish economy to world capital and competition by the Özal government accelerated the massive import and use of cassette recorders and of every kind of music-related technology. New local recording companies and studios made their first appearance, as the ban over the use of Kurdish lyrics in songs was officially lifted in 1991 (despite its de facto continuation for many more years), many cultural centers and publishing houses which gave priority to "ethnic" issues were established and new journals and newspapers publishing in non-Turkish local languages introduced themselves to new readerships. Moreover, new local radio and TV stations started broadcasting, thus breaking the state monopoly, and new artists were given the opportunity to introduce their music to larger audiences. All these developments facilitated the "de-penalization" and rise of "ethnic music" in Turkey. Different indigenous non-Turkish musical genres and languages acquired greater audibility and social recognition. The musical and social atmosphere started to gradually diversify, and public discussions and debates about "ethnic identity" proliferated. Neoliberal reform in Turkey brought new opportunities for public expression and recognition for marginalized groups and ethnic minorities, but at the same time the logic of private profit erected new obstacles for those without access to large audiences.

The music industry had contradictory functions in the making and rise of "ethnic music" and difference in Turkey. On the one hand, activist, left-wing music producers with defined political aspirations and projects assumed the role of protagonists in the rise of the "ethnic-music" phenomenon. On the other, the rise of new technologies and the

domination of the logic of profit, shifted priorities in the areas of music-making and distribution. From a form of expression of political dissidence and desire, this form of music gradually became a means of profit-making. The consequences of this dramatic shift are crucial. Let us see how.

Music industry and political change

Emre is the owner of a famous record company, which played a pivotal role in the rise of "ethnic music" in Turkey in the 1990s. As he explains:

> In the past nobody would say I am from this or that place, or that these are my roots. The Kurdish movement helped create an atmosphere in which people could now easily express themselves regarding their roots. And the truth is that everyone became more comfortable and started searching for their roots, saying that they were Kurdish, Laz, Armenian… The situation changed rapidly; before that, there was the dominant mainstream ideology of the nation-state that considered everyone living on these lands as a Turk. I still remember how afraid we were, even a few years ago, to publicly state that we were Alevis.[70] When they would ask us where we are from, we would not reveal our real region; we would simply tell that we are from a nearby area because this would not raise suspicion of our religious affiliation and devotion. People were afraid of openly stating that they were Alevis, more so if they were civil servants, policemen or military officers. In

[70]The Alevis are a large heterodox group of approximately 20-25 million people that are spread around Anatolia. They are the second largest religious group after the mainstream Sunni Muslims of the country. There is still an ongoing debate among activists, scholars, theologians, and politicians as to whether Alevis should be considered Muslims or a different religious group, or Shia sect. They have a large diaspora in Europe which in the last few years has developed various projects and activities for the "protection and development" of the Alevi religion and culture, and raised its voice against the assimilationist policies of the Sunni governments of Turkey.

> the 1990s, with the recording and wider circulation of ethnic music, people started searching and questioning their ethno-phobias. This brought a recovery; it is an achievement to be able to search and find your own past, your own roots. (Ozer& Oney, 2008:197).

Emre, after finishing his compulsory military service, migrated to Istanbul in 1976 and started working in a small recording company as a secretary, mainly answering phones. He was not aware of the musical landscape of that period, knew nothing about protest music in Turkey and was not aware of the existing groups and artists. In fact, he did not listen to any Turkish music at all, but mainly listened to Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin. Some time later, he moved to another recording company where he had more responsibilities and started learning how recordings are made in a studio, who is who in the industry, what kinds of musical genres and artists are out there and how to deal with state authorities in order to produce and release a new musical work.

Emre said that the military coup in the 1980s, among other "innovations," established a five-member commission within the structure of the Ministry of Culture. It was comprised of a representative from the cinema and TV industry, a military officer, a policeman, a judge and an artist. The committee was responsible for inspecting, controlling and censoring newly produced musical works shortly before release and circulation; it would identify all the recording companies and listen to their new productions one by one. The committee would never inspect Turkish pop and foreign music albums, but only those made by artists who were known for their political music. This committee was still active until around 2004. Many companies and artists who produced political music in Turkey were afraid of this committee, and due to its

authority, many song lyrics were changed before they were granted license to circulate publicly. Emre thinks that this is a continuation of the early state policies, under which hundreds of local songs were not granted approval, never made it to the "national archive" and were not allowed public presentation via the powerful TRT.

Emre vividly remembers the process of production and circulation of the first official album with songs in the Kurdish language:

> it was a period of prohibitions. Kurdish lyrics were totally banned. There were some albums with some Kurdish words among the predominantly Turkish lyrics, and because of these words, the albums would make crazy sales. The owner of the company I was working for decided to record and officially release the first album with exclusively Kurdish lyrics, defying the bans and the potential consequences of such an action. We gave the album dossier to the Ministry of Culture without mentioning that the lyrics were in Kurdish; we lied instead and said that the lyrics were in Turkish. Until they made the necessary inspections we had already produced the album in the city of Manisa, where the Raks factory was located. In order to avoid its confiscation, we started the distribution to the local distributors during the night, immediately after the album was ready; and from there, we distributed it to the hundreds of local music stores all around the country. We thought it would be very difficult for the police to confiscate thousands of albums from all the different music stores around the country, and we were right: Though they tried, they couldn't control the circulation. After we made sure that the album had reached all the music stores, we informed a journalist friend of ours, who was working for a mainstream newspaper, about our first Kurdish album. The next morning, he put the story on the front page of the newspaper, so everyone learned about it. Turgut Özal was in office then and there were severe reactions: his

> government immediately passed a new law regarding the music made by people and groups who are not recognized as a nation-state by Turkey. Also, there was the law passed by the military regime that prohibited "minority music." This changed later. The owner of our company was then arrested and put on trial. He was decisive about [the album], and he knew what he was going to face, but despite that, he did it. (Ozer& Oney 2008:302)

Having accumulated valuable knowledge and experience from the Kurdish album, Emre decided to focus more on "political music." The company did not have much economic power, though, and Emre had to find money for a new production with a leftist music group that he had recently identified. He had inherited about thirteen gold bracelets from his mother, which he decided to sell in order to pay for the studio recordings. The album he made for this group sold thousands of copies. Some time later he went on to establish his own company, where he focused on ethnic-music productions. Every time he would send an ethnic music album's dossier to the Ministry of Culture for approval, he declared that the lyrics were Turkish so as to avoid further inspection from the committee and to avoid the danger of prohibition. He was prosecuted many times for providing incorrect information to the ministry, but they did not manage to stop his activity and productions. He continued releasing albums in Kurdish and other languages, and gradually his company became very famous and influential. He had opened the path for the rise of "ethnic music" in Turkey. Additionally, he contributed to the gradual making of a new market for different genres and languages, thus encouraging other companies to undertake these kinds of productions too, with the expectation of making some profit. Political considerations and money were about to meet in the field of ethnic music.

However, it would be very difficult for ethnic music to compete with and challenge the cultural hegemony and commercial value of mainstream genres, supported by powerful private and state networks.

Additionally, the political schism between left and right in Turkey had a tremendous impact on the musical landscape of the country. Emre's intervention in Turkey's musical scene was not limited to the production of Kurdish and other "ethnic-music" genres. His company played a leading role in appropriating various, quite popular artists from leftist organizations and events, who until then, had been appropriated and used by ultra nationalist and statist networks.

The famous Turkish bağlama performer Neşet Ertaş is a telling example. Neşet had lived in Germany for many years, and his musical productions were undertaken and controlled by companies owned by immigrant Turkish nationalists in Germany. Additionally, he and his music were appropriated by Turkish nationalist organizations and associations. Whenever he would go to different places to perform, members of the ultra-nationalist racist party of Turkey, MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) would be there to applaud, support and honor him. There would always be big Turkish and MHP flags waving at his concerts, and for these reasons, leftist supporters refrained from going to these kinds of events. Emre was aware that Neşet, a leftist himself, was unable to know details about the places he was going to perform and who the organizers were; so as soon as he would take the stage, it was already too late for him to step down. Emre thought that by taking Neşet to his company, he would be able to pull him away from the nationalist networks and appropriate him for more democratic and leftist events.

When Neşet became a contracted artist of Emre's company, Neşet never performed in nationalist, rightist events again. Every time there was a performance, Emre would inform him about its details, giving him control over his affiliations. He stopped going to party events, and Emre would always find sponsors for him to go and perform in free "*halk konserleri"* (people's concerts), organized by opposition groups. Emre argues that "the appropriation of Neşet Ertaş for my company was a very successful operation that drove him away from the nationalists and deprived them from their right and legitimacy to use his music. In so doing, we also succeeded, to a certain degree, in protecting his own political identity. The same operation took place regarding other famous folk music performers too" (ibid., 304). Emre thinks that "saving the musicians from the nationalist networks" and appropriating them for the opposition groups was one of his company's most important contributions and interventions in the Turkish musical, ideological and political landscape. In Turkey, who plays for whom, and who listens to whom, is a very sensitive issue and has political implications.

Networks of individuals who defined themselves as leftist or oppositional created a clear distinction between "left-wing music nights" and "market nights." The latter are supported by state authorities and commercial companies. The struggle for "control" of genres and artists who oscillate between the two is ongoing and crucial.

From state to market control

In the 2000s, with the acceleration of the Internet and sound storage and reproduction technologies such as iTunes, iPods, recording software and various web sites, new profit opportunities emerged alongside risks, transformations and crisis.

Professionals in music-making and distribution in Turkey started talking about the "coming collapse" of their sector. More particularly, according to official statistics and the opinions expressed by specialists and actors in the music sector, between 2005 and 2006, there was a tremendous increase in ADSL subscriptions (Forta, 2007: 269). While there were 200,000 internet subscribers in 2005, by 2006, this number had reached 3,000,000; this further accelerated the illegal copying of music and led to a remarkable decrease in the cassette market (Forta, 2007: 269). Professionals were afraid that their jobs were coming to an end.

Two "theories" competed in their prediction of the future of music: One held that, with the advance of technology, music would become available to everyone for free; the other compared music to water, a utility for which one pays either state or private institutions. Kerem, the owner of an influential record company, one of the most powerful local music companies in Turkey, imagines and describes the music of the future by following the second theory:

> I wish music was public and free for everyone, and that musicians would make it for free, but unfortunately nowadays this is entirely impossible. So what we need to do right now, if we wish to seriously talk about turning music into an industry, is to make it much more profitable. The extra profit won't come from the sales of cassettes and CDs, this is the old method; new profit will come from the selling of copyrights and license, from digital sales, and from concerts.

Kerem compares music to water. Public institutions such as municipalities sell water to people for various uses; this, he argues, is the equivalent of copyright sales in music for use in various contexts (TV and radio stations, restaurants, bars, night clubs, hotels or public transportation). There are private corporations that bottle water and sell

it, something akin to the classic CD, with its cover and back pages, the booklet inside with texts and photos, "like a musical boutique" (Forta 2007:266).

There are ongoing discussions and plans in Turkey regarding the further institutionalization and control of various activities involved in the making, dissemination and listening of music, and about the distribution of the profit produced from these activities. The role of professional organizations is going to be very crucial in this process, and at the bottom of this lies the rising importance of contractual relations and the evolving contract culture that brings further regulation and control than previously experienced.

In the recent past, individuals who thought of themselves as musicians would go to other individuals who described themselves as producers, and they would agree, orally, on the production of a cassette/CD and on percentage cuts regarding the potential profit from sales. This was a very unstable and unpredictable relationship, since the oral agreement could break up for various reasons, particularly those regarding disagreements about profit distribution. Companies could be established, flourish and decline in a short period, while musical genres and artists could rise and fall rapidly, not being able to withstand competition from imitations, unreliable partners who would not pay their share and lack of extensive distribution and promotional networks. Music-making was like a local, parochial craftsmanship, and the idea of copyright was not even discussed.

Today, the establishment of organizations that protect and promote the interests of artists, creators and companies play an ever-increasing role that changes the musical landscape of the country and secures the orderly management and distribution of the profit that comes out of copyright licenses. Currently there are the following professional

associations: the MUYORBIR (Professional Association of Singers), whose members are singers, the MÜ-YAP (Professional Association of Music Producers), whose members are the owners of music companies, and finally two associations, MESAM and MSG, that both represent the owners of musical works such as composers and lyricists. Individuals can be a member of these organizations depending on their activities. As composers and lyricists of the song they sing themselves, then they will receive copyright revenues from each respective organization. They must first, of course, register as a member in order to gain the right to collecting copyright money. By 2007, the amount of money collected in this way was about 10 to 15 million dollars (Forta 2007:268).

These professional organizations in the last five years have been trying to coordinate their activities and agree on common rules through which they would be able to distribute the revenues that are meant to start pouring in from licensing. Additionally, they are trying to establish a "culture of copyright" among different constituencies in order to be able to collect money from them. Despite the fact that all the relevant laws regarding copyright and licensing have been passed by the Islamic government in recent years, they have not been implemented in practice by many individuals who are engaged in music and related sectors.

For example, Kerem once visited the owner of a small hotel with the necessary documents, and asked him to pay for copyrights for the music he was playing in his hotel. The owner refused to pay and challenged Kerem to prove that he was actually playing unlicensed music. Another small hotel owner, when Kerem visited him for the same reason, reacted "what's your problem, I purchased this CD from the market and I am playing it in my hotel, I can use it as I wish; why should I also pay money for playing it?"

When Kerem sent him the respective legal documents that proved that he needed to pay an amount of money for using this music in his professional space, the owner refused and chose to take the issue to the court. This legal dispute has been going on for four years. In the last seven to eight years, professional music organizations are trying to establish a common understanding and collaboration with the representative organizations of other professions on licensing and copyright issues.

Kerem believes that copyright culture is still not very developed in Turkey. This is why, he argues, "music-industry" professionals keep losing money. Nevertheless, he is very hopeful that things will change and people will start paying for the music they use in different contexts, thus increasing the revenues of their sector.

According to the action plan upon which the four professional organizations have agreed, money from copyright and licensing will be collected by one body that represents all four organizations. At a second stage, the money will be distributed internally among themselves according to the repertoire of each artist, composer/lyricist and company owner. So far, state and private radio and television stations constitute the most important source of income. The four music organizations have managed to make an agreement with all the nationwide mainstream TV stations regarding licensing issues and are in an ongoing legal dispute with a few of them. After conducting extensive research, they identified 1,000 radio stations, and by 2007 they managed to make licensing agreements with 400 of them. Moreover, they identified 200,000 places—bars, night clubs, hotels, restaurants, cultural centers—where music is performed. Their aim is to include all these in their licensing agreements. If they manage to do so, their revenues will increase dramatically, but, as Kerem says, this will take a lot of time and "strategic work" (Forta

2007:268). All those interested in this sector are trying to create and establish a "copyright awareness" by organizing campaigns and approaching all those involved to inform them directly.

The next step is to further extend their electronic database of songs, composers, artists and lyricists by creating long playlists that will enable them to track whose song is downloaded by whom and when. This will give them great control over digital sales of music that take place either through the Internet or through mobile phones. Currently MÜ-YAP has 185 local member companies that collaborate in order to create a common database. So far, in this database, they have gathered about 80,000 songs that can be legally downloaded (Forta 2007:269). Downloading can be tracked through a central electronic system that cost about $500,000 to create. Every three months, each company receives a report with lists of their songs that were legally downloaded; they are informed about the revenues, then they settle the distribution among themselves according to their downloaded repertoire. Each of the other organizations receives these reports with the downloaded playlists in order for them to be able to distribute money to their own members (singers, composers, lyricists and so on).[71]

For an individual to gain rights and access to this money, he/she needs to become a member of one of those organizations, differently he/she will face financial difficulties and won't be able to compete with others and gain recognition from larger audiences. Kerem argues that they are planning to control the various activities and live performances of artists in Turkey and abroad so that they can receive licensing revenues from those activities too. A powerful network of companies, controlled by few big ones,

[71] Those who have rights over this money are the companies, the singers, the composers and lyricists.

is currently being created and has begun exerting control over every form of musical activity in the country. The strict control of state authorities over musical creativity has gradually reached an end and is currently being replaced by the logic of the market that creates new opportunities and different obstacles. In this way, the power over music-making shifted from state control to corporate control.

This huge transformation is based upon what Kerem calls the rising "contract culture" and the gradual functioning of the respective laws that have been recently passed by the government (Forta 2007:265). The introduction of legal rules that regulate the relations between singers, composers, lyricists and companies facilitates the further "corporatization" of music-making and its control by powerful local companies. Currently these companies are becoming dominant in their competition with large international corporations such as SONY and Universal, who in the recent past have established greater control over the "music market," as it is called in the language of corporations. Since the 2000s, however, with the rise of the Internet and digital technologies of sound recording, reproduction and storage, the cost of music-making and listening dropped significantly. Now, with a program and a laptop, an artist can make a high-quality recording in his or her room and share it for free with potential audiences on YouTube and many other local digital playlists.

Additionally, local companies can now afford to make new productions due to the decrease in cost. In this way, international music corporations in Turkey started losing revenues. Moreover the further institutionalization of collaboration among local professional organizations as described above has made life for the internationals more difficult. Finally, the gradual change in the music preferences of audiences, the

diversification of the musical landscape and the change in the contexts of music listening due to social and technological shifts further empowered the locals and disempowered the internationals. Some important local companies have reached a point where they can sell between 700,000 and 1,500,000 copies. There is a further diversification of musical genres from alternative electronic to ethnic music; and there is an annual production of approximately 1,000 to 1,500 new albums (*ibid*). According to specialists in the sector, listening habits are also changing, and listeners are moving away from the popular, individual singers and shifting attention toward collective work and to the overall quality of the album. Protagonists in the industry are very optimistic that it is the local companies who will finally win the battle and "control this rising and diverse market" in Turkey.

Now let us take a closer look at the dynamics of "ethnic" music-making in Istanbul.

Music between activism and profit

How are these dynamics reflected on ethnic music making in Istanbul? In this section, I describe and anlyze the making of an album that includes songs in ten different historically marginalized or censored languages of Anatolia, Pontic Greek among them.

Ali was a member of a political group named "Initiative for the Brotherhood of Peoples," which consisted of musicians, intellectuals, writers, poets, publication specialists and other activists who identified as leftists. The aims of this collectivity was to create a context for the free debate of economic and political issues currently facing the country, to fight against nationalism, to reject the marginalization of different groups from mainstream society, to organize events and to inform the public about the non-

Turkish ethnic groups living in Turkey and to help them gain greater visibility and acceptance by larger segments of society.

But as is the case with many leftist groups in Turkey, after a short period of time and after the initial enthusiasm wore away, the meetings became repetitive, and gradually the group started to disintegrate without having managed to produce something more than a few minor concerts. Ali was anxious to keep the group together, and for this reason, he started thinking of a project that would function as a unifying and mobilizing force. This is how he developed the idea of a music project about the languages that had survived years of assimilationist policies and are still alive within the borders of Turkey. This group would gather musicians from different ethnic groups and ask them to sing in their native languages on a single music album.

For Ali, music is a "leading force," or "motor force" for the society, as he calls it, and he thought that by undertaking such a project, the group would have a strong motivation to remain united, have a tangible cause, and at the same time they would be able to make their presence more visible to larger audiences. Though there were some groups that perform songs in other non-Turkish languages, this would be the first project of its kind in the musical history of the country, and Ali expected that it would greatly benefit their struggle for "recognition and mutual acceptance" of all the linguistic/ethnic groups that currently live as Turkish citizens within the territorial borders of Turkey.

However, things did not turn out as expected. To his disappointment, in a period of two to three months after the day he announced his project idea to the other members of the group, some of them, who had initially declared their enthusiasm and support,

started posing obstacles, questioning the viability of the project and the participation of other individuals and groups, and they began to withdraw.

The Initiative consisted of peoples and groups from diverse geographies, backgrounds, political experiences and orientations. Ali's initial expectation was that everybody would participate with his or her own particularities and experiences, allowing potential for positive contributions, and that there would be a minimum of mutual acceptance. However, after their first participation, some people from the Black-Sea region (the representatives of a magazine) declared that they would not attend the meetings any longer, followed by their abandonment of the Initiative without any further explanation. Another group expressed its reservations about the participation of some Kurdish activists and withdrew. A music group comprised of nine women stopped attending the meetings of the Initiative and gradually withdrew. Additionally, some others explicitly expressed concerns about the economic rewards they might receive from their participation, and when they realized that there would not be any, they also stopped attending the meetings. In this way, politics and economic considerations created severe obstacles for Ali.

All these delayed the development of his project for a year and a half, but he was determined to move on. Ali had already made some contacts with musicians and recording companies in Istanbul, and one of these musicians was Mustafa, the person who called me and asked me to participate in this project. Ali and Mustafa worked together closely in order to materialize the idea of a CD with ten songs in ten indigenous, non-Turkish languages.

However, the problems and obstacles did not finish here. Ali had made an oral agreement with one recording company, though they had not yet signed a written contract. They worked together for five months and they even made the first recording of one of the songs. Suddenly and without any prior warning, the owner of the recording company told Ali that, due to financial difficulties, he would not be able to carry out this project and withdrew without further explanation. Ali and Mustafa then started looking for another company to undertake the project. It took them about six months to meet and agree with Kerem, owner one of the two major recording companies of Turkey that were supporting ethnic music projects (see previous section). Meetings, negotiations, agreements, and materializations of projects in Turkey can be very time-consuming processes. At least this time, Ali and Mustafa had secured the support of a major, influential and accountable company.

Following this delay, they had to deal with the problem of finding artists willing to sing. Ali had great difficulty in finding a vocalist who could sing in the Süryani (Syriac) language, since the number of the members of this ethnic group had decreased by assimilation and migration. After a long search, he managed to find a young person named Arda, a university student in Istanbul who had recently started teaching Süryani language at his church's seminars. Arda did not have any familiarity whatsoever with the art of musical performance and singing, but with the guidance of Ali and Mustafa, he managed to sing and record a song for the needs of the CD. Problems also arose with the Greek Constantinopolitan song, since the musician who had initially accepted to participate failed to attend the recordings at the studio. Three separate recording sessions were rented especially for him. Ali was puzzled with this behavior and could not

understand why Yanni, the Greek Constantinopolitan musician, repeatedly did not show up for the recording. After three months of promises, discussions and failed attempts to record they stopped communicating.

Another woman who sang in Circassian delayed the recordings for two months, despite her initial enthusiasm and agreement to participate. In the end she, too, declared that she was withdrawing from the project. Ali wanted to include a song in Hebrew by the Jewish communities of Anatolia. Despite his continuous efforts to find someone to sing in this language in Turkey, he failed, and such a song never made it into the project's repertoire. Ali is optimistic, however, that in the future, when he will produce a second CD with ten other languages of Anatolia (20 in total), Hebrew will be included.

Music-making in Turkey has become extremely commercialized, and for Ali and Mustafa, this commercialization constitutes an "ethical problem." Most of the companies, with the exception of two or three in Istanbul, are not interested in the quality of music. Ali said that they do not value art and that they are only interested in the potential profit they can make by selling CDs to larger segments of the population. This, combined with the fact that production of new melodies and lyrics in the genre of "folk music" in general has been frozen for decades and that there is only repetition of the old melodies that are now characterized as "traditional," has led to further marginalization of this musical genre. Some new songs are produced, but there is a common understanding among the community of musicians in this genre that they constitute "cheap copies of the originals." Those companies who managed to make money in the past did not re-invest them in "quality music" and musicians; had they done so, then creativity and "good music" would have been at the forefront.

It is very difficult for someone to survive as a professional "folk" musician in Istanbul; one needs to be in other more profitable genres in order to make a decent income that allow music to be one's profession. Most of the participants in Ali and Mustafa's project are amateur musicians who have other stable jobs in different domains, making music strictly for ideological and emotional reasons. Only three of the participants in the project claim a professional engagement with music-making and performance.

Commercial music performed with western instruments, rhythms and pop sonic and lyric qualities has become quite dominant and mainstream in contemporary Turkey, and these are the genres that continuously sell and bring profit to the companies. What Ali calls "quality folk music," especially in the non-Turkish indigenous languages of Anatolia, is very marginal in terms of audience and of course in terms of profit-making. But Ali hopes that their project can be a significant starting point that might mobilize other sensitive musicians to follow and create larger audiences.

Another problem in the "Turkish music industry," according to Ali, is the lack of professionalism and the slow pace at which people work and produce. He and Mustafa deeply felt and painfully experienced this in their quest for a production company and for some musicians for their project. A project that might be completed in two days might take ten or fifteen days in Turkey. Ali says simply, "People are lazy." Additionally, the lack of contractual relations until very recently among musicians and producers can destabilize their relations, since promises are given but are not kept and projects are agreed upon but do not materialize, both potentially causing financial damage to

musicians and the collapse of expectations. If Ali was dependent on music for his and his family's living, this project would have certainly been a financial and temporal disaster.

TELL US

> *Tell us*…first there was sound, then it turned to word. With its thousands of years of accumulated experience, word turned to music…*Tell us,* we listen and we see how richly and enthusiastically we have been living together. Tell us so we can more clearly hear your stentorian voice, we have missed it, we have been waiting for so long to listen to it. Wherever we looked around, we were alone, we felt desolate. We were a little heartbroken, perhaps we were trying to understand, and maybe we were just trying to survive, we were "orphans"…we were far away, perhaps we were staying away from each other, we did not recognize each other, we couldn't recognize each other, we were delaying…*Tell us*, our aim was to come together; to think where we should have started from, and how we should have accomplished it. We knew the dizzying power of being together, next to each other…
>
> And there you are, we are together in peace and tolerance….
>
> This sound and this word came together, and they brought understanding and insight in front of our eyes; they welcomed us in all their simplicity, telling us "I am here" …
>
> *Tell us*, this is how we started to get to know each other, by listening to each other's melodies and songs, by feeling and living in each other's language. Our intention is very transparent, our expression straight, unequivocal…
>
> *Tell us* this is the name of our resurfaced experiences that have passed, concealed in our social memory; it's the name of our enthusiasm that

> cannot get constricted in these lands, an enthusiasm we wish will carryover to everyone; this is the name of peace and tolerance…*Tell us*, first of all this is a project; and a name for those who believe in living together on these lands, for those who accomplish it; a name for those who manage to do so…*Tell us*, this is the name of the feelings brought by simply being able to sit next to each other without any expectations; it's the name of a harmony that comes even when we work together, a harmony that we cannot define; it's the name of a memory that was put on paper…*Tell us* this is the name of embellishing our lives with color, of acknowledging each other's presence; it's the name of the ability to give direction to our lives through music and art…..This is the name of our mutual understanding when coming together, participating, seeing, telling….
>
> *Tell us*, this is the name of the necessity to live together by being more powerful and productive, never losing our direction, without viewing the "other" as being superior or more advanced but by accepting him/her for his/her richness and for the values he/she creates…Yes *Tell us*, this is a music album project, the project of us all; it is the voice and soul of all those who have been producing on these lands for thousands of years, and the voice and soul of their products; *Tell us* is the name of the ability to make it and to survive up until now, to exist, and to be able to exist forever….
>
> Introductory text in the music album *Tell Us*

The project presented ten songs in ten different languages/dialects: Pontic Greek, Laz, Georgian, Circassian, Hemşin-Armenian, Arabic, Kurdish, Armenian, Assyrian and Turkish. Ali and Mustafa's wish was that every volunteer participant would decide and prepare by themselves the orchestration and performance in the recording studio. The idea was that, by doing so, everyone would have the chance to present to the audience

their own musical culture as in the way they felt was most "original." However, this was not possible for every song. For example, for the Assyrian song is from a musical culture that is "dying," according to my informants. Ali and Mustafa worked with Arda, the young Assyrian student mentioned earlier, very closely, going through the existing, limited, repertoire. After choosing a song, they rehearsed it together many times so that Arda would be able to sing it in the studio with the accompaniment of various instruments. Despite the difficulties they had in teaching him to sing without hesitating and without serious mistakes, Ali and Mustafa feel satisfied because they believe that by including this Assyrian song in the project and by pushing Arda to engage with his own musical culture more seriously, they might have contributed to the making of a young scholar who may play an important role in the revival of the Assyrian music and culture in Turkey. In this way, Ali and Mustafa helped teach Arda about "cultural revival."

Beyond the linguistic element in the repertoire, this project was also based on the idea that the person who would sing each song should come from that particular culture or "ethnic identity." For Ali and Mustafa, it would be meaningless to add yet another CD where a few artists sing in several different languages to the many such albums that already exist. For their project, "originality" in the performance of the song meant that if you sing the Kurdish song you "must be a Kurd," for the Arabic song you "must be an Arab," for the Greek song a Greek and so on. When trying to find someone who would sing the Turkish song, Ali told me somehow ironically, that they had difficulties in finding "a pure Turk" and a democrat, someone who would understand the purpose of the project and would like to contribute wholeheartedly. Since "Turkish folk music" had become a dominant genre through state policies, every artist in Anatolia could potentially

perform and sing these kinds of songs; the important aspect for Ali and Mustafa was to find an ethnic Turk, or a "pure Turk" who would do it. I was puzzled with the way Ali brought up the issue of the "pure Turk." When I expressed my puzzlement, he smiled and told me that he found a young lady who was a Turk but an Alevi like himself, so he would not count her among the "pure Turks" whom he identified with mainstream Sunni Islam.

Another problem that Ali had to face was the fear of some participants that this CD might be considered "political." They questioned whether there was any hidden political agenda behind it. Things became worse when some of them, after hearing that there would also be a Kurdish song in the repertoire, distanced themselves from the project and never showed up in the meetings without further notification and explanation. Due to the ongoing military confrontation between state forces and Kurdish guerrilla groups, the very mention of the word "Kurdish" can raise serious fears and reservations, even among people who describe themselves as democrats and as members of the opposition.

Ali is quite critical towards those approaches, and he thinks that whatever we do in life is political. Even inactivity is political for him, since by not participating one indirectly legitimizes a particular regime or a certain way of being. Additionally, a real artist and intellectual should always be in the opposition and support the oppressed and the marginalized. He emphatically stated, "we should be critical towards the system, Niko, this is how it has always been. As artists and intellectuals, we need to take a clear and open position; we know from history that there were the artists of the king and of the

emperor, okay, but the real artist is always against power, he is a dissident, he has a critical eye and stance against the system."

Despite the fact that the project is about the ethnic languages and cultures of Anatolia, and it is "political" as such, Ali refuses to admit that they had a particular political aim. The only thing they were trying to do was to show something that already exists: the presence of these different cultures, and nothing more. However, the ideological and political landscape in Turkey has developed in such a way that even this simple and human fact—the public expression of linguistic and musical difference—becomes a highly controversial political issue that might cause fear among citizens, even the intervention of state authorities. Ali grew up in a "cosmopolitan" environment in his native Antakya, close to the Syrian border. He lived in a community with Christians, Kurds, Turks and Armenians, with whom he went to the same school, danced, and shared many moments; he is used to living with difference around him and thus he takes it for granted. Ethnic variation is not something extraordinary as an experience or as an idea, which is why he insists that their album is not a political project, but simply the unprompted expression of a deeply experienced reality, something entirely ordinary. As Ali recalls, outsiders considered this daily coexistence of difference as something abnormal, and they could not understand it. For Ali and his friends, however, this inability of the outsiders seemed extremely odd, too. Ali commented:

> Over the last few years we have observed a rise in the popularity of ethnic discourses and identities all around the world. Well, on the one hand, this might be good, but I also think that it could become dangerous. So for me, preparing such an album was something extremely natural. It's like drinking water. Some people in the project might have not viewed it as such, and that's why they stepped back,

> because they thought it was political. But no, we just try to show other people something that already exists, to bring these cultures next to each other. Nobody can deny that these cultures exist, since we know they are here. It doesn't matter if the state or whoever refuses to acknowledge their existence, this does not make them to cease to exist, they are there, whether we like it or not. For example, the Pontic Greeks, no matter what the state says—these people exist, they do not vanish. A culture dies only when the people who live with it consider it dead. Greek, Arabic, Persian cultures, among others, are all historic cultures of this region that date back at least a thousand years. They have a past, they survived through different regimes and empires, and they did not disappear.

Musicscapes of Anatolia

Before deciding on what song to record, each artist prepared a repertoire of two to three songs from which to choose together with Ali and Mustafa, who were the organizers and managers of the whole process. Some of the participants were experienced professionals and were prepared to start recording immediately with their own musicians. Most of them, however, beyond some knowledge of their repertoires, were amateurs and did not have any recording experience. Thus, they needed significant help from Ali and Mustafa regarding instrument use, orchestration, arrangement and rendition.

Ali describes the outcome of the recordings with reserved satisfaction, as "natural" and "pleasant," but wishes there would have been more space for them to develop the project differently. This album was prepared on a very limited budget. All of the participants, including Adem and myself, contributed without requesting any compensation, because we believed in the importance of the cause. Had there been more

money to use, more instruments and musicians would have participated in order to sonically enrich each piece, and more time would be allocated to studio recordings and to the subsequent elaboration of the sonic character of each song in the post-recording period. Also, Ali and others were not professional musicians, but had their own jobs and obligations. Ali was working as a school teacher from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., so he could attend recordings only in the afternoon and evening. The same was true for many other participants. Additionally, the recordings were dependent upon the availability of the studio and the technician, which made time constraints a negative factor that did not help Ali and Mustafa deploy all their talents and creativity during the making of the album. Despite all these difficulties, everybody was satisfied in the end.

Before entering the recording studio, Ali conducted extensive research regarding the music of the different groups which were to be included in the album. He worked together with the artists to read books and articles, search the Internet and talk to older people in order to learn how each musical genre was performed, what kinds of instruments were used, what were the singing techniques and what kinds of social context did they came from. Of course, he also researched the artists performing on the CD themselves. This research and dialogue with other musicians and singers lasted for about two years, taking of course under consideration all the other problems mentioned earlier. The aim was to imagine and perform a certain "originality" for each melody, in addition to uniting ten different languages and music cultures. To his surprise, after the completion of all recordings, Ali claimed that the songs sounded quite similar to each other, despite their different origins, social and cultural contexts, sonic and rhythmic

characters, and the diverse imaginings that accompanied them. Ali suggested that I listen to the CD as a whole in order to be able to understand what he means:

> This happened spontaneously. You will feel it too; it is very interesting. You will immediately say to yourself that these songs are so familiar. Despite the fact that each artist prepared his or her own repertoire, and that we are talking about different languages, songs and geographies, you will see that all of them will sound extremely familiar to you. They will make you think that you know these melodies from somewhere and that you have heard them before. This sense of familiarity has nothing to do with the underlying orchestration and arrangements. After all, these were imagined and carried out separately. But you will see, if you place the Pontic-Greek song next to the Arabic, Kurdish and Assyrian songs, they will all sound very familiar. I feel that this is also a proof of the universality of music. There are songs from diverse geographies in the album: from the Balkans and the Black Sea to the Middle East.

Ali imagines this sonic familiarity as something that stems from the complex interactions among people of totally different cultures and geographies. He describes this as a "cultural exchange of the past," of which we are not aware even today. He says:

> in the past there was a very strong tolerance and mutual acceptance of people and difference, it was more humane. Nowadays tolerance is something constructed, something consciously planned in order to achieve certain aims, whereas in the past there was a natural, spontaneous tolerance coming from the character of the people and their daily habits; today in Turkey all these discussions about tolerance are artificial. They can vanish at any moment.

For Ali, music is the most powerful carrier of culture; the songs in this album are a good manifestation of how this culture of tolerance from the past was imprinted in the melodies that managed to survive and to transmit this culture to our days.

The experience of working for this album with these different people made him realize that the resemblances between cultures constitute beauty, and that the differences make us richer. Until we met and worked together, Ali was not aware of the Pontic-Greek dialect, and of the fact that it still survives in the Black Sea region of Turkey; other participants were not aware of the existence of the Arab language and music within the borders of their own country. This work gave the opportunity to the other artists to get to know each other through their music; they saw their similarities and differences and became aware of each other's presence in the different corners of Turkey. Ali's hope is that the same will also be felt by the people who will listen to the album. He is surprised about how it was possible for him, even as an artist and teacher, not to be aware of the existence of different groups. He complains that other people of different ethnic origins were not, and many still are not, aware of the presence of a large, Arabic-speaking population in Turkey, estimated to be at least five million. Despite the huge Arab influence, especially through Sunni Islam and music, the citizens of Turkey still were not aware of the presence of the population to which Ali claims belonging. It is his hope that this album will help people get to know and accept each other, to learn about the different cultures, acknowledge them and maybe change the way they think about their country and about themselves. In this respect, Ali is very optimistic about the future.

The power of music

As a communist, activist, Alevi Arab, teacher and musician, Ali has developed a detailed narrative and interpretation of what has happened to the different "ethnic groups" in Turkey and to their music in the post-1923 Kemalist period. This interpretation has been guiding his thinking, activities and interactions for many years.

In Republican Turkey, the non-Turkish groups, such as the converted, Islamized Greeks of Pontos (the Black Sea region), the Arabs (either Alevi or Sunni), the Kurds, the Circassians, the Laz and many others have been consciously disregarded by state authorities and have been pushed to oblivion and assimilation, according to Ali. Despite these policies, though, some of them managed to survive, since, as he enthusiastically explains, "The state, by not recognizing their presence, did not manage to erase all these other groups; only if they want to forget themselves and their culture, and only then, will they get assimilated and vanish." However, not all ethnic groups shared the same fate, according to my informant. Some of them, such as the Arabs and the Laz, are still under the danger of assimilation by Ataturkism, which Ali argues created Turkism, the dominant ideology which he identifies with Nazism. For Ali, Turkism or Turkishness is no longer a racial identity; rather, it has become a dominant system of thought combined with economic interest and violence that has been absorbing people from different ethnic identities, and has been transforming them into fanatic Turks.

When talking about the power of music on people and its role in society, he uses the metaphor of the gene:

> Well, it is very difficult to state it with words. Some things you need to feel in order to understand. We know that genes carry the biological information and

> particularities of each human from the father to the son, to the next generations. Music is like a gene—the gene of culture. Once I went to research and collect local folk songs at the Turkish-Syrian border, and there I heard a song that I knew because it was sung in another region of Anatolia many miles away. How could this song survive and reach that area—it's amazing. It's not poetry, photography or another form of art, but music that carries the culture. It is so powerful. When I play music, I feel that my fingers acquire a life of their own, they become independent of me. I don't know, I cannot describe it with words. But a group of people gets assimilated not when it loses its language and religion but when it loses its music. Musical sound is permanent.

Ali observed this phenomenon even among some of the Arabs of his region who have been assimilated and now claimed that they were Turks; when he plays their local Arab music, their body language shifts immediately: They put their hand close to their ear showing that they are trying to listen carefully, their facial expression changes, they stand up and start dancing. This is inevitable, says Ali, who claims that he is now in a position to recognize an assimilated Arab from his body language at the listening of his music.

He is very critical of the "system" that tries to control music-making and its listening. He thinks that "the system" in Turkey, especially after the coup in the 1980s, promoted a low-quality music, with simple, superficial lyrics and melodies that would deter people from thinking seriously; music attempts to distract them from problems and block them from imagining any possible solutions by channeling their imagination and desire to daily, trivial consumerist lifestyles. If we add to this the prohibition of other genres that can be dangerous for "the system," then gradually this light music becomes

dominant and a new audience rises that demands only those low-quality songs. This means that many musicians who try to do something different and mobilize the listeners won't be very successful since none would listen to them. Popular musical demand had been decisively defined and confined by "the system" in Turkey through the initial control of the musical supply that took place via prohibitions, imprisonments and silencing. After the audience was created according to "the system's" demands, then it was easy to control musicians too. Those who might pose a threat through their music were not desirable by audiences, and were no longer "marketable." However, despite all these obstacles, other musical genres did not vanish.

Ali still remembers the prohibitions and censorship of the military regime in Turkey in the 1980s over political music, folk music and every kind of song with lyrics involving "social problems." In fact, the regime supported pop and restaurant music that drove people away from their immediate problems and instilled in them depression and fatalism, leading to alienation, oblivion and pacification. This situation lasted for a few years, according to my informant, who also thinks that it is not accidental that during the military regime and the economic collapse of the beginning of the neoliberal period, many young people in Turkey committed suicide. For Ali, music should bear witness to people's life conditions, and it should remind them of their real lives. Otherwise, it can become extremely alienating and dangerous. Music is like a mirror for humans in which they see their real image, and this helps them acquire a self-knowledge; music should come out of people's experiences. This is why he thinks that pop and even rock music, imported to Turkey from abroad, played an alienating role for the audiences and succeeded, to a certain degree, to pacify them against the regime. It was not only the

lyrics and the song themes that were alienating, but also the sonic and rhythmic qualities of these genres, as well as the behavior of the performers on stage, which was totally foreign for the ethos of the local people. These foreign genres were imposed on the citizens of Turkey, particularly the youth, by the military regime in order to make them forget themselves, their identities and their problems, and to prevent them from imagining an alternative future, something that would possibly mobilize them against the regime. Music has the potential to keep people together and to make them feel like a community, as long as it comes from their own experiences, says Ali. These foreign musical genres kept youth in Turkey under control by presenting a totally different lifestyle and by promoting false expectations. Since the older generations were occupied with the struggle for economic survival, there was no one else to act against the junta. In this case, music functioned like a drug.

In the next and final section, I turn to Ali's sensitivities and ideas about "his own ethnic music." The challenges and transformations it faces are quite similar to those faced by kemençe musicians like Adem and others who try to revive and share their local musical culture and language.

Dream and desire

The Arab music of Anatolia was developed in a rural context, and the themes about which Arabs sing are dominated by the experiences of work in the fields. The way love is expressed towards a woman is also inspired by relations observed in the nature with which the Arab farmer is in close contact, and by the constant use of metaphors taken from those observations. The expression of love towards a woman, though, takes

place in an indirect way and it is always expressed in the third person, so that no one would be publicly exposed or incriminated. Of course, praise to nature is also a dominant theme in the Anatolian Arab repertoire. Other themes include separation and loneliness, failure to unite with a beloved due to financial restrictions—and rebellion songs, since, as Ali explains, the Arabs were constantly colonized and under the control of foreign states.

A characteristic feature of the "collective" nature of Arab musical performances in the rural Anatolian context was the spontaneous accompaniment of the main singer by those present. One person starts singing the melody after which the others jump in and sing along. Ali declares with pride that in the Alevi Arab culture of Anatolia, women can also sing publicly and even together with a man, and that the position of women in his culture is much better than that of the women in Sunni Muslim groups. Arab songs are very "pragmatic" in the sense that their themes are taken by the daily experiences of the people who make them, and they are sung in a simple, daily language. There is a certain spontaneity in their making, as they are not the result of long, conscious, scholarly elaboration. Despite this, Ali says, "the lyrics made by those villagers are so poetic."

The gradual socioeconomic change and the migration of the Arab population to major urban centers accelerated assimilation and pushed Anatolian Arab music further to the margins, even among its "natural" listeners: The Arabs of Turkey. As Ali argues, during the last thirty years, almost nothing remained from that way of life, with the exception of some songs and religious rituals. Experiencing this change as a "loss," Ali pushed himself to start collecting and organizing into an archive as many Arab songs as he could. His purpose is to "save" them from oblivion so that future generations, if they feel the need, will use it as a reference source in order to start making Arab music again,

to regain their creativity, and to "revive their culture." He considers this a duty for the youth and also an obligation towards the previous generations.

Migration and urbanization completely changed the network of social interactions among the Anatolian Arabs and their ways of life. This gradually made Arab music, both sonically and thematically, sound "old," obsolete, and even meaningless for the younger generations who had grown up in major centers like Istanbul. They intermingled with people coming from very different backgrounds and with musical genres totally foreign to their Arab background. With migration, music-listening habits started shifting. Moreover, the Arabic language was gradually replaced by standard Turkish, causing a further decline in the number of people who listened to music with Arabic lyrics. All these factors combined seriously disrupted musical and poetic creativity and caused a sonic and "meaning crisis" for this musical genre.

Ali was extremely frustrated and worried about these developments, and he was among the first who identified them and warned his people about the dangers "for their culture." He wanted to stop this shift and make the youth come back to Arabic music, so he engaged in a dialogue with various immigrant groups in Istanbul via the Internet and social media, by writing texts and by performing music himself. His efforts started bearing some fruit, and gradually, younger people initiated groups on Facebook and elsewhere to support Anatolian Arab music. There are also some music groups that have been established that try to combine rock with Arab music, creating a genre called Arabic rock, in addition to an Arabic pop. Ali smiles when hearing these "strange" names. He has met with these groups and advised them not to use these terms, though he was not negative with regard to the use of new, different instruments to enrich the sonic character

of the melodies. His argument was that these names—"rock," "jazz," "pop" etc.—signify very different musical forms that come from diverse cultures and were created for different purposes. He also maintains that they come from within certain contexts and out of certain experiences, and there was no reason to imitate them. These genres represent totally different worlds for Ali, and for this reason, he thinks they can be alienating to the musicians and their audiences. He encouraged members of these groups to become more creative and independent. Regardless of the naming of genres, this is a sign of renewed interest in Anatolian Arabic music, and this makes Ali feel happy, giving him a greater sense of duty and mission. He is not yet sure as to where things are headed and claims that he cannot see very far ahead right now because they are only in the early stages of development. However, inside him there is this impulse that makes him want to continue fighting for the future of his music and its revival.

The starting point for this, according to Ali, is to collect all the old songs that have been alive for centuries and to organize them into an effective archive to which everyone interested should have access. Then, based on the musical forms of these old songs that are now turned into "classics" or "tradition," the younger musicians will create new melodies and lyrics. This is what Ali has been trying to do for years through his personal research in various parts of Anatolia where Arabs live. Additionally, he has recorded his own personal album, on which he included old "traditional" village songs and recent melodies that reflect his modern urban experiences, showing in this way that this is a viable means for the revival of the Anatolian Arabic culture. He is firm in his conviction that the old rural songs must be revived and once again become part of the regular repertoire, even for the younger generations. The rural and the urban or the traditional

and the modern are experienced as incompatible, as if there is a schism that defines the way people like Ali view these categories. For him, the challenge is how to reconcile them and produce music based on the old musical forms, but in such a way that they will address the contemporary experiences and anxieties of itspotential audiences.

For Ali, saving old songs from oblivion through collection and archive-building, helps future generations remember and acknowledge "their roots." It is a very powerful act that helps humans remain together, maintaining their sense of origin, who they are and maybe where they want to go.

However, it seems that not everybody wants to remember his or her "roots," because such memories might be construed as dangerous. In this way, Ali's music functions as an example. Not all people from his group always approve of his activities and ideas. When he recorded his first personal album, including songs both in Turkish and in Arabic, he faced the reactions of some of his co-villagers who challenged and criticized his willingness to use Arabic. They told him, he said, "'Why did you sing in Arabic in your album? What's the reason?' And the funny thing is that they ask and criticize me in Arabic."

Ali's big enemy in his effort to revive his music is urbanization, because in such a context young people might not be interested in learning the language, since they can survive with Turkish. Without the language, their interest in this music might decrease. Moreover, the urban lifestyle is so different from the one that is described in the "traditional" rural songs that a young listener might think it totally meaningless to even spend time to learn about that past way of life. Besides, how can one find meaning in songs that talk about digging and cultivating the land, about unfulfilled desire, about

rebellion and so on when one lives in Istanbul, drives a fast car, has access to easy romance, travels and uses technology? Life seems so much easier and comfortable now compared to the one described in the "traditional" songs. Why should a young man or woman want to start listening to this genre again?

Ali thinks that in the way things have evolved, the wish to "return" is a matter of personal reflection and decision. He expresses his dissatisfaction with the contemporary way of life:

> Individuals, especially the youth, are under siege. They seem so confused, they do not know how and what to think, how to love, what kinds of music to listen to. It seems to me that everything is imposed on them, they cannot decide on their own. We live in very strange times, and I feel that people like us—musicians and intellectuals—need to develop very strong methods of resistance against these technologies of oblivion and alteration. We have to oppose and fight against a very strong enemy. These new technologies actually do not bring people together. You think that when you use the Internet you communicate, but in reality you do not. There are so many groups on the Internet that they are supposed to discuss and exchange ideas with, but they do not. You cannot communicate really by sitting in front of a screen.

These practices are nothing more than a pollution of pseudo-communication for Ali. People cannot communicate, he thinks, if they do not look, touch, and hear each other. He says that "in order to be able to be humans, we need to use all our five senses. Look how we express our love to a cat: we touch it, smell it, talk to it. We need to smell the dung and the milk of the cow in order to be able to recognize and understand it; we need to get into the field and into the garden to work, smell, and touch the soil. This is

what life is about, without this you live in abstraction, and you end up distancing yourself from other people and from life." "Traditional" Anatolian Arabic music is a product of a lifestyle full of multi-sensual experiences, whereas contemporary fast, urban life, for Ali, leads to abstraction and to isolation. It is not easy to understand music that comes out of this multi-sensual world if you are "sensually" blind.

The problems of this genre do not end here, though. A very important issue for Ali is the use of *bağlama* as a main instrument in his music. He is aware that the *oud, kanun,* violin and *darbuka* (a kind of percussion) are the main instruments in Arab music and that he should go back to them in order to be able to make "good, original" music. It is the *oud* that is the central instrument among these. Ali plays none of them, although he claims that he makes Arab music. He plays bağlama*,* the Turkish national instrument that has pervaded every musical genre in Anatolia, as I mentioned above. He admits that this instrument was somehow imposed on him, since he grew up being taught that he was a Turk and that he should do Turkish things. In his immediate environment where he grew up, the instruments of Arab musical culture had almost vanished, so he turned his attention to the bağlama, the only available instrument to learn. But he admits that he did not take much pleasure in playing the Arab melodies with the bağlama, because its sonic texture is quite different, and this instrument does not provide the performer with the necessary freedom to build the melody as he could have had he been using an Arab *oud.* Moreover, there is a striking difference even between the Arab and Turkish *oud*s. Though they belong to the same family of instrument, their performance techniques are quite different, and the outcomes of course differ significantly. The bağlama is inadequate to express the sonic richness produced with an Arab *oud*, and this has an impact on how

emotions are aroused in the listeners. The bağlama sounds and feels differently, making it inappropriate for Arab music, according to Ali. In his imagination and plans for the future, the bağlama could participate in the performance of Arab music, though as an accompaniment and not as a main instrument.

Ali argues that the "original Arab" percussion should also be revived and performed according to Arab techniques, not Turkish ones. The rhythms in the two musical cultures are quite different and their proper performance requires fluency in different techniques and styles. It is not enough to simply use the old Arab instruments in his performances; the important thing is to be able to play them following the Arab techniques and style, which are distinct and clearly recognizable by listeners and musicians with trained ears. For me, it was not easy to understand the sonic and temporal differences, since I had no immediate familiarity with any of these instruments. Moreover, Ali would talk to me about musical sound without giving me real examples with his instrument. Though I could understand what he meant and how important it was for him, I did not have the chance to understand what he was telling me in a more sonically tangible way, since it was not possible to play during our meetings at a coffee shop in downtown Istanbul. Performing an Arab melody with the *oud* and then with the *bağlama* is like reading a poem in its original and then reading it in translation. It will not have the same sound or the same feeling. Ali has been trying to train his musicians to play with an Arab style, but, as he says, it is not easy for them because they are not Arabs, they are Turks. For this reason, they have not absorbed the Arab techniques and they cannot understand their sonic nuances and particularities.

Ali illustrates his point as follows:

> Until I was seven years old, I would think and speak in Arabic. Then I went to primary school, where I would think in Arabic, but I had to learn and speak in Turkish until I almost forgot how to think in Arabic. After a certain period of schooling, I started thinking and speaking in Turkish. During my university years I became interested in my culture, and I tried to learn how to think in Arabic again. Music is something like this, in that trying to play Arab music with a *bağlama* is like trying to think in Arabic and speak in Turkish: It loses its taste. I am not opposing "foreign" instruments playing Arab music or Arab instruments performing other musical genres, but not as the main instruments, only as accompanying sounds. The main instrument in every genre should be the one that is central in that particular culture, because it came out of those particular people. They created it, and it expresses and addresses their needs, feelings and ideas.

In my meetings with the other artists who participated in this project, I heard similar stories about their musical genres and the challenges they faced, personally, socially and sonically: the gradual vanishing of the language and the shrinking of audiences, reactions from the immediate environment; the lack of repertoire, collection and archive building; limited creativity due to the categorical antithesis drawn between "tradition" and "modernity;" the lack of instrumental knowledge and intrusion of the *bağlama*;stigmatization; and lack of professionalization. I also came to realize the many similarities, and some of the differences, between my own experiences as a Greek lyra/kemençe performer in Greece and in Turkey, and Ali's.

My informants wished to revive their musical cultures and were critical of the hegemony of the bağlama that reflected the hegemony of the Turkish ethnicity over the other indigenous groups of Anatolia. This, for my interlocutors, was something that called for change. However, despite their bitterness and anxiety for their and their music's future, they all strongly believed that all instruments, and thus all people, are siblings.

Conclusions

From Pontic-Greek to Arab and other ethnic music genres, my interlocutors—amateur, semi-professional and professional musicians—strive to find channels to approach larger audiences and gain recognition. In their attempts to succeed they are caught in the complex power dynamics that music industries have created in Turkey. By the very nature of the musical genre they create and promote, their activity is highly political, no matter whether it is explicitly accepted and described as such. For all my informants, playing the music of their villages and regions and singing in their native languages in public is as natural as "drinking water," as one of them argued. Their claim that their musical desire and practice is not political at all, is actually a very political argument, aimed at neutralizing the severe reactions they face from various segments of society who accuse them for separatist propaganda.

However, though they have managed to survive state, religious and social stigma and censorship, as I have shown in previous chapters, my interlocutors are currently faced with a great force that itself makes legitimate claims to plurality, freedom and profit. This force is the simple and legitimate desire of the private music industries to

increase their profits. The logic of the market in this context, while it initially created opportunities and opened alternative channels to expression and recognition, gradually erected new, unintentional, barriers to musical practices. If a genre does not have the potential to bring profits, according to the understanding of those in charge, it is not worth producing it. The calculations about profit-making are based on different factors that are usually beyond the reach of local musicians. The desires and tastes of audiences are now shaped by a multitude of uncontrolled forces, and this creates both opportunities and risks for those involved in music-making. The language that has become dominant among influential music-making communities, as I experienced it in the field, gives priority not to issues of "musical quality" (however this might be defined) but to the possibility of catching the attention and interest of large and diverse audiences. An artist and his producer have to "capture the spirit" of an era, like a surfer who rides on the crest of a wave, in order to make money.

The shift of priorities and the dominance of the logic of endless profit in the world of music is a profound cultural transformation with important social and political consequences. My interlocutors remain "locked" and confined within small and even shrinking audiences, since their potential to bring great profits to industries are very limited by the nature of their genres. Their music is currently mainly listened to by a small segment of the people who speak these dialects and languages. However, linguistic homogenization imposed by state policies in the last ninety years resulted in the decline of numbers of speakers of those non-Turkish languages. It is interesting to see here an unintended collaboration between market forces and the state in further marginalizing those musical genres and the languages on which they were based. The market imposes

its own indirect censorship based not on “national security” or “ethical” considerations but on the completely legitimate claim to endless profit. Whether numbers are small or big greatly matter for the music industries. In the end, the people of the market who attempt to increase their market shares and profits, take music making and distribution under their control and homogenize it.

CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICAL LISTENINGS

In recent years, kemençe and its music have become the epicenter of intense debates among individuals and groups that broadly define themselves as right- and left-wing. Once monopolized by right-wing networks and state institutions, kemençe musical practices and meanings are now re-shaped and claimed by leftist groups and independent artists. Each imagines the instrument and the people listening to it in different ways, producing sharply different narratives about roots and belonging, as well as projects for the future. In all these debates the specter of the Greeks, as we will see, is everywhere. The revival of the interest in the history of the Greek presence in Trabzon by left-wing groups and independent performers, and their attempts to revive and use local practices, especially kemençe music and Pontic-Greek lyrics, has impacted the contemporary cultural dynamics of the region and played a central role in the re-shaping of the local right- and left-wing political identities and the public's attitudes in general.

In this chapter, I focus on the different uses and meanings of kemençe music for these diverse constituencies. I want to show how music-listening is integral to struggles for political power, legitimacy and community. Most of the individuals who are mentioned in this chapter are listeners or amateur performers of kemençe. Even when I describe the activities of professional performers, my focus in this chapter is on their audiences. The re-interpretation and re-signification of the experience of kemençe music

listening is a highly political act, with far-reaching implications in other fields of personal and social life in contemporary Turkey and in the future.

Let us start with the dynamics of the revival of Pontic-Greek lyrics in kemençe music and its consequences. In the following section, we meet kemençe performer and singer Adem, whom we have already met in previous chapters and in different contexts. The attitude of his bilingual audiences towards his Pontic-Greek songs shifts according to the broader political context in which they feel they find themselves. The act of Pontic-Greek song listening is initially signified by many listeners as harmful and dangerous, and thus is censored.

Audience matters: Social censorship

Adem had decided to record songs in Pontic-Greek. His decision was not a result of any political ideology, calculation or aspiration but rather a simple wish to express himself in his native language: in Pontic-Greek. For him it was the most natural thing to do, stating, "This is the language I was born with and I grew up speaking. And I want to sing songs in my language." Many listeners, who were also bilingual, approved and supported his decision and activity. In fact, many criticized him for not having put more songs with Pontic-Greek lyrics in his first album.

When this album was released, he started acquiring further popularity, mainly among listeners from his own village and from the broader Trabzon region. He was receiving more invitations to perform at weddings, local festivals, and other private gatherings in houses and restaurants. Adem gradually gained the acceptance and

appreciation of the community of the already-established kemençe players and singers. He was one of them, a *sanatçi*, an artist.

This was a period when private radio stations in Turkey were on the rise, and Adem's album was promoted by one such radio station, the owner of which was from Trabzon, and personally knew and loved Adem. Personal connections, respect, and appreciation are very important in the world of Black Sea music. The creation of any commercial value for a Black Sea musician is predominantly based on these personal local connections and appreciations, and not in the artist's abstract fame as a "star."

However many of his listeners were hesitant and critical of his decision to put a song in Pontic-Greek and to sing in this language publicly. Those who were reacting were themselves speakers of Pontic-Greek and members of the same community as Adem, some of whom were even from the same village. Adem was the first local, young kemençe player who had the courage to do something like this in a country, in which the mainstream considered linguistic diversity a threat to national security. At some places where he went to perform, people would question and criticize him for his decision to use this language in public and in his recording. Adem recalled some neighbors who asked him, "Why did you feel the need to do something like this, what will you gain, what is your aim for doing this now, aren't you afraid?" which made Adem nervous, and many times very angry. Adem was telling them that he did not have any political aim, that he was just singing in his native language, the same language of the people who were criticizing him. He would tell these critics that if they did not speak this language, then it is not theirs and thus they should not worry; however, if they understood and spoke it,

this meant that it was an existing language and that there was nothing wrong with expressing themselves in it through singing.

In one of his public performances at a festival organized by a Trabzon cultural association in a small town outside of Istanbul, Adem quarreled with the organizers about his willingness to publicly sing in Pontic-Greek too. The association was comprised of people from the same village as Adem. Before he would get on the stage to play and sing, the organizers urged him not to sing, even one song, in Pontic-Greek, because they were afraid that they might face problems with state authorities. Adem disagreed and responded saying that there would not be any problem for anyone since most of the participants at the festival were also speakers of Pontic-Greek and they would understand his songs. Besides, many of the participants who were Adem's listeners were encouraging him to sing in Pontic-Greek, and so he did. The members of the association's administration got very angry at Adem for not listening to their request. After that they started criticizing him at various gatherings and to different individuals from the same community, thus seriously damaging his reputation.

Adem had difficulties in understanding why these people were afraid of listening to Pontic-Greek songs in a public performance, "those who were afraid, were speaking Pontic-Greek in their daily interactions and they hadn't faced any problem, why would it be a problem if I would sing few songs in our native language?" Some of them were thinking that Adem, by singing in Pontic-Greek, was exposing their community to the eyes of the "state." The "fear of the state" was very present among this population and I had personally witnessed it during my fieldwork among these people since they would make constant references to the role of the "state" and its power to shape their lives.

Adem did not share these fears. He was aware that state authorities already knew that these people speak this particular language, so he did not think that he was revealing a secret. Everything was well-known: Pontic-Greek was a daily routine. When he was trying to explain why some people had that negative reaction, Adem said to me and laughed, "Who knows, they might have been afraid that the state would uproot them from their villages and send them to Greece because of their language."

Another of his listeners told him that he speaks Pontic-Greek too, expressing fear that Adem's public performances might cause problems for him as a speaker of the language. Adem then encouraged him not to speak it if he was so afraid, but while Adem would continue speaking and singing since, for him, it was absolutely normal and not a cause for fear. Even if something bad was to happen it would happen to him alone since he was the one singing in public performances and thus taking all the risk.

After that event, Adem's jobs decreased rapidly and his reputation among many members of the cultural associations of his region was damaged. People were hesitant to invite him to their festivals and private events because they were afraid that his presence would cause them problems in their relations with the "state." Rumors described him as a dangerous man who was singing in Pontic-Greek and who was trying to impose a "hidden political agenda."

Adem used to sing a lament in Pontic-Greek that was talking about the last hours of one local shepherd's life in the village. The song was sung by that shepherd in Pontic-Greek and later, when he passed away, it became popular among his fellow villagers. Adem was playing and singing this during his performance at the cultural association of *Oflular* in Istanbul every week. Some of the listeners asked him why he was singing it in

Pontic-Greek and why he did not translate and sing it in Turkish. Adem told them that the shepherd sang this in Pontic-Greek originally, and he felt it would not be ethical to sing it in Turkish. Besides, even if he did sing it in the Turkish translation, the song would "lose its taste." Many listeners told him that he should be careful when singing in Pontic-Greek because they were sure that state authorities were tracking and recording his cultural activities. Adem was not taking these threats seriously, asking, "Who am I that the state would deal with me? Am I a bureaucrat? I won't be able to become an MP. I am just a kemençe player and singer, I am not such an important person."

People in the villages, as well as many citizens of Turkey, were raised with the fear of the state. This was something like a God that could punish those who do not follow its rules. The state was the absolute, monolithic power that people had to serve and obey. Adem was against this mentality; he believed that the state exists to serve the people and not vice-versa. People in his village, even after they migrated to Istanbul and other urban centers, continued living in their closed, small worlds without being very aware of the political struggles for the recognition of diversity in the country. They had absorbed the mainstream propaganda that was presenting any demand for recognition of non-Turkish languages as a separatist propaganda and a threat to the national unity. This internalization of the rejection of otherness led them to fear and sometimes to hide and even reject their own linguistic and cultural difference. Their criticism towards Adem that his singing exposes their "secret," their native Pontic-Greek language, was a reflection of this deep fear and mode of thinking. However, gradually this attitude of fear and censorship changed, providing Adem with more space to share his songs.

Audience matters: "You are our brand name"

Adem talks on his cell and paces in the living room at his house in Bahcelievler, at the western outskirts of Istanbul. I am sitting at the sofa waiting for him to go and have lunch at the usual place, a small *lokanta* [restaurant] few blocks down the street. I have been staying with him for a few months now for my fieldwork, and going to the *lokanta* to eat had become an almost daily routine. Many times we would meet friends and discuss the current condition and developments in the *Karadeniz* musical scene such as who gets invited to play where, what new songs and albums are released, whose voice is good, who is a good performer, and what needs to be done for the future of this music.

Adem is excited, he smiles and constantly gestures with his left arm while talking to the person at the other end of the line as if giving a public talk in front of a large audience. He says, "Yes there has been a lot of misunderstanding abi[72], people say bad things about me without knowing me, nobody came to ask me about all these so I can tell them what I think, they simply criticize me. If someone has anything against me he should tell me directly without gossiping behind my back." Adem stopped talking momentarily to listen to the other end for a few seconds, then he concluded, "Yes I will come to play, we will discuss in detail in few days again, thank you abi."

He turned to me and cried with joy, "My isolation is going to end my brother, it's over." He had just spoken to the chairman of the *Beşköylüler Kültür Derneği* [Cultural Association of the People of Beşköy] in the town of Bursa, a few miles east of Istanbul

[72] The word *abi* means "older brother", but is also used by younger persons to address someone, a male, who is older. It is a commonly used term in Turkey that reveals respect for the older members of the community and also some degree of intimacy.

who, for the first time after many years, invited him to perform at their annual festival. The chairman apologized to Adem for not having invited him all these years and told him that from now on they would support him as much as they could, because as he emphatically said, Adem is their village's "brand name." The chairman also confessed that they were afraid to invite him to perform because there were many negative rumors against him and his supposed political intentions. His presence at the association's festival might had caused "problems with the state," as the chairman said.

Some people from the same villages with strong nationalist views were accusing Adem of having a "separatist propaganda" because in some of his public performances in the past, among the songs in Turkish, he sang one or two songs in his native Pontic-Greek. This was interpreted by various local constituencies as "a threat to national security and territorial integrity."

The late 1990s was a very polarized period in Turkish politics with the Kurdish problem and the violence associated with it on the rise. The general support of the Trabzon population toward mainstream ideologies, and hatred against the Kurds was increasing. The media was cultivating an extremely nationalistic climate among the population, and the use of local, indigenous non-Turkish languages in public musical performances was stigmatized as "separatist propaganda" that jeopardized the future of the Turkish nation. Adem's only "sin" was that he simply wanted to sing in his mother language, without having any political aspirations or plans in mind. However, in the polarized political atmosphere of the time, his singing in Pontic-Greek was enough to categorize him as a "danger." The rumors against him were spreading among his fellow villagers in Trabzon and among their migrant communities in Istanbul and elsewhere.

Many fellow villagers, the chairman of the association included, were afraid that Adem's public performance in Pontic-Greek was exposing the community in the eyes of the general Turkish public and the authorities. Their patriotism and devotion to the state would be questioned and they were afraid that this might create problems for them and their families. Adem was trying to convince those accusing him that he did not have any political aspirations and that he was simply expressing himself in his native language and that there was nothing wrong with doing that. But all this was in vain.

A few years later, in the early 2000s and with the collapse of the Kemalist power block and the rise of the Islamic government of Tayyip Erdogan to power, the political atmosphere gradually started changing and performers like Adem were becoming more relaxed, free, and secure to sing in their native languages. The call from the chairman of the association signaled Adem's first step towards "liberation" from the position of the stigmatized, dangerous kemençe performer and singer. The same was true for his audiences too.

This association is one of the several institutions established by people who migrated from Adem's village in Trabzon to the western parts of the country. They organize various musical events on an annual basis, at which they invite Black Sea musicians to perform with kemençe. These events are the meeting points for fellow villagers in the city. They also provide a network of relations through which kemençe performers and singers can book jobs for weddings and festivals. As seen with Adem, performers from Trabzon need to cultivate good relations with these associations in order to promote themselves and make money. And every village, with its own associations in the cities, primarily supports its own kemençe performers. Adem believed that now some

people will be less hostile to him, and that he will receive more invitations to perform in various events organized by these associations and his fellow villagers. This would increase his fame, and of course his financial rewards.

I was very relieved to see Adem in such a happy mood after he received that call from the chairman because I was feeling partially responsible for his isolation in the Trabzon music scene. Years earlier, when we had initially met in Istanbul through a mutual friend from Trabzon, I invited him to come to Greece and record a CD with me and other kemençe performers with lyrics in Pontic-Greek. By doing so, I introduced him to audiences in Greece but also, without being aware, I contributed to his stigmatization in Turkey. With the passing of years, I realized that his continuous friendship and musical collaboration with me also put him in a difficult position, but he never acknowledged this to me directly. In one of our discussions he confessed that he received pressure from various people in Turkey to stop coming to Greece and collaborating with Greek kemençe performers. He was even warned that if he insisted on singing in Pontic-Greek in Turkey and Greece, his career in Turkey would be ruined. He was encouraged to abandon singing in Pontic-Greek and embrace Turkish completely in public performances. He was even assured that had he decided to adopt this stance, he would receive full support from mainstream networks and would become very famous.

However, Adem insisted on occasionally singing some songs in his native language in Turkey, and kept coming to Greece where he enjoyed the love and support of his listeners in cities and villages. While in Greece, he was doing quite well, in Turkey he was the "black sheep" among the community of the kemençe performers and their audiences. In those years, he was younger and did not seem to find this problematic. The

call from the chairman and his invitation made Adem believe that his fame in Turkey would now increase and that he would gain further support and respect from his own fellow villagers, for whom he wanted to make music. He was not that interested in gaining audiences outside of the Trabzon communities and the Pontic-Greeks of Greece and the Diaspora.

But the politics of kemençe-listening is not shaped only by linguistic considerations: performance techniques and the subsequent quality of kemençe sound are also crucial matters around which meanings, attitudes and social practices are formed and developed.

The capital of kemençe

The issue of kemençe history, roots, routes, and ownership never ceased being an issue of discussion and debate among performers and listeners in the broader Trabzon region, despite mainstream official policies and narratives that were imposing an interpretation that was conforming to the Turkish nationalist ideology. What is fascinating is that these debates were not only related to language use in song lyrics but were also linked to issues of performance virtuosity.

During my fieldwork some of my informants would occasionally urge me to go to Görele, a small town a few miles west of Trabzon, to listen to and interview the local Çepni[73] masters of kemençe, who were considered, for some, virtuosos in the Black Sea. This small town of the approximately 30,000 inhabitants was described by locals as the

[73] The Çepni are an ex-nomadic, Central-Asian Turkic group that settled west of Trabzon before the city's conquest by the Ottomans in 1461. The Çepni contributed significantly to the conquest of Trabzon by fighting against the Greeks. For more on their history see Akat 2012.

"capital town of kemençe." Despite my efforts to reach those masters, I was generally unsuccessful since they were asking for large amounts of money as a compensation for the short interview they would provide.

I managed with difficulty and only through the mediation of a local friend, to arrange an appointment with an old, famous performer of this town, whom I will call Tamer for reasons of discretion. Tamer had acquired fame as the student and heir to the tradition of Piçoglu Osman, another local kemençe performer of the early 20th century. The mainstream networks and discourses had elevated Piçoglu Osman to the level of an idol. The fact that he played kemençe in front of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk when the latter visited Trabzon had certainly played a decisive role in this, and now he is ascribed the status of "the father of kemençe" among local audiences.

Later in his career, Tamer received extensive state patronage and support and he was also appointed a "kemençe state artist" in the national television network (TRT), as well as a performance teacher at the Istanbul technical university's music school.

He asked me to go and wait for him at a local barber shop in the town's center. I went to the suggested place and introduced myself, saying that I had a meeting with the famous kemençe master of the town. The information that a young, Greek researcher and kemençe performer was in the barber shop waiting for the city's kemençe virtuoso spread out in the nearby coffee shops. In few minutes the barber shop was crowded by a number of middle-aged men who were curious to see what I was doing in their town. In the meantime, Tamer arrived and sat next to me. People were expressing their respect, welcoming him and calling him *ustad,* master. They urged me to take advantage of the opportunity of being in Görele, the capital of kemençe as they proudly said, to learn from

the master. I was listening and moving my head approvingly without saying anything. One of them insisted that neither Trabzon nor Greece could compete with the Çepni kemençe performers of Görele who, according to him, were the best in the world.

Tamer asked me to play kemençe with him for few minutes. We started playing some of the local melodies with which I was not quite familiar. He was unfolding all his virtuosity and I was, like an apprentice, trying to follow him, not always successfully. The audience applauded him many times gesturing to each other and expressing their enthusiasm. My playing, on the other, did not produce similar outbursts but rather indifferent acceptance. Tamer leaned towards me and condescendingly said that the local melodies are very complicated and that with my "Greek technique" I would not be able to play them. He was not only trying to convince me of his virtuosic superiority, but he was also publicly confirming the conviction that the local performers and styles were of higher quality than those from Greece. I did not try to challenge his performance of patronizing superiority because this would put me in an unpleasant situation with him and the audience that was present, and would thus undermine my research in the locality. I simply smiled and invited him to go to a quiet place to continue our discussion and kemençe playing.

As I learned from Tamer and other local informants, the people of Görele take great pride in their "original Turkic origins" from Central Asia, and in private discussions they mock the inhabitants of Trabzon for their exalted idea of themselves. As Tamer told me, laughing, "Eh, those people in Trabzon, they think they are aristocrats and the most patriotic Turks. It's so funny, most of them are Greek converts but they never confess it." The idea that the Çepni people of Görele are the best kemençe performers and the

"original bearers" of this musical culture, which they supposedly brought from Central Asia and spread to other parts of the Black Sea, was born out of the need to safely incorporate this genre within the nationalist Turkish musical narrative. Since Trabzon was a site of ambiguity for the kemalist regime, due to its thousands of Pontic-Greek-speaking Muslim inhabitants, among whom kemençe was venerated, the invention of the theory of the "Central Asian roots" of this instrument seemed inevitable. It is not accidental that this idea has a certain currency only among nationalist audiences and is clearly promoted by mainstream networks. Additionally, most of the kemençe performers employed by state television were drawn from within the Çepni population, whose loyalty and patriotism could not be doubted. The Çepni of Görele symbolically served as the guarantors of the kemençe's "indisputable Turkishness."

I personally witnessed endless passionate debates among kemençe performers and listeners in Trabzon regarding the supposed superior virtuosity of the Çepni. My Trabzon informants were vehemently rejecting the Çepni superiority, whereas some others were responding with a sense of irony and humor. Even within Trabzon itself there was local competition regarding the mastery over kemençe. The inhabitants of every region supported their own performers and what they considered their region's style. They believed it is the "best and most authentic'' compared to the other styles. Many of my informants would not even listen to recordings made by performers outside of their own village or town.

However, despite the internal local differences, the Trabzon style of kemençe playing was juxtaposed to that of Görele and this constituted the main schism in the local performance styles. Additionally, many informants in Trabzon reported a strong affinity

to the kemençe style in Greece, which they perceived as very similar to the old performance styles of the eastern parts of the province, where many Pontic-Greek speakers were currently living. This strong affinity for the Greek style was not easily put in words, informants could not explain why they liked, they simply thought it was very beautiful and reminiscent of the older times. As I show later in this chapter, the association of the Greek style with "old time Trabzon" and the nostalgia accompanying it was the main factor that made that style sound so intimate.

On the other hand, the Çepni style was perceived as very harsh. This was understandable because the Çepni tuned the kemençe in very high pitches and played extremely fast, with sharp bowing. Whereas the Çepni style was more appropriate for dancing and was described as tasteless, the eastern provinces of Trabzon usually tuned in much lower pitches and employed a smoother bowing technique that gave the sound "more feeling."

Some of my interlocutors in Trabzon, when not despising it, made fun of the Görele performance style. A very well-known kemençe performer who asked for discretion when sharing his thoughts with me, told me that "when kemençe reached westwards and got into the hands of the Çepni, it started getting "bastardized" and "degenerated," thus vehemently rejecting their performance style for its "inauthentic," and violin-like sound. Others did not express such strong feelings and simply ignored it. Few, if any at all, of those I worked with would subscribe to the view that the Çepni were the "best performers." Those less emotionally involved acknowledged that the Çepni had developed their own style. But there was a general agreement among my Trabzon informants that their province was and remains the "capital of kemençe" and that the

Çepni learned from the people of Trabzon. Echoing his peers, an important middle-aged performer from Trabzon, put it this way during our interview,

> The Çepni style does not exist in Greece either, then how can they claim that Görele is the center of kemençe? Görele can't be the center of *kemençe* since the majority of performers, especially the older generations, in Greece and in Trabzon, have a common style. We are the majority, whereas the Görele performers and their style is a minority. The minority cannot be the center. There is the center and the edges of the kemençe zones, Trabzon and Greece are the centers.

Another young informant from the Pontic-Greek speaking eastern districts of Trabzon, who had deep knowledge of the different styles and was an avid collector and fan of kemençe music, shared his thoughts with me

> What should we believe? Here people say that kemençe was brought from Central Asia by the Çepni Turks and that its center is the town of Görele. But if you examine the old kemençe players in the eastern districts of Trabzon you will realize that they were many more than those in Görele. Besides the Görele style is very different from ours at this side, they use only two strings, and especially the one that produces high pitches. I am moved by my district's local kemençe players, and not by those in Görele.

But beyond the differences in the performance techniques and the feeling, there was an issue with language-use in lyrics. Most of my interlocutors in Trabzon were not approving of the ways the Çepni sung, and they were making fun of their accent and vocabulary. They claimed that they couldn't understand the Çepni lyrics. I heard the same from Çepni informants about the Trabzon accent and lyrics. When I was asking

them about their difficulty understanding Çepni lyrics, since they were singing in Turkish too, they couldn't give a straight answer. One informant told me that a possible explanation, without being sure at all, is that the Çepni might have come from a different part of Central Asia than the people of Trabzon and that's why they speak with very different accents. I was able to personally experience the different accents of the people of Trabzon and of the Çepni of Görele. I think that their linguistic divergence and the difficulties in understanding each other stemmed from their very different historical and cultural trajectories. The Çepni were originally Turkish-speaking people, whereas the Turkish pronunciation of the people from the eastern parts of Trabzon was definetely influenced from their native Pontic-Greek.

Beyond performance techniques and aesthetics, aversion of my Trabzon interlocutors towards the Çepni was also triggered by the formers' disapproval of the lifestyle and "loose morals" of the latter. The people of Trabzon had the fame of being devout Sunni Muslims, whereas the Çepni were considered heterodox Shia who later converted to Sunni Islam, but never abandoned their love for alcohol.

My elderly Pontic-Greek-speaking interlocutors from the town of Tonya, in the western district of Trabzon, borders the areas where the Çepni lived, reported that there were many disputes between them and the Çepni for grazing lands in the past. The people of Tonya considered themselves indigenous, native to the province of Trabzon, and described the Çepni as foreigners, and late comers who settled in the region and had very different lifestyles and customs, which they despised. In addition to that, among the elderly of Tonya, it was common knowledge that the Çepni had learned to play the kemençe and do the horon [Trabzon dance] from the elderly people of Tonya. Echoing

the views of his fellow villagers, an old man in this town confidentially shared with me his experience and ideas:

> The Çepni learned everything from us, the kemençe, the dance. Their people learned all of our songs, they were educated in our musical gatherings, we taught them, and now some ignorant people say that the Çepni are the best and that Görele is the capital of kemençe, and nobody recognizes Tonya. The Çepni became culture kings and we are nothing. Well, I regret to say, but when you are conquered by foreigners you become a slave in your own land.

I was gradually coming to realize that the local competition between Trabzon and Görele for the mastery of kemençe was much deeper than a simple disagreement about musical taste, styles, aesthetics and performance techniques. It was clearly linked to issues of political loyalty, hegemony, and state legitimacy, mediated through the affective power of music.

My informants, depending on their political and ideological affiliations, "listened" to different things when listening to kemençe music. The sound of the instrument evoked a strong sense of localism that could, though reluctantly, encompass people of diverse religious and linguistic background. For other listeners, kemençe evoked a sharp feeling of Turkish nationalism that was excluding cultural otherness and differentiation. Let me now turn to brief portraits indicative of key positions in such debates and of the confusion surrounding Turkish nationalist discourses as to what is "national" and what is foreign.

Between Turkishness and localism

Mr. Mehmet, is a 65-year-old retired schoolteacher from Trabzon; he claims that he is an amateur researcher and kemençe player. I was introduced to him during my fieldwork in Trabzon by a friend who told me that Mr. Mehmet is a knowledgeable person on the history of kemençe and that I should consult him. This friend was afraid that I might fall in the hands of ignorant leftist informants who would fill my mind with false information. Thus, he introduced me to Mr. Mehmet. During our interview, Mr. Mehmet was trying to convince me that "I am a Turk" arguing that the fact that I am a kemençe performer reinforces his argument. He came prepared with notepads from which he was reading about the history and culture of the people of the eastern Black Sea. He stressed the central Asian, Turkish roots of the kemençe and of all the people who listen to this instrument, either Christians or Muslims. After about an hour and a half of constant talk on his behalf, he concluded by saying that he opened his heart to me because he considers me one of them, a Black Sea Turk: "Your ancestors, Niko, come from these areas, you must know that they were original Turks who were converted to Christianity; and because they were Christians, the poor people, they were deceived to believe that they are Greeks. That's why they were relocated to Greece in 1923 with the exchange of populations; they should have remained here. There were no Greeks here in the Black Sea, Greeks lived in the Mediterranean though even there you can find strong traces of the Turkish civilization."

Mr. Mehmet is also a kemençe maker; he has made a number of kemençes imprinted with the Turkish flag. From the very first moments of our interview and from

the writers he mentioned to strengthen his arguments, I immediately understood that he was inspired by the ultra-nationalist ideas that were in extensive circulation in this part of the country. What was very interesting in this encounter was Mr. Mehmet's complete inability to accept me as a Greek because of my association with kemençe and the Black Sea. The possibility to accept someone as both Greek and kemençe performer would probably destabilize his own views and deeply-held convictions.

However, not everyone in the region of Trabzon agrees with Mr. Mehmet. Another informant of mine, Irfan, shared with me his thoughts and experiences during one of our musical gatherings at a coffee shop on the highlands of Trabzon one summer.

Irfan is a 40-year-old photographer and journalist, working for a local newspaper in the city of Trabzon. Beyond photography, he is an amateur performer in the very early stages and a big fan of the kemençe. He told me that he could not accept that I, a Greek, can play better than he. I responded that I have played for more than twenty years and that it is normal to be musically more fluent than he, who started just recently, and that he should be patient and hardworking if he really wants to learn. Irfan responded by saying that very soon he will play better than Greeks.

His big dream is to establish a music school for teaching the kemençe in his native town of Surmene, just few miles east of Trabzon. He believes it is a shame not to have such a school in the homeland of kemençe as he calls it.

He shared his idea with a number of people in his town, most of whom accepted it with pleasure. However, a small group of young men, members of the ultra-nationalist movement named "grey wolves," verbally attacked him, accusing him for wanting to teach a "Greek instrument to the Turkish youth." They said, "Why don't you establish a

school for teaching the bağlama, that's our national instrument, not the kemençe. Why don't you support your Turkish culture, you should be ashamed. Don't play the infidel's instrument." Irfan was puzzled and irritated at the same time, "these people are fanatics, they believe that kemençe is a Greek instrument, how stupid they are. But who cares for them, I will do as I wish. Moreover bağlama is not our main instrument here in Trabzon, kemençe is our instrument and it was played by both Greeks and Turks."

Interestingly enough, almost a hundred years ago, in the multiethnic Ottoman context, the "ethnic ownership" of this instrument, and its history, probably would not constitute an issue of dispute. The passing of time and of older generations, together with the establishment of the nation-state and national history, created the need to "nationalize" kemençe musical culture thus producing oblivion, confusion, ambiguity, contradictions, and tensions. How did this "nationalization" of folk music and kemençe in particular take place? To understand this and the contemporary music dynamics in Trabzon and their stakes, we need to take a brief look in the recent past and examine the music policies of the nationalist Republican regime after 1923.

Folk music and nation-making in Turkey

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the expulsion of the Christians and the rise to power of the nationalist cadre under Mustafa Kemal, a Turkish national state was established in Asia Minor in 1923. The remaining Muslim and heterodox multi-lingual ethnic groups of Anatolia would be integrated into the newly-founded national state. Thus a process of "modernization" and nation-building started taking place, aiming at transforming these diverse groups into a homogenous nationality and into "civilized,

European Turks" (Lewis 1961, Zurcher 1997). A central element of this policy was the development and dissemination of a new thesis of "Turkish national history" which rejected the multilingual heritage of the empire, which downplayed Islamic religion as the primary model of group solidarity, and stressed the "cultural unity" of the "Turkish people from ancient times" (Copeaux 1997, Berkes 1964, Ahmad 1993).

Along with policies such as the introduction of western calendar, a dress code, script and language reform, and the law of last names, "musical reforms" were intended to ally the new "secular nation" with Europe, supporting Turkish cultural roots as distinct from the region's Ottoman history, and to construct a "national music repertoire" that would create common feelings and a sense of belonging among the linguistically and culturally diverse groups of Anatolia (Haşgül 1996, Balkılıç 2009).

Ideas about the importance of music for the cultivation of "national consciousness" and unity and thoughts for the use of folk songs as the basis for the creation of a Turkish national music repertoire have been expressed by nationalist intellectuals since the 1908s with the rise to power of the nationalist military movement of the Young Turks (Şenel 1999:105). The most important figure in the relevant discussions of this period was the sociologist and theorist of Turkish nationalism Ziya Gökalp. His argument was that there are two distinct kinds of music in Turkey: one pertaining to the Ottoman elite, and the other to the rural people. The former was considered the product of Arab-Persian civilization, based in turn upon the civilization of the Byzantine Empire. For Gökalp, the latter was the true culture of the Turks. He argued that only one music could exist as the true, national music of Turkey, and this was to be achieved through a synthesis of "Turkish" folk music and the musical techniques of the

West (Gökalp 1999). Similar ideas regarding music had been expressed by the dictator and founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) (Nimet Arsan 1961:89) under the orders and guidance of whom music policies evolved.[74] Gökalp also suggested that besides folk songs, other folk materials should be collected too, that would be taught to the young children and strengthen their national feelings, whereas the folk materials that did not serve this purpose should be "thrown away" (Başgöz 1998a:45). Other nationalist intellectuals of this period expressed similar ideas, urging for the collection of folk songs that harbor the "national soul" (Şenel 1999:105, Ülkütaşır 1972:30). Despite these early calls, systematic collections of folk songs started in the 1920s with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, under the guidance and with the funding of the Ministry of Education and its various institutions that were dispersed around the country (Balkılıç 2009:157).

Scholars agree that the central aims of these activities were the following: to "purge" the "national Turkish music" from any influence of the Ottoman music, that was in turn considered a remnant of Byzantium; to collect the songs of the "real Turkish national culture" that supposedly survived in the rural communities; to produce a "national music" based on the collected local folk songs harmonized according to western musical standards and techniques; and to disseminate and impose this new repertoire through a network of state institutions. The attempt to create a national music took place through the technical advice of European advisers, the media, and most importantly, through the establishment of educational and research institutions whose main role was the collection, standardization, and polyphonization of folk songs and the production of

[74] For more on this subject see Adnan Saygun, 1986, *Atatürk ve Musiki* (Atatürk and music)

"musically educated performers" (Balkılıç 2009, Tekelioğlu 2001, Şenel 1999, Üstel 1999, Haşgül 1996, Öztürkmen 1994, Stokes 1993). In this context, the songs of the many non-Turkish speaking groups were either ignored or were gradually assimilated into the rising mainstream "Turkish folk music" genre (Haşgül 1996 Balkılıç 2009).

These state music policies went through different faces and had their ups and downs from the 1920s until 1950s. The first step was to ban Ottoman classical music from every aspect of social life, from teaching to performance. Young people were sent to Europe to be educated in western music theory, instruments and techniques. The aim was to replace the old Ottoman musical notation with that of western Europe, to provide instruction only in European music, and to prepare the infrastructure for the transcription of local folk songs and their adjustment to western musical norms (Haşgül 1996, Balkılıç 2009).

The Istanbul conservatoire started preparations for the collection of folk songs in 1922, under the guidance and with the support of the ministry of education. The first step was to prepare a questionnaire comprised of fourteen questions. Two thousand copies of the questionnaire were sent, via the ministry of education's networks, to music teachers in state schools all around the country, requesting for local song transcriptions and information about the local musical cultures. Teachers were also asked to provide descriptions as well as their opinions about the different aspects of local musical life (i.e. who sings the songs in the villages, which songs are the favorite ones in the locality and which ones are mostly sung by the local population, what is the teachers' personal opinion about these songs, and who are the famous local musicians). The instructions in the questionnaire were clearly stating that folk songs are the representatives of the

national soul, stressing their importance for the cultivation of Turkish national consciousness and thus reminding those engaged in the collection activities of the crucial national mission that they were undertaking (Balkılıç 2009:157).

The period's musical reformists found that this initial form of song compilation was inadequate due to the problematic transcription methods and thus decided to start fieldwork for onsite collections in different parts of the country with the help of the phonograph. But still many of the collected songs were transcribed by hand and were not recorded. The four expeditions that took place between 1925 and 1932 yielded a collection of around 850 songs. Until 1936 the number of collected songs rose to 1000. Out of these, only 200 were recorded on vinyl, and fifteen transcription books were published at that time (Akbas 2000:60-61, Saygun 1938: VI, Şenel 1999:108-111, Ülkütaşır 1972: 34-36, Basgoz 1998a: 46).

In this first state-sponsored compilation, an unspecified number of songs had lyrics in non-Turkish languages. The ethnic background of each was identified but was never announced or published. The songs that were coming out of ethnic cultural backgrounds other than Turkish, were either consciously ignored or were given Turkish lyrics, completely irrelevant from the initial meaning, and thus were incorporated into the Turkish national folk mainstream (Haşgül 1996).

Since the late 1930s more systematic expeditions for the collection and transcriptions of folk songs in the European notation took place. This time under the auspices of the Ankara state conservatory, 17 expeditions in 57 cities took place between 1936 and 1952, and 9000 songs were collected. Out of these, only 1000 was taught to the performers and singers of the state radio (Şenel 1999: 114-115, Turkish Folk Research

1951: 338, in Başkılıç 2009:165). In the same period more severe state censorship was exercised on the "old music." Mustafa Kemal's address at the national assembly on November 1, 1934 signaled the beginning of this second phase of "music reform" during which the government was deciding what kind of music would be listened to and how it should be performed. Musical events around the country, even in small rural communities, were put under strict state surveillance that lasted for several decades (Haşgül 1996:35).

The new regime attempted to transform "traditional" village music into an "art" by adding to it layers of western art music such as harmony, counterpoint and orchestral and choral textures, replacing traditional variation and improvisation with fixed compositional forms through the use of musical notation and demanding new standards of intonation and precision in performance (Elçin 1997:123). In this way the local, idiosyncratic sonic nuances and performance styles were homogenized into one standardized sonic body that curtailed musical creativity. This was facilitated by the imposition of the bağlama—a long lute that was imagined as the "Turkish national instrument"—on the diverse musical traditions of the various groups that were using different instruments. From then on, the bağlama, when not completely dominant, had a dominating voice over other local instruments in the performance of the "folk melodies" in public media outlets and in state-sponsored public performances (Bayrak 1985:384, Karabulut 2009, in Balkılıç 2009:173). This standardization was expected to cultivate a common listening habit, a "national" ear and a homogenous patriotic feeling.

A major intervention on the lyrics of the collected songs occurred as well. Lyrics not conforming to the "Turkish national ethical standards," were replaced or simply

erased, and words were also replaced to conform to a more standardized version of Turkish, thus depriving the song from its local flavor and connotation. There are reports from the 1940s mentioning that people would sometimes react to the radio programs that were presenting their local songs in this new, altered, standardized form. (Balkılıç 2009:176). More importantly, those songs which were sung in non-Turkish languages were either left out of the "national archive" or were included after new lyrics in standard Turkish were written. In most cases, the content of the song was completely changed (Haşgül 1996, Bayrak 2002:25). Additionally the collected songs were registered as "Turkish Folk Song," with their creators listed as "Anonymous." Moreover, each song as well as each local dance, was categorized as belonging to a particular administrative region of the country such as Black Sea, East, Southeast etc, without any reference to the diverse groups that were living in these geographies, or to their toponyms that could function as a clear indication of cultural difference. Thus, ethnic groups were replaced by geographical coordinates and were homogenized under the term "Turk;" the southeastern Turks, the eastern Turks, the Black Sea Turks, the Western Anatolian Turks and their music. In this way the sonic character, the language of lyrics, and their content, as well as the trajectories and history of the songs changed dramatically. The previously very familiar local melodies were re-contextualized and reintroduced to their audiences as "Turkish folk music" (Özer, 2008, Haşgül 1996). The songs that eventually comprised the official "national folk repertoire"—the number of songs reached 4500, leaving outside thousands of songs—would be constantly performed by the Turkish Radio Television (TRT) institution's famous propaganda program named "Yürttan Sesler Korosu" (Voices of the Homeland Chorus) since the 1940s (Özer 2008, Haşgül 1996:43).

Thus the diverse musics of the indigenous populations were turned into a homogenized "Turkish folk music" genre and into a sonic symbol of the new Turkish nation.

Nation-making and musical "modernization" in Turkey relegated some musical genres and instruments to a marginal position within the dominant musical narratives, when they were not assimilated altogether. The invention of Turkish folk music tradition in Anatolia between 1923 and 1950s became a very central tool of control and assimilation of the diverse indigenous populations into the dominant, mainstream Turkish nationhood. However, these centrally-designed music policies were not completely successful, as people in the rural regions continued singing and listening to their local songs in their own way, listening to local performers, without really embracing TRT's national musical narrative. However, all those local musical traditions lived a marginal life in the rural zones and neighborhoods, confined to the private sphere of houses and in small networks of friends and relatives outside of the state's and the market's mainstream. Additionally, it was prohibited by law to sing in public in any of the local languages (i.e. Kurdish, Arabic, Pontic-Greek etc.) though singing in other languages such as English would not constitute a problem.

Kemençe and nation-building in Trabzon

The region of Trabzon on the Black Sea shore was one of the places where state sponsored folk song research and collection was conducted. Between 1929, and 1991, four major state institutions conducted song collection there. The Istanbul conservatoire collected 12 songs in the city of Trabzon in 1929 but they were completely lost from the archives. It is not known whether they were deliberately destroyed or were simply lost out of indifference. During its work in Trabzon in that year, the conservatoire members

recorded songs from prisoners, school teachers, and some villagers who were brought to Trabzon for this purpose by the authorities. Also, in 1932, the conservatoire invited a few Trabzon kemençe players to Istanbul to record them, thus collecting 12 songs that are still preserved in the archives but have not been published. Out of the 850 songs collected by this institution only 42 were from Trabzon (Şenel 1994:6).

The second public institution that conducted folk song compilation in Trabzon was the state conservatoire of Ankara, in 1937 and 1943. Between 1936 and 1960, this institution conducted several expeditions all around the country, collecting 8,000 songs. Out of these, 152 were collected from Trabzon and nearby towns within its administrative borders. Most of the 152 songs were not transcribed but rather recorded but later on these recordings were damaged and only the catalogues survived (Şenel 1994:10-13).

The TRT was the third institution that conducted song collections in Trabzon and around the country. During its research in Trabzon in 1967, it collected 200 songs that were much later transcribed in western notation. The TRT gradually became the central state institution for the collection and transcription of folk songs, a role that it maintains until today. The TRT keeps in its archives most of the musical data collected in previous decades and occasionally conducts new research and transcriptions. From the thousands of songs collected since the 1920s, only 4500 have been transcribed and were included in the national music archive of the TRT, and from these only 77 are from Trabzon (Şenel 1994:87). Though it has lost its initial fame and hegemony, especially among many musicians, the TRT's role in the construction and renewal of the "Turkish national music" repertoire has been central. The strict rules of performance techniques and

notation that lead to the production of a homogenized folk musical genre out of the diverse musical cultures of Anatolia, are still adhered to by its employees.[75]

The general directorate for the research and development of popular cultures of the ministry of culture is another institution that has conducted field research for song collections since the 1970s. It conducted research in Trabzon in 1991 (Şenel 1994:107). Song collection and transcription for the purposes of "saving" songs has become the preoccupation of a number of individuals from Trabzon who conducted their own private research and compiled their own archives. Until recently, this activity was conducted in the context of saving and reviving "Turkish musical culture" and thus had the support of state authorities.

The examination of the primary sources relevant to folk song collection in Trabzon since the 1920s reveals some very interesting ambivalences and contradictions in the thinking of those who participated. Reading through the texts that were written by some of the protagonists of the field researches from different periods, we can clearly see that the kemençe itself, its history and its music constituted objects of strong speculation. The reluctant acceptance of the kemençe as a "Turkish folk instrument" and its gradual incorporation into the nationalist Turkish musical narrative, even in a marginal position at the edges of this "national musical culture," was clearly the outcome of political considerations that are present even in contemporary debates, as I was able to personally experience during my fieldwork in Trabzon.

Ideas about the roots and the history of kemençe musical culture and how it reached Trabzon clearly reveal that some of the researchers of that period did not

[75] For a detailed discussion of the TRT's role and practices see Stokes 1993.

consider it as having "Turkish roots" or a part of "Turkish musical culture," but rather as something that came from the West and was later on absorbed by the "Turkish groups" of the eastern Black Sea. The person who started this discussion was the Turkish researcher, writer, musician and music teacher Mahmut Ragip Gazimihal, who was also among the founders of Turkish musicology. In one of his reports about song collection in Trabzon, published by the Turkish newspaper *Vakit* in 1930, Gazimihal clearly stated his findings (in Şenel 1994:278). The report had the revealing title "*Trabzonlular Kemençeyi Nereden Buldular?*" which translates to "From where did the people of Trabzon find the kemençe?" In it Gazimihal argues that the dance of Trabzon and the kemençe did not constitute parts of the "autochthonous" culture but were brought to Trabzon from the West. Below I provide the English translation of the excerpt of his report in which he develops the relevant ideas:

> Regarding the *horon* (dances) of Trabzon, they are certainly related to the circle dances of the western middle ages. It is well known that in the 13th century of the Gregorian calendar, Trabzon was the biggest Genoese trade center in the Black Sea and it hosted many European neighbors and castles. It is understood that the dances called *horon* and the kemençe that they call *lira* in Trabzon were brought by those Europeans. Because similar to the most prominent French circle dances of the middle ages that were called "harol, horol," the wooden pear-shaped kemençe that is called *lira* and accompanies these dances, is encountered in the 13th century French church engravings and in some Latin books. But with the passing of time, partly due to the influence of the dances of Erzeroum, and partly due to the presence of Turkish lyrics—because all dance melodies can also be sung—haronlar (dances) got Turkified. European features can also be traced in the double cord performance tradition of the kemençe and in the continuous repetition

> of the same theme in the dance tunes. The peoples of every coastal trade center had been subjected to such a destiny. The people of coastal regions are used to these situations. Let's add that the people of Trabzon before the war of '93 were not familiar with the Georgian clothes they currently wear, they did not know them, they did not like them. They were wearing the Janissary clothing. [They did not know the Georgian circle dances; while in Byzantium there were no bowed instruments].
>
> The Greeks and the Armenians of our eastern provinces don't have their own distinct dances. They call the asik (beloved) asok, the saz (bağlama instrument) saz, the bar (dance) bor; without getting tired they always sing in Turkish, play music and dance.
>
> Hugo Reiman explained that the most important factor that proves the national character of the dances is the influence exercised by the sound of the lyrics on the sound and structure of the melodies. The aesthetic, historical and national value of our *bar* style or *horon* style dances is very high. If the suite, sonata, and the symphony came out of the very old western dances, then it becomes necessary for our composers to focus their attention on our dance melodies.

Gazimihal points out that one should not look for any Greek or Georgian influences on the Trabzon music and dance culture. Though in some other similar reports Gazimihal slightly refers to the Greeks of Trabzon and to their music, he fails to take under serious consideration their musical impact. He also almost completely overlooks the fact that thousands of Muslims in Trabzon still spoke Pontic-Greek. The superficial, propaganda style and descriptive nature of these reports, when placed in the political context of that period leads me to the conclusion that the overlooking of the decisive role

of non-Muslims in the formation of the Trabzon musical life and culture, and especially the role of the Christian Greek inhabitants who were recently deported, was either the outcome of ignorance or the result of nationalist political considerations aiming at the creation of a "homogenous, pure Turkish nation" via the complete appropriation of any cultural trait that might undermine the imagined purity.

Thirty-seven years after Gazimihal's previously mentioned report, another report written in 1967 by Ilhan Baran, another researcher who conducted state-sponsored song collections in Trabzon, the following is recorded,

> The main instrument in Trabzon and nearby Rize is kemençe. Its roots are definitely unknown. It is said that in the past the masters of this instrument were the local Greeks. It is certain that due to religious intolerance the Turks were hesitant to play instruments. Much later Turks too started becoming masters of this instrument (Ilhan Baran, 1968 in Şenel 1994).

In these and other relevant reports we can clearly discern the attempts of the authors to construct interpretations of local musical practices that would conform to the vision of a "pure Turkish nation." The fact that thousands of Turkish citizens of this area were native speakers of non-Turkish languages (Pontic-Greek, Georgian, and Armenian) possibly made these "ambivalent" populations a potential threat, in terms of their loyalties, in the eyes of state administrators. This must have certainly constituted an important reason for these scholars' interpretive choices and conclusions. Whereas any influences from a generic "West" were not only harmless for the nationalist ideology but even welcome, since they were symbolically affirming the direct contact and dialogue of the "great Turkish nation" with the big imperial nations of the West.

Discussions about the "roots of kemençe," the instrument that was and still is so dominant in the musical culture of the rural areas of Trabzon and the symbol of a strong regionalism and lifestyle that was not conforming to the period's Turkish nationalist visions, continued for several decades and are still present in contemporary Trabzon as I personally witnessed during my fieldwork and as I show in the subsequent sections of this chapter. The scholars who built the repertoire and the narrative about the "Turkish national music" had to find a way to accommodate the music and the instrument, the kemençe, of the people of Trabzon.

A different strand of thinking about the "roots of kemençe" and its routes is clearly seen in the writings of various contemporary nationalist Turkish writers and commentators. Their narrative presents the kemençe as an instrument brought from Central Asia by the Turkish nomadic groups who later spread it to different regions and ethnic groups (Öğel 1987, Türkdoğan 1997, Bilgin 1990). Thus we are presented with two main conflicting visions of kemençe history in the relevant writings. The first records that the instrument was brought to Trabzon by Westerners, the Genoese in particular, and was later absorbed by the Turks and its other inhabitants. The second describes a very different route, telling that the instrument was brought to Trabzon by the Turkish nomadic groups of Central Asia and spread to other regions and populations. The gradual transition in the relevant writings from the European to the Central Asian Turkish origins of kemençe must be related to the ideological dispositions of the writers and to broader political considerations, especially in the post-1980s coup period and the rise of Kurdish movement.

Though these two narratives present distinct roots and routes of the kemençe, one European and one Turkish Central Asian, they share their strong negation to search and acknowledge the role of the dense and highly active, until 1923, local non-Turkish inhabitants, and in particular the Greeks of Trabzon. Additionally, the presence of large Pontic-Greek speaking Muslim populations in Trabzon and their strong attachment to kemençe was certainly a factor for which the nationalist cadres were obliged to invent a narrative for this instrument that would incorporate and decrease its potential "denationalizing" and destabilizing role.

What is important here for the purposes of this section is to understand and show how visions about roots and routes served to construct a hegemonic nationalist narrative that attempted to imagine and incorporate the kemençe of Trabzon into the "Turkish musical culture" and its rural performers and aficionados into the recently invented "Turkish nation."

Turks, kemençe, Greeks

As already mentioned, kemençe and its music has become the locus of intense interpretive practice in present day Trabzon. Ideas and debates about what kemençe means for its audiences, what is its history and its importance for the local society and the unity of the "Turkish nation" in the present and future, and what should be done to protect the instrument from the danger of "foreign appropriations" and "ethnic separatism" are produced, circulate, and discussed extensively in mainstream networks such as self-proclaimed left-wing kemalist or extremist right-wing Islamokemalist.

In this section, I present the basic ideas and interpretations of the mainstream nationalist camp in Trabzon. The "intellectual leaders" of this broadly-defined group produce texts and oral arguments in which they promote a certain interpretation of music culture and history, and suggestions for present and future action. These interpretations are then widely reproduced by their audiences and supporters in the social media, in local press and daily discussions, framing the ways many people think and feel about kemençe and its music. In this section my primary purpose is not to refute anybody's ideas and arguments but rather to understand the uses, underpinnings, and consequences of this type of writing in and about Trabzon.

Shortly after I concluded my fieldwork in Turkey and returned to Princeton, a new book entitled *"Pontus Efxinos: Kemençe ve Horon"* [Black Sea: Lyre and Dance] (2012) was published in Turkey by *Berikan Yayinevi*, an ultra-nationalist publisher in the capital city of Ankara. Among the publisher's writers are bureaucrats, military personnel, school teachers, university professors and independent writers. Ali Karadeniz, the book's writer, who is from the eastern Black Sea town of Giresun, just few miles west of Trabzon, specializes in Turkish literature and children's literature. This 231-page book was written out of a kind of patriotic duty to defend the "Turkish culture" and character of the Black Sea people against local, left-wing activism and its supposedly international supporters, the "Western imperialist" countries. In this book, which more or less summarizes the state-promoted mainstream thinking and arguements, one can find very specific ideas about the visions and plans about kemençe music of the nationalist networks in the Black Sea. It should be noted that these kinds of publications and texts intend to shape popular perceptions about particular themes, and they are of a

propagandistic character, addressing Turkish-speaking, local audiences. This does not mean that their authors are necessarily deliberately lying. I assume that many of them deeply believe what they write since they also claim that they "defend the historical truth." In Trabzon and in Turkey in general, there is a thriving industry of various right-wing political propaganda books written mainly by locals who work either as school teachers or professors in local state universities. Authors who engage in this kind of activity write with the purpose of defending "the unity of the Turkish nation" against intellectual attacks from outsiders, aiming at the strengthening of national values, ideals and visions through promoting a certain interpretation of history and culture.

In an exchange of letters between the author and Mehmet Bilgin, another well-known ultra nationalist writer of Trabzon, the latter encourages the former to engage more thoroughly with research and writing about kemençe for "national security reasons." The letter, that is included in Karadeniz's book, is quite revealing of the mainstream state-promoted propaganda, and thus I want the reader to take full advantage of its content. The arguments made in it constitute the main body of a narrative that has spread and can be encountered in numerous websites, publications, local TV shows and public discussions. Here I provide a translation of the letter in English,

> I am expecting you to expand your work on kemençe and turn it into a book, because all the propaganda in the region of the Black Sea about the supposedly Greek origins of its people is based on the promotion of the idea that kemençe is a Greek instrument. They try to spread this idea among the local population especially by deceiving and using the local kemençe performers. This is a multi-directional activity. Its planners purchase large numbers of kemençe from Turkey, then they sell them to the Pontic-Greeks in Greece trying to keep this tradition alive

among the youth. I want you to intensify your research taking under consideration the information I will share with you shortly. Only people with your ideological outlook can successfully carry out such a task. Neither state institution nor any bureaucrat have the time to engage in these kinds of fine activities and this has an adverse effect on our people. Kemençe is not the only folk instrument used in the eastern Black Sea region. There is also davul [local percussion], zurna [shrill-pipe flute], tulum [bagpipe], kaval [reed pipe], and bağlama [string instrument]. Moreover kemençe is not used in every region of the Black Sea with the same intensity. If we examine the areas where it is spread and mostly played, we will see that these are Kuman and Çepni settlements. Kemençe is an instrument used extensively by the Kuman, Gagavuz and Çepni groups.[76] There is even a Kuman toponym named kemençe. Because the Orthodox Christian Kumans were playing the kemençe, the instrument was identified with the Christians. Thus the Çepni who were also very passionate about kemençe were frequently accused by local religious leaders as being Muslim converts from Christianity. Though these claims are not to be found in any written source, I was able to personally hear them during my research among these people. The fact that it is proven that the Çepni are one of the 24 Turkic Oguz groups protected them from being popularly perceived as Orthodox Christians. I have personally met few evil-minded individuals who passionately propagate the supposedly Orthodox-Greek origins of the Çepni.

[76] The Çepni are a nomadic Central Asian Turkic group. It is argued that they settled west of Trabzon slightly before the city's conquest by the Ottomans in 1461. The Gagavuz and the Kumans are "ethnic" groups that ultra-nationalists claim as being of Turkic origin. Especially the history and name of the Kumans is used by the ultra-nationalist intellectuals in Trabzon in order to discursively legitimize and spread the argument among locals that Turks settled in Trabzon well before the Greeks and that the Pontic-Greek speaking people of contemporary Trabzon are not Greeks who converted to Islam but are actually Orthodox Kumans, thus of "Turkish origin and culture." This view is not supported by any historical record and evidence and it is even ridiculed by people from the Pontic-Greek-speaking community.

> However there also lived Orthodox Christians in the eastern Black Sea region who were playing kemençe and were dancing the horon. The reason for this is that they were of Kuman origins. A segment of the Kumans was assimilated by the Georgians, another segment in the Arhavi and Pazar areas were absorbed by the Laz group. Among the Laz in this region there still are families with Kuman clan names. Among those who left the eastern Black Sea and settled in Greece there are kemençe players too. Even among them there are Orthodox Christian families who still bare names from the Kuman clans" (Karadeniz 2012: 62-63).

In the final sections of the letter Mehmet Bilgin claims that kemençe is played by other Turkic tribes too, but that unfortunately there is a lack of relevant research. He then urges Ali, to whom the letter is addressed, to do research on the different songs sung with kemençe among all these groups and invites him to use his previously-published texts about the ethnic history and musical culture of the eastern Black sea. The results of this research, hopes Mehmet, will constitute an important, detailed database that will facilitate the job of the various TV and radio music programs that so far, according to him, they have not been doing a good job in "properly" presenting the musical culture, the instruments and the musicians of this region, thus contributing to confusion and misunderstandings (Karadeniz 2012:63).

Ali was in perfect agreement with Mehmet's opinion and came to see himself as someone who was taking the mission to defend the "Turkishness" of kemençe and of its listeners' musical culture and their political loyalty. He became even more convinced about the importance of this mission after having watched the Eurovision song contest of 2010, where the Greek team incorporated the kemençe in its show, thus "appropriating"

the instrument in front of the eyes of millions of viewers around the world. Due to this "appropriation" by the Greeks and to the intense debates taking place in Trabzon, the kemençe had become a "political instrument" and Ali was preparing to produce the "first serious source study" about it and offer intellectual support and arguments to the people of Trabzon who were "getting confused."

The challenge to the rigid "patriotic" meanings with which kemençe was invested by these authors was perceived as a potential danger that could undermine the political loyalties of its Trabzon audiences. Additionally the blurring of lines between "Greeks and Turks" through the use of the same instrument, the rise of ambiguity and the challenge to the mainstream interpretations regarding kemençe, was perceived as "degeneration of the national culture."

Ali too, following Mehmet Bilgin, reproduces in his texts the recently invented ultra-nationalist myth of the supposedly ancient Turkish origins of some of Trabzon's Pontic-Greek-speaking populations, either Christian or Muslim. In his attempt to draw a sharp line between those who currently speak Rumça (Pontic-Greek) in Trabzon and the Pontic-Greek speakers of Greece and of Greeks in general, he stresses that people in Turkey should learn to distinguish between the category of *Rum* (Romios/Roman) and that of *Yunan* (Ioanian). The term Rum in the nationalist imagination designates the Orthodox Christian who in the past lived in Anatolia and after 1923 might have become a citizen of Turkey, whereas the Yunan is the Orthodox Christian who is a citizen of Greece (Karadeniz 2012:83).

In terms of political sovereignty, which I think is the important issue in this distinction, Rum is Orthodox Christian under Turkish political authority, whereas the

Yunan has his own independent state, that is Greece. The fear of nationalist circles that the equation of the categories of Rum and Yunan in popular imagination in Turkey might contribute to the rise of separatist tendencies among the Pontic-Greek-speaking Sunni populations in Trabzon, and their attempt to keep them conceptually separate, is revealing of the importance that these political actors attribute to the control and circulation of these meanings in their attempt to shape public historical perceptions, eliminate conceptual deviations from the mainstream and secure the local population's political loyalty.

Ali warns his readers that some evil-minded individuals are trying to turn the kemençe into a symbol of a different ethnic identity and state, and draws comparisons with the Kurdish case. He writes, "we should keep in mind that as in the southeast where language was used in order to establish a distinct ethnic culture and structure [Kurdish], in the Black Sea too the kemençe, dances and melodies are parts of a similar strategic plan." He goes on to argue that all those songs and instruments are "purely Turkish" and that Turks should claim and protect them, and not let themselves be defeated by the "psychological war" of enemies (Karadeniz 2012: 109-111). He criticizes those musicians and recording companies who release songs in Pontic-Greek lyrics for their "nationally-damaging" activity and more or less accuses them of "serving foreign interests," mainly Greek and Western in general (Karadeniz 2012: 111). Warnings against the danger of using kemençe music for the making of an "ethnic separatist" movement in the Black Sea are always accompanied by statements about the homogenous character of this region's population and it's highly nationalist emotions, attachments, and loyalties.

For writers and thinkers like Ali in the Black Sea, dance and music instruments possess a central part in the national culture. They are thought of as ways of life and as rituals through which individuals and groups define and distinguish themselves from cultural others. The political importance of kemençe music and dance according to Ali's understanding, which echoes Plato and Aristotle, is that they imprint in the soul and the body the ethos of a lifestyle, the feelings and ideas about life, they contain it and transfer it to younger generations, thus contributing to the shaping of their world visions, emotions, and values, which is highly important for the state's legitimacy over its population.

The solution to the problem of the gradual "politicization" of kemençe and of its gradual transformation into a symbol and tool of "ethnic separatism" by Greeks and other local left-wing activists according to the nationalists' arguments, is the support and study of this musical culture by academic structures and state patronage. The establishment of new, extended archives for kemençe music that will transfer this culture to the future generations in a "proper way," the incorporation of the instrument into academic research and teaching and the invention and establishment of a new discipline for the study of "Turkish bowed instruments," the reinvigoration of folklore studies and institutions, and the instrument's reintroduction to internal and international audiences, are thought as the necessary steps that will decrease the dangers that right-wing thinkers and activists imagine (Karadeniz 2012:136-137).

Nationalist thinking in and about the eastern Black Sea attributes significant importance to the role of music in politics. The public cultivation of fear by these circles that kemençe music is currently being used by left-wing activists as a tool for "ethnic

separatist propaganda" that can potentially further undermine Turkey's unity and sovereignty, has caused significant polarization among the individuals who participate in the networks of kemençe music making and listening, from artists and producers to event-organizers and audiences. One can discern an artist's left or right wing affiliations by the quality of his musical sound and the use of instruments in the recordings, the public venues where he shares his music, the language and themes, and the interpretations with which his music is invested in CD descriptions and other public presentations. There are also those who prefer to "hide" themselves and blur the lines and the sharp distinctions between left-right in order to gain access to both audiences. The latter too, as I came to gradually recognize in my fieldwork, started getting more attentive to the political affiliations and ideas of the Black Sea artists they were choosing to listen to. The once-unified and state-promoted "Black Sea music" scene is becoming more and more fragmented along the lines just described.

What is actually suggested by the nationalist groups, in an ironic rather Foucaultian spirit, is the state-sponsored control of the signification practices that relate to kemençe music through its "serious study," and the production of "scientific" discourses and "educated musicians." The establishment of a new apparatus of signification and meaning management and circulation will enable state authorities to deprive "local leftists, Greeks and imperialists" from their means of cultural and political influence and "ethnic propaganda" and introduce a new network that will attempt to monopolize kemençe-related activities and meanings. If this policy was to be implemented, as I see it, it would constitute a return to a more sophisticated version of the

state controls and policies of the early Republican period between 1923 and 1950, as I have described in the initial sections of this chapter.

Two years after I finished fieldwork and returned to Princeton, I learned from the Turkish press that the recently established Trabzon state conservatoire was preparing to receive its first twenty students for the academic year 2011-2012. The director of the conservatoire stated that its mission was to educate and produce performers with the highest national and international standards, to raise the level of Trabzon's cultural life, and to address and attract different sections of the local society. Though it was legally established in 2003, the conservatoire opened its doors in 2011 due to the lack of academic personnel compliant with the standards posed by the state higher education institute. Some of my leftist interlocutors whom I later consulted, told me that the academics appointed to the Trabzon conservatoire were known for their "uncritical nationalist" ideas about the music of Trabzon and that it would have been inconceivable to appoint a left-wing scholar in that institution. Moreover, according to the official announcement of the Trabzon governor to the local press, the new conservatoire was to be housed not in the university campus but in the historic Byzantine and later Ottoman part of the city, in the building that 514 years ago was the house of the Suleiman the Magnificent, the Trabzon-born, tenth and longest reigning sultan of the Ottoman empire. The symbolism was quite strong.

Keeping music out of politics

I was sitting on the second floor at McDonalds in downtown Trabzon eating French fries. The place was almost empty. American fast food was not very popular among the city's inhabitants, and the strong anti-American and anti-Western sentiment must have played its part in this. A few months before I got there for my fieldwork, McDonalds in Trabzon had been attacked by some extremist right-wing individuals, who threw a bomb through its windows, protesting "American cultural imperialism." Since then, I never sat at the tables in front of the windows, despite the nice view of the central square.

Zeki, the owner and director of a local newspaper—and according to local standards, a progressive one—arrived a few minutes later to meet me. One of our common friends told him about his idea to open a restaurant with live kemençe music, something that was lacking from the city's night life. This would attract wealthy locals, but more importantly, the rising currents of visitors from Greece. Our friend asked me to go check the place and tell him my opinion, since he was out of the city those days. Zeki was friends with the owner so he volunteered to show me the place.

While walking over, Zeki told me that his newspaper would support this project and that he was not opposing Pontic-Greeks from Greece visiting Trabzon since "we have the same culture," referring to the kemençe music and dances. But he stressed that politics should stay out of this, urging me, "some people try to achieve other objectives, they are very political, there shouldn't be any politics in these relationships, only music, folklore and dance, let's leave politics aside."

The rising numbers of Greek visitors to Trabzon, the face-to-face interactions with the locals, the intense discussions about history and culture on social media among Pontic-Greek-speaking Trabzonian and Pontic-Greeks from Greece and around the world, and the still low but rising popularity of Pontic-Greek kemençe music and lyrics among local audiences, alarmed the more conservative constituencies and members of the state apparatus, who started perceiving the Greek visitors and the intense interactions with the locals as a potentially destabilizing factor. As I was able to learn from local informants, the police apparatus was monitoring every Greek visitor and his contacts and networks in the province. The fear was that these contacts could trigger a revivalist movement among the Pontic-Greek speakers of the region that might turn into a political movement with separatist demands, similar to that of the Kurds. These fears were reflected and reproduced in various press reports, in panels and public discussions taking place in the area with the support of the local authorities and right-wing, pro-state groups.

The fear of *misyonerlik* [missionary activity] in Trabzon, the idea that foreigners were approaching local youth to convert them to Christianity and draw them to ethic separatism, had become an obsession that was constantly reinforced by right-wing press reports and opinion articles.

I was dragged into such a controversy towards the end of my fieldwork. A middle aged man from the town of Sürmene whom I met during my research in Turkey and who was claiming that he was a fan of my kemençe playing, decided to write and publish an article against me and against all those kemençe players from Greece and Turkey who were trying to collaborate and produce common musical works. However, I was the main target of the attack. He decided to write this text after a debate we had on Facebook about

history, and the role of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whom I had characterized as a dictator in one of my posts. The thread of the virtual debate unfolded under one of my posts in which I was sharing with friends the interview of a very famous and respected Turkish historian, who was talking about the Armenian genocide.

The person who wrote the article, as I later learned, was a supporter of the fascist, extremist right-wing political party of Turkey and in the past had also verbally attacked a left-wing intellectual from Trabzon who had written a book about the Pontic-Greek language spoken in his village. The title of his text was "The brotherhood of kemençe: The dangerous games over the Black Sea." After arguing that kemençe is a Turkish instrument brought from Central Asia and that Greeks had stolen every cultural value from the Turks, he moved on to accuse me, however, without mentioning my name. Below I provide the translation of a relevant excerpt from his text that was uploaded on a Trabzonian website and which illuminates the dominant mentality among these individuals and political groups:

> There is a "friend" of ours, a Greek kemençe player. Most of you know his public face which is covered with an artistic mask. He is a doctoral student at Princeton in the US, but what kind of a PhD student is he, since he is always in Turkey throughout the year. He lives in the houses of young people whom he has influenced and made them his supporters, he plays kemençe in Istanbul at various bars that are managed by his supporters, but he spends most of his time in the villages in Trabzon. He records the songs sung by old people. He plays kemençe in village coffee shops and records other younger kemençe players too. Then he goes back to Greece and he records these beautiful songs that were originally sung with Turkish lyrics, but now he puts Pontic-Greek lyrics. After he has Hellenized

> the songs in this way, he comes back to the Black Sea and presents our songs as Pontic-Greek. His videos are all over Facebook and in this way our songs get Hellenized, as is our kemençe. He is currently interested in collecting Bahatin Tsamurali's old kemençe recordings. This brother of ours, who has undertaken the duty of building this brotherhood of kemençe has another trait too: he hates Atatürk and Topal Osman.[77] Behind the soft face of this kemençe player, who is supposedly a PhD student, hides a huge audacity and he can't hide his hatred for the Turks. He is such an audacious person that he dared to put Atatürk's pictures next to a photo depicting the Nazis.

The suggestion of my interlocutor earlier in this section to keep music out of politics, as I interpreted it, actually meant to avoid undermining the already-existing mainstream nationalist meanings of kemençe music, and not to turn the instrument into a symbol of ethnic difference and diversity. He actually advocated for the maintenance of the existing signification order. Moreover, kemençe was already implicated in politics since the early 20th century, and the agents of this were the state authorities and the networks of artists they supported within the context of a specific music policy that are described in earlier parts of the chapter. Additionally, kemençe songs with openly nationalist and even racist content made by the big names of this genre have found extensive coverage and support by mainstream networks. These are songs that cultivate

[77] Topal Osman was a Çepni Turk from the city of Giresun of the Black Sea. He was a Turkish militia leader who was deeply implicated in the Armenian and Greek massacres during World War I and soon after. He is currently venerated, especially by the fascist far right-wing, as a hero "who cleaned up the Black Sea and threw the Greeks to the sea." Left wing and liberal individuals and groups in the region have started criticizing his war activity and his elevation to the status of a national hero. Some Black Sea singers have sung songs praising Topal Osman's deeds.

xenophobia and directly target other groups such as Armenians, Jews, Greeks and Kurds, and recently the "West" in general, for supposedly being enemies of the Turkish nation constantly plotting against it. Mainstream state propaganda has very successfully incorporated this musical subgenre and used it for its political purposes.

Suspicion and curiosity: A kind mayor

During my fieldwork I visited the music school of *Platana/Akçaabat*, a small town just few from Trabzon, and there I was introduced by my friend Ali to the mayor of *Maçka* who was there to attend a musical event with a famous Trabzonian singer. I went there for the same reason. Ali was a bağlama performer and teacher at that school and we were working together for the production of his first CD in which I would perform with my kemençe and sing two songs in Pontic-Greek.

He told the mayor that I was a performer from Greece and that I was there for my PhD research. The mayor was extremely welcoming and invited me to his office to have a cup of tea and discuss. We agreed with my friend Ali that we will visit him the next day.

Maçka is another small town within the administrational boundaries of the province of Trabzon. Until 1923, there used to live a large Orthodox Greek population. Now it was inhabited by local Muslims and by some others who migrated from the nearby Pontic-Greek speaking communities of *Tonya*. What made this city very important was the presence of the seven-century-old Greek orthodox monastery of *Panagia Sümela,* which attracted many tourists and pilgrims from different parts of the country and of the world. Many Pontic-Greeks from Greece and elsewhere were visiting

the monastery every year to request the blessing of the Virgin Mary to which it was dedicated. Though the monastery had been seriously damaged there were some restoration initiatives. For the Turkish people, Sümela is now a museum, a reminder of the Orthodox Greek neighbors' presence in the region, and a source of material gains, as are many Greek churches and buildings in the region. As I learned from Ali and from other informants, the mayor was trying to make every possible effort to turn his municipality into a tourist attraction site, and Greeks seemed liked very good potential customers. The presence of the Sümela monastery in his province strengthened his conviction about the touristic potential of his municipality.

I felt quite awkward when I was informed about the mayor's intentions. Though I could understand that his duty is to attract money for his municipality and its inhabitants, I had difficulties seeing myself as a "tourist" in Trabzon, and I was also annoyed to be considered a potential source of material gains. I immediately thought of my ancestors who were forced to abandon their properties and homelands in *Pontos* and were led to poverty and marginalization for many decades. Coming from such a trajectory it was ethically and politically unacceptable for me to pretend that I was a "happy tourist" in Trabzon. Moreover, the "monuments" that were attracting most of the visitors and bringing most of the money in Trabzon were constructed and once owned by the Greek Orthodox communities of the region. What Greeks left behind was securing a valuable revenue to the city, despite that even though, there still were strong anti-Greek feelings among different constituencies in this area and across the Black Sea province.

The gaze and the ethos of the tourist was not appropriate for me. The possibility of folklorizing, aestheticizing, and commercializing the Greek presence/absence in

Trabzon reminded me of the Native American situation in the US; marginality, casinos, alcohol, Indian hat feathers, tourist pendants, the famous Cherokee Jeeps, and of course the notorious western films about the "good" cowboys killing "bad" Native Americans. I was aware that I did not go to Trabzon to engage in any kind of partisan political activism, but to do my fieldwork. However, my political self was constantly popping up. Despite all these thoughts that distracted me momentarily, the mayor made a good impression on me and I was anxious to meet with him in his office.

The next morning Ali and I, together with one of his colleagues, drove for about thirty minutes from Trabzon to the mayor's office in the municipality building in downtown Maçka. When we got there it was about 11:40 in the morning. We were received by the secretary who told us that the mayor would be a bit late, so we got into his office, sat on the relaxing leather sofas and waited for him. Ali kept talking with his colleague and I went out to buy newspapers. The headline of the day was the decision to ban DTP, the legal political party that was representing thousands of Kurds and other democrats in the national parliament.

When I got back to the office the mayor had not arrived yet. I was looking around to familiarize myself with his office. My attention was captured by a huge relief map of Turkey that was hanging behind the mayor's desk and a big Turkish flag. And on top of the map was the bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the so-called founder of modern Republican Turkey. These busts and portraits of the "great leader" could be found all over Turkey, in public, private and commercial buildings. There was a law that made it compulsory to have one of these representations of "the great leader" hanging in public rooms. You could even find them in public restrooms. In the past I would get annoyed by

his overwhelming presence, but after a period of time I learned to ignore it, as many of my local interlocutors did as well.

The mayor arrived a few minutes later, he greeted us all, we shook hands and sat down. He started talking with Ali about politics, completely ignoring me. Every now and then his cell phone would ring and the mayor would interrupt the discussion to answer his phone and talk for few minutes. Ali looked at me and smiled meaningfully. I smiled back. When he returned to the discussion the mayor expressed his anxiety over the recent ban of the DTP party and said that Turkey was now facing a real threat of partition. He added that this ban gives opportunity to the West to criticize Turkey and that those responsible in the Islamic government should have managed the whole issue more cleverly and efficiently. He was keeping his voice low, and was speaking fast, as if he did not want me to understand, or at least this is how I interpreted his manner of speaking. However I could hear and understand everything.

The mayor was also disappointed by the leader of his party, CHP, the kemalist, social democrat, secular pylon of the country's political system. He accused his party's president for being ineffective and unable to collect any votes from the Kurdish population while the Islamic party was doing quite well on that front. In the meantime he ordered tea for all of us. After stating one more time that he was anxious about the country's unity and future he said that Turks should be self-confident and operate cleverly in order to succeed.

Then he turned his attention to me. He welcomed me again and asked me what exactly my profession was, and what the reasons for my presence in Trabzon were. I started responding to his question by telling him that I was there to do my fieldwork

research for my PhD on kemençe music. I wanted to go on and explain in some more detail but the mayor interrupted me saying that he will help as much as he can by suggesting to me sources to look at and people to speak to. He mentioned the name of a medical doctor who is from Maçka but now lives in Istanbul most of the time, Mustafa Duman, who wrote a book on the *kemençe*. I was already familiar with Mr. Mustafa's work. I knew that he had a great love for his "native culture of Trabzon" and he had invested most of his free time researching and writing about it. There are many amateur writers and researchers in this area but Mr. Mustafa has become quite influential and well-known since he has written extensively and published books and articles in local newspapers and journals.

The mayor stood up from his desk, approached his library and started looking for Mr.Mustafa's book. When he found it, he picked it up and approached me. I understood that he wanted to donate it to me. With a big smile under his moustache the mayor said: "There you are, this is what you need, in here there is your whole research on the kemençe, whatever you want you can find it here, you don't need to look anywhere else, you don't have to do any other research; just read this book and it will be enough." We all burst into laughter after the mayor's exaggerated words, and his characteristic gestures. I thought it was funny for him to say something like this, but on the other I did not want to criticize or disappoint him, we would all feel uncomfortable, so I allowed myself to laugh and I thanked him for his contribution. I guess that my spontaneous reaction made it more than obvious that I was not taking him seriously. I continued laughing and thanking him.

The mayor continued his lecture by telling me that the inhabitants of his municipality are Kuman-Turks, an "ancient Turkish group," and that it is highly possible that we, the Pontic-Greeks or the Rums as they call us in Turkey, are of Kuman-Turkish origin too. I spontaneously burst into laughter again, this time even stronger and louder. The rest were laughing too. Ali had also mentioned this theory to me few days earlier, but he did not seem very serious about this since he was smiling while explaining it to me. This popular narrative proposes that Kuman Turks were an ancient Turkish tribe that came to the Black Sea before the Greeks and that they brought the *kemençe* with them and thus Greeks learned the *kemençe* from the Turks. This "theory" has become quite popular mainly among the ultra-nationalist and kemalist segments of the local population.

I kept smiling and tried to test his reaction and background ideas. The best way to do this with the locals and to elicit responses and provoke a productive discussion is to joke with them about the origins of a local word, which clearly is not Turkish, or the kemençe or a local habit, by telling them that it is "Greek." Thus I asked the mayor whether the people in this region use the word *kodespana* (housewife, in Pontic-Greek). This was something I already knew from one of my informants who was from this same town. He said yes and added that people also use the word *kokirts* (the male equivalent of the housewife in Pontic-Greek) as well as many other non-Turkish words. These were described as local idioms by him. I explained that these words are Greek but he disagreed by gesturing with the continuous turning of his head left and right. He told me, smiling, that this is not sure, and that most probably these "local words" are of Caucasian origin, and that we do not possess much information in order to draw a secure conclusion. I laughed again and wondered how it was possible for an educated person like the mayor,

who was claiming to be a progressive, humanist, and social democrat to echo the ideas of the racist parties of the Turkish ultra-right. However, I was very used in this kind of responses in this region during my fieldwork. Even though I was not verbally provoking people since I was not interested, some interlocutors would do whatever it took to prove to me that this "monument" or that word was not of Greek origin but something else, even though there was scholarly knowledge proving the contrary. The atmosphere in the office was very cheerful since none of us had any confrontational reaction or behavior. We were exchanging ideas smiling, laughing, and teasing each other. The trope of "roots" can also be a very amusing topic of discussion in Trabzon. It is not accidental that many local people with a deep sense of humor make jokes about theirs or their friends' supposed Greek origins.

The mayor said, smiling, "Oh Niko, you put an ending to the words and you make them Greek, you present everything as Greek." I replied by saying that since we agree that these words are not Turkish, then we should ask ourselves about their etymology. If one has Greek as his mother tongue and is familiar with the Greek dialects, one can easily understand that these particular words are Pontic-Greek. I also asked the mayor, trying to joke with him further, why people in the eastern Black Sea provinces call the regional dance *horon,* which is also another Greek word. The mayor paused to think and after a while he replied "That I really don't know."

I explained to him that my research was not about the "ethnic origins" of the region's inhabitants and that I was not trying to prove or refute the "roots" of anyone. I felt the need to clarify this in order to avoid misunderstandings since I realized that "ethnic research" is most probably what the mayor thought as soon as he heard that I am

an anthropologist working on music, which is locally translated as folklore, history and identity. The fear of the "ethnic other" in Trabzon and in the eastern Black Sea provinces in general is cultivated by a network of journalists and amateur local writers who call themselves "researchers" and "intellectuals." It is well known by scholars, state officials and many lay citizens that there are four different linguistic groups living in this part of the country and thus any reference to "cultural" matters from a foreigner raises suspicion and mobilizes fear and reaction.

The mayor did not pause in his effort to enlighten me. He reached for his cell phone and started looking in his contacts list. He put the cell to his ear, looked at me and told me that he was calling Mr. Mustafa Duman, the medical doctor who wrote the book about the kemençe. The simple fact that Mr. Mustafa is a medical doctor makes him a reliable source of knowledge and information for the mayor, as well as for many of the less educated people in this locality. If you are a medical doctor you can write a book about a musical instrument and locals will most probably take it seriously, with the support of local media, of course. If the words are put on paper they acquire a magical power to convince and shape the thoughts of the readers. This gave rise to an industry of amateur "local historiography" and idea-making in Trabzon, as well as in other parts of Anatolia, with the support and promotion of state networks. These practices usually reflect and represent patriotic views and ideals. Mr. Mustafa answered the phone. The mayor greeted him and immediately told him that he had a young Greek visitor in his office doing research on kemençe, and who would like to make arrangements and make an interview with him. Mr. Mustafa gladly agreed, as the mayor told me, and immediately asked him the following question: "So, Mr. Mustafa, according to the

research you have done so far, is the kemençe a Greek instrument?" Probably Mr. Mustafa said a clear no and the mayor, with a big smile of satisfaction on his lips, loudly repeated the answer, "aaah, no, so… no, ok, ok;" he looked me in my eyes repeating the "no" with evident satisfaction. Then he asked Mr. Mustafa if he could give me his number to contact him while in Istanbul. Mr. Mustafa agreed, the mayor thanked him, he said good bye and hung up.

The mayor turned to me again saying, "You see, as the doctor said, the kemençe is not a Greek instrument." I thought that it would be completely meaningless to enter such a debate right then. Besides, I wanted to know what people believed and how they thought about various things and not impose my ideas on them. However, I was a bit irritated by the mayor's insistence on making me accept his truth. What is even more interesting is that he started this whole discussion as soon as I told him that I was doing research. However, I decided to approach the experience with an enlarged sense of humor. So I laughed again and thanked him for the help, though I stressed that I think differently about these matters. I thought that if I would push the discussion further I might jeopardize my relations with the mayor and even with my friend Ali who had kindly agreed to come with me to his office. The mayor repeated his willingness to help me in my research, even though I never asked for it, and promised that he would put me in contact with some cultural associations in Trabzon where horon and kemençe are taught. He mentioned some names of people with whose kemalist and nationalist ideas I was already familiar. He also called to a nearby village to look for the local kemençe player to see if he was available in one of the coming days.

After he made all the arrangements for me, the mayor told me that he would like to interview me and publish the reportage to the municipality's website. I agreed and he called the municipality's journalist, who started recording me. He asked me about myself and my life, where I was coming from, why I was in Trabzon, how long I would stay and where, and the aim of my research. He and the mayor told me that the reportage would go online the same afternoon. I checked it many times for the next few days, but the reportage never appeared. I thought that it was very strange and the first thing that came to my mind was that the "interview" ended up in the hands, and ears, of the local police station.

After we finished, the mayor asked me if I had my kemençe with me and I said yes; he proposed to go to a restaurant in *Hamsikoy,* a nearby village, to eat at the local restaurant and play music. We got into the municipality's official car and drove for about half an hour through forests, mountains and rivers. I was absorbed by my thoughts and my imagination was travelling to past times when many Greek *kemençe* players were living in this region. The mayor was constantly calling his friends proudly announcing that he has a kemençe player from Greece accompanying him and inviting them to come and join us to the restaurant and listen to some "good kemençe."

When we reached our destination, all the workers came out to welcome the mayor and his guests. They gave us a table on the second floor from where we could have a better view. The mayor looked outside of the window pointing towards the villages across the mountain, telling me that one of his Greek friends who frequently visits the area descends from that village. The mayor's friends arrived soon, we ordered food and I was requested to play my kemençe. I started playing old melodies from the Maçka area,

the mayor's town, and singing in Pontic-Greek and in Trabzonian Turkish. They were listening to me carefully and silently, with a wide smile over their faces; they were looking at each other smiling and pointing to the kemençe saying "listen, listen, how nice it sounds."

Despite our disagreements and even suspicion for each other as described above, the final performance context and the sound of kemençe, even if it was only for the duration of the event, challenged our ideas and views and made us feel closer to each other. The barriers that were erected during our discussion in the office, the rigid meanings and understandings of history, of ourselves and of the other, melted under the affective power of the kemençe's sound. After the end of the performance we would all probably return to our previous habits of thinking and feeling, but I hope that experiencing music together with listeners of this sort, left an imprint on our memory that will be lasting, cracking the stone of suspicion and implicit hostility. Music made us (momentarily, at least) more flexible and open to other interpretations and understandings. I could see how the instrument I played and loved, which was a strong part of my personal ethos, was also loved by people with whom I had very opposing views and ideas about history and politics and how they invested it with different meanings. For my interlocutors, I think, experiencing my music destabilized previously-held certainties and caused skepticism, self-reflection and even fear, and later on severe reaction, as shown earlier in the chapter with the publication of a text against me.

Yet, if kemençe music could enter the space between us, this does not mean we heard it the same way. The sound of kemençe was perceived and interpreted differently by diverse audiences in Trabzon. An informant had told me that when he listens to its

sound the first thing that comes to his mind is the Turkish flag and the sense of pride. Another one, confidentially shared with me that the music of kemençe made him think of his "Pontic-Greek ancestors" and made him nostalgic for the old cosmopolitan Trabzon. It is to the latter meanings of kemençe that I now turn in the following sections of this chapter.

Left-wing Trabzon

While in Trabzon, I was receiving many invitations from Facebook to meet people and play music for them. My musical activities of the previous years had provided me with a network of listeners and local musicians that facilitated my fieldwork. The imaginary and emotional connections built around my music, brought me to the leadership of the local left-wing activist groups and organizations. I was not aware of the existence of these people until I started my fieldwork. Until then I was under the impression that all the people in Trabzon were supporters of Islamic and mainstream right-wing political parties and ideals. However, I was wrong.

One day in December while in Trabzon, Faik, a musician friend of mine who was living in Trabzon, took me to the headquarters of KESK, a local powerful worker's union, in order to introduce me to some of its members and leaders. He said, "People have listened to your cassette Niko. I told them you are here and they asked me to take you to the headquarters to meet and talk with you." There I met Mr. Ismet, Mr. Kioksal, Mustafa, Çengiz, Kiamil and others. They gave me a very warm welcome, we sat around a table and starting talking. I told them about my research and they enthusiastically promised to help me in any possible way, "Just tell us what you want and we will help

you, and don't be afraid, you have good friends know whom you can trust." Mr. Ismet, a middle-aged owner of a *dershane* (private tutoring school) and chairman of the local branch of ODP, a left-wing political party not represented in the parliament, urged me to be in close contact with them and not to worry about anything, and if I ever happen to have any problems with the local police or any ultra-right groups, I should call him immediately for help. He said, "Don't worry, we can mobilize three thousand people in just few hours, we are quite powerful in this city." Mr. Ismet, with his small glasses and his curly hair, reminded me of Antonio Gramsci.

We were discussing the political and cultural situation in Trabzon. It was a period where the Islamist government of the AKP had reached its peak of power. Immediately, the discussion went to "ethnic matters." Mustafa, a Pontic-Greek-speaker, said that he could not understand why the state was afraid of the linguistic and cultural difference of Trabzon's inhabitants since there were not any "ethnic" demands on their behalf. Despite the decades long assimilation policies, many people in Trabzon still maintain their sense of a special non-Turkish identity. Çengiz intervened, "You never know how things will evolve for the people of Trabzon. Today they support the state, and you see tomorrow they might completely change their stance and go against the state and turn things upside down." Mr. Ismet entered the discussion, again saying that the state demolished every monument that it considered as not belonging to the "Turkish culture," however they did not manage to destroy everything.

This was a period of the much-discussed *Açılım* (Political Opening) in Turkey, during which the Islamic government had announced it would take steps to accommodate the demands of the country's Kurdish population and to further democratize the political

system. Mustafa, the hardcore Marxist of the company, argued that the "so-called" political opening of the Islamists is just "bullshit;" he continued, "what we experience is a power struggle between neoliberal Islamists and the secular Kemalist, nothing more. Kemalism is approaching the end. However the neoliberals will inevitably, and unwillingly of course, open the road for us, the Marxists."

I was not necessarily completely agreeing with all the analysis, however I felt as if I was "at home," and maybe for the first time in Trabzon I had the sense that I could talk and express my ideas freely, and ask questions, knowing that I will not be misinterpreted and will not get in any kind of trouble. That was a huge relief for me. KESK and its people were for me an oasis of democratic and liberal expression. So far I was hesitant to ask "deep" questions to my interlocutors because I was aware that people with more right-wing and Islamic affiliations might complain to the local police authorities. Mustafa told me that I could ask them whatever I wanted, they were not afraid of talking and being recorded and that their ideas are not secret, "we have been through many things Niko, we are not afraid to have our voices on your tape recorder." Many locals were hesitant to talk me every time I would ask their permission to use my recorder. Some of them were afraid that this recording would fall into the hands of the police in one way or another and they did not want to take the risk. However my left-wing activist friends did not care. They were interrogated in the police station many times after protests and political gatherings in the city.

The Black Sea province is not an easy place to live and work. An ethnomusicologist from France who was doing his research in a small town few miles east of Trabzon during the same period with me, got himself into serious trouble when

one of his informants went to the police station complaining that "this strange French guy is asking questions about our ethnic roots." He was arrested and deported immediately. My case was different since I was Greek and a kemençe player, quite well-known; this constituted a kind of protective wall for me. As my interlocutors in the KESK told me: "Nikos, if you were British or American it would not be easy to do your research here, people would not accept you." But now I was considered by many as "their guy," from the same place, I was somehow considered local. "The kemençe effect" I thought.

The KESK members' activities are not limited to protests and political gatherings, though. They are active in the field of arts too and they are trying to shape the cultural life of the city. Çengiz and Kiamil were responsible for this kind of activity. They work in the education sector and they have created a theatre group with young university students, named UMUT, meaning hope. That year, they prepared to perform a play written by the well-known theatrical writer Dimitris Psathas, a Greek who was born in Trabzon and passed away in Athens years ago. I was surprised to hear that. They told me that their aim was to remind to the inhabitants of Trabzon the history and the cultural depth and richness of their city, and that they wished to establish relations with theatrical groups from Greece. They were happy that I was in Trabzon because they wanted me to participate as a performer in the concert they were organizing for the support of their group. They thought that my presence as a Greek kemençe player would have great symbolic value and would help advance the group's agenda. I thought that this might be a bit risky for me since it would constitute a direct engagement with local politics; however, I did not want to disappoint them. I told them that I could participate and that we should talk again to arrange dates and other details. I was consciously allowing

myself to be appropriated by my left-wing interlocutors without very much thinking about any potential consequences. Besides, in a different context, I allowed myself to be appropriated by a mainstream group of interlocutors in Ankara when a few months later, I participated at the municipality's official festivities for the "liberation of Trabzon from Russian occupation." That was an event full of kemalist patriotic narratives and rituals.

I thought that all these would allow me to enter the worlds of different people and develop a deeper understanding of the ideological and political cleavages in the locality. It was my *kemençe* competence after all that got me into all these different contexts and opened doors, and more importantly, the hearts of people who became my informants. Moreover I was feeling a bit more secure and free to move now with the Islamic government in power, as opposed to my experience a few years earlier when the kemalists were in full control of the country. However, I had to be very careful again, despite the loosening of the polarizing public discourses and the decrease in the patriotic fever. "Trabzon can be full of surprises" a KESK member pointed out to me.

Muhabet[78]

My new friends at the KESK headquarters asked that we gather for a *muhabet* that same Saturday night at one of the few city's *meyhane.*[79] They do not have many chances to enjoy such an event as they told me, and they very much wanted to listen to me live. We met a few hours later, around eight in the evening, at the *meyhane* behind the city's

[78] Muhabet is an Arabic word extensively used in Turkey and in Trabzon more particularly to denote the act of sitting together with friends around a table, chatting, playing music, drinking and eating. It is predominantly a male form of socialization.
[79] Restaurant where one can also consume alcohol and listen to live music.

well known *meydan* [central square] in downtown Trabzon, not very far away from the KESK headquarters. The members of the theatrical group would also attend the musical gathering. This time the *muhabet* would be attended by both men and women. However if this was to take place in a village, where people generally do not consume alcohol, the presence of women would be either limited to the elderly ones or there would be none at all. This is because these male gatherings are not "proper" for young unmarried women, but the ethos of the city and of the left-wing culture has overcome these "traditional" Islamic practices and mentalities.

We were given the second floor of the restaurant where we could be alone and use it as we wished. Instead of sitting at different tables, we joined some tables so we could all sit around and be able to sing, drink, and eat together. People started coming and finally we reached the number of twenty or more. After having drunk some *raki,* a must for the local fans of alcohol, and having chatted a bit, they asked me if I could play for them. I picked up my kemençe*,* tuned it for few seconds and started playing slow melodies with which they were also familiar. I was singing both in Pontic-Greek and Trabzonian Turkish. Across from me was sitting Mustafa, a young engineer from the Pontic-Greek speaking communities of the town of Tonya. He was listening to me carefully, especially when I would sing in Pontic-Greek, he would straighten his neck and turn his right ear towards me to listen to the lyrics. Every time he would understand what I was saying he would smile and approve by moving his head with satisfaction. Some of the participants were occasionally singing with me, others were simply carefully listening and drinking, moving their heads left and right, following the melodies. Mr. Ismet with

his company, was listening with his glass in his hand. He was showing his appreciation for the performance by gesturing with his head and by commenting with his friends.

After I had played some slow table songs as they are called in order to "warm up" my audience, I started playing more rhythmic tunes; people accompanied me by clapping rhythmically and singing. I played faster and turned the melody into a horon, the local fast dance. People started cheering, Mr. Ismet left his glass and stood up to dance with a few others, holding hands tightly and dancing in circle. Gradually, as the rhythm got faster, they lifted their arms up, "hop hoooop, hayde, hooppp, long live Niko, hooop hop, bravo, *haide* let's dance friends, hoop hop" they were shouting. After having played for about an hour I took a break. The participants, who in the meantime had gotten very sweaty, applauded me enthusiastically. Mr. Ismet stood up again, lifted his glass and made a toast to the friendship of all the people and to my honor, welcoming me one more time; the participants approved and toasted back lifting their glasses, "to your health Niko, to your health" they shouted. Mr. Ismet was still standing, waiting for the shouts to cease, he was preparing to say something else, "Trabzon was devalued and lost its beauty when the Greeks left. I wish we could re-construct those days for which I am so nostalgic, unfortunately today Trabzon has been turned into a fascist city, it lost its cosmopolitanism, we need to rethink who we are friends, what it means to be a Turk nowadays. People should feel free to publicly admit their Pontic-Greek identity here in Trabzon, why should they refuse, repress, and hide it?" The participants agreed with him and started discussing loudly what should be done for the city to change and to find its "own identity." Tsengiz followed up "who is a real Turk in this city anyway? We need to re-appropriate our city's past again." Çengiz finished his words by saying to the

participants that I, as a Greek and a kemençe player, am a living reminder of the city's past and identity, and to this people enthusiastically clapped. Mr. Ismet requested from me to play some "old Pontic-Greek songs, songs of our ancestors" as he emphatically put it. Listening to all these, Tsengiz intervened again "most of the indigenous inhabitants of Trabzon are of Pontic-Greek descent, in many villages around here they still speak Pontic-Greek, we should have our own political opening in this city too," he said referring to the opening that the government was currently undertaking towards the country's Kurdish population.

I started playing again the old table songs in Pontic-Greek and some in Turkish. Participants were following me, they were moving their bodies and heads rhythmically, making a perfect accompaniment. I turned into the *horon* again and they all jumped up, grabbed hands tightly and started dancing in circle. I stood up and got in middle of the closed circle; I was moving around playing in front of every dancer, singing in front of their faces. The dancers cheered up, they were closing their eyes, shouting "ooooh ooh, long live Niko, hop hoooop" and dancing faster and faster. I kept the speed up for some time. Everyone, including myself, was having great time. It is one of these *muhabets* that have an almost therapeutic impact on one's soul, I thought.

Moreover this, and other similar performance events, became contexts in which mainstream perceptions of the past were challenged, and new narratives of belonging and history were getting shared among the participants. The open, free and intense expression of ideas during the different stages of the performance were unique and not easily observed in other forms of social gatherings. It was as if music liberated them and unleashed their tongues. My music and lyrics in this context became a symbol of "the

city's past" for my listeners and interlocutors. The music also provided a source for them to produce alternative visions about the future. Music also gave them moral and emotional justification about everything they believed in and struggled for.

Demanding listeners

The gradual rise of a different, left-wing, audience for kemençe that was also very active in appropriating this musical culture for its own political ends, was also the result of broader socio-cultural processes of migrations and intercultural exchange in the new Turkish and foreign urban environments where masses of people from Trabzon and other Black Sea towns and villages had migrated. The opening up to and intermingling with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and the university education that many received, led those individuals to revise their world views and ideas about history and belonging. New narratives and explanations about "what had happened" and "how we got here" replaced older certainties and confusions.

Among the Pontic-Greek-speaking communities of Trabzon, in particular, started rising new interpretations of history and "culture" that were very slowly gaining more popularity. An informant put it very succinctly:

> It is difficult to maintain the unity of a national state that was established with the name "Turkish" on a soil where almost the majority of toponyms were Greek. To succeed in that they had to invent a common enemy that would unify all the different people. That enemy was the Greek culture. Maybe this is why for many years state policy was trying to deprive the Trabzon people of the kemençe. Maybe that's why every night on TV there was a propaganda against anything Greek and an attempt to create hostility. The word Greek was used for swearing.

What is interesting is that despite the fact that kemençe was an instrument that was also used by other groups of the eastern Black Sea, even though in much lesser degrees, it became a topic of dispute between Greeks and Turks. Since the word Greek was creating such annoyance to them, the nationalist youth was wholeheartedly supporting the view that kemençe was a Turkish instrument. Those who were more educated and open-minded were more open to other interpretations. There were also those young people who were nationalist Turks, despite the fact that their parents were speaking Pontic-Greek among themselves. These kids started feeling embarrassment when they realized that they could understand the lyrics of songs in Pontic-Greeks that were coming from Greece. Because still the word Greek was an offense, and it was shameful to even suspect that one might be of Pontic-Greek origins. However no matter how shameful it was, people kept listening to Pontic-Greek songs. This listening practice was pushing them to question their sense of belonging, to ask their families about their past and to start doing research, as I have shown in chapter two.

Beyond acknowledging the Greek historical presence and cultural contributions in Trabzon, listeners who come from certtain strands of left-wing backgrounds consciously undermine Turkish nationalist interpretations about music and history. They try to turn kemençe into a symbol of cultural pluralism, diversity and co-existence, and thus create space in the public sphere for the recognition, acceptance and legitimate existence of linguistic and cultural diversity in contemporary Trabzon and in the eastern Black Sea region in general.

As I personally observed during my fieldwork and learned from informants, the attempts to dress kemençe music with meanings of cultural diversity and co-existence,

were based on the intellectual work of professional and amateur researchers and activists who started field research and song collections in order to revive the assimilated non-Turkish ethnic musical cultures of the eastern Black Sea and of the whole of Anatolia, thus challenging the nationalist musical narrative and its related practices. As in the early 1920s, in recent years too, music in Turkey, and in Trabzon in particular, has once again become the site of intense debates and struggles for the definitions of nation, ethnicity and democracy. And of course kemençe and its history is at the center of this debate. Left-wing activists make use of the texts produced by critical scholars and also the work of ethnomusicologists and activist performers to strengthen their arguments against nationalist discourses and to legitimate and facilitate the "revival of ethnic cultures." Beyond small concerts, field trips and recordings, CD releases and music workshops, writing and publishing is another influential form of signification practice. Beyond the academic publishing in Turkish and English whose aim is both to advance knowledge but also to engage in more concrete forms of political activism, new writing by left-wing activists is done mainly in Turkish and addresses the local Turkish audiences and for activist purposes. This writing is based on the existing published research of academics and also on the research that activists themselves are conducting in their own villages and communities. These last publications take the form of edited volumes in which authors of diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds share their findings and views.[80] Texts of this kind can also be read in low-circulation periodicals and on various websites managed by left-wing activists.

[80] See Biryol 2014 and 2012, Demirer&Bakirezer 2010. I was also informed that new publications are currently being prepared.

A characteristic example of the uses of research for leftist political purposes is the following "music manifesto" of a left-wing group: the group's name is "Revolutionary Black Sea." In their manifesto, the members of the group address artists and musicians and call them to "fulfill their duty to the people" by making music that engages with specific themes and in different languages. Also in it we can clearly see how for its writers music is implicated in politics or it is politics itself. This group has a rising impact on social media with about thirty thousand followers on Facebook. Below I provide the exact English translation of their "music manifesto":

> To the Black Sea artists and musicians…
>
> In recent years we witness the rise of a musical genre called "Black Sea music" that is listened to by an ever-growing number of people, becoming popular among audiences all around Anatolia. One of the reasons behind the rising popularity of this genre is the fact that many of its songs are sung in languages other than Turkish such as Laz, Pontic-Greek, Georgian, and Hemshin Armenian.
>
> Starting in 1926, a group of faculty members of the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory (present day State Conservatory of Istanbul University), had organized research trips to all provinces of Anatolia. The fourth of these research trips included the Black Sea province. During these trips the songs of Black Sea regions such as Sinop, Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, Gumushane and Bayburt were compiled and later they were transcribed in music notation and entered the catalogue of the "Turkish national music" archive. In 1967 another research team, this time from the TRT (Turkish State Radio and Television) was sent to the Black Sea province to record songs from this area. A part of the tunes that had been compiled during these research trips were deprived of their original lyrics and new

lyrics in Turkish were written. Thus these songs were turned into tools of assimilation. And this time people were obliged to listen to songs with Turkish lyrics, that in the past, they had been listening to in their native languages. Furthermore these melodies were re-introduced and presented as "Turkish Folk Music."

But what is striking here is that for the sake of creating the common "Black Sea identity" a completely new musical genre was constructed through melodic and more importantly linguistic homogenization with the use of Turkish lyrics. Therefore, from then onwards, there would be no Pontic-Greek, Laz, Georgian, and Hemshin Armenian songs; there would only be Black Sea tunes. In all provinces from the west to the east, people would now listen to "Black Sea" songs. Undoubtedly the peoples of the Black Sea listen to each other's music and consider it their own. But the problem was that these songs were represented to them after they were cut off from their original lyrics in their native languages. Recent developments provide people with the opportunity to sing and listen to songs in their native languages, and this is important and it makes us happy. Young artists who do research in this field, who return to the original lyrics and melodies and sing in their native languages, managed to prevent the distraction and disappearance of this great wealth. Of course, in a sense, the leading role of artist Kazim Koyuntzu in the initiation of this process is of great importance. Contemporary artists, scientists and intellectuals have to perform a great duty and to contribute to this current of cultural revival with their research in the fields of folk dance, folk jokes, dress, food, architectural forms etc.

But we want to bring to public attention the genre called “Black Sea” music, which becomes even more pervasive and popular nowadays. It reminds us of the arabesk music, the genre that was supported and promoted for years by the dominant classes in order to neutralize the reactions of the working masses. As we mentioned in the beginning, on the one hand we observe a positive development, the revival of old melodies that are sung in the native languages and performed with different instruments, as a result of the research conducted; on the other we listen to the same songs sung in the supposedly “Black Sea” idiom in Turkish. And of course there is no objection to doing something like this for the sake of understanding lyrics from broader masses of audiences. But the problem with these songs that are becoming more popular is their content, their lyrics, and their themes.

There are different categories of folk songs according to their themes: lullabies, songs for children, for nature, love, heroism, ceremonies, satire, prison, work, dance, and laments. All these represent peoples’ happiness, pain, problems, nostalgia, feelings, worldview, hopes and beliefs. But when we examine the themes of songs from genres that become popular, aside from some rear examples of songs referring to social issues and problems, the majority of them concentrates on love and separation. There is no doubt of course that love and separation are part of our life, but on the other, songs with these themes are not adequate to reflect and express the feelings of the working peoples, whose labor is exploited, who live in conditions where there is no democracy and justice, whose native languages are prohibited, whose history and identity are ignored, who experience state violence every time they struggle for rights, whose valleys and rivers are sold-off to private investors.

We, aside from the love songs of the peoples of the Black Sea, want to listen to their songs about their dreams, their distress, their jubilation. And we want to listen to these in their native as well as in other languages. But we also want to listen to songs that increase peoples' hopes and express their demands for freedom, equality and justice…

Instead of songs that praise murderers like Topal Osman, we want to listen to songs about past and present persecutions and oppression and about the heroes who struggled against these….

We want to listen to songs that expose those who have their eyes on our products, our tea, our tobacco, our hazelnuts, and on our rivers; songs that explain what exploitation and poverty is, and propose some solutions…

Furthermore we want to listen to songs that describe and explain the suffering, the hopes and the ways of liberation for our mothers and our wives, who experience additional oppression and injustice just because they are women…

We want to listen to songs that foster brotherhood and friendship, and stand against racist and chauvinistic ideas and thoughts…

We hope that our young artists and musicians who are, in a sense, leaders in the start of this process, will pay attention to our friendly notice…
The Revolutionary Black Sea

These active listeners as I want to call them, through their texts, daily discussions, artistic events, and listening habits, express their willingness to participate in the shaping of the musical landscape of the eastern Black Sea. They demand that music makers create songs that bring to public awareness the experiences of what they describe, in a classic Marxist sense, the "working-class" people.

Thus the members of this group try to shape the agenda of music making by suggesting themes for new songs. Love and separation, though important elements of the working-class life, are not enough to capture the whole range of experiences of these people. They demand songs that talk about oppression, persecution, and struggles for democracy and equality. The manifesto also portrays the perception of the past and the vision for the future that this group has developed. Its demands are very unique and interesting in the sense that so far similar movements were mainly focusing on issues of equal income distribution and other kinds of "human rights." Demanding from artists certain types of songs is certainly a novel form of political activism that I experienced during my fieldwork in Turkey, the consequences and underpinnings of which require further thinking. Thus we might be able to talk about the "listening rights" of citizens.

At this point I want to introduce the concept of listening activism. This is a novel form of political activity that I saw developing during my fieldwork where listeners attempt to undermine the monopolies of the musicians and those professionals engaged in music-making and dissemination and acquire greater role in what circulates and is heard as music. They become the co-producers of the musical soundscape of the Black Sea. YouTube and the internet greatly facilitate this new form of political engagement by

offering alternative sources and channels of music selection, signification, circulation, and advocacy in the public sphere.

Some of the most successful among these YouTube activists manage to attract thousands of followers to their channel. Uploading kemençe videos from both Greece and Turkey and asking viewers to comment has become an impressive public forum for debate, appraisal, and of course cursing that has shaped the perceptions and understanding of thousands of kemençe listeners. In some cases, the managers of these channels record their own videos by traveling in various places in Greece and Turkey and then share them with their followers.

This recording and sharing activity has created a space for virtual interaction among kemençe fans from both countries and with diverse ideological persuasions. Sometimes participants strongly disagree about songs, lyrics, playing techniques, and about issues of history and language. Disagreements can escalate to virtual threats and swears. Despite some fevered discussions about history and politics regarding Greece and Turkey, most of the time the discussions among viewers under these music clips are quite relaxed and friendly. Fans have the chance to get to know how kemençe is played by others in different contexts, they exchange songs and ideas about "music quality," and they encourage each other to discover the depth of this music. A shared sense of pride among the participants is created through these virtual dialogues, and in most cases, a spirit of friendship and solidarity is fostered. Kemençe music on Youtube becomes the site which unites youth with diverse backgrounds and even hostile ideas for each other from Greece and Turkey. National barriers melt and desire and visions of peaceful coexistence and collaboration emerge.

This form of listening activism contributed to the gradual introduction of new songs to local repertoires. Encouraged and inspired by the audience's enthusiasm for each country's kemençe melodies, some performers from both sides share songs, sing them in their language, Pontic-Greek or Trabzonian Turkish, or even collaborate in recordings with their colleagues from the other country. However, suspicion and hostility does not totally vanish. The ethos of brotherhood and collaboration cultivated through common music-listening is challenged and many times undermined by mainstream discourses of nationalist enmity that circulate extensively, especially in Turkey. Nationalist circles in Turkey, as I have shown and for reasons I have discussed earlier in this chapter, oppose the rise of this common listening ethos of kemençe, whereas in Greece, among performers and listeners there is a much more positive approach.

This rising new listening ethos is perceived as a threat by the nationalists in Trabzon because they cannot discursively control its meanings and consequences. Those on the left were aware that music was exerting a strong influence on peoples' feelings and worldviews, and started making deliberate use of it. One of the protagonists of this kemençe listening activism in Turkey shared his vision with me:

> I can risk everything for the kemençe and our identity so that people will learn who they are, so that they can become conscious of their history. There are people from Trabzon who are afraid to publicly claim their identity. This music sharing activity will create an atmosphere of dialogue and understanding that will allow people to speak up and not be afraid. Everything should be discussed openly and without fear. Music will bring Pontic-Greek people and the people of Trabzon closer to each other and facilitate their collaboration. In this way kemençe culture and Black Sea culture in general will revive again.

My wish as an amateur kemençe performer and a romantic who actually initiated this musical collaboration a few years ago, was to contribute to the mutual reinforcement of our musical creativity. Being aware of the problems facing this musical genre both in Greece and Turkey, I was thinking that one way out of this would be the closer collaboration between kemençe players from the two countries. In this way they would "graft" onto each other, learn new melodies, study each others' techniques and styles, and enrich their repertoires and collaboration networks and experiences. Much later, and after this project had already reached out to broader audiences in the two countries, I came to realize its consequences and the challenges it was facing from the nationalist circles, especially in Turkey. Moreover, it was then that I started realizing the very strong connections between two human activities that until then I was usually keeping separate: music and politics. Additionally, my experience with left and right-wing activists during my fieldwork strengthened my conviction of the inseparability of these two domains of human life that scholars too, until recently, were keeping apart.

Conclusions

The political project of musical modernization and nationalization in Turkey aimed at the regulation of the sense of hearing and the promotion of a new acoustic regime as I want to call it, which attempted to cultivate new habits of listening and new forms of relatedness. That is a group of individuals with a "common ear" and a shared feeling of belonging, a nation. The sonic homogenization and standardization of different genres of music from across the country and from different ethnic groups generated an influential mainstream musical genre, the Halk Muziği (Folk Music) and led the sonic

qualities of some other genres and their instruments to stigmatization, hybridization and marginalization.

The music-listening habits of the bilingual individuals of Trabzon were disrupted by the transformation of the sonic character of the local musical genres and by the censorship imposed upon the use of non-Turkish indigenous languages in lyrics. Thus the shrinking of audiences for the kemençe seemed inevitable. New social hierarchies and differentiations were produced, based on the transformed and differently valued listening habits and musical tastes of the population. This transformation relegated the performers and the listeners of kemençe to the position of "unsophisticated, uneducated villagers" and the instrument itself was popularly perceived by urbanites as a "piece of wood that produces noise."

The stigmatization and marginalization of kemençe and its music in Turkey pushed this musical genre to the edges of near extinction. Together with this genre was to disappear a whole world of meanings and daily practices: bodily habits (dance for example and its connotations); senses of the self; notions of belonging; sense of humor; ideas about social conduct; memories and narratives of the past; languages and idioms. Everything that was a reminder of the "infidel other" was facing the pressure of organized oblivion.

The gradual rise of the "ethnic Black Sea music" phenomenon in the last decade with the contribution of left-wing audiences constitutes an overturning of the officially-authorized musical and cultural homogenization that was supported for decades by right-wing political activism. The use of the local Greek dialect of Trabzon in lyrics partly replaces Turkish, causing both enthusiasm and negative reactions among audiences with

diverse ideological and political affiliations. The "national ear" is currently being further "deregulated" and escapes state control, with the help of new technologies of communication. The shift of musical sensibilities is accompanied by a call into question of the official explanations about history and music, and by an increasing curiosity about local and family history, language, and "culture."

As long as deviant music-listening practices were confined to the private sphere of the house or in small networks of relatives, they did not constitute a threat for the mainstream interpretations of culture and history. The nationalists appropriated kemençe and gained control over the production and circulation of meanings associated with this instrument. Left-wing listening activism is currently transforming the listening ethos, attachments and worldviews of larger segments of the population in Trabzon and in the diaspora. When left-wing listeners and activists started to engage with this music and to circulate their own interpretations of music and history—and their own music-listening habits of course—to the public sphere, with the help of the new media, they challenged and undermined the nationalist monopoly. Music-listening now challenged previously-held views and ideas, and led to new interpretations as the medium of political activism. The very act of listening to particular kemençe music genres and styles is now a sign of ideological affiliation and a political act in itself.

CONCLUSIONS

Political anthropology had for many years attempted to understand power dynamics in different societies and contexts, and to define what politics or the political is. Initially anthropologists studied the creation of political order and forms of political authority and government, they developed classifications of political systems, and they provided ethnographic data to explain how religion and kinship are tightly linked to power and politics (Fortes 1940, Evans-Pritchard 1940, in Krohn-Hansen 2015: 336). Then, interest moved towards the examination of the processes of political struggle and change, and the role that the supposedly universal will to power played in these transformations (Leach 1954, Barth 1959 in Krohn-Hansen 2015:336-337).

This anthropological trend was later on criticized for having universalized a western notion of power and politics, and for identifying political power with coercion and violence (Clastres 1977 in Krohn-Hansen 2015: 335). In subsequent years, anthropologists developed new agendas and their interest focused on the relations of power to meaning production (Geertz 1973, Geertz 1980, Cohen 1974), on ethnicity and identity politics (Kapferer 1988, Yanagisako and Delaney 1995), on resistance and domination (Scottt 1985), and on history and power (Price 1983, 2011) thus enriching our understanding (see Krohn-Hansen 2015:337-338).

The critique towards the scholarly reification of the state (Abrams 1988, Radcliffe-Brown 1950) was followed by a greater realization of the need to understand the cultural complexities and dynamics of its construction and of the importance to overcome its Eurocentric conceptualization (see Das and Poole 2004, Harvey 2005,

Taussig 1991 and 1997, Coronil 1997, Ferguson and Gupta 2002, see in Krohn-Hansen 2015: 339). This revived interest in the "state" in recent decades was followed by thriving discussions on sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat 2006), citizenship (Lazar 2008), democracy (Paley 2008), authoritarianism (Krohn-Hansen 2009), security (Goldstein 2010) and on various forms of political violence (Das 2006, Kelly 2011, Coronil and Skurski 2005, Theidon 2013, see in Krohn-Hansen 2015: 339-340). Moreover, interest in neoliberal forms of government has proliferated. As a result, novel and fascinating ethnographic approaches of the multiple effects of neoliberal reform have entered scholarly discussions (Greenhouse 2012).

I am in agreement with the rising consensus among anthropologists who study "political life" that politics and power are not confined to narrow institutional sites. I also agree with the call to examine various forms of human activities to find "politics and power", though many of these studies focus on activities that could be explicitly, and conventionally, characterized as political (i.e. various forms of bureaucratic practice, violence, etc.). In my work, I am trying to move towards a different direction and to connect music to the production or undermining of political legitimacy. By focusing on music-making and listening, I am trying to understand how, through these activities, my informants transform their listening practices and shape their emotions, values, imagination, and expectations for the future. What is it that makes people to want to "change" themselves and others? What motivates them to act? What constitutes action? How does the making, interpretation and use of musical sound relate to broader processes of social transformation? The detailed study of expressive practices (we conventionally

call them art) in general, can reveal much about the complexity of interplay between emotion, desire, imagination, and sociopolitical transformation.

In this dissertation I have placed the musical experiences and practices of my informants and the stakes they entail in contemporary Turkey at the center of my analysis. I have closely examined the multiple meanings of Trabzon kemençe music-listening and -making and the ways in which these practices and meanings engaged with other fields of experience and social life, such as religious beliefs, memory, nation-building, legitimacy, history, subjectivity, migration, political power, censorship, democracy, commodification, ownership, transformation and agency in the context of contemporary Turkey.

In this final section I briefly summarize the ethnographic findings of each chapter. Then I discuss the interpretive issues and theoretical stakes that arise out of these ethnographic findings and outline what I believe are my theoretical contributions.

In chapter one, I described the historical conversion of much the Trabzon region to Islam and its consequences on kemençe music making and listening for my informants. The chapter was divided in two sections, a historical one and an ethnographic one. In the first, historical section, I used secondary literature and some primary sources to narrate the long historical process of conversion to Islam of segments of the Orthodox-Christian Greek population in Asia Minor in general, and in Trabzon in particular. This conversion took place in the context of empire-building by the Ottoman Turks and lasted, at least for the case of the Greeks of Trabzon, for about three hundred years since the 16th century. And as I see it, it bears many similarities with other imperial cases around the world where the various indigenous populations abandoned their local religions and converted

to various strands of Christianity. In the case I examined, the indigenous were the Orthodox Christian Greek population, and the conversion was from Christianity to Islam. The colonizers were the Ottoman Turks. If Steven Feld's Kaluli people were not allowed to play their local instruments because they were stigmatized as evil by the Christian missionaries who converted them, the convert Greeks of Trabzon became alienated from kemençe as Muslim preachers stigmatized the instrument and its music as an "infidel" custom and an unethical practice. The similarities in power dynamics and cultural consequences here are fascinating.

The consequences of the religious conversion for the musical practices of the converted population were very significant and are still audible today, something I personally heard and experienced, together with my interlocutors in Trabzon. The kemençe and its music were stigmatized by the local preachers as the "instrument of the infidels" that led to "improper" sociality and alcohol consumption and people were encouraged to stop listening to it. As a result, many people were alienated from this musical culture, and the performers of kemençe were marginalized and stigmatized. What was stigmatized was a particular ethos, a sensibility and a lifestyle that was completely associated with the Christian inhabitants and the Christian past of the converted population and deemed inappropriate for supposedly faithful Muslims. This stigmatization of the instrument and its music is present even today among the more devout segments of the Trabzonian population, regardless of their native language. This is one basic reason, as I see it, why kemençe culture almost reached the threshold of extinction in Turkey. However, despite the pressure from this powerful network of local religious leaders, the instrument survived in the hands of only a few performers.

Without reference to the historical event of conversion, it would be difficult to explain and understand the dynamics and stakes of contemporary kemençe listening and playing in Turkey, since the cultural transformation that began with conversion to Islam changed the context in which these musical practices gained meaning and significance for the people. Additionally, I wanted to stress the centrality of Islamic attachments for the formation of a Turkish nation-state.

Also history becomes ethnographically important in the present because the practice of kemençe playing and listening is associated with an experienced or an imagined past for which many of my informants are longing. The kemençe in Trabzon is an ambivalent sign of history, even more so after the "national modernization" project imposed by the Kemalists in the post-1923 period. Thus, any analysis of contemporary kemençe musical practices in Turkey will inevitably have to address issues of history and memory, among other things, or else it will be incomplete.

The meanings with which and through which human groups live their lives do not change quickly. Cultural transformations occur over long periods of time, and even then the erasure of previous meanings is not always complete. A cultural mixing usually occurs, producing new codes cultural forms. Especially when we try to understand musical culture, which is a very stubborn and persistent feature of the human experience, then transformation is certainly much slower, and we need to take a diachronic approach to understand the phenomenon. The fact that kemençe practices survived in Turkey to our era despite the religious and state pressures and censorship is a sign of the music's "stubbornness" and also an indication of the centrality of musical sound in human experience and subjectivity. Even in the wake of major social and political

transformations, musical practices can survive with their older meanings or by getting slightly modified and re-signified. Even in the face of religious conversion, the ethos and sensibility a musical genre creates and maintains can survive and even challenge the signification practices of the new religion. Kemençe music in Turkey is not only a sign of a sensibility coming from the past, a stimulator of memory, historical narrative and affective experience for contemporary actors, but also an affective echo of the people's past. The conceptual stakes and challenges of these ethnographic findings are taken up later in the conclusion.

Chapter two describes the experience of kemençe music listening and its affective impact on my informants' subjectivity and agency. The process of conversion to Islam in previous periods and the state policies of linguistic and cultural assimilation and homogenization in the context of a Turkish nation-building in Asia Minor in the post-1923 period produced what I call states of meaninglessness or meaning gaps, for many of my informants in Trabzon, whose family memories, language use, and other cultural practices and ideas did not converge to a standardized notion of state-imposed Turkishness. The realization on their behalf of their cultural deviation from the state-sponsored mainstreams placed them at a liminal position and made them start questioning their national affiliations and sentiments. Their encounter with different forms of kemençe musical sound and song became a catalyst of personal transformation.

As I mentioned earlier in this section, cultural transformation is a long-term process that not only produces change but also creates meaning gaps. These meaning gaps—the inability of my informants to explain to themselves or many of their practices and attachments not found in other people outside of their family, village and broader

social environment—became a source of anxiety and of constant questioning that made them vulnerable.

I argue that the practice of kemençe listening touched upon very sensitive and important domains of their subjectivity, that is, their imagination, their feelings and their desires. Their initial aural encounters with kemençe music with Pontic-Greek lyrics tilted their sensibilities and caused an initial existential shock and destabilization. The previous meanings with which they lived and understood themselves and their social environment were challenged and deconstructed, and their questioning about "who they are" expanded. Their sense of Turkishness was seriously damaged and even collapsed. Moreover, listening to this kind of music was like experiencing history at a personal, immediate level. The sound of the kemençe activated an intimate sense of time: History was not something abstract anymore but something directly experienced through kemençe listening.

Gradually, acts of listening of certain styles of kemençe music became a catalyst that strengthened their sense of difference, uniqueness and pride. Kemençe listening became a practice of personal empowerment, self-refashioning and self-confidence building. This affective impact of musical sound became a source on which they drew to transform themselves. Musical sound had the great power to challenge decades long of state-promoted policies of assimilation and homogenization. The very acts of kemençe listening by my informants helped them abandon state narratives of history and belonging.

After their initial shock and the process of personal transformation, my informants followed different paths. Some kept their "discoveries" to themselves and their

immediate environment. While they questioned their national attachment and ceased considering themselves as Turks, they maintained a strong sense of Islamic personhood. For others, meanwhile, these fundamental religious attachments were challenged and abandoned. One informant decided to convert to Orthodox Christianity, thinking that she was "returning back" to her ancestors' religion, and started describing herself as a "Greek of Trabzon." This cultural transformation, the change from what it meant to be a "Turk" to what it meant to be a "Greek" also enabled her entrance into a new network of relations. In doing so, she exercised her agency within a rather very hostile social environment in Trabzon. She created a sense of mission to share her stories and her "findings" with others by developing a desire to write and publish a book. This kind of change of meanings entails the making of additional, new networks of relations, without necessarily abandoning the previous ones.

In the second chapter the story ends here. But if my informants decide to develop social activities to share their experiences, they might become cultural leaders who will also impact the feelings and thoughts of other citizens. This is how personal initiatives might gradually transform into social movements with the potential to bring broader social change. After their transformation, my informants remained citizens of Turkey, but not "Turkish" any more.

These ethnographic findings also push us to think about the great importance of values and beliefs for the lives and motivation of individuals and the empowerment that these meanings entail for humans. Also, the findings make us aware that transformation is about the collapse of certain meanings and the making of new ones. What was initially cultural transformation might then bring about social change too, that is, a change to the

way humans interact. The findings here also prompt us to think about the strong connection of musical sound and the sense of hearing to the formation of subjectivity and agency. People experience themselves, others and their environment through their senses. Changes to the ways they perceive produce changes to the ways they think and feel. Thus, I argue that the transformation of music-listening habits relates to the transformation of human's subjectivity and has very serious potential stakes, not only personal but also broader, social and political. Plato and Aristotle were absolutely right in arguing that music has great power in shaping the personality of the youth. However, they lacked the ethnography to support their claims.

In chapter three I analyzed the claims to and practices of "musical authenticity" by performers and listeners and their struggles to musically reconstruct "Trabzonian" affective experiences and ethos. Migration to Istanbul and the gradual introduction of new instruments, melodies, performance techniques and song themes to kemençe music are perceived as a serious threat to "authentic personhood," ethos and lifestyle. Being from Trabzon meant, among other things, experiencing a certain repertoire of emotions that are thought of as crucial. The "authentic kemençe genre" is considered as such only when it sounds a certain way and when it provokes certain feelings in its performers and listeners. Deviation from these feelings is rejected as foreign, inauthentic, and cheap. The main feelings for which performers and listeners of this genre strive are that of nostalgia and longing. Without them there is no "authentic style." The transformation of the sonic fabric of Trabzon music through the introduction of violin techniques, synthesizers and electric drums, took place as a result of migration to urban centers and the desire of younger performers to open up to larger audiences and increase their profits. I argue that

migration inevitably caused, in the long-term, detachment from the previous rural experiences of life and networks of relations and entrance to urban ones. This relational and experiential transformation also entailed a gradual change to the meanings of music-making and -listening. The sensibilities and ethos of the villages in Trabzon differed radically from those in a city like Istanbul, and this started gradually to reflect on kemençe music making and listening. This produced what I call an affective oblivion.

The insistence of my informants on "authentic kemençe music" and their attempts to promote it among larger audiences, is a cultural and political intervention that tries to remake not only a musical, sonic environment and a sensibility associated with it, but also an affective and imaginative world, the meanings of which provide the basis and legitimacy for a reinvented rural way of life, imagined as different from the urban mainstream. My informants exercise their political agency by trying to shape sensibilities through cultivation of certain emotions and to cultivate the desires and imagination of their fellow citizens through their musical interventions. They try to cultivate a certain male "Trabzonian ethos." Despite their relatively marginal position in the musical hierarchy in Turkey, they act in full awareness of the power of musical sound and its potential to bring change. Their insistence on these sounds and ethos is their tacit but strong public critique to their society's westernization and "modernization" experience.

The people I wrote about in this chapter were anxious and were trying to "retune" the ears of their fellow citizens and to shift their aural perception and sensibility, believing, out of personal experience, that by doing so they will change their thoughts and emotions too. They also believed that one of the solutions to the problem of "degeneration" of music was its de-commercialization. Profit-making out of music-

making and -listening was perceived as something at least problematic. Thus, their struggle was not about saving the "authentic kemençe" style per se, but about fighting against affective oblivion and existential transformation. It was a struggle for the legitimacy of a different way of being based on values and ethics quite different from those promoted by the modernist project and its future-oriented and materialist underpinnings.

In chapter four I tried to think through the question of the consequences of turning the musical practices of vulnerable communities who struggle for cultural revival and survival into commodities. What happens when these communities' musicians engage with profit-making music industries and networks in their attempts to reach broader audiences and spread their music and "political" message? Here I opened the discussion to include other musical genres in Turkey, Arab music in particular, as a means of providing a basis for comparative analysis with the kemençe music of Trabzon.

From the ethnographic and other data I presented in previous chapters and in chapter four, we can safely say that all the musical genres of the diverse linguistic groups of Turkey faced a similar fate in the post-1923 period. They were censored, marginalized and at times even appropriated and transformed in order to serve the building of the "Turkish nation." In the late 1990s, religion networks and nationalist governments gave way to the intervention of the "market." As I showed, some private industries, by opposing state policies and breaking the monopolies of state-owned networks of production and circulation, initially played a positive role in the revival and spread of this marginal "ethnic" music genres. This was a period of "political activism" on the part of the owners of certain record companies. Later, the logic of profit started dominating and

transforming the priorities of record-company owners, thus impacting the work of musicians. Some of my informant musicians themselves, who tried to turn their musical practice into a professional activity, were captured by the commercial networks of music such as night-clubs, TV shows, restaurants, protection/mafia groups and record companies. The ethnography also prompts us to think more, and even theorize, the gradual absorption and displacement of musical political activism by the desire of financial profit and its consequences.

Moreover, the gradual strengthening of the intellectual-property regime for music in Turkey, the tighter control of the networks of mass circulation and promotion and the absolute dominance of the logic of profit-making in music has started to further marginalize these already-marginalized genres, because they cannot gain large audiences and sell extensively. Audiences are shaped by a number of forces beyond the control of the musicians, either professionals or amateurs. The logic of the market in the field of music in Turkey does not necessarily bring more pluralism in "music products" and does not even promote the very much praised "freedom of choice." The pursuit of profit in music, the dominance of "free-market" logic, and the search for big numbers and sales, tend to homogenize desires and preferences instead of diversifying them. Musical practice, an important human activity that cultivates difference and plurality, is thus captured in the networks of a homogenizing "machine" that this time legitimizes its practice not through reference to Islamic ethics or national-security claims, but by reference to profit. We can also clearly see a strong tension between market culture and the "authentic ethos" claims and practices of informants in chapter three. What does this

tension mean? Why is "authenticity" thought of and experienced as something opposed to market ethics and logic?

The findings in this chapter, but also in the dissertation in general, might connstitute evidence for the rethinking of the relationship between the domains we conventionally call politics and economy, and to problematize their rigid conceptual separation. As we have seen, decades-long state policies of nation-building and the activities of Islamic networks shaped the broader context in which musical activities developed and large audiences were shaped. Add to this the role of private record companies that expanded the "market," but under the tight control of state authorities who until recently regulated what songs could or could not circulate publicly. Moreover, policies of linguistic assimilation and homogenization, and the censorship imposed on indigenous non-Turkish languages in Asia Minor in the post-1923 era, led to the radical shrinking of the potential audiences of these musical genres. Even when a very limited number of private companies decided to promote "ethnic" musical genres, they did so due to their owners' sensitivities, attachments and affiliations. They saw such musical production as a form of political activism against state censorship and oppression, not as a means to make profit. Though the political activity of both producers and musicians initially broke state monopolies and created a "market" for "ethnic" music genres, the gradual shift of priorities and the increasing desire for profit made them realize that their "market share" could increase only if they address broader audiences by promoting different genres. The "ethnic" music genres I described in this chapter are confined within certain social contexts and audiences, still limited compared to the whole, and their makers and promoters do not seem to have a strategy to pull them out of the

margins. Thus some producers and musicians, trying to balance between their "heart and their stomach," changed priorities and made "ethnic music" and activism a secondary priority.

This change of priorities is not without serious stakes. This chapter also shows that when musicians make calculations based on "the logic of the market," they are absorbed and changed. For the success of their initial "political project" it is not enough to just produce CDs with songs in their native languages. Creating and gaining "audiences" requires a broader range of activities and the further de-stigmatization of the use of native languages in song forms. Trying to spread these musical genres through existing commercial channels, mentalities, and practices leads to the loss of their transformative potential.

Out of the previous discussions and considerations comes also another important issue: the connections between music ownership and commodification. How does the logic of market and profit in music change the ethos and cultures of my interlocutors and populations in general? Is the "market" a form of culture, a way of personal and collective being based on the monopolies and control of ownership and distribution? We also need to think how the logic of profit transforms the meaning of musical practice and experience. I keep thinking about these questions in relation to music, and I will try to say something more in my final remarks in this concluding section.

Chapter five described the recently revived interpretive battles and appropriations of kemençe and its music by opposing constituencies in Trabzon in their attempts to promote their mutually exclusive political agendas of "local Turkish patriotism and national homogeneity" on the one hand and "cultural pluralism and cosmopolitanism" on

the other. I argue that kemençe music had almost completely been appropriated in the public sphere by state-supported networks since the beginning of the twentieth century and it remained in the monopoly of right-wing groups until quite recently. However, the more dynamic involvement of left-wing individuals and networks in the making and promotion of certain genres of kemençe music in recent years destabilized the right-wing hegemony and monopoly and challenged the mainstream meanings with which this music was associated.

State-sponsored networks used kemençe music to promote ideas of national homogeneity and Turkish patriotism, while leftists spoke of the kemençe as a sign of cultural pluralism and cosmopolitanism in Trabzon, making direct references to the city's pre-1923 past and its Greek inhabitants. The latter is a new cultural movement that makes extensive use of kemençe music in its attempts to promote cultural revival, difference and pluralism. The "specter of the Greeks" in Trabzon still haunts the opposing political constituencies, but in different ways. For the right wing, it is an anathema that should be forgotten, while for the left wing, it is a blessing that will contribute to the revival of memories, the struggle against nationalism and racism and to the re-making of the city's pluralism and cosmopolitanism. Thus we "hear" how these opposing groups listen quite different "things" to kemençe.

The fragmentation of the listening habits and practices and the shift of the meanings of kemençe music mainly due to left-wing activism supports the making of cultural difference and enables new forms of interpersonal exchanges that are claimed as "ethnic." The "ethnic" here—and the national, too—is an ongoing process and a claim to difference, not a fixed, pre-existing entity. And since national citizenship in Turkey is

still based on the perception of absolute cultural homogeneity, any deviations are perceived as a threat to national security and state sovereignty. Thus the sound and meaning of kemençe music had to be completely controlled. The loss of the sonic and signification control due to the activities of left-wing groups constitutes a "political problem." What music the citizens listen to and how they interpret it had become a matter of interest for state networks. This is one dimension of the political nature of musical practice, but it is not the only one.

If government legitimacy and state sovereignty are based on political loyalties, then we need to think about what these loyalties "mean" and about the practices through which they are culturally made and sustained. Then we need to think about how these loyalties involve the making of emotions and to consider how musical practices either create and support them or challenge and undermine them. Politics is not just about the redistribution of material gains and losses through taxation, parliaments and laws, public administration and elections and monopoly over the means of violence. I think the stakes are much greater than that, and the closer examination of musical practice and experience, as I tried to do it in this dissertation, can help us reveal these stakes. I will return to the issue of politics and music soon.

Let me now turn to the more general theoretical and interpretive issues that run through and emerge out of this ethnography.

The experience of transformation is present throughout this dissertation. The engagement of my informants with music-listening and -making constitutes a fundamental experience of being, based on a strong, re-made sense of difference and uniqueness. Informants re-tune their sensibilities through the medium of kemençe music,

something through which they re-create their values and life orientations. This is a fascinating and very deep cultural transformation that also re-shapes their desire to act and to bring not only personal but also social change. They become very active listeners, as I have called them, who engage in interpretive battles for the definitions, practices and the qualities of kemençe music, going against the very powerful networks of religion, nationalism and market that tend to produce homogeneity. The revival of interest in musical "authenticity," for example should not be read as a claim to "cultural purity," but rather as a desire and claim to difference and uniqueness. This cultural transformation produces new forms of subjectivity and strengthens their agency. This strengthened agency as I have experienced in the field and described it here forms the basis for larger transformations. These active listeners try to change the meanings and forms of social interaction, at least in their immediate environments. And this is, as I see it, an important beginning for further, broader transformations that will include larger segments of the population. The call for active listening and cultural authenticity in music might be the beginning of a new movement of change. This change will depend not only on my informants' desires, plans, and activities, but also on the efficacy of projects of other competitive networks that develop in order to counter the cultural and social outcomes of my informants' interpretive and relation-making activities. Thus my findings speak to the long debates in social theory about agency and structure. But no matter how things will evolve in the personal and social lives of my interlocutors in the next few years, it is clear that the transformation of their music listening habits and practices already entails very crucial political stakes.

Also, we need to think and theorize further these strong claims of people to difference and uniqueness at the current moment, not only in Turkey but in many parts of the world. What does this entail, and how does it push us to think about human sociality, experience, and culture? How can we make the notion of difference and uniqueness the basis of a social theory that conceptualizes human communities not simply as networks of shared characteristics but also as ongoing processes of co-existence based on difference?

But the transformation was also personal with epistemological implications. I got to better understand my interlocutors through listening them listening to their music. I gained some access to their emotional world—I "touched their souls"—by listening and playing kemençe with them. The experience of listening and making music together was an experience of unification and close communication that elicited great joy and mutual understanding. My sense of hearing and modes of feeling were transformed during my engagement with the music of these people. I became a different person and to a certain point I got "assimilated" into local meanings and emotions, despite our sometimes quite different and, I would say, conflicting interpretations of music and history. This emotional intimacy through music, this affective knowledge taught me experientially what other anthropologists have been arguing for some time now: the importance of one's senses in the understanding of other cultural contexts and dynamics.

Another theme that emerges throughout the dissertation is the importance of aural perception in the shaping of the emotion and subjectivity of my interlocutors and the broad stakes it entails. Nevertheless, I believe that the term emotion, though I use it extensively, runs the risk of reification. We already know that emotions are culturally and

historically shaped and are not naturally given. But we need new terminology that will capture this dynamism and protect us from freezing and fixing emotions in our analysis. This will also allow us to incorporate talk about emotions into larger social and political process. I am thinking, provisionally, of the term *constitutive meaningfulness*, which, while abstract and rather vague, better reflects the dynamism and the stakes of emotion for human personhood and sociality.

The act of listening is also central in this dissertation. Having shown the powerful agency of listeners in the shaping and interpretation of kemençe music, I want to argue in favor of a conceptual line-blurring between music-making and -listening. Even more importantly, based on the presented ethnographic data, I want to argue against thinking of music-making and -listening in terms of production and consumption, respectively. Unfortunately, this binary thinking is quite present in many studies of musical practice. This type of thinking seriously blocks our understanding of the complex and very dynamic musical experiences and activities. It confines the analysis of musical praxis within an economistic conceptual framework that produces repetitive narratives. Music-listening is not consumption in the market sense. Escaping the trap of this terminology will free up the complex dynamics of musical experience.

Another central finding of my research, one that is related to the non-consumeristic nature of music-listening, is this: Though music is subject to multiple claims from diverse networks and individuals, and though music can be made into a commodity, it cannot be owned. Music resists ownership and escapes absolute interpretive control. We need to think further about the "anarchic" nature of musical praxis and experience and its constant escape of ownership. What does it mean for our

understanding of human experience and sociality? Also, what are the stakes of the appropriation of intellectual work and of affective practices through intellectual-property regimes? How can ownership be claimed and exercised here? Is it only a constant claim to the monopolistic use of expressive practices for profit purposes? What is it that is lost and transformed when music becomes commodified?

We also saw how musical praxis is appropriated by state networks that base their legitimacy and sovereignty on claims of loyalty and cultural sameness. Here we also need to think of the relationship between political loyalty and cultural sameness. However, musical praxis escapes that interpretive control, too, by producing interpretive plurality. And I think it is this that makes it dangerous in the eyes of bureaucracies and mainstream networks. Can the "inherent danger" of musical praxis tell us anything about the potential relationship between interpretation, political sovereignty and democracy? How should we think about the attempts of governments to "own" music?

Another finding of this dissertation has to do with the linking of markets to politics. Markets, as I see it in the field of musical activities in Turkey, are not completely autonomous fields, at least not in the beginning. They are shaped through political decisions and interventions. The decision of the Turkish government to loosen the monopoly over music-making and circulation and to allow the establishment of private music companies allowed for the shaping of a new "market" in Turkey. Gradually these markets became more influential, but they still remained under government regulation. Their relationship was not only competitive but also complementary. National security and profit are two aspirations that have caused further cultural homogenization.

This ethnography also prompts us to rethink the notion of "ethnic music" and even the term "ethnic" in the discipline of *ethno*musicology. My findings problematize the uncritical appropriation and analytical use of the term in many studies of music. This usage presupposes the existence of a fixed and frozen ethnic identity and leads to a depiction of music as a reflection of it. However, I propose that we focus on the more fluid category of subjectivity and try to think how the reshaping of subjectivities through musical practices produce new relations and forms of sociality that can potentially, but not necessarily, be claimed as "ethnic." But even in this case, we should think of the ethnic not as an essence but as a political aspiration, as a project for the making of a new *polis.* We always run the danger of reification and, thus, misunderstanding when we turn dynamic, signified relations into fixed entities, and then turn these imagined entities into the object of our studies.

As we saw in this ethnography, kinship plays an important role in the identification of my interlocutors. Grandparents become the locus of historical narrative and interpretation. How can we think of kinship in terms of intimacy and proximity of relations and thickness of interactions? If the first human network in which we find emotional and material security is the family, then how can we rethink "ethnicity" and "nation"? We need to revise theories of nationalism and approaches to ethnicity for the reasons I mentioned earlier, but also for the fact that these theories are predominantly based on the visual perception of texts and images and completely disregard the sense of hearing in the formation of desires, ideas, aspirations and attachments. The theory of "imagined communities" formulated by Anderson is problematic for this reason. We cannot disregard the strong impact of hearing and of other senses in the creation of

human imagination. If we want to understand the dynamics of human sociality we must escape the abstract and mentalist Andersonian, and thus mystical, approach and bring "community" on the concrete experience of the everyday, where people see, touch, taste, hear and smell. We need to start thinking about human interaction as sensed.

In this ethnography we did not see a classic form of "resistance." There is an interpretive tension centered mainly on a dynamic pluralism espoused and promoted by my informants who are citizens of Turkey on the one side and a fixed logic of incorporation, encompassment and control under the Turkish state on the other. The people who do the "resisting" against the homogenizing practices and logics of the state networks are multilingual and even multi-musical, with diverse attachments, belongings and agendas. They are not a unified, frozen entity that opposes another fixed entity. For the time being there is no "ethnic conflict" in the region in the classical sense of the term. Resistance here is about claiming a pluralism of meanings, of affective attachments and depths and of plural histories. What can these interpretive tensions tell us about inter-group competition and even conflict? Can interpretive tensions produce further polarization and even escalate into physical violence, and, if so, how?

And here I come to the ethical dilemmas of this research. My informants and I have been quite vulnerable in relation to state authorities and extreme nationalist networks. Our musical experiences and expressive practices in houses, in coffee shops, in festivals, in night clubs and in recording studios—simply put, our affective co-existence during my research—due to reasons that I have explained in the different chapters, became the object of both admiration but also suspicion and accusations. Moreover, my involvement as an amateur kemençe player made a significant impact on the people with

whom I worked, something which was beyond my control. To a certain degree, I tried to study a "phenomenon" in the creation of which I contributed significantly as a kemençe player years ago. The tuning of peoples' sensibilities through the affective power of my music I think that empowered them personally but also made them more vulnerable socially. Some of them had the agency to claim and defend this relationship, others preferred either to hide or underplay it.

Another ethical issue in this research has to do with the ways we portray vulnerable populations. Is the changing of names and the hiding of their identities enough, especially when we write about musicians with a certain fame and public presence? How can we balance between analytical depth and ethical commitments to our interlocutors? Moreover, this project is not a left-wing inspired form of "culture activism." However, many of my findings support a pluralism that was also espoused by some of my left-wing interlocutors. Here I also feel a tension between the interpretive and theoretical commitments of my ethnographer self and my strong affective attachments and ideas as a kemençe player. This is a tension that I have not yet managed to completely resolve, both in my writing and in my feelings and thinking.

The combination of my research work and my experience as a kemençe player among my interlocutors in Turkey made me realize that music-making, and listening, can become, depending on the context, a form of tacit political activism, a sensual activism that impacts peoples' feelings and affiliations not through abstract discursive explanations but through musical sound and its power to cause transformation. For example, the revival of older kemençe musical genres, the nostalgia they induce and the

spirit of curiosity and interest for local history they stimulate, is a very powerful tool in contexts of state censorship and interpretive controls.

Moreover, music has the power to undermine discourses of hostility and competition and produce a sense of oneness among otherwise very competitive and even opposing groups and individuals. The discursive management of the feelings generated by musical experiences is what makes it available to manipulation. But, as I have seen, affective knowledge can be more influential in the making of attachments than discursive rationalizations and narratives are. For this reason, affective knowledge might be very crucial for the construction or deconstruction of attachments and legitimacies and this makes them dangerous for governments and bureaucracies. This form of sonic and acoustic activism can escape control by claiming that it is not at all about politics but simply about music. The interpretive flexibility of musical praxis exposes it to various appropriations by powerful networks, but on the other it also protects, though not always, its practitioners.

Regarding the musical genre itself, I would like to briefly express some thoughts. In my interlocutors' music there is a strong identification with deep loss and with a sense of a constant absence. This is a loss that seems to be life-changing. As I said elsewhere, this sense of absence is a very central trope around which this music has evolved. Moreover, the masculine voice is dominant. Many male performers and singers cope with their inability to control things in life, feeling that their masculinity is challenged. They poetically identify with experiences of disrupted, changed destiny. There is a constant pain expressed in their music. How should we think about this element of loss and absence in kemençe music?

This experience of deep loss takes me back to the issue of mortality and politics of which I spoke a little in the introduction of the dissertation. Trying to further develop my thinking about the "liberating" function of art, I am now considering linking it to the "memory of mortality." The constant remembering of mortality through kemençe musical praxis has an important function. It helps listeners to constantly re-evaluate their lives and priorities. Occasional engagement with the idea of death can produce fundamental cultural change. Such a change can also, and more dramatically, occur in the face of erotic disappointment, and even more in the shocking, damaging experiences such as the death of a beloved person or in situations of physical violence. The breakup of human relations leads to the undermining of the meanings that sustained them. Then humans need to re-tune themselves and create new meanings through which they can continue their lives. And of course, new relations are accompanied by new interpretive moves and experiences. The reminder of mortality through kemençe music constantly cultivates doubt and questioning. This does not mean that people stop believing in God and in religion. It depends—some might begin to reject core religious tenets, while others might become more faithful.

The cultivation of the memory of mortality through music is a fundamental political act that makes people aware of their condition, makes them think of what is worth living for and re-tune their desires, aspirations and orientations. Music is extremely powerful, indeed, since it addresses the *constitutive meanings* we call emotions on which human ethos and personhood is build. Every human intervention that touches upon this domain of human experience, the edges of meaning, is deemed to produce significant outcomes and transformations. I see musical praxis as one such activity.

This ethnography also points towards a fresh conceptualization of musical practice as entailing novel forms of political subjectivity**.** While many scholarly approaches locate the political importance of music simply in the content of its lyrics and the iconic value of its melodies, my work moves beyond this conceptualization. Musical practice is a highly accessible, mobile, popular and influential human experience of sung, embodied and affective philosophy that shapes the intentionality of my informants. It is a technology for individuals to negotiate and refashion their morality, emotions, beliefs, aspirations, desires and imagination, as many of my interlocutors do. Personal and shared at the same time, music is a human activity of affective, embodied, individual and collective reflection on intimate and constitutive meanings and experiences such as love, beauty, aging, loneliness, pain and separation. Thus the political relevance and power of musical practice lies in its ability to shape human agency and ethos, also making individuals aware of the significations that dominate formal and informal social and political relations. The exposure of the constructed nature and the undermining of these significations can potentially threaten the stability of a given political arrangement and plant the seeds of social change.

Another conclusion, related to the previous one, has to do with the creative and political power of individual musicians who, by virtue of the emotional intensity of listening in this soundscape, can "tune" audiences' desires and imagination, with long lasting, intentional and unintentional effects. As emotion and value-makers, musicians can shape the stance and behaviors, and even mobilize populations along lines and for purposes that might run contrary to what other forces—religion and government—impose, as this ethnography of musical praxis in Turkey shows. Another important

finding is the agency of listeners in their encounter with the kemençe music and their power to co-shape the meanings of this genre. Moreover, while powerful networks such as those of religion, nation-state and market promote homogeneity, musical practices enhance difference and plurality, and can thus potentially destabilize and undermine such homogenizing projects.

Regarding the scholarly understanding of the relationship between music and politics, my ethnographic findings lead me to specific conclusions regarding the contemporary political sphere and the forms of expression it sustains**.** The modern western conceptualization of politics as a predominantly government-, state- and power-related activity has led to the exclusion of other forms of human activity from the scholarly investigations of politics, since they were, arbitrarily, deemed politically irrelevant. The mystification and reification of music in previous western scholarly discourses, meanwhile, was due to its conceptual separation from the narrowly-defined political realm. With the exception of a handful of thinkers, the political relevance of music has been largely ignored for many years not only by anthropologists, but also by sociologists, political scientists and political philosophers of modern times. I believe it is time to end this separation and to start thinking of music as something that pertains to the life of the *polis*, and to think of politics not as a science of administration and decision-making, but as the ultimate art of living meaningful lives together. We need to think about when politics lost that classical meaning of art and became a science, and indeed a very quantitative one, especially in the U.S., and consider the consequences of this transformation of politics from art to science.

This ethnography of musical praxis and experience also opens the way for a closer cultural understanding of politics in Turkey. The remaking of old, indigenous musical genres is certainly a herald of something that is changing in Turkish society, and we need to listen carefully in order to understand and analyze it. This cultural and social transformation will also positively impact the exchanges between citizens from Turkey and Greece. Musicians have played a great role in such exchange and continue to do so. Another interesting phenomenon, which seems to have escaped scholars of social movements in Turkey, is that these social movements tend to become more Weberian and less Marxist in their analysis and understanding of human affairs. That is also an interesting change both for anthropology and for active politics itself.

And finally back to music itself, from where we started. The close, ethnographic examination of musical practices opens a big window onto the understanding of social life and to its most pressing issues. I was surprised when, a few years ago, I realized how many popular songs in Turkey referred to the experience of imprisonment. This certainly was the result of very complex and dynamic social and political processes, including military dictatorship, the Kurdish struggle for liberation and human rights, poverty, marginalization and many more. The musical soundscape of Turkey is currently going through another re-tuning, as I mentioned earlier, and we need to open our ears and listen in order to understand. Philosopher and economist Jacque Attali has famously argued that for twenty-five centuries Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world and that it has failed to understand that the world is not for beholding, it is for hearing. We must now learn to judge a society by its sound.

What life in *polis* shares with music is harmony. An a-political life is noise. Paying closer attention to the musical transformations and the acts of music listening of a society, we can also understand the world that is coming, since musical sound is the herald of social change and of hope.

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