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**Between Islam and the State:
Politics of Engagement**
The Engagements between Gulen Community and the Secular Turkish State

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March 2001

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate studies and research in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The key to understanding Islam and civil society is the state. However, this key issue has been decentered due to the prevailing focus in the literature, that is the compatibility/incompatibility between Islam and civil society. The findings of this thesis reveal emergent Islamic sensibilities and capacities that lead to transitions in state-Islam interaction. These findings call for a rethinking of the theories on civil society and Islam.

The study is based on an extended empirical research project undertaken in Turkey and Kazakhstan between 1997-1999. It focuses on the leading Islamic community-movement in Turkey, Gulen Community, which is not only national(ist)but also internationally organized in numerous countries. Gulen Community aims to reconcile Islamic ways of lives and faith with the secular institutional milieu. Gulen accomplishes its goal mainly (yet not only) through education, i.e. its numerous high schools and universities in Turkey and all around the world.

The main finding of my research contrasts with the juxtaposition of Islam and the state in the literature: Gulen creates the alternative pathways of engagements with the state. The engagements range from domestic symbolic politics and negotiations to international alliances. The thesis examines the engagements in three distinct spheres, i.e. the national education, international undertakings and the gender order. As ethnographic research in Istanbul and Almati revealed, the domestically uneasy interactions between Gulen and the state take the form of overt alliances at the international level. I argue that Gulen's strong identification with the 'nation as the state' facilitates its engagements with the Republic. Moreover, Gulen's inheritance of the gender strategies of the founding fathers of the nation contributes further to the congruence between Gulen and the state.

My argument is that the engagements can largely be explained by the elective affinities between Islam and the nation-state, which are analyzed at three levels: identity, state and the international world order. The thesis reveals that further research has to be done on the following question : Is the Turkish state in the process of creating a nationalist, non-threatening and pro-state Islam?

Résumé

L'état est primordial pour comprendre l'islam et la société civile. Cependant nombreux sont les travaux académiques qui ont dévié de cet aspect pour se concentrer sur la question de compatibilité entre l'Islam et la société civile. Les résultats de cette thèse révèlent pourtant que le lien entre l'état et l'Islam est en train de vivre une transition. Ces résultats remettent donc en questions les théories qui se concentrent sur le lien entre la société civile et l'Islam.

L'étude est basée sur un vaste projet de recherche empirique réalisé en Turquie et au Kazakhstan entre 1997 et 1999. Elle se concentre sur la communauté et le mouvement imposant de la Communauté Gulen en Turquie, qui est non seulement organisée à un niveau national mais aussi international, par sa présence dans de nombreux pays. La communauté Gulen tente de réconcilier la religion et le mode de vie islamique avec un environnement et des institutions séculaires. Gulen accomplit son but avant tout par l'éducation à travers ses nombreux lycées et universités en Turquie et à travers le monde.

Le résultat central de ma recherche diffère des travaux qui perçoivent une juxtaposition entre l'islam et l'état : Gulen crée des voies d'engagements avec l'état, allant de la politique symbolique et négociations, au niveau domestique, jusqu'à des alliances au niveau international. La thèse examine donc ces engagements au niveau de trois sphères distinctes : l'éducation nationale, les projets internationaux et la situation de genre. Mes recherches ethnographiques, à Istanbul et Almati, ont révélé que l'interaction entre Gulen et l'état, qui est loin d'être harmonieuse au niveau domestique, prend la forme d'une alliance ouverte au niveau international. L'argument de la thèse est qu'en s'identifiant à «la nation en tant qu'état», Gulen facilite son engagement avec la république. De plus ayant adopté les mêmes stratégies de genre que l'état, Gulen est devenu encore plus compatible avec l'état.

Je maintiens que ces engagements sont attribuables aux affinités électives entre l'islam et l'état-nation, analysées sur trois niveaux différents : l'identité, l'état et l'ordre mondial international. La thèse révèle qu'il faut faire de plus amples recherches sur la question suivante : Est-ce que l'état turc est dans le processus de créer une forme d'islam qui serait nationaliste, moins menaçante et plus étatiste ?

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the strong women of my family--especially to my mother--who rule their lives, and also to my father, who has always been a nurturer of liberties. Without the generous support and warmth of my family, this thesis could not be accomplished. During the hard days of struggle (not only with the text but also with the tough Ph.D. lifestyle), I was sheltered by my mother's wisdom; my father's trust in me; my sister's irreplaceable friendship and sharp intellect; my grandmother's special blessing; my aunt's deep understanding and my cousin's warm and caring accompaniment in Montreal.

I deeply appreciate the cooperation of Fethullahists. Their hospitality was not limited to the domestic and international sites of the Community, but they also welcomed me into their homes and everyday lives. It was more than a pleasure to socialize with them and to share their lives. Writing about this intense experience has been a continuous passion. This helped me very much to survive the isolating nature of the dissertation.

I owe special thanks to the Department of Sociology for giving me the opportunity to teach almost every term as well as for offering resources generously. I also thank SPIRIT (School for Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Research on Interculturalism and Transnationalism) at Aalborg University in Denmark for a postgraduate scholarship, which included workshops and office space, as well as for covering my expenses to attend an international conference in Norway. A Social Sciences and Humanities Subcommittee Research Grant at McGill enabled me to extend my research to Kazakhstan, opening a new area of research for me. An Alma Mater Travel Grant enabled me to present a chapter of my thesis at a conference in Israel.

I am grateful to Professor Suzanne Staggenborg, whose support kept me going throughout my fieldwork and writing. She read all the chapters and gave thoughtful comments and suggestions. I thank Professor Charles Taylor for commenting on an earlier draft of a chapter and Professor Ulf Hedetoft (Aalborg University) for reading several chapters and discussing the project with me. Many thanks go to Professor Axel van den Berg, whose constructive criticism helped me in various ways. Professor Peta Tancred's comments on the gender chapter made me think about important issues. Professor Leyla Neyzi (Sabanci University) shared my field experiences and encouraged me immensely. I am indebted to Professor Serif Mardin (Sabanci University) for showing interest in my study and for sharing his expertise on the subject matter with me. I am also thankful to Professor Cemal Kafadar (Harvard University) for opening new horizons for further research with his stimulating questions and critical mind.

This dissertation relies heavily on the reading, commenting, editing (in some cases several versions), and intense emotional and intellectual labour of my academic colleagues. Especially in the most difficult last weeks before the final submission, they never left me alone, even during the long nights that I spent in front of the computer. The lights of several offices in the Leacock Building were on many hours after midnight. I owe deeply to the following friends: Yesim Bayar, Devrim Yavuz, Annalisa Saloni, Gretchen Schirmer, Kimberley Ducey, Jeff Cormier, Dan Loomer, Avi Goldberg, Orlee Hauser,

Howard Ramos, Hande Paker, Can Erk, Natalka Patsiurko, Selime Sancar, Turgut Kisinbay, and finally Efe Postalci, whose magic touch and formatting saved my life in a few hours. Special thanks also go to Sharon, Franca, and Linda, who made the work environment feel cozy like home.

It is difficult to find the words to express my sincere gratitude to Professor John A. Hall, my supervisor and mentor. Working with him has been a great pleasure, an experience that one cannot easily let go of. I had the rarest opportunity to observe the most concrete personification of my highly abstract subject matter--civil society and civility--in John Hall, a philosopher of liberties and civility. He is the epitome of integrity, as he not only teaches his enlightening insights and theory but also displays them in practice. This combination, I believe, was a unique privilege for my dissertation on civil society. His interest in my subject and his visit to one of my research sites were incredible motivation for my study. His comments, questions and never-ending encouragement have been truly invaluable, without which this thesis would not have been realized. Most importantly, I am forever indebted to him for helping me to develop self-confidence and faith in my work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, the key to understanding Islam and civil society is the state. However, this key issue was neglected due to the dominance of one-dimensional approaches to Islam. Most of the studies of Islam separated cultural and political Islam and limited their focus to one of them. Other studies treated Islam as merely a religion (a text and dogma). On the one hand, the view of Islam as an exclusively institutional political process neglected Islamic culture, identities and discourses.¹ On the other hand, the studies of Islam as a discourse, identities and (civic) culture disregarded the importance of the state and macro political processes.² The intermingling of Islamic politics and culture was largely absent in social research. More importantly, in these studies, both civil society and Islam were juxtaposed against the state.³

Many commentators have agreed that “civil society can exist without formal political organizations because pervasive informal organizational structures often serve as the framework for effective political, social and economic action” (Eickelman, 1996, p. xi).⁴ However, while they promised to integrate the state into the study of civil society, they have often disregarded the “central” institutions of the state.⁵ Briefly, explaining Islam with regard to its interaction with the state has been labeled as “conventional”, while the emphasis on civic culture, community action, grass-root movements and the public sphere has become fashionable in social science.⁶

¹B Turner(1974) *Weber and Islam*. Keagan Paul. See Turner's critique of Weber's analysis of Islam, which limited its focus merely to the structure and disregarded culture, values, beliefs etc.

² N. Gole (1993) *Modern Mahrem* (Forbidden Sacred). Ist: Metis; Gole (1997) “The Quest for the Islamic Self” in R. Kasaba and Bozdogan (1998) *Rethinking Modernity and Turkish National Identity*. Seattle, London: University of Seattle Press White (1996) “Civic Culture and Islam in Urban Turkey” in C. Hann and E. Dunn (1996) *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*. London and New York: Routledge.

³ R. A. Norton (1996) *Civil Society in the Middle East*. Leiden: E.J. Brill: Gole (1996) “Authoritarian Secularism” in Norton (ed.); H. Yavuz (2000b) “Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere”, *Journal of International Affairs*, vol.54, no.1.

⁴ Norton (1996); R. Kasaba and S. Bozdogan (2000)) “Turkey at a Cross-Road”, *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 54, no.1. Kasaba and Bozdogan clearly argue that the extending sphere of civil society after th1980s indicates declining significance of the state.

⁵For exceptions to this see E. Goldberg, R. Kasaba and J. Migdal (1993) “Introduction” to *Rules and Rights in the Middle East*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press; B. Toprak (1996) “Civil Society in Turkey” in Norton (ed.)

⁶ See Chapter 3; See, Eickelman's “Preface” and Norton's “Introduction” in Norton (1996), with regard to their recognition of the importance of the state. However, the volumes contributed to the juxtapositions of the state and civil society and thereby state and Islam.

The interest in political Islam created an excessive focus on *Refah* (Welfare) Party and its successor *Fazilet* (Virtue) Party.⁷ These parties have been wrongly seen as representative of Turkish Islam. *Refah* embraced a fundamentalist anti-system fraction, which not only intimidated secularists and the secular state but also alienated some moderate Islamists. This, finally, led to a state-imposed ban of the party in 1997. The state's ban on the party is seen as further proof of the degree to which Turkist Islam is political and fundamentalist (anti-state). The limited scope and narrow focus of social research on the *Refah* prevented a fresh look at the emergent realities, i.e., a critical investigation of the shifting parameters of interaction between the state and modern Islam in Turkey. Denying the reductionist generalization of *Refah* — or *Fazilet* — as the main representative of modern Islam in contemporary Turkey, my project investigates the leading Islamic Community-movement, Gülen.

Interestingly, following the state's ban, votes for the religious party, *Fazilet*, along with its popularity, decreased, while the Gülen Community continued its rapid rise and success at the national and international levels. The Community's *dava* (mission, issue) is to reconcile Islamic culture and identity with the secular Republic and civil society. In other words, it aims to bridge the secular institutional milieu primarily with faith but also with Islamic culture and identity. The main finding of my research challenges mainstream theories, which juxtapose Islam against the state. Gülen is distinct among other Islamic movements: it engages the state. It accommodates emerging sensibilities and develops infrastructural capacities to create pathways of engagements, which are alternatives to the formal political channels. This thesis critically examines these pathways, which range from domestic symbolic politics and negotiations⁸ to overt cooperations with the state at the international level.⁹ The topical chapters of the thesis reveal the elective affinities between Gülen and the state, which facilitate these engagements. The main congruence between them is their common understanding of social change as project-based social engineering.

⁷ H. Gulalp (1995) "Islamist Party Poised for National Power in Turkey", *Middle East Report*, May/June-July August, p. 54- 56; D. Shankland (1996) "The Demise of Republican Turkey's Social Contract?", *Government & Opposition*, vol. 31, no. 3, p.304-321 J. White (1995) "Islam and Democracy: The Turkish Experience", *Current History*, vol.94, p.7-12; H. Yavuz (1997) "Political Islam and the Welfare (*Refah*) Party in Turkey", *Comparative Politics*, vol.30, no.1, p.63-81

⁸ Chapter 6

⁹ Chapter 7

Kemalist Republicans “modernized” Turks by building a nation, while Fethullahist Islamist aim to “civilize” Turkish Islam by developing civil society.

The thesis aims to explain the uniqueness of the Gülen Community among other Islamic groups and movements, led by the intellectual Islamist leader, Fethullah Gülen. Gülen effectively denounces anti-system positionings to the secular state. F. Gülen clearly highlights this position in one of his books:

Regardless of the conditions, legitimacy of the state must not be damaged... Anti-democratic interventions never worked, as we already experienced in Turkey...Problems have to be solved within the system (F. Gülen, 1997, p. 285)

In light of extensive empirical findings, Chapter 2 critically reviews conventional theories of Islam and civil society. My findings suggest that a heavy focus on whether or not Islam is compatible with civil society is counter-productive. On the basis of extensive empirical evidence, the thesis suggests another theoretical focus in the debate, that is state-Islam interaction.¹⁰ Chapter 2 traces the Tocquevillean heritage of theories of civil society, which emphasize state-society interaction. I argue that little has been said about this with regard to Islam. More importantly, even when the state is brought into the analysis, most often it is juxtaposed against Islam.¹¹ My argument is that the prevalent anti-statist overtones in the existing literature obscure emergent transformations in the linkages between the state and Islam. Islam-state interaction needs to be rethought in the face of new evidence. Chapter 3 illustrates how utilizing a sensitive empirical methodology, multi-sited ethnography, helped me to make this theoretical contribution. This methodology enabled me to capture and analyze the manifestations of seemingly macro processes and institutions (Islam, civil society, state, patriarchy, ethnic politics, and the international world order) at the level of everyday life.¹²

Chapter 4 briefly traces the historical roots of the interaction between Islam and the state looking back at the Ottoman Empire and early Republic. The Gülen Community is the largest and most influential Islamic Community in Turkey, emerging out of the

¹⁰ J. Esposito and J. Piscatory (1991) “Democratization and Islam”, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 45, no.3; J. E. Esposito and J. Voll (1996) *Islam and Democracy*. Oxford University Press.

¹¹ R.A Norton (1996); Esposito and J. Piscatory (1991); H. Yavuz (2000b); Yavuz (2000a) “Being Modern in the Nurist Way”, *ISIM Newsletter*, October, p. 14-15.

¹² G. Marcus (1998) *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

fragmentations in the Nur Movement in the 1980s.¹³ The chapter situates Gülen within the larger socio-historical background (its cultural roots in Nur, in Islamic orders as well as in the Republican national culture). In this way, it captures transitions in the interactions between Turkish Islam and the state. My argument is that Gülen represents Islam in transition, from repression by the state to engagements with the state. As much as this transition has to do with the emerging Islamic sensibilities and capacities, it is also a result of transformations in social conditions in Turkey following the 1980 military coup.¹⁴ Although much has been written on the increasing visibility of civil society and the public sphere since then,¹⁵ little attention has been paid to structural transformations, especially the linkages between state and civil society.¹⁶

Chapter 5 depicts the social organization and inner propellants of Gülen. I outline how the Community attracts and mobilizes a wide-ranging diversity of identities and agendas for its *dava*. However, findings also revealed significant degrees of homogeneity within the Gülen Community, in particular among the people in *hizmet* and in the non-public sphere. Hence, I do not make the assumption that diversity in the window sites is a guarantee of civil society.¹⁷ Nor, do I judge the community as an ultimate trap to liberties. It is extremely important to explore the nature of diversity and unity in an Islamic community. The decency of social life resides widely in the way Gülen reconciles the concepts of *Cemiyet* and *Cemaat*, i.e. diversity and uniformity. I will argue that Gülen's inner structure of diversity and homogeneity grants important clues regarding its emergent capacities of engagement with the state.

¹³For a comprehensive analysis of Nur, see S. Mardin (1989) *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York. Nur Movement is an Islamist movement led by Said Nursi. The movement is highly respected and recognized by the volumes of *Risale*, written by Said Nursi in the Ottoman language. They are modern interpretations of Qur'an. The movement has aimed to reconcile modernity with tradition. Today, it is fragmented and dispersed due to the separations during the late 1970s and 1980s. Gülen Community is the largest and leading inheritors of Nur Movement.

¹⁴ See Kasaba and Bozdoğan (2000).

¹⁵ N. Gole (2000) *İslamin Kamusal Yüzleri* (The Public Faces of Islam). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları; Gole (1993); Kasaba and Bozdoğan (1997); E. Ozdalga and S. Persson (1998) *Civil Society Democracy and Muslim World*. Turk Tarih Vakfı Yayınları 76.

¹⁶ Few studies paid attention to the state-society interaction. See for example, .B. Toprak (1996) "Civil Society in Turkey" in Norton (ed.); Y. Arat (2000a) "Gender and Citizenship in Turkey" in S. Joseph (ed.) *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. D. Kandiyoti (1991) *Women Islam and the State*. London: McMillan.

¹⁷ E. Gellner (1994a) *The Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

The remaining chapters will explore engagements in three distinctive areas of the Community's project-based social engineering: national education, international undertakings, and a particular gender order. These three areas shed light on the culturally-specific interaction between Gülen and the state. Chapter 6 will focus on the contestations over education, more specifically over Gülen's educational projects at the national level (the schools, dormitories, summer camps etc.). Contestations between the secularist civil society organizations and Gülen are depicted. The nature of these contestations illustrates why public debate cannot be taken-for granted as the existence or development of civil society. Accordingly, the focus will be shifted towards other evidence: Gülen's domestic engagements with the state. The symbolic politics, through which Gülen loyally negotiates with the state, is important for explaining civility and civil society.

Chapter 7 follows Gülen's *dava* to the international domain. I will explore its international undertakings, i.e. international education and particular ethnic politics in Kazakhstan. Evidence will be provided on the wide-ranging diversity of people who are attracted to Gülen's undertakings in Almati, such as national(ist), Islamic, moralist, Kemalist, ultra-nationalist identities. The chapter will illustrate how Gülen manages to mobilize these people in the name of the "nation as the state". My argument is that Gülen's conception of the nation and prioritization of national loyalties in the international domain facilitates its cooperation with the Turkish state. Moreover, the elective affinities between this Turkish Islam and the Republic will be discussed in the face of overt international alliances between them.

In Chapter 8, the gender order in the Community will be examined which reveals further affinities between the Republican and Islamist male elite in Turkey. First, I will depict the women-friendly public sites of Gülen, which initially seem to suggest that Gülen reforms Islamic patriarchy. In a similar fashion to the Republican nation-building male elite, Fethullahist men value women's visibility in public. The chapter will show how Fethullahist social engineers inherited their gender strategies from the founding fathers. In these three topical chapters, it is important to note how the Gülen Community, as a product of the Republican era, resembles the secular state.

In Chapter 9, I conclude that it is possible for Islam to engage and cooperate with the state in various spheres of life and through alternative channels. The sensibilities and capacities of engagement largely depend on the historical legacy and national culture as well as the political setting. The findings suggest a rethinking of theories of civil society and Islam. The secret of civil society resides in the ability to trust and cooperate.¹⁸ Gülen's engagements are important steps towards the development of civil society in the Muslim world. Therefore, the topic calls for sensitive analysis. In the conclusion, I will discuss further how we can qualify civil society and Islam in order to overcome the errors of the compatibility debate. Finally, I will raise some new questions (as possible topics for future research) which emerged out of the thesis.

¹⁸ A. de Tocqueville (1955) *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, translated by Stuart Gilbert. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday; Hall (1992) "Trust in Tocqueville", *Policy Organization and Society*, no.5.

CHAPTER 2:THEORY:

SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY-ISLAM COMPATIBILITY TO STATE-ISLAM INTERACTION

Introduction

The Islamic revival has provoked two major responses from commentators: optimism and pessimism about the compatibility of Islam with civil society. Usually, the debate extends further and discusses the congruence of Islam with liberal democracy, the nation-state and nationalism and modernity. Often, civil society has been used interchangeably with these concepts. This chapter reviews the optimist and pessimist accounts of compatibility, while assessing them critically. Both pessimists and optimists of Islam define civil society in various ways. Below, the theoretical flaws of these definitions will be discussed. In trying to clarify the term, this chapter will trace the state-Islam interaction in the existing social theory literature.

Starting with de Tocqueville, the importance of the state-society interaction as the corner stone of civil society has been acknowledged in Western social theory.¹ However, there has been a reluctance to incorporate this interaction into theories of Islam and civil society.² This has been mainly due to the classical fusion of state and religion (or religious community- *Umma*). The next sections will review the arguments, which elaborate the historical misfit between Islam and politics. As a deviant case from this general pattern, alternative explanations of the Ottoman “exception” will be considered. How could the Ottoman Empire stabilize political rule for such a long period of time? The explanations are extremely important for the study of Gülen, which appears as a contemporary “anomaly” of Islam-state interaction.

Situating the state-Islam interaction in historical and cultural context is the initial step toward abandoning the universalistic juxtaposition between Islam and the state. Subsequently, the following chapters will and examine the empirical evidence on the multi-level engagements between Gülen and the secular state. The rest of the thesis will analyze these engagements microscopically (at the levels of identity, everyday life,

¹ Tocqueville (1955).

discourse) and macroscopically (at the levels of the state and international world order). The overall analysis calls for a rethinking of the mainstream theories of civil society and Islam.

Civil society itself is a highly contested concept. Before bringing in Islam, which is another core concept of recent debates, I will briefly overview the historical career of civil society in the West. This career is important not because it provides a ready-made recipe to understand the subject matter of the study, but because of the awareness of the subjects (Gülenists) that civil society was historically not born in the bosom of the Muslim world. Civil society in the non-western world did not develop in ignorance or isolation from its 19th Century forerunners in the West. For conceptual clarity, a sense of the contested usage and historical career of civil society may be useful. As the main findings of the research brought me back to the historical career of the term --and not vice versa--, the Tocquevillean overtone surfaced only after I connected all the findings and completed analysis. My findings revealed issues that are strongly related to and embraced by civil society, such as a *political culture* and *institutions* of trust/distrust, co-operation/clash, domination/ power-sharing, power-stand-off, autonomy, liberties, despotism, fear etc. These historically significant concepts emerged out of ethnographic particularities in their own faces and intricate ways. In this sense, nothing is wrong with the heavy and often contested historical baggage that the term carries: As long as the continuities and discontinuities are explained in their own contexts, they are extremely helpful to “make our own thinking for our selves” (Skinner, 1988, p.66)

Contested Relevancy of the Historical Baggage of Civil Society

As early as the end of 18th Century, civil society was understood as the highlanders, who were defined against the lowlanders. As an evolutionary stage in human history, the polished came to be differentiated from the rude, in Ferguson’s terms.³ Yet, the “indispensable relevance” of these classical theories can not be explained by the continuity of the dichotomy between the “barbarian” and the “civilized” (Skinner, 1988, p. 65).⁴ In fact, this crude separation would have pejorative meanings for the contemporary world.

³A. Ferguson (1995) [1782] *An Essay of the History of Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

What, then, would be the use of history of ideas and the related abstract concepts for the present study, since there is not a timeless and universal conception of civil society? Indeed, the continuing relevance of classical debates and the history of ideas are due to the variety of assumptions and ambivalences manifested in different contexts, and are not due their assumptions of unilinear developmental continuity or universal constancy.

This study owes a great deal to the history of ideas and the historical career of civil society: First, it offers an analytical framework, which impelled me to start to think about the issues concerning the thesis. Second, having been exposed to a context-sensitive ethnographic account, ideas had to withdraw from the scene for a considerable time, in order not to hinder, obscure or manipulate the findings. In other words, a good deal of dissociation from and even self-conscious forgetting of the abstract/universal conception of civil society was needed in order to trace the concrete/local in everyday life. This is why I call this process “self-conscious forgetting”. In this way, we can allow the research to breathe and develop independently. However, after the findings secured their places in the research, they themselves welcomed a good deal of remembering and theoretical reflection. Subsequently, the theoretical baggage was invited back in order to reframe and restate it.

The very reason for regarding such histories as indispensably relevant is not because crude “lessons” can be picked out of them, but because the history itself provides a lesson in self-knowledge. To demand from the history of thought a solution to our own immediate problems is thus to commit not merely a methodological fallacy, but something like a moral error. But to learn from the past --and we cannot otherwise learn at all-- the distinction between what is necessary and what is the product of our own contingent arrangements, is to learn the key to self-awareness itself (Skinner, 1988, p.67)

However, there are two major objections to the relevancy of the historical baggage of civil society. First, some anthropologists attack the abstractness of civil society. They refuse the “impositions” of a uniquely Western experience, i.e. civil society, on the non-Western world in social research.⁵ The main problem with this anthropological revolt is

⁴J. Tully (1988) *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*. London:Polity Press.

⁵Hann and E. Dunn (1996) *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*. London and New York: Routledge.

that it underestimates the fact that ethnography can be empowered, rather than weakened or ruined, by being theoretically informed. The history of thought and theoretical baggage does not need to impede our *Verstehen*.

The use of the history of ideas is criticized pushing contemporary reality into conventional thought structures. The argument follows that the use of this baggage invites conformism. Accordingly, a new “(P)olitical argument ... comes into its own only during crisis conditions, when conventional beliefs and unargued assumptions begin to disintegrate and to be questioned... They are (the) times, in which controversies erupt about the prevailing definitions of how to understand the past in relation to the present.” (Keane, 1988a, p.205). However, the production of new political arguments and the construction of new concepts do not necessarily require times of crisis. Old concepts dissolve or transform into different ones. We only need effective and sensitive methods, which enable us to capture the emergent realities behind the conventional ones. An awareness of why and how history of ideas are relevant to contemporary reality strengthens the research. Stated differently, knowledge about the historical career of civil society may be an asset for understanding its emerging manifestations. An empirically-substantiated analysis needs to integrate the theoretical baggage through a sensitive methodology. An unbounded ethnography, I will argue in the next chapter, contextualizes and thereby particularizes the “classical” relevance of the term in the contemporary context. It reveals the concrete particularities and emergent realities, which call for reformulations of the theory, as opposed to inviting conformism to existing structures.

My second disagreement with the anthropological counter-argument is the juxtaposition of Western models against a non-Western one.⁶ This is another anthropological rebellion against the imposition of the Western model on the non-Western paths, but also claims to deconstruct the dichotomous thinking between the West and the rest. In her study of civic culture in Turkey, J. White's account of the local culture as communitarian, heavily interpersonal and reciprocal,⁷ excludes the co-existence of other patterns of social bonds. The individualistic, formal and contractual relations, which she reserves to the Western experience, are denied to the seemingly “exotic” Turkish

⁶Ibid.,

experience. Accordingly, she argues “civil society, in its classical form has little conceptual tolerance for associational bonds based on religious ethics, on “private” relations of kin and clan, or on regional folk loyalties” (White, 1996, p.147). According to her, classical Western theories are not only irrelevant to the understanding of the Turkish case, but also distort the analysis. Here, she not only neglects Tocquevillean definitions of civil society which emphasize self-organizations, horizontal associations and religion as one of the habits of the heart, i.e. the political culture,⁸ but she also abandons the whole historical career of the term as being “little or no use describing the most of the non-Western world” (White, 1996, p. 147). Ironically, these attempts dichotomize the West and the rest further.

It is not only anthropology which attacks the relevancy of the historical career of civil society. Political scientists also questioned the usefulness of the search for “preconditions” and/or “attributes”, in order to predict the prospects of democracy and civil society in the non-Western world.⁹ Huntington’s recipes for democracy have been severely criticized as a major piece of historical determinism. It has been argued that: “Since for the most part these characteristics are drawn from Western Europe, it should not come as a surprise that conditions in the rest of the world usually appear unpropitious for the development of democracy”. (Goldberg et al., 1993, p. 4-5)

Unfortunately, although it is true that the historical heritage of civil society has been the corner-stone of the essentialist arguments within the compatibility debate, the solution is not simply discarding the historical baggage. The concepts and the related institutional arrangements at hand (such as the nation-state, democracy, civil society, Republic etc.) did not emerge “in ignorance of European and American meanings” and applications of the terms: local debates are “never entirely innocent of Western genealogies”?¹⁰ Thus, although the travelling of civil society to the Muslim world is by no means a replicability

⁷White (1996)

⁸ A. De Tocqueville(1945) *Democracy in America*. New York: Vintage Books, p. 539-541. According to Tocqueville, religion in America is conducive to liberty. There is faith in equality of human beings in front of God. This political culture is compared with the Muslim world in Lindholm's book. C. Lindholm (1996) *Islamic Middle East. Islamic Middle East: An Historical Anthropology*. London, Cambridge: Blackwell.

⁹ E. Goldberg, R. Kasaba and J. Migdal (1993) “Introduction” to *Rules and Rights in the Middle East*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, p. 4-5

of a unique, historical accident --the Western experience--, this journey is far from being blind, uninformed and/or ignorant of the manifestations of that Western accident. The search for an exotic and/or authentic non-Western social world, untouched by the Western forerunners of civil society is a futile exercise.

Secular republican Turkey appears often as a test case for modernization theory: Can the Western path be followed by the rest?¹¹ Turkey also became another case study as a secular democracy in the Muslim world: Is Turkey reconciling Islam with civil society and democracy?¹² Although the initial motivation in the making of modern secular Turkey was an imitation of the Western path, the unintended consequences (such as the Islamic revival) have proven to be far from imports of the Western models. As M. Mann correctly argues, political revolutions are easy to initiate but difficult to imitate.¹³ However, although the journey onto the civil society to the non-West has evidently not been a mirror image of the West, it is important to take into account that the West has been a reference point and/or stimuli in the emergence of alternative pathways.

Finally, it may be true that "(t)he revival of the concept of civil society is self-conscious" (Kumar, 1993, p. 375). It holds its step on the past, i.e., and the local historical heritage, as a sound platform for soul-searching. Indeed, there are increasing popular yearnings for civil society as well as purposeful and voluntary activities of individuals and communities to develop civil society in the Middle East.¹⁴ However, this does not distort the usefulness of the term. The recent revival of civil society in non-Western countries may be partly a program, but the self-conscious component does not need to repudiate the analytical value of the term. Gülen's claims for being a civil society organization does indeed entail some self-conscious efforts to bring the civic Islamic tradition back in. At the same time, however, it is primarily forward-looking (and not merely nostalgic) in the way it hosts "elective affinities" between the tradition/cultural heritage and the contemporary

¹⁰See Chatterjee's accounts on the meaning of secularism in India. P. Chatterjee (1995) "Religious Minorities and the Secular State: Reflections on an Indian Impasse", *Public Culture*, vol. 8, p. 13-14.

¹¹ D. Lerner (1964) *Passing of a Traditional Society*. New York.

¹²B. Lewis (1994) "Why Turkey is the only Muslim Democracy?", *Middle East Quarterly*: vol.1, no.1, p.41-9; E. Gellner (1994b) "Kemalism", in *Encounters with Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

¹³M. Mann (1993), p.18

¹⁴ For the self-conscious agendas of developing civil society in the Middle East, see E. Goldberg, R. Kasaba and J. Migdal (1993) "Introduction".

social conditions/ institutional processes. This adaptability locates civil society as a central position within Islam: Is civil society in Islam constrained to its (historically rooted egalitarian) local culture? Is Islam really incapable of bridging civic local networking with broader institutional political processes,¹⁵ as the pessimists of the compatibility debate argue? Does it necessarily position itself against the political rule and the secular state, as its historical baggage strongly suggests?¹⁶

The multiplicity of approaches and the ongoing disagreements on the ambivalences of civil society, enrich its qualities and endow the term with more depth, instead of causing chaos and confusion.¹⁷ This multiplicity indicates not only that the term was overused, but also overtheorized. This theoretical richness can become strength of the term, as long as it is defined clearly. First of all, civil society historically embraces a civilizational aspect of social life, which cannot be replaced easily by other terms such as liberal democracy.

Late 18th and 19th Century classical thinking on civil society is primarily concerned with the evolutionary stages of civilization. Although social patterns and institutions have constantly changed in modern societies, certain contested issues persist, which were raised by classical debates on civil society. The relevancy of the history of ideas to the contemporary world is largely conceptual. The habits of the heart (trust, fear, virtues, and passions) and the nature of political rule (despotism versus moderate rule) are some of the main concepts which are some of the major concerns of the present study. In attempting to reveal and understand the dynamic of civil society in an Islamic community, the thesis deals also with the dark sides of civilization. Ferguson's and Montesquieu's insights about the dark sides of civil society are of a great importance.

As early as the end of 18th Century, Ferguson acknowledged the ambivalence of civilization: Progress and prosperity were neither immune nor mutually exclusive to decay and corruption.¹⁸ In other words, civil society had its own ambiguities. The dark side of civil society finds expression also in the fear of despotism expressed in Montesquieu's

¹⁵Lindholm (1996).

¹⁶E. Gellner (1981) *Muslim Society*. Cambridge University Press.; J. A. Hall (1986) *Powers and Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*. London: Penguin Books.

¹⁷Hall (1995).

¹⁸Ferguson (1995) [1782].

thought.¹⁹ He was afraid of cruelty grounded in a system of coercion (coercive government) and arbitrary rule, namely despotism. Shklar draws attention to Montesquieu's analysis of fear: "When we think politically, we are afraid not only for ourselves but for our fellow citizens as well. We fear as a society of fearful people". (Shklar, 1987, p.29). A major issue for Islam is the fear of its despotic potential. Not only in the West but also in secular Muslim countries, the culture and politics of fear is important to understand and explain. As Chapter 6 will discuss, the political culture of fear underlies the clash and ongoing rupture in the Muslim world.

As a solution to such a fear of despotism, Montesquieu advocated moderate government and political liberty. However, this was not an ultimate guarantee of freedom either, since power may be abused and virtue has its limits. As a caution against this dark face of civilization, Montesquieu concludes that power should be checked. He is not naive to rely purely on virtue in order to avoid corruption because he believes that power is apt to get abused. Thus, he suggested the separation of powers against the possibility of corruption. This early warning against the power stand-off between the ruler and the ruled has been a timeless goal in politics. Stated in more contemporary terms, the state-society interaction requires power-sharing, which has been a concern of the philosophers of civil society in as early as 19th century. As I will discuss below, power-sharing has been historically problematic in Islamic societies.

Another philosopher of liberty and civil society is Tocqueville. He argues that civil society --in its ideal form-- is a modern, liberal democracy, which makes room for an autonomous sphere for self-organizations and associational life.²⁰ But the dark side of civil society is not to be discarded too soon: His major concern was how to attain and maintain political liberty along with equal social conditions, since the latter was by no means a guarantee for the latter. This dilemma underlies Tocqueville's contemplation of another weak point of human nature. Bringing in the concept of envy,²¹ Tocqueville builds upon Montesquieu's fear of despotism. Having experienced the cruelties of the Old Regime and the French Revolution, he describes a society, where people are divided by envy and

¹⁹ Montesquieu (1973) *Persian Letters*. Baltimore: Penguin Classics.

²⁰ Tocqueville (1945).

distrust. It is a society where people have not only lost the ability to cooperate, but have also become divided and alienated from each other under the cruelties of the Old Regime. Tocqueville's fear is people may indeed choose to live under a dictator. In the French Revolution, he shows that the capacities of civil society for cooperation and associational life are largely shaped by the nature of political rule and the state's attitudes. Accordingly, he brings in the state as a major agent in shaping the capacities and nature of civil society.

The findings of the present study display close affinities to the Tocquevillean approach to civil society: Firstly, it shares Tocqueville's appreciation of the importance of the habits of the heart,²² that is the national (political) culture which embraces the faith (religious and cultural), passions, norms, ethics and values of a society. The role of civil religion in the formation of a democratic policy is evident in his analysis of, *Democracy in America*. The Tocquevillean insight is clear in Lindholm's study of the Islamic Middle East, where he successfully makes the connection between the United States and the Middle East: two completely different societies and states, which resemble each other in their cultural heritage of egalitarianism, absence of inherited hierarchical structures of aristocracy along with individualist competitiveness.²³

Two key concepts of Tocquevillean thought became evident in my analysis of the Gülen Community's sites: trust and public spirit. Trust largely determines the capacity of association and cooperation in society. An interesting parallel may be easily drawn between Tocqueville's emphasis on the public spirit and Gülen's *dava* (mission, issue), which brought a diversity of people together for a common goal. However, to draw a completely optimistic picture on the basis of these emergent sensibilities of trust, association and cooperation, would be too simplistic, unless the dark sides and ambiguity of civil society in Turkey were considered. The historically rooted tension between Islam and the state surfaces often in contemporary Turkey, in the form of societal clashes and ruptures, the expectations of betrayal, erratic distrust, uncivil forms of contestations etc. In other words, mutual fear between Islam and secular culture is by no means overcome, despite the emergent indications of a developing civil society. The abilities of civil society to survive

²¹Tocqueville (1955).

²²Tocqueville (1945), p.539-41.

²³Lindholm (1996).

its dark side depend on its ability to “gradually” transform both the political culture and the institutional linkages between society and the state.

Tocqueville's approach to civil society is irreplaceably sound in its sharp focus on the interaction between civil society and the state. Differently stated, civil society is redefined primarily as the capacities of the state and society to penetrate each other through civil means and democratic channels. Refusing to acknowledge the futile debate over the primacy of state or civil society,²⁴ this study portrays an emergent or proto civil society, in Bryant's terms, which transforms the conventional linkages between Islam and the state. Evidently, the third Tocquevillean affinity of this study is its approach to civil society as the capacity to self-organize.²⁵ However, self-organization is not an inherent guarantee for civility. Many fundamentalist Islamic organizations may be self-organized, but the nature of the organization and the means they employ in their activities largely determines their civility. The strength of a Tocquevillean analysis is its emphasis on the nature of political rule and the state, which has an effect on the nature of self-organization in society.²⁶ Bryant clearly separates “civil society against the state” and “civil society in constructive relation with a reformed state”.²⁷ This, I believe, clarifies most of the confusion about the term, civil society. It is true that some conceptions of civil society try to say “too many things”.²⁸ For example Marxist and Gramscian approaches which juxtapose civil society against the state are not useful in explaining the uniqueness of Gülen in the Muslim world. Gülen's self-organizational abilities are strengthened and flourished by its capacity to engage the state. Thus, Gülen appears as a challenge to the theories, which view Islam ultimately in opposition to the state.

Fourthly, Tocqueville's definition of civil society has been the basis of my discomfort with the contemporary focuses of theories of civil society and Islam, i. e. the compatibility of them. The static visions of the compatibility debate compares and juxtaposes some

²⁴K. Kumar (1993) “Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term”, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.44. See also the rest of his debate with Bryant, no.45.

²⁵Tocqueville (1955), p. 515.

²⁶Tocqueville (1945).

²⁷C.G.A. Bryant (1994) “A Further Comment on Kumar's Civil Society”, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45.

²⁸K. Kumar (1994), “Civil Society Again: A Reply to Christopher Bryant's ‘Social Self-organization, Civility and Sociology’”, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.45, p. 128.

putatively inherent qualities of Islam against some putatively universal and neutral qualities of civil society. The suggestion to shift the locus of the debate has everything to do with the Tocquevillean tradition. Its conception of civil society is dynamic, since it prioritizes interactions with the state.²⁹

In addition to the relevancy of the historical baggage, the usefulness of the concept has been also questioned. Civil society has been criticized as being too elusive and ultra-elastic. Does civil society have anything to contribute to the concepts and institutions of liberal democratic theory, which already provide a rich vocabulary such as constitutionalism, citizenship, human rights and democracy? (Kumar, 1993, p.391) Do we need such an elastic term as civil society, which is overused to mean numerous things?

Nobody can deny that civil society is at home with liberalism and democracy³⁰. Moreover, it enthusiastically embraces public sphere conceptually as well as in everyday life (Bryant, 1994, p.498-499). However, the undeniable kinship between these terms does neither eradicate civil society nor render it useless. On the contrary, it makes civil society more of a central concern for social theory.

Contrary to suggestions to abandon and/or replace the term with the vocabulary of liberal democracy,³¹ this empirically-based study will elaborate in detail, that Turkish case and Gülen are highly demonstrative of the unavoidable usefulness and irreplaceability of civil society by the vocabulary of liberal democracy. Having the first experimentations with constitutions in the Ottoman Empire, (Gulhane Hatti Humayun in 1870 and Kanun-i Esasi, 1908), the tradition of constitutionalism in the Turkish Republic has a long tradition.³² Moreover, it has been one of the most functional electoral democracies in the Middle East. On top of all these distinctions in the Muslim world, the Turkish Republic endowed women with political rights such as the right to vote and to be elected to the parliament earlier than many Western countries. However, was democracy located in a vibrant civil society? Despite all these political accomplishments, or perhaps, due to these

²⁹With regard to the sophisticated versions of the state-civil society dynamics see especially Hall (1995); (1986); Mann (1993).

³⁰ Hall (1995).

³¹ K. Kumar (1993) "Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term", *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.44.

³² See Berkes (1999).

self-assuring successes, Turkey is a perfect example, which illustrates the irreplaceability and unavoidability of civil society. It displays how the periodical frustrations and failures of republicanism, liberal democracy, constitutionalism, electoral democracy, to be rooted in and flourish in civil society. The experiments of democracy have been frustrating in Turkey (the last instance being the state's ban of the religious party in government), due to the difficulties of a burgeoning civil society, which is needed not only to accommodate Islam but also to shelter democracy.

Secondly, it may seem like a paradox that I employ civil society and not the public sphere as a conceptual tool to understand and analyze the Gülen Community. Kumar insists that Habermas' account of the public sphere as a clearer and more helpful concept over "most of the uses of the idea of civil society" (Kumar, 1994, p.129). On the basis of its developing school of thought and the public debate it propels, Gülen appears indeed as the corner-stone of a flourishing public sphere in Turkey. It is true that Gülen has been one of the most visible examples of the public faces of Islam³³ due to the platform of dialogue, debate and societal compromise it creates. However, this does not repudiate civil society as an analytical tool, mainly because it does not exclude the public sphere. On the contrary, civil society embraces public sphere. Bryant correctly argues that the public sphere is primarily about communication, public debate, discourse, --namely talk-- whereas civil society is all of those and more. This makes civil society a particularly contested term. Bryant's suggestion is useful. In order to avoid turning civil society to a catch-all term, it has to be situated in a well-defined tradition³⁴. The well-established historical career of the term is extremely helpful retaining its unavoidable qualities and to contextualize them in contemporary conditions. Put more concretely, civil society rooted in a Tocquevillean tradition is sound and has more explanatory strength, as it fulfills more than what public sphere as a conceptual tool has to offer. That is the ways it integrates social conditions and institutions, which underlie the popular concept of public sphere, i.e. public faces and debates.

³³ N. Gole (2000a).

³⁴ C.G.A Bryant (1993) "Social Self-Organization, Civility and Sociology: A Comment on Kumar's Civil Society", *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44.

Civil society and "its" public sphere:

Unlike the unique historical career of civil society, Habermas' "bourgeois public sphere" referred to a particular epoch.³⁵ This sphere, according to Habermas, institutionalized an opposition between the state and society as well as a separation of private interest from public interest (Habermas, 1989, p.24). Accordingly, the public sphere is a realm where private people publicly use reason to "engage ... in a debate" (Habermas, 1989, p.27), whereas civil society is the quality of the social world³⁶ --not a particular sphere of a society-- which encourages associational capacities of people and organizations to cooperate. Obviously, civil society does not exclude public debate, voices and identities. However its corner-stone is not "talk". Neither can it be reduced to a mere platform of collective action and struggle against the state. Civil society is a conceptual tool to captures and analyzes the infrastructural penetrations between society and the state.³⁷ However, this culture of cooperation requires the development of linkages between civil organizations and the state and thereby collaborations between different self-organizations. In this sense, civil society is a useful term, which overcomes the conventional juxtaposition of society against the state, without discarding or underemphasizing identity. In fact, the liberal conception of civil society emphasizes the importance of individuation through self-explorations and experimentation for the formation of identity.³⁸

Recent spokespeople for the public sphere criticize Habermas in constructive ways: They correctly highlight the historical and contemporary variety of the public spheres and the competition between these spheres.³⁹ Moreover, they criticize Habermas' concept as being too unitarian: How could a "rational political consensus [be] achieved in a pluralistic society"?⁴⁰ Their argument is that Habermas' public sphere is not a diversity-friendly concept and thereby neglects culture and identities social movements, people's voices and

³⁵C. J. Calhoun (1992) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

³⁶Hall (1995).

³⁷Hall (1986); Mann (1993).

³⁸Hall (1995).

³⁹G. Eley (1992) "Nations, Public and Political Cultures", in C. J. Calhoun (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁴⁰McCarthy (1992) "Practical Discourse: On the Relation of Morality to Politics" in Calhoun (ed).

discourses, gender differences and agency⁴¹. Indeed, civil society as a conceptual tool does capture this diversity, too. However, in the recent revisions of the public sphere, diversity tends to be a cure, solution and explanation for all reasons and all the times. In contrast, civil society does not romanticize diversity, since some differences may not necessarily be considered as “civil”. Civil society resides in the ability to “agree to disagree”⁴² and to manage this minimum consensus through infrastructural means and institutionalized channels. In this sense, civil society proves to be a strong tool for the present study, which enables me separate between “saying, talking, representing” and “doing”. Put more concretely, it helped me to overcome the suspicions of *takkiye* (dissimulation) of Islam, since I focused empirically on what they were actually doing, i.e. their institutional linkages with the Republic, in addition to their discourses, public presentations and public faces.

Despite all these advantages of civil society as a concept, the fashionable overuse of the public sphere is not surprising since diversity is indeed a cool concept. Moreover, the procedural concept of the public sphere (as opposed to the more substantive concept) is useful: “What is important here is not so much what the public discourse is about as the way in which this discourse takes place” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 80).⁴³ However, by the structure of the public sphere, Benhabib refers to “egalitarian reciprocity” and the “ideal speech situation”. These are identified as the structural components of the public sphere. Unfortunately, the analyzing merely the discourse and the meanings miss the underlying institutional arrangements and their implications, unless its structural base are taken into account.⁴⁴ Benhabib’s focus on inclusion/exclusion (of women’s concerns) from the public debate is a good critical point. However, a Tocquevillean conception of civil society is more useful: it captures the inclusion/exclusion (of the women) not only from the public sphere but also from the infrastructural power relations and thereby, from engagements with the state.⁴⁵ Indeed, women may be visible in the public sphere and participate in public debate, as in the case of Gülen. However, this participation and visibility may be

⁴¹Calhoun(1992) p. 33-36.

⁴²Hall (1995).

⁴³S. Benhabib (1992) “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, Liberal Tradition and Jürgen Habermas”, in Calhoun (ed.).

⁴⁴See Gole (2000a).

masking their exclusion from the offices and institutions of power, which will be elaborate critically in Chapter 8.

Unfortunately, in the new critics, Habermas' structural transformations and their institutional base are abandoned to a considerable extent at the cost of celebrating the diversity of merely public appearances and debate. In other words, Habermas' concept that is devoid of its structural base, has the potential of rendering the public sphere to mere public appearances and visibilities, of which I will underline the potential aridity and misinterpretations in the same chapter: I will argue that women's public visibility and participation may provide us with false liberation and emancipation, unless accompanied by women's integration into engagement with power structure. In other words, women's public visibility and participation should not be mistaken as empowerment and/or gender equality, as long as women are excluded from infrastructural power structures and relations.

The new critics abandon Habermas' integration of the state into his theory of the public sphere.⁴⁶ Calhoun observes that "Habermas approaches the public sphere and its transformations more as reflections of underlying developments in civil society and the state" (Calhoun, 1992, p.37). Indeed, Habermas opposes civil society, as "a genuine domain of private autonomy" against the state (Habermas, 1989, p. 12).⁴⁷ As implied in the "bourgeois" connotations of the Habermasian term, civil society is referred to as an anti-state arena without any reservation.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the public sphere is still widely understood as a "defense of civil society against the state" (Calhoun, 1992, p.39)⁴⁹ However, neither the opposition between the state and civil society, nor the interconnectedness and relation between civil society and public sphere, are fully developed among the new critiques of Habermas' public sphere.⁵⁰

⁴⁵See Chapter 8.

⁴⁶ There are exceptions such as N. Frazer (1992) "Rethinking the Public sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" in Calhoun (ed.).

⁴⁷Cited in Calhoun (1992), p.7.

⁴⁸A. Arato and J. Cohen (1992) *Civil Society and Political Theory*. MIT Press.

⁴⁹ See also Calhoun (1992), p. 7, 9, 10, 13.

⁵⁰ Frazer (1992) attempts to reflect the critical deconstruction of public/private dichotomy to the conceptual framework of civil society and the state. However, her analysis does not show a permeation of these analytically different concepts, but the interaction/relation between them. The interaction she refers is

In addition to the above mentioned theoretical reasons for maintaining civil society as a conceptual tool, there is also a non-academic motivation: The increasing yearnings for and popularity of civil society in the contemporary Islamic Middle East is pushing us to inquire what is happening “out there”. More concretely, what makes Fethullahists underline that they are for civil society and that the Gülen Community is primarily a civil society organization? In addition to the empirical findings of the thesis, this self-definition itself requires special attention to the theories of civil society.

Pessimists and Optimists of the Compatibility Debate

Despite its flaws and futility, the compatibility debate was the starting point or the stimulating force behind this project. Hence, my initial aim was to examine empirically if the Gülen Community was a civil society organization, as Fethullahists’ self-definition suggests, or not. Despite the seeming simplicity of the subject matter, the realization of this objective has been far from an easy task, mainly because not only civil society and but also Islam are highly contested phenomena in theory as well as in practice.⁵¹ Both suffered from universalistic theorization and scarcity of empirically-based studies.⁵² Most of the studies suffered from the difficulty “to particularize” Islam and civil society and to “make (them) concrete”.⁵³ Civil society as a putative universal idea and ideal (often as a prescriptive hope) and Islam as a presumably universal all-encompassing monolithic system (based on a universal doctrine) did not lend themselves easily for local empirical research.

Similarly, although the predominant theoretical tradition of compatibility debate stimulated a useful start for my research, it was resistant to everyday life of the Islamic Community. This misfit between theory and field experience required me to adjust the

between the parliament and civil society. In this sense, it is debatable why she needs to call the parliament “a strong civil society”.

⁵¹For the contestations in everyday life, see Chapters 5 and 6.

⁵² A sound tradition of anthropology Islam does exist, however, it needs to be extended in the face of the increasing undertheorized and non-empirical, mostly journalistic accounts of Islam. As the most often referred ethnographies of Islam, see M. Gilsenan (1990) *Recognizing Islam Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East*. London: I. B. Tauris and Co Ltd.; C. Geertz (1968) *Islam Observed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

⁵³For an attempt to particularize a presumably universal term, civil society through ethnographic methods, see the exceptional studies in Hann and Dunn (1996), p.2-3.

methodology.⁵⁴ The ethnographic research, which developed out of the gap between theory and everyday life, reshaped questions and pushed me towards various and multiple sites, out of which both new issues/problems findings and conclusions emerged. In this sense, it helped me to rethink the theory and restate the questions. However, it definitely did not lead to obliterate the term “civil society”.

Optimists and pessimist of compatibility: Islam versus the state?

As already mentioned, the compatibility debate takes place between two major camps. Most of the times these camps talk pass each other in the absence of empirical studies. The pre-existing bifurcation in the literature puts a considerable amount of pressure on my research during the fieldwork. Interestingly, beyond the theoretical and academic concerns, everyday life in Turkey requires a clearly defined positioning in one of those camps.

Along with civil society, Islam’s compatibility with liberal democracy, nation-state, nationalism, secularism, modernity and rationality has been an issue of disagreement between scholars. Most of the time civil society is used as an umbrella concept to imply all of these terms and to simply capture the wide-ranging incompatibilities or compatibilities of Islam.⁵⁵

Optimists argue that the Islamic heritage is democratic⁵⁶. The so-called “apologetic chord”, in Sivan’s terms, defend the compatibility of Islam and democracy⁵⁷ and emphasize the difference between the concepts of democracy in the West and in Islam⁵⁸.

In Islamic history, there are a number of very important concepts and images that shape the contemporary visions of what a just society should be. These are the foundations for the Islamic perceptions of democracy. Despite the great dynamism and diversity among contemporary Muslims in terms of political views, these are core concepts that are central to the political positions of virtually all Muslims. What varies is the definition of the concepts –not recognition of the concepts themselves (Esposito and Voll, 1996, p.23)

⁵⁴See also Chapter 3 for my rethinking and readjusting of the initially proposed research methods.

⁵⁵ S. Huntington (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of the World order*. New York: Simon and Schuster. B. Lewis (1993) “Islam and Liberal Democracy”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, February, p. 89-94.

J.Piscatori and D. Eickelman (1996) *Muslim Politics*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press; Norton (1996); J. Esposito and J. Voll (1996). S. Zubaida (1995) “Is there a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner’s Sociology of Islam”, *Economy and Society*, vol. 24, no. 2, p.151-188. While Gellner, Huntington and Lewis regard Islam as an inherent enemy of civil society, Esposito and Voll, Eickelman and Piscatori, Zubaida and Norton disagree with them for several reasons.

⁵⁶Esposito and Voll (1996), p. 21-32.

⁵⁷ E. Sivan 1985) *Radical Islam: Midieval Theology and Modern Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁵⁸ J.Esposito and J. Piscatory (1991), p. 438.

One of the core concepts, perhaps the most important one, is *tevhid*, that is the oneness and uniqueness of God. *Tevhid* is the affirmation that there is only one sovereign in Islam that is God.⁵⁹ This statement puts *tevhid* in the heart of the disagreement between optimists and pessimists. According to pessimists, *tevhid* is the main reason why Islamic democracy and civil society are incompatible. They argue that the sovereignty of God is in conflict with sovereignty of the people.⁶⁰ In contrast, optimists claim that “absolute sovereignty of God makes any hierarchy impossible, since before God all humans are equal...A hierarchical, dictatorial system has historically been condemned as non-Islamic” (Esposito and Voll, 1996, p.25). In this sense, *tevhid* provides a worldview, which rejects arbitrary rule, since “man fears only one power” (Shariati, 1979, p.87). From this perspective, Islam is inherently democratic, especially because every sane Muslim is entitled equally to interpret the law of God. Hence, Mawdudi argues that if popular sovereignty is restricted and direct by the God’s law, Islam is perfectly compatible with democracy.⁶¹ However, this festive presentation of Islam does not obliterate the fact that Islam has been interpreted in numerous ways, which has supported dictatorships as well as democracies.⁶²

Suspicious commentators of Islamic democracy highlight the irony in the Islamists challenge to the principles of liberal democracy. As Yesim Arat suggests, since the primary contract in Islam is with God, this contract may easily render Muslim choices and rights irrelevant.⁶³ Yet, optimists respond that Islamic democracy is based on core concepts of *shura* (consultation), *icma* (consensus) and *ictihad* (interpretative judgement).⁶⁴ Muslims delegate authority to the ruler, but their opinion count in the affairs of the state.⁶⁵ Accordingly, optimists claim that the principles of egalitarianism, political consultation, personal liberty and dignity are essential in the Islamic heritage.

Popular participation is highlighted as another important cultural characteristic of Islam. Islam appears perfectly compatible with civil society when its capacities for

⁵⁹ Esposito and Voll (1996), p.23.

⁶⁰ E. Gellner (1992) *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*. London ; New York : Routledge.

⁶¹ Mawdudi (1982) “Political Theory of Islam”, in J. Donohue and J. Esposito (eds.) *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.253-54.

⁶² Esposito and Piscatory (1991), p.434.

⁶³ Arat (2000a) “Gender and Citizenship in Turkey”, in Suad Joseph (ed.) *Gender and Citizenship in Middle East*.

⁶⁴ Esposito and J. Piscatory (1991), p.427-440.

voluntary informal networks at the local level are considered.⁶⁶ Recently, a group of theoreticians of civil society in the Middle East argued that civil society in the region needs to be understood primarily as informal associations. Put differently, it does not need to be fashioned or conceptualized as the existence of formal political organizations and impersonal associations, as its evolution in the West suggests.⁶⁷ However, this particular approach to civil society is problematic. It leads to a narrow understanding of civil society as merely a civic culture. Subsequently, it contributes to the juxtapositions of Islam and the secular state, since Islamic civil society is reduced to grass-roots resistance or community-based opposition to the state. Most of the studies of the *Refah* were along this line. J. White portrays civil society in Turkey primarily as local community action and interpersonal trust:

The *Refah* may owe its electoral victories to protest and pragmatism, but its organizational methods have been crucial in its success. Unlike other parties, the RP does not rely primarily on the media to get its message across, but works face to face. Street by street and village by village, cells of voter are built up....RP also maintains many types of clubs that bring together potential voters. The RP's strategy relies on building interpersonal trust. It takes full advantage of neighborhood, regional and cultural bonds that tie people to one another in mutual assistance as well as its flip side: mutual obligation.(White, 1995, p.11)

White continues that some secularist or simply pragmatic non-Islamic grass root organizations operate on the same principle as *Refah*. Hence, she concludes, that the “political culture of civil society” in Turkey is mainly “interpersonal trust based on community affiliations” (White, 1995, p.11-12). She generalizes further that “this is something intrinsic to Turkish society, not unique to Islamic groups” (White, 1995, p.12). Although she correctly observes that *Refah*'s success was largely based on local networking, her generalization of civil society and political culture in Turkey as primarily communalist is debatable. The trouble with this approach is that it largely misses the emergent transformations in political culture, that is, the shifting linkages between Islam and the state. The findings of the present study reveal both informal and formal/contractual social relations in the Gülen Community. The heavy focus on *Refah* in social research is partly responsible for rendering civil society to civic culture.⁶⁸ *Refah*, indeed, failed in

⁶⁵ Esposito (1991) *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, p.149.

⁶⁶See especially Eickelman (1996) “Foreword” to Norton (ed.); White (1996).

⁶⁷Eickelman (1996).

⁶⁸For an approach, which equates civil society to civic culture, see Seligman (1992) *The Idea of a Civil Society*. New York: Free Press.

transferring its local networking abilities to the level of the state. However, the discussion of civil society and Islam should not be restricted to *Refah*, as its ban and the radically reduced popularity of its successor party *Fazilet* (Virtue) also clearly illustrates.

The romanticization of Islamic civic culture (reciprocal, egalitarian and communalist) over the universalistic, impersonal contractual relations of the “Western-originated” civil society is problematic. It is evident that the modernity manifests itself as alternative combinations of tradition and creativity as well as imitation of the West. The warmth of the moral community at home is comforting in the face of continuous adaptation to the norms of other than one’s own. However, moral community should not be prioritized the way optimists tend to do. On the basis of empirical data, however, the present study reveals that the Gülen Community displays both formal and informal types of organizations. Indeed, Gülen’s distinction is due to its ability to combine civic culture and voluntary associations with formal and contractual linkages to the state. Put more concretely, Gülen’s main difference from *Refah*, is its ability to transform vibrant local networking to the level of state and international world-order. As following chapters will illustrate, it is wrong conceptualize trust strictly to interpersonal, informal and community-based relations in Turkey. My findings reveal that trust (as well as other issues concerning civil society) does not exist as a pure and sterile non-Western phenomena.⁶⁹

It is important to note that the optimist spokespeople of compatibility have heavily focused not only on *Refah* but also on democracy. White claims that “in Turkey people believe that democracy –voting—is the only legitimate way to attain political power” (White, 1995, p.12). Yavuz also regards *Refah*’s coalition government with True Path party in 1996, as a “break in Turkish history that was the outcome of a search for new relations between state and society” (Yavuz, 1997, p.63). He claims that: “Turkey sets an example of what is possible in integrating Islamic movements into its relatively democratic political system. By accommodating Islamic voices and expanding the boundaries of participation, Turkey has preserved and consolidated its democracy and civil society” (p.63). Yavuz is right in highlighting that the interaction between Islam and the state is dynamic and evolving. However, his focus to theorizing state-society interaction, that is

⁶⁹See Chapter 7.

the political participation and *Refah*, needs to qualify civil society further. The state's ban of *Refah* in 1997 clearly demonstrated once more that democracy in Turkey retains incivil tendencies⁷⁰. Therefore, a Tocquevillean approach to civil society is stronger and more suitable to understand Turkish Islam, since it highlights that democracy is desirable only if it is married to "civil practices" (Hall, 1995, p. 26). Put differently, the nature of the state-society relation appears as the main issue in the face of disfunctioning of formal processes of democracy in Turkey. Accordingly, the selective emphasis of the optimists on political participation and democracy has the cost of decentering main concepts of civil society such as civility, freedom and empowerment.

As different from the compatibility arguments, the present study reveals how different engagements with the state and/or "nation as the state"⁷¹ empowers the Gülen Community. Similar to secularist circles, which are called second Republicanists, Gülen engages the Republic through various means with the aim of transforming it. In fact, contrary to White's conviction, political participation and voting are not necessarily the primary means to attain power. The votes for political Islam are inconsistent, elusive and unpredictable. This became obvious when *Refah*'s votes shifted to the ultra-nationalist National Movement Party right after its ban, but more importantly they are "less the result of Islam than of a complex set of factors" (Yavuz, 1997, p.72). Economic incentives, as well as local services, play a role in people's voting behavior. In Turkey, the pathway to accumulate power for the Islamists is not primarily through political participation. Furthermore, the separation of political and other sources of power, as well as dividing cultural and political Islam does not help much in understanding decency of social life. Accordingly, the following chapters will show how Gülen's elective affinities with the republic, and the related emergent sensibilities of engagements with the state, facilitate its empowerment.

Perhaps, the weakest accounts of compatibility between civil society and Islam are raised on the issue of freedom and liberty, which has been the core concept of civil society in the West. Optimists argue that freedom is defined differently in the Islamic world-view. The folk Islam defines freedom as "a path leading to transcendence, a dream of a different

⁷⁰ See Hall (1995), p.26; Gellner (1994).

nature that had its institutional roots in Sufism or Islamic mysticism” (Mardin, 1995, p.290). Rosenthal also argues that freedom as an ideal was not unknown in Islam.

However, he added:

Consciousness of the basic human need for freedom was not general and not strongly developed. It was not sufficiently strong, for instance to produce rebels against societal restraint, who might have fought such a restraint in the name of individual liberty. Muslim society, as a completely integrated structure, could have hardly tolerated attempts to change it in the name of so powerful an idea as that of freedom, which one unleashed might have endangered the whole structure (Rosenthal, 1960, p.122)

The contradiction between the unity in the Muslim community, and the need for individual liberty and space in a civil society has been one of the concerns of the compatibility debate. The absoluteness of truth in Islam (and the related all-encompassing moral world) versus rationality attached to science was another trouble that optimists had to deal. Yavuz argued that “Recognizing that modernity does not acknowledge God, Nurists want to overcome this by calling Muslims to rationalize the Qur’an and take science seriously.” (Yavuz, 2000a, p.15). In its broadest form, the debate extends to discuss the compatibility of Islam with modernity. Numerous responses have come from the optimists using different degrees of relativism, hermeneutics of the embedded meanings and interpretation, which I will not be able to cover here. Some of the vocal responses were that Islam redefines its own modernity in quite creative ways⁷². Islam is seen as one of the multiple modernities, which redefines modernity in authentic ways.⁷³ However, the ongoing polarization of Islamists and secularists as well as state’s ban of *Refah* does not support evidence for the optimist view of a smooth cooperation and trust.

Diversity has been emphasized as excess against the blueprints of the homogenized *Umma*.⁷⁴ Many optimists present snapshots of diversity, i.e. the numerous public faces of Islam.⁷⁵ They argue that Islamist movements contribute to diversity and pluralism and

⁷¹ See Chapter 7.

⁷² Gole (1993).

⁷³ N. Gole (2000b) “Snapshots in Islamic Modernities”, *Deadalus*, vol.129, no.1, p. 91-119; S. N. Eisenstein (2000) “Multiple Modernities”, *Deadalus*, vol.129, no.1.

⁷⁴ Eickelman and Piscatory (1996).

⁷⁵ Gole (2000b); (2000a).

thereby foster new social contracts⁷⁶. "Cohabitation of differences" was made a core issue, but very few optimists bother to explain the nature of the cohabitations and capacities of cooperation in society.⁷⁷ Optimists confine their interest to the apparent super-diversified public faces of Islam and the related diversity they create in the public sphere.

Unfortunately, they are missing the inner propellants, and the complicated ways this seeming diversity is structured. They neglect that these public presentations may hide a real or potential homogeneity beyond their fashionable public faces and discourses. It is neither diversity nor uniformity, which determine the prospects of Islam and civil society. The underlying structures of the differences as well as homogeneities have to be explored in order to reveal how these local structures interact with political institutions

The theories of multiculturalism are not explanatory to explain Turkish case fully, definitely not the way they explained the Canadian case.⁷⁸ In contrast to their fashionable popularity in Turkey, the blind adaptation of these theories do not help us to understand the Turkish case for several obvious reasons: The cultural and political setting --institutions and processes-- is different than the countries, which provided case studies for multiculturalism theories. Instead of exploring the setting and the conditions, optimists have been busy celebrating diversity in Turkey. More importantly, their strong emphasis on self-organization (Islamic movements, groups, and organization) has led to a neglect of the state. They either conceptualized civil lives and "quest for identities" without the state or more often despite the state.⁷⁹ There are some accounts, which question taken-for-granted opposition between Islam and the "anti-religious" orientation of the Turkish state. However, they are anti-statist accounts which deny (the analytical and ontological) separation between the state and civil society in Turkey.⁸⁰

⁷⁶H. Yavuz (1999) "Search for a New Contract: Fethullah Gülen, Virtue Party and the Kurds", SAIS Review, vol 19, no.1; Gole (1993); (1996).

⁷⁷R. Kasaba (1998) "Co-habitation of Differences", in R. W. Hefner (ed.) *Democratic Civility: the History and Cross-cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal*. New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers.

⁷⁸C. Taylor. (1992) *Multi-Culturalism and the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁷⁹H. Yavuz (2000b); (2000a); Gole (1997).

⁸⁰L. Koker (1998) "Ulusal Kimlik ve Devlet Mesrutiyeti: Türkiye'nin Demokratik Deneyiminin Celiskileri" (National Identity and the Legitimacy of the State: The Ambivalence of Democratic Experiences in Turkey) in E. Ozdalga and S. Persson (ed.) *Civil Society. Democracy and Muslim World*. Turk Tarih Vakfı Yayınları 76; Y. Navaro-Yashin (1998) "The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society", *New Perspectives*, vol.18, p.1-22. Yael Navaro deconstructs the civil society-state separation with regard to the interaction between Welfare

The excessive optimist focus on diversity was a response to the liberal conception of civil society, which dislikes extensive shared social identity in a Durkheimian sense.⁸¹ Only a limited sense of unity, and a minimum agreement to disagree is desirable for a civil society, which would leave space for the individual to experiment.⁸² The trouble with the optimist accounts, which try to keep up the demands of a liberal civil society, is the following: They tend to equate diversity with civility. As Gellner claimed, not every autonomous self-organization is civil.⁸³ The key is cooperation and trust in society and not just the existence of differences⁸⁴: “Civil society is thus a way of life rather than a blanket admission that anything goes” (Hall, 2000, p.54) Chapter 6 illustrates that absence of decency in the clashes between secularist and Fethullahist organizations reduce their differences to a series of uncivil encounters. Similarly, unless the homogenizing drives in *Gülen Cemaat* (Community) are to be balanced with the pluralistic *Cemiyet* (Association), powerful self-organizations may have uncivil faces.

Instead of judging the compatibility of Islam with abstract conceptions of liberty, homogeneity, rationality, modernity etc., Chapter 5 traces the nature of unity, uniformity and diversity in the everyday life of Gülen. Stated more specifically, it questions how diversity and uniformity are structured in Gülen. It thereby explores if the conventional “social cages” of Islam.⁸⁵ Are the cages transformed through the emergent Islamic sensibilities in Gülen? What kind of concrete adaptations did Gülen experience in its *dava* to reconcile tradition and modernity? What are the particular manifestations of these arrangements in everyday life? In contrast to these particularizing questions, the optimist studies of identity politics portray diversity at face value and leave unity unnoticed. Moreover, they do not explore the inner propellants and structure of fashionable diversities.

and the state, According to her, civil society --thereby Welfare party as a representative organ of political Islam in Turkey-- does not exist as an analytically distinct category from the state.

⁸¹ Hall (1995), p.26.

⁸² Ibid, p.6 and p.15.

⁸³ Gellner (1994).

⁸⁴ J. A Hall (1998a) “The Genealogies of Civility” in R. W. Hefner (ed.) *Democratic Civility: the History and Cross-cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal*. New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers.

⁸⁵ Ibid,

In contrast to the optimist accounts that Islam is an inherent propellant of civil society and democracy in the Muslim world, pessimists argue that Islam is the source of the problem, clash and violence.⁸⁶ The pessimists adopt and build on the mainstream literature, which renders Islam a political threat to the secular state and civil society. It is seen as a threat not only to the secular liberal West but also the secular states in the Middle East, such as the Turkish Republic.⁸⁷ In contrast to the optimists who celebrate diversity as an end in itself, the fear of Islam led the pessimists to overgeneralize the wide-ranging diversity of Islamic groups as a monolithic, fundamentalist and thereby anti-system front. Gellner's major question was how Islam managed to be so successful under the conditions of secular modernity? He argued that Islam, as a supposedly united front the *Umma* (Muslim Community)-- was secularization-resistant and blind to national loyalties.⁸⁸

The process of modernization destroyed [the] communities that had provided the basis for the low culture of Islam. By turning clansmen, lineage members, villagers and tribesmen into labor migrants and shantytown dwellers, it atomized the population and promoted them to find their identity in a high religion, in a high culture that provides an identity shared by all Muslims, uniting them against the outsiders (Gellner, 1995).⁸⁹

The views of the pessimists on the issue have been clear:

From the historical perspective, it would seem that of all the non-Western civilizations in the world, Islam offers the best prospects for Western-style democracy. Historically, culturally and religiously, it is the closest to the West, sharing much--though by no means all-- of the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman heritage, that helped to form our modern civilization. From a political perspective however, Islam seems to offer the worst prospects for liberal democracy. (Lewis, 1993, p. 89)

Pessimists clearly render Islam the source of the problem: The essence of Islam is seen as responsible not only for political instability but also for violence within and between civilizations.⁹⁰ Bernard Lewis states: "The question ... is not whether liberal democracy is compatible with Islamic fundamentalism, clearly it is not, but whether it is compatible with Islam itself" (Lewis, 1993, p.93). Despite a good deal of cultural essentialism, the

⁸⁶Huntington (1996); Lewis (1993).

⁸⁷Acar (1994) "Islam in Turkey", in C. Balkir and A. M. Williams (eds.) *Turkey and Europe*. London, New York: Pinter Publishers Ltd.

⁸⁸Gellner (1981).

⁸⁹ The quote is from the transcript of a lecture Gellner gave in October 1995 in Heidelberg at a conference organized by Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut on "Religion as Culture and Anti-Culture". This is thought of as the last lecture of Gellner before he died in early November in Prague. This lecture was first published in *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*.

⁹⁰Huntington (1996); Lewis (1993).

optimists' certainty about the inabilities and defects of Islam in the political sphere is not to be rejected too quickly. Lewis continues his argument by giving some empirical evidence on the issue:

Of the forty-six sovereign states that make up the international Islamic Conference, only one, the Turkish Republic can be described as a democracy in Western terms, and even there the path to freedom has been beset by obstacles. (Lewis, 1993, p.89)

Similar to the general tendency among optimists, the pessimist camp separates cultural and political Islam. Unlike the optimists though, they discard the democracy-friendly cultural aspects and civic culture of Islam as defenses to promote Islam. Gellner is an example. He not only explains the sources of political instability in Islam but also denies seeing the tribal cultural and historical roots of Islam as indicators of "civil society". Adopting a highly qualified definition of civil society, he correctly warns against the tendency to equate any kind of diversity, such as tribal, anarchic and terrorist, with civil society.⁹¹ Moreover, he argues that some autonomous groups cannot be considered as civil society, because they cage individuals, such as the kinship groups do in Islam.⁹² In this way, Gellner narrows down the incompatibility debate to a neatly defined civil society and explained why Islam could not produce a civil society.⁹³

Gellner bases his model of Muslim society on Ibn Khaldun's oscillation theory. According to Gellner, Islam, unlike the irreversible unilinear rise of the West, is destined to decay in cycles. This is mainly because of the inevitable tension between the tribes and the center. Gellner portrays the cyclical politics in classical Islam: the refined and civilized city dwellers are ruled by a ruler of tribal origin. Tribes relatively egalitarian tribesmen dislike urban life and distrust political rule and thus, continuously pose a threat to the center.⁹⁴ In the absence of a strong state, which could tame the tribesmen, the townsmen had no option but to rely on the tribes for defense.

The separation between the center and tribes was also significant in terms of the division between High and Low Islam. The culture in the center, i.e. High Islam, is orthodox, scriptural, egalitarian and puritanical, whereas, the tribal folk culture of Low

⁹¹Gellner (1994).

⁹² Ibid.,;Gellner (1981).

⁹³Gellner (1981); (1994).

⁹⁴ Gellner (1981), p.17-25.

Islam is heterodox, ritualistic, hierarchical, pluralistic and fragmented. These two cultures are by no means mutually exclusive, but rather dependent on each other. The central rule is dependent on the military power and defense capacities of the tribes, as well as their provision of luxury goods. Tribesmen, on the other hand, are economically dependent on the center.

Although the defense intensive tribes were state-resistant --they could not be controlled by the state-⁹⁵ they were the potential state-founders. In this sense, Gellner argues that in Islam "politically the civilized were dependent on the barbarians" (Gellner, p. 28).⁹⁶ The core quality of the tribes, i.e. cohesion, starts to loosen in city life. Once the tribes involve the state, however, their egalitarian and civic characteristics decline and they become corrupt. The *ulema* (learned men or scholars of Islam) did turn their back to the rulers and invite one of the tribes periodically to replace the corrupted political rule. Once in power, the more cohesive tribe obtains the leadership and becomes corrupted. The pattern renders stable political rule impossible. In this manner, the pendulum continues to swing until modern times, when Islam manages to produce an alternative order out of itself, instead of having to follow a Western path. Its folk culture is sufficient to replace the role of high culture in maintaining social cohesion under the conditions of modernity, i.e. centralization of the political and military power. Gellner continues to argue that thanks to High Culture, Islam manages to adapt modernity, by remaining "secularization-resistant". Accordingly, this resistance is a major handicap for its prospects for civil society. In fact, Gellner keenly and insistently concludes that this makes Islam an enemy of civil society.⁹⁷ The Khaldunian cyclical theory is coherent in locating the political instabilities of the Muslim world in the distrust of politics, dissident amongst the tribes and the absence of strong states. When classical Islam is compared with the rise of West:

In Islam, unlike Christianity, there is no distinction between canon law and any other type of law, since the spiritual doctrine is its own theory. This political theory ... stands opposed in principle to the mundane practice of politics... Islam stands opposed to the mundane exercise of power, but cannot do without it. It opposes the political realm but cannot

⁹⁵ Hall (1986), p.92.

⁹⁶ Gellner (1981), p.15, 25; Hall (1986), p. 92, 96.

⁹⁷ Gellner (1994).

withdraw from it and organize society on religious lines as did Hinduism. (Hall, 1985, p. 85).

Consequently, this kind of attitude towards politics combines with an effective tribal order and blocks the emergence of a capitalist economy. Hence, Islam is missing two major components of civil society: Rational law and autonomous cities, i.e. the preconditions of the emergence of a dynamic market economy. In Europe, the birth of civil society preceded the emergence of a strong state, whereas in the Muslim world, civil society itself was impeded by specific historical conditions.

Interestingly, both optimistic and pessimistic accounts of Islam are often based on and legitimized by the historical and cultural heritage of Islam. Another commonality is the way they separate cultural and political aspects in their assessments of compatibility. However, one striking difference between the pessimists and optimists is the historical time period they highlight. As the contemporary believers still aspire, the Golden Age of Islam is known by its successful combination of religion with political rule.⁹⁸ The Islamic faith in egalitarianism had its roots in the heydays of early Islam, i.e. the reign of Muhammad, the Prophet. In the days of the original *Umma*, there were no claims to superiority. As Lindholm clearly explains:

One's status as noble or slave, black or white, wealthy or impoverished, Arab or Persian was irrelevant for one's salvation in the charismatic community by shared devotion to Allah and His Prophet. Holding fast to their egalitarian faith, these early Muslims saw they could vanquish the world. But governing what they had conquered, while keeping their ideals intact was another matter (Lindholm, 1996, p. 82-83)

Early Islam is also known by the pre-dominance of economic trade, as manifested in craft guilds, which were autonomous from the government. These organizations are interpreted by optimists as a community of trust and shared consensus on minimizing distinctions of wealth and power.⁹⁹ Long-distance trade was contributing to the fragile nature of the central state, while strengthening "informal ties of trust" though international trade (Lindholm, 1996, p.31).

⁹⁸ With regard to the historical, cultural and ethical context of the early Islam, see Lindholm (1996), p.78-83.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.31.

Contrary to Gellner's pessimistic historical anthropology --yet, also sharing many of its insights--, Lindholm argues, that Islamic culture was not that different from the civilizations which produced the greatest civil societies and democracies. His account of Islamic culture as egalitarian, conducive to individual competitiveness and devoid of historically rooted hierarchies compares the political culture of the Islamic Middle East with America. In both cultures, there is a faith in egalitarianism; in the former, people's equality in front of God, and in the latter, people's equality in rational law.

Lindholm's positive depiction of Islamic political culture is neither naïve nor reductionist. Consequently, instead of concluding that Islam is simply compatible with democracy or civil society on the basis of its cultural heritage, he argues that the egalitarian participation in Islam¹⁰⁰ is limited to the local level because it is not easily transferable to broader democratic participation. Consequently, he ends up agreeing with the pessimists that the spheres of citizenship and the state are mutually exclusive in Islam because the state is regarded as distrustful, corrupt, and illegitimate (p. 266). Hence, the civic culture, which is supposed to be conducive to civil society, seems to be unsuccessful in transferring its qualities to the political institutional sphere (p.271). Lindholm argues:

The despotism of the center can therefore be understood not as a result of absence of any democratic and egalitarian tradition, but rather as a response to a tradition taken to its extremes.

Without a legitimate state sphere for public service, Middle Eastern traditions of democracy, equality and participation in the rivalries of the local polity trained men to value their freedom from domination, but did not lead to any wider sense of citizenship or community beyond the local necessities of mutual defense and aggression. The public world was conceived solely as an arena of individual pursuit of glory by free agents who hoped to become tyrants themselves ... The pattern serves a lesson that we should be careful not to romanticize democratic and egalitarian local structures in themselves; when individuals lack a public goal or a legitimized governmental framework, and are motivated solely by personal aggrandizement. Local independence may easily coincide with national repression and democratic communities may produce aspiring dictators rather participatory citizens. (Lindholm, 1996, p. 267)

Despite an egalitarian cultural heritage, classical Islam failed to produce stable and moderate political rule. But, "if the pervasive ethos of egalitarianism and competitive individualism tends to fragment secular and sacred empires alike, why did the Ottomans

¹⁰⁰ See also White (1996) for the contemporary manifestations of the local level civic culture in Turkey.

not succumb to the cycle and collapse” in the way described in detail by Khaldun? (Lindholm, 1996, p. 120) Obviously, Ottomans did not produce a participatory democracy, nor did they develop a concept of citizenship in the modern sense. Then, what was distinct in the Empire?

Although Gellner’s Khaldunian model is a useful tool to understand political instabilities in certain parts and historical periods in the Muslim world, it is not a sufficient tool to judge Islam as inherently incompatible with civil society. It is extremely important to note the circumstantial (and not inherent nor traditional) ability of Islam to penetrate a society: “Islam does have some penetrative power, and this is seen in the spreading of a set of norms throughout the society. However, it is only in exceptional circumstances that tribesmen will abandon the ritual-addicted, custom-laden version of Islam to which they adhere, and participate in high cultural norms designated to restore Islamic purity”(Hall, 1986, p.96). It is these circumstances and conditions, which allow penetration between the society and the state that the present study will focus on.

Gellner’s approach to Islam has been criticized by many scholars as essentializing Islam and creating the myth of a universal, abstract concept of “Muslim society” by ignoring various manifestations in different context and under various conditions¹⁰¹. Although a certain level of pessimism about the historical experiments of the Islamic world with civil society is substantiated well, the Ottoman Empire and its successor Turkish Republic stand out as significant challenges to his theory. If Gellner’s neglect of “the role (of) civil political forces... in earlier and later times” (Hodgson, vol.1, p. 348) is justified, his treatment of the Ottoman Empire as an exception is still not justifiable, since the historical, geographical and political implications of the Ottoman influence was too large to be an exception. Longevity, durability, and the scope of the Ottoman Empire were too large to be categorized as an exception.

Gellner does not provide us with any explanation for this (putative) exception, except for pointing to its peasant base and the military slaves at the center (rather than the

¹⁰¹ Zubaida (1995); T. Asad (1996) “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam” in J. A. Hall and I. Jarvie (eds.) *The Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi. One of the problems Asad raise is that Gellner’s subjects, the Muslim people, do not speak in his analysis and that we do not hear those people’s voices and discourses.

nomadic tribes). Since political instability and cyclical decay are the intrinsic defects of Islam in Gellner's model, Ottoman case requires further explanation. Perhaps one of the most burning, yet unresolved questions between optimists and pessimists has been whether the Ottoman Empire had a civil society: If civil society is defined, in contrast to Gellner's approach, merely as the existence of societal forces, guilds and *vakıf* (foundations) as autonomous self-organizations this would affirm the existence of civil society in the Empire.¹⁰² However, the debate on civil society is usually extended further to incorporate center-periphery interaction, along with Gellner's analysis. As one of the leading pessimists, Heper argues: "The absence of civil society in Turkey was an inheritance from the Ottoman Empire, where political economic and social power was in the center." (Heper, 2000, p.63) These approaches are not sufficient to explain the Ottoman exception. For a deeper understanding, the nature of the state-society interaction has to be explored.

The Empire deviated from the cyclical state model by accomplishing a temporary marriage between religion and politics (Hall, 1985, p. 107). This circumstantial marriage is extremely important to note in understanding the emergent engagements between Gülen and the state in Turkey. But if this conditional marriage was accomplished by the Empire, why could it still not escape the so-called cyclical politics and decay? Although the fall of the Empire seems to provide support for the Khaldunian theory, the stagnation of the Empire was not due to its political ineptness. The Empire declined as it came to the end of expansion, which was its primary goal (Hall, 1985, p.108). In the heyday of political expansion, the *ulema* did ally with the military power. This alliance between intellectual and military power was the basis of the legitimacy of the Empire until it reached its limits and stopped expansion in the 1600's. The interaction between the *ulema* and the state is important to note, since the alliances, as well as the struggles between the state, *ulema* and the Janissaries in the 18th Century, display their engagements with the Empire and political life. (Zubaida, 1995, p.159-160)

Centralization and hierchichal organization was manifested in a sophisticated differentiation of the state apparatus. The Ottoman state overcame the threat of tribes, by encouraging and sometimes imposing settled lives through sedentarization policies.

¹⁰² H. Gerber (2000) "Ottoman Civil Society" in K. Karpat (ed.) *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*. Netherlands: Leiden Brill, p.137.

(Lewis, 1975, p.9) The Ottomans indeed developed alternative pathways to manage the conventionally difficult relationship between the ruler and the ruled. As Sami Zubaida highlights, the Janissaries did establish and develop links with various classes and market.¹⁰³ Moreover, in contrast to the cyclical model, the local notables who collected taxes were engaging the state in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁴ These were important signs that Islam could not be essentialized as inept for politics. More specifically, the Ottoman Empire did display temporary penetrations between the state and society. In addition to the distinct penetrations between the society and the state, geopolitical factors played a role in the so-called Ottoman “exception”. Ecology played a role as well: Ottomans settled in the well-watered agricultural plains of Turkey, which facilitated sedentary farming and peasantry and was therefore easier to dominate than the tribes. The Ottoman war-base economy along with the ethics of *jihad* and *gazi* spirit led to expansions toward the wealthy West, an advantage, which the rest of the Middle East could not enjoy.¹⁰⁵ It is important to note that these accidental factors made a difference in Ottoman’s deviation from the putatively inherent incapacities of Islam for a stable strong political rule and a stable state apparatus.

Moreover, a close look at the interaction between the heterodox groups of Low Islam and the center suggests that various Islamic orders and brotherhoods were active in the center.¹⁰⁶ Yet the urban manifestations of heterodox Islam did not only attract the urban poor, as Gellner argued.¹⁰⁷ The Mevlevi order, but also the Bektasis, did attract *ulema* as well as some of the Ottoman rulers.¹⁰⁸ In other words, the center did not deny heterodox Low Islam. Heterodox and orthodox Islam coexisted in the Empire. In the 18th century, Islamic brotherhoods spread both in the center and at the periphery.¹⁰⁹

The Turkish case appears as a curious and rather deviant Muslim example. Zubaida is right in arguing that Turkey is an “aggressively different” case from its roots, whether it is

¹⁰³ S. Zubaida (1989) *Islam, the People and the State*. London, New York: Routledge.

¹⁰⁴ Gerber (2000).

¹⁰⁵ Lindholm (1996), p.121.

¹⁰⁶ H. Inalcik (1994) [1973] *The Ottoman Empire*. London: Phoenix. See especially, the last section on popular culture and religion.

¹⁰⁷ Gellner (1981), p.48

¹⁰⁸ H. Inalcik (1994), p. 191; Zubaida (1995), p. 164

¹⁰⁹ Lewis B. (1975) [1961].

early nomadic roots in Central Asia or the Imperial roots in the Ottoman Sultanate.¹¹⁰ However, there are overt continuities as well as differences. The ambivalences of the state-Islam interaction continued in the republic, which will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 4. Hence, not only is Gellner's account of the Ottoman exception problematic, but his analysis of Turkey as another exception is not substantiated. His view on Kemalism as anti-religious is debatable,¹¹¹ but also his account of Turkey in his later writings is not well-developed.¹¹² Although the separation between High and Low Islam has clearly existed in the Ottoman context, this simplistic dichotomy does not completely explain the Turkish case. "The urban saints", who according to Gellner attracted the urban poor,¹¹³ does not quite explain the existence of the Islamic brotherhoods (low Islam) in the urban sphere. Islamic brotherhoods in the center were attracting Ulema and the ruling class.

The Gülen Community-movement originated in a rural setting, which has its roots in Anatolian brotherhoods and folk culture. The Anatolian features become even more visible in its organizations and everyday life in Central Asia. However, like many other Islamic movements, it has been successfully organized in the biggest metropolitans such as İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara in Turkey and Almati in Kazakhstan. Hence, its appeal has been both to rural and urban people. Gellner's thesis becomes less useful in light of certain emerging accidental factors: The post-Soviet period has witnessed new geopolitical transformations in Turkic Central Asian countries. A huge vacuum emerged in Central Asia, which is a landscape with a large Turkic population, which endows Turkey with a large area of influence religiously, politically as well as economically. Theorizing Muslim society, by leaving the Turkic Muslim world out, is becoming harder to justify, in the face of the increasing role and influence of Turkish Islam in the Turkic world. The present study provides a fresh look at these emergent realities.

The reflections of the compatibility debate in Turkey have been both academic and non-academic, and have missed the central issue of Islam-state interaction. The recent rise

¹¹⁰ Zubaida (1989).

¹¹¹ Mardin (1983). Kemalist nation-builders regarded religion as a glue to maintain societal cohesion. This was very much in line with Durkheimian approach to religion. As Koker (1998) also points that it is far from clear whether Kemalism was against religion.

¹¹² Gellner(1996).

¹¹³ Gellner (1981), p.48.

of Islam fueled a widespread pessimistic perception of a theocratic threat to the Atatürkist Turkish state, as well as to its Republican project.¹¹⁴ The self-assigned, ethical and moral responsibility to save and defend Atatürk's heritage from the evil of Islam has obscured the transformations and the linkages between the state and Islam. In addition, fear of Islam was caught up with an extreme reductionism that is overgeneralizing the wide-ranging diversity of Islamic groups as a monolithic, fundamentalist and thereby anti-system front.¹¹⁵ Islam, as a supposedly united front, is juxtaposed with secular regimes, the state, prospects of civil society and certainly the West. This reductionist literature is grounded on the pessimist grand theories, that is Gellner's thesis of "secularization-resistant" Islam and Huntington's "clash of civilizations"¹¹⁶. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Islam and the state in literature is assumed to be reaffirmed by the recent state-imposed ban of the religious party, *Refah*.

This was the starting point of my project on Gülen. In light of extensive tensions between the secular milieu and Islamic movements, especially the ongoing social unrest about headscarves, how could we explain the continuous rise and increasing popularity of Gülen in and out of Turkey? If Islam is inherently incompatible with civil society, how are Gülen's undertakings to be explained? Did we have to come up with another large category of exceptions, in order to confirm the pessimist's conviction that Islam is incompatible with civil society? Some accidental as well as political and cultural circumstances made Gülen too large and influential to being another "anomaly" which deviates from the norm. It not only deviates domestically but also has become an international actor with a considerable degree of economic, social and political power. Its increasing role and influence in Central Asia requires further explanation and analysis than merely labeling it as another "exception".

This thesis will do two things with this putative exception to the incompatibility thesis: First, it will locate the case study in socio-cultural and historical context and thereby, avoid the abstract and essentialist arguments of the pessimist theories. It will draw attention to the emergent circumstances, sensibilities and related structural transformations.

¹¹⁴ F. Acar (1994) "Islam in Turkey", in C. Balkir and A. M. Williams (eds.) *Turkey and Europe*. London, New York: Pinter Publishers Ltd.

¹¹⁵ Acar (1994).

Second, it will follow the dynamics and capacities of Islam to engage the state -political rule-, as they are manifested empirically in everyday life. As the putative incompatibility of Islam with civil society is primarily substantiated by the historically-rooted distrust between Islam and mundane politics, an account of the interactions between the state and Gülen will be essential to challenge the assumptions of the pessimists. However, the dark faces of civil society, which surface at different sites, will be discussed in the following chapters.

Summing up, the capacities of the optimistic and pessimistic commentators of compatibility are limited to capturing and explaining the emergent realities in the linkages between Islam and the state. It is primarily the particular cultural and socio-political conditions and processes as well as inner propellants of the seemingly abstract phenomenon (i.e. Islam, civil society, secular state, etc.) which this study will examine in order to explore the prospects of Islam and civil society. Rendering Islam and civil society to abstract and universalistic concepts, both optimist and pessimists miss the key issue, that is the emergent and circumstantial interaction between the secular state and Islam. It is the particular nature of these penetrations,¹¹⁷ and not some abstract and/or inherent qualities of Islam, which shapes civil society.

Islam as Ways of Life: Religion, Culture and Politics in Everyday

In most studies, Islam is either considered as primarily a text of a rigid doctrine and/or a set of patrimonial institutions, which are responsible for arbitrary political rule. Although Weber in his brilliant account of world religions acknowledges the importance of social meanings, values, beliefs in shaping social reality, i.e. how Protestant ethics invented accidentally Western modernity and capitalism,¹¹⁸ his study of Islam had a twist: its focus was limited to the social structure and conveniently omitted agency and meaning. This contradicts his own methodology, *Verstehen* and interpretative sociology, which promise to locate the beliefs and meanings in social conditions.¹¹⁹ Briefly, the Weberian conceptions of Islam as a universal, all-encompassing and cohesive patrimonial structure

¹¹⁶ Huntington (1996); Gellner (1981).

¹¹⁷ Hall (1995); Mann (1993).

¹¹⁸ M. Weber (1958) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by T. Parsons. New York: Scribner.

dominated previous studies of Islam, which claim that Islam has not (and can not) allow space for rational law and moderate, democratic political rule, liberties and civil society.¹²⁰

The present study combines social meanings, discourses and cultural identities with the social situations, conditions and institutions. Islam as a culture, beliefs and identities does not exist in a vacuum: The “elective affinities” will be traced between social meanings and social conditions.¹²¹ Everyday life offers enormous sources for the understanding of both institutions and identities. The manifestations of Islam in everyday life render the conventional boundaries between culture and politics useless. In other words, Fethullahists’ everyday lives embrace social, political and cultural dimensions of Islam. More concretely speaking, Gülen’s institutional linkages and engagements with the state are not separable or isolated from the social and cultural patterns and processes of the Community. The engagements are an extension of Fethullahist identities, sensibilities as well as their *dava*. As Geertz highlights:

Religion... must be viewed in terms of its formative impact upon common sense, the way in which, by questioning the unquestionable, it shapes our apprehension of the quotidian world (Geertz, 1968, 95).¹²²

Islam is a way of life that intermingles culture and politics, as it is manifested in everyday life. Accordingly, the present study aims to understand them in their embeddedness in both culture and politics. However, religion is not the most pervasive force. Hence, it needs to be understood in its coexistence and permeation with other aspects of social reality. Evidently, the following chapters are not merely about Islam, but they discuss Islam in its embeddedness in various processes and institutions. In this respect, I believe, I follow Gilsenan’s insight of the anthropology of Islam:

Islam will be discussed not as a single, rigidly bounded set of structures determining or interacting with other social structures but rather as a word that identifies varying relations of practice, representation, symbol, concept and worldview within the same society and

¹¹⁹Turner (1974).

¹²⁰See S. Mardin (1995) “Civil Society and Islam”, in J. A. Hall (ed.) *Civil Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, with regard to his argument that Islam has a different definition of freedom.

¹²¹Hall (1986), p.19-20.

¹²²Geertz (1968) is criticizing Malinowski’s instrumentalist view of religion. (Geertz, p.92). He argues that the problem lies in Malinowski’s “defective conception” of an important aspect of culture, that is the everyday life. Put more concretely, Malinowski saw the social world as “consisting of techniques for coping with life” rather than as ways of life (Geertz, p.93).

between different societies. There are patterns in these relations, and they have changed in very important ways over time. My aim is not to persuade the reader to substitute a relativized and fragmented vision for one global unity. Rather it is to situate some of these religious, cultural and ideological forms and practices that people regard as Islamic in the life and development of their societies. There are therefore whole sections of the book, in which topics and themes are dealt with that do not appear at first glance to have much to do with Islam or religion... To take any element on its own or only in relation to other elements defined as "religious" would not yield its social meaning. And we have to be prepared to find that religion is often only a very minor influence. (Gilsenan, 1990, p.19-20)

Conclusion

Despite several problems and essentializing inclinations, the compatibility debate is important. It comprises valuable insights, which lead to further thinking. My assessment of the optimists and pessimists of compatibility was not to discard the whole debate but to invite further critical thinking and theoretical revisions. As this chapter discussed, some of the premises of the compatibility debate are weak in helping us understand the prospects of civil society and Islam. The following chapters will aim to overcome these weaknesses by bridging the Islamic ways of life with the state.

The compatibility debate has excessive focus on diversity or homogeneity, which in fact are important issues for civil society. However, abstract and universalistic arguments whether Islam is (or has been) pluralist or unitarian do not take us further theoretically.¹²³ Similarly, participation and civic culture are other overused concepts of the compatibility debate.¹²⁴ Both optimists and pessimists disagreed on whether or not Islam is compatible with democracy. Again, they continue largely talking past each other. Furthermore, public visibility and inclusion have been a major issue of the debate.¹²⁵ All these concepts are important to understand Turkish Islam. However, as the empirical research was troubled by (and had to cope with) the limitations of these concepts, I suggest a shift in focus towards a more dynamic issue of civil society. State-society interaction is far from being a fresh focus. It has occupied scholars of civility since the late 18th century. However, due to the historical baggage of Islam and its intricate relation to politics and the state, state-society interaction has been downplayed, if not discarded the compatibility debate. In this

¹²³ See especially chapter 5 and chapter 7.

¹²⁴ Chapter 8 is extensively dealing the weaknesses of this concept.

¹²⁵ See Chapter 8.

chapter, I tried to trace and highlight insights about state-Islam interaction in the existing literature. They sometimes were obscured due to the blueprints of the compatibility debate. The next chapters will attempt to show the limits of the compatibility debate empirically and insert the new focus on the basis of empirical evidence.

It is important to note that the focus on state-Islam interactions emerged out of the findings of my research. The reasons for shifting the focus from compatibility to engagements from public sphere to civil society as well as from democratic participation to the alternative linkages between state and Islam, reside in the Gülen Community. In other words, all these theoretical contributions are firmly rooted in empirical findings, which will be discussed in the following chapters. This renewed focus, will enable me to follow the local culture (represented largely as civic) to the broader institutional milieu, where Islam is known to have troubles. Civil society, defined as the basis of the state-society interaction, is unavoidably useful in capturing the putative weak and problematic realms of Islam. The following chapters will elaborate both the complications and the contentments of this prospective marriage of convenience between Gülen and the Republican project.

Pushing aside the compatibility between Islam and civil society, this thesis will reveal and analyze the “elective affinities” between the secular Turkish state and the Gülen Community. Contrary to the compatibility debate which declares Islam as an inherent enemy or friend of civil society,¹²⁶ may we instead be witnessing a culturally-specific Islamic effort to transform the linkages between Islam and the state? May these emerging engagements between them be refashioning civil society in distinctive ways, despite a heavy baggage of historically rooted ambivalences and a legacy of mutual distrust?¹²⁷ Hall highlights that civil society is fragile (Hall, 1995, p. 27). While it needs to be extended in the West, the embryo of civil society has to be nurtured and then, taken meticulous care in the Muslim world. But first, the current cultural and political transformations in Islam have to be captured and acknowledged. In this sense, nothing is wrong in Gülen’s making civil society a program, mainly because it may be the only road to amend uncivil inclinations of democracies in the Middle East.

¹²⁶ Gellner (1994).

¹²⁷ With regard to the historical flow of the ambivalences of the state-Islam interaction in Turkey, see Berkes (1999); Sakallioglu (1996).

Bringing the putative abstract concepts, not only civil society and Islam but also the state, nationhood, ethnicity, patriarchy etc. down to the everyday, this study calls for a rethinking the existing mainstream theories of civil society and Islam. Topical chapters will deal with theoretical subthemes, such as identity and boundaries of Gülen and the Republic; ethnic politics, national identities and nation-state; gender order, patriarchy and gender sensibilities. However, all the topical issues (gender, ethnicity, nationalism, and education) will speak to a broader concern: the emerging sensibilities and capacities of Islam to engage the secular state. This capacity endows Gülen distinction among other Islamic organizations and movements in Turkey and in the Muslim world.

The methods require special attention with regard to the theoretical contribution of the thesis. The choice of methods and their adaptability to the nature of the subject matter were extremely important to deal with the seemingly abstract concepts of political sociology. The recent use of ethnography in studying political identities, processes, structures and institutions provides concrete accounts and facts and in-dept and sensitive analysis of seemingly abstract and universal phenomena. Subsequently, the methods enable me to make use of the historical career and theoretical baggage of Islam and civil society without being trapped by the pre-determined categories of the dominant grand theories. Moreover, they facilitated the bridge between the social, historical, cultural as well as political dimensions of Islam, as they are manifested in the everyday life. The avoidance of conventional optimism about the Islamic culture and pessimism of Islamic politics owes a great deal to the methodology, which enabled me to understand and explain Gülen in its embeddedness to Islam as ways of life.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Extensive use of the history of ideas and the heavy theoretical baggage in social science research have been criticized by some sociologists and anthropologists.¹ Reliance on the history of ideas have been attacked as defending the “spell-binding hold of past ideologies over the present” (Keane, 1988a, p.217) as well the Western past experiences and concepts over the non-Western ones.² This is argued to create conservative and conformist social sciences. This chapter will show that both the theoretical baggage and the historical career of the concepts need not constrain the research to predetermined categories and understandings. On the contrary, the history of ideas and theory are useful for an empirical methodology, as long as it has the tools to appreciate the context and to locate the subject matter in the broader picture. The use of ethnography in political science and political sociology is unconventional. It is even more unusual when these anthropological methods are employed to make contributions to political theory. Multi-sited ethnography proved to be extremely useful in tracing the macro theoretical concepts (such as civil society and Islam) and institutions (such as the state) in their manifestations in everyday life.

Everyday life as resourceful locality embraces not only continuities from the past but it also accommodates the emergent realities of the present. The multi-sited ethnography I undertook in numerous sites and settings of everyday life was theoretically informed. Yet, it made space for genuine and sensitive research to breathe and for questions and findings to emerge from the field. It offered the flexibility to capture and understand the resistant nature of the findings to fit conventional categories, before any fresh theoretical contribution was to be made.

¹ Hann and Dunn (1996).

² White (1996).

Multi-sited Ethnography

Discovering the emergent quality of the subject matter, while moving between multiple sites of Gülen

My initial aim was to investigate an Islamic “Community”, Gülen, in order to examine its claims of contributing to the development of “civil society” in Turkey. Obviously, I was carrying a set of questions of which the theoretical significance was firmly substantiated. Without those theoretical conceptions, I would be unable not only to formulate the so-called “anomaly”, i.e. the paradox, but also to frame my subject matter. While the subject matter emerged gradually out of the field, the methodology evolved, developed and adapted to the nature of the subject matter. This flexibility and contextuality enabled me to make critical and sensitive use of the theories and the related macro-concepts.

In line with my theoretical expectations, the initial aim of the fieldwork was to understand the Gülen Community, and its compatibility with civil society. However, thanks to the flexibility and sensitivity of my methods, I ended up capturing and studying a much more dynamic subject matter: emergent realities, shifting linkages and processual interactions between Gülen and the state.

Along with the advantages of a theoretically informed start, some difficulties emerged in translating the theoretical terms into a design of investigation through fieldwork. Initially, I could not help looking for the Gülen, the “Islamic” Community as well as civil society everywhere, only to be frustrated.³ Neither the Islamic community nor civil society were there, at least in the forms that were presumed by universalistic Western theories.⁴ First, despite its name “*Cemaat*” (community), Gülen did not fit the traditional definition of a community with clear boundaries and collective representations. Obviously, Gülen was not fitting any of the predetermined boxes for Islam; neither pessimistic accounts nor

³I describe the cultural and organizational specificities of the *Cemaat* (community) and *Cemiyet* (association) in Chapter 5. For historical specificities, see Chapter 4. The reconstruction of the community emerged in the process of doing fieldwork.

⁴As already discussed in the theory chapter, my theoretical enthusiasm to find “working” cohabitations of differences and multi-culturalism was disappointed too soon, by the “unbearable heaviness of clash” between (and among) secularists and Islamists, which even made my research an object of contestations. On the other hand, Gülen obviously did not fit the presumed incompatibility, or even clash of Islam and civil society on the basis of its increasing accomplishments and national and international undertakings in various areas.

festive optimists could explain Gülen's distinction. In this sense, the research methods of the study may resemble and seem to share some premises of grounded theory given its attack on two major theoretical traditions of the issue. However, it deviates from grounded theory since it does not simply reject all previous theories in order to formulate a brand new theory from scratch. On the contrary, it functions within the same framework and uses its concepts, ⁵ by suggesting to shift the focus of the whole debate (from compatibility to state-Islam interaction). Moreover, it reformulates the presumably most problematic realm in Islam, that is politics by broadening the term. Therefore, it shares the premises of Burawoys' extended case method, which aims to reformulate and build on existing theories, rather than rejecting them.⁶

Immediately after I started the fieldwork, it became evident that the "field" was resistant to fit the mainstream theories. This lack of fit was managed by one of the most valuable qualities of ethnographic fieldwork: "ethnography should not be overdetermined before it begins." (Marcus, 1998, p. 17). The ethnographic projects that are heavily inspired by theory, "must be allowed to 'breathe' ... before the theory kicks in" (p.18) Marcus suggests a "strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts ... but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects" (Marcus, p. 80).

The initial inability of the theories of Islam and civil society to explain Gülen's distinct situation led to three to four months of free-floating in the "field". I decided that I was going to understand what was happening out there, instead of becoming upset about what was supposedly missing. Pushing aside some of the theoretical dilemmas for a limited time during the period of free-floating, I reduced my objective initially to developing only an understanding of the identity of the Gülen Community, and thereby the nature of its organizations and Fethullahist identities. In other words, I reduced my attempts to shape the flow of the research and gave the subjects more space to lead the flow of research and to represent themselves to me, so that my ethnography could breathe.

⁵Similarly, my study acknowledges the macro-theoretical concepts, such as the state, civil society and Islam. However, my analysis does not rely on them as abstract and frozen concepts and universally applicable truths. In my ethnography, those concepts are understood through their manifestations in the everyday life.

⁶M. Burawoy (1991) *Ethnography Unbound*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

I believe, this self-reflexive and critical attitude proved to be useful and fruitful in the long run, since my questions as well as subject matter emerged out of the field.

The so-called field appeared as a diffuse sphere (rather than a fenced geographical place). It was the sphere of everyday life where I studied the ongoing formation of subjectivities as well as structural transformations. Traditionally, ethnographies were designed to be and served as detailed and descriptive case studies. However, a heavily descriptive case study on Gülen did not seem feasible; Gülen was too multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and geographically diffused. Thus, aiming at a full-fledged description seemed likely to result in reductionist and superficial representation. Hence, I let its multiple-faces and multiple-identities emerge and speak for themselves over a long period of time. I had to be physically mobile and mentally free enough (to embrace shifting impressions, contradicting and fragmented realities and continuously emerging paradoxes) as well as socially adaptable, or “modular” in Gellner’s terms (in order to participate in completely different contexts, one after the other).

The heterogeneity that Gülen embraced prevented my study from being heavily descriptive in the conventional sense. However, I still needed to map my subject of study. That was one of the most difficult tasks of my research, especially because of Gülen’s strategic self-presentations and image making⁷, but also because of the diffuse and extended nature of the Community. Gülen had to be contextualized before being understood and theorized, instead of being quickly described, categorized and judged. A Durkheimian approach, which framed the Community by boundary-maintenance and “collective representations” did not help much, since there were no geographical/physical boundaries, nor a shared consciousness or unified culture, keeping Gülen together.⁸

Gülen’s embeddedness in the larger picture (historically and culturally) as well as its large scope at the national and international level rendered a locally bound case study method useless and irrelevant, mainly because place-focused ethnographies had a limitation to theorize micro-macro interaction. Traditional single-site ethnography can no longer provide sufficient explanatory and narrative control, mainly because they can no

⁷See Chapter 5.

⁸Chapter 5.

longer be located in the broader picture of larger systems, such as the state, the market, the international world order.⁹ Dichotomizing the local and the global, they had a tendency to announce the victory of the local culture over the global forces and sometimes over macro-institutions. Hence, they were often used by others such as political scientists, historians etc. who are traditionally more authorized to study macro forces¹⁰ Hence, traditional place-focused ethnography was out of question for my subject matter, not only because Gülen was extremely multi-sited and multi-layered, but also my aim was to follow the emergent issue, the paradox, from site to site and to three main levels of analysis. These levels are identity, state, and international world-order.

The emergent and dispersed nature of the subject matter (engagements) pushed my study toward different sites. “The anthropologists, of course, continue to work intensively and locally with particular subjects – the substance of ethnographic fieldwork requires this—but they no longer do so with the sense that the cultural object of study is fully accessible within a particular site, or without the sense that the fieldwork anywhere is integrally and intimately tied to the sites of possible fieldwork elsewhere” (Marcus, p. 117). Interestingly, however, I did not employ this methodology in its conventional use, studying the effects of globalization. Instead, I adopted the multi-sited ethnography to study the effects of another macro process, that is the persistence of the nation-state as an powerful force in shaping social reality. Accordingly, I selectively enjoyed and used its methodological capacity and tools for theorizing the macro processes, such as state-society interaction, ethnic politics in the international world order, patriarchy etc.

Situating Gülen in the broader picture: contextualizing the identity of the community

Conventional ethnographies do study organizations and institutions, such as corporations and mental hospitals.¹¹ However, multi-sited ethnography endows the researcher with the tools to do higher macro-level analysis, allowing an examination of broader structural processes and institutional linkages in transition. The subject matter of the thesis, the shifting linkages between Islam and the state at the national and international

⁹ Marcus (1998), especially p. 49 and 82

¹⁰ Marcus (1998), p. 12, 13

¹¹ As an example, see the classical ethnography of E. Goffman (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Chicago: Aldine.

level, would traditionally be studied by historical sociologists and institutionalists. The recent ethnographic accounts on such macro processes are methodological contributions to the field of political sociology.

The discovery of the “anomaly”, i.e. Gülen’s engagements with the state and the Republican project at the very local level, required me to follow the “paradox” to other sites and areas. Following the paradox enabled me to move between various sites, levels and areas of analysis and thereby allowed me to generalize on the basis of the similar patterns of engagements between those multiple locales.

There have been other successful attempts in social sciences to overcome the limitations of the place-focused case study and thereby to deal with broader theoretical issues. One of the widely used traditions is comparative studies in various social science disciplines, which indeed do make important contributions to macro-level theorizing. Unlike multi-sited ethnography, most of the comparative studies start with a structured research agenda to compare pre-determined subject matters (areas, geographical space, time period etc). In contrast, my subject of study, i.e. wide-ranging engagements, emerged gradually during my field study, out of my ongoing back and forth movements between sites and the relating analysis. Obviously, the “discontinuous plane of movement”, which eventually led to the discovery of relations and associations between sites is explicitly different from the “linear spatial plane” of the comparative approach (Marcus 1998, p.86).

In addition to comparative methods, there is a good deal of work on community networks, which recognizes the multi-sited nature of the subject matter.¹² Moreover, many studies have incorporated multiple-sites in order to be able to extend the limited scope of the place-focused case study¹³ However, most of the substantial work, which aimed to theorize the micro-macro interplay, ended up regarding the macro as the determinant of the micro.¹⁴ Thus, they tend to do the opposite of the place-focused case method, which prioritizes the micro over the macro. My study aimed to understand the interaction and

¹²B. Wellman (1999). *Networks in the Global Village: Life in Contemporary Communities*. Boulder: Westview Press; B. Wellman and S.D. Berkowitz (1988) *Social Structures: A Network Approach*. Cambridge, New York : Cambridge University Press

¹³Burawoy (1991); See also D. A. Snow and L. Anderson (1991) “Researching the Homeless: The Characteristic Features and Virtues of the Case Study,” in *A Case for the Case Study* in J.R. Feaggin et al. eds. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p. 148-173.

linkages between micro and macro (i.e., Gülen and the state), and not how one is molded by the other.

The paradoxes around Gülen could not be understood and investigated independent of its relations and interaction with the broader context. For example, the initial attraction of Gülen was its increasing reputation as a modern, moderate and putatively “civilized” manifestation of Islam in Turkey. However, at the same time, it was becoming the locus of hatred, repulsion, distrust and secularist reactions, especially among hard-core Kemalists. The communal sites of Gülen are penetrated by broader structural processes, such as the state's penetration to the Community's schools, or the alliance between the state and the Community, which my research revealed in the international domain of the Community. The penetrating macro forces and structures such as the state, Islam, civil society, patriarchy etc. are conventionally conceptualized and represented as monolithic, consistent and holistic entities. My research captured them in their emergent interactions and penetrations of the Community. Rejecting conceptualization of Gülen and the state as monolithic and unified entities, I followed the ambivalent interactions between them, as well as contradictory, paradoxical and ambiguous attitudes among the parts and pieces of both.¹⁴ Hence, the presumably obvious and ultra-familiar Gülen emerged as a complex and virgin subject of study out of its omni-presence in the broader context and complex interactions with the larger picture. Marcus correctly argues that: “If there is anything left to be discovered by ethnography it is relationships, connections, and indeed cultures of connection, association and circulation that are completely missed through the use and the naming of the object of the study in terms of categories “natural” to subjects’ preexisting discourses about them” (Marcus, 1998, p.16)

Along the lines of complex and diffuse relationships between multiple sites of Gülen, I had to reimagine another form of ethnography, i.e. multi-sited, and construct its multi-site space for my research. Along with the methodological imagination, I had to continuously reformulate the central questions of my project¹⁵. Although the Gülen Community was not a unified subject, there was a logic and continuity --a *dava* (mission) and goal-- discovered

¹⁴Burawoy (1991)

¹⁵See the Conclusion .

¹⁶ Marcus (1998), especially see p.49-53; (1995) “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of

beyond this seeming chaos. I was able to grasp the associations and connections between the sites several months after I began.¹⁷

Multi-sited ethnography entails a wide range of difficulties and tensions. First of all, the contemporary local knowledge ceases to be merely local and thereby creates uncertainties and anxieties on the researcher's part. Since, the connections to the elsewhere are not clear, nor precisely articulated, the fieldwork creates ever-present tense dynamics for the ethnographer to move to the other sites. This dynamism requires quick shifts of moods, perceptions and sometimes attitudes on the researcher's part, as s/he is shifting between sites. Due to the multiplicity of the sites that I participated in successively, it was an extremely demanding job to catch the shifting impressions, sensations, objects, events, conversations etc. It was even more difficult to process them cognitively and to sense them in the fullest. Highly emotional Risale Readings in women's groups, entailed intense and intimate exchange of feelings. I was not only interacting with them, but also did not see any point in resisting being touched, moved or captured by these events. Having been moved by this intensity, I was rushing to a completely different site, for example, to a meeting of Fethullahist officers with entrepreneurial benefactors of schools. In these different sites, I was not watching other people's lives like in a movie theater. It was quite demanding to change my whole mood to adapt to the highly materialistic conversations about financing of schools and new business projects. These involvements would take place, often a few hours before I was going to eat dinner with my family or friends. These dinners were another site, though not one of the communal sites, where I was going to be a part of a discussion on the Community. All these sites were strongly connected to each other but also so discontinuous in many aspects. The perception and analysis of shifting sites was a challenging exercise.

This particular methodology enabled me to discover the connections and then identify differences between these sites, which were disguised behind the heterogeneity of and within the sites. In addition, effective image making and strategy-management of the

Multi-sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 24, p. 95-117.

¹⁷ See Chapter 4. The followers and organizations were attached to each other only through their commitment to a culturally specific way of reconciling Islam with civil society and secular institutional milieu. These attachments implied different intensities and –sometimes loose and elusive– forms of commitment and loyalty.

Community renders the continuities between the sites invisible. For example, my discovery of the patriarchal linkages of Gülen to the Republican elite could be possible through the connections that I made between numerous sites such as communal events, households etc. The diffuse space, multiple sites and fragmented nature of Gülen pushed me to extend to other sites. In order to contextualize a businessman's affiliation with the Community, I needed to follow him to various communal sites, as well as to other spheres of his life, such as his home and family. In return for this multiplicity of experiences in different sites, mobile ethnography endowed me with the tools to discover the continuities between the sites.

To give a concrete example, for a long time I studied intensively the sites of national and international education, business, home life etc. The differences and diversity at those sites were obvious. However, the main finding of my research occurred to me much later. The whole picture started to integrate, only when I began to discover the similarities between the sites. Stated more concretely, the commonalty between the sites was the engagement with the state and the Republican project. This emerged out of the connections and continuities between these sites. My emergent subject was strongly related to the new ways of thinking about contemporary, emergent and processual conditions and shifting linkages in the society. Accordingly, in my ethnography, "[o]ld concepts [were] conserved but in ways that [were] unexpected in the frame of ethnography's notion of culture rooted in the idea of community and communality" (Marcus, 1998, p.54).

For example, I preserved the naming of Gülen *Cemaat* (Community), but illustrated a new conception and manifestation of an Islamic community. Another example is the following: I maintained my focus on the concept of civil society, but showed its context-specific implications and ambivalence by reconstructing it from below through the links, associations and interactions between the sites and the state. My fieldwork revealed the interactions at the micro-borders between the state and Gülen, through which the *dava* is planned, operationalized and implemented. By micro-borders, I refer to the sites of interaction between macro structures, which manifest themselves at the level of everyday life. These sites were discovered and grasped thanks to the multi-sited ethnography. Subsequently, I followed Gülen's engagements with the state by shifting between the sites.

Briefly, the multi-sited methodology is distinct in the sense that it provides the tools to understand how a broad system operates, i.e. how Gülen is organized and performs as a part of the Republican project.¹⁸ Put differently, how it is embedded within larger social forces and conditions, i.e. in the Turkish state and the international world order. In this sense, the multi-sited ethnography helped me to reveal the embeddedness of the emergent Islamic sensibilities in the broader picture. This is how the ethnography can overcome the taken-for-granted controversy between the “thick description” of the local and the “thin narrative” of the broader, global, macro processes.¹⁹

Accordingly, several macro-concepts such as civil society, Turkish Islam, the secular state are rethought and reconceptualized from below as the interplay, continuity and discontinuity between the sites are investigated, and as Gülen, its *dava* and its engagements are situated to the broader picture. It is important to note though, that my aim in this study is not holistic representations. In other words, I do not claim to portray the interactions between the state and Islam as a totality. In contrast, stipulating wide-ranging interactions between Gülen and the nation-state, I claim that these interactions are the key to understanding and arguing about the broader picture. This helps me to make contributions to the undertheorized issues of the state, civil society and Islam.

The sites: following the engagements in different areas

Which sites did I end up studying? How did I choose and investigate them? Since the moving ground of the research is not naturally limited, and since the possible sites to follow the *dava* are numerous, the choice of the sites depends on the ethnographer's ability to discover and relate them to each other. In this sense, multi-sited ethnography is creative and flexible. I did not use a uniform set of fieldwork practices for every site.²⁰ My participation took different forms depending on the situation; I undertook participant observation in formal meetings, participated in informal gatherings, which I call attentive participation, and also was involved in the private spheres of the informants, especially when I stayed in dormitories and homes of the informants. In order to differentiate this last

¹⁸ See Chapter 4.

¹⁹ John and Jean Comaroff (1992), *Ethnography and Historical Imagination*. San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, p.5.

²⁰ See Marcus (1998), p.84. It is true that my research revealed tensions, contestations and some muted or

type of participation from the others, I call this sensitive participation. Sensitive participation did not include tape-recording. Most of the field notes from my sensitive participation are in my personal diary, since some of the data was highly personal and confidential.

My fieldwork was extensive and detailed requiring long-term participation over a period of fourteen months, between May 1997 and July 1998, in İstanbul. Writing several chapters helped me to clarify the connections and analyze the findings. Subsequently, I went back to the field again in 1999. At that time, I followed the engagements to the international domain, i.e. the communal sites in Almati. Informal- open-ended interviews, formal- unstructured or semistructured interviews, arranged group discussions and casual conversations were employed. The sites that I visited were wide-ranging: The *Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı* (The foundation of Writers and Journalists), Fatih University in İstanbul, the schools, dormitories, *Işık Evler* (student houses), TV (Samanyolu) and radio station of the Community, the newspaper, Akademi (the research center in the making) the Risale readings, communal events such as ceremonies, meetings, charity dinners, receptions in five star hotels, dinner banquets, academic seminars conferences, households, families, offices, restaurants and businesses owned by Fethullahists and many other formal and informal get-togethers with different purposes (including just socializing and “hanging out”). In May 1999, I went to Kazakhstan (Almati), to participate in the international communal sites of Gülen. For two weeks, I stayed with female students who associated with the Community, through different degrees of attachment. I visited the following sites: KATEV -*Kazak-Türk Eğitim Vakfı* (The Foundation of Kazak-Turk Education), schools, dormitories, Fatih University, Turkish firms, bank, offices, factories and other business such as restaurants, which finance the schools in Kazakhstan and households of Fethullahists where I was invited for lunch, dinner, breakfast or just for coffee. After my fieldwork in Almati, I continued my research on and off throughout the summer 1999, in İstanbul (between June 1999 and mid-September 1999). This period was primarily spent on going back to the informants and asking for their reflections and opinions on my analysis.

The diffuse geographical and socio-cultural organization of the Community enriched the construction of the multi-sited ethnographic space. In other words, the institutional and identitarian diversity, which Gülen comprises, contributed more color to the field. But it also required me to concentrate on certain areas more than others. Accordingly, I identified three basic areas of concentration, which, I found, constituted Gülen's major spheres of engagement with the state: national education, international undertakings and gender order.

The sites of education were the major areas of the project-based social engineering. The sites that heavily contributed to my analysis about education are the Community's high-schools, universities, dormitories, Akademi (research center), *Işık Evler* (student houses) and other schools, which Fethullahist students attend. These sites embrace the most strategic micro-borders between Gülen and the state, where the Community symbolically negotiates responsibilities over education and co-operates with the state. International undertakings were mostly observed and investigated in the following sites: the schools, universities and dormitories, offices and businesses in Almati, in *Kazak-Türk Eğitim Vakfı*, KATEV, (Foundation of Kazak-Turk Education) and the households of the staff of KATEV and of the Turkish students in Almati as well as all of the other sites in Turkey, in which the international undertakings were discussed, planned and evaluated. Gender order is too diffuse to be attributed to a few sites since it permeated all the sites, spheres and the relevant discourses and practices. The numerous sites, which completely excluded women, such as the meetings of the leading intellectuals of the Community or the businessmen (mostly in Writer's and Journalists Foundation), enabled me to understand the nature of the patriarchy. The sites, which strategically incorporated women, helped me to explicate the rationale, the motives and nature of the women's participation at those sites. Finally, the sites where women socialized among themselves enabled me to develop deeper insight, intimate friendships and long-lasting communication with the women. These interactions exposed me to the inner worlds, common meanings, feelings, silences and implicitly and explicitly expressed complaints of the women. These exclusively female sites also provided me with deeper insight into the nature and degree of gender segregation in the Community.

Although some sites proved to be more useful and more directly connected to one or more of the three areas of analysis, all the sites were interrelated. There was a continuity

between them since they all were the grounds of the strategic engagements to realize the *dava*. The discontinuity lay in the type and degree of engagements.

Accordingly, however, I followed the “contested and conflicted social grounds” (Marcus, 1998, p.6) where Fethullahists were pursuing their agenda.²¹ My journey on the moving grounds and the sites did not only reveal the conflicts and symbolic negotiations for the *dava*. To my surprise, I discovered more of the unexpected, undeclared and even disguised co-operations, bondings and alliances, that the Community was involved in, either implicitly or explicitly. Taking into account a good deal of complexities of the historically rooted distrust and tensions between the state and Islam, my study revealed the emergent sensibilities and a few striking strategies, through which Gülen works on making itself non- threatening to the Republic. These emergent realities were evidenced by my discovery of the “backstages” of the Community. I analyzed these sensibilities thanks to the findings of the differences between ‘back and frontstages’ of the Community.²²

Shifting between front and backstages

A good example of shifting between back and frontstages is the following. The Fethullahist male interviewees expressed a good deal of pro-woman discourses of gender equality in my interviews. Most of them told me that they were “respecting their wives as equals and would not limit their freedom. And Islam forbids that kind of discrimination anyway”. Indeed, the seemingly progressive sites of the Community were welcoming women who were giving speeches and participating equally. However, intense participation enabled me to capture contradictions between their discourses and their attitudes and practices, which changed from site to site, from situation to situation. Soon, I realized that the women in the ‘window sites’ (frontstages) were not their presumably ‘equal’ wives, whose lives were confined to the home, child-bearing, child-rearing and housework.

Eventually, I become used to receiving talks on gender equality from these Fethullahist men whose participation and activities in the Community were denied to their wives and daughters. My participations helped to find out the gaps or contradictions

²¹ See especially Chapter 5 and 6.

²² I borrow the terms back and frontstages and the related theory of presentations of the self from Goffman

between frontstages (public faces and discourses) and the backstages: I had to reimagine my 'field' by discovering and incorporating more backstages. In those sites, image-making diminishes. Therefore, my access extended beyond the public presentations of Gülen. Hence, multiple sites facilitated and sharpened my sensitivity to the difference between the frontstages (of the public presentations) and backstages, i.e. the ordinary sites of everyday in the Community. Backstages were important sites for the findings, since they revealed the inner propellants and structural characteristics of the Community, which underlie Gülen's public faces in the public sphere. Eventually, the connections between the backstage sites took me a step further: I found that the patriarchic attitudes of Fethullahists (a particular gender order) were another congruence between the Community and the Republic.²³

Topical chapters

In line with the non-linear nature of the multi-sited ethnography, I chose to write an ethnography based on topical chapters, each of which analyze an area of engagements, thereby a different topic. Although the text is discrete (rather than displaying a linear development of an argument) and although every chapter deals with different aspects and sites, they all deal with the same subject matter. Thus, as the connections between the multiple sites led to a major finding, the analysis in each topical chapter strengthens the major argument of the thesis.

Ethnographic Interviewing

Nature of the subject matter and continuous adjustments of methods

The chaotic, dispersed and elusive outlook of the Community necessitated methodological flexibility and adaptability. Gülen did not provide me with an explicit pattern, which could be easily observable and depictable by the use of conventional qualitative methods. Although my initial aim was to conduct unstructured and semi-structured interviews, as well as participant observation, I ended up undertaking multi-sited ethnography combining several techniques of participation.

(1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

²³ See chapter 8.

The second reason, which necessitated methodological creativity, was the fact that the Community was highly politicized and popular. Hence, its sites were hot spots for the journalists and any curious observers, as well as whole-hearted defenders of the Atatürkist Republic. Fethullahists were not only exhausted with journalists' hunting for flashy news, but they were also cautious about the state intelligence people (secret agents). Subsequently, many ethnographers that I personally know, gave up researching Gülen since they were denied access to certain sites or simply because of the cool reception. I had to use specific social skills, personal assets and connections, such as my family members, and highlight particular self-identities, when they were more appropriate. I will come to this point in the last section of the chapter.

A third reason for flexibility and spontaneous creativity in methods was to allow me to understand and cope with Gülen's effective image-making and strategy-management. In order to capture and reveal Gülen's strategies and images as well as to differentiate between front and backstages of the Community, I had to use several ethnographic techniques together. For example, when I detected a contradiction between the answers or between the findings in the interviews and in my participations, I continued my participation, but in more intense or intimate ways and spheres. Put more concretely, I shifted to their domestic sphere and met their intimate family and continued ethnographic interviewing in their family as well as other spheres of life. My participation in their everyday life enabled me to acquire data that could not have been acquired using conventional interview techniques. A good example of this came during an informal chat about women's situation in the Community with a female informant. I inquired insistently further and probed pretending that I did not understand the issue. In the middle of the conversation, she paused and took a letter from her fiancée out of her purse, which she allowed me to read. It is unlikely that I would have been able to gain access to this kind of data, which gave me valuable insight into the issue, in an interview situation. Another example was my access to a few personal photo albums of informants, on my insistence to know more and my unsatisfied curiosity. The formality and planned nature of the interview tends to block possible intimacies of ethnographic interviewing. Shifting sites and types of participation helped me a lot in coping with and keeping myself alert to the duality of the Fethullahists' discourses, paradoxes in practices and conflicting statements.

Combining interviews with various kinds of participation

My ethnography combined several ethnographic tools and remodified and readapted them continuously depending on the situation. The combination of two major tools, various kinds of participation, and, interviewing helped me to discover patterns in the seeming chaos. The nature of the combination was unplanned and varied according to the place, time, who the informant(s) were and the interaction between the informant(s) and myself, i.e. trust, familiarity, sincerity, formality etc.

Here are some examples of my combinations of different types of participation with various interview techniques: I was a non-participant observer –or less participant and more observant-- quite rarely, only when I was observing a formal meeting (business or decision-making in the Community) or when some unplanned, adhoc situation would take place and/or interrupt the event or conversation in which I was participating.²⁴ Participant observation usually took place in the impersonal milieu of the organizations. Participant observations were usually combined with formal planned formal interviews. The only other occasion in which I was more of an observer than participant was in the initial stages of my interaction with Fethullahists, such as at the first few Risale Readings with women. Soon, my participation became more involved.

My intense participations took place, when Fethullahists started to open up, to trust, and make me a part of their private lives, to call me to hang out and especially when I stayed over in their place. My interactions with Fethullahist students were intimate, especially when we chatted about their lives, families, love stories, sexualities until late at night. In those instances, my researcher identity was conveniently ignored. The subjects started to show interest in my identity and personal life. Most of the everyday chats with one or more people took place during my intimate participations. These chats were spontaneous ethnographic interviewing, as my aim was to learn and understand and not simply to socialize and enjoy myself. In other words, my intimate participations in the conversations were goal-oriented and strategical, although most of the subjects did ignore my researcher identity in these instances.

²⁴For example, I voluntarily became more of an observer, when a journalist interrupted my visit to Cemal Usakli -- the officer in Journalist and Writers Foundation of Gülen. I wanted to observe the interaction between media and the Community, without interfering.

In between these two extremes (participant observer and intimate participant), I was usually an attentive participant, who was over-interacting and over-socializing with Fethullahists, in order to neutralize or downplay my researcher status. This helped me to avoid potential perceptions of hierarchy between them and me.²³ The interviews during most of the attentive participations and all of the intimate participations were parts of conversations and thereby, informal, spontaneous and usually intense. Obviously, they were not recorded like the formal ones. However, I took detailed notes during or after the instances, depending on the content of the conversation. In cases of intimate topics, I had to delay note-taking, in order not to make the informant self-conscious that he or she was interviewed. Often, these moments where they completely forgot about my research were the most valuable. I collected most of these kinds of fieldwork notes in my personal diary.

The participations encompassed a considerable amount of informal, spontaneous, in-depth and often adhoc interviews as well as group discussions, which were unplanned, spontaneous and thus casual. My participations in the everyday life conversations allowed me to permeate the texture of the mundane, ordinary quality of their lives. This casual quality captured in my participations was valuable, since it was not necessarily available in the planned interviews and previously arranged meetings for oral histories.

As explained in the previous chapter, the nature of the Community necessitated that the interviews were to be complemented with various ethnographic tools. This is mainly because the “talk”, i.e. the discourses and the textual representations of the Community had to be put into context. The talk was useful in depicting the public presentations and the discourses of the Community. However, these had to be backed up with various kinds of participation to capture underlying structural facts, such as institutionalized linkages between the state and Gülen. Often these underlying processes were obscured behind the ready-made images, public faces as well as predominant conceptions of the compatibility debate.

²³For example, I was encouraging them to call me at home, to chat with me about things other than my goal-oriented research question. I was keeping in touch as well and trying to share my life, in order to build relations on equal terms. I had to open up and share more sincerely, when they asked for more intimate details. These created some tensions from time to time, since our life styles and world views were quite different.

This point may require a few concrete examples from the field: I interviewed a Fethullahist female student. She insistently repeated to me that Fethullahist female students were in peace and harmony with the Republican project, Atatürkist secularism and the secular educational system. It was only afterward, when I started to spend time and socialize with her, that I discovered things conflicting with her optimistic discourse. Only then did I begin to sense discomforts, which perhaps even she was not realizing. Her life was made up of never-ending compensations. When we met her Fethullahist friends who all were wearing head scarves like her, she rejected my suggestion to meet in Nisantasi. She insisted that we meet them in a cafe in a relatively conservative neighborhood. Later, she wanted to leave with me and not stay with them. She explained to me after we left, that she feels extremely uncomfortable walking with a large group of veiled women on the street. She said: "I just do not want to strike attention that is all. When a group of veiled women walk on the street, people throw bad looks. I do not want to be looked down like a creature". She explained that she feels uncomfortable with the looks of the people in Nisantasi, where most of the women are not veiled. Although she successfully denied these discomforts in the interviews, she could not hide them when we started to share everyday life. She was not only professionally trained to mute her conflicts with the system in her discourse, but also was extremely good in developing everyday life strategies to avoid conflict and tension. Later, I observed that most of these attitudes were merely emotional responses and not calculated strategies. Intense participation in their everyday lives enabled me to differentiate identity-formation from rational strategy-management.

She continued to explain to me that she could not endure the looks and insults coming from both men and women, such as: "Shame on you.... At this young age, you are covered with the veil of bigotry.... Atatürk's soul must be in pain in the other world". She could not make herself invisible but she could at least dilute the public attention and the related tension, by avoiding walking in large groups of veiled women. Compromise was an inevitable part of Fethullahists' everyday life and discourse. My research revealed how Fethullahists identities differ radically from many other Islamists in their discomfort with standing out and thereby their continuous efforts to adapt to the broader Republican milieu.

Without my intense participation in the organizations and insistence on taking part in as many activities as possible, linkages between the state and Gülen would not have been

easily detectable in the discourses of the Fethullahists. Another example is the interviews with the spokespeople of the Community, who were highly assertive and expressive because of their high command of the state's ideology as well as their congruence with the mainstream political culture of the nation-state. My interviews with the public figures of the Community were especially offering the prevailing official discourses of the state. These could easily disguise or downplay Fethullahists' personal insights and agendas, which were separate from the state. The elaborate presentation of the official discourses and comfort with those discourses were important data in themselves.²⁶

However, there was definitely more to be discovered. They were speaking in the name of the nation and the state, by using the official vocabulary of the republic. Moreover, the agendas of several state officers in Almati overlapped with Fethullahist agendas. However, neither these overlaps nor elective affinities were the indicators of permeation between the Community and the state. Although Gülen's autonomy may sometimes be harder to detect in their "talk" and answers (i.e. in the interviews), my participation in their undertakings and self-organization revealed Gülen's autonomy and power. I witnessed first-hand the processes in which the Fethullahists sat down with the state's officers to make educational policies in the international sphere. The finding of the engagements, especially linkages and cooperations between Gülen and the Republic was extremely important and constitutes the major finding of my research. The combination in ethnography of interviewing and intense participation enabled me to discover how instead of being co-opted by the state²⁷, Gülen is actually an autonomous entity, which interacts or cooperates with the state on its own terms.

Thanks to the ethnographic methods, I could realize the analytical separation between the state and the Community despite the explicit overlaps of their discourses and agendas such as the undertakings in Kazakhstan. Thanks to the highly adaptable ethnographic tools, the major finding of the thesis, that is, the resemblances between the state and the

²⁶ See Chapter 7. The discourses of the Community's officers (in the Gülen's central foundation) and the state's officers (in the Council of Turkish Ministry of Education) in Almati overlapped explicitly. I received from Fethullahists and the state's teachers almost the same reactions and responses about Gülen's schools and international undertakings. Thus, Fethullahists appeared as loyal representatives of the Turkish nation-state, especially in the international domain.

²⁷ See Chapter 3, and especially the conclusion of Chapter 9. This finding challenges the argument that civil society in Turkey is permeated by the state, see Navaro-Yashin (1998).

Community, led to the conclusion that Gülen was not co-opted by the state. Moreover, the main finding, that is the engagements between them, was made possible by an awareness of the ontological and analytical separation between them.²⁴

Becoming a part of Fethullahists' everyday lives helped me to dig beyond the prepared public presentations and faces of the Community, which is presented in the mass media. My participation in their everyday life, in the organizations, schools and households put my interviews and oral histories on stage, double checked and deepened their insights. Participation was the tool for me to situate the texts --life stories, discourses, written texts, answers in the interviews--into the contexts.

Planned and formal interviews: exposure to Fethullahists' politically correct answers, proper images and conflict-avoiding strategies

In addition to these unplanned discussions, conversations and adhoc/informal interviews, I undertook thirtytwo planned interviews. Most of these interviews were formal and conducted in the workplaces, such as offices of the businessmen, professors and teachers, in the foundations and other organizations of the Community. Some of them took place during my participant observations, while I both participated and observed. Some of these planned interviews were informal and semi-structured yet arranged beforehand, in cases such as a Fethullahist woman's introducing her husband to me over dinner at their place.

In sharp contrast to the life stories and oral histories, in the first planned interviews, informants often tended to provide me with stereotypical and preestablished statements about these issues, which would save them from 'trouble'. This was mainly because of the historically rooted tradition of distrust. Fethullahist informants acted as if they were being judged. They stated that they felt under suspicion and surveillance. They expressed discomfort since often their loyalty was tested. Partly, it was due to the historically formed tensions and distrust between Islam and the secular Republican milieu, with which I was immediately identified in the eyes of the interviewees --my clothing, outlook, attitudes and discourse were clearly not Islamic. However, their defensive attitudes were also partly due

²⁴Navaro-Yashin (1998). Analyzing *Refah*, she argued that civil society did not have a separate autonomous sphere. The state does not leave space for civil society.

to the direct effect of the goal-oriented questions in the interviews. The question-answer form of the interviews was also contributing to this perception, whereas during my participations and oral histories, they were not expected explicitly to inform me and to answer and therefore did not feel accountable. The planned nature of these interviews took the research from the relaxed mundane everyday life routines to a more formal place.

Hence, compared to my participations and the related ethnographic interviewing, my interviews were more affected by the political taboos that the informants have been socialized to keep quite about or to respond to giving politically correct answers. Most of my interviewees seemed to be trained effectively (both by the Community and the shaky Republican milieu), and almost conditioned, to make themselves non-intimidating and non-threatening agencies, especially when they heard several keywords, such as Atatürk, the state, *irtica* (fundamentalism), secularism. In my initial interviews, any question about Atatürk was answered with exactly the same, cold, cautious and impersonal statements, which were prepared expressions of respect and recognition for Atatürk.

Another reason for such precautions was admitted by many of my interviewees after some trust was established. They reported that they were exhausted by outside interest, and by being chased by the mass media and journalists. They stated that they were fed up with being the center of public attention for so long. It seemed that this exhaustion helped them to develop sound techniques and strategies to “avoid trouble”, by giving politically correct and standard answers.

During my interviews, it became obvious that trust was an issue and barrier in my ethnography, since my subject of study, and thereby interviews, were embedded in a milieu of long-lasting tradition of distrust and expectations of betrayal between Islam and secular regimes. To a large extent, I overcame these barriers after the first interviews. In the long run, when I became friends or developed closer contacts with the informants (usually through my participation), I was able to establish trust. My female and student identity seemed to help but I also had to do a lot of self-conscious adjustment in my discourse and attitudes, which I will discuss in the next section in detail.

Eventually, some informants admitted that they were fed up with being obliged “to prove their innocence as non-political” (or rather anti-fundamentalist) Islamists and

compliance with the system. To escape this dilemma, they said that they preferred to avoid discussing these issues. This explained a good deal of the mute reactions on their part, as well as denials of associations, boundaries and Islamic labels.

Briefly, in many planned interviews, I was often provided with self-conscious self-presentations of Gülen, i. e. proper images, which would not threaten, or even would praise, the dominant secular culture and official ideology. Initially, they did not help to reveal what was beyond these popular images. How were they actually distinct among other Islamic groups? Can their distinction be merely explained by professional capacities of image-making or public relations? Most of the initial planned interviews did not take me further to answer these questions. They proved to be useful tools for discovering the extent and strength of Gülen's image-making and strategies.

Importantly, the planned and formal interviews started to be more fruitful, when they were conducted after a certain level of trust was established. In these instances, valuable and pointed information was collected, especially when I had a specific issue to investigate or particular pre-framed questions to ask. In formal interviews, the specificity of the topic of conversation increased in proportion to my knowledge about the interviewee and the issues of the interview. Evidently, this stage came later in my long-term research project, after I started to capture and acknowledge the connections between the sites, i.e. the engagements between Gülen and the state.

Oral histories: following the issue throughout the lives of Fethullahists⁹

The recently increasing interest in oral histories has resulted in a conviction that they were a postmodern invention and just another fashion to fade away soon. However, historically, oral histories have been used as interdisciplinary tools to collect various data and thereby, to produce different kinds of knowledge.¹⁰ Oral histories were one of the most useful ethnographic interviewing techniques that I employed. In this study, they were not undertaken in order to offer historical facts and to construct historical accounts and

⁹See especially Chapter 4, for my pragmatic use of oral histories to investigate the shifting linkages between the Community and the state, throughout the lives of Fethullahists, who are over 40 years old. These people's life stories are extremely important since they experienced the journey from Nur to Gülen, that is the transitions of Islam "from exile to integration."

¹⁰D.K. Dunaway and W. K. Baum (1996) *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. London: Altamira Press.

narratives from oral sources. Nor were they collected to be published as literary pieces or as ends in themselves. Rather, I had a pragmatic motivation, a sociological curiosity and objective: my initial aim was to understand the formation of various Fethullahist identities over a particular time period and in different places. My primary aim was to understand the continuity between Nur and Gülen as well as shifts from Nurist towards Fethullahist identities. I aimed to complete the second-hand sources of the historical background with the first-hand sources, i.e. the personal histories.

My aim was not to write the history of the Gülen, but to contextualize the Community and its followers. Accordingly, the oral histories, interviews, the biography of Fethullah Gülen and my interviews with the author of his biography facilitated contextualizing my subject matter.³¹ Rather than producing historical knowledge on the basis of oral histories, I chose, as Dunaway states,

to learn the structure and variety of a society or culture, as manifested by a representative individual's world view, cultural traits, and traditions. Thus, the ethnographic interview provides insights into individuals not as historical eyewitnesses but as culture- or tradition-bearers.... Such interviewing does not de-emphasize individual uniqueness or personality, so much as it situates how individuality manifests itself in the systemic context of socio-cultural forces (Dunaway and Baum, 1996, p.10).

Eventually, oral histories helped me to understand how and under which conditions Fethullahist identities have been integrated over time and what the origins of their associations were with the Community, its *dava* and projects. Quite unpurposely, I happened to listen to memories of informants, who had participated in the household of Fethullah Gülen in Erzurum. Those memories helped to put not only Fethullah Gülen's identity to the early childhood context, but also to discover the strong roots of that milieu in the Islamic brotherhoods and sects. It would be difficult to discover those early memories, unless I asked the informants to talk about their own lives in detail. Moreover, I also learned a great deal of how the loyalties and affiliations have shifted and developed within the last decades, when Gülen's popularity increased rapidly. Interestingly, informants realized the transformations in their attitudes, while they were trying to describe and explain to me. It is extremely important to note how fixed ways of thinking may mask subtle changes and emerging sensitivities. They may even be left unnoticed by

³¹See Chapter 4.

the informants themselves, until they consciously start to think about the long-term transformations in their lives. Providing me with answers to these important questions, they were in line with the multi-sited ethnography, since they enabled me to situate the local and the immediate in the larger context.

The oral histories were different from the interviews in several ways. First, they were not merely unstructured like the informal interviews but in addition they allowed the narrator to control, shape and lead the narrative. I was not asking or probing, unless it was necessary. Hence, there was no question or keyword offered by me to influence their discourse or to make them feel accountable. I made it as explicit as possible that the narration and the degree of opening-up was in their control. That meant that most of the time I listened and observed her/his emphasis -- highlighted experiences-- and gaps in the narratives-- silences, downplaying and underrepresentation of experiences. In other words, I kept my interventions and questions to as few as possible in order to give the informant the space and freedom to describe her/his experiences in her/his terms.¹² My purposeful passivity or withdrawal from the conversation continued, until I had a good sense of the story and thereby could formulate pointed questions. Only then, during the later stages of the oral history, did a shift to informal interviewing took place.

I owe a great deal to the feminist methodology in blocking my research agenda and prioritizing the agendas of the informant for a limited time period. As Anderson and Jack argue:

An oral interview, when structured by the narrator instead of the researcher, allows each [informant] to express her/[his] uniqueness ... Each person is free to describe her [his] idiosyncratic interaction between self-image and cultural norms. Each person can tell us how she comes to value or devalue herself. During the interview, the researcher's role is to foster this freedom and to restrict the imposition of personal expectations (K. Anderson and D. C. Jack, 1991, p.20)

Accordingly, I rarely channeled the flow of the narrative, mostly to encourage them to express their feelings, insights, opinions, habits and ordinary everyday life routines in their own terms. This gave me deep insight into their vocabularies, perceptions, world-views and especially habits of the heart, such as their fears and hopes. Habits of the heart are

¹²S. B. Gluck and D. Patai (1991) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. New York and London: Routledge.

more difficult to discover by asking questions than by letting people talk about their lives freely for hours. My questions were limited to my knowledge and expectations about the Gülen Community.

Hence, I prioritized the informants' narration, i.e. the presentation of her/his reality, untouched by my immediate research goals. Initially, my immediate research goal (to understand the compatibility between civil society and their lives) had to be pushed aside. In the early stages, the oral histories seemed to be extremely time-consuming and out-of-focus. Long sessions of appointments with the narrators required a long period of time, until I could connect them to the whole picture. As I refused to impose my own research agenda, the material I collected from different narrators seemed fragmentary and unrelated for a long time. Luckily, that initial period overlapped with my free-floating in the field, when I purposely decided to forget about my initial research topic, the theories of civil society and the historical career of the term. Thus, it was easier for me to give the narrators more space and freedom, as I was tolerating infinite flexibility for my own research. Gradually, I could see the connections with an increasing affectivity and depth in time, due to the development of better interactions between the narrator, as well as accumulating knowledge about the informant.

All stories were interesting, colorful in different ways, but unfortunately too diffuse to detect a pattern. It took me a long time to be able to identify and make sense of the continuities and similarities in their definitions, perceptions. It was even more difficult to capture the overlapping silences and discomforts. A similar research experience is described by Friedlander during his research:

[Q]uestions themselves emerged in my own thought only over a period of many months, and the responses to them were by no means immediately intelligible. Only gradually did patterns emerge relating some characteristics of personality with certain aspects of the history of the local (Friedlander, 1996, p.155)

Thirdly, in contrast to the interviews, the narrators were less likely to use strategies to "avoid trouble and conflict": Put differently, they could not separate their stories --lives, agencies and selves-- from the Republican milieu, in which they were strongly embedded. Hence, their depiction of the so-called taboo subjects was not filtered by conflict-avoiding

strategies, when they are so intensely engaged telling their own life stories. Their stories, even the most intimate events of their lives such as the major aspects of their relations with their Republican Atatürkist parents, neighbors, wedding ceremonies, their whole education, their interaction with the Atatürkist teachers, could not be taken out of the context of the Republican project. They were born into the Republican era and the meanings they created were the products of the same milieu. Their memories were selective in remembering the ambivalence of micro-level relations/interactions with the state. Oral histories helped me to trace the changes in their positioning over time. The stories revealed the ways identities were linked to the experiences of living at or crossing the micro-borders of the state. Their past was strongly affected with the shifts of the regimes between tolerance and repression. Accordingly, their stories were deeply embedded in the broader political context. Hence, there was no way of narrating without reference to the politics of Islamization and secularization. In other words, their skillful avoidance of the taboo subjects did not work in the intrinsically politicized oral histories. Their earlier memories were full with intense experiences and feelings such as state's ban or repression of their religious organizations, labeling of Risale Readings as revolutionary fundamentalist activity, burning books, ostracization from friend's circles, societal/familial reaction against veiling, secrecy, hiding, moving, shame, guilt-consciousness, fear etc.

I, as a listener, and they, as narrators, both experienced the impossibility of separating the text (their narratives) from the context. There was no way to isolate their experiences from those dramatic connections. Their identities were the products of the intersection of several complex processes (political, cultural, and emotional). Therefore, they could not deny, push aside or simply avoid these processes, the way the informants tended to do in the interviews. Denying or skipping my questions in the interviews was easier, since many Fethullahists were prepared and even trained to do so. But denying their own agencies, their identity formations and the past, which made their selves, proved to be practically impossible. Life histories seemed to be immune to Gülen's strategies to mute conflicts and to cool down high emotionality. The gap between their previous experiences and their present life became extremely obvious, especially because I was participating their present lives. Therefore, oral histories proved to be extremely useful in exposing me to the shifting

linkages between Islam and the Republican project, as the transformations were clearly traceable in peoples' personal life stories.

I undertook four oral histories. They varied in content and form as well as in intensity and depth. Yet, all of them were extensive narratives, heavily dependent on the narrator. The diversity and differences between life stories were obvious and striking. However, the commonalities between those stories were more significant for my research and yet more difficult to discover. What did these people share? The answer was more complex and not readily available. Their stories opened my horizons allowing me to grasp how change occurred in time along with an ever-increasing conscious effort to preserve Islam --as a way of life, culture and tradition. But the ways of readapting and modifying Islamic ways of lives appeared to be unconscious and unnoticed.³³ The conscious protective attitudes to rescue faith and Islamic tradition were accompanied with the unconscious (or unacknowledged) elective affinities between their ways of lives and the Republican milieu.

One of the oral histories was undertaken with a close friend, whose life and some intimate details were already familiar to me. She also was one of my contact people. Despite this familiarity, however, it took us a surprisingly long time to get together a comprehensive and in-depth narrative. I chose her because she was extremely active and involved in the Community. She worked in *hizmet* (service) in different roles and undertook several duties. Thus, she experienced the gendered order of various sites. Another oral history was collected with fewer but longer sessions with a Fethullahist man who works in one of the organizations (foundation) of the Community. His experience in Gülen and wide knowledge of the Community was a valuable source for my research. His distinct experiences in the military school and the army were of great importance to my research.

My interest in the other two narrators was their personal closeness to the leader of the Community, Fethullah Gülen, since a very young age. One of them, a housewife, told me her life story over a long period of time through planned and unplanned meetings. I also interviewed her husband a few times. This couple has been close to the leader of the Community, Fethullah Gülen, and his family and enlightened me with their memories from

³³Dunaway (1996), p. 11

the home atmosphere, where Gülen was raised. The last oral history was with a leading male intellectual, whom I chose because he has been trained and educated by F. Gülen -- as one of his students-- and then became a very close friend and colleague to him. Moreover, he provided me several life stories of other leading intellectuals, including Fethullah Gülen. As he was raised in the Community, his life story was intensively intermingled with the lives of the prominent figures in the Community. It was interesting for me to meet some of these Fethullahists, after listening parts and pieces of their life stories. It was also an interesting journey for me into the intellectual life and history of production of ideas in the Community.

In addition to those detailed, labor-intensive and time-consuming oral histories, I collected numerous life stories during my participant observations, during my intensive socializing with Fethullahists and during my interviews. These life stories were brief and to the point since I interfered with their structure and flow.

(How) has Fethullah Gülen's discourse of tolerance/dialogue between civilizations found expression/reflection in their lives? (How) has the Fethullahist emphasis on cohabitation of differences affected the flow of Fethullahists life experiences? Were there any generational differences in life-worlds and world views of Fethullahists with regard to the Republic? How were their lives affected by larger socio-political processes and institutional arrangements? How have the shared meanings of Gülen --such as international agendas-- developed and how did they shape various aspects of their identities throughout their lives? This was particularly important since, later, I also discovered some similarities between their experiences before the Gülen Community emerged out of the Nur Movement in the early 1980s.

Only then, I started to pick up on their immediate everyday interaction with and feelings toward the state, Atatürk and the Republican project, during their lives. I patiently waited for the clues and answers to my delayed question: How had these tensions and/or relations and everyday life engagements changed form and intensity in time? How had their identities integrated along with the changing socio-political conditions, especially

with regard to their attitudes toward the Republic?¹⁴ Oral histories incorporated a historical dimension to the study.

Managing Fieldwork Relations: A Collaborative Undertaking

Reflexive ethnography: different voices

Through the inclusion of both multiple sites and voices, ethnography becomes a collaborative undertaking. Thereby, it involves a different “ethic and politics of research” (Marcus 1998, p. 241). Appreciating the multiple voices of the informants, my study shows that their primary contribution to existing knowledge is to invite critical rethinking of the conventional theories. It is particularly so, thanks to the reflexivity of the subjects and reflexive ethnography. This enabled me to incorporate the reflections and responses of my informants about my findings. The voices of the people are by no means a hindrance to study the social “facts”, conditions, structural realities. On the contrary, incorporation of those voices and identities enrich the understanding of macro-level processes and institutions.

My ethnography acknowledges three different levels of reflexivity, i.e. the level of the informant, the ethnographer and the audience of the ethnography. The third level refers to the people who continuously asked about my study, since they were socially, intellectually and/or politically involved with the issues of the research. It was usually those in the secular circles who showed curiosity or who felt threatened by Gülen’s rise and/or Republican people of a certain age (most of them 1960s and above) who had feelings of hatred for the Community. In addition to the collaboration of the informants, the responses of the audience (including the subjects) to the study contributed to my analysis¹⁵. The interaction between these levels of reflexivity leads to a deeper understanding and more sensitive research by the ethnographer. In this way, reflexive social science enables the diffusion of ethnographic authority of the ethnographer. This, I believe, is a fresh asset for political sociology, which has traditionally excluded identities and people’s voices.

¹⁴ See Chapter 4.

¹⁵ Towards the end of the writing of the first draft, I went back to the informants and collected their responses, views and criticisms of my analysis.

The Gülen Community proved to be particularly striking with regard to self-reflexivity. A striking common characteristic of Fethullahists was the self-conscious awareness of their vulnerability to the shaky and historically unstable socio-political conditions. The Community itself has been already working on self-presentation with a self-conscious effort. In other words, Fethullahists were self-reflexive in character, as an evident effect of their engagements with the Republican milieu.

Recently, the ethnographer's visibility in the text is encouraged in ethnographies. The author's self-reflexivity is regarded as a step towards the elimination of the authorial authority. Indeed, my participations, exposures, experiences, feelings and responses constitute in-depth data. However, the self-reflexivity of the ethnographer is an asset for the research, as long as it resides in field-practices and not literary experimentation. In other words, the researcher's participations in the field are useful data, as long as the ethnographic text is not merely about self-experience.³⁶ Moreover, the text and the writing of the ethnography must not overrule ethnography as a empirical field study, since it may lead to an underestimation of the importance of ethnographic practice and the research. As Davies argues,

[R]eflexivity is inherent to social research at all stages and in all forms. But this reflexivity is not the end purpose of the research; it is the means through which knowledge of a social reality outside ourselves can be approached.... Reflexivity in the text is not the same as a thoroughgoing reflexivity that informs the research process at each stage.... [I]t is vital to retain the primacy of the doing of research over the writing of or about it: in other words, ethnography must retain its grounding in practice, so that its relevance is both for other professionals and those who are its subjects (Davies, 1999, p. 222-223, 224)

Replacing the traditional "rapport" with cooperation between the ethnographer and the subjects

In this study, "collaboration" ("co-operation" in dialogue) replaced the traditional "rapport" ("relationship" or "connection") As Marcus argues, rapport has been heavily associated with the instrumentality and calculation on the part of the researcher³⁷. In fact, my adoption of the term collaboration refers to more than just a cooperation in dialogue. The depth and extent of the present study has been largely shaped and enriched through the

³⁶ See Rosaldo (1993), *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, London: Routledge. Postmodernists may not always be able to escape from the trap of the "self-absorbed Self" at the cost of omitting the "culturally different Other" (p.7).

³⁷ Marcus (1998), p.113.

cooperation of the informants in every sphere of the field. Indeed, their cooperation was extremely wide-ranging: introducing me to people, keeping me informed and inviting me continuously to numerous events, private and public gatherings, allowing me to enter their intimate lives, hosting and offering me various services, such as driving and translating, nurturing and healing when I became sick in Almati, consoling me and being friends when my passport was taken from me by the state's officers etc.

The subject of my study, i.e. the engagements, are simultaneously occurring in many different sites³⁸. Unlike in traditional rapport, it is difficult to talk about a distinct arrival in a bounded community. The diffuse nature of the field and multi-sitedness of the Community rendered arrival stories irrelevant.

Despite the informant's cooperation, the uncertainties of the multi-sited ethnography create some tensions for both the ethnographer and the subjects. A good example is the following. The chair of the research organization, Akademi, asked me what I was after, since he could not make sense of the connections between other sites I had visited and his organization. He asked me anxiously "What does this organization have to do with Risale Readings? Our aim is scientific and not religious, do you know that?" As the connections between the sites were not clear to me either at that particular time, I could not offer him a satisfactory answer. At that time, all of the sites of the Community were "Islamic" sites for me, as I had not discovered the various nature of the engagements. Disturbed by the lack of any clear explanation, he called me a few days after my visit. Obviously, the uncertainty attached to the research made him feel uncomfortable. He felt the need to clarify:

I have been thinking about our conversation, the other day. You are right that there are many activities associated with a Community. But let me clarify something I could not explain neatly that day: this organization, Akademi is primarily a civil society organization and should not be confused with any other religious undertaking. I hope you will manage to differentiate between these different activities and events.

In fact, both of us were suffering at that time in different registers. He felt the need to dissociate from other sites and highlight the differences. In contrast, I was suffering from the difficulty of connecting the fragmented sites to each other. The research was affecting both me and the subjects in different ways.³⁹ However, it is extremely important to note

³⁸ Ibid., p.118.

³⁹ Marcus (1998), p.119.

that the engagements between me and the subjects were emerging out of the sites and our interactions. This was a striking contrast to the regulative ideal of rapport.

Goal-oriented, pragmatic adaptation to the field does not imply "going native"

"[The] ethnographer's experiences when they participate in social interaction in another society clearly alter their own selves in accordance with the expectations of the others" (Davies, 1999, p.24).

In conventional anthropology, the changes in the identity or self of the researcher have been understood, or rather stigmatized, as "going native". This creates continuous tensions for the researcher to question—or maintain self-consciousness of—the level of her involvement and attachment. In fact, it is possible that the researcher to find her/himself becoming one of the subjects. However, this extreme case does not apply to other instances, when the researcher consciously and purposely chooses to adapt the milieu, in order to attain her goals. Like other methodologies, ethnography is primarily a self-conscious strategy and a goal-oriented tool. The immersion in the field and the in-depth and intense experience is a part of the calculated and pragmatic process of data collection.

During my fieldwork, I made considerable effort to make myself invisible and not different from them, in order to get rid off the guest or stranger status as much as possible. The most striking example of this attitude was the fitting of my feminine identity to the gender order in communal sites. Interestingly, it was a combination of conscious efforts and some pragmatic adaptations of convenience. Despite my purposefulness and awareness of this attitude, it took me some time to realize how submissive and deferential I became in the Community of extreme gender segregation and subordination.⁴⁰ I did not mind the way gendered interactions stripped me of my feminist identity and attitudes since my aim was clearly to understand their lives rather than to change or challenge it. Interestingly however, I found myself taking this issue of obedience further.

To my surprise, I realized gradually that I was conveniently starting to become used to the advantages of the male-dominant milieu by accepting their treatment to me as their daughter, or a young girl who needs protection, care and direction. I found myself being

⁴⁰ See Marcus (1997) , "The Uses of Complicity in the Changing Mise-en-Scene of Anthropological Fieldwork," in *Representations*, vol. 59, p. 85-108.

driven to my interviews, letting them set up my appointments, being introduced to the elite of the Community, being taken care of and hosted at different sites, as a “fragile” girl whose dependency on the Fethullahist men was taken-for-granted. Most of the time, I did not even need to ask them for co-operation for my fieldwork because the assistance, support and extreme hospitality was offered automatically. By allowing the Fethullahist men to be protective and helpful, I took advantage of the milieu but at the same time, I had to adapt and accept some of the aspects of the roles their daughters and wives were playing. Not that I forgot or abandoned my free-spirit feminist identity, but my interactions in those sites were being formed as result of complex processes which were absorbing me. I did not resist this temptation at all because this was serving my research ends. Depending on the context, I found myself taken care of, guided, protected and sheltered. I even happened to put myself in conversations and situations, which I could not tolerate in any other context or circle of people. But more importantly, these experiences gave me deep insights into the gender dynamics of the Community, which would not be that obvious if my feminist self participated in those sites.

How did I cope with my critical attitudes towards communal life styles, as well as cognitive or emotional reactions toward gender discrimination? How did I manage not to express any sensitivity, discomfort or anger with the explicit gender subordination in the Community? This situation is more complex than it seems and cannot be explained merely on the basis of methodological strategy, convenience or the regulative ideal of rapport. It is undeniable that the same patriarchal and sexist treatment would be enough to make me furious in any other context. Looking back on my experiences in the field, I clearly see now the unintended consequences of adapting to several different kinds of male-dominated sites. Although a certain degree of awareness was always attached to my attitudes with regard to the inappropriateness of a feminist, activist identity in those contexts, I did not pretend or fake submissiveness. Most of my motivation developed not because they would ostracize or exclude me. Indeed, they would not. But the extent and depth of the data collected would decrease. It was not a secret that I was always self-conscious that this rather submissive role gave me the advantage of not being perceived as a threat to the Community's men. However, in addition to this pragmatic awareness, it was easier and comforting to be able to behave and act as one of the informants, instead of a deviant in the

Community. Indeed, I found it even harder, if not impossible, to limit my activity to that of a “detached” participant observer. Lifeworlds were much more attractive and inviting to slip into than just to observe as a guest.

The transformations in my attitudes and discourse at those sites are important keys in understanding the Community’s gender order. Therefore, the inclusion of the transitions in my attitudes in the ethnography, i.e. self-reflexivity, serves to the end of explanatory strength and deeper understanding of the relations between the ethnographer and the subjects.

My participation in their lives was driven both by curiosity and instrumentalist calculating. However, usually I was living it rather than just researching. For me, it was more interesting and real to interact with the people and allow myself experience different lifeworlds, rather than limiting myself to a critical and analytical observer. This did not mean that I went native. I did not have to convert and to forget who I was in order to immerse myself fully to their ways of life. I tried to see the world from the subject’s eyes in order to interact with them genuinely. I just wanted to learn through experience, to feel the people, to smell the sites and taste their food.” In order to experience them to the fullest I interacted intensively. This facilitated collaboration between the subjects and me.

Feminist methodologies helped me in my attempt to abolish hierarchy between myself as a researcher and the people that I was studying.” My aim was to make myself less visible and powerless in order to denounce any kind of power. I needed to dissociate particularly from the power of knowledge, which Fethullahists associated with me as a secular looking researcher who was educated in West.” The techniques I used helped me a great deal, but there were other factors, which helped me in this respect.

I was seen primarily as a young, single, female student, which traditionally was enough to make me an object of a lesser authority in the Community. As a female student,

⁴¹ J. Clifford and G. Marcus (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁴² S. B. Gluck and D. Patai (1991).

⁴³ With this respect, I disagree with Marcus. Despite the changes of the fieldwork conditions, the power associated with the researcher continues to prevail in the interaction between the researcher and the subjects. Thus, it required me to make deliberate efforts to cope with that barrier, even in the cases Marcus highlights, that is the interaction with upper-class subjects or the elite. Class distinctions did not automatically abolish

I could not be established in their eyes. Moreover, a single 'girl' could not have settled yet. These assumptions helped me to overcome potential authorities associated with the researcher. Moreover, I put some conscious effort into emphasizing my current situation as a student, which helped me to overcome the class distinctions. This was particularly useful, especially when I interviewed economically lower strata of the Community, such as the teachers and the students.

On the other hand, I used my personal connections, which helped me reach the elite of the Community. I did not hesitate to use all the channels, when my family, my professors, my friends offered to make appointments with the upper-class businessmen, their wives, the prominent benefactors of the schools and the intellectual circles of the Community. On these occasions, I emphasized my cosmopolitan identity and did not hide my career path, instead of presenting myself merely as a student. I took advantage of the soft spot of the Fethullahist elite for intellectual, educated females who are connected with the West.

I took considerable advantage of my gender, which made me an object of protection and a non-threat among men as well as a potential newcomer sister among the women. A combination of my strategic emphasis of my female identity and suppression of my feminist identity helped me to participate in the segregated worlds of men and women in different ways. I consciously tried to conform to their gender role expectations. This made the whole project more fluid and feasible. Briefly, my pragmatic and purposeful shifts between different identities helped me in immersing myself in the sites of the Community.

Sexy subjects: studying the fashionable

Every novel connection offered me new opportunities to meet more people and to participate in new sites. Every new encounter led to many more new ones, sometimes even without any conscious effort. This was partly a snowball effect. However, sometimes, it was more than a snowball effect, since I was consciously following the sites of the engagements, and not simply meeting the people who I was coming across. Looking back at my whole experience, I see now, that the ease I had was due to something more than just my strategic and pragmatic orientation. My whole ethnography was about developing interactions and cooperations. I believe, I made friends who were curious to know more

the perceived power of knowledge.

about me. The interaction by definition is mutual. However, sometimes, it required sharing experiences.

A few times, this attitude created some deep moral dilemmas and ethical concerns for me in my life and research. At those times, I experienced painful emotional discomfort. I could not immediately identify and name the reasons for my annoyances. However, they became increasingly more visible and harder to ignore. Due to limited space, I cannot summarize all the tensions I experienced during my fieldwork but a few examples will illustrate some of the discomforts I experienced. In order to develop closer and more sincere relationships --rather than traditional hierarchical ethnographer-subject relationships-- with the people I studied, I did not treat them solely as my informants. Accordingly, I did not behave like a typical researcher. Although I was not hiding that I was studying them, some of them soon started to assume and feel that I was interested in them and that I was enjoying being with them. This was particularly so among women's Risale Reading groups.

Women were opening-up and sharing their most intimate details with me. They sometimes were telling me that I was not allowed to use them in my study and sometimes they were completely forgetting or conveniently ignoring my research. Briefly, new friendships were developing, which were enriching my research. Women from different research groups were calling and inviting me for different occasions. Hence, my life started to become more and more open to them. Soon, I started to receive phone calls, practically all the time, even late at night, when I usually was not at home. Against my will, I found myself accountable --and trying to account-- for where I was late at night. A role-conflict was involved: I was a single female whom they wanted to make a part of their Islamic collectivity. The degenerated nightlife, which was associated with alcohol, clubs and sex, was alien to the Community, especially to the Fethullahist women. Besides, in their lifeworlds, a single woman lives with the parents, sleeps at home until she marries and moves in with her husband. Accordingly, I faced an immediate ethical dilemma between lying about my life and identity or being honest about it. The former would help me develop friendships and be on better terms with them, but put me in a very awkward situation attended by continuous guilt and bad conscience. However, initially, the latter seemed practically so impossible since it involved the fear and risk of being ostracized or

simply being relegated to a designated outsider/researcher status. This was an important emotional dilemma in my fieldwork, which did not lend itself to a quick fix. As my subject matter emerged out of the field, my interaction with the people developed gradually out of the symbolic and negotiated interactions. I had to work on these interactions diligently, depending on my relations with the informants. The presentation of myself without having to lie, took more energy and effort than anything else in the field. The interactions with the subjects have been emergent and processual since we were taking part in creating our micro-realities, the dynamics of sharing our everyday lives. In addition to the research ethics, I needed to make sure that we could make it work despite our differences. This was one of the major claims of the Community. Hence, I did not prefer to lie about my self. I simply wanted to experience how the interaction was developing. How were the boundaries between us permeating through negotiations? Yet, I had to do a lot of shifts between identities and between back and frontstages of my life. I believe the Fethullahists and I managed to understand each other in this respect.

I almost lost the separation between my life and the research. My family, my friends, my boyfriend were more and more turning into informants, while my informants were becoming my friends. The questions of the secularists about the Community were received by me as valuable data. All the suggestions they were offering me for my research (without my asking for them) and their 'preaching' were taking their place in my research notes. I sometimes was trying to make myself invisible and non-existent, in order to receive my immediate family's and friend's perspectives on the events of Gülen. My analytical distance was not making them happy, especially when they were trying to consult me as an authority on the issue and when I was disprivileging or even hiding my views, in order not to distort theirs. Often, I was accused of fading away and becoming faceless and therefore insincere company.

I was stepping into the ballroom where the wedding ceremony of one of my best friends was taking place. My friends were asking me about my reflections on the never-ending burning news about the Gülen Community. More importantly, they were bombarding me with these questions before they bothering to ask how I was doing. I was introduced to my boyfriends' family, that is whole-hearted Atatürkists and who, I was told before, disliked Fethullahists very much. They immediately began to ask about my

findings and tried to find out my perspective on the issue. The annoying point was that this immediate jump into my research, which almost felt as an examination of my loyalty to the Atatürkist tradition, was taking place before they asked me anything else about me, my life or identity. It was one of several occasions that I really did not want to disappoint the people by taking analytical distance. The tension was ethical: I was continuously torn between being an honest sociologist and being a muted researcher who avoids conflict. On different occasions, I chose different attitudes but even the choice itself caused extra tensions in my everyday life. I simply did not want to provoke people and create opposition, since the milieu was almost too ripe for clashes.

Briefly, it was not just me who was loosing the separation between my (field) work and (personal) life but the social context and conditions were creating these permeations, too. Due to the burning immediacy of the issue, I was automatically reduced to the research that I was conducting. People, like my relatives, friends and acquaintances, were dying to know about the Community, but they seemed more eager to know which side I was taking. I believe this was due to the popularity and highly politicized nature of the subject matter.

Conclusion

My use of multi-sited ethnography was pragmatic and deviated from its conventional use as a means used to study globalization. I used this methodology to be able to deal with the macro realities of the nation-state and civil society, by tracing them at the level of everyday life. It enabled me to carry the analysis from the micro (identities, everyday discourses, beliefs etc) to the macro level (state and international world order). Consequently, it gave me the tools to theorize state-society interaction (the engagements between the state and an Islamic Community-movement) on the basis of extensive empirical findings.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: MEANING AND CONTEXT

Introduction

Owing to unique historical circumstances, the establishment of a church above, subordinate to, or parallel with the state was peculiar to Christianity; it constituted an exception rather than the rule in relations between the state and religion. This existence of the Christian church as a political power in its own right has tended to focus attention mainly on the political aspects of secularism. In a non-Christian state such political considerations are not necessarily of primary importance. To understand the process of secularization in a non-Christian society, one must examine the extent of the domination of religious rules over all areas of life and discover whether or not this domination is either implemented or supported by the state. Further, one must estimate the extent of this domination and also try to ascertain the degree of separation between the religious life of the people and the other aspects of their lives. (Berkes, 1999, p.6)

Understanding the historical specificities of the interaction between Islam and the state in Turkey requires more than one-dimensional political analysis, since Islam cannot be reduced to merely politics or the religious text and dogma. However, this has been the approach that most of the studies have taken so far. Islam needs to be understood in its context, which permeates the boundaries between culture and politics. It is lived as ways of life, which comprise historically and culturally specific patterns of interaction as well as institutional processes. Everyday is a rich context to capture Islam as ways of life. Before tracing its manifestation in the contemporary everyday life in the next chapters, it is extremely important to situate state-Islam interaction into the socio-historical context, where it has evolved and ripened.

As it has discussed in the second chapter, the interaction between the state and Islam in the Ottoman Empire was distinct in the Muslim world in its capacity for a temporary marriage between religion and politics. In this chapter, the nature of this marriage needs to be explored further because this bond has left a mark on the contemporary engagements between Islam and the secular state in the Turkish Republic. In addition to the continuities, the discontinuities between the Empire and the Republic will also be elaborated. Furthermore, in the context of a particular development of secularism in the Republic, the intellectual and cultural roots of the Gülen Community need to be explored, in order to follow a particular development of secularism. In this analysis, the Nur Movement, out of which Gülen emerged, is as important as its Islamic brothers. Although Nur and Gülen

were born into (and were close to) the Islamic orders,¹ they dissociated from them in several ways.

The main aim of this chapter is to explore the manifestations of the state-Islam interaction in Nur and Gülen. The analysis of a multi-dimensional transition (organizational as well as identitarian) from Nur to Gülen will enable me to reveal mutual changes in the attitudes between Islam and the Republican project. Accordingly, the second part of the chapter will focus on the relatively short period of time of the post 1980's (after the military coup), when transitions in the status of Islam became strikingly evident in the rapid rise and popularity of the Gülen Community. My study highlights this period since it will analyze the cultural and political complexities of "Islam in transition" from Nur to Gülen. It also has a particular focus on the redefinition of the Islamic identities and restructuration of everyday as well as emergent sensibilities in and around Gülen. Obviously, these transformations are more than just political processes.

In addition to the large picture of "Islam in transition", the chapter looks at the interplay between this broader trend and the identities (discourses, action, practices, feelings and agendas) of the former Nurists and/or Fethullahists. Complementing the historical accounts with the voices of the people, I will discuss to what extent Fethullahists regard themselves as inheritors of the Nur Movement. How are subjectivities fashioned around emotional attachments, historical continuities, cultural similarities and differences between Nur and Gülen? What kind of transition enabled Gülen to avoid the pejorative labels which has been largely associated with Nur, such as *irtica* (fundamentalist) and *bolucu* (seperatist). How, in the last two decades, did Islam travel from exiles of Nur to the Gülen Community's self-definition as a civil society organization? Oral histories, life stories, in-depth interviews, people's memoirs will be used to understand the manifestations of the transitions at the level of identity. How are subjectivities built around the historically ambivalent relationship between the state and Islam? How did these transitions in power dynamics dramatically effect Fethullahists lives and became central in their identity-formation? What is so distinctly different in Gülen which places it in a historically unique positioning with regard to the Republican project?

¹Mardin (1991).

Historical Patterns of Islam-State Interaction in Turkey: Bifurcation Between Religion and Politics

Historically, the attitudes of the Turkish state toward Islam have been ambivalent. The underlying reason of this ambivalence can be traced to the late 18th century, when the tensions between Islam and Westernization surfaced in the Ottoman Empire.² Analyzing the nature of the development of secularism in Turkey, Berkes correctly argues that Turkish experience was a bifurcation between religion and politics, and not a clear-cut separation between them in the Western sense. Subsequently, the state maintained a central role in shaping and keeping political Islam³ under control. In its endeavours to cope with the tension, the state has developed a double discourse⁴. On the one hand it displayed a rigid authoritarian segregation of the religious and the political -- the so-called laiklik (laicism) in Turkey. On the other hand, it worked on the incorporation of Islam into the system in order to cope with its anti-system tendencies⁵. This ambivalent attitude has largely shaped the distinctiveness of the Turkish Islam, of which, I will argue, Gülen and its forefather Nur are striking examples.

There have been several explanations for the Islamic revival in the secular Turkish Republic. One of the dominant explanations is the "bankruptcy of Kemalist project". This argument explains Islamic revival as merely a reaction to the failures of the Kemalist modernization. Lacking a historical vision of the roots of the tension between Islam and modernization, this narrow approach oversimplifies the relationship between Islam and state.⁶ Moreover, it is monocausal, and thereby misses the historically and culturally

²Berkes (1964)

³ Benin and Stock (1997) *Political Islam*. The terms "Political Islam", "Islamic fundamentalism", "radical Islam" have been widely used as interchangeable in the literature. In its simplest definition, fundamentalism is a call to return to the of Golden Age. "It suggests the restoration of a pure, unsullied and authentic form of the religion cleansed of historical accretions, distortions and modernist definitions" (p.3). However, the authors in the volume argued that several versions of contemporary Islamization seeks to redefine its concepts, re-vitalize and re-islamize societies. Thus, political Islam appears to be a preferable term --rather than Islamic fundamentalism--because its core is regarded as temporal and political. As the present study will refer to Islam as ways of life, it will be dealing with its multi-dimensional nature. Accordingly, political Islam may not always be clearly separable from the cultural and moral manifestations of Islam. Moreover, the study will illustrate that there exist Muslim politics, which is not necessarily fundamentalist and thereby anti-system. It is problematic to call all Muslim politics as fundamentalist and therefore as an enemy of temporal politics and the state.

⁴ Sakallioğlu (1996)

⁵Ibid.,

⁶Ibid.,

specific characteristics and inner propellants of Islam in Turkey, which the present study aims to explore.⁷ The bankruptcy argument is supported by two basic arguments:

1. The radical break with the past --the imposition of secularization and modernization by Atatürk-- caused an Islamic reaction in the form of an Islamist fundamentalist movement. Atatürk's project was therefore an incomplete project⁸, which could not accommodate Islam. Thereby it provoked and mobilized the Islamist masses.

2. Atatürk's understanding of secularism, which became the cornerstone (official ideology) of the Turkish Republic and the Republican project, was insubstantial. It lacked doctrine and it was anti-religious, rather than aiming at a separation of religion and politics. It founded an authoritarian secularism⁹, which failed to incorporate Islam democratically.

The "bankruptcy of the Kemalist project" argument is weak but not completely false. Although the Kemalist modernization project has been considered as a failure or an incomplete modernization project for numerous reasons¹⁰, it alone cannot explain the Islamic revival in Turkey.

The bankruptcy argument ignores the historically rooted bifurcation between traditional Islamists and the Westernizing elite, which predated the Republican project. It mainly fails to incorporate the sources of this tension, like the state's attitude, which displays a curious blend of tolerance and suppression of Islamic forces since late 18th Century. Hence, it is particularly important to trace the roots of this tension back to 19th century (the Ottoman Empire) and to analyze the imperial legacy of the ambivalence between Islam and the state. Although Turkey was distinct from other Muslim countries with regard to some accidental factors, such as the proximity and earlier receptiveness to

⁷See Mardin (1998), with regard to his critic to the Turkish social scientists in understanding the inner propellants of Islam. He criticizes most of the studies of Islam in Turkey for their blind adoption of macro theories from West instead of looking at the micro dynamics of Islam in the everyday life.

⁸Turner (1974) Weber and Islam. Keagan and Paul, p.160.

⁹ See Gole (1996).

¹⁰This is a major debate, which constitutes the corner stone of the contemporary literature on Turkey. To what extent would the current situation (problems of democracy, discontents of modernity, obstacles for civil society and barriers of economic development) be different, if the Kemalist Republica project was envisioned and undertaken differently? For a comprehensive collection of debates from different angles, see Kasaba and Bozdogan (1997).

the West, the tensions between tradition and modernity during the 18th and 19th Centuries are reaffirming historical roots of the ambivalence.(Berkes, 1964, p.508)

The Turkish experience deviated from the West in the nature of tension. Unlike the conflict between religion and the world in the Christian experience, the real tension was between tradition and change in the Turkish experience. "Such a struggle can take place in a society where there is no organized church authority" (Berkes, 1964, p.6).Both Gülen and Nur were born into a milieu without an organized church: Their *dava* is a perfect example of the efforts to reconcile tradition with social change that is the revitalization of faith and Islamic culture under the modern conditions and the secular Republic.

While reform was understood as modernization and technical development in the Ottoman Empire the 18th century, the political implications of reform only surfaced in the 19th century. It is only after from the middle of the 19th century on that the state lost its traditional legitimization based on religion and became responsible to promote change:

The mounting tension worked for the separation of the two intertwined elements of the traditional order, in spite of all efforts to keep state and religion side by side in a new dual relationship. Attempts to delineate the respective areas of the two produced, not a secular state with a religious organization outside it, but rather a series of divisions in the political legal and political institutions each of which manifested a religious-secular duality. (Berkes, 1964, p.509)

Beginning in the mid-19th century, the Ottoman state started to face the rise of the West as a challenge to its existence, which led to a drive for modernization. This was a new phenomenon in the Muslim world because "Islam first coalesced into a religious community... Qur'an defined with some detail how the religious community was to operate, although it was not so precise concerning the structure of the state. Thus, Islamic societies and their theoreticians had a tendency to see the state as an extension of the religious community, existing for the protection of the community. The emphasis was on the life of the Community, not on the life of the state. Both before and after Ottomans, the *de facto* heavier weight of the state (than had been planned for an ideal Islamic society) was reluctantly accepted by the Ulema...(Mardin, 1989, p. 18-19). Hence, the state-induced drive in the Empire was a novelty in the Muslim world and became the major political and

intellectual concern. The traditional fusion of state and religion in Islam began to be challenged and the state started to become an agency or motor of change.¹¹

As one of the earliest non-Western modernizers (other than Russia and Japan), the Ottoman state could not remain indifferent to an urgent call for a fundamental transformation, especially in the absence of a middle class as the cornerstone of transformation. Beginning during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839), institutional reforms started to take place and the state became “bound to lead to some modernization in the conception and organization of government” (Mardin, 1989, p.30; Berkes, 1964, p. 134). The Tanzimat Charter (Hatt-i Humayun of Gulhane) was the earliest constitutional document in any Muslim country and put a limit on arbitrary executive powers of the *padisah* (the sultan). The charter opened the first formal breach between the temporal and the religious.

How, then, did Islamists react to the state's social and political engineering, i.e. modernizing reforms during the century? The subsequent conservative reaction of the young Ottomans --an intellectual traditionalist movement-- attacked the authoritarianism, extreme Westernism and superficiality of Tanzimat policies. Their aim was to achieve a synthesis between progress (a Western notion) and the Islamic state (loyalty to traditional practices). It is important to note the earliest yearnings for a middle ground, which can be traced to the contemporary search for reconciliation of Islam and modernity. According to the Young Ottomans, Islam was “a principle of cohesion for the Ottoman, and the Tanzimat statesmen had undermined this element by their secularizing reforms in the judiciary” (Mardin, 1983, p. 143). The Islamist faction within the Young Ottomans denied the superiority of European methods in administration, technology and science. They ascribed the decline of the empire to its deviation from the *şeriat* (Islamic law). The conservative young Ottoman reaction to the westernizing Tanzimat designated just the beginning of a constant tension between forces of tradition and those of change/reform.

This period witnessed the first attempts to establish public law outside *şeriat* and secular education outside the religious¹². However, it is extremely important to note that

¹¹See Mardin (1989)

¹²Berkes (1964) p.169-188

these new attempts created conflict and ambivalence within the legal system and education rather than a straight separation between them and religion. After the separation of statutory and *şeriat* laws in 1869, two types of laws and courts emerged which had “different legal conceptions concerning procedure”. (Berkes, 1964, p.170). In other words, they both overlapped and contradicted each other. Moreover, the statutory law was neither completely secular nor entirely compatible with *şeriat*. Another illustration of the ambivalent relation between politics/state and religion, was Tanzimat's view of education. This view was largely shaped by the conception of secularism of the period. “Despite the enhanced importance given to the dissemination of secular learning, there was definite retrogression in the degree of secularity with which the government viewed the function of religious instruction” (Berkes, 1964, p.173)

The reformist Tanzimat period was followed by the thirty-year absolutist rule of Abdülhamit II (1876-1909). Predictably, the pendulum between Islamization and Westernization (secularization) swung next towards the Westernizing attempts of the Young Turks who fought for a return to constitutional rule¹³. The Young Turk Movement (organized around the association ‘Union and Progress’) led to the awakening of a secular conception of rational unity and rejected the conception of a state associated with or based on religion. Eventually, with the collapse of Islamic unity, Turkish nationalism became active.

The series of modernizing and secularizing revolutions led by Atatürk--such as abolition of the traditional clothing the Arabic alphabet and measurements, the adoption of Swiss civil law, granting more equal rights to women --in the early years of the Turkish Republic (mid-1920s and 1930s), harshly repressed Islam not only as a religion but also as a culture. Religious activities and entities has been pushed underground through severe measures and punishments by the state and the modernizing elite, while the sects and orders were abolished by the sultanate and caliphate. All these harsh enforcements treated Islam as merely a religion. That means it adopted a narrow understanding of Islam as merely a religion and ignored Islam as ways of life. This neglect of Islam as ways of everyday life is directly reflected in the social science in Turkey, where most of the studies

¹³Ibid.,

take Islam either as pure religion or politics. Islam as cultural ways of life and identities has been widely discarded from the spectrum of Turkish social science let aside studies, which bridge the cultural and political aspects of Islam.

Berkes argues strongly that Kemalist secularism sought to rationalize Islam, and aimed to take religion under the control of popular sovereignty, rather than abolishing it¹⁴. He highlights the combination of the Durkheimian and Republican tones in Atatürk's conception of religion. Atatürk abolished the caliphate in order to liberate Islam from traditional associations. Ironically however, along with the repressions and bans, the modernist/secularist drive in Turkey (from the 19th century to the post-1980 era) aimed to incorporate religion into the Republic¹⁵. This was different from an anti-religious rupture or a clear-cut separation between religion and politics in the history of a secular Republic. Atatürk's secularizing revolution claimed to restrict Islam to the private sphere, seeking the individualization of religion.¹⁶ Thus, religion was made an individual matter¹⁷, another feature that makes Turkey a curious case with regard to Gellner's universalistic theory of secularization-resistant Islam¹⁸.

The literature often focuses on Atatürk's conception of religion, which was different from the ideas of both the men of Tanzimat and the Young Turks. Atatürk believed that "the modern state would be shored up by civic religion" (Mardin, 1983, p. 143). Attributing only a secondary role to religion, Atatürk's secularization policy created new institutions, which would encourage civic religion after the abolition of the traditional ones through a series of revolutions. Turkish secularism differed from Western secular systems by its particular means and path.¹⁹ Islam was recruited to the new secular Turkish Republic's pragmatic policies through, which the state aimed to legitimate itself.

¹⁴N. Berkes (1964).

¹⁵Ibid., Berkes rejected the claim that Atatürk's secularization project was anti-religious. L. Koker (1999) states that it is not clear if Kemalist nationalism has an anti-religious stance. Mardin (1983) "Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey" in Piscatory (ed.) highlights the Durkheimian solidarist approach to religion which the Kemalist nation-builders adopted. The debate whether Atatürkist laiklik is anti-religious or not is ongoing and open-ended.

¹⁶ With regard to Turkish secularization, see also Turner (1974), p.160-170.

¹⁷Berkes (1964).

¹⁸Gellner (1994) *Conditions*; Gellner (1993).

¹⁹ Turner (1974). Turner argues how secularization takes a different form in different societies. Put differently, the manifestations of secularization were far from a universal phenomena.

In the early years of the Republican project, secularization was realized at the expense of the freedom to form Islamist organizations (including sects, orders, voluntary and civil religious associations) and to engage in Islamist politics. However, any argument, which pits the state and Kemalism (official ideology of the Republic) against Islam would miss the contingent relationship between them. Similarly, an understanding of Islam as an anti-system force would be one-sided and incomplete because it would fail to recognize the pragmatic and sometimes even modernist tendencies of political Islam which have survived in a Westernizing, secularizing state since the Tanzimat period.

The state's repressive strategy toward Islam (i.e. prohibition of religious organizations, parties and sects) was relaxed with the introduction of multiparty politics. Although Said Nursi withdrew from politics, he strongly suggested that his followers vote for the Democrat Party (Mardin, 1989, p.98). The military coup in 1960 put an end to the alliance between some Islamist circles and the Democratic Party, which had won the elections in 1950. Again, the state's tolerant attitude was followed by military suppression of Islamists. The membership in an Islamic order or even participation in a religious meeting or ritual had to be in secrecy. There was a complete lack of tolerance for any symbolic and/or political expression of Islam. The next sections, I will elaborate the reflection of these structural transformations at the identity level²⁰.

The leaders of religious sects were punished, imprisoned and kept under strict surveillance. The confrontations between the religious leaders such as Said Nursi (the leader of the Nur Movement) and the secular Turkish state maintained its intensity until after the 1980s, the period following the military coup. Successive lawsuits took place throughout Said Nursi's life.²¹ Until the mid-1980s, fear and guilt-consciousness had been the major feelings of Islamic people's lives. Islamist men and women who deviated from the standardized, accepted traditional Muslim image were not only condemned by the state but also sanctioned by the society. A contemporary Fethullahist woman, Ayse, recalls those days with pessimism and sorrow:

From the moment I was introduced to a group of women who secretly were gathering to

²⁰See the last two sections of this chapter.

²¹Mardin (1989), see the life-long exiles, trials and imprisonments of Said Nursi.

read Risales²², my whole world-view started to shatter and change radically. It was the beginning of a new journey to a deeper inner-life for me...A kind of renaissance, my enlightenment...(Her eyes shine, her voice changes with excitement). For me, my integration of personality started with that lucky event, namely my entrance to the Nur world. Unfortunately, I had to keep it as a secret for quite long time. There was no way, I could share it with any of my friends or family members. On the contrary, I had to hide what I was going through with great caution and effort, especially from my parents, who, as the majority of people, were hard-core Atatürkists and who were voting for the leftist party *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*-CHP (Republican Party of the Public). We were living in one of those little towns of Anatolia where almost everybody knew each other. Our Risale readings had to continue with incredible secrecy for years. Can you imagine that reading an Islamic publication was the biggest crime? Let aside religious organizations, we were scared to be caught by reading and punished for our ideas. I had to pretend in every sphere of my life in order not to be labeled, marginalized and ostracized. Although I was dying to satisfy my burning starvation for religious texts and publications, there were almost no books and Risales were hidden in fear. My mother was wearing a little, symbolic headscarf just for her respect for tradition, similar to most of the women in town. In time, my life became a torture and a hypocrisy, tearing me apart between my fakely secular appearance in public and my growing devotion to God which was calling for a proper self-expression such as veil and other requirements of our religion...I lived in agony and pain for years till I had the courage to start to wear a bigger scarf and admit my true feelings and faith...I became a shame for all my family and was ostracized immediately by the whole community..²³

After moving from town to town in Anatolia and following and participating in Risale readings in different secret groups and in fear of being caught, she eventually met her husband who had gone through similar painful experiences. The couple's close friendship with Fethullah Gülen and his family flourished in Erzurum. She still recalls "the warmth" she felt "in the household Hoca Efendi was raised" and the "distinguished quality of Islamic life" in F. Gülen's home. Currently, they live in İstanbul where their Fethullahist orientation and active participation in the Community is no longer a threat to their security. To the contrary, they are a highly respected couple both in the Community and in society, which respects Ayse's contributions through volunteer work in education and the husband's Islamic knowledge as an established and internationally recognized faculty member. They recollected their memories of the "fugitive past", never-ending pretension and lies about the most intimate details of their self-identity. Then, they thanked God for the contemporary space for and recognition of their faith in society. Ayse says: "It feels like our fugitive past was another century but in fact, that was only a few decades ago. It is only because of God's justice that we reached to today's peace and freedom".

²²*Risale-i Nur* (Epistle of Light) are a collection of letters of interpretations of Qur'an written by the leader of the Nur movement, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. It still is accepted as one of the most pre-eminent and valuable piece of Islamic literature.

One of the most intense experiences of another woman, Mualla, was how she had been marginalized when she decided to wear a bigger scarf after being secretly exposed to Risales for a while. She was invited to read the Risales by her brother, who was a medical student in Ankara at the times. After this initial encounter with the “deep and intense journey to Nur”, she went through a dramatic internal change and soul searching. As she put it, she was acquiring awareness after long years of dormant life and absence of touch with both with her inner-self and sensibilities for the outer world. The biggest and most aggressive reaction to her radical decision to wear a big headscarf came from the secularist Kemalist parents who were voting for left-wing CHP. She narrated:

Our parents were thinking how could they survive the shame of having such disloyal children (my brother and me), betrayers of the Atatürk's reforms, who were completely out of their minds? Indeed, Islamism was the strongest stigma at those times. My situation was definitely more difficult than my brother. He was at least away from home in Ankara and among medical science students, who were sharing Nur teachings and philosophy. I was confined to my little town and face-to face interaction with the locals. A few women bravely started to wear bigger scarves. This was the most visible expression of Islamist awakening in those Anatolian towns. In fact, in Risale readings, there has always been diversity. There were women without any scarves, with a traditional covering or some marginal ones with the ‘new Islamist image’ which was attracting a lot of reactions and even anger among the homogeneously secular people. That is how my husband, a wholehearted Fethullahist, noticed and followed me in order to find out who this ‘properly’ covered woman was. It was so rare and unacceptable that we were just a few people who easily noticed each other...(She smiles) Very different from today's reality, where you see women like me everywhere...It took us years to gain public recognition... It took years of conflict and struggle to feel comfortable with who we are and what we think...²⁴

The life stories of several people completed a picture of discrete Risale readings all over Anatolia . Another woman, Zeynep, who writes in the Islamist journals, narrated similar stories with regard to the reactions against the increasing visibility of the Nur Movement. Obviously, there was no talk about the Gülen Community at those times:

When I decided to marry my husband I was told that he was participating the Nur activities and ceremonies. I was so scared, because, by that time, all we knew was that they were religious people who would get organized for illegal, anti-system purposes. For me, there was no difference between a witch or magician and a Nurist until I got to know my husband closer and started to read Risales, which were the turning point in my life.²⁵

²³ Quoted from an interview with Ayse Hanım, 1997 in İstanbul.

²⁴ Quoted from an interview with Mualla Hanım, 1998 in İstanbul.

²⁵ Quoted from an interview with Zeynep, in 1998 in İstanbul.

Again, for Zeynep, who defines herself as a wholehearted Fethullahist, there was a historical moment of converting to the Nur Movement. Since this happened way before the fragmentation, the Risales –and not the charm of the Gülen Community–attracted the people like Zeynep and Ayse who were in their mid-ages now. It is only after the splits, that they identified themselves with the ‘moderate and modernist’ Gülen Community whose activities in which they were already involved. Although the first, ‘awakening’ and enchantment were for the Risales, Fethullah Gülen and his interpretation of Qur'an became the source of enlightenment soon afterward. The awakening originated, both Mualla and Zeynep explained, from the attempt to answer those suspicious questions about God, religion, Qu'ran, universe, the other-world, faith and an Islamic history filled with miracles. Risales' first and most primary goal was to satisfy the increasingly suspicious minds of the increasingly secular and rational modernity.

The intensity of the repression of self-presentation at the everyday life level changed along with the shifts in the state's attitudes. But what was the underlying motive of this significant transition from clash and exclusion to recognition and integration? How can we explain the micro and macro levels of transition, which are attributed to God's justice by Fethullahists?

Since the 1970s, political Islam developed and revived under the control of Kemalist institutions and the dominant secular culture.²⁶ Put more concretely, the religious party (National Salvation Party) was incorporated into the system in line with the state's double discourse, that is the combination of religious and non-religious discourses. Publication of the religious and Qur'anic books increased and became more legitimate under the state's control. Fethullah Gülen's tapes started to circulate and his voice became increasingly accessible to the masses. As well, the activities became less illegitimate compared to the past, although there was no public recognition and state tolerance yet. For some time, İzmir was the center of Fethullahist activities, where Fethullah Gülen was teaching in a religious school in Kestanepazarı.²⁷ As most of my middle-aged informants, who came from İzmir to İstanbul reported, his teachings and Risale readings became open to wider circles, and

²⁶B. Toprak (1984) “Politicization of Islam in a Secular State”, in Arjamond S. A (ed.) *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*. National Salvation Party (1972-81) became *Refah* in 1985 and remained so until it was abolished by the Turkish state in 1997.

increasingly attracted leading right-wing politicians, businessmen and even state officials. Interviews and oral histories revealed that the strong roots of the Community were built originally in İzmir and that the Kestanepazarı networking was transferred to İstanbul only during and after 1980s.

The post-1980 period witnessed the increasing visibility of public sphere. State policies have changed radically in both style and substance. This period, which followed the 1980 military coup, accommodated more heterogeneity in society as well as increasing the variety of voices and social movements in the public sphere. A radical Islamization was accompanied by a popularization of Islam. Islamic discourse was reformulated as well as radicalized. At the same time, the diversity of Islamist groups and movements increased. Were we witnessing the decreasing capacity of the Turkish state in the face of empowerment of grassroots Islam?²⁸ Certainly, grass-root Islam became more visible after 1980.²⁹

Fethullah Gülen's cassettes, which started to circulate and became popular during the Kestanepazarı lectures, became more accessible. It was only after the 1980s that the tensions and cleavages came to surface in the Nur Movement. The fragmentation had its roots in the last decades, but the explicit separation only occurred in late 1980s and most of the organizations of the Gülen Community was established in the early 1990s. The fragmentations in the 1980s were followed by the gradual increasing publicity and (national and international) institutionalization of the Gülen Community in 1990s. Those have been the times when the state's attitudes displayed more tolerance for differences, especially more flexibility for Islam³⁰, which explicitly came to its end toward the late 1990s.

Refah widened its appeal by catchall strategies and eventually won the elections in 1996.³¹ However, an argument based entirely on grassroots and public faces of Islam³² fails to acknowledge the importance of the state's attitudes over Islam. The post-1980

²⁷See F. Gülen's biography by L. Erdogan (1995) *Küçük Dünyam* (My small World).

²⁸ Kasaba and Bozdoğan (2000).

²⁹Gole (1993).

³⁰ See Sakallıoğlu (1996); Kasaba and Bozdoğan (2000).

³¹Gole (1996).

³²See Gole (2000a).

period witnessed more toleration for and incorporation of Islam within official parameters as the best way to restrict the power of radical Islam³³. As long as Islam would be given a voice, it could be kept within the system, as Hirschman's voice/exit theory would predict.³⁴

In the mid-1990s, after a decade of tolerance for Islam and the rule of *Refah*, the state started to reinforce its military surveillance over Islam and intensified its measures through several strategies. These strategies ranged from interfering in Islamist people's lives and activities at the everyday life level to threats of closure and actual bans on Islamic organizations and groups. In 1997-98, my endless endeavor to make appointments with *Okuyucu* and *Yazıcı* branches of the Nur Movement were turned down. Moreover, the insistent efforts of my contact people to arrange interviews also proved futile. I, at least, had the chance to have my contact people ask why they rejected all my attempts to meet them. The answers were similar and significant:

Our center is threatened by the state as we are accused of promoting *irtica* (fundamentalism). We are under strict surveillance and pressure. For our own security, we do not talk to strangers and we do not announce ourselves and our addresses as *Yazıcı* group. We are practically not supposed to be organized -- in the eyes of the Turkish state. We have been through this and we know the implications of these measurements and threats of the state.

Sometimes I received excuses such as "my father did not allow me because we should not trust strangers. The times are bad, you know". In contrast to the abundance of interpersonal relationships, organizational contacts and connections I made in Gülen, *Yazıcı* (Writers) and *Okuyucu* (Readers) groups avoided me with strong resistance and strict secrecy. Neither me nor my contact people, some of whom were close friends of *Yazıcı*s, could overcome their determined refusals to meet me. The insecurity and discomfort arising from an affiliation with a sect or Islamist group created once more repressed identities, masked affiliations or uncomfortable subjectivities.

Obviously, the pendulum swung back to the side of repression and authority. The power of historical patterns was once more proven. *Refah* was banned by the Turkish

³³See Sakallıoğlu (1996).

³⁴Hirschmann (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. Hirschmann adopts a rational choice theory of political inclusion and exclusion: When people are given the voice, they tend to remain within the system in order to cope with it whereas when they are denied political participation and expression, they are more likely to exit. In the case of absence of both of the rights --voice and exit--, the only remaining option, according to Hirschman is disloyal confrontation and political violence.

courts in 1997. In addition, the Imam-Hatips (religious high-schools) were closed down by a far-reaching change in the educational system. This enforcement abolished the eight-year high school system, comprised of religious highschools, by extending the secular elementary schooling to eight years instead. The state reimposed its will on every sphere of Islamist identities in a manner of reassurance of the irreversibility of secularization in Turkey. Interestingly, however, instead of keeping Islam under control, it invoked the repressed subjectivities and polarized the Islamist and secularist camps.

While many of the Islamic organizations and communities were already horrified by the authoritarian attitudes of the state, the Gülen Community appeared as an exception. Its publicity, popularity and legitimacy increased. It continued its projects and symbolic and discursive interaction with the state and several secularist circles --except for the Atatürkist civil society organizations.³⁵ Despite the contestations and periodical clashes Gülen faced in the late 1990s, and despite the attitudes of the state's branches, Gülen is under legal protection of the state.

When I mentioned the Islamists' fear, the feeling of being threatened and being pushed underground reported by different Nurist groups such as *Yazıcı*s and *Okuyucus*, Fethullahists responded with a calm confidence about their distinction. During one of my interviews, a representative of one of the Community's associations expressed their distinction from other Islamic groups:

We are not fundamentalists. We are even not an Islamist group. What would we have to fear about our project-based, civil society undertakings? We are in the service of Turkish society and we are proud of this. Who would want to suffocate a useful civil society establishment like us? Anybody who loves his country should support us if he can not participate in our projects.

Are we witnessing the smooth transformation from the state's historically formed distrust to the Nur Movement towards co-operation and trust between the Gülen Community and the state? Is there a radical change in the traditional parameters of state-society interaction?

To what extent is the contemporary security of Fethullahists reliable and stable in the light of the problematic history of its antecedents? In response to this question,

³⁵See Chapter 6.

Fethullahists expressed agreement about their self-perception, their feelings of security and comfort with the existing system, identification with the Kemalist tradition and commitment to the Turkish nation. Interestingly, this self-confidence seems to be backed up by a strategic dissociation from their forefathers. The statement of Fethullah Gülen's lawyers *summarizes* the widespread consensus about these issues:

The label Nurist is not a preferred and welcome label, as Hoca Efendi quite often disclaims it. Said Nursi can not be monopolized by a group. He is a great activist and scholar who left his mark on our age, which will be enlightening for everybody. It is definitely normal to make use of his ideas and world-view as well as of another hero, Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, the military leader of the independence War and the national leader. (Arti Haber, 1997)

To what extent, then, does the Gülen Community associate with the Nur Movement? What is Nur's and Gülen's relation to the Islamic brotherhoods? And what is distinct about Gülen, which is differentiated from Nur as well as other Islamic groups and brotherhoods?

This section traced and analyzed critically a historically specific development of secularism in Turkey, which has displayed conflict between religion and politics and thereby a bifurcation in various spheres and institutions, such as education and law. The ambivalence is manifested in continuous shifts in the state's attitude towards Islam. The next section will focus on Islam as ways of life, rather than its religious and political implications. Islam as ways of life and personal life stories tells us much about the cultural and intellectual roots of the Gülen Community and the Nur Movement. Despite the differences between them, the cultural roots -- mentalities, discourses, values-- of the Community in the folk Islam (sects and brotherhoods) is important to situate Gülen into context and have a deeper understanding of its distinction.

Continuities from Nur to Gülen: The Emergence of the Gülen Community

The leader of the Gülen Community Fethullah Gülen was born in Erzurum (one of the cities in the Eastern Part of Turkey), to highly respected parents with regard to Islamic knowledge, virtue and spirituality. His mother was a woman of high sensibility and Islamic dispositions to teach Islam. His mother was F. Gülen's first teacher. (Erdogan, 1995, p.33). She was teaching Qur'an to all the children in town and F. Gülen was highly educated on Qur'an, even in his early childhood.

His father was a *vaiz* (a man who knows and reads Qur'an), as he himself became later.³⁶ As some of the informants highlighted, Gülen's household was hosting numerous leading religious men of those times. The house was known for its large banquet dinners, where Islam was celebrated, discussed and appreciated.³⁷ Thus, F. Gülen was socialized into an Islamic milieu, which provided him with several charismatic role models. He started *namaz* (praying five times a day), when he was four.

He went to elementary school for two and a half years. Even during these childhood years he was intimidated by one of the teachers, since he was practising *namaz* in school. When the family moved he did not continue formal education but learned and continued to read not only Ottoman but also Arabic, initially from his father. He never stopped learning from distinct religious men and educating himself and the masses, in terms of Islamic text and knowledge. Soon, he started to be trained in memorizing Qur'an, to become a *hafız*. F. Gülen's education and self-training continued in teachings in mosques, *tekke* and *zaviyes* (hodgepodes) as well as with religious men called Hoca.

Said Nursi was the religious figure of highest reverence of the time. Meeting his students, such as Kirkinci Hoca, when they came to Erzurum to make a *sohbet* (chat) was a privilege.³⁸ During the chat, in his first meeting with a couple of Said Nursi's students, he was touched by the modesty and disinterest in material wealth of those men. He describes his feelings about these Nurists: "There was a depth in their prayer. Their *namaz* and praying seemed so different to me." (Erdogan, 1995, p. 44). After being deeply impressed, he insistently wanted to belong to that group. Despite the disapproval of his teachers and their negative thoughts about Risales, he says his heart was with Nurists since then. In time, he became deeply influenced by Said Nursi and his teachings.³⁹ Joining the Nurists was a matter of honor and privilege, as was Nurists' recognition of F. Gülen.

³⁶ I listened to several people from the community who got to know Hoca Efendi's parents and family life. Those people lived in Erzurum and were enchanted with his parents for their souls, tenderness and the Islamic knowledge, but most of all for their virtue and personality. A woman whom I interviewed talked more about Hoca Efendi's parents than himself. When she lived in Erzurum Hoca Efendi was not known that well but his parents were impressive characters respected very highly in Erzurum.

³⁷ In addition to my oral histories, see L. Erdogan (1995) *Küçük Dünyam*, biography of F. Gülen.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁹ Ibid.

F. Gülen lived and worked in several towns and cities in Turkey. However, most of my informant's stories about the Community's origins start with F. Gülen's presence in İzmir, in Kestanepazarı, where he was teaching Islam in a religious school. Hence, the Community's birth needs to be traced back to Kestanepazarı when the contemporary leading figures of the Community have started to gather around F. Gülen. The masses, which started to follow F. Gülen began to include prominent national political leaders, such as Özal, who was flying to Kestanepazarı in order to listen to his 'mentor'. In a way, the Community started to come together in İzmir much earlier than the fragmentations in Nur Community became visible.

The activities, religious teachings, Risale readings and Nur gatherings continued for quite sometime without a completely separate notion of a Gülen Community, under the shelter of Nur.⁴⁰ Hence, their activities were not limited to İzmir, Kestanepazarı. A woman who had to move very often, because of her husband's job, from city to city, told me that in every small city and even town, she would immediately find people who were gathering for Risale readings without any difficulty. If she had not known anybody in town, she had asked the owner of the bookstore who was buying Risales. Those were the times when Islamist revival was not the central issue yet. Islamism was marginal and underground whereas the traditional Muslim identity was representative of the Islamic culture.

The people who were coming together to read Risale were looked down on, as if they were some creatures from space. The majority was voting for the center-left secularist party CHP. And the women who were covered were just wearing a small scarf—you could see almost all of their hair and neck -- just out of habit and tradition. For them, the headscarf did not really have a symbolic meaning, beyond the form and shape. There was no Islamic consciousness and awakening yet.

While the young generation Fethullahists were born in a period when the Gülen Community was already active and established, the older generations have been educated, socialized and shaped mostly by the Nur Movement and Risale teachings. However, Islamic culture of that time could not be confined just to Risales. Anatolia has always been the bosom of leading sects such as Naksibendi, which influenced most of the contemporary

leading Islamist intellectuals --including Said Nursi. Thus, a comprehensive grasp of the cultural and intellectual context requires a grasp of Islamic orders and sects. This will help reveal how and why the Gülen Community differs and claims to dissociate itself from the pre-existing and present Islamic orders, although it was really born into the hands of these Islamic orders in the bosom of Anatolia.

Although Islamic orders in Turkey have been the cornerstone of Islamic culture, they have been less of a focus of research compared to the representative organizations of political Islam, such as the political parties; *Milli Selamet Partisi*, MSP (National Salvation Party), its successor *Refah* and a section of *Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP (Motherland party) and *Fazilet* after its ban. This can be explained by their uncertain status in the secular Turkish Republic. However, it is important to understand these orders and the significance of their politicization, which was repressed by the early Turkish Republic. In March 1926, the *tekkes* and *zaviyes* (hodes) were demolished because they were seen as “hotbeds of corruption, ignorance and superstition”⁴¹. This legal abolition of *tarikats* (sects) further contributed to the decline of the influence of the *şeyhs*. As a result of the perception of sects and *şeyhs* as threats to “Atatürk’s ambition of welding the country into a viable unitary and secular state”, many *şeyhs* were persecuted⁴². The Republican milieu is known for its complete distrust of the sects as fundamentalist threats and sources of bigotry to be eliminated.

Bringing the personal back in the impersonal contractual nature of the civil society projects

This historically uncertain legal status of the other Islamic orders pushed their activities underground.⁴³ This, to some extent, led to a shift of focus in research interest. Although it is very important to understand the historically less incorporated and legitimized political and cultural manifestations of Islam, such as the Nur Movement and its contemporary fragmentations, many studies concentrated on *Refah* and its political

⁴⁰ It is obvious from my oral histories and the biography of F.Gülen that Nur was an all-encompassing movement by then and there was no such as distinct Gülen Community.

⁴¹ Van Bruinessen M. (1992) *Agha, Seyh and State*, p.253; Mardin (1989).

⁴² Bruinessen, p.253.

⁴³ In a confidential secret document that I managed to receive from a retired military officer identifies Nur as one of the separatist terrorists movements after the military coup.

success. Hence, the ambiguous status of orders contributed to the lack of studies, which approach Islam as a social and cultural practice with potential political influence, as in Nur and Gülen cases. Their enormous influence in the formation of public opinion and political decision-making is less obvious than the direct exercises of political power of major parties.⁴⁴

The Nur Movement had alternative ways of interacting with the institutionalized forms of power. Mardin argues that Nurists are primarily an Islamic community, which can be seen as a set of personal networks. Thus, the conceptualization of the society as a machine is not useful to understand the *gemeinschaftlich* aspects of interpersonal relations of Nurists, which are reflected in the ideas of Said Nursi. In other words, Said Nursi's primary aim was always to "repersonalize Turkish society through the personalized stamp of the Risale-i Nur" (Mardin, 1989, p. 12), replacing Western-type of contractual ties with interpersonal relations, which still is a very popular idea among Fethullahists:

What the Young Turks, and later the Republic, had done was to eliminate the discourse based on the non-prepositional means which gave life to interpersonal relations for the average Ottoman. Said Nursi's contribution was a reaffirmation of the norms set by the Qur'an in such a way as to re-introduce the traditional Muslim idiom of conduct and of personal relations into an emerging society of industry and mass-communications (Mardin, 1989, p.12)

The Nur Movement claimed explicitly to disseminate the message of the Truth of Qur'an, in its own way and for the common sense. This might appear to make it a sect. However, in line with the self-definition of the Nurist actors, Mardin clearly explains why it is not a sect but a movement. Firstly, Nur's organizational characteristics overlap with the patterns of social movements. "[I]t does not operate on the model of a traditional Islamic sect" mainly because it does not have formal structure and procedures for membership⁴⁵. Historically, traditional Islamic orders have been organized around a master --a *şeyh*-- in a dwelling in which communal life is regulated with a sufist emphasis on "respect for the spiritual freedom of each member".⁴⁶

⁴⁴Mardin (1991) elaborates the historically political involvements of *Naksibendi* and the recent political influence of Nurists.

⁴⁵Mardin (1989) p.25.

⁴⁶For a detailed study on the historical formation and organization of Sufi orders in Islam, see Trimmingham (1971) *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, p.175-193. Trimmingham successfully illustrates the diversity of culturally-

As Friedberg and Crozier argue, all collective action needs to be seen on a continuum between extremely structured organization and completely unstructured movement. In reality, all social action would fit somewhere on the continuum with different degrees of structuration.⁴⁷ The important question appears to be: How does the type of internal organization affects the thought and collective action of the social actors and their conceptualization of and interaction with the state, *Refah* and other secular and Islamist groups including West. Although both Nur and Gülen appear as social movements in their organizations, their interaction with the state has been different.

The repersonalization can be traced by the *gemeinschaftlich* networks of Fethullahists, which have expanded on the basis of trust, mutual respect, devotion to Fethullah Gülen and the goals of the Community. Following Said Nursi's openness to the contemporary technology, Gülen reconciles the trust-based, communalist interaction patterns with the depersonalized high-technology, mass-communications and scientific overtone of the modern era.⁴⁸ The Community makes extensive use of economic, social and human capital --money, technology and social networks, charity and *hizmet*-- to transfer the resources into the sources of social, economic and political power. In addition to the accumulation of enormous sources of power, Gülen's social organization is distinct in its relation to the state, a topic, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The school-like quality of Nur and Gülen and their emphasis on education

Compared to the traditional Islamic sects, the Nurists appear quite modern with their emphasis on education and knowledge. They are known with their Nur *talebesi* (Nur students), who learn the difficult Ottoman text of the Risalesi. This characteristic is inherited and extended by the Gülen Community by teaching Risales in summer courses, dormitories, during *sohbets* (Risale reading and discussion), etc.:

specific formation of orders by highlighting the origins of Turkish tekkes where a true community of disciples lived under one roof, while their families lived outside the building. Membership was well-defined. Women were admitted as affiliated members as well as men, although they rarely would be dervishes (p. 176). Tringham also emphasizes the difference of the Turkish *tekkes* from multi-functional *zaviyes* of the Maghrib which survived as long as their *seyhs* were alive (p.172)

⁴⁷Crozier and Friedberg (1980) *Actors and System: The Politics of Collective Action*.

⁴⁸My participant observations at several sites of the community revealed that the Gülen Community owns one of the most well-equipped and richest TV and radio channel, *Samanyolu* and *Burc*. Its universities and high-schools make use of the latest technology and equipments, too.

Mit den traditionellen Orden hat die Nuristluk-Bewegung zwar mancherlei Elemente gemeinsam, unterscheidet sich von diesen aber grundsätzlich in Ansatz und Selbstverständnis: Sie ist kein Orden, sondern eine 'Schule' (U. Spuler, 1981, p. 442)⁴⁹

In fact, the school-like quality of Nur is reflected in their philosophical and sociological thought, Nurist insight and Risale teachings. Their approach denies the contradictions between science, rationality, positivist science and faith and religion. It is particularly important to note that the Nurist criticisms of West are usually confined to Western individualism, and not to science, technology or education. However, their openness to the West does not demolish the tension between religion and rationality. Said Nursi dealt with this tension under the rule of Ottoman Empire through an impressive attempt at a “modern” compromise. He saw the division of education into three separate streams --*medrese*, *tekke* and secular education-- as problematic. According to him, “[t]he only way to bring the creativity back was to reintroduce religious studies to secular schools, to add the study of science to the program of *medrese* and to bring competent *Ulema* into the *tekke*” (Mardin, 1989, p.81). The desire to reconcile faith with to the secular education -- to legitimize religion for the authority of science-- can be traced in Gülen's organization. In both Gülen and Nur, the emphasis is on reconciliation and integration of science and religion and on denouncing them as mutually exclusive categories. It is important that both chose to focus on the area of education and to strengthen scientific education for their *dava*. That is to revitalize faith under the conditions of modernity.

The endeavor to be an established school of thought seems to have been adopted by the Gülen Community from the Nur Movement. They were similar with regard to the emphasis on education. However, this is taken even further by the Gülen Community through their extended educational projects at the national and international levels. The internationalist undertakings and networking differentiate the Gülen Community from the Nur Movement.⁵⁰ Interestingly, though Said Nursi's belief “that the Turks should make use

⁴⁹S. Ursula(1981). Although the Nur Movement has some common elements with the traditional orders, it differs from them with regard to its origins and selfunderstanding. It is not an order but a 'school'. One might easily disagree about the extent of commonalities between Nurists and the traditional Islamic orders, which is a broad subject of discussion that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

⁵⁰See Mardin's Comments in *Artı Haber* (1997), monthly magazine, no.1. Gülen's distinction is that it actually became an international actor.

of the forces of Islam throughout the world” was shared by the Young Turks (Mardin, 1989, p.95). The Gülen’s internationalist drive can be traced back to the nation-building period, when Nursi’s teachings already started to create “sympathy of the other Asian nations” (Mardin, 1989, p. 97)

Obviously, the socio-political conditions, i.e. the context, under which each community operated, make the realities of Nur and Gülen explicitly different. Hence, the undertakings of the Gülen Community need to be situated in larger socio-cultural and historical context. However, it is important and useful to highlight the striking similarities between Nur and Gülen: they share the emphasis on education and concern of how to organize it.

In addition to the Nurists' positive attitude towards Western education , Nurists emphasized a radical break from traditional sects by their abandonment of the personal cult of the leader and the oral leadership of the *şeyh* to adherence to the printed message.⁵¹ In other words, Said Nursi replaced oral and pervasively face-to face interaction of the Islamic tradition of sects with his Risale books, namely the print culture.⁵² This contributed greatly to the school-like quality of both Gülen and Nur, as they both actively work on teaching Said Nursi’s teachings.

An increasing use of modern technologies of mass communication by Nurists accompanied this shift to print culture, and thereby made a more Western education of the religious teachings possible. This interestingly modern aspect of Turkish Islam seems to be another continuity from Nur to Gülen, as it can be detected initially by the wide-spread circulation of Fethullah Gülen's tapes and later by other mass media channels such as community's TV, radio, newspaper and magazines. Gülen's message is clear and public as his numerous books reach masses.

⁵¹See H. Yavuz (1996) “Yayına Dayalı İslami Söylem ve Modernlik: Nur Hareketi” (Print-Based Islamic Discourse and Modernity: Nur Movement) in *Uluslararası Bediüzzaman Sempozyumu* (International Symposium of Bediüzzaman). İstanbul: Yeni Asya, p. 641-667.

⁵²B. Anderson (1983) with regard to his analysis of the historical origins and importance of print culture in the emergence of civil society.

'The message' appears to replace the cult of the individual leader, which was a modern twist in Islamic tradition in Anatolia.⁵³ However, some controversies and discomforts appeared recently about this issue in the Gülen Community. My interviews in and among the followers of *Yeni Asya* and *Yeni Nesil* (other groups which emerged out of Nur) revealed the following: F. Gülen has been criticized as developing an individual cult, especially by other groups who emerged out of the fragmentations in Nur. F. Gülen's status as a charismatic leader and as the leading spokesman of the Community, who appears on media channels often, endangers the denouncement of the individual cult. As many of the leading Fethullahists, F. Gülen is aware of this attack. My interviews with F. Gülen's close circle of followers revealed how hard they try to fight with the development of the individual cult. F. Gülen puts effort in withdrawing from public attendance and leaving the space for other Fethullahists. This effort is explicit in his refusals to give speeches and lectures in conferences.⁵⁴ The aim is to make his books, ideas and the Fethullahist school of thought the cornerstone of the Community. Intensive institutionalization of the Community also helps to reduce --if not prevent-- the formation of an individual cult around F. Gülen.

Similar to F. Gülen, Said Nursi wanted to open a university in Turkey in the eastern provinces.⁵⁵ Despite his effort and application, it did not come true in his life. Gülen inherited Nur's openness to modern technology, the emphasis on the science-oriented,

⁵³Both Said Nursi and Gülen are charismatic leaders who mobilize masses. Thus, there is a deep reverence for these figures. However, it is different from a sect in the sense that there is no procedure for succession as in the sects. On the contrary, the aim is the transmission of the school of thought and the world-view rather than a structure of hierarchy. Thus, it is the message which is worked on, developed, communicated and documented in order to be transferred to the next generations and other societies. However, the resistance and avoidance of the formation of a personal cult becomes difficult from time to time, not only because of the inevitable charm and charisma of F. Gülen, but also because of the ever-increasing symbolic capital he conveys. The intellectual leaders of the Community show great effort to prevent this kind of devotion to the leader.

⁵⁴Fethullah Gülen is often invited to give talks at the international level, such as in the case of the invitation to a conference at Harvard University on "Turkish International Politics" in October 1998. He refused to participate in the Conference. Being recognized not only by the Turkish state but also by prominent institutions abroad, Fethullah Gülen and the Community show resistance against a development of personal cult. This is a distinct difference of the Community from the sects and the culture of *seyhs*. Accordingly, most of the invitations are responded to by other leading intellectuals of the Community. F. Gülen often prefers to leave the stage to his fellow brothers and sometimes uses his health problems as excuses to not respond to attend invitations.

⁵⁵For an extended biography of Said Nursi, see Sahiner (1996), p.95. See also Mardin (1989).

moral education as well as appreciation for print culture and mass communication. These are the most striking differences of Nur and Gülen from other Islamic orders.

Social Organization of Nur and Gülen: Structural and Ideational Differences from a "Sect"

Weberian sociology of religion juxtaposes two organizational forms, the church and the sect.⁵⁶ Like the notion of civil society, the concept of the "sect" is historically, culturally and religiously specific to the West and Christianity.⁵⁷ Thus, some of the historically and culturally-specific organizational characteristics of Nur and Gülen have to be highlighted in order to illustrate the lack of fit between the Christian and Islamic context.

First of all, the major bifurcation and tension has been between Nurists --as any other Islamist sect or movement of Turkish Islam-- and the state, which has displayed ambivalent attitudes toward Islam. Thus, the cleavage between church and sect does not apply to Islamic orders and Islam or Qur'an in general.⁵⁸ The division between high culture, as represented by Ulema and folk culture as represented by the Islamic orders did not take the form of a clash as in the Western case. Thus, Nurists do not fit the Weberian dichotomy between orthodox church and the sect:⁵⁹

[Weber hat] kein erschöpfendes Categoriesystem zur Klassifikation von Strukturen der religiösen Organisation aufstellt. Wenn wir in der realen Welt einer solchen Organization begegnen, dann kann es eine Kirche oder eine Sekte, genausogut aber auch etwas anderes sein (Cook, 1987, p.335).⁶⁰

⁵⁶ M. Weber (1968) *Economy and Society*, vol. 3, p.1204.

⁵⁷ E. Troeltsch (1912) *Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (The Social Studies of the Christian Churches and Groups). Tübingen: Mohr. Not surprisingly, Troeltsch argued that the term did not have a universal application.

⁵⁸ The diversity of the Islamic sects and group does not imply a cleavage between them and a mainstream Islam. The tension has been rather between Islam and secularization as a by-product of modernization.

⁵⁹ Cook M. Cook (1987) "Max Weber und Islamische Sekten" (Max Weber and Islamic sects) in Schluchter (ed.) *Max Weber's Sicht des Islams* (Max Weber's Approach to Islam). Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft. Cook criticizes Weber because he identifies merely the difference between the sect and the church without defining the key concepts. Moreover, he argues that Weber did not offer us a formalized explanation of the differences between the sect and the church.

⁶⁰ Weber does not develop an exhaustive system of categories for the classification of the religious organization. When we come across such organizations in real life, it can be the church or a sect but it can as well be something else.

The Nur Movement and the more recent Gülen Community can not be explored and understood with the basic tenets of a Western sociology of religion. They differ from sects structurally, but they also offer a different world-view with their reinterpretation of Qur'an. Being a product of the early years of the Turkish Republic, the Nur Movement has aimed to revitalize Islam and its traditions because of the fear that extensive adoption of modernization would erase the Islamic tradition and faith. Importantly, it is a call for a reconciliation of modernity and tradition --and also of Islam and rationality-- and not for retraditionalization. Similarly, Gülen can not be grasped by using the Western dichotomy between the sects and the church.

Nur and Gülen display striking differences from the sects in terms of their lack of membership procedures, as well as the freedom of access and exit and openness to the newcomers. Hence, their boundaries are fuzzy, temporal and flexible:

Einerseits ist diese Haltung sektiererisch. Man grenzt sich ab gegenüber allem, was sonst noch islamisch ist, und beansprucht für sich selbst, allein den 'wahren Islam' darzustellen. Grundlage dieses 'wahren Islam', wie ihn die Nur bewegung sieht, ist die Anerkennung des Gründers dieser Gruppe Said Nursi (1873-1960) und.. his Auslegung des Koran. Nur wer sich kompromisslos auf diesen Boden stellt, kann ein Nurist sein... Andererseits ist die Nuristluk Bewegung panislamisch orientiert und von dem Bemühen geleitet, möglichst alle islamischen Gruppierungen in ihre Bestrebungen einzubeziehen. Doch führt der Weg zu diesem Ziel nicht über eine 'islamische Okumene', einen Zusammenschluß verschiedenerartigen Gruppierungen, sondern exklusive über den Beitritt aller anderen Muslime zur Nuristluk Bewegung (Spuler, 1981,p.425).⁶¹

Spuler investigates the seemingly contradictory characteristics of the Nur group with regard to its approach towards membership. She argues that, on the one hand, they consider devotion to Said Nursi's teaching (Risales) and insights as a precondition for belonging the movement, which makes the Nur Group exclusive. On the other hand, she emphasizes how they are open to newcomers. She rightly states that the Nur group is open to any Muslim. This quality differentiates Nur, as well as Gülen, from the commitment to the Muslim Community, i.e. the *Umma*. The Gülen Community takes this openness one step further: It operates with fuzzy boundaries, which attracts people with various religious

⁶¹On the one hand, this attitude is sectarian. One dissociates from the Islamic and claims to represent the "true Islam". The basis of this "true Islam", as Nur Movement considers it, is the recognition of the founder of this group Said Nursi (1873-1960) and his interpretation. Only s(he) can be a Nurist, who without compromise agrees with this base (Said Nursi's interpretation). On the other hand, Nur has a pan-Islamic orientation and strives to include as many other Islamic groups as possible onto their aim and endeavor. Yet,

orientation. Moreover, the overlapping memberships in other voluntary associations, political pressure groups, parties, and even government contribute to the particularly modern images of the contemporary Gülen Community as opposite to a religious order or sect.⁶² My research revealed that, in contrast to religious sects, Gülen promotes and encourages multiple affiliations and loyalties as means to extend the Community's networks and sphere of influence. This openness to newcomers is another key concept in understanding its distinct interaction with the state and the Republican project.

Ambiguity towards politics

Weberian categories do not fit the Islamic phenomena and cannot explain the political significance and manifestations of the Nur Movement as distinct from other sects and orders.⁶³ Mardin investigated the political involvement of Nur --through its links with the Naksibendi order-- in the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, Nur makes a striking case study with regard to its ambiguous attitudes toward politics⁶⁴ and to its interaction with state.⁶⁵ Nurists' ambiguity towards politics is reflected in Said Nursi's personal convictions and attitudes. On the one hand, politics and direct political involvement is rejected as corrupt. On the other hand, he was always aware that Turkish Islam, with its paradoxical place between the supposedly secular state and repressed Muslim identity, would inevitably spill over into the political.⁶⁶ A similar ambiguity is still observed in Gülen's ambivalent attitudes toward politics. Although Fethullahists claim to be apolitical and uninterested in politics, the rapidly increasing power in the Community is both an active and potential political influence at the national and international level. This is manifested strikingly in its ability to transform power dynamics at the institutional and identity level, for example between the Community's organizations and the state's agencies. These issues will be elaborated in detail in the following chapters.

the means to this end does not comprise the principle of *Umma* as a union of different kinds of groups, but exclusively joining or incorporating other Muslims into Nur.

⁶²The next chapter will discuss in detail the meaning and characteristics of the fuzzy boundaries of Gülen Community

⁶³ See Cook (1987).

⁶⁴Mardin (1991).

⁶⁵See Sahiner (1996).

⁶⁶See Mardin (1991); Mardin (1989); Piscatori and Eickelman (1996).

Said Nursi's orientation to politics shifted throughout his life. In early 1920s, he took side with Mustafa Kemal against the *fetwa* (the orders of the Ulema) of the *Şeyhülislam* (the chief Ulema) (Mardin, 1989, p.94). At those times, Mustafa Kemal himself was not opposing the idea of "unification of the population by providing a religious focus of alliance" (Mardin, 1989, p.95). In January 1923, he was actively promoting a "Muslim way of life" in the parliament, since he believed that the Turkish War of Independence was won thanks to the God's grace. (Mardin, 1898, p.95). At the same time, he continued his warnings against the destructive potential of secularism in Turkey. The early Said was more politically active, whereas the late Said was withdrawn from politics and material world. This shift happened after his decision in 1920s (Mardin, 1989, p.40). He was usually in exile and on ongoing trials. However, even when he withdrew from politics, he was encouraging his followers to vote for the Democrat Party and to be involved in politics (Mardin, 1989, p.98). As Mardin argues, these are not contradictory attitudes, since important changes took place in the mean time, which transformed the larger political picture. The concept of citizenship evolved and introduced Nurists into a new political context and new debates. This was "a new domain the limits of which [were] different from that of the Muslim community of *Umma*" (Mardin, 1989, p.40) In some ways similar to Nurists' political orientation, F. Gülen presents an apolitical stand, while at the same time mobilizing his followers to vote for ANAP, center right, and not for *Fazilet*, religious party. Moreover, Gülen developed stronger connections to leading politicians more than Said Nursi.⁶⁷ The prime-ministers, such as Özal and Ecevit, and the former president Demirel are known for their closeness to F. Gülen. This explains a good deal of the political protection given to Gülen.

Evidently, Nur and Gülen deviate from the conventional state-Islam interaction in the secular Republic in different ways. In contrast to the Ottoman Empire, which strategically intended to keep Islam under control, the early Turkish Republic demolished the sects. Nevertheless, the authoritarian imposition of a radical secularism as the official ideology has not been able to prevent the activities of the sects completely. Since religion has been dismissed from the public sphere and remains in the private sphere, the Islamic orders, and

⁶⁷See Mardin (1989) with regard to Nursi's connections to Young Turks and encounters with Atatürk; see also Sahiner (1996) with respect to his meetings with several Pashas and Fevzi Cakmak, p.276

a whole rooted culture around them, have been forced to disappear. Not surprisingly however, their existence continued covertly. Throughout the recent history of the Turkish Republic, they have been allowed to become more visible or banned/crushed totally from time to time, depending on the changing attitudes of the state. When multi-party politics was introduced, it abolished the 'rigid and elitist Kemalist policies'.⁶⁸ Subsequently, the Democrat Party tolerated and even advocated a freer expression of Islam. This created a more flexible public sphere, where Islamic orders were allowed to be more visible and active.

Certain *şeyhs* have even been able to increase the traditional influence they already had through collaboration with political parties or governors, police officers etc. which allowed them to dispense more patronage than before. The parties obviously work through these *şeyhs*, not because they share the parties ideological stand but because of their influence among the population and the number of votes they thereby control. Even the Republican People's party which has been devoted to the struggle against landlords and religious reaction, depended in the Kurdish provinces strongly on *ağas* and *şeyhs* (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p.253)

The status of a *Şeyh* is a complicated one and reflects a 'peculiarity of a political structure' which persisted until our time⁶⁹. As Bruinessen argues, nineteenth century local political leadership was identified with *şeyhs*. They were rendered ineffective by the Turkish Republic. It is important to note that neither Nurists nor Fethullahists have associated themselves with sectarian activities, despite their originally strong ties to the orders. Hence, they deliberately denounced the classical hierarchy between the *şeyhs* and the followers. However, due to the "written" message which has been successfully transferred to the new generations --mainly through his book *Risale-i Nur*, Said Nursi has survived as a mentor and pathfinder. He was seen increasingly as an Islamic threat to the secular Republic by the Young Turks and was sent to exile by the Turkish state, when he was identified with bigotry and backwardness. As a matter of fact, he spent most of his life in exile.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Bruinessen (1992).

⁶⁹Mardin (1989); Van Bruinessen (1992).

⁷⁰*Ibid.*; Sahiner (1996)

Although the concept of *şeyh* has been denied by the Nur Movement and the Gülen Community, it did not prevent their leaders from being powerful public figures and influential local leaders. Despite the continuous denial of political involvement, the Gülen Community appears not only as a political actor at the national level but also internationally. This is evidenced by the Community's continuous interaction with the Turkish state, the military and the politicians, as well as with other states, which accommodate Fethullahists schools. However, Gülen's political influence is far different than the Islamic orders, primarily because it is recognized by the Republic and acknowledged as a legitimate Community movement, rather than a separatist movement. The state's attitudes towards Gülen will be analyzed in the next chapters.

Briefly, the Nur Movement and the Gülen Community differ in various respects (structural, discursive and socio-political) from the traditional Islamic orders. They both have represented the modern and nationalist versions of Islam and appear strikingly efficient in adapting the conditions and requirements of their epoch. When we shift our focus from the exiles of Nur to today's Gülen, we have a dramatically different picture: Gülen claims to be a civil society organization and not simply an Islamic Community. How did this intellectual, discursive but also political shift happen within the last couple of decades?

Post-1980 Period: Fragmentations within the Nur Movement

The aftermath of the military intervention has been another period of tolerance for Islam. " [A] relaxation of the secularist stances of the state, during Turgut Özal's leadership has led to the admission that Islam too is an essential component of Turkish national identity" (Zubaida, 1996, p.10). Along with the increasing diversity of Islamic groups, the already apparent cleavages in the Nur Movement were transformed into dramatic fragmentations. Gülen appeared as the largest, increasingly powerful and influential branch of Nur. Its recent rise and success is as significant as its continuously increasing size and visibility. What changed in the process of separation from Nur, which seemed to radically affect the encounters between the Republican project and Gülen? When we consider the historical fluctuations in the broader sociopolitical conditions, the

new swing of the pendulum towards toleration is not surprising. It can be seen merely as a continuation of the ambivalent and shaky quality of Islam-state interaction. However, Gülen seems to take advantage of this agreeable milieu in a smooth and congenial way, which has not been accomplished by any other Islamic circle in Turkey before. What was distinct enough to radically change the exiles of Nur to one of high popularity and recognition? In order to answer this question, I will first investigate the nature of fragmentations and situate Gülen in the context of fragmentations. Then I will focus on three emergent sensibilities, which underline the Fethullahists' break with the past: the discomfort with labels which oppose Islam to the Republic, the new self-presentation of Gülen through diligent image-making and the promotion of civil society, through which Islamists start to display sensibilities of engagement.

It was not by accident that I happened to start my research in the households of the so-called Nurists, which I initially thought, would be an umbrella term, enveloping the Gülen Community as well as several other groups. Fethullahists were associated strongly with the Risales and Said Nursi,⁷¹ as Fethullahists above a certain age had converted from the Nur Movement. Many scholars like Zubaida regard Gülen as "the richest and most important offshoot of the Nurist Movement" (Zubaida, 1996, p.11)

The early 1980s witnessed the increasing visibility of the fragmentations and separations in the Nur Movement. These splits, including the Gülen Community's separation have become the focus media attention for quite a long time.⁷² However, the particular nature and subjective meaning of these fragmentations has not been investigated sufficiently yet. My first aim in the field was to inquire about the splits and about how rigid the divisions are, as well as about the interaction between these supposedly fragmented groups. I was expecting that the cleavages --their reasons and motives-- would speak for themselves, which, unfortunately, was not the case.

Blunt question about fragmentations within the broader the Nur Movement seemed to intimidate Nurists. There was discomfort and avoidance in talking about these issues. What was so discomforting or annoying about the fragmentations? What made it hard for the

⁷¹ *Artı Haber* (1997), monthly magazine, no.1; Zubaida (1996)

⁷² *Artı Haber*, 1997, monthly magazine, no.1

people to express and explain their affiliations? Were there any clear-cut boundaries among the Nurist groups at all? Put differently: was there any shared set of codes which still may relate or even attach the fragmented groups to each other? How was I supposed to read into those silences and discomforts? Obviously, I was touching sensitive issues, about which there was neither consensus nor public debate and disagreement. A Nurist woman who was upset with my inquisitions preached me:

We all read Qur'an and the Risales. We all believe in God, so what is the aim in inquiring and fostering the divisions among Nurists. I do not like the terms like Nurist or Fethullahist. This label leads to further polarization. We all have faith and believe in God. You better read Risales instead of asking these questions because you can only learn from them and not from me and the others.

It seems that, the text and faith was important collective representations and that was enough to keep the connection between Nurists together. However, her preaching sounded like a prescriptive hope rather than a description of the contemporary situation of Nur, namely numerous fragmented groups, which can hardly talk to each other about their disagreements.

For Leman Hanım, studying the Gülen or Nur --she did not admit the difference anyways-- would be reading and understanding the text and not trying to mess with men or inquire about the “dangerous zone” of the cleavages. I was not supposed to mess with that contingency, namely the politics of power struggles between Nurist groups. In other words, “no politics”.

The nature of the cleavages became evident to me shortly after I started to encounter more families, which had felt forced to identify with one of the fragmented groups. Different groups had different priorities and emphasized various aspects and issues of Nur. One of the leading and well-known writers of the Community, A. Hoca, told me during a very informal chatting that:

The fragmentation is not about the disagreements on the content and meaning of Risales. The clashes are not about the religious text. It is about life and power relations. It is about politics and money. When I tell them this they get pissed off. This is the last thing they want to hear since they claim to be apolitical and other-worldly. A proper Nurist is not supposed to be absorbed too much in the material world, since the important thing is the life after this temporal existence.

Said Nursi's main purpose was to revitalize the Muslim tradition against the invasions of materialism from West⁷³. Hence, materialism, individualism and the temporary self-interest oriented actions in "this-world" were looked down upon. Nurists found the social, political and economic bases of the fragmentations difficult to acknowledge and admit. This was evident in the silences and discomforts to talk about the fragmentations, As both Said Nursi and F. Gülen highlight in their texts, they were primarily a moralist and religious, not a political, movement. Several Nurist informants did not seem to come to terms with --and sometimes just not admit-- the political nature of the fragmentations. Most probably, that was why they were still identifying with Nur and not with one of the recently emerged groups.

It did not take a long time for me to step out of the Nurist households (private sphere of Nurists) and to enter the realm of organizations, which belonged clearly to Nurist groups. Hence, people in these organizations (mostly foundations) were identifying with the groups and expressed their reasons, agendas and their differences from other groups with more confidence. Some groups, such as *Yeni Asya*, have their own press (either a newspaper, a journal or press house), separate organizations, associations, foundations and activities.

Contrary to the expectations that I would have difficulties of access, I have been contacted and invited by different Nurist groups. They explicitly or implicitly wanted me to study the Nur Movement and Risales, instead of Gülen. This, according to most Nurists, was the new center of attention and just a "temporary fashion". Different groups have called me and offered all sorts of facilities for my dissertation. They provided me with a variety of publications written on Nurism so far (all the published material, the thesis, the collection of relevant news from the last ten years). They also offered unlimited use of their Internet access, e-mail, books and even office space and invitation to conferences. It is interesting how the news in such fragmented, differentiated and extensive groups traveled: My phone number seemed to circulate very quickly among them. I was astonished by their good intentions and support for the accumulation of knowledge and scientific research on the Nurism. As opposed to the never-ending discouragement from

⁷³Mardin (1989), p.8.

“outside” the Community to not study Nur or Gülen,⁷⁴ the Nurist invitation and encouragement to study the Community was very tempting and impressive. It seemed there was an anti-scientific and anti-progressive image of Islam that Nurists wanted to dispel. I was caught between the ‘insider’ encouragement and ‘outsider’ discouragement. But at that time I was still far from defining who would be the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘insiders’.

One thing became gradually clearer: Despite the initial reluctance of people to admit the cleavages in Nur, the borders between different Nurist groups were more clearly drawn than the borders of the Gülen Community. Put differently, Gülen was dissociating clearly from other Nurist groups and radical Islamists, while its boundaries with other outsiders seemed blurred⁷⁵. In this sense, Gülen was opening its doors to the secular circles, sometimes at the cost of alienating Islamists.

Within the Nur Movement, taking Gülen’s side or not was a major issue. Despite the enormous effort by the Fethullahists to burr the boundaries, several Nurist groups such as *Okuyucular* (the Readers), *Yazıcılar* (the Writers), *Yeni Asyacılar* (New Asianists) identified themselves against the Gülen Community, more than against each other. Although it seemed that the sphere of influence of the Gülen Community has been extremely inclusive and tried to incorporate the largest diversity possible, other formerly Nurist groups seemed unlikely to participate in Gülen’s project and events. That is one of the most explicit examples of boundary-maintenance between the Gülen Community and the other Nurists. Other Nurist groups do not take part in Gülen events. They do not work in Gülen organizations. They avoid interaction and co-existence with a few exceptions such as obligations and the requirements of civil interaction and/or civil disattention. It seemed that Fethullahist understanding of diversity and civil society was more inclined toward attracting people from secular, Kemalist circles, rather than Islamists?

One of my interesting encounters took place in *Yeni Asya*, another Nurist group that claims deviance/difference from other groups in its identification with another central right party, *Dogru Yol*, DYP (Right Path Party), while most of the other Nurist and Fethullahists vote for ANAP. Feeling responsible to make an outsider researcher, namely me, aware of

⁷⁴ See the Chapter 5, with regard to the discouragement to study the Community

⁷⁵ See Chapter 5

the backstage of the fragmentations, the people in *Yeni Asya* group were direct and blunt. Although they were a very small group, they had their own journal *Kopru* (Bridge) and newspaper *Yeni Asya* (New Asia), as well as their own foundation and associations independent of other Nur groups. I had a long chat with the leading intellectuals and other members in their center, the main *Yeni Asya* organization in Fatih, which is known as one of the most religious neighborhoods of İstanbul . There were only men in the center with whom I discussed the contemporary situation and agendas of the *Yeni Asya* group.

The critical approach to the Gülen Community was very much at the surface even before I started to ask questions about Gülen. Their relationship to the Fethullahists seemed quite tense and not on friendly terms. Some of my informants explained the origins of this tension to me. According to the *Yeni Asya* group, the fragmentation has not been a smooth process where everybody freely chose which group to belong to. There has been a lot of disappointments, endings of long-lasting friendships, frustrations and even betrayals. The gentlemen in the center opened up as they recalled their memories after the 1980s. *Yeni Asya* people were judgmental about the increasing popularity and extravagance of the Fethullahists because they believed that most of this attraction was afforded by enormous economic capital, which the Community conveyed. They were not only critical of the Fethullahists' compromising conformism but also about their deviation from the Nur Movement's Islamic framework. Gülen was criticized as fading away in its endeavor to adapt the secular milieu. Their compromise seemed to disturb other Nurist circles. They reported their feelings of disappointment with Gülen and his followers from İzmir, who used to be their "buddies" and brother fellows for so many years. The men in *Yeni Asya* implicitly attacked Gülen as a pragmatic conformists, which prioritizes its own self-interest at the expense of abandoning loyalty to Nur tradition. According to them, Gülen was growing excessively in size and popularity and losing touch with its base, i.e. followers, and became carried away by the diversified and unprincipled masses. In addition to its uncontrollable growth and the development of the individual cult of F. Gülen, most of the Nurists from different groups argued that, Gülen was becoming a pioneer of the repressive state. Along with their explicit criticism against Gülen, some informants tried to convince me to study Nur rather than Gülen.

Yazıcı Group is another interesting case who not only rejected even the formal interaction with the Gülen Community, but they also rejected contacting with any outsiders. *Yazıcı*s are people who were committed to the hand-written Risales in the *eski yazi* (Arabic Alphabet). They strongly reject the Latin alphabet and the press, and insist on maintaining the tradition. Thus, they continue to write the Risales with ink. They not only have an aesthetic concern, but also argue that the Risales were originally written by hand. They simply close their doors to modernity and its marriage with the technology. Preserving authenticity was important for the *Yazıcı*s. With an exception of *Yazıcı*s, all Nur groups agree that Said Nursi and his text was open to innovation, technology and modernity in its own particular way and that Said Nursi in his times promoted technology and adopted the good things of modernity.

This is interesting in the sense that *Yazıcı*s were displaying a very contrasting image to Fethullahists with regard to their relation to the Republican milieu and Kemalist official ideology, as well as with respect to their fear from and avoidance of the state. They still continue to perform the role of the "fugitive" Islam in the post 1980 period. While Gülen's organizations have been promoted and advertised through several channels (they even work with an advertising company to make it professional), *Yazıcı*s were hiding from the public gaze and escaping from it. The repressive past for Islam was indeed continuing for other Islamic groups. This data provided me with a clear vision of how Gülen is a real deviation from the norm and a dramatic break from the traditional status of Islam as a fugitive, an exile and a threat to the Republic.

Emergent Sensibilities in Islam: "Islam in Transition" from the exiles of Nur to the Engagements of Gülen

Efforts to organize and to be recognized as "civil society"

The primary endeavor of Gülen is its attempt to claim the status of a civil society organization. Accordingly, Gülen specialized and accomplished in various outlets, such as education, business and international networks. Soon, Gülen became a magnet for different sources of social power, which were accumulated through private schools and universities, companies, holdings, media establishments etc. These outlets are highly competitive not only at the national level but also internationally. In addition to the strategic denouncement

of the negative labels attached to Islam by the secular Republic, Gülen appears as a break with the past in its claims for being a civil society organization.

Similar to the announcements of Fethullah Gülen through media channels, my informants were keen on avoiding association with any group, party, or ism's. However, it was not a denial of the origins of the group, since Fethullah Gülen himself and many Fethullahists proudly express that they have been Nur students in past. It is prestigious to have been educated on Risales. But then, if it is not the roots, what did the reaction against labeling indicate? Some of the uneasiness is due to the fact that the Nur Movement has been regarded and treated as *irtica* (fundamentalism) by the secularists and the Turkish state for a long time. The denial of any categorization is emphasized in most of my interviews and oral histories:

IslamIST, secularIST, feminIST, leftIST...I am not any of them and that is why I find comfort with Gülen's philosophy and insight. Enough with pushing people into camps. We do not want these imposed polarizations anymore.

Fethullahists' rejection of the labels is consistent with the attempts to form a humanist, pluralist school of thought based on tolerance, dialogue and societal compromise. Accordingly, they not only denounce collective representations and labels, but also boundaries, except perhaps for the insider's Community (i.e. the people in *hizmet* (service)⁷⁶. Some Nurist have argued that this pluralist discourse was a continuation of the Said Nursi tradition. Fethullahists emphasized that this was a necessity in an age of information, multicultural diversity and globalization. The distinction of the contemporary Gülen Community is that they strategically claim that Islam was a subtitle, when we look at their activities and institutions as a whole. In other words, they are able to downplay Islam in the project-based civil society undertakings. Their self-presentation as a civil society organization is managed to a large extent by the dissociation from Nur and other Islamic groups and organizations.

The Gülen Community emphasizes its distinction on the basis of its claim to be a civil society organization. As already discussed, this self-definition is the main grounds on which it claims distinction from other Islamic groups and orders. These groups have been

⁷⁶See Chapter 5, for the discussion of *Cemaat* (Community) of the insiders and the culturally-specific homogeneity and uniformity they entail

historically perceived and labeled as threats to the Republican project and to civil society, or looked upon with suspicion:

So prominent and active are [the religious orders] in the peripheries of big cities that some writers have discovered in them the constituents of civil elements of a genuine civil society in Turkey. To the extent to which they are voluntary, perform civic functions and serve as means of political participation, religious orders can be seen as constituents of civil society. It is obviously the case that, over their long history before and during the single party era, some of these orders have evolved and developed means of not only surviving under restrictive conditions but also broadening their horizons in reaching out to other groups. However, one should also point to the extent to which most of these orders exist not to encourage but to stunt the effective growth of men and women as free-thinking subjects of history (Kasaba, 1996, p.16).

It is extremely interesting that the active leading position in the undertakings of civil society, especially the idea of "the dialogue between civilization", came for the first time from the Islamic circles. In other words, we are observing an emergent Islam is taking the lead from the secular Republican elite in a country which has had a long tradition of top-down project-based social engineering. However, this particular form of Islam is not merely taking the lead but it also rejects politics and to come to power. The next chapters will explicate how Gülen managed to be a leading figure in the social engineering of a civilizing project, despite its Islamic self and despite the Republican distrust of Islam.

Although the Nurist faith in other world and non-material assets and qualities are appreciated in Gülen, the Gülen Community is accomplishing this in the accumulation of assets of the material world and power. While Said Nursi "combated materialism because it negated Islam, he also realized that the influences of Western ways (ideas, institutions, practices) were destroying the cultural frame that Muslims used to establish a rapport with the everyday world" (Mardin, 1989, p. 9). Fethullahists seem to be managing the materialist world better. Gülen encourages trade, entrepreneurship and business networks.

The compatibility of Gülen with the free market economy and its ever-increasing international networks is one of the areas where Gülen seems to break free from the Nurists tradition. The Gülen Community does not struggle against the material world. On the contrary, my research revealed that Gülen, as a network of organizations, is an expert on how to manage the rules of the consumerist society and seems to reconcile Islamic ways of life with the capitalist world. However, this ability does not render Gülen an individualist community. Similar to Nur, Gülen's success is based to a large extent on the

interpersonal networks and gemeinschaftlich quality in its *Cemiyet* (associations) and organization.⁷⁷

Breaking with the past: creating the new image

Latif Bey was a person who left an important blueprint on the development of the Fethullahist school of thought, and the discourse on “the dialogue between the civilizations”. He also initiated and worked for the establishment of the *Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı* (The Foundation of Writers and Journalists) and still gives enormous support—both intellectually and managerially—to the opening of a research center and academic scholarship. I had some initial difficulty in introducing myself to him because when I told him about my field experience among the Nurists and the Risale readings, his response was rather interesting:

“So, what am I supposed to do with all these things? Perhaps you are confusing me with somebody else? We are not organizing Risale Readings here. It is about science and knowledge.”

“It was one of those moments when I felt that my mentioning the text and religious activities within the Community offended a man of science. Latif Bey started to argue that the religiosity of the Community was not primary to Gülen's undertakings.”

“Religion in our undertakings is a subtitle”, he continued.

This person was an Islamic scholar, with a university degree and had also been a Nur student in his childhood. He was F. Gülen's student and closest friend. However, on the other hand, he was a leading image-maker and impression manager in the Community. He had already told me how subtle they, especially himself, had to work on “Hoca Efendi's (F. Gülen) image”, such as the outfit and his public appearance. Obviously, the everyday life presentations of the selves were delicately figured out. He explained that he had a very hard time convincing F. Gülen to collaborate in this change of style. Originally, F. Gülen was wearing traditional religious clothes, which were authentically religious. As a man who “did not have the slightest interest in this-worldly affairs”, he was completely indifferent to what he was wearing. Moreover, he had difficulty becoming used to

⁷⁷See Mardin (1989), p. 12, with regard to the Nurist stance against individualism.

“Western” clothing, i.e. the suit, after many years of wearing religious clothing. Apparently, his fellows had a very hard time convincing him to make a radical change of clothes and self-image, to be in tune with the Community’s claims for being a civil society organization.

For a man of purity, devotion, spirituality and high sensitivity, it was the hardest thing to accept the immediacy and necessity of such a this-worldly and pretentious change. For him, it was like wearing a mask without any reason and almost like being untruthful to himself. He really resisted strongly being a public figure in this sense. He was a man of a deep inner world and preferred to be left alone there...But soon, he found himself in front of the masses and we had to know how to deal with that...⁷⁸

What kind of a community was Gülen, if not primarily religious? Latif Bey did not immediately answer my question. Surprisingly however, he called me at home after 2-3 days of thinking and evaluating our conversation.

As I told you, religion for us is a subtitle. We work on civil society-projects such as opening schools and research center (Akademi) and Writers associations. These are civil undertakings and organized by a wide range of variety of people regardless of their religious orientation. I think you should feel free to call us a civil society organization, as we all do call our undertakings so.

As is highly explicit in the discourse of the actors, Islam and civil society had a long tradition of being regarded as a contradiction in terms in the Republican context. Hence, Gülen's major aim was to engineer a progressive, tolerant and thereby pluralist image, with a heavy focus on science, knowledge and education. Along with the presentation of Gülen as a civil society organization in everyday life, the Community downplayed its Islamic face and presented itself as a moral Community calling for a just and happy moral order. The self-presentation of the Community was a product of labour-intensive image-making. Gülen works with an advertising company, which is primarily responsible for the public relations of the Community. The image-making and Gülen's claim to be a civil society organization require more diligent effort.

This became clear during my shifts between those sites, where different Fethullahists in different sites provided me various presentations of the Community. There were different levels of front and backstages. For example, women’s Risale readings were one

⁷⁸ Quoted from the interview with Latif Erdogan, in 1997 in Akademi (research center) in Istanbul.

of the most immune sites to public presentations. This was mainly because, most of the time, the readings were “on the inside” and not monitored by the outsiders, like in the window sites of the Community, but also because housewives were segregated sharply from the “real life” and “serious business” of the Community. Therefore, my interviews with Fethullahists became more fruitful when I participated in their households, since private sphere was relatively less affected by the image-making. My access to the backstages of the Community was facilitated when I started to make friends in the Community and socialize with them. In other words, my realization of the extents and depths of image-making became possible through my entrance to Fethullahists lives as a friend who shared their everyday lives and intimacies, rather a “participant observer” observed and monitored them. Soon I found myself being called by them for a coffee, lunch, for staying over at night etc. My close and intimate connections to Fethullahists helped me to be absorbed in their life-worlds, feelings, senses, insights, agendas and world-views, which I call the new Fethullahist “sensibility”.

The new sensibilities of engagement

Gülen's rise should be largely understood and explained as the emergence of a new sensibility among moderate Islamists. What is this sensibility and what are its sources? First of all, Gülen represents a break with the past: It deviates from the vicious circle of pendulum shifting between tolerance and repression --and sometimes elimination as in the case of sects in the past and *Refah* in 1997. Gülen breaks with the traditional stereotype of Islamic resistance, and/or confrontation, and displays a new pattern of interaction; that is engagements. In this sense, it refuses the conventional anti-Republican status of Islam, which would automatically presume and invite a clash with the Republican project.

As my study will elaborate in the following chapters, Gülen appears as a rupture in the Islamic positioning against the state. The major finding of my study is that Gülen represents the shift from exclusion and/or repression of Islam to the integration and/or engagements between Islam and the Republic. The Nur Movement was discriminated and repressed by the Kemalist project as it became seen as a fundamentalist threat to the secular Republic. At this particular historical moment, we are witnessing the emergence of

a moderate, nationalist Islam, which engages with the secular forces and institutions⁷⁹. The characteristics of this new sensibility, which continuously produces alternative paths to engage the Republic, is investigated throughout the thesis.

I will argue in the next chapter that the only explicit common ground to participate in Gülen's *dava* (mission) is a particular orientation to the Republican project, i.e. the engagements. But how did the new sensibilities of engagement emerge at a particular time in history? The rest of the chapters illustrate how the elective affinities between Gülen and the state facilitate these engagements.

Conclusion

The Gülen Community appears as the cornerstone of an important transition towards a modern Turkish Islam. Its extensive networks and projects at the national and international level are the sites where Islam works its way from exclusion to engagement, from the feelings of guilt, fear and oppression to recognition and integration by the Republic. Gülen appears as a distinct Community-movement among other former Nurist groups, which in turn report continuities with the conventional repressed status of Islam. The long tradition of distrust still affects Islam, and certainly Gülen is not immune to that historical baggage⁸⁰. However, Gülen's uniqueness lies in the new Islamic sensibilities for a civil society. It displays a capacity to engage the Republic for the attainment of the *dava*.

The journey from Said Nursi (1876-1960), the leader of the Nur Movement --the so-called "incarnation of backwardness"⁸¹-- to F. Gülen, the recognized leader of a civil society organization, has been a difficult but a short one. While Nurists' "legal status was sufficiently vague to attract periodically the ire of state prosecutors". (Mardin, 1989, 2), Fethullahists' claim for civil society organization proves efficient enough to be recognized by, and cooperated with, by the Turkish state. Briefly, despite the similarities and continuities between Nur and Gülen, the latter breaks from its forerunner the Nur Movement, which has been stigmatized as a fundamentalist, anti-Republican movement. Gülen is the representor of the newly emerging Islamic identities, life-styles and agendas,

⁷⁹See Chapter 5, especially the section on *Cemiyet* (Association)

⁸⁰See Chapter 6, with regard to the periodical ruptures of examination, judgement and loyalty tests, which the Republican milieu imposes on Gülen. It is important to note, how Gülen deals with these ruptures.

⁸¹Mardin (1989), p.2

which no longer feel comfortable with their conventional oppositional positioning to the secular state and the Republican project. This is largely due to the elective affinities between Gülen and the Republic, which the chapters 8 and 9 will illustrate and analyze in detail.

I analyzed the transformations of Islamist identities by revealing the shifts in their experiences, discourses and feelings throughout their lives. Their life stories provided me with rich and sound sources of data following people as they accommodated to the transitions from Nur to Gülen. My empirical study of the Community at the level of everyday life highlighted actors' points of view and appreciated the social actors as the negotiators of their own realities and active users and creators of the culture. However, the actors' points of view were built upon the socio-political conditions, macro forces and characteristics of the Republican milieu. Being constrained and shaped by the pre-existing socio-political conditions and contemporary circumstances, Fethullahists are, to a large extent, the products of the Republican Era and reflect the characteristics of the context they were born into. Hence, "Islam in transition", from exile to engagement, is analyzed as an interplay between transformations in the social structure and reformations of Islamic identities and visions. The main argument of this chapter is that the evidence on the transitions in Islamic identities, life styles and practices indicate a broader shift in macro forces: I argued that they inform us of a newly emerging Islam, which is a transition from exile towards engagement.

The new sensibilities of Gülen include willingness and decisiveness in engaging with the Republic. Gülen is the creator of several civil society projects through its active participation in the Republican agendas and visions. Gülen's engagement with the secular state is primarily a reflection of the transformations in the larger picture, i.e. the increasing vibrancy of civil society. Accordingly, we observe not only an "Islam in transition", but also the transitions in the interaction between the state and Islam. Each chapter in this present work will reveal different aspects of Gülen's multi-dimensional engagement with the Republican project in various areas.

But first, the next chapter will analyze the inner dynamics, social structure and main characteristics of the Community, as they shed light on the Community's engagements with the state.

The premise of unification... is essential to collective life... But so is the inevitability of proliferation, polyphony, and plurality. Situating our fragments is thus a challenging task, for the systems to which we relate them are systems of a complex sort. Yet, we insist, they are systems nonetheless. We should not deny them coherence, merely because they refuse to reduce readily to simple structures (Comaroff, 1992, p. 32)

CHAPTER 5: FUZZY BOUNDARIES AND THE SITES OF ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

This chapter aims to accomplish a seemingly simple and thus straight forward task of portraying Gülen, which is called a *Cemaat* (community), its *dava* (issue, goal, mission) and its organizations.¹ However, as it will be evident below, grasping Gülen as ways of life and a set of organizations is far from an easy task.

The main motivation for the rise of sociology has been conventional interest in trying to understand how collectivities cohere, i.e. how they maintain their integrity.² Since the birth of sociology, the sociological emphasis on cohesion and uniformity has persisted as the complexity of the cultural and social organization of our societies has increased. Hence, this traditional focus was my starting point to understand and describe the Gülen Community.

Retaining my interest in grasping what makes Gülen a community, I soon became more attracted and absorbed by the diversity in Gülen. For quite a long time, I let myself free float in the diffused and fragmented sites of Gülen. My participation in this apparent chaos of meanings, identities and organizations led to both stressful and joyful experiences. While intending to search for “common denominators” which brings these people together, I was captured by the disorder, fragmentation and uncertainty.

As a result, this study had to refuse quick fix solutions. It is the product of overcoming the conventional impatience of fitting every phenomenon into some presumed category. In this chapter, I will not argue that Gülen is traditional, modern or postmodern, communitarian or liberal, authoritarian or democratic. homogeneous or heterogeneous. I

¹Although this chapter explains why Gülen is not a community in the traditional sense, I will call it The Gülen Community for practical reasons but also because this is the translation of its name in Turkey, that is Gülen *Cemaati*.

²Durkheim(1951) *Suicide*. New York: The Free Press; (1984) *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: The Free Press.

will rather reveal and disentangle the patterns that are disguised by these arid categories and concepts. In order to be meaningful, these concepts need some flesh and blood. Hence, the voices of the people and the contexts where these voices acquire meaning, will provide those abstraction with depth. Instead of labeling, judging or categorizing, the aim is to understand how diversity and/or uniformity works and is organized. In the search for definitions, descriptions and portrayals of the Community, instead of celebrating chaos or unity, the chapter answers an important question: what kind of diversity and/or what kind of homogeneity?

This investigation will be related to the broader question of civil society. What do these discovered patterns and structures mean with regard to the broader organization of society? (How) do the immediate manifestations of the Community inform us about the broader picture? Regarding Gülen's claims to be a civil society organization, a particular understanding of and yearning for "civil society" will be investigated.

Community in Flux: First Impressions of Chaos and Uncertainty

Gülen *Cemaat* appears to be omni-present. That was the main illusion, which initially discouraged me in studying it. The so-called "information age" or "knowledge society" seemed to polish its omni-presence with an overwhelming media splash. Gülen has become one of the major issues in daily news, magazines, all media channels, everyday life chats over meals or coffee, political discourse, in people's minds, etc. Information about the Community is abundant. Exposure to this excess leads to the assumption that we already know everything about this Community. Colleges, several local professors and friends, disheartened me in investigating this seemingly "obvious" subject matter. However, there was an evident confusion between rough and unmediated information and analytical knowledge: put differently, there was a difference between information in the news and meaning. In the initial stages of my fieldwork, I had to disentangle and legitimize the distinction between junk information, small talk and meaning. As Hannerz critically asks: "What are we to do with the suggestion that not all information has a meaning; that, in fact, meaninglessness increases in the information age?" (Hannerz, 1992, p. 31)

Everyone I spoke to had an already established and politicized idea about Gülen. The popularity of my topic had both advantages and disadvantages. After the initial

discouragements to study it, the major advantage emerged: I had easy contacts and an abundance of connections to the prospective informants and smooth processes of introduction access. Shortly after my first attempts to meet people who were suggested to me as prospective Fethullahist informants, I was confused and perplexed. Surprisingly, despite its omni-presence and “obvious” characteristics, the Community proved to be elusive. In other words, despite the feeling of being surrounded by Gülen, the informants’ statements of attachments to Gülen appeared to be ambiguous and ambivalent. Contrary to common sense expectations, I had to disentangle a mess of loyalties, attachments and identifications. For a long time, I had to deal with the seemingly basic and simple question: Who were the people of this Community?

Although the organization of the Community was publicly known and legitimately recognized, my interviews revealed that several people working in those organizations refuse to admit their association with the Community. I was introduced to people who have been with Gülen for a long time, who had been working for the Community and/or contributing financially, intellectually etc. Even in these explicit cases of strong affiliation, I heard initial statements of denial or distancing. I heard denials from people whose names were publicized in Fethullah Gülen’s published biography. Even people who were known to be actively involved during the periods of emergence and flourishing of the Community tended to be reluctant to express their affiliation. Soon, my initial confusions and frustrations turned to a sociological curiosity in understanding this apparent chaos. What was it that these people were denying and why? Instead of the nature of affiliations, I started to examine the motives of denials of attachments. Only then, I could develop sensitive understanding of the people’s discomforts. I listened to many people in numerous sites of the Community, who were working in its organizations and participating in its events and activities.

“I really appreciate the work that is done by them.”

“I personally adore and respect Hoca Efendi very much but I am not one of his followers. I think it is me...I can not follow anybody devotedly.”

“I support everything they do. I have great admiration for what they are doing for the Turkish nation but I am not a Fethullahist.”

“I would die if Hoca Efendi said so but it is only for the name of the good he does for Turkish society. I am not a follower of a sect. It is about faith and the willingness to be useful for my nation.”

Obviously, the bipolar understanding of insideness and outsideness was not sufficient to grasp the attachments to the Community. The issue was more complex than mere membership in a community. I also listened to people who even had a public reputation as Fethullahists:

“There is nothing called the Gülen Community. Which Community are you talking about in the Information age? We have schools and educational projects in different parts of the world. We have connections with the businessmen which extend from the borders of China to America...Do we look like a religious organization or sect?”, Kaya Bey, a Fethullahist businessman, was implying that they were too international and large-scale to be rendered to a community.

“By calling Gülen, a Community, you are underestimating us”, said an officer in one of the Community's foundation. “We work on civil society projects. We work for our nation. Is this the way you appreciate civil society organizations? In fact, by calling it a Community, you are not only diminishing its value and underestimating it, but also contributing to the polarizations in the society. Labeling are just conspiracies created by the people who are jealous of our successful accomplishments.”

Another prominent figure of the Community, Cevdet Bey reported: “I do not know any Community. I know Risales, the holy book, which enlightens humanity. I know Fethullah Gülen, the scholar, the light of our age. I know 'good people' who would not hesitate to sacrifice themselves, if Hoca Efendi asks them to do so. But I do not know a Community. You are looking for something which does not exist.” Cevdet Bey was one of those Fethullahists who accused me as inventing boundaries. According to him, the good of Gülen could not and should not be attributed to a limited number of people. “But the whole nation should be” he added “entitled to this privileged way of living.”

Initially, trust issues surfaced between the informants and me. Some informants suspected that I might be a secret agent working for the state or simply a journalist who wanted to undermine the Community: “Why did you choose me? Who referred me to you?

I am a decent, honest religious man, nothing like a fundamentalist activist or a member of a sect. I love the Republic... Yes, I adore Hoca Efendi, but who does not? I have known him since our childhood. We have always been good friends. I am wondering if this entitles me to label?"

Interestingly, the attachments were diversified: They ranged from intimate bonds and emotional ties to business-like and even contractual connections. "I only do business with them", or simply "I do my job, I do not care who is my business partner and whether or not he is religious." Soon, I realized that these statements might be sincere and true but also just preventive and protective. The well-known figures in the Community sometimes preferred to reduce their connection to merely business, in order to play it safe. These preventive and thus purposeful dissociation needed to be separated from lesser degree attachments to the Community.

In most cases, explicit expressions of affiliations were cautious and ambivalent, if not guilt-ridden. Most of these denials were defense mechanisms that the informants used to protect themselves from the unknown stranger and/or shaky socio-political conditions. Their discomfort has decreased and eventually disappeared. However, I always had to remain alert to the situations, since the expectation of betrayal was deeply rooted in history as a result of the ambivalent relation between Islam and the state.³

In addition to the Fethullahists' historically rooted attitudes to downplay Islamic labels and associations, there is a large mass of people who are indeed associating with varying degrees of loyalties and attachments. Due to the information explosion, people from different circles and backgrounds did develop different levels of familiarity, sympathy and appreciation. "I really like the way Fethullah Gülen writes" said my coiffeur, during our chat. To my surprise, she was reading his books. I was surprised because she was not affiliated with the Community. Neither was she religious. I was meeting people in various spheres outside the numerous sites of the Community, who were making comments such as "what a brilliant idea to create Turkish schools all over the world" or "this kind of morality is all we need in this age of degeneration". Definitely, these people were not trying to hide their affiliation. On the contrary, they did not have any connections to the

³ See the Chapter 4.

Community, except for their feelings of admiration. It was through these comments and feelings of ordinary people that I was hearing about the Community, in places which were not at all closely related to the Community. Hence, my fieldwork was not confined to communal sites. Everyday life in and out sideof the Community was a treasure of data.

Moreover, I was trying to understand the people such as academics, politicians, artists and leading entrepreneurs who were associating with Gülen with different degrees of attachment. Some of them were non-practicing Muslims, agnostics or from other religions such as Judaism. Hence, religious commitment and faith were not at all sufficient to explain the complexity of people's connections to the Community.

The variety of the attachments described in my interviews intensified the uncertainties about who the people were and where the Community resided. The disorder and chaotic diversity rendered a clear-cut description of the Community impossible. Gülen was far more complex to be reduced to a geographical location. Besides, those were the times when I knew little about what my subject matter was going to be. I was merely trying to understand Fethullahist identities.

Being bombarded by my questions, the informants sometimes gave me signs of playfulness. Their answers were contradictory with their practices. I heard denials of the existence of a Community, which were followed by conversations with the wife on the phone: "If the kid is sick, why do not you take him to the doctor of the Community?" Or after preaching to me for labeling them, a Fethullahist would receive a guest to the office who would ask him how "the things in the Community" have been recently. These unintended interactions were replaced by more relaxed and trustful dialogue, shortly after I started to share different spheres of their lives, and not just a scene of interviewing. Affinities were already emerging between the informant and me when they started to feel more comfortable in admitting strong identifications with Gülen. It was safe to be in and out at the same time. It was secure to play with the boundaries and express loose associations. Gülen was a Community in flux due to its supple and fluid boundaries. However, its elusiveness did not negate its existence.

Multiple and Overlapping Loyalties: Unbearable Lightness of Fuzzy Boundaries

The traditional sociological responsibility of pointing the finger at the Community, to define its physical borders, to draw the boundaries of its spheres of action was not to the fragmented nature of the subject matter. The changing nature of social phenomena requires conceptual renovations. As the informants' statements revealed, Gülen was not a sect-like entity or a community in the traditional sense. Conservative Durkheimian sociology, which is primarily after the common denominator, is not useful in understanding the dynamics of Gülen. As Hannerz diagnoses, the problem with this convention lies in the way "culture" is understood. "This is a matter of confronting a customary commitment, in anthropology and elsewhere, to one particular understanding of culture as collective, socially organized meaning- the idea of culture as something shared, in the sense of homogeneously distributed in society" (Hannerz, 1992, p.12)

Are Risales a common denominator? As it is evident from the interviews, although the Gülen Community has a strong self-identity, Fethullahists are sensitive in labeling. They implicitly or sometimes explicitly deny boundaries, which are used to exclude and segregate people. Interestingly, my findings also show that many Fethullahist also deny collective representations shared with other Nur groups with different degrees of dissociation. Risales were the most striking common ground for all different former Nur groups, which was evident in their insistence that I should read them. My question regarding the centrality of Risales as one of the shared meanings was answered by the head of Akademi (research center of the Community):

You are more than welcome to read Risales. It is a very valuable and precious piece of Islamic literature but although it is magnificent, it is not irreplaceable. Hence, you may choose to read 200 other books on Islam and perhaps learn as much as you could learn from Risales. The point is that nobody will prevent or discourage you from reading what you prefer and choose. There is more publication now, both on Islam and Islamic knowledge and on science and philosophy. During the 60's, it was so hard to find valuable Islamic publications. They were banned. That scarcity made Risales unique. So many books are coming out everyday that there is excess and information pollution. Today, our concern is how to select the valuable books among so many. Thus, instead of imposing one single book, we aim to raise generations of young, fresh minds and free-spirits who will devote themselves to science, progress and who will open their eyes to West. Risales are still the most direct and best way to achieve this, yet no longer the only way...

Despite the fact that the Community stemmed from the larger Nurist movement and despite the shared reverence for its text Risale'i Nur, a majority of my Fethullahist

informants expressed reluctance to identify themselves completely with *Nurculuk* (Nurism). Risales and Nurist philosophy is still highly respected but Fethullahist differ from other Nurists inheritors in their pragmatic attitude toward the past and their roots. Several business people who participate in public events of the Community and who are known as Fethullahists admitted that they do not have time to read them:

Risale-i Nur is a precious text and dearest to us but it is not a pre-condition to read them to share our *dava* (mission). Times have changed. People are busier. I have no time to eat breakfast. Reading the newspapers is my luxury. (Sarcastically speaking) I did not read Risales if you noticed but I am sharing the Community's *dava*... I am sharing the faith and my resources are in their *hizmet*.

Fethullahists' orientation with regard to the Risales was an interesting deviation from other Nurist groups. They teach Risales in their educational summer camps and encourage Risale readings in the dormitories. The Fethullahist women do come together and read and interpret parts and pieces of the text. Hence, reading them was sympathetically suggested but was not prioritized by many Fethullahists. A considerable number of the benefactors, especially the businessmen and entrepreneurs, i.e. the financial corner of Gülen, admitted that they have never been a Nur student.

"I read every piece of Hoca Efendi's writings but Risales are hard to understand and require too much time. The money I make in my business is more valuable to the Community than my knowledge of Risales"

"I love to listen to the people who know Risales. I am passionately in love with Hoca Efendi's reading of Risales but I myself...I do not know much... If you are interested in Risales, you are in the wrong place: What you will find here is business, textile, money... Perhaps I should introduce you with our fellows who can talk to you about Risales"

As Gülen becomes an increasingly heterogeneous Community-movement, Risales ceased to be requirement to participate in the projects, sites and/or world-view of the Community, which attract people from various circles. Most often, the presentation of the Risales to a newcomer and/or to the outsiders was not as strict and primary as in other Nurist groups. The most explicit encouragement to read the Risales are among women groups who come together to read and interpret Risales every two weeks and in the

educational sites of the Community, i.e. extra-curriculum activities, dorms, summer camps and *sohbets*⁴.

The women in the *sohbets* were mostly housewives who can make time on “other-worldly” issues compared to their husbands who were extremely busy with “this-worldly projects” of the Community, business, politics, seminars and other organizational activities. Zehra was talking about a touching instance, in one of the Risale readings:

My husband is a former Nur student, who knows Risales better than me. When I see him in the ambitious outside world of business, I am thinking if he is forgetting Risales or what. He has no time for reading them anymore since he is super busy with the organizations of Community's activities. I hope he is not losing that inner-depth, while he is struggling in this fake and pretentious material world.⁵

Evidently, the extensive reliance on the assumptions of “cultural sharing” carries the risk that the authorial voice of the ethnographer may reduce the multiplicity of the voices to an imagined uniformity.⁶ Hannerz argues that the consequence of this overemphasis on the shared leads to an “asocial” cultural analysis (Hannerz, 1992, p.12). In other words, the complexity of the interrelations between differences is overlooked, with the goal of capturing and representing the whole as a homogenous system. Hence, the effort to draw Gülen's physical boundaries and to give a clear-cut recipe for who is qualified as Fethullahist was futile. Neither did Gülen have fixed boundaries nor did the notions of insideness and outsideness seem to be explanatory categories for its existence. This diagnosis did not mean that it did not exist. Rather, the very nature of its existence had to be delineated.

Accordingly, I chose to listen to the amazing diversity of the voices. People had multiple loyalties and affinities, i.e. an informant who expresses sympathy with Gülen could be whole-hearted Atatürkist and at the same time a Jewish business person. Another representative example of overlapping commitments is the entrepreneur in the food industry who was a benefactor of Gülen, supporting the schools in Almati financially. He reported that his charity had nothing to do with religion. He was barely a believer; the only

⁴ *Sohbet* means chat. However, it connotes Risale Readings.

⁵ Quoted in an interview with Zehra in 1999 in İstanbul.

⁶U. Hannerz (1992) *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 2; J. Clifford and G. Marcus (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography: a School of American Research*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

faith he had was in educating future generations properly. Only with this respect, he was a follower of the Gülen Community:

Who else, in my country, works so diligently in educating the youth, not just in sciences but in an all-encompassing way? It is not just to catch up with the rapid scientific developments of contemporary civilization but also to create a better, a more descent generation. You should see the self-sacrifices done towards this end. You really should see how these people are devoted to their mission ...I learned to understand and appreciate their honesty and high morals. For years, we have been taught that Islamic morals and culture were the source of bigotry. I am happy that, after all, I can only adore and support this kind of commitment. I love these people, deep in my heart! They do not ask me to change, to be religious...

The fuzziness of boundaries renders compromises easier not only within the secularist circles but also for various Islamic identities that are yearning to replace polarization with dialogue and cohabitation. I interviewed several moderate Islamists who pointed out that they dislike and avoid extravagant events and activities of the Community. No matter how they were disagreeing with the Community's management, they admitted that they sympathized with Gülen's school of thought. They may prefer not to attend the events and organizations but instead associate themselves with the philosophy and ideas. Many Islamist students, who were dissociating with the Community's organizations emphasized that Fethullah Gülen's philosophy was comforting since it was not only flexible, but also enlightening.

An example of this is provided by a friend of mine, Nazan, whom I met before my project on the Community. She feels at home with Gülen's discourse: in some way, her philosophy of life finds expression in Gülen's ideas and undertakings. Nazan is an intellectual, open-minded believer who is academically but also politically involved with the Islamist movement. She advocates and promotes Gülen's mission. However, she definitely prefers to operate independently and separately from any community. As she contributes to knowledge by her writings and her discussions in international seminars, in civil society organizations, on TV etc.- she argues that she needs the space for freedom of thought. Accordingly, she feels that an affiliation with any religious sect, community or organization would deprive her from this space. She stated to me: "In the past, I suffered enough from the imposition of 'shared sets of conduct'. I believe I need to be by myself to contribute to the Islamic movements now"

Gülen, with its fuzzy boundaries, suits best her need for space and independence. It recognizes her choice. Her sympathy and voluntary participation is welcomed and appreciated, to the extent she would like to participate. In some sense, this seems like a mutual understanding on a personal level. In fact, this flexibility and readiness to blur the boundaries attracts a lot of intellectuals (from different backgrounds) who contribute to the pool of ideas when their own space is secured. These people find comfort in being free-floating intellectuals around the fluid boundaries of the Community, as long as the Community recognizes their mobility and orientation. This fuzziness allows them to maintain their overlapping loyalties to academia, or to the art they produce as well as any other social and/or political membership, while still enjoying affinities with Gülen.

I also met people whose primary affiliations were with the fascist party in Turkey but who were also enchanted by Gülen's vision and moved to Central Asia.⁷ They were impressed mainly by Gülen's nationalist overtones and stated that they could easily combine its Islamic/nationalist vision with *Milli Hareket Partisi* MHP's (Ultra-nationalist Movement Party) nationalist agenda to consolidate a Turkic political unit in Central Asia.

Obviously, the affiliations with Gülen were more complex and sophisticated than I expected. It was important to reveal that major transformations were taking place in Gülen's communal sites, in terms of permeations of historically rigid boundaries and thereby, a mellowing down of the polarization between the Islamic and the secular. This meant a decline of conflicts within those putatively hostile groups, as well as among other historically separated groups such as ultra-nationalists, second-Republicanists, pro-civil society movement etc. Gülen did not aim to undermine disagreements but to provide the platforms where these different people could manage to come together and listen to each other.

However, the discovery and celebration of the diversity in an Islamic Community was not an end in itself for my research, no matter how attractive and eccentric it may have appeared. My goal was to investigate the source and consequences of this diversity. More importantly, what were its implications for the broader picture?⁸

⁷ See the Chapter 8.

⁸See Hannerz (1992), p.11, with regard to how to handle and make sense of diversity.

The permeations were diffuse and fragmented. On the one hand, they were “far from being reduced to a closed system of signs and relations” (Comaroff, 1992, p.30). On the other hand, the fact that they were happening in multiple sites was an important sign that they may be happening in an infinite numbers of settings.⁹ They were representative of new impregnations and social trends in society. The dynamism and diversity of affiliations and overlapping loyalties designated an important process, a “community-movement” in making, or put differently, a meaningful beginning of a coherent, yet diverse transformation acquiring momentum in Gülen’s sites.

Obviously, overlapping loyalties and diversity of attachments as well as the fuzzy boundaries contributed to the rapid rise and expansion of the Community. Although the management of diversity and dialogue were highlighted as the motto of Gülen, they were the self-conscious presentations of the Community. In order to understand Gülen in-depth, I needed to go further than these window sites that are used for public events. I needed to understand what kind of diversity was at hand, behind the extravagant platforms of cohabitation.

First, I will investigate what creates the feelings of affinity in this polished presentation of chaos and fragmentation. I will explore the meanings attached to the Gülen’s mission and explain the concept of *hizmet* (service). Is there, after all, a kind of *Cemaat*, (community) out there, which manages to attract and accommodate differences? Secondly, I will delineate how this diversity is socially organized and institutionalized into the so-called *Cemiyet* (association). The investigation of the social organization of diversity enables me to reveal the nature of a worldwide institutional networking and the sound personal bondings as its basis.

Cemaat (Community) and Hizmet (service): Pride in Self-sacrifice for Dava (Goal)

What kind of homogeneity?

Inheriting the basics of the Nur Movement, the Gülen Community, at the most abstract level, claims to reconcile tradition and modernity.¹⁰ To bring this abstract mission down-to earth, Fethullahists paraphrase this ambitious goal in many different ways. There is

⁹ Marcus (1998).

¹⁰ Mardin (1989).

consensus among Fethullahists that “Islamic self needs to be rescued in an age of constant and rapid change”. Whether it is referred as the Information age, modernity or postmodernity, Fethullahists focus on reconciling it with the Islamic culture. Many Fethullahist intellectuals expressed their awareness that “tradition” was a notion in continuous making and remaking, in the light of contemporary conditions¹¹. However, none of them were willing to give it up or replace with another concept. My informants seemed open to redefine it. In this sense, the Gülen Community is a community-movement, which deliberately works on revitalizing and expanding the Islamic culture, along with a continuous effort to acclimatize it to the contemporary socio-political conditions.

Fethullahists dissociate themselves from their parents whom they call “traditional Muslims”¹². Being asked the meaning they attach to this term, they argue that their traditional parents lacked the means and horizons to question and critically assess religious dogma. The desire to reconcile science with religion was a recent aspiration, which originated with the leader of the Nur Movement, Said Nursi. Fethullahists explain that their parents inherited Islam without any critical mind and curiosity. Hence, Fethullahists are proud of being able to deal with the scientific challenge to religion and of being flexible enough to question it and search for “rational” explanations. According to them, this combination of reason and religion, as well as rationality and Islam was originated by Said Nursi and then developed and strengthened by Fethullah Gülen. In this sense, Gülen may be considered a “Community beyond Tradition”, but never a community without Tradition.¹³

Led by Fethullah Gülen and the intellectual elite, the Community has a clearly defined *dava*. Unfortunately, as a result of an extreme popularization of the Community, their *dava* has been reduced to (and wrongly perceived as) window sites and the related discourses of diversity. Media and a lack of control over the abundance of information

¹¹ P. Morris (1996) “Community Beyond Tradition”, in P. Heelas, S. Lash and P. Morris (eds.) *Detraditionalization*. Oxford: Blackwell; U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash (1994) *Reflexive Modernization : Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press; With regard to the redefinition of tradition, see also T. Asad (1996) “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam” in J. A. Hall and I. Jarvie (eds.) *The Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi.

¹² Gellner’s thesis of high and low Islam applies here.

¹³ P. Morris (1996), p.223-250

contributed to superficiality in understanding Gülen. Moreover, the Community's self-effort to present itself as merely a civil society organization led to one-sided, or perhaps shallow understandings. The optimists of the compatibility debate celebrated its diversity, while the pessimists condemned it as an Islamic threat to the Republic. The latter view is based on the conviction that Gülen hides its anti-system aspirations through takkiye (dissimulation).¹⁴ Both views are reductionist mainly because they were trapped by whatever was to see on the surface (the front-stage, window sites). The optimist and pessimist spokespeople neglect the inner propellants and the underlying structures. In other words, they ignore what lies behind the public faces of diversity and uniformity.¹⁵

The most important contribution of this project is that it overcomes both the reductionist celebrations of diversity and condemnations of the Islamic treat: This study reveals far more complex dynamics and engagements, which have emerged out of fieldwork. Islam is neither a mere enemy nor friend of the Republic and its project, nor is it a mere producer of diversity or homogeneity. In order to understand Gülen in-depth, one needs to contextualize its *dava*. It was a long and puzzling process to be able to locate Gülen macro-processes.

Gülen's *dava* relates directly to the broader context, that is the secular forces of the state and the Republican project *dava* is a multiple level mission, as it represents the discomforts at the levels of identities, discourses as well as institutions. Fethullahist spokespeople represent Islamic identities to reconcile the Islamic self and the culture with the secular Republic, its official discourses and secular institutions. Gülen is a product of ambivalent interactions between the state and Islam as well as polarizations between them. However, Gülen is also an agent which has influence on the state through its numerous and multi-level encounters and engagements with it. Lacking the basis for historically rooted trust relations with the state, Gülen represents a recent yearning for the development civil society.¹⁶

¹⁴See the theory chapter for a larger discussion on the reductionist views of Islam and civil society. These views lead to distorted understandings of The Gülen Community and thus lead to ruptures and societal clashes from time to time. Examples of these polarizations are discussed in the chapter 6.

¹⁵See Chapter 2.

¹⁶Hall (1992); Tocqueville (1955).

There is a deliberate rejection of anti-system sentiments in these moderating, regulative searches for middle ground. All my interviews, oral histories and participant observations revealed the immediate needs of the people to deal with the historically grounded ambivalences between Islam and the secular forces. Hence, contrary to much of the speculations and conspiracy about Gülen, Gülen's *dava* is strongly connected to the Republican project. It does not aim to destroy it, but to work on and shape the Republican project. More importantly, Fethullahists are people who chose to live with and within it. This is the main reason why it alienated the radical Islamist circles and fundamentalists while also creating furious reactions from radical secularists. On one hand, fundamental Islamists dislike –some even do condemn– Gülen as they see it coopted and not sincere. “I have no respect for an Islamic Community which fades away like Gülen. In order to make Turkish state happy, they became a lost community without a respect for real Islam. They have no ability to criticize the status quo but just to support it” said an activist Islamist student, who chose to leave the Community after spending a considerable time with them. Gülen's critical dissociation from *Refah* and the tensions between them can be also explained by the moderate and pro-system it promotes. On the other hand, radical secularists condemned Gülen for indoctrinating large segments of the society, from diversified backgrounds to organize against the Republic and Atatürkist secular tradition: What kinds of unethical and immoral techniques must Gülen be using to influence the large and diffused masses, who must be “bewitched” in order to believe in Gülen's lies?¹⁷

In fact, there is a certain logic to the seemingly disconnected and fragmented presentations of the Community. Gülen's text as well as the social organization of the Community display extreme forms of commitment to the *dava*. I chose to call the people Fethullahists, who have this strong commitment to the *dava*.¹⁸ By Fethullahists, I mean people who commit themselves to the Fethullahist *dava* unconditionally. They make this *dava* the priority of their lives and express a readiness for self-sacrifice. Indeed,

¹⁷ See H. Cevizoglu (1999) *Nurculuk Dünü Bugünü* (Nurism in the Past and Today). İstanbul: Beyaz Yayınları. Cevizoglu published the public debate in his television show *Ceviz Kabuğu*, on 28th of February 1998. In addition to this public debate, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6, my contacts with and phone calls to those Atatürkist associations endowed me with significant data on their hatred and condemnations of the Gülen Community.

¹⁸As the people in the Community refuse labels and to be called Fethullahist or Fethullahist, I am apolethegic to them. However, for practical reasons, I needed to refer them by a name in this project.

Fethullahists take pride in heroic stories about people who died in *hizmet*, for the common end. The religiously-based service offered to the Community is called *hizmet*. In fact *hizmet* implies readiness for self-sacrifice without even giving it a second thought. Fethullahists report pride of being in *hizmet* and believe in the holiness of this mission. All kinds of acts of altruism are undertaken in the name of the Gülen Community and for the love of God. Indeed, I interviewed people who went to remote countries under inhuman conditions, in order to teach in the Turkish schools there. There is no material return in the *hizmet*. Neither do the people in *hizmet* have expectation of material or worldly returns. Most of the time, the teachers are paid poorly (out of charities, barely enough for survival). More often, students are in *hizmet* who are offering voluntary service without any payment. It is usually women, especially students who are undertaking non-paid *hizmet*, since the traditional gender roles do not assign them the right or responsibility of earning money.

Hizmet was a broad term encompassing a wide range of activities. At the most general level, it implies any service or work done for the Community. Its most frequent form is teaching and educating the young. This, in fact, is the expansion of a particular Turkish Muslim culture. As education has been the major area of concentration, *hizmet* primarily has been associated with all kinds of service in educational undertakings. Teachers, managers (sisters and brothers) of dormitories, people who work in the offices of Gülen's organizations, people who escort and host the guests of the Community, are all in *hizmet*. Most of the officers and teachers are paid, although teacher's salaries often depend on the benefactors' charity. Many teachers, who were appointed to the former Soviet countries reported that they had gone month without any payment.

Evidently, among Fethullahists, a common worldview and communal feeling are explicitly recognized. Then the question becomes: is there perhaps an integrated "community" after all, beyond the apparent fragmented diversity? Is there a homogenous group of people, who are committed to the *dava* and whose bonds are stronger than any other loyalty in life? If so, what kind of a community and homogeneity does it entail? Do Fethullahists have a homogenizing vision attached to their agenda? What is so distinct about these people which coheres them tightly together, besides their faith and mission?

It is important to highlight that the Gülen Community is a large and continuously increasing community-movement whose exact size is not quantifiable. This is due to its large-scale, international extensions, and also because of its fuzzy boundaries. In addition to the people in *hizmet*, there are large masses who are crossing boundaries and playing with them. Since there is no census which might count as affiliations, and since the affiliations themselves vary dramatically, there is no quantitative figure. Some of the leading figures of the Community estimate that five-six million people identify with the Community. Although it a minimum estimate agreed by many people, it is just a guess and therefore far from accurate. Because of the scale of the Community, an absolute homogeneity is practically unfeasible. Some of the leading elites report that because of the inability to predict the extent the Community's constituents, the direct connections between the center and periphery become increasingly more difficult. To identify the sense of the Community requires more organization and detailed management, since the masses are not always able to follow Fethullah Gülen's footprints:

Hoca Efendi is the most open-minded person I have known in my life. He has been sharing with us for years. You can see the extent of his horizons, in the schools of thought we produce and in our undertakings. But if you go to the masses, you may not find the same coherent liberal worldview and progressive attitudes. No matter how hard Hoca Efendi works, the people further away from the center will need time to catch up with his speed. As the Community expands rapidly, we no longer have control over or even an idea about the people. You know that all sorts of people follow Gülen, but in their own way. There is nothing to do speed up their progress.¹⁹

In contrast to a geographically enclosed collectivity, Gülen is diffuse and internationally organized. It is an "imagined Community" in B. Anderson's terms.²⁰ People are not connected to each other through face-to-face interaction but through the sharing of the knowledge that Gülen is a large-scale, internationally organized brotherhood.²¹ This imagination is facilitated through the media and the immediate exposure to the Community and the leader, Fethullah Gülen, the print culture, the Community's newspaper, magazines, monthly journals and books.²² Hence, a certain moralist vision produced by the top elite of the Community, is readily available to the people through several means, including the

¹⁹ Quoted from an interview with L. Erdogan, in *Akademi*, in 1998.

²⁰ B. Anderson (1983).

²¹ See Chapter 8, with regard to the gender order, the patriarchal organization.

²² H. Yavuz (1996). Yavuz emphasizes the distinction of Nur Movement as representing originally a print culture, and thus differing from most of the Islamic sects and groups, which are based on oral sources.

Internet. Gülen's text is the basis of the cohesion among these people, although most of them read Risales, too. All the people I met during my fieldwork were knowledgeable about Fethullah Gülen's ideas and school of thought. Even the ones who are reluctant to read were learning Gülen's school of thought through the F. Gülen's cassettes.

Fethullahists are the people who are taught Risales in dormitories and summer camps. Outside this circle of people who are or had been in *hizmet* for a particular time, the frequency of command over Risales decreases dramatically, mainly because the text and its language (Ottoman Turkish) are difficult to understand. However, as it is the case with the Qur'anic text, the everyday practices of the Community display far more diversity than the homogeneity implied and even imposed in the Risales and in Fethullah Gülen's books. This is due to the emergent and processual quality of culture as opposed to the static text. It is important to note that Fethullahists are successful at interpreting and adapting the texts (both Risales and Gülen's books) to their lives. In this respect, I believe, they are successors of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, who interpreted Qur'an in their revisionist and reformist way.

Highlighting the gaps between the text and the everyday life in the Community, I do not intend to deny or underestimate the power of Fethullah Gülen's words on the people. On the contrary, radical Islamists criticize Fethullahists for being blind devotees of Fethullah Gülen. Among Fethullahists themselves, there are cautious attitudes against tendencies to form an individual cult out of Fethullah Gülen. However, in the Community, you may often hear statements such as "I die immediately, if Hoca Efendi wants me to do so". Fethullah Gülen's mobilizing abilities are strikingly visible. Businesspeople report that they follow Hoca Efendi's suggestions to invest in Central Asia. I met numerous Fethullahists who have been Fethullah Gülen's students and whose respect and devotion to him does not compare to any other commitment in life, including loyalty to their family.

In addition to the direct exposure to Fethullah Gülen and his influence, the message in the Community is effectively delivered due to the highly detailed and complex structure of the Community. The structure is hierarchical, but the hierarchies are usually based on respect and recognition of Islamic knowledge and/or seniority rather than contractual impositions. The Community is neatly organized through geographical divisions. The people who are in charge of different countries, provinces, cities, towns neighborhoods and

villages, are widely known. The connection between these people in charge is close and connects people different geographical areas indirectly. Almost of all the people who are responsible for the management of a certain area have cellular phones, business cards with phone-numbers, fax and office address on them. I never had any difficulty to contacting any of these people. They were always available since they were in *hizmet*. Hence, it is their job to be available for the Community all the times.

The neatly planned organization of the Gülen Community is one of the major sources of its efficiency and expansion. I will discuss the educational and business networks in the following chapters. However, I would like to elaborate now on how this neat organization of complexities enables the Community to serve as a large, even international, family. Although Gülen is an “imagined community”, where face-to face interaction is practically impossible, the interaction between Fethullahists is far from being impersonal, distant and detached. On the contrary, despite the extreme dispersion and diversity, Fethullahists relate to each other through personalized channels. Even institutional arrangements are based on personal connections. One woman, Saime, who had to move continuously from one city to the other because of her husband’s job, told me her experiences in the Nur Movement, in different towns of Anatolia. This was far before the Gülen Community emerged as a separate community-movement and thus before Saime was a Fethullahist, i.e. during late 1950s and 1960s. However, her life story shows the continuities between Nur and Gülen with regard to the efficiency of personal channels to connect to the large network:

Each time we would move to another place, my first concern would be to contact our *kardeşlerimiz* (our brothers and sisters). You will be surprised, but it would take me less than half an hour to get the information I was looking for. I just simply knew where to go. I was going directly to the bookstore that was selling Islamic books. At those times, they were rare, if not underground. Most of the time the seller himself was from our Community. Even if he was not, he would know everybody who was buying Risales. Once I could find the people who were reading Risales, that meant, I was already connected and automatically welcome to the women’s Risale readings. Every single neighborhood or village we went to there were people who were meeting on a regular basis. At those times, it was illegitimate action and thus underground activity. Still, I never had any difficulty in finding my people. I loved them all. Without their warmth, life would be such a cold and unbearable experience.²³

²³ Quoted in an interview with Saime in 1998, in İstanbul.

Similar experiences were revealed during the oral histories and interviews, when people talked about their mobility within the Gülen Community. The mobility was either for personal reasons or for *hizmet* in different places, within or outside national boundaries. Many people stated that they were introduced to their husbands by the Fethullahists or through the Community's channels. Almost all of the women were actively involved in matchmaking within the Community. Regardless how diffuse and extensive the Community is, it is a large family, where people relate to each other through the most intimate means, meanings and codes of conduct. Being Fethullahist makes one a member of a huge, effective, powerful family where fellow feelings are shared in every sphere of life. As a guest of the Gülen Community, I was surprised by Fethullahists' extremely warm, close and hospitable welcoming of me. I was taken-for-granted as a sister whose attachment to them was seen as only natural.²⁴

Wandering around the "fuzzy boundaries" of the Community as a researcher whose primary interest in the Community was sociological, I was easily absorbed to the sense of the Community which accompanied me from site to site.²⁵ It took only a few calls made by the Fethullahists in İstanbul to make sure that I feel comfortable in the sites in Almati, i.e. schools, dormitories, households, companies, restaurants owned by Turks etc.

Interestingly though, even in Almati, I did not feel overwhelmed by an intensity of communal feelings. The Community was extremely efficient in helping me to organizing my fieldwork. They immediately absorbed me into their lives, their homes, and their most intimate talks. Despite of my being surrounded by a Community, and sharing their immediate realities, common meanings, I did not feel uncomfortable. Perhaps that was the reason why so many people from different circles are crossing the fuzzy boundaries of the Community, without feeling overwhelmed or melted into the collectivity. Before elaborating Gülen's institutionalization into a *Cemiyet* (Association) as a social organization of complex diversity, I need to further explain what makes Gülen a special Community and what kind of a Community Gülen is.

²⁴For a detailed discussion of the fellow feelings and how they overlap with and even reinforce the national loyalties, see Chapter 7.

²⁵These feelings and the sensation of Gülen as a huge family became extremely explicit in Almati, where I was connected through personal contacts and trust relations.

First of all, as I already discussed, the diversity handled by the numerous sites of the Community is striking. This is directly related to a particular Fethullahist attitude. The Gülen Community manages to develop a motto, a common meaning, that is tolerance for difference. Fethullahists, especially the ones in *hizmet*, are trained to emphasize their ability to indulge differences. Being exposed to the moralist overtone and communitarian attitudes of Fethullahists, I had difficulty in understanding what the source of the recognition for differences was. Each time I apologized about my lack of Islamic knowledge, indifference to religious practices, my Western clothing etc., the answer was prompt: "It is O.K. These are details. The important thing is the quality of the soul, the inner self... Your virtue does not reside in the material world". I never tested the limits of their tolerance by shocking them with the outrageous, but my subtle negotiations of my own sphere always worked in different spheres, with different Fethullahists. I met entrepreneurs who were supporting the Community financially, benefactors and admirers of Fethullah Gülen who were ignorant about Islamic culture and practices. Whenever they were apologetic, they were told by Fethullahists to relax. Similar to my experience, they were constantly told that there were no obligations and no coercion in religion. "Faith changes the world and nothing else is as powerful as faith.", I was told by believers:

There is many ways of expressing faith, such as charities for poor students. You do not have to pray five times a day, especially someone like you, who is in business meetings throughout the day. Islam is the most adaptable, flexible and reasonable religion. Therefore, it will be the religion of this modern era.

Fethullahists are proud of promoting this tolerant image, which helps them to flourish in a culture, which is in a process of never-ending tension between Islamization and secularization. What kind of sense of community do they have if there is a continuous effort to blur the boundaries to incorporate "others"? What kind of a homogeneity does Gülen entail? Obviously, it is a particular homogeneity, which is historically and culturally specific. Gülen manifests an agreement, a consensus to reconcile moderate differences. Fethullahists are people who are willing to accommodate a certain level of diversity and incorporate it into their discourse and networks. Their efforts are self-conscious, cultivated and strategic. The sense of Community is further reinforced by the shared goal of accommodating differences. The pride in self-sacrifice for the Community goes hand in

hand with the pride in this strategy of “fuzzy boundaries” and “cohabitation of differences”. Briefly, it is a community based on shared culture, common goals and fellow feelings, which display coherent commitment of hosting differences. The strong commitment to this end and the success in managing this agenda, in turn, strengthens the family-like quality of Gülen. Hence, if one single quality is sought to define Gülen as a Community, it would be “efficiency”.

However, it is extremely important that this efficiency in achieving the goal of “accommodation of differences” should not be confused with the Community formed by the people in *hizmet*. It may seem paradoxical that Gülen embraces uniformity and diversity. However, there is no contradiction. Behind the accomplishment of diversity, there is a perfectly harmonious and cohesive Community, which imposes strict rules, regulations and norms to manage Fethullahists’ lives. In addition to the moral codes for the Fethullahists’ themselves, there is the impositions of an acceptable life style. There are strict moral, practical and educational rules in the dormitories and other educational institutions of Gülen. My fieldwork among Fethullahist students reveals that the students who live in the *Işık Evler* (Houses of Light) are supposed to read only the Community’s daily news. Any other newspaper or journal, which would contradict Gülen’s orientation, is rejected and removed from the *Işık Evi*. There is “after school” requirements which encompass social activities that the students in the schools are obliged to attend. Although the curriculums is standard and science-focused, the after school activities aim to expand Islamic practices, traditions and culture.²⁶ Moreover, the Community interferes even with the most personal decisions of people, such as marriage, social relations, political affiliations and jobs.²⁷ If a person is assigned to do *hizmet* in a foreign country, it is usually the final decision. In almost all cases, he himself and his family follows the Community’s orders, regardless how demanding those orders may be. The commitment is ultimate and there is no concept of negotiation over or rejection of the *hizmet* responsibilities. Fethullah Gülen clearly states in one of his most popular books, that “When it comes to the community, there are no different goals and expectations, thus no dissolution and

²⁶ See the Chapters 6 and 7. In the latter, I elaborate how the schools abroad display a double mission in teaching both Islamic and Turkish ways.

²⁷ See the Chapter 9, with regard to some women’s tensions between Community’s demands and their career opportunities.

separation. Since the solidarity based on common beliefs is both a duty and a *ibadet* (worshipping), it is the highest value.” (Gülen,1997, p.252)

The Gülen Community is a community of believers, people who have faith and who believe in the *ahiret* (the world after death). Fethullahists are a community of practicing Muslims. This is quite different than the *Cemiyet* (association) which attracts people with various religious affiliations. An Islamist woman, Selime, improved my terminology as well as my understanding by suggesting to me another definition. According to her, “the Gülen Community could be better described as “*İslami yasayan insanlar*” (people who live Islam). She explained further that she means a people who experience/feel particular ways of Islam by allowing them to shape their lives and identity. In other words, Selime tried to highlight that Islam for them is not simply a text or religion but a way of life, since it satisfies them in every sphere, i.e. culturally, socially, intellectually, morally etc.

Gülen is a community, which calls for a *temiz* (clean, pure, chaste) society in the age of degeneration, a decrease of moral sentiments and of a tendency toward a morality-free-zone.²⁸ Fethullah Gülen expresses his extreme frustration about the latest events of moral and political corruption, such as the Mafia’s undertakings, the gangs and their relationship with the State. According to Gülen, the only effective solution to such a miserable situation is the reincorporation of faith and religious feelings into Turkish society:

A clever nation such as the Turkish nation can not be controlled and disciplined by worldly penalties and their implications. Unless people have concern about the otherworld and salvation they can use their intellect to abuse and manipulate 60-70 % of existing legislation. Then, the aim should be to raise religious generations who will accomplish purification of society, although it may take a very long time.(Gülen, 1997, p. 289)²⁹

From this point of view, religion fulfills an important function of regulating the societal order, amending morality and overcoming corruption and degeneration. In a way, Gülen’s *dava* is an all-encompassing social and cultural engineering. How is this holistic engineering realized through moderate, pro-system, peaceful and piecemeal means?

²⁸ Fethullah Gülen (1997) “*Temiz Topluma Doğru*” (Toward a Clean Pure Society), in *Prizma* vol. 2, p. 282-290

²⁹ “*Türk Milleti gibi zeki bir milleti, dünyevi ceza müeyyideleriyle bir yere bağlamak imkansızdır. İnsanlarda ahiret endisesi olmadıktan sonra, zekalarını kullanarak mevcut kanunların 60/70% 'nın rahatlıkla aç ığını bulur altından siyrılabilirler. öyleyse uzun bir zaman dahi olsa, nesillerin din ve dini değerlere yönlendirilmesine ve toplumu gerçekten temiz pak bir toplum haline getirilecek nesillerin yetistirilmesine özen gösterilmelidir*” (Gülen, 1997. p. 289).

F. Gülen is a communitarian who promotes the idea of *Cemaat veliligi* (community parenting) which suggests that the leading figures of the Community are *masumiyete kilitli* (fixed by innocence). This will establish and promote moral principles and constitute a moral collectivity by incorporating gradually more people.³⁰ He strongly advocates that even charismatic personalities need to be melt into the Community. This is so because the individuals by themselves are not able to accomplish to the extent they can accomplish in a community. Thus, an individual within the community is definitely more useful and efficient. Gülen pragmatically manages to bridge these concepts and theories, which are the corner stones of his school of thought, with the project-based goals of the community. In a sense, the projects on education, business and trade aim to create morally superior, just and thereby happier individuals. School and business connections are regarded as means to spreading Turkish Islam as ways of life.

Evidently, the functionalist overtones are supplied by a subtext of how individuals necessarily need to belong to a community. There are communitarian overtones in Fethullahists' discourse, such as the importance of family life and marriage (e.g., the effort to arrange marriages and prevent premarital romantic involvement) for the Community's good). Interestingly however, most of the responses to my questions about the compatibility of the moral order (as described by Fethullahists) with tolerance (as claimed by Fethullahists), revealed the importance given to individual choice. The religious and moralist overtone is very often harnessed with contemporary aspirations and hopes as well as recognition of the individual. As the leading intellectuals of the Community most of the time argue, they aspire a society where each individual should have the right and opportunity to choose to be virtuous and moral as well as efficient and productive. During my interviews, and participation in the communal sites, I insistently probed informants about how this would be possible and how a person could be trusted to choose to be a moral. My question was about an old dilemma: To what extent is the *dava* a moral issue? Could the projects be built on virtue? Would it not corrupt eventually? The responses did not really change in content and displayed consistency from site to site. A spokesman for the community, Ziya Bey, who is in charge of the coordination of some of the schools, answered my question:

³⁰ Ibid., p.252-257.

It is the *gorul* (hearts) and souls that we want to reach. Fatih Sultan Mehmet did not conquer İstanbul, there was no resistance from the people...no war...no fighting. He took his time to conquering people's souls, not to take over their geographical setting. What we desire is individual consent and it can only happen by scientific education, by giving the individual the freedom and formation (accompanied by information) to decide for himself or herself. That is the essence of our thought...the aim is to raise self-conscious, well-educated and open-minded youth. ..The education of the soul is only possible with *sabir* (patience). In the ideal society to which we aspire, people will not need any societal control or imposition to be both virtuous and progressive. We definitely know this can only be realized in a long time and thanks to trained patience...Change can not be by force but by individual consent...On the other hand, we do not target the conventional consent of traditional people...We desire the consent of the *çağdaş ve medeni* (contemporary and civilized) people who will find their own way by exploration and critical reasoning. That is the reason why we put all our energy in opening good schools where sciences are taught. We want to raise world citizens, who would be able to make choices, and not be manipulated by the vices of modernity.

Often, informants' responses emphasized individual choice, consent and freedom of exploration. However, this emphasis seems to contradict with Fethullah Gülen's text, which explicitly prioritizes the community and the communal good at the cost of sacrificing individual rights. In fact, *hizmet* as an ultimate devotion to the Community, requires self-sacrifice on the part of Fethullahists. Then, the question is: is there a gap between everyday life practices and the religio-moralist text of the Community? The answer to this question is complicated and requires critical analysis. It is true that *hizmet* is a binding responsibility. However, the individual is free to make the choice of devoting himself/herself to the Community. There is no forced membership.

A very striking example of the importance of individual choice is Mehmet's intense experience in the Community. Mehmet is an educated, scientific-minded man aged 27. He met Fethullahists in North American context. At that time he was finishing his M. A at the American University in Washington, D.C. He was a practicing believer with a strong faith. He told me that he always felt the need to identify himself with an Islamic group. Since he was an adolescent he searched for an Islamic school of thought with which he could associate. After being attracted to Sufi thought and especially Mevlana, his hunger for the reconciliation of science and faith seemed to find comfort in the Gülen Community.

Mehmet is the first informant who introduced a whole new world to me, that is the Community's backstage which I discovered gradually with time. He narrated his story with all his emotions and excitement:

Following a good Fethullahist friend of mine who was in *hizmet* and studying at the same

university in Washington D.C., I found myself in New York City, in a house of Gülen. It was a huge, beautiful house with three floors. I spent there the most touching and intense three weeks of my life. The people I met there caught my heart with their sincerity and warmth. I never felt so welcomed and so wanted with a completely new group of people. The brothers were extremely friendly. You could discuss with them philosophy and science and, in two hours, you find yourself praying together. Before I met these people, I never had a chance to satisfy both my religious and intellectual selves at the same time. There was something unique about the whole experience. I felt like staying there forever.

He lived there for the weeks that were scheduled by the “camp”. In the camp, life was very planned and structured, for 24 hours. Basically, they were reading Risales, the Qur’an, and several other religious text and worshipping to educate their souls and their will power. Almost all the people who were attending the ‘condensed camp program’ were students who were doing their graduate studies at American universities. They were funded mostly by the Community. Gülen offered scholarships through the foundations.

The three weeks, a very religious, moral and ritualistic life absorbed him. The daily schedule was very structured. They woke up at 3 o'clock in the morning to pray. Prayers continued all day long. The meals and other services were financed by the organization. The days were hectic and filled with heated discussions on several issues in Islam and touchy issues about contemporary Turkish society. They exchanged ideas continuously and thought about several matters in-between prayers. Mehmet said that it was a whole different world that surrounded him and by the end of the first week he was already mentally and physically tired. He added:

It is not that these Gülen people continuously lived that way. It was a concentrated schedule like in the science seminars or conferences where you attend the sessions until late at night and you only relax during the coffee breaks and the meals. It was tiring and demanding but extremely motivating, satisfactory for my soul and intellectually challenging. However, I was definitely exhausted after a while. I remember my mind could not absorb anything anymore.

These camps of the Community are regarded as intense education and treatment of the soul as well as the intellect. Religious undertakings have a heavy emotional overtone. They not only take place abroad but in Turkey as well. They schedule intensive readings particularly for the students and also serve to recruit newcomers. The reading camps have strict rules and impose a pre-set daily schedule where the participants are kept busy all day long.

Mehmet's definition of the situation quite often resembled Goffman's total institutions, which cut off and isolate like-situated people from the wider society for a while³¹. Similar to the total institutions, the camps operate with a over-all rational plan and strict rules and regulations. All aspects of life are conducted in the same place, which combines residence, education and work. As other informants also highlighted, an important idea of the camp is the "compulsory company of others" who are treated alike and who are taught and educated the same way. As Mehmet indicated, "Voluntary commitment and voluntary participation does not make the whole experience any looser, more flexible or less rigid. There is no space or opportunity to be alone for one minute. You are always with others. However, it has a charm in getting you and a kind of attraction in keeping you attached".

After the camp, Mehmet went back to his school and kept in touch with the Fethullahists mainly because they were the ones whose "intellectual capacities and debating skills" satisfied him most. Surprisingly however, he "never became one of them". Why did he feel so much at home with these people? How would an Islamist discourse satisfy a scientist's search for answers about life in general? If he was so satisfied, why did he never 'enter' completely? My friend felt bombarded by my questions mainly because they were related to his intimacies about his formation of self-identity and also because they involved "the most private and intimate decisions about his life".

However, he tried to explain the process he went through: he called it his "journey". He explained in detail how deeply he was attracted to the Community: "It is hard to explain, I immediately loved those people. Perhaps the comfort of being able to trust and be trusted made the experience so tempting" His questions, doubts and concerns about how to reconcile reason, his profession, scientific rationality with his faith had been satisfied long before his introduction to the Gülen people in New York. He had been attracted first when he had read the Risales years ago. But he never had a chance to meet the Fethullahists. Although he chose not to join them, he still recognized the Risales as a very important piece of Islamic culture.

³¹ Goffman (1961) *Asylums*. Pelican Book.

He found it difficult to explain why he resisted the Community's temptation. After several meetings and his gradual overcoming of embarrassment, he started to open up. He explained that he is on a "different path", his "own way" that he could not share with a Community. Hence, the idea of *hizmet* was not possible for him to pursue. He blushed and said that he felt like an egoist when he admitted his reasons to me. It was because he could never afford the demands, i.e. his life, to a Community. The Gülen Community could never recognize his own path, his own inner journey. Not only because he was more of a spiritualist and follower of the Sufist school of thought, but also because he had other this-worldly involvements. I asked him what he meant by "worldly involvements". He smiled and explained with an expression of embarrassment of his face: "I mean I already have plans for my future, such as my career plans and dreams that I want to follow. I do not think that I can underestimate my desires to have a family and children and to have a peaceful life. I want to live with them and for them". He looked through the window of the café. He remained silence for a few minutes and just watched the crowded street and the flow of the masses, and then all of a sudden continued: "*Cemaat* can not share you with anything else. You either belong to it or not. Your belonging shall be all-encompassing and entails complete devotion. Thus, the decision is very fundamental and has to be made explicit."

Thus, he chose to be on his own in his journey. But he never wanted to lose his contacts with the Community. He maintains his ties to them because his decision about entrance did not really frustrate the Fethullahists. Mehmet emphasized that they did not impose their expectations on him. He did not have to be in *hizmet* for the Community, in order to be friends with them. He did not cooperate with them in different projects and did not even attend events. However, his choice to be a sympathizer and an admirer of the Gülen was recognized and respected. He said that he would be very sad to lose those friends he made in New York. The idea of the flexible boundaries enabled him to be 'around' the Community rather than inside or completely detached. It gave him the opportunity to keep "loose" bonds instead of choosing between access or exit.

Mehmet's case is particular in the sense that he had no difficulty in crossing the boundaries of *hizmet*. When he met with these people, he already was envisioning a unique path for himself. He was at the stage of graduating from an American university, which

was going to increase his alternatives and opportunities. He was already physically and socially “mobile” when he met the Fethullahists. Thus, the Community’s temptation and abilities to absorb him did not prevent him from following his own path. Although the Community leaves room for access and exit, it may not be as easy as in Mehmet’s case to cross the boundaries of *hizmet* so smoothly. It is important to note that many students are introduced to the Fethullahists at earlier ages than Mehmet. Hence, the Community opens up new horizons, alternative paths and a strong sense of warmth and solidarity for them. Indeed, many informants reported that after participating in the Community’s life, the warmth, the fellow feelings in the camps, dormitories etc. meant that they already felt strongly tied to the Community.

However, there is no coercion or binding obligations to keep people in *hizmet*. Unlike in sects, access and exit is flexible and depends on the individual’s decision. Esma, the head of the girls’ dormitory in Almati, took a radical decision to exit in three weeks. She received an acceptance from a German university for a MS. in mathematics and decided to quit her job with the Community. I asked her if there was any pressures or impositions not to leave. She smiled and told me: “Everybody is sad because they love me. They became my family for such a long time. I know it is a quick decision, however a graduate degree in mathematics has always been my dream, I think they understand that. I have to go!”. Her family was in Germany and she was going to move there to live with them for the first time since she was raised by her grandparents in Turkey. I also asked her if she could be in *hizmet* in Germany and continue to serve the Community. Her answer was prompt: “You know graduate life. Mathematics is particularly difficult in Germany. I think I have to work just for myself at least for a few years”. She was simply “off”. The weeks I participated in her life in school, dormitories and outside her work environment, there was almost no discouragement for her decision or interference with her life.

Gülen is a recent Community, which emerged out of the fragmentations of the Nur Movement only in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hence, most of the young Fethullahists, especially the students, did choose to affiliate strongly with Gülen and be in *hizmet*. They were not born into Fethullahist families: Either their families became Fethullahist through a transformation which they were a part of or they themselves choose to be a part of the Community, very often against the will of their Atatürkist families. I also met people who

were in the Nur Movement and then chose to join the Gülen Community. In these cases, there is a family tradition to be traced back to 1940s and 1950s. But even in these Fethullahist families, the affiliation with Gülen is not completely a family matter. Often there are some family members who choose to associate with Gülen and those who chose to be detached. Moreover, the intensity and form of affiliation within the same family varies as my fieldwork in different households and my interviews with different members of the family revealed. Hence, the commitment and devotion to the family is a matter of individual freedom. Although there may be emotional pressures and demands to incorporate the people to the Community, the final decision is made by the individual.

However, once the decision is made, the newcomers voluntarily agree to be a part of the all-encompassing life of the Community. In this respect, the Gülen Community is an “assent” community which people choose to associate with. In other words, they were not born into it as in the “descent” communities.³² As Morris describes,

Assent communities are always built out of, and posterior to communities of descent... Assent community is a voluntary association... [they] are always new, oriented towards the future completion of their communion and are thus continually engaged in the process of their own formation. Communities of assent are based on strategies of successful rhetorical persuasion, designed to lead to assent to a body of shared truths or values. The communities of assent are normally missionary, reflecting their potential universality. Religion and culture become distinguishable, the former being the ‘assent package’. Such communities are by their virtue cross-cultural and assent is neatly packaged to facilitate expansion into different cultural contexts. The Communities of assent replace familial relations with metaphorical brothers, mothers, sisters and fathers. (Morris, 1996, p.238-239)

Interestingly, the sense of community in Gülen is fostered by these metaphorical family relations, such as the sisters and brothers in the dormitories and Işık houses. These sisterhoods and brotherhoods breed not only the fellow feelings and help individuals to identify with the whole nation, which is a descent community, but also creates the sense of a large international family whose sphere of influence is extensive. Hence, it embraces the individual regardless of space or context. The affinities cross national boundaries and thereby become effective at the international level. In this sense, Morris is right in arguing that the affiliation with an assent Community is necessarily cross-cultural. But then, does this kind of affiliation create an imposed homogeneity?

³² Morris (1996).

Morris argues that “all assent communities suffer from the inherent danger of understanding themselves as a totality: One completed, fixed, unicity or subject”(Morris, 1996, p. 239). He contrasts intolerant and homogeneous assent communities with the inherently pluralistic descent communities where identity does not depend on a doctrine or an ideology. The people in *hizmet* constitute a homogeneous collectivity. As explained above in detail, there are explicit shared sets of beliefs, practices and values. Although exit and access are liberally and tolerantly permitted, it is clear who belongs to the Community. Thus, the Gülen Community does entail a homogenizing demand that every committed Fethullahist ‘assents to the creed of the community’.

Briefly, the Gülen Community represents a particular community. It does indeed entail uniformity in its backstage, which is disguised by the decorations of diversity in the frontstage, discourses of pluralism and self-presentation as a civil society organization. If one thinks of the situation in the student camps, which resemble total institutions, one may feel that the frontstage, (images and decorations of the Community as well as calculated self-presentations) would not be genuine. In fact, the most common and strong attack on Gülen claims that it does *takkiye* (dissimulation). The extreme manifestations of rigid rules and demands for self-sacrifice in *hizmet* may seem contradictory to Gülen’s window sites and discourses of tolerance. However, the seeming contradiction has a logic and meaning.

First of all, the homogenizing tendency is limited by the ever-increasing scale of the Community. More importantly, the realization of the *dava* requires more than a Community of devoted believers, in this particular context and at this particular moment in history. I will evaluate the diversity of affinities gathered around the Fethullahist *dava*, in the next section. The Gülen Community is extremely aware that their *dava* requires permeation of boundaries and the making of *dava* a mission, a goal of the majority. Fethullah Gülen argues that the movements, which left their mark on history, are the ones, which try to catch the majority of the people.³³ Hence, Fethullahists’ strategy has been to accommodate differences and manage diversity through dialogue in order to be able to engage with the broader context. Working on a diversity-friendly, thereby a conflict-avoiding community, it is in the process of transforming into a distinctly extensive and

³³See A. Kurucan (1997) “Foreword” to F. Gülen, *Prizma*.

highly complex community-movement. This community-movement does not negate nor abolish the homogenous assent community, but it extends, opens its horizons and permeates its boundaries. How does a religio-moralist assent community with established rules of conduct and visible uniformity manage to become a diversity-friendly community-movement? What kind of diversity does Gülen entail? And more importantly, how is the diversity accommodated at the levels of identity, organizations and institutions?

How is the intensity of the family-like quality of Gülen to be explained if it is not intimidating newcomers and outsiders? What is specific about it to attract and keep people comfortable in all its spheres? What is distinct about Fethullahists who were so able to welcome people from different backgrounds that they do not feel the pressures of melting into a homogenous culture?

I argue that Gülen has developed distinct sensibilities and capacities. Interestingly, it is a religio-moralist Community that manages to accommodate differences in the Turkish context and not the self-assigned Atatürkist civil society organizations, nor any other social movement or voluntary organization, which may be associated more with the secularist circles. Indeed, Gülen's self-presentation as a civil society organization has worked well so far as reflected in its diversified constituency as well as its interaction with the state. It has acquired considerable credit as an organization, which aims to improve educational institutions in Turkey. This aim of the Community is recognized as independent of its religious orientation. In addition to the high-ranking politicians, such as Demirel, whose name was given to the university in Almaty, several high-ranking officials of the military, such as H. Karadayi, visit Gülen's schools and report their appreciations.³⁴ Working hard at its self-presentation as a civil society organization, rather than a religious Community, Gülen received substantial financial and political support from different circles of businesspeople. Does that create a contradiction in terms? Is Gülen a community of an all-encompassing uniformity or is it a civil society organization, which accommodates differences? Can this putative contradiction be explained just by *takkiye* and conspiracy? Is there a sociological account of how this seeming paradox can be explained? How are we to justify for the theoretical assumption that Islam is incompatible with civil society and that

³⁴See Community's daily, *Zaman*, 19 April 1998.

a community would be unable to appreciate an individual's space for self-experimentation? To answer these questions, one needs to explicate the complexity of the social organization of chaotic diversity. Only then, one may understand the logic and meaning of an apparent miracle, namely the harmonious co-existence of all-encompassing unity with dispersed diversity.

Cemiyet (association): Pride in Diversity

What kind of diversity?

Gülen incorporates the idea of a moral community into its projects in a very sophisticated, non-intimidating and conflict-avoiding way. However, it also shares many cultural idioms and norms with the society at large, into which it was born. Along with its distinct *dava* and Islamic worldview, it is a product of the national culture and the Republican milieu. This is the key to the accommodation of diversity within Gülen. At the same time however, all the Fethullahists I met, interviewed, socialized and became friends with, were people with an high degree of awareness, and self-consciousness about how tolerance and flexibility is essential for the accomplishment of their *dava*. There is a shared awareness that the *dava* can only be pursued through successful engagement with the socio-political as well as the economic forces of the Republican milieu. It is the very nature of this engagement, which requires the permeation of boundaries.³⁵

Fuzzy boundaries help the Community transcend the historically formed polarization between the secular and the Islamic. It is a cultural process, which is emergent and thus created by the people, their meanings and actions. In this sense, the Community is alert to the milieu and extremely adaptive to the local constructions of reality, as well as broader trends in society. Obviously, Gülen is an exemplary product of the Republican era, which is highly acclimatized to contingent socio-political conditions. Yet, fuzzy boundaries are also developed by Gülen as deliberate strategies of cultural engineering. The Community is

project. In this sense, the permeation of boundaries is the basis of Gülen's social and cultural engineering.

It is extremely important to note that flexibility and fuzzy boundaries operate usually at the level of the *Cemiyet* (association), i.e. the institutionalized sites of foundations, media and print organizations, companies, firms. These are the associational sites where people are not expected to be devoted to *hizmet*. Certainly, people in *hizmet* work in these associations. But as already discussed, people in these sites display a wide-ranging diversity of attachments and ties to Gülen. This permeation and diversity can not be generalized to the Gülen Community at large. Permeations are the effects of institutionalization of diversity in Gülen's legitimate organizations and through its business contracts as well as its participation in national and international politics and policy-making. Thus, supple attachments and fuzzy boundaries relate to associational life, its manifestations and consequences. These are the supreme manifestations of Gülen's accommodation of difference. Not surprisingly, these are the most visible communal sites, which I call window sites or front-stage where usually extravagant events, celebrations and public presentations of Gülen take place. It is not surprising that the Community highlights, polishes and takes pride in the *Cemiyet* as the promoter of civil society in Turkey.

The differentiation between *Cemaat* and *Cemiyet* is acknowledged by leading Fethullahists. Presenting Gülen as a civil society organization, they claim that it is primarily a *Cemiyet* and not a religious community. Obviously, in the self-presentation of Gülen, there is a strategic overemphasis on *Cemiyet*, i.e. the social organization of diversity and downplaying of *Cemaat*. Hence, the importance and urgency of the following question increases: How does Gülen reconcile this associational diversity and fuzzy boundary with the uniformity and rigidity of a religio-moralist community? Gülen is extremely capable of organizing and co-ordinating diversity through its complex network of organizations at the national and international level. How is this organizational ability to accommodate differences combined with the organizational ability to sustain uniformity among Fethullahists?

As I already discussed at length, Fethullahists take pride in their strong commitment to the Community and the defense of it, while claiming to respect and recognize individual choice and freedom. Yet, it is important to note that Fethullahists' emphasis on individual freedom is defined in communitarian terms. Individual is given choice and voice, yet they are still conceptualized through their embeddedness in the Community. In this sense, Gülen aspires liberal-communitarian view that community necessarily and primarily exists³⁶. In this respect, the Gülen Community seems to be in line with liberal communitarians, such as Charles Taylor, who deny the juxtaposition between individual rights and communal good. Taylor argues that the polarization between liberals and communitarians takes place because they talk past each other³⁷. This lack of mutual understanding, he suggests, can be remedied by opening public discussion and dialogue.³⁸ For the last two decades, the emphasis on dialogue has been the motto of the Gülen Community. Fethullahists underline that their aim is to create the platforms for cohabitation of differences through mutual understanding.

It is important to note that unlike MacIntyre's moralist communitarianism,³⁹ the Gülen Community does not contrast a liberal, open-market society with moral sentiments and fellow feeling.⁴⁰ As it is explicit in the economic power accumulated in the hands of the Community, Fethullahists are business-minded people who compete extremely well in a market economy. In the foundations, I observed how businesspeople in various countries account and ask for Counseling in the Community. I asked how these extensive business networks are maintained by Gülen. I was particularly interested in how Fethullah Gülen, an Islamic scholar, was connected to the business world. I received similar answers from entrepreneurs, owners of small and medium businesses and petite bourgeois:

³⁶M. Walzer (1983) *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic Books; Taylor (1992) *Multiculturalism and Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

³⁷ C. Taylor (1989) "Cross Purposes: The Liberal Communitarian Debate" in N. Rosenblum (ed.) *Liberalism and Moral Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 159-83.

³⁸Taylor (1992).

³⁹A. C. MacIntyre (1984) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.

⁴⁰ A. Smith(1976) *The Thoery of Moral Sentiments*, edited by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Smith explains that economic liberalism and free market economy does not render individuals to merely self-interested, interest-calculating beings. People do perceive the expectations of the society and try to keep up with the norms and values. Moral sentiments do not necessarily contradict with the logic of free-market and liberal society.

“I owe the idea of my business to Hoca Efendi (Fethullah Gülen). If not for him, I would not even dare to initiate a business in Kazakhstan.”

“I always wanted to extend my scope but it is the Gülen Community which connected me with other people in this business. I owe them a lot.”

“Hoca Efendi is my mentor and path-finder. Every step I took, I consulted him. I owe all my accomplishments to him.”

“I started to listen to his suggestions in my teenagers in Kestanepazarı (İzmir), in 1970s. The seeds of my entrepreneurial spirit has roots in those times, when he was telling us that the market in Central Asia was virgin and that we had to fill it up. Since then, I can not imagine to progress without his consulting.”

As the businesspeople themselves reported, Fethullah Gülen receives the recent news, developments and problems as well as initiatives of the businesspeople on regular basis. The officers in the foundations and close friends of Fethullah Gülen confirmed that he organizes business meetings where the businesspeople update his information. These meetings, as well as personal communications (face-to-face or through means of distant communication) serve to update him. He also consults business circles and direct them to new agendas and future projects.

Gülen is a highly hierarchical Community, which is self-conscious of hierarchies of seniority. In other words, Fethullahists are extremely respectful of seniority based on age and religious wisdom. Hence, instead of imposed hierarchy, Gülen is grounded in strong impressions and admirations of hierarchies. Unlike in a corporate organizational culture, Gülen’s hierarchies symbolize holiness of Islamic scholarship and faith. There are specific terminologies to express respect for seniority, such as *ağabey*(brother), *abla*(sister), and *hocam* (my teacher, mentor). Fethullah Gülen is called Hoca Efendi, which is the highest expression of devotion within the Community. Hence, the organizational or associational life of Gülen displays a continuation of Gülen’s communal feelings such as brotherhood, fellow feeling, and personal connection. Even though Gülen is extensively institutionalized and although its associational life is presented as the sound grounds for the development of civil society, the Gülen *Cemiyet* is an extension of a large-scale family, which is ready to shelter people from various other circles and orientations under one roof. Unlike in

corporate cultures, the efficiency in Gülen's organization is explained on the basis of self-sacrifice, charity, devotion and personal connections. Despite the large scale of Gülen, familiarity is the basis of Gülen's organizational culture.

Although Fethullahists express an explicit communitarian and moralist tone, everyday life discourse and practices do not attempt to juxtapose authenticity and liberalism or Islamic tradition with a free market economy. The Gülen Community emerged, flourished and realized most of its accomplishments in the bosom of liberal society and a free market as well as on the basis of charities of capitalists and entrepreneurs. Far from being committed believers, some of these people appreciate and support Gülen's undertakings merely because they are convinced that education creates a better society, progress and affluence.

Evidently, the Gülen Community is attracting, influencing and representing a far wider spectrum of people in the society, than it is often assumed. The deeper diversity is explored, the clearer Gülen's amazing extend becomes. Displaying the multiple sites and investing the various spheres of influence of Gülen, I am now obliged to investigate the nature of this dispersed and diffuse multiplicity of voices and co-operations. Is there any logic to this diversity? Can we go further than a mere celebration of a pluralistic *Cemiyet*? A deeper understanding of the nature of this diversity was acquired gradually throughout my fieldwork. It took a long time to put the pieces of the puzzle together to situate Gülen and its *dava* into a broader picture.

My findings reveal that there are indeed meaningful patterns in this seemingly chaotic diversity. Despite their differences, the followers/sympathizers/benefactors of Gülen are people who form affinities with various aspects of Gülen's *dava*. It often deviates from the Islamic and/or moralist overtone but retains other basis for affinity. The various aspects and layers of *dava* form affinities between people who come from different backgrounds. The people, who admit some kind of affinity with the Community, are, in fact, people who have different kinds of issues with the Republican project. Often, these issues are far more prior to Gülen's projects or may have nothing to do with Gülen's *dava*. One does not need to be Fethullahist in order to share their feelings and to engage meaningful communication with the Republican project. These are people from diverse backgrounds --Islamists,

nationalists, fascists, secularists, leftists, feminists, capitalists and certainly some moderate Republicans who may identify with any of those groups- who call for piecemeal improvements and peaceful reformations in society. Regardless of the intended focus of these reforms --moral, educational, business-oriented, nationalist/internationalist--, these people are the ones who chose to engage the Republican project, instead of simply abolishing it.

These are the people from different backgrounds, who survive within the system, yet, who would like to adapt it to the contemporary world. The idea of “catching up and competing with contemporary civilization” is an explicit commonality between Atatürk and Gülen, although appropriated in different ways. Accordingly, the tradition of project-based reformations,⁴¹ or put differently the cultural and social engineering from above, is inherited from the Republicans by Gülen. This elitist drive to engineer a better society has its roots in the Ottoman Empire and the Westernizing elite such as the Young Turks. Gülen's followers/sympathizers/benefactors do, indeed, believe in the Republic.⁴² They prefer to co-operate with and exist within a secular system when undertaking their projects.

All share the call for platforms to express their different voices. This is how the Fethullahist *dava* seems so attractive to masses that have carried the burdens and discomforts of polarization and societal clash. They finally sense the possibility of making their voice heard which in turn incorporates them into the Republican project. In contrast to the historically formed fear that Islam is mobilizing the masses against the Republic in order to overthrow the state, Gülen ends up creating and developing engagements with the Republic. In this sense, Gülen is a perfect example of Hirschman's “exit, voice and loyalty” theory.⁴³ While several other Islamists such as the religious party, often express anti-system aims and sentiments and eventually find themselves out of the system, Gülen manages to remain in the very center of the system with considerable amounts of social, economic, political and intellectual power.

⁴¹See Mardin (1997), with regard to the tradition of project-based modernization, led by the elite. My argument is that the Fethullahist elite has been extremely successful in inheriting this Republican tradition.

⁴²I carefully separate these people from the Fethullahists who are in committed to the Community either by *hizmet* or through strong ties.

⁴³ A. O. Hirschman(1970) *Exit Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*. Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press.

Contrary to conspiracy theories and commonsense, Gülen expresses more loyalty to the Republic than many other secular (such as second Republicans) as well as Islamist critics of the Republic. This can be explained in its ability to gather people who have similar complex relations to the Republic. Interestingly, although it highlights loyalty to the nation-state and its Republican project, Gülen has not been co-opted. The main reason for its resistance to co-optation is its *dava*, that is the aim to improve and reform (within the framework of the Republican project) through its engagements, as well as its subtle and symbolic negotiations.

Briefly, boundaries between a wide-ranging diversity of people permeated on the basis of emerging multiple affinities, such as education, business, international undertakings, civil society, moderate Islam, amending moral degeneration, revitalizing nationalist pride, etc. Permeating boundaries were symbolically diverting from the rigid boundaries of the Republicans. The flexibility due to mobile boundaries was in some way mellowing the rigidities associated with the Republican project. No matter whether Gülen will end up serving this mission of reconciliation, its motto so far has been in this direction. Hence, its attraction to the people is its ability to form numerous platforms where people from different circles are engaged dialogue with each other, as well as with the third parties, that is the broader system.⁴⁴ That is how my subject matter emerged out of these seemingly unrelated fragments. I only gradually realized that the emergent subject was the engagements of these people with the Republican project. Yet, it took me quite sometime to situate the fragments to a meaningful whole. It only takes a subtle view of culture and a flexible and sensitive methodology to “begin to understand why social life everywhere appears dualistic, simultaneously ordered and disorderly” (Camoroff, 1992, p.30)

Contesting the Boundaries: Unbearable Heaviness of the Clash

Having investigated the nature of uniformity and diversity in the Gülen Community, my research reveals the significance of its *dava* in producing a diverse affiliation and fuzzy boundaries. Depending on the intensity and the kind of affinities, Gülen displays high organizational ability to produce both cohesion and cohabitation of differences. However, in order to highlight the importance of the permeations and the meaning of the

transformations in these pluralistic sites, one needs to illustrate the rigidity of boundaries and polarizations within the larger Republican context.

Although my fieldwork at multiple sites of the Community was continuing without any difficulty, my initial efforts to communicate with the self-assigned Atatürkist (secularist) civil society organizations were failing. After hearing my topic, the Gülen Community, they were explicitly closing their doors.⁴⁵

Despite the Republican Atatürkist organizations were refusing to co-operate with me, I had many other Republicans around me, with whom I had good relations. I was born into and raised in the same milieu with radical Atatürkists. Indeed, before my research, I had known only a few Islamists. All my family and friends were Atatürkist secularists with varying degrees of attachment to the Republican ideology. The fact that I chose to study the Community was making them very unhappy because they thought that was not worthy of being the subject of a Ph.D. thesis. Another reaction from the same circle of people -- including my father, my uncle and many close relatives and acquaintances -- was to encourage me to reveal the harm and the evil of the Community. Most of them approached me to legitimize their own ideological orientation and conspiracy theories. If my thesis failed to satisfy these demands, they were extremely frustrated and distant from me. This interaction did not only occur with Republican informants but also from people with whom I had been close. Thus, they proved to be alienating and caused additional tension for me during my ethnographic research. However, they provided plenty of first-hand information while extending my research to more sites and permeating all the spheres of my life.

I soon realized that my research was one of the tangible objects of contestation between the Community and its Atatürkist opponents. I was forced to defend civil society, but ironically each side was identifying itself with civilization and civil society. In other words, my thesis was caught by the contestations over the claims for monopoly over civil society: I had to “be honest and clarify which side I was taking”. In other words, there was

⁴⁴See Marcus (1998), with regard to the engagements to the third party, that is the larger context, i.e. the state, the market, the international world order etc. I discussed this in Chapter 3 in detail.

⁴⁵Their deliberate rejection to be interviewed were taking place right after the first major explosion of clash between these organizations and The Gülen Community in February. As contestations and ruptures will be narrated at large in Chapter 6, I will not discuss the peak points of the polarization now.

visible pressure on me to decide as soon as possible “whose civil society” I was going to defend.⁴⁶

The continuous negotiation over boundaries often turned my research into a platform of contestations for power. While resisting to taking sides at the cost of discomforts in my private life, I participated in micro sites of confrontations between uncompromising Atatürkists and Fethullahists, which provided me with valuable insights. The demand for the prospective knowledge located me as a researcher in the midst of contestations and negotiations. There was intense pressure to locate my study with regard to the fuzzy boundaries of the Community. During my ethnographic fieldwork, I experienced similar contestations over education and educational policy-making⁴⁷. Interestingly, outside the associations, organizations and window sites of the Community, the clashes were hard to escape.

It is important to note how the whole issue had become so personalized and had led to unintended and shocking consequences that involved the continuity of personal relationships, friendships and intimate bonds. It easily became the heart of the formation of subjectivities and blurred the taken-for granted divisions between our “intimate” and “political” selves. Was there really a distinct political existence and stance outside and independent of our selves? The clash between the Community and Atatürkist civil society organizations reveals how fundamental was this socio-political dilemma for our identity-formation and for our everyday lives is. The agitated confrontation unmasked the historically formed centrality of the moral and political tension for the integrity of the identities: One felt obliged to take side in order to “be”.

This explains why Gülen’s attempts to create a middle ground, i.e. platforms for dialogue and reconciliation of polarizations, have become so popular. In contrast to the sites of continuous tensions and trouble, Gülen’s communal sites call for societal compromise and communication. They have therapeutic influence and attraction for people who are tired of clash and who no longer are ready to endure the unbearable heaviness of these polarizations. Gülen’s popularity is not only caused by the intellectual need to listen

⁴⁶See Chapter 6.

⁴⁷See the Chapter 7 and the Conclusion.

to different voices but also by societal transformation. Gülen satisfies people who are in search of permeations, flexibility, multiple and overlapping affinities and loyalties. Yet, the transformations, which take place in communal sites, inform us about broader societal trends. As Ahmet, a highly respected and accomplished entrepreneur (owner of a large-scale company) states:

I am not religious. I hardly have any time to think about metaphysics or spirituality. Honestly, I am not interested in those issues either. However, I appreciate the Gülen Community for the toleration they call for. I am a member of *Türkiye Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği-TÜSIAD* (Association of Turkish Businessmen), but I am also a member of *Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği -MÜSIAD* (Association of Muslim Businessmen). This separation never made sense to me. I could never understand why I should not work together with Islamic businessmen. These boundaries are artificial and useless but more importantly, they can not afford the demands of a contemporary market situation. In order to compete in a highly competitive market, I must work with people regardless of their religious and political orientation. Besides, I am really tired of this meaningless battle.

It is important to situate these oppositions to the macro processes. The micro versions of the clash are happening in numerous sites in a milieu, which hosted the same oppositions throughout the history. The connectedness among the sites as well as between them and the broader context requires both a multi-sited ethnography and a particular approach to culture.

Downscale, ... culture is likely to be characterized by the concreteness and situational rootedness of its meanings. Upscale, it takes increasing diversity. If a sense of a whole grows out of this, it is probably of a moving interconnecteness, nothing less, and not necessarily anything more. To get to the realities of contemporary wholes, we may often have to shatter the mystique of traditional anthropological holism (Hannerz, 1992, p. 22)

Conclusion

Complex relations and engagements are successfully organized and institutionalized by the Gülen Community. As I already highlighted, Fethullahists pride in institutionalized diversity finds expression in their management of cultural engineering. Institutionalized diversity goes hand in hand with institutionalized uniformity. The disentangling of the complex coexistence of diversity and uniformity challenge the conventional juxtaposition of a religio-moralist Community with civil society. The explanations of this seeming disparity is more complex than a simplistic judgment of Gülen as doing *takkiye* (dissimulation). A deeper understanding requires critical in-depth analysis of commonsense conspiracies.

Indeed, the complex organization of Gülen overcomes this putative contradiction. On the one hand, it is a community, which is capable of high degrees of uniformity. On the other hand, it, does, indeed, operate through numerous civil society projects, which operate through business contracts, a market economy and individual initiative. Although it requires altruism and ultimate devotion from the people in *hizmet*, its extensive and diverse associational life is far more complex than a homogenous Community's inner structure.

Different aspects and emphasis of the *dava*, such as nationalism, development of civil society, moderation and reconciliation of ideological orientations, create multiple and diverse affinities. It is important in the sense that it leads to an agreement – or shared culture-- of welcoming moderate differences. Even the uniformity among the people in *hizmet* aims to incorporate newcomers and demonstrates more interest in foreigners. That is why newcomers are more popular in Gülen, than the people whose loyalty and/or affiliation has been secured for a long time.

A deeper understanding of the quality of complex diversity and uniformity in Gülen raises further questions: What if Gülen pursues its communitarian tendencies in the future?

serve the needs of people and societal calls for platforms of societal compromises. No matter whether it was intended or unintended, these highly visible communal sites contribute to the development of civil society. They provide the places to exercise abilities to disagree in civil terms. They offer channels to discuss and exchange ideas, sources and goals between people who have been perceived as mutually exclusive (if not enemy-like) groups so far.

Gülen's project-based undertakings unintentionally lead to micro transformations in the linkages between the Islam and the state. These unintended consequences are more immediate and effective than the planned and expected consequences of the projects. Hence, the sites of engagements, thereby the societal transformations, are the most visible seeds of civil society. The expected outcomes of the educational projects are still to be observed in the far future. This highly diversified community-movement does not only enable dialogue between the different followers of Gülen but also an engagement with the Republican project. Moreover, the platforms for dialogue do serve not only as discursive interactions but associational and institutionalized engagements among these people and between them and the state. The transformations in the sites are the unintended consequences of Gülen's Community-movement and needs to be recognized as separate from the intended *dava* of the Gülen Community. The fear of the intended consequences of Gülen's success -rise and accumulation of power- leaves these important unintended consequences, i. e. these transformations in shadow.

[c]ultures are not scientific 'objects'... Cultures and our views of 'it' are produced historically and are actively contested... If culture is not an object to be described, neither it is a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitely interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal and emergent (Clifford, p. 18)¹

CHAPTER 6: CONTESTATIONS OVER THE CONTROL OF EDUCATION

Introduction

Focusing on the main area of concentration, the educational projects of the Community, this chapter examines the nature and forms of interaction between the state and Gülen in the domestic sphere. Contrary to pessimistic theories which reserve the ideal of civil society to the Western countries,² the findings of this present study show that both Islamic and Kemalist self-organizations do place civil society at the heart of their discourses and agendas, as the self-definitions of both Kemalist organizations and the Gülen Community as "civil society organizations" confirm. The yearnings for civil society is reflected in social theory, which celebrates the happy co-existence of differences and the relating increasing visibility of civil society in Turkey.³ However, these optimistic conclusions lack analysis of the deepening opposition between the Kemalists and Fethullahists. This chapter will demonstrate how the concept of "civil society" has been made the corner stone of the public debate --more specifically, of the contestations over education. These yearnings however, are not only prescriptive but also paradoxical, since the nature of the clashes contradict the main premises of civil society, such as civility. What is mistaken for, or rather marketed as civil society, should not obscure our ability to see beyond these maladaptations and reveal the significant moves made towards civil society.

Highlighting the ill-conceptions and false promotions of civil society in the clashes between Kemalist Republicans and Gülen, this chapter will shift the focus : It will carry the contestations over "monopolizing civil society" toward the platforms the interaction

¹J. Clifford(1986)

²Hall (1998) The nature of Civil Society, in *Society*, May-June, p.12; Gellner (1994)

³Gole (1996) " Toward an Autonomization of Politics and Civil Society in Turkey", in Heper M. and A.Evin (ed.) *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp 123-222

between civil society and the state. Unfortunately, the historically rooted perceptions of Kemalists and Islamists as mutually exclusive categories, as well as the persistent clashes between them, obscure emergent shifts in the interaction between Islam and the Republic. The aim of this chapter is to shift from a prescriptive to a descriptive analysis of the complex and implicit nature of these domestic interactions. Accordingly, this chapter will reveal the specific patterns of interaction between Gülen and the state, along and across the latter's microborders.⁴ The term microborders is useful to notify the sites and settings where micro encounters take place, mostly within everyday interactions. By microborders, I mean two separate yet interrelated phenomena. Firstly, they are the multiple-locale of interaction between the various structures, agencies, branches (i. e. the Turkish courts, the Councils of the Ministries, state officials, military, *Milli Güvenlik Konseyi*, MGK (Council of National Security) and the Gülen Community, its project-based undertakings, organizations etc. Secondly, they are the physical or non-physical zones, where Gülen and the state exert power over and negotiate each other's realm of influence. In other words, those strategic sites where different parts of extensive, multi-layered and fragmented structures of Gülen and the state penetrate each other (such as the local sites of education). Some distinct micro-borders through which Gülen and the state interact and penetrate each other are: the schools, dormitories, the Turkish courts as well as the numerous sites where the schools are contested between the defenders of the Republic (and its secularist ideology) and the followers of Gülen (supporters of the Community's schools). Examples of this include dinner tables, streets, newspaper columns etc.

In order to investigate these complexities, I will firstly describe on what grounds Gülen manages to acquire space, recognition and power to contest with Kemalist organizations and to negotiate with the state over education.

Gülen's Organizational Capacity to Accumulate, Handle and Transfer Social Sources of Power

"One facet of Mr. Gülen's success is wealth creation. Many of his followers have become rich" (Economist, 2000, July 8-14, p.52)

⁴ I am borrowing this term microborders from Wilson and Donnan (1998), p.3. However, while they use the

Over five-hundred schools, both high schools and universities, were founded in the name of the Gülen Community around the world.⁵ Over one-hundred of the high schools are located in Turkey and the rest are located in different countries and continents.⁶ The Community owns seven universities, two of which I visited during my fieldwork (one in Almati-Kazakhstan, Süleyman Demirel University, and another in İstanbul-Turkey, Fatih University). In addition to the schools abroad, the community continues to open new schools in Turkey with relatively better standards, technology and curriculum, which is affirmed by the distinct successes of the graduating students.⁷ They offer scholarships to successful students and prepare them for competitive exams at the national level. As well, they encourage and support them through graduate studies in high-ranking universities in North America. The Gülen Community seems to continue Said Nursi's emphasis on education and the Nurist importance given to high school and university education⁸. However, unlike Nurists, while Fethullahists make education the primary goal of their projects, they also expand their business network and accomplish smooth transfers of money (economic power) and human capital (intellectual and political power) between business and education. As Economist correctly highlights, F. Gülen's followers, friends, and sympathizers, have holdings in hospitals, stock-holding companies, newspapers, TV channels, supermarket chains, as well as strong connections to the national and local politicians.⁹

term to indicate the geographical boundaries, my adoption of the term is more metaphorical.

⁵ See Hakan Yavuz (1999) "Search For a New Contract in Turkey: Fethullah Gülen, The Virtue Party and the Kurds", SAIS Review, vol.19, no.1

⁶ The schools are not the property of Fethullah Gülen although he is the mentor and the leader who originally initiated the idea and who still is the motor of mobilization. The schools are financed mostly by people who are in or around the Gülen *Cemiyet* (Association), who admire and love Hoca Efendi. These beneficiaries are mostly the owners of middle or bigger sizes of business. The schools opened in the Turkic countries in Asia open the doors for intense interactions, especially trade for businessman and international connections for Turkey. In other words, in addition to providing charity for brilliant students, the schools led to a flourishing in trade and business. There are small booklets published by the community as well as video tapes which familiarize the society with the schools abroad.

⁷ It is important to note that the schools have a preference for and accept the best students whom are offered scholarships most of the time. These selective attitudes in recruitment must have an effect on the overall success of the schools. The high schools display enormous success in university exams in Turkey as well as in Olympiads at the international level.

⁸ S. Mardin (1989)

⁹ Economist, July 8-14, 2000, p.52

The increasing efficiency of the Gülen Community, both in Turkey and internationally, should be attributed to both of these outlets. Firstly, through education, that is, schools, *dershanes*,¹⁰ dormitories and summer camps, Gülen aims to adapt to the “information age” and to be competitive at the international level. The schools do not offer religious education and do not teach Islam. F. Gülen assures that the schools are completely devoid of any traits of Islamic fundamentalism.¹¹ He emphasizes that all of the schools are under the State's control and monitoring. Moreover, he promises to close them if any features of the schools were found to be against the secular democracy, the Republic, Atatürkism and its reforms. As in all his media talks, he highlights his respect for the military and denies the conventional expectations that there is tension between the Community and the military. The schools are equipped with high technology and teach Western sciences in English. In addition to their scientific teaching, they aim to rescue the new generations from degeneration, immorality and decadence through moral education and discipline.¹²

The second area of concentration, that is the business networks, i. e. the networks of trade, numerous middle and big size businesses, entrepreneurs and a large chain of the media,¹³ provide the primary financial source for the educational projects, particularly the fellowships offered for the students. Most of the time, the Fethullahist businessmen and entrepreneurs support the schools but there are also benefactors from wider circles who sympathize with and support Gülen's schools. Hence, the Community has a considerably strong hold of an extensively growing and accumulating capital, either in the hands of

¹⁰ *Dershanes* prepare the high schools students for the national university exam. They provide private classes and lectures mostly in sciences and are very competitive compared to other *dershanes* in Turkey. Because the teachers and other personnel are devoted Muslims who try to do charity and good for the students, their performance turns out to be more than regular teaching. The students argue that they have been taken care of with love, patience, and sincerity. They explain the secret of their success by the sacrifices of their selfless teachers.

¹¹ See *Hurriyet* daily news, 8th April 1998 and *Milliyet* daily news, 19th April 1998 as striking examples of Fethullah Gülen's declarations about the schools.

¹² Fethullah Gülen (1996b) *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* (The Hesitations of the Contemporary Era). İzmir: T.O.V Yayınları

¹³ H. Yavuz calls this extensive media network the “large media Empire”. Yavuz (1999), p. 6. Indeed, in addition to *Samanyolu* TV and *Burç* FM, the Community owns the following journals and magazines: *Zaman* (Time) daily newspaper, *Sızıntı* (Leakage) a monthly scientific magazine, *Aksiyon*, a weekly magazine, *Ekoloji*, a magazine about environmental issues, *Yeni Ümit* (New Hope), a journal on theological issues, *Fountain*, a journal in English language. The most striking enterprise of the Community is Asya

individual Fethullahists or in the foundations of the Community. Their positive approach to and successful performance in the free market economy has contributed to their striking accumulation of powers. Interestingly, most Fethullahist capitalists are defenders and promoters of the free market, i.e. liberal economy. F. Gülen states that the *mü'minler* (Muslim believers) shall control trade and market as well as other spheres of activity in the world order of the nation states. He supports his argument by using the example of the Golden Age of Islam, the time of vigorous trade when Hz. Muhammad lived.¹⁴

The summoning of the Golden Age backs up the expansion of their networks (both education and business) both at the national and international level. Their discourse of a modern, nationalist Islam (or Islamic nationalism) is accompanied by their awareness, sensitivity and active involvement with the international world order. The Community's nationalist overtone accompanied and even reinforced their increasing visibility and undertakings in the international domain: As Calhoun observes: "Invoking or giving voice to large scale categorical identities enables the discourse of nationalism to situate people in the world order (or disorder)".¹⁵ Their claim for a civil life and the development of civil society is legitimized and reinforced by their handling of "the power... that states and large-scale economic activity have over us." (Calhoun, 1997, p.125).

While schools fulfill the responsibility of educating a moral and progressive future elite who will be competitive at the global level, businessmen create and strengthen international ties and networks as a part of the "international corporate bourgeoisie".¹⁶ These spheres of activities and investments are neither separate nor distinct from each other. On the contrary, the resources are easily and smoothly transferred from one sphere to another. The Community successfully permeates various spheres of activity and influence, i.e. the economic, social, political and cultural realms. Accordingly, it owes its

Finans, which is growing rapidly. Yavuz draws attention to some critical numbers: 16 partners share Asya Finans and they have already accumulated over half a billion Dollars in capital. (p.6)

¹⁴Fethullah Gülen (1996) *İnancın Gölgesinde* vol. 1 (In the Shadow of Faith), İzmir:Nil Yayınları

¹⁵Calhoun (1997) *Nationalism*. Buckingham:Open University Press, p. 125. Calhoun's terminology is helpful in understanding the bridge between these nationalist Islamist categorical identities and the international world order.

¹⁶C. Keyder (1997) "Whither the Project of Modernity" in Kasaba and Bozdoğan (eds.) *Rethinking Modernity*, p.47. Here, Keyder emphasizes how businessmen play an important role in making the bureaucracy and the state elite accountable. This is a demand for rule of law and thus generates significant political power.

distinctive success to its effective intermingling of different sources of social power. This strategy renders the transfer of resources more simple and feasible. The areas of activities and the relating institutions are strongly supportive of, and connected to each other. In this sense, Gülen's distinction largely relies on its efficient organizational capacities.

The Gülen businessmen invest money in the schools or offer scholarships, which contribute to the accumulation of intellectual power in the new generations. In return, some schools have become private schools, which accumulate economic power thanks to the distinct successes of their students. The Community has a pragmatic approach to its accomplishments. A good example for this is provided in the case of the Community's activities in Kazakhstan. Gülen's schools in Almati not only provide relatively higher quality of education, discipline, Turkish-Muslim morality and cultururation, but also attract an effective Turkish business community as well as encourage a vigorous sphere of business, trade and entrepreneurial investments. The schools help to create a Turkish Muslim Community, and have revitalized and developed the business networks between Turkey and Kazakhstan. The schools and dormitories have proved to be hospitable and accommodating to the businessmen who go to Almati for business. Moreover, the schools have become a connection with the local people in Almati who send their children to Gülen's schools or who have developed personal as well as contractual ties with the Fethullahists in Almati. The Turkish businessmen and entrepreneurs that I interviewed in Almati reported that they contributed to the finances of the schools in one way or another, such as providing them with their products (most of the time with equipment or food), offering scholarships to students, or contributing to the salaries of the teachers etc. Interestingly, their explanations of the reasons for their financial support varied widely. This is an important indicator of how the Gülen Community manages to mobilize people from different backgrounds with different agendas, and connects different sources of social power.

The owner of a Turkish Kebap Restaurant stated: "These schools are our national pride. I cannot help crying when I see Kazak students speaking Turkish and singing *İstiklal Marşı* (national anthem). We all feel very proud of these schools and I think it is our duty to support them." When I asked why he came to Almati, he explained that his kin had Middle Asian roots and that he had always wanted to go and live there. He was born

into a family whose members were all voting for the ultra-nationalist party *Milli Hareket Partisi*, MHP (National Action Party). He emphasized his respect for Fethullah Gülen: "Certainly," he said, "he is deserving the best place in the heaven."

A Fethullahist owner of a middle-size business, Yahya Bey, indicated that Hoca Efendi was the creator of the project in Middle Asia and that he has been talking about it for a long time. He said: "He is the leader who gave the ideas about Kazakhstan to us. We just follow his path and try to create a Turkish community here. The schools are the corner stones of this community. Certainly, we do our best to support them."

One of the managers in one of the largest Turkish firms, Vahid Bey, explained his rational for charity:

To be honest, I support these schools for my own self-interest. I am not going to give you a lesson about morality. I will be blunt with you. The Kazak-Turk high schools educate Kazak students in English, Turkish, Kazak and Russian. Their educational standards are high. That means human capital for me, for my business for the future of my enterprise. If I wish to transfer the same quality of human capital from Turkey to work in our firm, I have to pay ten times more. Besides, s/he will come here without knowing Kazak or Russian. These schools produce a Turkish and English speaking, well-educated, hard-working reserve army of cheap labor. Besides, the graduates also learn "*guzel ahlak*" (high morality), and our manners and customs in school. They really become self-disciplined human beings. In a morally corrupted society like this, Kazakh-Turk schools education is so vital, essential and distinguished. I am calculating my own interest in supporting them.

Interestingly, the other manager (who has the same rank) reported that he did not know anything about the Company's contribution to the schools. He was not interested in knowing or hearing either. He, then, suggested that I direct ask all of my questions to his colleague. The opposing responses from these two managers implied that the feelings surrounding the schools (sympathy or interest) could not be generalized to all of the Turks in Almati. Some of the businessmen chose to maintain a distance from Gülen's establishments. However, most of the businessmen that I interviewed demonstrated support for the schools.

Fuzzy boundaries helped not only to accumulate and transfer different sources of power, but also to ally various sources of power at different levels. They are not only connected to the leading businessmen, to enormous economic capital, and to intellectuals, but also to the bureaucrats and politicians (such as the former prime-ministers Ecevit and Özal as well as the former president Demirel) and are thereby under legal protection. As a

quote in Economist highlights: “They are in the police, they have judges, and nobody is stopping them.”¹⁷ Gülen was thus permeating “everywhere”. Not surprisingly, several prominent politicians as well as most of the high-ranking retired military officials were welcome, respected and treated very well in the Gülen Community. They were invited to give speeches at the communal events and their opinions and advice were solicited often. The Community has embraced several ex-military officials and its discourse has always been cooperative and loyal to the Turkish state and military.¹⁸

In addition, the leading figures of the Gülen Community established new ties with the local politicians in Almaty based on mutual respect, and informal recognition. KATEV (The Foundation of Kazak- Turk Education) maintained strong connections and close interactions with both the president and local politicians. Huseyin Bey, a highly respected member of KATEV reported: “The president of Kazakhstan would never disappoint us and never turn us down”. The Community’s strong links to the top political leaders in Turkey is not a secret. Ozal was a follower of F. Gülen. The Prime Minister Ecevit often expressed his supportive attitudes to the Community and his appreciation of its undertakings.¹⁹ The educational projects bolster the social, political and business networks and create national as well as international platforms for the Community. These platforms make up the micro-borders through which Gülen interacts with the state and its Republican project.

Monopolizing Civil Society: Who Makes or “Owns” Civil Society?

As a result of the Community’s ability to mobilize and coordinate enormous sources of economic, social, political and intellectual power, the Community soon became the focus of public attention and interest as well as a subject of repulsion among radical secularists in Turkey. This repulsion was reinforced not only by Gülen’s increasing influence on education, but also by its claims to be a civil society organization. Historically, Kemalists and Islamists have been perceived and represented as mutually

¹⁷ See “Islamist Evangelists” in Economist July 8-14 2000

¹⁸ Hoca Efendi declared in the media that he respects and likes the Turkish army and that he has soldiers in his family who have fought for the Turkish nation.

¹⁹ Economist, July, 2000

exclusive oppositions.²⁰ However, the Gülen Community presents itself as an exception to this polarization, and claims to accomplish alternative platforms for the “cohabitation of differences”.²¹

Despite Gülen's arduous efforts and calls for societal compromise, my findings confirmed the historically formed and persistent trend: the hard-core Kemalists maintained their antagonistic orientation to the Community. Although Gülen's moderate nationalist Islam reduces conflict with the Republican milieu, it can not erase the distrust and bifurcations rooted in the political culture (of which the historical roots are discussed in chapter 4). The following case is a presentation of just one of the contemporary instances of the ongoing clashes: the explosion in February 1998, of the ongoing discomforts in the contestations over education, schools, and students.²²

The main visible discomfort with the Community's undertakings appeared among the self-assigned Kemalist civil society organizations.²³ Converging in an exclusive manner under the umbrella organization *STKB-Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlari Birliği* (The United Civil Society Organizations), two-hundred and six Kemalist organizations declared themselves as the guardians of the secular Republic from the Islamist organizations whose aim, according to them, was to undermine Atatürk's principles secretly and to overthrow the secular Turkish Republic. Civil society in Turkey and was viewed as “them” as were the people and organizations who agree with them and support them unconditionally, especially in their attitude against the Islamists. Declaring their own aims, responsibilities and agendas as civil society undertakings, they condemned the Community's claim to

²⁰ Berkes (1999). For a fresher look at the recent situation, see Kasaba and Bozdoğan (1997). With regard to the nature and historical formation of antagonism between Kemalists and Islamists, see R. Kasaba (1997) “Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities” in R. Kasaba and S. Bozdoğan (eds.) *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Washington D.C: University of Washington Press.

²¹ Kasaba (1997)

²² See Y. Navaro-Yashin (1996). She highlights how civil society is rendered a discursive tool but fails to recognize the distinctly separate spheres of the State and the Islamists as she deconstructs the analytical separation between them.

²³ Kemalist Civil Society Organizations united under the umbrella of *Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlari Birliği* -STKB (The United Civil Society Organizations) against the threat of Islam, particularly the recent rise of the Gülen Community and its schools in and outside of Turkey. Some of the member organizations are the following: *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (Atatürkist Thought Association) *Altmış Sekizliler Vakfı* (The Foundation of the generation of 68), *Cumhuriyet Okur Girişimi* (The initiative of the Readers of the Cumhuriyet Newspaper), *çağdas Eğitim Vakfı* (The Foundation of Modern and Civil Education), *Dayanışma Derneği* (Mutual Support

assert its projects as civil society undertakings. According to them, the Community was Islamist, and this fact alone was enough to exclude the Community from anything “civil” due to the threat that they supposedly posed against the secular Turkish Republic.

According to STKB, Islam is inherently incompatible with civil society and thereby an enemy of the secular state. It is important to note that the radical Kemalists are pessimistic reductionists, conceptualizing Islam as a monolithic unit of bigotry. This conventional stereotyping of Islam prevents them from capturing any emergent capacities and sensibilities of Islam. Hence, the overlooking (or perhaps convenient ignoring of) the linkages of Gülen with the state and the Republican project by STKB is not surprising.

The simplistic and superficial positioning of Gülen as against the secular state dictates that Gülen has to be abolished in order to rescue Turkish civilization and the Turkish Republic. That is, Islam must be crushed in the name of civil society. Similarly, the Gülen Community must be banned in order to attain “a civil society.” Obviously, this adoption of civil society is an oxymoron. STKB’s approach to civil society displays a monopolistic attitude, which assumes that there is only one possible civil society: one that corresponds with their own vision. This monopolistic claim is highly ironical with regard to the definitions of civil society²⁴. STKB explicitly assumes that the Republic has been left to their trust. Ironically, these assumptions seem to ignore the national characteristics of Islamic culture, identities and practices. As the clashes are highly politicized, the shared

Association), *55 Sanat Örgütü* (55 Art Associations), *Sosyal Demokrasi Vakfı* (Social Democracy Foundation).

²⁴ See Hall (1995); Gellner (1994); Seligman (1992); Arato and Cohen (1992). It reveals the Western origins of civil society as a “concept and institutional reality”. However, it stops short of shedding light on its implications in the non-Western world. There have been considerable attempts to understand the reflections of civil society in the non-West by Norton (1996). However, the theoretical approaches mostly lack empirical analysis and incorporation of structures and institutions. They either remain as hopeful “calls” and “searches” for civil society from a Westernist perspective, or do not go beyond the claim that we need to redefine civil society in the non-Western context. See Gole (1996); White (1996). White explains civil society in Turkey through civic culture. Her exclusive focus on communitarian, personal and face-to-face relations, mutual obligations and trust, underestimates contractual and impersonal bases of civil society in Turkey. Moreover, it exoticises Turkish culture, Islam in particular, as predominantly communitarian. Although Dunn and Hann have collected some recent literature diagnosing the lack of fit between the Western paradigms and the non-Western reality, the issue is still widely undertheorized.

political (national) culture, seems to be ignored in the picture of continuous clash and distrust.²⁵

Despite their similarities, which are recognized by neither (to be described below), the oppositions between Kemalist organizations and the Gülen Community have rapidly deepened. Historically, the clash was based on the importation of the ideals of enlightenment during the nation's building.²⁶ As Atatürk highlights: "Our thinking and our mentality will have to become civilized. And we will be proud of this civilization. Take a look at the entire Turkish and Islamic world. Because they failed to adapt to the conditions and rise and found themselves in such a catastrophe and suffering. We cannot hesitate anymore. We have to move forward" (Kasaba, 1997, p.27-28). The top-down project of civilizing a nation and its "mentality" implied "Westernization" along Kemalist lines. Kasaba elaborates this particular vision of civilization, which was adopted by Atatürk:

Certain cultures were judged to be unsuitable to take part in progress unless they abandoned their identity. The progressive tenets of the enlightenment become an excuse for dividing people into rigid groups and categories... Progress ceased to be a universal and somewhat abstract ideal and became a vehicle for describing and justifying the desired and deserved upward movement of their ethnically defined "solid community" in history (Kasaba, 1997, p. 27).

Hence, it is not surprising to find that civility and civil society appear as monopolies to Kemalists. Progress as defined in Kemalist terms, i.e. top-down Westernization,²⁷ and Kemalism were made the criteria for the claim to being "civil". Atatürk's approach to civilization had a sacred devotion to the Western civilization (Europe in particular) and displayed an overt imitation of the "civil" and "civilized". Indeed, for many years, Kemalists' taken-for-granted ownership and making of civility and civil society seemed to be uncontested. However, one may observe similar sensibilities and mentalities among Islamic reformers. Gülen was born into the national culture of the Republic. It is not surprising then, that the attitudes of the Republic shaped a Turkish Islam, which in turn produced its own group of social engineers, a new Islamist elite, who envision social change/civilization through project-based social engineering.

²⁵ See chapter 7 for a deeper analysis of the relations between the state, nation, and primacy of national loyalties.

²⁶ Kasaba (1997)

²⁷ *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, (Atatürk's Speeches and Statements) vol. II, p. 207, cited in Kasaba (1997)

Indeed, Gülen shares many characteristics of Kemalist organizations. As a perfect product of the Republican era, it operates on the basis of Kemalist tenets of civilization, i.e. the importance of science, Western scientific education, progress and a combination of nationalist loyalties with internationalist ambitions.²⁸ As findings have revealed, the Fethullahists schools have directly inherited the Kemalist faith in the Nation, science and progress. This has been a significant distinction of the Gülen Community from other Islamic groups and organizations. Moreover, Gülen even shares anti-Middle-Eastern and Western-oriented undertakings, as well as some agendas over Central Asia.²⁹ Adopting to the to the changing map of the world order, Fethullahists have become more United States oriented than were the Europe-oriented nation-building Republicans.

In this respect, it is important to understand the Fethullahist endeavor of opening schools abroad and choosing English as the language of instruction in its highschoools and universities. Part of their agenda is *milli itibarımız ve onun korunması* (our national pride credentials and its protection). Gülen emphasized that “Turkey is a candidate of being a world's super power, based on its past and present situation”(F. Gülen, 1997, p.283).³⁰ My questions concerning why they founded schools in European countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Denmark as well as in Africa, Australia etc. were often answered through a civilizing discourse, which resembles Atatürk's ambitions:

Why would there be only American schools in Western countries? Why would the West be just led by the American power and leadership? We do not just want to catch up with West but we aim to be respected, recognized and appreciated by the West. Once, our ancestors were the leaders of the world civilization. Remember the heydays of the Ottoman Empire! Why can't we become like them in the future? (a regional coordinator of the schools)³¹

Their new schools followed the traditional reverence for Atatürk. As my participant observations in Gülen's schools revealed, Atatürk's cult is expressed by Atatürk's corners, which display Atatürk's pictures and sayings on the walls of the schools. As a product of the Republican Era, Fethullahists' schools (in Turkey and abroad) reflect and express a deep loyalty to the Turkish nation as well as respect for its Kemalist ideals. These schools do not have a religious curriculum. On the contrary, their aim is presented and declared as

²⁸ See chapter 7.

²⁹ L. Erdoğan (1995).

³⁰ F. Gülen (1997) *Prizma* vol. 2, İstanbul: Nil Yayınları, p.283

³¹ Quoted from an interview with an officer, Celal Bey, in one of the Community's organizations.

scientific progress and international competitiveness, as Atatürk had always commanded. They emphasize the forward-looking tone of their approach to nationalist education, while downplaying its conservative backward-looking substance of nationalism. They have founded very few schools in Middle Eastern countries. Rather, they have inherited the Westernist, anti-Middle Easternist mentality of the official ideology.

In the schools outside the national borders of Turkey, students of other nationalities learn fluent Turkish and sing the Turkish national anthem to assert their loyalty for the Turkish nation. The first time that I was informed about the international schools, was during one of the charity dinners held in one of the big, five star hotels in Turkey. Benefactors (active and potential), businessmen, entrepreneurs, famous public figures, artists, leading Fethullahists and journalists, all take part in these dinners. They are not only kept informed about the international accomplishments of the schools, but are also invited to support the Community's undertakings.³² We were shown a film, which was made, in the schools in different countries. Everyone in the huge ballroom was very impressed with the presented accomplishments of the schools, especially their Kemalist overtones. The way that the students were taught to respect Kemalist tradition as well as the Turkish nation, was very moving for the guests. After that particular occasion, I quite often observed people crying during charity dinners when they saw students from other nationalities singing the Turkish national anthem. In this way, the Kemalist aspirations (of raising self-sacrificing Turkish youth for the Turkish nation) are extended to the Islamic, nationalist Fethullahist hope to raise pro-Turkist foreign students who may share the vision and promote the interest of the Turkish nation in the future. Fethullahists' explicitly nationalist/internationalist overtone and extensive international networks are important to note in order to understand their claims for being a civil society organizations as well as their congruence and linkages with the state.³³

³²The Community's daily newspaper, *Zaman*, frequently publicizes the get-togethers, five-star-hotel banquets, and other events which bring the benefactors and potential contributors together. For an example of these sorts of extravagant and quite frequent public events, see *Zaman*, 10th of January, 1988. The members of ISHAD (Association of Collaboration for Business Life) organized an *Iftar* Banquet (breaking the fast) in çırağan Palace in İstanbul. Over eight-hundred businessmen declared: "It is our duty to finance and support the schools." During my fieldwork, I participated in several banquets in Polat Rônesans (a five star hotel in İstanbul) where schools were promoted to different groups of professionals in order to collect charity and recruit new benefactors.

³³ See Chapter 7.

The problem arising out of the increasing popularity of the Community came to the surface firstly about the representation of the Turkish nation at the international level: Why would it have to be a religiously learned man, namely Fethullah Gülen, who represented the modern secular Turkey at the international level? A retired military officer who became friends with the Community after his retirement told me:

The military has a serious concern about the increasing scope of the community, especially with regard to the education. They are highly annoyed by the expansion of the community's schools all around world. They do not want a religious community to represent Turkey abroad. A good friend of mine from the military quite often teases me that the community is flirting with everybody including me and this enables them to operate at the international level. He adds that some superior authority has to stop this flirtation as Turkish nation strongly refuses to be identified with this new *Ulema*. He is right in the sense that the community keeps good relations with several powerful circles. But I am not sure if their activities are rejected as the new *Ulema* undertakings in the society at large. I definitely have nothing against the projects. On the contrary, I think they represent the Turkish nation better than any other Turkish organization. Anybody who is not content should have the power and ability to take the projects over or otherwise he should appreciate the Community because they are doing a real good job.

The implicit links of the Community with several entrepreneurs, politicians, state bureaucrats and even some retired military officials impeded the formation of a full-fledged counter-movement, but rather bifurcations. Conflict persists within and between state departments as well as in various spheres of life. Acting upon the fact that the military is uneasy and always alarmed with the Community's undertakings, Gülen works on making its accomplishments public to the military and thereby, maintains civil relations with the military officers. The high-rank military officials, such as H. Karadayi, visit Gülen's schools and report positive feelings and appreciation of the successes of the schools.³⁴ Although the permeation of the boundaries protected the Community from a strong confrontation, the Kemalist civil society organizations persisted as a distinct group who were entirely immune to the fuzzy boundaries and the strategic permeation of the borders. They intensified clash ones again and started to undermine Gülen through media channels by lobbying that the Community's schools had to be urgently closed down for the good of the Turkish nation. They presented it as a moral responsibility of every citizen of the Turkish Republic in order to rescue the(ir) civil society and the future generations.

³⁴ *Zaman* (Gülen's daily), 19 April, 1998

Taking side with the "civil" or evil: "civil society" seems to lack civility

STKB's goal was to rescue and save the secularism from Islamic threat, whereas Fethullahists' *dava* (issue, mission) was to create a virtuous Turkish society by revitalizing Islam and faith of the secular Republic. Ironically, the legacy of distrust renders it impossible to recognize their similarities. The fear of dominant perceptions of the other side reinforces clash, which seems to manifest itself as a pure political clash between political Islam and radical secularists. However, if culture could be recognized in the picture, it would be easier to acknowledge that these people share the same national culture not only as regular citizens, but also proud of being "Türk".

During my fieldwork, I found it hard and almost impossible to discuss the issues about the Community freely and openly with the people in Kemalist organizations. My attempts to have an interview with the leading intellectual and member of one of the most prominent Kemalist organization had failed after being examined whether or not my thesis will take their side. My futile attempts to explain that my aim is to "understand" the source and the nature of the tensions and the conflicts rather than taking side were disregarded.

The female leader said:

If you still could not discover the Community's hidden goals to overthrow the state, it is not your fault. They are professional liars. Why do you think they found those schools? To develop *takkiye* (dissimulation) and raise traitors. Of course, they do every single effort to mask their true intentions. But I can not help you in this. I can only warn you as they possess all the means and know all the ways to fool people.

I asked if we could not talk face to face rather than on the phone. However, she refused to share her knowledge with me: She told me to read the book they published on this issue. And of course, I could fax her if I happened to discover "The truth" that they already knew about the Community. She was nervous and distant and implied pity for me since she believed that I was not aware of the impartial truth, i.e. the conspiracy, they were possessing. My short conversation with her was frustrating since it did not give me the opportunity for further communication and mutual understanding. After this failing attempt, I tried several times to get in touch with several STKB organizations in order to collect their views and reflections on the issue. I found it very hard to convince any of these Kemalists to communicate and discuss the burning issues of Gülen. The fax I send to

this female leader was left without a response. If my endeavor to communicate as a researcher was rejected, how would they ever enter into a dialogue with the Islamists and make an “agreement to disagree”? The polished arguments of the optimist spokespeople of Islam and civil society did not seem to apply to the case. I did not feel any attempts to monopolize my thesis or pressure to convert me by the Community, although there were some implicit encouragement to be “one of them” (in the form of warm welcoming, hosting and accommodating). The Community’s openness to me –in different ways among women and men³⁵ – was the opposite of the closure and discouragement to study Gülen, which I experienced in my attempts to gain access to Kemalist civil society organizations. Certainly, there is contestations and similarities over the claims of civility and civil society on both sides. However, the codes of conduct among Fethullahists enables them to display more tolerant, flexible and friendly means in order to survive in a polarized milieu. These codes were different than the explicitly aggressive challenges of the Kemalist organizations.

At that particular time they were closing their doors to the any stranger who was exploring the issues related to the Gülen Community. This occurred right after a tumultuous confrontation between two students and the Community, which I will narrate below. Although my efforts to communicate with secularist civil society organizations were failing, I was born into, raised, and continue to live in the same milieu with hard-core Kemalists who have located themselves against a monolithic entity called “Islamic front” The fact that I chose to study the Community was making them very unhappy because they were believing that, if anything at all, it was not worth of being the subject of a Ph.D. thesis. My father never stopped teasing me jokingly: “We send you to Canada to be a scientist and you ended up studying these traitors of the Republic”. He maintained his critical attitude to my project and confronted me often, especially during the times of the peaks of the clash.

Another reaction from the same circle of people --including my hard-core Kemalist uncle and many close relatives and acquaintances – was to convince me to reveal the harm and the evil of the Community. Most of them were approaching me to legitimize their own

³⁵ See my discussion on gendered ways of access in methodology and also see the chapter on patriarchy.

conspiracy theories. If my thesis failed to satisfy these demands, they would be extremely frustrated and distance themselves from me. Coming from close circles of people, these attitudes initially seemed alienating and caused additional tension for me. However, they provided plenty of first-hand source information throughout my fieldwork.

Soon, I realized that my study was one of the tangible objects of contestation between the Community and the its Kemalist opponents. I was forced to defend the civil society, but the paradox was “which civil society?” and “whose civil society?” In other words, my thesis was caught by the contestations over the claims for monopolization of the civil society: I had to “be honest and clarify which side I was taking”. Any attitude to refuse to take side was associated with being fake and betraying the “loyalties”.

Rather than promoting a sterile and static set of values, norms and recruitment, the continuous negotiation of the actors over the boundaries turned the Community to a platform of contestations for power. Any potential knowledge to be produced about the Community is possessively contested in order to make sure whether it is going to take side among the Kemalists or Islamists. There was intense pressure to locate my study with regard to the fuzzy boundaries of the Community: “Are you *in* or *out*?” Any thought, book or statement would be immediately forced to clarify where it stands and to take side with the “civil”. The demand for the prospective knowledge located me as a researcher in the midst of the contestations and negotiations, which, in return, strengthened my study empirically and analytically.

Although it was unintentional, I happened to cause some tension in a group of friends who expressed discomfort with my purchasing of the Community’s newspaper “Zaman”. I attempted to clarify that I had to read it for my research, as I was required to account on that. My justifications were not listened in the background of the gradually growing clash between two groups, who usually talked pass each other. Ironically, we could not resist another burning discussion on the issue of “Whose schools? Whose students?”, even in a private dinner-party at home. Not being able to endure my sociological interest in the issue and my question which try to understand rather than judge, the host, one of my good friends left the table. She interpreted my willingness to understand as signs of toleration, if not “taking side with the evil”. Although she is one of the rare people, who lives in Montreal

and whom I know from İstanbul -- before I came to Montreal, she chose to cut all her ties with me after that dinner in 1998. Despite the efforts of many common friends, she refused to be my friend anymore and justified her decision to our friends: "I have nothing to share with a person, whose loyalty to the secular Republic and Atatürk is not strong enough to see the evil in Islamists". Among many events, which pushed me toward difficult situations of taking side, this was one of the most disappointing instances, where I was left with no tools of making my sociological intentions explicable.

It is important to note how the whole issue has become so personalized and sensitive that involved the dynamics of my personal relationships, friendships and intimacies. It easily became the heart of the formation of subjectivities and blurred the taken-for granted division between our "intimate" and "political" selves. Was there really a distinct political existence and stance outside and independent of our selves? The clash between the Community and Kemalist civil society organizations revealed how fundamental this socio-political dilemma for identity-formation and for everyday lives were. The clashes brought the embeddedness of social actors to the surface. The agitated confrontation unmasked the historically formed centrality of the moral and political tension for the integrity of the identities: One felt obliged to take side in order to "be".

It is particularly important to underline the historically and culturally formed significance of the contestations for the formation of the subjectivities of Fethullahist identities. The call for the "civil society and societal compromise" transcends the institutional realm: This yearning is the exploding self-expression of the uncomfortable identities which are in the search of a middle ground with regard to the tension between the faith and modern, secularized social structures and institutions? It is not just the organizations, which permeate the boundaries of the Community but identities as well. In which ways are identities intimately linked to the experiences of living at or crossing borderlines of the Republican project? Alternative platforms are needed and called for where they may escape to chose one of those putatively opposed camps: Kemalists and Islamists³⁶. The following section narrates the story of two students who were caught by the

³⁶ However, the exclusively male nature of this project disadvantages women by depriving them of this potentially pluralistic platform. Women are in a lesser position not only because their access to and visibility in the putatively pluralistic sites are limited in complicated ways, but also because the interaction, the

clashes between these two camps, and who went through the tumultuous pressure to take side, along the micro-borders. These two students are the perfect examples of scapegoats of the uncivil, repulsive contestations over the so-called civil society.

The clashes between the Kemalist civil society organizations and Fethullahists (and their sympathizers here and there) evolved around the paradoxical claims to monopolize civil society. The ironic contestation over the civil society is reflected in the way the social actors --both Kemalists and Fethullahists—describe, present and promote their own organizations and projects as civil society establishments, while at the same time employing repulsive tools and methods to contest with each other. What exactly was believed to make their orientation “civil” or “uncivil”?³⁷ In order to investigate these issues, we need a closer gaze at the disputes around and about the Community and the Kemalist civil society organizations as well as their relationship to the Turkish state.

Indeed, the symbolic objects of this clash were not just the schools and my thesis or any knowledge produced on the issue. I will describe how two Fethullahist students were made the objects of clash and contestations over power. Whatever the objects of the clashes may be, the contestations over civil society seemed to lack civility. Civil society as defined as “cohabitation of differences” or increasing visibility of differences did not apply to the Turkish context of ongoing clash and especially the overtly uncivil means and tools employed by the two opposing sides.

Contestations between the United Civil Society Organizations and the Gülen Community: Whose Students?

In order to critically assess the nature of the contestations over students, it is necessary to understand the codes of student’s access and exit from the Community’s educational organizations.

contestations and networks of power between the state and the Community discriminates against and usually exclude women.

³⁷ Civil society originated in the West and entailed Western concept and ideal of secularism. Indeed, its roots manifested as a liberation from the church and scholastic thought. See Seligman (1992) Accordingly, some Western social science retain some suspicion whether Islam with its inherent tendency to blend politics with religion could be civil. Or would it rather be an enemy of civil society and undermine it. See Gellner (1992); Gellner (1994); Hall (1995). Yet, there is some room left for Turkey as an exception. Gellner (1997) “The Turkish Option in Comparative Perspective” in Kasaba and Bozdogan (eds.) . Some social scientists express optimism for the possibility that civil society might be travelling to Middle east. Norton (1996).

Access and exit through Community's schools and/or hizmet

In addition to the boys-only and girls-only high schools and universities, the Community had numerous dormitories where students accommodate, eat, study, that is the realm of extracurricular activities. I visited several dorms in different neighborhoods both in İstanbul and Almati: Most of the socialization and cultururation occurred in the dormitories where the students spent most of their time. Thus, dormitories seemed to be more effective in recruiting students to the Community. Perhaps, that is why Gülen's schools insist that students should board in dormitories.

In the educational sites (including the schools), the Community displays holistic liberalism, which does not leave much space for the individuals. These sites are different from the business and commercial world of the Community, where contact-based and less personal ties operates along with working concepts of individualism.³⁸ In some ways, schools and a moral education are the windows to the “inside”, that is the ways to recruit Fethullahists for *hizmet*, whereas public events and business world were the windows of the Community to the “outside”, that is to manage the relations with the broader milieu, i.e. the Republic and international world-order. Hence, as I already discussed in detail in Chapter 5, the Community consists both communal/personal and contractual/impersonal basis of relations and organizations. This particular combination is specific to their understanding of civil society. Gülen developed distinct methods in managing diversity and unity in its sites and organizations.³⁹

The different dormitories for high school and university students were not exclusive to the children of Fethullahist parents, Fethullahist students or practicing believers. They accepted students from all circles. Especially the students whose families are in another city and who came to the big city to study tended to prefer those dormitories. The popularity of the Community's dormitories can be explained by several factors. As one

³⁸ See Hall (1998) “The Nature of Civil Society”, *Society*, vol. 35, p.32. Hall excudes Durkheimian holistic liberalism from the definitions of civil society, as they do not leave space for individuation and experimentation. In contrast, White (1996) argues that in the Turkish context, civil society finds expression through civic culture and civic values , communalist, interpersonal interaction, trust, mutual obligations etc. Her findings in Umraniye cannot be generalized to the Turkish culture, as a broad generalization like hers requires multi-sited reseach. My findings show that Gülen's multiple sites display both of these supposedly conflicting basis of organization (personal and impersonal), though some sites may be inclined towards one type.

parent explained they felt secure to send their children to a safe, moral and clean dormitory rather than to a place where “degeneration of İstanbul life spoils everything”. The dormitories as well as the schools were unisex and strictly monitored by the Community. Thus, they were perceived as relatively immune to the so-called “social problems” and moral corruption in İstanbul. The dormitories were private but still cheap and the Community tried to provide as many scholarships as possible for the students. There were several *ağabey*s and *ablas* (elder brother and sister)³⁹ who were fulfilling their *Hizmet* (service) as voluntary teachers who take care of the lives of the students. In contrast to a state-dormitory, there was more order, discipline and moral concern for students’ lives. Some parents reflected on their choice of the Gülen’s dorms: “They are honest and virtuous Muslim people who manage these dormitories” as opposed to corrupted, immoral vicious people who may harm the children. Accordingly, the promotion of a moral society and the aim of raising virtuous generations were appreciated by some traditionally Muslim and/or conservative parents who hesitated to send their children to the big city to study.

In addition to the dormitories, *Işık Evler* (The Houses of Light) accommodate approximately 4-6 students, who live together in an apartment. These apartments are usually financed by benefactors. The Community is trying to provide some financial support for the good students. Usually, the successful students are provided with scholarships. The apartments are shared either by male or female students and there is at least one elder student (*abla* or *ağabey*) who takes care of the small groups and supervises the lives of the students. *Işık Evler* are known by the warmth and communal feelings they provide the students with. In *Işık Evler*, the emotional ties seem to be an attraction for the potential newcoming students. My participation observations in various sites of dorms and *Işık Evler* revealed that the emotional overtones and interpersonal relations replace the all-encompassing socialization and discipline in the dormitories, in attracting and recruiting students to the Community. As my interviews and participant observations revealed, the

³⁹ See Chapter 5.

⁴⁰ There are several *Abblas* in each girls-only dormitory, who are responsible for the students. The *Abbla* not only helps them for their schools work but she also organizes Risale Readings and is responsible of the general order and everyday life in the dormitory. The *ablas* and *ağabey*s usually are volunteered workers of the Community. It is very common that these people have varying degrees of command of the lives of the students. This ranges from their authority to enforce rules of conduct and order, in the dormitory to arranging endogamous marriages for the students.

rules in *Işık Evler* are applied in different degrees depending on the *abla/ağabey* and the students.⁴¹ Although these rules are informal and not standard, they create a sort of surveillance of the private lives of the students.

Despite the different emphasis of dormitories (on discipline) and *Işık Evler* (on warmth and sincere friendships), the students who start to live in dormitories and/or *Işık Evler* find themselves surrounded with the Community and its absorbing life world: The people they socialize become automatically Fethullahist students. Moreover, the only daily newspaper, magazines and journals which is allowed in the *Işık Evler* is *Zaman* and other prints of the Community. In addition to the control of what the students read except for schools, there is monitoring on with what they wear, eat and with whom they associate. The control and discipline after the access is not fixed as it largely depends on interpersonal relations with *ağabey*s and *ablas*. Summer camps were different than other extracurricular activities as they were explicitly aiming religious training, i.e. Risale readings and intense worshipping. The schedules were harsh and strict and students' lives are structured as in the total institutions.

As the Community pre-determines several aspects of life for the students, it is not surprising that I met several students who chose to exit and left the Community, mainly because of their need for space, freedom, experimentation or for his or her different world views. One of them, a history student, Emine, explained me about her discomforts in the Community. She said:

I need more room to explore and learn various things in my life and nobody is stopping you from doing so in the *Işık Evleri* but the way your everyday life is structured creates too much of rules and discipline for my taste and a very particular socialization pattern. Hence, you find yourself in a implicitly framed space and predetermined circle of people. When I lived in the *Işık Evler* I found it very hard to step out of this well-defined space. It is weird

⁴¹In some *Isik Evler*, there was no time constraint to enter the apartment, to leave or even to spend the night somewhere else as long as the student informs the *abla/ağabey* or the roommates. However, in some of the houses, very detailed surveillance is practised. However, all my informants expressed satisfaction with the interaction among the roommates, with strong friendship and enormous help coming from the *ablas/ ağabey*s not only for the homework but for studies and life in general. Strong ties gave the students a feeling of warmth and being at home which most of the time is very appreciated by the young students. Some of them stated they like to cook and eat together which they never did before with friends. Some pointed that studying together makes life easier. Another contentment was that they easily made friends through their roommates and they liked to socialize together. It is important to notice that apartment-sharing is so common in Turkish society --even in İstanbul-- as in Western countries, although there is exceptions among university students. The community introduced a relatively new concept by inviting students to live together and by successfully organizing this pattern.

though because the rules of the household is just a part of this limitation. I think the rest is very informal and automatic because without any force or obligation you find yourself as a part of the communal life very easily. Perhaps it is nothing to be surprised at... It is a community anyway...perhaps it is me...I need more freedom. I think, I was not meant for any kind of community...

Interestingly however, she was a whole-hearted, radical Islamist student who criticized the Community for standardized mediocrity and conformism and for impeding passion, creativity and action in the Islamist movement. She was more of a leading, radical activist figure than a submissive follower of a moderate, "state-framed" movement, in Brubaker's terms. She was bold and very ecstatic about the Islamist ideology but did not like the "walls" of the dormitories and the *Işık Evler* which, according to her, were cooling out the Islamic passion, inviting fake conformity and fading away from the Islamist spirit. She challenged the Kemalist and pro-system tone in the student settings and found it fake. According to her, "They can not change the world by submissive acclimatization. Their particular imposition of a conformist identity on their students alienates people like me". I happened to participate her discussion with one of his friends, a Fethullahist student, in the university campus, she was aggressively attacking to his conformity and rule-abiding behavior. Interestingly, the Fethullahist student never lost his control and calm attitudes, even when she became extremely provocative. In their interaction with radical Islamists, as well as with radical secularists, Fethullahist students seem to be well trained in avoiding conflict. The Community's strategy-management can be easily observed at the level of identities, among students and a male elite in particular. Since those groups are exposed to particular cultivation and training more than the housewives.

Spending a long time in the Community's *dershanes*, schools, dormitories and *Işık Evler* in different Anatolian cities, Emine was highly critical of all the fences surrounding the student life in the Gülen Community. She even felt the implicit pressure to marry within the Community, although there was no formal enforcements, which imposed it². But her case requires special attentions since she represents many other students, some of whom were my informants, who by their free will abandoned the Community and who had various reasons for this decision. She defined herself as an Islamist student who chooses to be independent of any community. In other words, she was keen on resisting

group affiliation and on being “nobody’s student”. Short after her exit, she decided to marry with an Islamist man --from outside the Community-- whom she fell in love with.

Another striking example was Suheyla, who became a good friend of mine soon. Sureyya was the most open-minded teacher in a *Imam-Hatip* (religious high school) in Eyup. As she was a Fethullahist, she was regarded “a little loose” in her mild attitudes to the students. She said: “They cannot understand the flexibility and open-mindedness of Fethullahists. No matter what we do, we are too liberal for other Islamists. Even my short coat disturbs them. What can I do? Change my style to fit their Islamist vision?” Sureyya divorced from an Islamist man, who was from another Nur. She said, their world vision did not fit. Becoming a single mother, she had a lot of pressure and responsibility and could not continue her central position in the Community’s undertakings. *Hizmet* was too demanding for a single mother. She quit. She explained to me:

When you are in, there is high expectations from you and certain ways of conduct... This is all about *hizmet*. It is a way of life... a big commitment... I was doing really well. I organized and coordinated educational and other public events for Gülen for such a long time. I can no longer effort it. The good thing about Gülen is that you can leave, if you are no longer able to meet the demands of *hizmet*. It was not a smooth exit. Some friends were upset as they desperately needed me. But my son definitely needs me more. They had to understand this.⁴³

Extensive evidence on the flexibility of access and exit provide challenge to the main accusation of Kemalist civil society organizations to the Gülen Community. The following section will investigate Kemalists’s representation of Gülen as an abusive and oppressive sect-like organization, which imprisons and students and brainwashes them with its evilish ideologies. These accusations and attacks took place not only in media but also are published as books. The clash over students is extremely important, as it provides strong challenge to the optimist arguments that public sphere accommodates increasing diversity and cohabitation of differences. The codes of conduct and manners in the clashes are of special importance, as they seem to discard civility from the definitions of civil society.

⁴² See Gülen (1997), with regard to his ideas on *hizmet* and marriage and also my discussion of the community’s functionalist approach to marriage, in the Chapter 8.

⁴³ Quoted from an interview with Sureyya, in 1997, in a conservative neighborhood of İstanbul, Eyup.

The clash

On one hand did the moderate insights and teachings estrange some of the Islamist students and teachers, as a Fethullahist female teacher, Sureyya, described. On the other hand, the expressions of loyalty and lipservice to the Kemalist tradition in the schools and dormitories did not help the Community to escape the repulsion from the Kemalist civil society organizations. The latter were ultimately rejecting any kind of Islamism as they did not recognize differences amongst them, such as statist, nationalist, fundamentalist etc. These voluntary organizations not only felt morally responsible to fight with the Islamic threat to Turkish Republic but also rescue the future generations from “Islamic indoctrination and brainwashing” in their terms. In the beginning of 1998, seven Kemalist civil society organization came together to publish a book called “HOCA EFENDİ'NİN OKULLARI” (Hoca Efendi's Schools)⁴⁴. The title as well as the whole book aimed to reveal the terrifying “Truth”⁴⁵ of the Gülen Community with regard to their treatment to the students, goals and undertakings of education. Publishing the letter “O” smaller than other letters, they symbolically highlighted the word KULLAR which meant the slaves, blind believers and devoted followers of Hoca Efendi, instead of OKULLAR (schools). This term, *kullar* was supposed to connote the oppressed and enslaved students.

The book fuelled an intense public debate mainly because it consisted of the interviews with two former Fethullahist students, their “bold” confessions --life story and experiences in the Gülen Community. Ismail Ozdemir and Serhat Ozkan had been in the Gülen Community for sometime, who then happened to leave the Community and found “shelter” in *Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı* (Foundation of Contemporary Education). Primarily Gulseven Guven Yaser, a Kemalist faculty at İstanbul University, but also several other members of STKB were the undertakers of this project of confessions, through the press

⁴⁴*Hoca Efendi'nin Okulları* (1998). The book has been published with the contributions of the following civil society organizations: *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (Atatürkist Thought Association) *Altmış Sekizliler Vakfı* (The Foundation of the generation of 68), *Cumhuriyet Okur Girişimi* (The initiative of the Readers of the Cumhuriyet Newspaper), *Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı* (The Foundation of Modern and Civil Education), *Dayanışma Derneği* (Mutual Support Association), *55 Sanat Örgütü* (55 Art Associations), *Sosyal Demokrasi Vakfı* (Social Democracy Foundation). These organizations define and announce themselves as civil society organisations as opposed to any Islamist movement, association and foundation.

⁴⁵The aim of the book is “*gerçeklerin su yüzüne çıkması*” (to reveal the Truth, to unmask the reality). See Introduction, p. II

conferences, the book and several shows on television. They were the hard-core Kemalists pursuing the moral duty of saving the two students.

The book was about dramatic, and the supposedly “agonizing” events that the students experienced in the Community. The whole story and the characteristics of the story telling to aimed reveal the inhuman oppression that the students were subjected to. It is written in the form of question and answer. The students answered the questions, which were prepared by the members of Kemalist organization. The book was intended to present an agitated turbulence and a cry of an aversion full with the feelings of responsibility to rescue the new generations from Gülen’s tortuous cage and imprisonment. Its aim was to alarm the whole society about the evil. It is important to note the discourse of deep-rooted hate and anger in the book, which opens with a dramatic introduction “These students are only 20 but feel very old because of the painful times they spent in the Community. However, they could not publish their stories in one of the best-seller newspapers because the whole media was busy praising the Community and its leaders” (p.20).⁴⁶

The book represented the Community as a *Şeriatci* (fundamentalist), anti-state organization and the two students ratified and substantiated this view by their answers, stories and experiences. They argued that the supposedly “hidden” aim of the Community is *İla-yi Kelimetullah* (to spread Islam all around the world) and to render Qur’an the main principle both in sciences and social life.⁴⁷ The book was claiming to reveal the hidden facts. Kemalist organizations put extra effort in dramatizing issues. The language of conspiracy theories helped to present some of the obvious as hidden facts and conspiracies. As Latif Erdogan, a close friend and former student of F. Gülen as well as the founder and former president of the Foundation of Writers and Journalists and the head of the Research center called Akademi, observed to me:

We are perfectly aware that we live in the Information Age. There is certain conditions of being modern. Moreover, Turkey is not Iran. We can not wear *cuppe* and *sarik* (traditional religious clothing). We have no desire to teach religion in the place of science. Our schools and students are competing in sciences at the international level and winning awards frequently. I have a degree in Islamic studies, but this does not contradict with my tie and suit, with my priority on science and knowledge and my arduous efforts to open and develop this research center, Akademi. The mentality, which opposes these issues against each other, is wrong and problematic. We need open-minded people and people with wider

⁴⁶ *Hoca Efendi'nin Okulları*, Introduction, İstanbul: I.U Basım Evi, 1998

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.20

horizons, who can reconcile the seemingly contradictory aspects of life, such as religion and science. I personally worked on the development of our motto: The Dialogue of Civilizations and toleration. You cannot contradict your own philosophy by resisting continuous change and adaptation to the new times...I feel comfortable as long as I am in harmony with the requirements of time and civilization.

Ismail seems to argue the opposite in the book of confessions. He narrates and compares his years in *Imam- Hatips* and in the Community's educational institutions:

The aim of education in both Imam Hatips and Gülen was the same, that is to create Islamic society and Islamic state...The methods and paths to reach this goal were different. While *Refah* and other radical groups present themselves through their discourses and activities, the Gülen Community tries to present itself as a mild, moderate image. We were taught a method by Gülen, in order to avoid societal reaction and obstacles, that is "*nabza gore serbet verme*".⁴⁸ While other Islamists do not shake hand with women and were blunt about their orientation, we were shaking hands, in order to receive recognition for the society. Another example would be Coca-cola consumption. The students in *Işık Evleri* are not supposed to drink Coca-Cola, since it is haram But we were in presence of other people who were newcomers or potential newcomers, our *ağabey*s would accept the Coke, before us. The aim was to look like harmonious and moderate (1998, p.14)

In the book (during the interview on 24 August 1997), Ismail seems to refuse to recognize differences between different Islams except for the methods and self-presentation. This brings us back to the never-ending moral debates and clashes between Islamists, pro-Islamists, moderate and radical secularists: *Takkiye* (Dissimulation) vs. True Self? This burning question constitutes the heart of the mutual distrust between Islamists and secularists and thereby, requires special attention. The search and call for the true self largely misses the point that identities are under continuous remaking. Put differently, in contrast to the existentialist faith in the authentic self—untouched by the vices of civilization--, identity-formation is a process.⁴⁹ The contestations between STKB and Gülen was a part of the process, through which Ismail and Serdar were trying to find their own ways.

The students seemed to confirm the conspiracy theories in the press conference as well as in the book that the pro-state and conformist outlook of the Community were fake. They claimed that Gülen served a hidden mission of Islamizing the Turkish society as well as the

⁴⁸To behave according to what the situation requires, to be able to change colours according to the contextual demands, like a camelion.

⁴⁹J. A Hall (1977) "Politics and Sincerity: 'the Existentialists' vs Goffman and Proust", *Sociological Review*, vol.25.

whole world. The students affirmed in the book that the Community was doing dissimulation,⁵⁰ in order to survive in a secularist milieu. The argument was that Gülen, in reality, aimed to overthrow the state. Their moderate, flexible and open-minded outlook was explained as a mask to survive and accomplish in a supposedly secular environment.

Short after the book came out, two representatives of Kemalist groups brought the issue to a television program, 27th of February, 1998⁵¹ where those two students were supposed to repeat their confessions, this time in front of millions of opinionated --if not agitated-- people. Although the students' identities had been concealed for some time, they had become publicized in press conference where those two students answered questions. As the calls I received before the show suggested, the assumption was that this was going to be the final blow for the Community. Gülen was going to be destroyed within the next couple of hours.

Surprisingly, after so many outspoken, bold confessions in the book and in the press conference, the boys did come to the show. Moreover, they happened to change their minds and sides in the clash.

Initially, despite the absence of the students, the discussion went smoothly the first few hours with Gulseven Hanım and Hasmet Atahan, a Kemalist lawyer from STKB: The two representatives of Kemalist groups, who claimed to have listened to the boy's stories and have worked intensely on the publication, talked about their accomplishment with pride. They promoted their loyalty to Atatürk, Turkish nation and secularism while condemning the Community who supposedly oppressed and tortured the boys in their schools, which supposedly caused depression for Ismail. The official ideology was celebrated with the emphasis on the moral responsibilities of every and each Turkish

⁵⁰ *Takkiye* originally means concealment practised by Shiites for self-protection and to hide esoteric knowledge from the crude. In the contemporary Turkey, it is used as deception and concealment from the oppressive secularism. *Tedbir* is another term which complements *takkiye*. They imply the precautions against the potential harm from cruel outside world. The students give examples of *takkiye* and *tedbir*: To pretend very moderate and soft, to use passwords, cods and nicknames if necessary or to hide the real Fethullahist identity and the mission from the newcomer students. See Hoca Efendinin Okulları, p.20 and 21 about the dissimulation and secrecy.

⁵¹ The show is published in a book by H. Cevizoglu (1999) *Nuculuk Dunu Bugunu* (Nurism, Yesterday, Today). İstanbul: Beyaz Yayınları. The show called Cevizkabugu brings the hottest discussions to the surface, on the 27th of Februray 1998. It is about 5 hours of a discussion and creates a lot of interactive tension by accepting calls from the audience.

citizen to protect the Turkish youth from the Islamist evil: Gulseven Hanım was talking in line with the opening sentences of the book of confessions:

The truth and the real faces, real selves (of Fethullahists) had to be revealed... These children are ours and expects help from us There is no doubt that it is going to be alarming and effective both for the parents and children to be exposed to the real faces of sects and brotherhoods and especially of a person, who presents himself as a representor of toleration and moderate Islam.⁵²

In the meantime, they were not loosing their hope that the boys would come. They kept trying to encourage the students from the screen to come to the show. They were assuring that the students' security was ensured and that the students will be under their protection.

The emerging disappointments of Gulseven Hanım and the lawyer, gradually, turned into anger and insults to Gülen, especially after Ismail called the show on a cellular phone. The Kemalist representatives' relatively politically correct discourses changed after a while, when he called the show to reverse his confessions again. Surprisingly, this time he called to confess that everything Gulseven and the lawyer were saying were lies and that he has been forced to make false confessions about the Community, and that they imposed a lot of emotional pressure on him. That was the reason why the questions were asked in written form during the press conference. Moreover, Ismail added that Gulseven Hanım and her colleagues created the book, by filling in their own ideas, convictions and arguments, as if they were Ismail's statements. Accordingly, he was abused and pressured to lie, cheat and pretend to the public. Ismail bluntly confessed on the phone: "*Ortada iğrenç bir oyun var*" (There is a disgusting game on the stage) (Cevizoglu, 1998,p.112). He continued:

"Some people took our friendly discussions, created a scheme and filled in things that we never said. The writer of the book is neither me nor my friend" (Cevizoglu, p.119). He explained that the members of STKB put a lot of pressure. However, they also promised many things:

"They promised both material benefits and opportunities (to study) abroad but they also coerced us by using pressure. I am not saying that they used physical power or gun but

they created such a scene and game that we could not find a way out" (p.126). In addition to their promises, Ismail's initial motive in approaching to STKB has to be noted:

I entered Bogazici University in 1995-1996 through the national exam. The first term, I stayed in an apartment of the Gülen Community. But I left the place because of personal problems. I underline "personal problems". Because the financial situation of my family was really bad, a friend of mine gave me the Foundation's number and said "If you want to have a scholarship from that foundation, tell them that you exit Gülen and that you are in a difficult situation and need their help"... Indeed, when I explained the situation, the people showed great interest in my case. I was really surprised by their attention. Although I was not registered that term, they gave me a scholarship" (Cevizoglu, 1998, p. 113-114)

Ironically, decision to leave the opponents' side seemed to be associated strongly with material rewards such as funding to study as well as good treatment by the opposite side. Being asked "whose cellular he was using", Ismail explained on television that one of the Kemalist businessman gave the phone as a gift to him. Ismail's new confessions degrading the Kemalist civil society organizations and condemning what they did to him continued till the next morning on television. He kept speaking in the name of his other friend, too. People in the show, the audience that calls the show as well as the two students expressed that they felt betrayed. Behind all these agitated events, there was a disguised clash of interest and power contestations between the Community and Kemalist groups. Both desired to shelter and possess the students and convince them about the good of their ideology and eventually mold them according to their vision and agenda. Obviously, there is nothing civil or liberal about these clashes. In the name of civil society, they both used similar strategies to attract the students, i.e. accusing the other side of using several immoral and unethical tools to tempt the students (such as money, accommodation, even cellular phones). They both contributed to the reputation of those two students and politicized them by making them the center of public attention. Both sides ended up blaming the students, as if it was a personal matter of Ismail and his friend. In fact, the students were symbolic scape-goats of an historically formed politico-moral clash, mutual hatred and distrust. Hence, the students were just the figurative objects of these sheer contestations of power. Soon the schools became subjects of clash as well.

The contestation were strongly related to their moralist approach to education: They both see education as the corner stone of all-encompassing socialization and cultururation,

⁵²Hoca Efendi'nin oKULLARI (1998), Introduction.

which overlaps with Durkheim's moral education. Put differently, instead of offering the students "individual room in which to experiment" and thereby the means to discover a good deal of Truth "through making one's own mistakes"⁵³, both Gülen and Kemalist organizations view education as a tool to fashion the future generations after their own image. This particular approach to education can be largely attributed to the top-down modernizing mentality and project-based civilizational reforms of the Republican project⁵⁴, the marks of which are evident in both Gülen and the Kemalist civil society organizations. They both contest in claiming the power of education to shape the young minds. The absence of civility is overt in the nature of the contestations, which amounts to insults and swears to the opponents in media.

The Symbolic Negotiations between the State and the Community: Whose Schools?

The historically rooted hatred between Kemalists and Islam was obscures the emergent linkages between the Gülen Community and the state. Kemalist civil society organizations miss the broader picture by posing the Gülen Community against the state. Put more concretely, Kemalists were too sure about the state's positioning against Gülen on the basis of conventional pessimist reductionism (the incompatibility of Islam and the secular state). The broader picture seemed to be neglected by most of the hard-core Kemalists as well as in the book, *Hoca Efendi'nin Okulları*. The book as well as the Kemalist organizations presented the clash merely as matter of as a ethical and moral responsibility. However, the backstage of the confrontations comprised undeclared negotiations and symbolic politics of negotiations over the education between the state and Gülen.

The accumulated secularist repulsion and unresolved tension between Kemalists organizations and the Gülen Community reached to its peak by the increasing publicized success of the Community's schools. Contrary to other Islamist groups, they seemed at ease with surveillance. A leading intellectual of the Community stated:

While the leading upper-class entrepreneurs of this country are still living in industrial age with all their capital invested on industry, we are aware that we live in the Information

⁵³Hall (1998c), p.3.

⁵⁴Mardin (1997).

Age. So , what we work on is to spent money and energy on human capital. Their legal status is recognized.. It is all legitimate. We have nothing to hide. We prefer to be accountable for every step we take. It is more secure. It makes you confident in undertaking your projects.

On the other hand, the Kemalists felt secure about their positioning as devoted defenders of Atatürk's principles and justified their endeavor as heroic attempts to rescue the students from the evil of Islamist dogma. As both sides saw themselves morally responsible for the salvation of the Turkish youth from the evilish acts and dangerous monopoly of the other, the issue transformed rapidly into a burning urgency. Whose property should all those schools be and whose responsibility is it to raise and educate new generations?

Eventually, making Gülen accountable for the finances and socio-cultural agendas of the schools, the Turkish courts initiated a close scrutiny of schools. Fethullah Gülen's immediate surrender was shocking and caused flashy reactions both from Islamic and secular circles. The Community successfully made clear that it declined its rights over the schools and thereby its involvement to the education. Gülen was ready to transfer its schools to the state immediately, if it was for the good of the Turkish nation. Accordingly, the Community displayed its "loyalty" to the Republic and the nation through its readiness to surrender the schools to the state. Fethullah Gülen's frequent announcements back up this loyalty to the military court and the state: " MGK is a constitutional institution.... My only contribution to the schools is encouragement and suggestions. They are under the state's control"⁵⁵.

As Nazli Ilıcak, a right-wing nationalist journalist, emotionally and sadly expressed, the readiness to transfer of the schools to the minister of National Education was largely considered as a mistake by pro-Fethullahists, since the staff in those schools were serving (teaching, educating etc.) in the name of God. Their service was selfless and for no material returns. It was for their love and faith in Fethullah Gülen. Most of the beneficiaries and benefactors stated in my interviews that they were "voluntary slaves" of Hoca Efendi's virtue, charisma and his school of thought and some of them even were impressed by him regardless of their own 'different' orientations toward Islam⁵⁶ and

⁵⁵ *Zaman*, daily news, 19 April, 1998.

⁵⁶ Some benefactors were even Jews or celebrities who have no commitment to Islam at all.

religion in general. The mobilizing and motivating force was clearly the Community's emphasis on education and its project-based undertakings. How would the state deal with all these mobilization and management of the networks? During the days of symbolic negotiations, my questions to the Fethullahists were answered similarly: "We will follow what Hoca Efendi says. He is smarter than all of us". How could any other organization or institution possibly dare to replace the Community, to maintain its inner dynamics and to take over its complicated co-ordination at the national and international level? Hence, F. Gülen's mobilization was seen as irreplaceable.⁵⁷

The issue of Gülen's schools became the central matter for the highest military court, the *Milli Güvenlik Konseyi*- MGK (Council of National Security). Contrary to the Kemalist civil society organizations' expectations, the government and the military agreed on the 27th of March 1998, that the Fethullahists were "sincere" Muslims and that they were entitled to maintain the schools.⁵⁸ In contrast to the STKB's self-confident conviction, the implicit and symbolic encounters between the state and the Community designated mutual recognition and readiness for moderate negotiation: The government and the military ended up tolerating the schools and announced Fethullahists as "sincere Muslims". Having abolished *Refah* so recently and imposing a semi-military intervention with its cautious attitudes toward Islamist activities, the state's, and MGK's in particular, tolerant decision had to be surprising. But that did not seem to be paid attention in the shadow of the flashy clashes.

Indeed, the issue of the potential transfer, which created reactions among both secularists and Islamists, was only an illustrative manifestation of the symbolic politics between the state and the Community. The surrender was typical of the Community's exhibition of national loyalties. Similarly, the state's intervention was symbolic to confirm its control and authority. It is important to note the subjectivity and symbolic quality of the communication and the concepts, i.e. sincerity and loyalty, in this specific linkage between

⁵⁷ As my in-depth interviews revealed and the media channels announced for several days, Fethullah Gülen declared that the only aim of the schools is to serve the Turkish nation and that they were ready to transfer them to the state. The supporters and followers of Gülen expressed their puzzlement and disappointment of why Fethullah Gülen would put up with such an injustice. See Nazli Ilıcak's column in *Aksam*, daily news, 27 December 1997. Arguing that the Community should keep its schools, she also explains why F. Gülen's attitude is understandable on the basis of his Islamic faith, tolerance, patience and devotion his mission.

⁵⁸ *Zaman*, 27-28 March 1998.

the state and Gülen.⁵⁹ Symbolic negotiations served both the state and the Gülen Community to reassure their undeclared --yet safe-- spheres of influence and effectiveness.

Interestingly however, the state's moderate penetration and cautious responsiveness to Gülen's projects as well as Gülen's loyalties and good terms with the state are conveniently omitted by the literature as well as by the public opinion, the mass media and the everyday life discourse. I argue, that this multi-dimensional neglect has a selective rationality: The historically rooted distrust and mutual fear of betrayal between Islam and the state obscures emergent linkages and even cooperations between the state and Gülen. In other words, the legacy of ambivalence of the interaction between Islam and the state renders pathways of engagements between Gülen and Islam invisible. While most of my informants, as well as the media, were quick to pick on the confrontations and contestations over the schools, they failed to detect and make sense of the symbolic quality in the process of negotiations.⁶⁰ The emergent organizational abilities and new Islamic sensibilities of Gülen and the infrastructural capacities of the state are important to note, since they inform us about the shifting cultural and political linkages between Islam and the state.

The pessimistic acceptance and hopelessness about the impossibility of a responsive moderate state and an interacting civil society had been firmly rooted in culture and identities. A critical minded and perceptive sociologist friend of mine expressed her ideas with regard to the problematic of my dissertation:

Why do you care really? Why do you bother to write a thesis on this issue? Islam will disappear soon. There will not be anything for you to study. Look what happened with Kurdish nationalism. It is destroyed. We do not have it anymore. The Turkish state has been able to eliminate a nationalist movement from the stage forever. It is a unique accomplishment --she was being ironic-- of which we have been witnessing hardly any other example recently. Islam is destined to disappear, too. Under this state, nothing can survive, it is just about a matter of time when it will be abolished from the political agenda.

⁵⁹With regard to the symbolic quality of the Muslim Politics, see Eickelman and Piscatory (1996)

⁶⁰My study followed the periodical ruptures between Gülen and the Republican milieu over a long-time period (between 1997 and 1999), which displayed a consistent pattern of conflict-avoidance through the use of symbolic politics and contestations.

Islam as a cultural and historical process, i.e. Islam in transition, has been completely ignored in this static, conventional view. It disregards the cultural components of Islam -- beyond a mere political affiliation—and a wide range of Islamic identities as well as Islam as a social process. Her positioning and reaction were representative of the increasing hopelessness for a moderate and responsive state which would interact with voluntary and non-governmental organizations and social movements. Unfortunately, the hopelessness led to the conventional dichotomy between the authoritarian state and inert masses. Without denying the historically rooted flaws of the repressive state tradition, my fieldwork reveals that we are observing an emergent symbolic interaction between the state and the Community: Gülen's engagements reflect a package of cultural, political, economic and moral codes that Turkish Islam shares with the national culture of the Republic.

It is important to note that the schools had a symbolic meaning of reassuring the "civil" mutual recognition between the state and the Community.⁶¹ They bargained and reaffirmed their own networks of power and spheres of influence through the symbolic negotiation over the schools. The assumption that the state was a "natural" ally of the Kemalist civil society organizations to overthrow the Gülen Community proved to be naive and simplistic because this assumption overlooked a particularly complex and symbolic interaction between the Community and the state. The imagined and taken-for-granted alliance between the state and the Kemalist organizations, as well as the oppositions between Gülen and the state, claim the existence of an oxymoron, namely the "natural and inherent", in the zone of continuously contested powers relations and shifting linkages.

Conclusion

Interestingly, the monopolizing claims for civil society are reflections of the essentialist premises of compatibility debate in everyday life in Turkey: Who is compatible with civil society, the Republican secularists or the moralist Islamic Fethullahists? Similar to the arid debates in the literature, they both believe and claim that they were developing civil society and thus entitled for civility, whereas the other side was undermining it

⁶¹With regard to the state's ability to penetrate civil society, see Hall (1998a) and Mann, (1993).

because of its inherent qualities. In the clashes about “Who is qualified to be civil?”, both sides largely rely on its own historical experiences and cultural qualifications in promoting civilization. Secularist organizations claim to protect Atatürk’s tradition whereas Gülen claims to protect and revitalize the Islamic faith. Evidently, they talk pass each other. Obviously, the primary requirement of a civilized life, namely societal trust seems to be lacking in this scenario.⁶² Furthermore, the means they employed to undermine each other seemed at odds with civil society. The nature of the clashes between STKB and Gülen provides challenge for both pessimist and optimist spokespeople of compatibility.

Therefore, it is particularly important to shift the focus of attention from the clashes about “who is compatible” to those infinite micro-borders, where the linkages between the state and modern Islam are negotiated and transformed continuously. In other words, most of the manifestation of civil society is not located in the sites where various self-assigned secularist and Islamic self-organizations contest with each other, but civil society resides in the subtle negotiations between the society (Gülen’s educational undertakings and organizations) and the state.

I illustrated that these symbolic, discursive negotiations between the Community and the state calls for a critical reinterpretation of the conventionally staged drama between the putatively authoritative and unresponsive secular state and supposedly “voiceless”, repressed Turkish Islam.⁶³ This pessimistic stereotype, which was created by the pessimist spokespeople of compatibility, masks the emergent capacities and sensibilities of Islam. I suggested a deeper understanding of the emergent nature of encounters between the Community and the state.

On the basis of empirical findings, it is important to maintain the analytical separation between the state and the civil society.⁶⁴ Although the attitudes of the Turkish state have had an influence on shaping a Turkish Islam, the Gülen Community maintains its autonomy and power. As one of the state officials (state’s teacher), Irfan Bey, stated to me in the foundation of the Gülen Community in Almati: “If you study civil society, you are at

⁶² Hall (1992); Tocqueville (1955).

⁶³ See the tradition of authoritarian state in Keyder (1997); Koker (1999).

⁶⁴ Navaro-Yashin (1998). Adopting a Foucaultian perspective, she deconstructs the analytical separation between the state and civil society.

the right place. This is the civic initiative. These schools are Turkish schools but are not sponsored by the state. The loyal citizens of the Republic establish and finance them. Nothing else is more civil than this". As Irfan Bey overtly expresses, it is not only the Community but the state also recognizes Gülen as a civic initiative. In one of my serial visits to *Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı* (Foundation of the Journalists and Writers) and, Ceyhan Bey, a respected officer in the Writer's Foundation of the Community explains his expectations of the state: "*Gölge etme başka ihsan istemem senden*" (Do not prevent me from doing things --let me do them--, I do not have any other demand from you).

Along with its self-conscious independence of the Community from the state, F. Gülen strongly highlights that the Community aims at "*toplum-devlet işbirliği*" (the co-operation between the state and the society) (F. Gülen, 1997, p.282)⁶⁵. Indeed, the Community fulfills this aim by engaging the state. As both Fethullahists and Kemalists are the product of the same national culture, they share a good deal of national loyalties and sensibilities. Although these commonalties are largely neglected and/or denied by both sides, they facilitate the engagements between Gülen and the state. The engagements are cultural as much as they are political, as they are embedded in a culturally and historically specific national culture. This finding carried my research from national to the international level. What happens in Gülen's sites, which are outside the national boundaries? The next chapter will follow the engagements from domestic to the international sphere.

⁶⁵See F. Gülen (1997),p.282. It is important to note Fethullah's Gülen emphasis on state-society co-operation. He suggests that the social problems should be dealt and coped with through an alliance between the state and the society. This cooperation is regarded as fundamental for a progress toward a *temiz toplum* (clean, pure, moral society) along with an ambition of being a super power in the world order (p.283)

CHAPTER 7: ALLIANCES BETWEEN THE TURKISH STATE AND THE GÜLEN COMMUNITY: ETHNIC POLITICS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated the contestations through which the Community and the state reaffirmed their own networks of power and spheres of influence in the domestic sphere. The state recognized the Community's schools within the national boundaries and abroad. This conclusion took me to the international domain of the Community. Why would the secular state tolerate and not hinder Gülen's rise as an Islamist international actor? How were the engagements transferred to the international domain, in the pursuit of Gülen's *dava*? Interestingly, ethnographic evidence revealed a rather different picture of the interactions between Gülen and the state, outside the national boundaries.

Among the many countries where Gülen opened numerous schools Kazakhstan is striking both quantitatively and qualitatively. Gülen founded twentyseven schools in Kazakhstan, five of which are located in Almati.¹ In addition to the striking number of the schools, the quality and popularity of Gülen's schools prepared the grounds for a large-scale accommodation of Turks as well as for a vivid business interaction between Turkey and Kazakhstan. The success and popularity of these schools are evident and publicized since the Community has been an extremely fashionable topic of the public discourse and the media. However, the common knowledge about the schools and strong businessmen links in Central Asia is shallow and calls for critical analysis on their sociological significance.

The issue has profound theoretical significance. The evidence challenges the presumed incompatibility of Islam with nationalism and with the secular nation-state. The chapter will problematize and reject the conventional pessimist view that Islam does not recognize ethnicity and nations but only the unity of *Umma*, the Muslim community. Secondly, the

¹ There are 2 high-schools for girls, 2 high-schools for boys and a university (mixed) in Almati. The basic language of instruction is English, but the schools also teach in Turkish, Kazakh and offer courses in Russian language. The Community organizes an exam at the national level in order to recruit students. The students' success in the Olympic competitions are strikingly high. Thus, the prestige of Turkish schools in Almati increased rapidly within the last 4-5 years.

communitarian character of Islam is seen as incompatible with individual freedom and contract-based relations, but only with community action and local participation. The optimists' celebration of the civic culture in Islam contributed unpurposely to the pessimists' conviction that Islam is an inherent enemy of civil society. The chapter will reveal both the communalist-interpersonal and contract-based-impersonal relations, which co-exist at various sites of Gülen. Accordingly, various kinds of trust relations will be revealed and analyzed at different levels. Finally, I will question if Gülen is effective as a civil society organization in a "highly non-religious" political culture, i.e. post-Soviet setting. How may this be possible, especially if Islam is secularization-resistant as Gellner claims?² How does Gülen become an international actor, trying to bridge various Turkic cultures with Western science, English education, if Islam is the intrinsic source of clash between civilizations? In this respect, it is important to understand the Kazak socio-political context, which discourages religious organizations through strict policies.³

Gülen represents a modern and nationalist version of Turkish Islam, which has a religio-moralist and political vision to connect Central Asians with their Turkic origins. In this chapter, I will focus on the strategic position of its central organization in Almati, namely KATEV, *Kazak-Türk Eğitim Vakfı* (Foundation of Kazak-Turk Education). I will critically examine its nationalist mission by discussing the competing concepts of nationalism and internationalism at the level of identities and organizations. It is important to explain KATEV's strategic meaning for the Turkish community in Almati. In relation to this, the process of the collective construction of the national good and interest around KATEV needs to be explored. How does the organization appear as the cornerstone of a Turkish/Turkist community and its everyday life? The national pride embedded in the outstanding popularity and success of the Kazak-Turk high-schools in Almati will be highlighted on the basis of my participant observation and interviews with the students-graduates, teachers, parents, benefactors of the schools and the personnel of KATEV. What do these Kazakh-Turk schools stand for? Are they the manifestations of nationalist and/or internationalist educational projects of an ethno-religious community? Does Gülen aim to

²Gellner (1981); (1994a); (1992).

³ M. H. Ruffin and D. Waugh (1999) *Civil Society in Central Asia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

turkishize or even perhaps to Islamize the region? To what extent are they regarded and presented as the Community's schools and as the schools of the Turkish Nation?

Analyzing the wide-ranging manifestations of Turkish nationalism in the international domain of the Gülen Community at both the identity and institutional level,⁴ I deny the separation between purely cultural or political approaches to nationhood. Accordingly, the investigation of KATEV as an organization will be completed with the central question about identities: how is national affiliation turned to national identities⁵ and political action and agendas?⁶ How and why does the national identity become a comforting and natural self? Extensive empirical evidence will be provided to show how the construction of the concepts of nationhood and national affiliation from below, do not exclude or contradict – on the contrary, are accompanied and reinforced by – the top-down, state-induced discourses and agendas of nationalism/internationalism. The compatibility debate conveniently overlooks dual processes, i.e. from below and top-down (cultural and political) in the formation of civil society.⁷

What is the complex relation between civil society and nationalism? It is extremely important to note the emphasis of the chapter that Gülen is transferring a successful community network not only to the level of the state but also to the international level. What do these findings tell us about the prospects of Islam and civil society?

The Paradox of fellow feeling: Constructing the “Natural”

The Community's central organization in Almati, namely KATEV (*Kazak-Türk Eğitim Vakfı*- Foundation of Kazak-Turk Education) is the corner stone of a Turkish/Turkist community in Almati. It is not merely a Community organization sheltering Fethullahists in *hizmet* and coordinating the Community's schools. On the basis of Gülen's

⁴ R. Brubaker (1998) “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism” in J. A. Hall (ed.) *The State of the Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also Calhoun (1997) *Nationalism*. Buckingham: Open University Press, where he argues that nationalism is too complex to be explained by only one factor, such as state formation or ethnicity.

⁵ U. Hedetoft (1995) *Signs of Nations: Studies in the Political Semiotic of Self and Other in Contemporary European Nationalism*. Aldershot, Brookfield: Dartmouth Pub. Co., p. 27-34.

⁶ J.A Hall (1998b) “Introduction” to in J. A. Hall (ed.) *The State of the Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; M. Beissinger (1998) “Nationalisms That Bark and Nationalisms That Bite: Ernest Gellner and the Substantiation of Nations on the State of the Nation” in J. A. Hall (ed.) *The State of the Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

undertakings, Almati became the so-called “Turkish center” in Central Asia. How did an Islamic organization succeed in creating a Turkish center? Was the aim of KATEV to Islamize or rather Turkishize Kazakhstan? How did the local people feel about Gülen’s “exposure” in Almati?

Gülen plays an important role in creating an ethnic politics. In its most obvious forms, the ethnic politics emphasizes pride in Turkishness, which proudly highlights and celebrates commonality between Kazak and Turks. The Community’s exposure to Central Asia is emotion-laden, as it aims to reconnect Turks with their ancestors. In Kazakhstan, one often hears the affirmative sayings of this celebrated commonalty:

“*Tüpümüz bir*” (We have the same roots, in Kazak language)

“*Aynı anadan süt emdik*” (We were nursed by the same mother, in Turkish language)

“*Kankardeşiyiz*” (We are blood bothers, in Turkish language)

In this sense, ethnic politics facilitates the relations with the local people, especially the students in Gülen’s schools and their parents but also the local businessmen and local politicians in the host country. In addition to Gülen’s intentional efforts to create good terms with the local people, this particular ethnic politics implies a new Islamic sensibility and faith in nationhood, which Fethullahists partly inherit from the nationalist characteristics of their forefather, the Nur Movement.⁸ Although a continuity of the national consciousness of Turkish Islam can be traced to Nur, Fethullahists are distinct in displaying a break from the previous Islamic movements. They are distinct as they nationalize their *dava* and agendas and politicize their national affiliation.⁹ In this sense, Gülen represent a pragmatic Islam which not only is a product of the national culture but also easily adapts to the current political processes: An emerging Turkish Islam is actualizing a national(ist) network at the international level on the basis of the ethnicity. What are the nature and implications of Gülen’s ethnic politics?

⁷ For an exceptional study which incorporates political culture into the analysis of civil society, see Hann and Dunn (1996).

⁸ S. Mürsel (1995) *Bediüzzaman Said Nursi ve Devlet Felsefesi* (Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and the Philosophy of the State). İstanbul: *Yeni Asya* Yayınları. See especially the section on Nation and Nationalism, p. 231-256.

⁹ B. Yack (2000) “Popular Sovereignty, Nationalism and the Liberal Democratic State”, presented in the workshop “*What Can states Do Now?*”, at McGill University, Montreal.

There is a generic and implicit reference to a common folk culture, symbols, myths, memories, and imageries of the past and historical heroes in the ordinary customs and the discourse of everyday life. The claims to a common prepolitical past is expressed through several symbols of common roots, such as the Kazak and Turkish language as well as customs, food and drinks, such as *kımız*. Sometimes the comparisons amount to physical similarities between Central Asians and Turks and acquire a racial tone in addition to the ethnic and cultural characteristics. All these symbols of commonalities and belonging are celebrated for they all are referred as the tangible proofs of Turkic roots.¹⁰ These characteristics, the features of an *ethnie* in Smith's terms, create a sense of warm solidarity and brotherhood between the Turks and Kazaks in Almati. Gülen's success resides in the ways in which it makes strategic use of the features of the *ethnie*. It is largely argued by the Fethullahists in Almati that "Turkic" life styles have been suppressed by the Soviet regime. There is an explicit reference to a common *ethnie*, which goes back to the pre-modern times and to the geographical space, Central Asia, which is called the "source of Turkish blood". Very often people would express that the Soviet rule could not destroy all of it and some of those features were still surviving.¹¹ Anthony Smith's approach is helpful to explain Gülen's effective strategy of using prepolitical bonds to create a contemporary ethnic politics:

What all this suggests is not simply the persistence of ethnic ties from the past which must be taken seriously by theorists of nationalism, but also the continuities between pre-modern ethnic communities and identities and their modern counterparts. I am not claiming that there are 'nations before nationalism', certainly not in the sense in which we understand and characterize contemporary nations...[T]he heritage they bequeathed are as much part of the modern nation as the technical, economic and political institutions required by a modern civilization (Smith, 1996, p. 145).

Despite wide-ranging differences of national affiliation, religious and political orientation among the Turks in Almati, the ethnic politics automatically assumes and induces the "natural" feelings of a membership in a definite whole with undeniable and

¹⁰ During my fieldwork in Almati, my Turkish hosts, the female students, took me to a big open market where I was amazed at the frequent use of broken Turkish by the rural people who were selling their goods. The way they were bargaining and joking around with us and even mothering the girls was loaded with signs of familiarity, warmth and sharing.

¹¹ A. D. Smith (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford, New York: B. Blackwell, p.16. Although Smith argues that nations cannot be conceived as natural and primordial, he claims that their roots can be

genuine boundaries.¹² Hedetoft correctly underlines the oxymoron in this presumption of a natural bonding, namely the postulate of a natural will behind the fellow-feeling:

There is the assumption of a priori, deep-rooted commonalty between various sections of a given population, semi-automatically welding into a unity across various rifts and differences of interest and standing. Ideally, such commonality is embedded in the nature of each citizen, and thus on his or her own will, whether s(he) is aware or not. The discursive construction of national identity thus claims the existence of that oxymoron, a natural will, in the social-anthropological make-up of citizens (Hedetoft, 1995, p.23).

The domestically fuzzy boundaries of the Gülen Community are symbolically transposed to real boundaries of nationhood on the basis of the fellow feeling, i. e. “we” versus the others. Contrary to the fuzzy boundaries of the Gülen Community which welcome different degrees of association and affiliation, the borders of “we”, the fellow Turks, were simply given and natural, and therefore comforting. But, what kind of a collectivity were these borders embracing? Was it enveloping an ethno-religious community,¹³ which conveniently would welcome and incorporate other Turkic Muslims in Central Asia? Indeed, ethnic politics aspires to include the so-called “Kazak Turks”, who, according to Fethullahists, merely need education and self-awareness to realize their Turkic origins. An implicit pride in the Turkic roots leads the Gülen Community to socialize Kazaks into “Turkish ways of life” through education. Similar to the domestic mobilization strategies, Gülen aims to mobilize a highly (ethnically, culturally, politically) diversified people for common ends: in this case, it is the revitalization of the forgotten Turkic past. Interestingly, Gülen’s fashionable diversity-friendly image underlies an ethnic agenda, which eventually aspires to raise consciousness of ethnic unity, if not homogenizing Central Asia. What makes Gülen an effective international actor is this ethnic politics which leads to new forms of engagements with the Turkish state.

What, then, was the basis of this ethnic politics? And how did it contribute to the formation of alternative pathways of engagements between the state and Gülen? Was it a kind of construction and/or imagination of a common history, prepolitical belonging or

traced to pre-modern times. Hence, he continues, ethnicities persist to modern times thanks to the ethnic consciousness transmitted through symbols and myths.

¹² Hedetoft (1995).

¹³ A. D. Smith (1999) “Ethnic Election and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals, Nations and Nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 5, no.3, p. 331-35. Smith argues that intense nationalisms can be traced back to the ancient religious beliefs in ethnic election, namely the privileges and duties of the chosen people before God.

revitalization of forgotten or undermined factual commonalities? In fact, it is not important whether these commonalities are factual or imagined. The issue of concern here is the way Gülen appears as a force to impel fellow feelings, which in the long-run aspire to Turkishize Central Asia. Gülen's agenda is even more interesting, when we recall the fact that the so-called Turkic ancestors from which the Turkish nation originated were not even Islamic. Turks met with Islam in Anatolia, not in Central Asia. In other words, the Central Asian connection is based purely on blood, race and ethnicity. Accordingly, the predominance of ethnic and national identity over other loyalties such as religion in this case, calls –implicitly or explicitly-- for homogenization.¹⁴ Hence, it is important to understand this quality of modern nationalism, in bringing together the political and cultural community as well as integrating the political and cultural identity.¹⁵

Was this intermingling of the cultural and political identities a merely “from below” process or did it also have a “top-down” state-framed quality? To what extent were the fellow-feelings shaped by the national culture and the agendas and ideologies of the nation-state? On the basis of empirical evidence, I will argue below that Turkish nationalism in the Kazak context is, “in an important sense, not one object, but two; at best it can be described as a dual or binary structure”(Hedetoft, p.20), top-down and from below.¹⁶

KATEV: An Autonomous Self-organization Volunteering for Service to “the State of the Nation”

KATEV is an efficient hierarchical organization, a foundation, supported by charities of the Turkish companies, the devout of the Community and the businessmen in Almati. It not only coordinates and supervises schools but also serves as a public relations agency, a community-based association or even a coffeehouse for a vivid Turkish community in Almati. One of its primary duties is to co-ordinate and organize the events, such as hosting guests from Turkey, helping them to find accommodations, to make immediate connections (with businessmen, schools, entrepreneurs, local politicians etc.), as well as

¹⁴ B. Yack (1999) “The Myth of the Civic Nation” in R. Beiner (ed.) *Theorizing Nationalism*. New York: State University of New York Press, p.115.

¹⁵ Yack (1999), p.114.

guiding them in the city and initiating and facilitating intercultural. In other words, KATEV is the social, cultural and economic center to organize the international connections, with a heavy concentration on education and trade.¹⁷ As Fethullah Gülen puts it, the schools abroad create the platform for Turkish lobbies in the international domain. According to him, this lobby will be created by the graduates of the Turkish schools --the local people-- who are taught “to trust to Turkey.”¹⁸

Indeed, trust is a major premise that KATEV and the schools are assuring in Almati. It is important to understand the nature and kind of trust, as it is one of the key concepts in understanding the inner propellants of civil society that Gülen claims to develop.¹⁹ KATEV provides the platform for trust at three levels: Firstly, Fethullahists who work in KATEV create the communal basis of ‘trust as reciprocal relations’ within the Turkish Community. Turks in Almati rely on KATEV to organize their daily activities and connections in the host country. Officers in KATEV were volunteered for *hizmet* unconditionally and rotated to Almati for a limited time (usually three years) to voluntarily serve the Gülen Community. The officers happened to serve the Turks in Almati as well. Secondly, they also volunteer proudly to accept the responsibility of representing and preserving several cultural symbols of the Turkish nation such as the flag, the anthem, customs, national feasts etc. In a way, KATEV creates the national basis for trust and treats these symbols as *milli emanet*, i.e. the national objects, which are left to their trust. Most of the time the visitors, such as the businessmen, military officers, the politicians, the president and the prime minister and researchers like myself, are treated as *milli emanet*. These people are welcomed with warm hospitality and taken care of as is naturally required for those loyal to the nation. At this level, trust is almost taken-for-granted between the nation and the Community: Gülen volunteers to be an international representative of the imagined community, the Turkish nation. Finally and most importantly, the impersonal and contractual represents a third level of trust operating in Almati. That is the trust built between the KATEV and Turkish state’s functions, primarily

¹⁶Hedetoft (1995), p. 13, 14 and 20. For the reference to the binary structure of nationalism, see also Anderson (1983).

¹⁷KATEV’s documents: The curriculum, the list of the courses offered, the bulletins on the cultural events and handouts, collected from Almati.

¹⁸*YeniYuzyl*, daily newspaper, 2 February, 1998.

the Consulate and also another agency of the state, the Council of National Education in Almati, which I will explore below. This trust is a product of Gülen's extension of its domestic engagements with the state to the international domain. Both sides recognize each other and legitimize the cooperation, such as educational policy-making, on the basis of common conceptions of nationhood and national interest. Hence, the trust is formal and contractual but is closely connected to the personal trust based on the communal fellow-feeling, i.e. the cultural and political identity. In emergencies --my loosing of my passport was a concrete example--, KATEV directly cooperates with the Consulate to guarantee the security of the visitor and to create the legal sphere of protection. These instances show the symbiotic relations of the citizens to the state --even outside the national borders of the state-- on the basis of the institutionalized trust to the nation-state. KATEV is distinguished precisely on this level of trust from other civil society organizations.

Conventionally, the communitarian character of Islam is contrasted with the Western concepts of individualism and contractual impersonal relations.²⁰ Gülen carries trust relations from the personal to the contractual, impersonal levels. Put differently, Gülen put effort in extending the trust culture in the community to trust between the state and Islam. It is not an easy transformation because of the historically rooted distrust between Islam and the state. However, despite the tensions and conflicts, Gülen manages to cooperate with the state. This exactly legitimizes KATEV as a civil society organization and Gülen as a propellant of civil society in Turkey. Moreover, Gülen plays an important role in the host country's yearnings for civil society too.

KATEV also serves as the central mediator of international arrangements between Turkey and Kazakhstan. It successfully links different national identities not only through education in schools but also on other platforms such as culture feasts, accommodation, career opportunities in Turkish organizations and businesses. Its international role is significant as it symbolizes an emergent Islamic sensitivity: As I will discuss at length in the last section, Fethullahist identities are continuously reconstructed along the lines of the affinity between nationalism and internationalism. A Fethullahist in *hizmet* is trained to be and presented as tolerant, moderate and cosmopolitan. Similarly, the presentation of

¹⁹See Hall (1992).

KATEV in everyday life is an extension of this elaborated Fethullahist world-view. This idealized tone of Fethullahist nationalism became more striking in the international domain of the Community. Fethullahists define themselves as active internationalist patriots which manifests itself through “(a) a greater discursive effort of self-reflection and self-enactment as internationalists than among citizens in general based on (b) greater knowledge and mobility within the international ambit and (c) greater extent of practical cultivation and appropriation of foreign cultural ways and languages.” (Hedetoft, 1995, p.18). Indeed, most of the Fethullahists, especially the intellectuals and sometimes the well-educated upper-strata, are extremely sensitive to and informed about the vibrations in the international world order. Accordingly, KATEV mediates between domestic and international forces and this, in turn, strengthens its claim for being a civil society organization.

Fethullahists in Almati are very careful (sometimes even too cautious and self-conscious) not to intimidate local people with their Islamic identity. In the interviews, they emphasized that they did not want to disturb students and parents who already perceive Islam as a threat in Kazak society. A highly respected Fethullahist entrepreneur, a benefactor of the schools, preached: “The schools represent and belong to the Turkish nation and nothing else. Naming the schools something else is an attempt to provoke cleavages and camps. We all are Turks and are very proud of it.”²¹ Often, the officers in KATEV and the teachers asked me not to mention the students and their parents, that the schools are associated with an Islamic Community.

Fethullahists in Almati perceive and/or anticipate a tension between their internationalist orientation and the Islamic selves. Interestingly, this undeclared uneasiness was partly due to their self-perception and partly to the state’s ambivalent attitudes toward Islam. As Calhoun observes, “[i]t is not just that others fail to see us for who we are ... or repress us because of who they think we are. We face problems of recognition because socially sustained discourses about who it is possible or appropriate or valuable to be inevitably shape the way we look at and constitute ourselves, with varying degrees of agonism and tension” (Calhoun, 1994, p.20-21). Hence, it is not surprising that

²⁰Gellner (1994a); Hall (1995).

Fethullahists are downplaying their Islamic identities as they are afraid of being perceived being in contradiction with their international identities and undertakings. This shows their willingness for adaptation and sensitivity to the cultural setting. One of the teachers stated: "Kazaks forgot their religious and ethnic roots. We want to recall these for them. But we do not want to intimidate the society. We are not religious missionaries. We came here primarily to teach science." Their adaptation to the host culture is also manifested in their willingness to speak Kazak. Most of the Fethullahists in Almati stated that it took them less than two to three months to start to speak.

Contrary to the discomfort with the Islamic identities, the national identity was assumed to be natural as it was comfortably and legitimately shared with all the Turks. Moreover, defined in ethnic terms, it could also be shared with other Turkic people. Ethnic identities were not only the most automatically recognized and constructed identity and the easiest from of belonging -especially in the international domain- but they were also reinforced by the state. Hence those identities were emphasized with pride and confidence. Obviously, nationalist identities --more than Islamic identities-- felt at home with the international undertakings. Hence, outside Turkey, Gülen developed a more efficient and effective national identity, manifested in KATEV as a national organization, rather than an Islamic one. This identity is explicit in the name of the foundation, Kazak Turkish Foundation of Education. The name excludes the Community and its name and thereby simply emphasizes the international bridge between Turkey and Kazakhstan. Contrary to what I found in the domestic sites of the Community, I rarely heard mentioning of the Gülen Community, its Islamic vision and mission, in Almati.

This finding leads to the second one: the schools and other Fethullahist organizations were presented simply as Turkic in Kazakhstan's public life. In other words, the school's national affiliation and loyalty to the state were emphasized in everyday life, while their existence as the Community's organization was strategically and discursively, practically omitted. Similar to the Fethullahists' identity, KATEV's identity was under continuous reconstruction. The Fethullahists in *hizmet* explained their efficiency in terms of their devotion to their nation. Their *hizmet* was presented in the name of the nation. The non-

²¹Interview with the owner of a chain of food factories. June, 1999, Almati.

Turkish students in the schools and their parents knew only that the schools were Turkish, extremely successful and competitive, and that the main language of instruction was English.²² The students with whom I spoke were not informed about the Gülen Community and its Islamic association.

The ambivalent domestic interactions between the Community and the state were transformed to visible, proud affiliations with the “nation” (-state).²³ As the fuzzy boundaries of the Community were replaced with the real boundaries of nationhood, they “naturally” embraced the Turkish community in Almati. Hence, its taking part in the continuous reconstruction of the Turkish national interest seemed almost natural and taken-for-granted. Interestingly, the Fethullahists’ usage of *millet* (nation) in the interviews were usually interchangeable –or almost identical— with the *ulus-devlet* (nation-state) or sometimes simply just the state. The nation and the state were strongly identified with each other.²⁴ This is exactly why and how national culture and political community are strongly attached to each other: This is the very process through which the political community is nationalized and the nation is politicized as an ongoing process.²⁵

In Almati, Gülen’s *dava* is integrated into a national mission, to “get back to the ancestors”. Therefore, Gülen’s *dava* in revitalizing the faith does not seem to be defined and presented as independent from the national interest. However, the strong national affiliation does not reduce KATEV’s autonomy. Below, I will critically discuss how these national loyalties empower Gülen to be the key international actor in establishing educational policies abroad, as well as in cooperating with the Turkish state in the reconstruction of national interest. How does Gülen’s high capacity to represent the national culture abroad facilitate its engagements with the state?

²²Turkish, Kazakh and Russian were taught as languages. The graduates were fluent in Turkish. Some courses such as history was taught in other languages than English but as a sign of the internationalist ambitions and competitiveness at the global level, the primary language of instruction was English. Indeed, the students won a lot of degrees in the Olympic competitions of sciences.

²³Hall (1998) ; Beissinger (1998); Hedetoft (1995).

²⁴D. McCrone (1998) *Sociology of Nationalism*. London: Routledge. See the chapter on "Nation as the State" p.85-102; Hall (1998).

²⁵Yack (2000).

KATEV fits the conception of a civil society organization, as it had the “capacity to organize itself without being organized by the state” (Calhoun, 1994, p. 309).²⁶ It may seem paradoxical that its self-definition as the servant of the nation –and not of the Community— enables it to self-organize autonomously at the international level. However, there is no contradiction. Its strong national affiliation does not restrain the effectiveness or the autonomy of the Community. On the contrary, it expands Gülen’s sphere of influence and power outside the national borders. Briefly, the primary identification with the nation and its international undertakings qualify Gülen’s self-organization as a civil society organization.

Educate and Discipline: Making a Good Homogenous Turkic World out of the Degeneration and Disorder

Fethullahists in *hizmet* are the officers in KATEV, the teachers, experts on education, principals of the schools and the heads of the dormitories. They are fluent in the Kazak language as well as in English, the main language of instruction. The educational project they created and implemented is actualized on the basis of networks between the teachers, the parents of the students, the graduates of the schools, the businessmen and entrepreneurs who financially support the schools and who provide scholarships to students. Although KATEV appears like an all-encompassing public relations organization, its main function and responsibility is the coordination of education, management and finance of the schools. All of the schools –out of which two boys’ high schools, two girls’ high schools and a university are located in Almati--are considered as high-prestige schools which are difficult to enter: KATEV prepares a nation-wide exam in order to select the best students in Kazakhstan. Moreover, in the adaptation week (the first week before classes formally

²⁶Calhoun (1994) “Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity and Self-determination” in Calhoun (ed.) *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers highlights the importance of self-organization for a political community: “If society had such capacity, then the ‘people’ integrated in that society could better be seen as the source of political legitimacy rather than merely the object of rule” (p.309). It is also important to understand the nature of self-organization. See Gellner (1994a). Hall (1995) agrees with Gellner that the existence of societal self-organization is no guarantee of civility. Another important point Calhoun makes is that the increasing trend of globalization and multinational encounters did not indicate the demise of nationalism. On the contrary, they renew and maintain nationalism as a discourse of identity and solidarity (p.305). The compatibility of KATEV’s international undertakings with nationalist discourses is a striking example of this seemingly contradictory affinity between internationalism and nationalism.

start), they eliminate the students who have difficulty in adaptation and discipline problems.

The curriculum neither privileges Islam or Turkey. The curriculum and education are secular. There is no religious teaching, except for a general course on the history of world religions. Hence, it is far from clear in which ways these schools do promote the national interest, let alone the Community's *dava*. However, along with the acknowledgment of English as a universal medium of education and science, Fethullahists aim to make Turkish an international means of communication. The teachers with whom I spoke highlighted the importance of teaching fluent Turkish and making it a wide-spread medium in Central Asia. The principal of the boy's high school in Almati stated that their students graduate with a proficiency in Turkish. They not only work for Turkish companies in Almati but also become closer and friendly to the Turkish culture. As he proudly put it, the graduates were "the bridges between Kazakhstan and Turkey." Hence, although language is a primary component of the ethnic politics and the nationalist educational project, it is definitely not the only international medium. To compete in the Olympics, the books are imported from the West. Relatively better equipment, technology and opportunities are offered to the students as a result of the collaboration of two states, Gülen and the Turkish community (mainly businessmen and entrepreneurs) in Almati. While the Kazak state provides the buildings and infrastructure, the Community transferred teachers, education and counseling specialists, administrators and principals.²⁷ Usually, the parents pay for the food. In addition, some schools, which already proved their success have started to charge tuition fees. As a result, the standards of Kazak education were raised by a considerable degree. What, then, is the interest of the Turkish nation in this international project? How exactly is this national interest pursued?

Indeed, KATEV is professional in education: It is a hierarchical organization with two basic departments, *eğitim* (education) and *öğretim* (teaching). The Teaching Department coordinates the courses and schedules, the curriculum, i.e. the scientific orientation in

²⁷The professors are offered posts in Kazakhstan and taken from their posts in Turkey for limited periods of time. See *Cumhuriyet*, daily newspaper, October 17, 1999, about how one professor is accused of being a traitor of the Turkish Republic since he accepted the job offer as the principle in Fatih University. *Cumhuriyet* is a newspaper which has and historically promoted a Republican, centre-left, secularist, Kemalist doctrine.

collaboration with the Turkish and Kazak states, whereas the Education Department is oriented towards socialization. Hence, their agenda does not just include teaching the courses that were offered during the school hours but they also require students to stay in the dormitories. The schools offer mandatory extra-curricular activities, which consist mainly of socializing activities. After school, students are taught cultural ways of life such as hygiene, bathing, clothing, personal addictions etc., which intervene with private habits of the students. The students are made familiar with the Turkish customs, traditional values, cultural codes and sanctions, the meaning and importance of the national days of Turkey. They are invited and encouraged to celebrate them. The aim of these activities is to spread the national culture to Kazak children who unfortunately are, according to the Fethullahists, the offspring of a morally corrupted society under the wicked Soviet rule.²⁸ Discipline is an important issue in the schools: they aim to eliminate the remnants of the immoral and anti-religious Soviet rule. It is important to note the double mission in the schools. The scientific competitiveness at the international level is combined with a moralist education, discipline and cultural indoctrination. The ultimate aim is to create a morally superior and scientifically competitive Turkic world.

The teachers play a central and sophisticated role in achieving this goal. Although religion is consciously avoided in the curriculum and teaching, the Gülen's *dava* - revitalization of faith in the modern, secular society- is not abandoned. Restoration of faith to life is prescriptively fought and implicitly ingrained through socialization, culturation and discipline. The Durkheimian tone in this educational project is explicit: The goal is to reconcile moral education with rationality (Durkheim, p.11) as well as with faith with science. This reconciliation is inherited from Movement and Risales.²⁹ Accordingly, morality is rational since "it sets in motion only the ideas and sentiments deriving from reason." (Durkheim, 1961 p.5).³⁰ The project reflects Fethullahist school of thought, which aimed to reconcile the presumably dichotomous approaches to faith/reason and

²⁸E. Durkheim (1961) *Moral Education*. London: Free Press.

²⁹ H. Yavuz (2000).

³⁰ See also S. Mardin (1983) "Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey" in J. P. Piscatory (ed) *Islam in the Political Process*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. It is important to note the Durkheimian overtone in Kemalist approach to solidarity and the to the function of religion. Through a similar nationalist mentality, Kemalists created a particular new sentiment, a new morality and faith in the secular Turkish Republic.

modernity/tradition through secular teaching.³¹ In this sense, although religion is not detectable as the primary goal of the Fethullahists in Almati, it is an undeclared and essential component of education and cultururation in general. The teachers of KATEV may be compared with the Durkheimian elite of the early Republic (especially *the Terakki Perver partisi*) who regard religion as a necessary means to strengthen the social and moral foundation of the society.³² It was the cure against rootlessness and degeneration. The Fethullahist teachers who came to Almati to teach as a service to the Community stated:

These kids need discipline. What an unlucky destiny, that they were born into a complete immoral disorder! It is only normal that they are so loose, disengaged and therefore nihilist tendencies. They suffered for so many years under the anti-religious Soviet rule, which cut people off from their spirituality, faith and morality. We know that it will take time but they will gradually acquire the sensibility for order and discipline and communal feelings along with a sound scientific background...We have the time, the energy, the commitment but more importantly determination...Interestingly, we already started to see the change in their attitudes. Their parents report their surprise by the rapid effects of our education and thank us.³³

In this sense, the civilizational project is, indeed, the extension of Gülen's *dava* to the international sphere. Change is conceptualized as project-based social-engineering.³⁴ This is another elective affinity between the Republican and Fethullahist reformer mentality. Many studies highlighted the top-down reforms of the Republic. However, when Islamic movements are studied, usually they are juxtaposed to the state as grass-root movements.³⁵ Their shared understanding of progress and civilization as project-based social engineering is largely ignored. Because a considerable part of Gülen's and the state's agenda –i.e. the ethnic politics in Central Asia-- overlaps, a separate Fethullahist *dava* is not easily distinguishable. Yet, Gülen's *dava* persists independently of, yet in collaboration with, the agendas of the nation-state: On one hand, Fethullahist teachers believe that a strong moral education along with scientific curriculum would help Kazak society develop into a moral,

³¹ See F. Gülen (1997); (1996b).

³² S. Mardin (1991b) *Türkiye'de Din ve Laiklik Makaleler 2* (Religion and Secularism in Turkey Essays 2). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, p.31.

³³ Quoted from an interview, in Almati June 1998. I heard positive comments from the parents with regard to the change in the attitudes of their children and how they became more responsible and acquired more self-control and discipline after they entered the Turkish schools. See Hedetoft (1995), p. 20. See his argument that a mentality of self-discipline in the name of the larger whole has often been a characteristic of nationalism in the European context.

³⁴ Mardin (1997); Berkes (1964). Many studies highlighted the top-down reforms of the Republic. However, when Islamic movements are studied, usually they are juxtaposed to the state as grass-root movements. Their common understanding of progress as project-based is largely ignored.

³⁵ Yavuz (1999a).

civilized and progressive society, which is very much a national mission. On the other hand, they also believe that this kind of progress and prosperity requires the revitalization of faith in society. Although it is expressed much rarely in the international domain, the ultimate goal is to save and recover the lost souls by cultivating faith through moral education.

In addition to the altruistic teachers, responsive parents are needed to collaborate in this ambitious educational project. Similar to the extension of education to the extra-curricular activities in the dormitories, the discipline and socialization are carried over to the home environment. The educators and teachers visit students' homes and ask for the cooperation of the parents. They monitor students in their family life and follow their progress by psychological tests in school. They not only aim to make sure that the home environment does not contradict with the schooling and discipline in schools but they also interfere with order in the private sphere if they find it not conducive to the moral education they implementing. They rely heavily on psychological counseling. Persuasion of non-cooperating parents is attempted on the basis that it is for the good of their children. It is an all-encompassing educational project, which aims to engineer human souls and identities.³⁶

The principals and teachers explained that the first reaction of the parents to the Turkish schools was negative. Initially, Kazaks were suspicious about the aims of the schools. Some of them thought that the Turks were "replacing the Soviet hegemony" and taking the advantage of the "vacuum" to dominate them through their missionary agendas.³⁷ They even rejected the naming of the schools Türk-Kazak. After these reactions and discomfort, the official name was Kazak-Türk schools. However, the initial backlash and suspicion were replaced with the trust, appreciation and cooperation of the parents as well as of the Kazak state.

The teachers are the crucial part of the project. They come there to serve a specific goal and mission. Most of them had to live under bad and harsh conditions for uncertain

³⁶ I borrow the term "engineering human souls" from Hall (2000).

³⁷ These issues came out in the interview with the principle of the boys high school in Almati as well as with the head of KATEV, undertaken in May 1999.

time periods.³⁸ Among the teachers, a high degree of self-sacrifice and self-denial³⁹ is the main characteristic of the *hizmet* abroad. Altruism in the name of God is transferred to a self-sacrifice for the nation in the international sphere of the Community. The legendary teachers who died for this goal in some Asian countries are recalled often with pride and gratitude. As Hedetoft argues:

[T]he most valued form of nationalism (which is interpreted as a manifestation of a national identity- not vice versa) is that which is based on the courageous acceptance of sacrifice, death being its highest form, war its most hitting context and heroism its official designation. The ultimate litmus test of national identity resides in one's readiness for sacrifice... For it is here that the ideal pertaining to the unity of state and nation is realized in the most radical manner possible... It is only in those --or parallel-- situations that the difference between the interest of the nations is clarified beyond any doubt, and where hostile images of the Other are not just allowed but, indeed, demanded (Hedetoft, 1995, p.25).⁴⁰

Interestingly, the loyalty to the Community and the nation reinforce each other in the case of *hizmet* in the international domain.⁴¹ It is not surprising then to find out extreme forms of self-sacrifice among Fethullahists, who serve outside of Turkey: the teachers are not just being altruistic members believers of the Gülen Community but also loyal citizens of the Turkish Republic. Accordingly, the *hizmet* is presented as a service merely to the nation, while the deeper motivation of the Fethullahist, that is the self-sacrifice for God, is not announced. The duality --or double quality-- of the teachers' self-sacrifice is conveniently reduced to a single cause of nationhood and thereby celebrated as a matter of diplomacy. A progressive daily newspaper, *Yeni Yüzyıl*, reported: "Four thousand

³⁸The Principal of the boys' high-school in Almati reported how during the days of initiating the projects in Central Asia, he had to endure extreme cold since there was no heating in his building and how he had to go without being paid for several months during his first appointment in Northern territories of the former Soviet Union, cited from an interview in May 1999.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p.20. Hedetoft depicts self-denial for the collective good as a prominent characteristic nationalism, in the European context.

⁴⁰Note the similar characteristic of nationalism in the Kemalist nationalist emphasis on the sacred status of *gazi* (the soldier who dies in the war) and Atatürk's command to the soldiers in the War of Independence to die.

⁴¹Smith (1999). See especially p. 336-337 where Smith elaborates the relationship between the religious myths of ethnic election and nationalist concepts of mission and destiny: belief in moral superiority over outsiders, the belief that virtue will be awarded, strict boundary against outsiders and the requirement of the engagement in the sacred, communal task. Although these features may be argued to characterize the Fethullahist Community in Almati, I disagree with Smith's explanation of intense ethnic nationalism by preceding religious myths about the chosen people, the myths of ethnic election. The continuing role of pre-modern ties, namely the religious myth of the chosen people is argued to be the deeper source of nationalism. The causal link is narrow and problematic mainly because it dismisses the political level and the

Fethullahist teachers operate like diplomats in Gülen's schools abroad?"⁴² *Zaman*, the Community's daily newspaper also appreciates the teachers as the international servants of the Turkish state by the Community.⁴³ The Gülen Community is proud of replacing the state's functions at the international level, which is thought of as a higher platform.

Combining faith with reason and communal duty with loyalty to the nation, the teachers are contributing to the making of educated, civilized and moral future generations who will be glued together by their Turkicness. They are also rescuing a subaltern Turkic people who had been suppressed and oppressed many years under the Soviet rule. The teachers claimed to help the students in revitalizing (or perhaps creating) commitment to their own origins, such as learning and appreciating the Kazak language (a dialect of Turkish).⁴⁴ From this perspective, Gülen's exposure to the region seems purely cultural and apolitical. The teachers claim that the project is immune to politics, which is a claim in line with the Community's self-presentations in Turkey.

In its simplest form, Fethullahists envision and plan a future, in which Turkish culture and language would be prevalent in many parts of the globe, especially in Central Asia. The most pronounced objective sounds merely cultural, namely to "bring the Turkic cultures closer". The cultural social engineering aspires a multiculturalist identity politics, which calls for a peaceful co-existence and recognition of differences.⁴⁵ It is important to note two points: First of all, paradoxically, the Fethullahists' educational project does indeed aspire for and work on homogenization of the region. Secondly, their nationalist project creates the platform for wide-ranging nationalist agendas and attracts and gathers different faces of nationalism. It should not be surprising then, that KATEV, the internationalist patriot, accommodates and nurtures many different degrees and kinds of nationalisms under its roof.

The officers in KATEV introduced me to one of the leading benefactors of the schools who was a self-designated fascist restaurant owner. He explained that Fethullah Gülen's

state from the analysis of nationalism. Moreover, it explains nationalism by the pre-existent ethno-religious collectivity, rather than vice versa.

⁴²*Yeni Yüzyıl*, daily newspaper, 27 March 1998.

⁴³*Zaman*, the Community's daily, 27 March 1998.

⁴⁴Russian is still the predominant language in the region.

⁴⁵ Taylor (1992).

vision and public talks were his inspiration to move to Almati. He was moved and incited by the encouragement of the leader --his pathfinder-- to go and reach Turkic roots in Central Asia. However, he was also born into a family of *ülkü* (ultra-nationalist goal)⁴⁶ and thus, he was raised by the utopia. Yet, his vision and *ülkü* aspirations were fulfilled by his participation in Gülen's agendas in KATEV's functions. He was fully satisfied in his participation in this cause, thanks to the opportunity to contribute to the Turkish schools.

My kin came from Middle Asia and I am so proud to be back to where I belong. This was my goal since my childhood... All these lands are sacred Turkish lands. They were stolen from us by the Russians. As you see, we are getting our land back with a huge Muslim population in it... However, these things take time. They will come to terms with their true self gradually. It would take at least fifty years if we try to *türklestirmek* (turkicize) them through nationalist education, through everyday life socialization and dissemination of our traditions. But if a smart political leader appeared on the stage who would co-operate and agree to consolidate Kazaks under the Turkish rule, we would save time...The cultural way is a long time. The political way is just practical and short cut and it only takes a powerful and clever president...However, we all know that it is very unlikely that the political solution would come from the heaven...Thus, Hoca Efendi's (F. Gülen's) vision is precious and the most promising project to our *ülkü*.

Similar to its domestic patterns of mobilization, Gülen manages to attract, accommodate and cohere a diverse collectivity around a new sensibility to engage the Republican project. Accordingly, it glues a culturally and ethnically diverse Turkic people and the Turks with diverse political orientation and different degrees of nationalist feelings. This capacity to attract wide-ranging constituency and to connect them for common goals, i.e. ethnic politics in this case, facilitates Gülen's engagements with the state.

Alliances between Gülen and the State: *Türk Milli Eğitim Müşavirliği* (The Council of Turkish National Education, CTNE) and KATEV

Along with its role as a cultural center and in attracting a variety of Turkic people under its roof, KATEV actualizes an important international undertaking: It cooperates with the Turkish and Kazak States in developing a curriculum for Kazak-Turk schools. The collaboration is based on mutual understanding, recognition and co-operation. It is important to note that the Gülen Community initiates an international approach to

⁴⁶*Ulku* is a specific word for goal which refers the nationalist utopia of the fascist right wing party (MHP-Nationalist People's Party) in Turkey. Their primary *ulku* is to establish a unitary Turkish land, which would

education, which involves the national education policies of Turkey and in the host countries in different countries. KATEV is one of Gülen's international organizations which undertakes this educational project with sophistication: On the one hand, it serves as a cultural center, where state's officers come to socialize, chat, drink and do networking informally. In this sense, it resembles a social club or coffeehouses in the West, which Habermas regarded as the birth of the public sphere.⁴⁷ On the other hand, it operates as a civil society organization, which engages a contract with the Turkish state in educational policy-making. Stated more concretely, KATEV interacts with the state at the international level, through both informal, personalized, and formal, impersonal, contractual relations. Contrary to conventional binary thinking, which dichotomizes these two levels of interactions, they complete and strengthen each through KATEV's undertakings.

The informal and personalized ties to the state are manifested in the brotherhood between KATEV's staff, the Fethullahist teachers and the teachers from the Turkish state. Separately from Gülen's educational project, twenty teachers of the Turkish state were appointed to Almati in order to teach the Turkish language in the local Kazak schools. Interestingly, the teachers of the secular state are "regulars" of KATEV, who not only share everyday life, warmth of the Community and fellow feelings in a foreign country but also similar international agendas. As one of the teachers stated: "The aim is not to turkishize Central Asia but to bridge the Turkic cultures. It is about familiarity and proximity."⁴⁸ However, when this multiculturalist discourse is probed further, he added:

We do not simply teach the Turkish language but also the Turkish culture and make students familiar and comfortable with it. When they are asked about their ethno-national affiliation, they say they are Kazak. But they really lack the cultural sensitivity and "blood consciousness." These human characteristics were eroded in the Soviet times. However, we work on this loss of affiliation. In the future, they will define themselves as Turks, the Kazak Turks. It only takes a decent education for them to realize their roots and how much we have in common. Is not education all about self-awareness and self-realization?⁴⁹

consolidate all the Turkic blood under the same flag. Their utopia finds convenience in cooperating with nationalist Islam, mainly with Nurists and Fethullahists in Middle Asia.

⁴⁷Habermas (1989).

⁴⁸ Quoted from an interview with Necdet Bey, a teacher in CTNE, in May 1998, in Almati.

⁴⁹With regard to the role of education in homogenizing nation-building process, see Gellner (1995); (1994b) "Kemalism" in *Encounters with Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

The similar discourses between the state's and Gülen's teachers is striking. In the interviews, they both stated that the Kazaks were not only lacking the cultural affiliation and ethnic consciousness but they also still carry the remnants of the former political affiliation, i.e. the Soviet identity. This is seen as the source of the problem, which prevents Kazaks from preserving their cultural heritage. Emphasizing the necessity of time for gradual reform and cultural changes, the Republican teachers, similar to the Fethullahist teachers, highlighted how schooling is the best and direct way to shape fresh minds. Along these lines, they expressed their appreciation of what KATEV does for the Turkish nation: "This is a charity for the good of Kazak people and a pride for the Turkish nation. KATEV makes us recall our past and refreshes our memory" (I. Bey, 1999, in CTNE). It is surprising to find pro-Fethullahist state officers, because of the predominant juxtapositions of Islam against the state (i.e. the compatibility debate). Indeed, the distrust between Islam and the state was historically and culturally formed in Turkish national culture. Hence, one would have expected that the state's teachers would be cautious and suspicious, if not intimidated, about KATEV's increasing authority on education and business connections. In accordance with the political culture in Turkey, state's agencies are traditionally expected to "control" rather than admire Islamic undertakings. In contrast, however, the teachers of the state not only share KATEV's ethnic politics but also appreciate KATEV's contributions to the Turkish nation. The findings are challenging the conventional interaction between Islam and secular Republic. Stated more specifically, the international alliances transcend the orthodox expectations of the distrust, hostility and conflict between the state's officers and the Fethullahists.

In addition to the personal bonds between the Fethullahists and state's officers, there is formal and institutionalized linkages between the organizations of Gülen and the state. *Millî Eğitim Müşavirliği* (the Council of the Turkish National Education, CTNE)⁵⁰ in Almati represents the Turkish Ministry of Education in Kazakhstan. In CTNE, there are 20 teachers of the Turkish language and only one history teacher. It not only coordinates the Turkish language courses in Kazak schools, but also cooperates with KATEV in forming the curriculum in Gülen's schools and creating educational policies outside the national

⁵⁰ Translation and abbreviation are mine.

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that the schools were operating according to the principles of the Turkish state. They had similar goals and discourses of those of the Turkish state.

The collaboration between CTNE and KATEV is not at all surprising when Atatürk's and Fethullah Gülen's nationalist visions about Turkic countries in Central Asia are compared. The official discourse maintained a nostalgic affiliation with the Turkic ancestors in Central Asia. Quotations from *Nutuk* (Atatürk's speeches collected in a book) hang on the walls in those schools, offices and in Atatürk corners. As a forward-looking leader, Atatürk had foreseen how the Soviet Regime might fall in the future and leave a huge vacuum in its place, which had to be filled by the Turkish nation. The quotes from *Nutuk* were confirming of devotion and loyalty to the Kemalist ideology and state. This official attitude towards Central Asia is strikingly reflected in Fethullah Gülen's agenda, which became explicit in his talks (circulated also in cassettes) and in his biography, *Küçük Dünyam*.⁵⁴ It is extremely important to trace the roots of this politics, i.e. the aspiration over Central Asia, to the roots of Islamism in the 19th Century in Ottoman Empire. Mardin argues that II. Abdulhamit used Islam as a strategy to expand to Central Asia as well as a weapon against imperialism.⁵⁵ Although F. Gülen is a whole-hearted Islamist unlike Atatürk, the undertakings of the Gülen Community reflect Atatürk's Durkheimian approach to "civic religion".⁵⁶ They seem to agree that, like ethnicity, religion facilitates the making of a homogeneous and cohesive collectivity. Moreover, Fethullahist agenda in Central Asia shares a good deal with the *Türk Tarih Tezi* (The Thesis of Turkish History). The thesis claimed that the Turks contributed to the civilization far before the Ottoman Empire, i.e. in Central Asia. This thesis was created ideology in 1930s as a part of the nation-building process and became a cornerstone of official ideology. The original aim was to create feelings of belonging, national identity and pride in Turkishness. Until the late period of the Ottoman Empire, the term Turk was used by the Ottomans as identical to

the state and the people and Gellner (1995) with regard to the importance of the Nation-state in homogenizing a people.

⁵⁴With regard to the Republican utopia (or agendas) on Central Asia see M. K. Atatürk (1934) *Nutuk* (Speech). İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası; and F. Gülen's overlapping agenda in his biography, L. Erdogan (1995) *Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi: Küçük Dünyam* (My Small World). İstanbul: Dogan Kitapcilik, p.65.

⁵⁵ Serif Mardin (2000) *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset* (Religion and Politics in Turkey). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp. 16- 17.

⁵⁶ Mardin (1983), p.138-159.

“nomad” or rural.⁵⁷ Mardin is right in arguing that Turkish nationalism has been the most successful and the only complete ideology of Kemalism (Mardin, 1991, p. 142). The success of this thesis can be easily confirmed by the effectiveness of Fethullahist ethnic politics in Almati. In contrast to its nomadic origins and cultural heritage, Turkish Islam aims to “civilize” Central Asia.

In addition to the overlapping discourses and agendas, the Community displays sound co-operation with both the Turkish and the Kazak state at the institutional level. This trio creates a curriculum, which fits the host country’s educational system as well as national education in Turkey. This collaboration explicitly confirms the states’ recognition of KATEV. But more importantly, it designates the enormous sphere of influence and authority the Gülen Community acquires at the international level. The Fethullahists in *hizmet*, the coordinating staff in KATEV, the teachers and the experts of education in Almati not only participate in educational policy-making but also implement the curriculum.⁵⁸ This double responsibility endows Gülen with considerable power over the international arrangements of Turkish education.⁵⁹

Evidently, the state appears as the highest authority and an object of extreme loyalty in the issues at hand. Gülen’s educational projects and political agendas in Kazakhstan have been in line with The state’s ideology.⁶⁰ The conversations about Gülen’s schools ultimately referred to the state and the Turkish nation.⁶¹ Mardin correctly depicts how high school teachers are indoctrinated into a dichotomous thinking of the official ideology, namely the positivist choice between the *irtica* (fundamentalism) and science.⁶² But this diagnosis contradicts with his critique of macro-level state-centered analysis. Approaching

⁵⁷ Mardin (1991b) *Türkiye’de Din ve Laiklik in Makaleler 2* (Religion and Secularism in Turkey Essays 2), p.69.

⁵⁸ M. Lipski (1980) *Street-level Bureaucracy*. New-York: Russel Sage Foundation.

⁵⁹ When I interviewed the head of the National Education Counselor in Almati, I asked how he feels about the fact that an Islamic Community is endowed with such an authority over the schools and education. He was irritated by my question, denies the fact that the schools belong the Community and preached to me that nobody should force our nation into artificial camps such as Fethullahist. He spoke with an authoritarian voice: “The schools are under the control of the Turkish state. Since our aims and agendas are similar, since we all work for the good of the Turkish nation, I do not see why the state and the Community would be in conflict. Please avoid creating unnecessary cleavages in the society” (May, 1999, Counselor of National Education-Almati).

⁶⁰ Hobsbawm (1995) p.11.

⁶¹ McCrone (1998). See the chapter on “Nation as a State”, p.85-102 and also Hall (1998b), Calhoun (1994).

⁶² Mardin (1997), p.67

macro and micro levels of analysis as separate and almost mutually exclusive analyses, he contradicts his own example of how the teachers are the micro-level representations of the state and its ideology. He suggests “life-world” as a more useful approach than macro perspectives. This approach prioritizes life-world as a concept and assumes that everyday life is independent of the state’s sphere of influence:

What I was discovering in looking at Islam as a discourse was a sphere of social activity covered neither by institution nor by the exercise of power of *devlet* (state). That is, there existed embedded in Ottoman social arrangements, a number of levels allowing for surreptitious ‘operatives’ that took their force from the many layers of an Islamic cultural funnel (Mardin, 1997, p. 72).

The findings of this study contradict this approach. The integration of cultural and political affiliation is striking among Fethullahists is striking: The informants’ nationalist/internationalist agendas were explicitly “state-framed”. In other words, it was created and shaped by the Republic and its official ideology and even could be traced to the emerging Islamist political strategies of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century. Regarding this point, Hobsbawm remarks that ordinary men would not have official ideology of the states in their minds.⁶³ However, Fethullahist informants expressed their national loyalties as loyalties to the state. Moreover, their discourses overlapped with that of the state’s teachers’. As one of the Fethullahist officers highlighted, “the denial of that loyalty would be a treason to the nation”. Therefore, national loyalties were regarded as signs of sincerity to the nation. With respect to these findings, Yack’s remark should be noted:

For it is [the] commitment to certain principles that makes one a member to a community, then we will probably want to know whether this commitment is genuine or a mask for subversion. The possibility of intolerance and paranoia in a truly civic nation is far from academic or hypothetical (Yack, 1999, p.115).

However, this observation does not refute the inner propellants and autonomy of KATEV (the personnel, the teachers, coordinators, education specialists, counseling staff etc.) which plays the central role in this project. KATEV and the teachers appear as both implementers and initiators of this particular kind of education. KATEV’s co-operation with the Kazak and Turkish state endows it not only with a double responsibility but also

⁶³Hobsbawm (1995), p.11.

with more legitimacy and power over education.⁶⁴ In this sense, its capacities to engage, the state and cooperate with it at the international level empowers the Community and legitimizes it as an effective civil society organization.

What kind of Nationalism and Internationalism? : Nationalism Civilized in the International Domain?

Globalization as a process and a growing body of literature has been mistakenly understood as the diminishing importance and effectiveness of the states. The argument follows that along with the declining significance of the nation-state, there is a shift towards a transnational conception of civil society. However, the present study illustrates that this is not the case. In contrast to the arguments about the declining significance of the states, Gülen's international exposures and successes are based on its strong alliances with the Turkish state. Moreover, its internationalist aspirations and agendas are not only in line with the national culture but also with the Turkish state's official ideology. The state-framed quality legitimizes and reinforces Gülen's international undertakings. As Naim argues:

Internationalism is an organic part of the conceptual universe of nationalism. Both creeds derive from the modern epoch of industrialized development and empire, plainly. But there is no doubt, which has been generally dominant. Ever since the vast, multi-ethnic recoil against French conquests it is the principle of political nationality which has emerged and re-emerged as the apparently inevitable form of almost all new states and international state settlements. So, internationalism has to be seen as a function of this principal's victories, rather than vice versa (T. Naim, 1997, p. 28).

"Why would there be only American and German schools all over the world and not Turkish?", several Fethullahists in KATEV agreed critically. Many non-religious (as well as religious) businessmen benefactors of the schools reported that their national feeling was satisfied and pampered by watching Kazak students singing the Turkish national anthem and fluently speaking proper Turkish. Admitting that they burst into tears while they watched those students, Fethullahists expressed their emotionality and national sentiments: "Who would not feel proud seeing the Turkish flag in the schools abroad?"

⁶⁴ Lipski (1980). Note Lipski's term, "street level bureaucrats" where he highlights the implementers of the policies as a form of policy-making. Thus, on top of Fethullahists' participation in the educational policy-making, they also have some space to remake and interpret curriculum while they implement it. Therefore, it is significant that Fethullahists are both the policy-makers and the personnel who carry out the curriculum.

several informants in Almati asked curiously.⁶⁵ The emerging sensibility was not simply globalization or transnationalization of Islam: What was so touching was to observe the internationalization of the national culture and *milli emanets*.

The process of nationalizing Islam and Islamic identities goes hand in hand with internationalization of them as well.⁶⁶ “An international network in Central Asia would only strengthen our Turkic Nation-states” said one of the KATEV’s distinguished educators, Husamettin Bey. He was a whole-hearted supporter of the ultra-nationalist party in Turkey, a self-defined *Bozkurt* (Steppenwolf -the symbol for the ultra-nationalists utopia over Central Asia) and a highly respected and appreciated internationalist.⁶⁷ He was especially admired for his sheltering, supporting and connecting the “real ethnic Turks” in Diaspora in different countries in Central Asia.⁶⁸ His ultra-nationalist affiliation was fueling his efficacy and capacities at the international level. On the basis of his Turkist, ultra-nationalist feelings, he was performing as a whole-hearted, engaged and passionate internationalist, who has won awards as a distinct international educator in Kazakhstan.

⁶⁵ Nairn (1997) denies the naturalness of the national feeling to ethnic communities. He rejects the ideology of naturalness by agreeing with Gellner (1995) on the view that nationalism is rather “a complex, multi-faceted response” to macro transformations in modern, contemporary history.

⁶⁶ Indeed, in the interviews, the informants generalized this collaboration to Middle Asian countries, rather than just focusing on Kazakhstan.

⁶⁷ He was a former teacher in one of the Kazakh-Turk high schools before becoming a principal. After being granted an award of “distinct educator” by the Kazakh state, he was offered an administrative position. His connections with the local politicians, the president of Kazakhstan and with the Turkish community were strikingly strong and extensive. He celebrated the success of the fascist party in the recent elections (1998) while he was making me familiar with his internationalist position and the importance of KATEV for the international competitiveness of the Turkish State.

⁶⁸ One of my informants was a very old man who defined himself as “a real Turk.” He explained to me what that meant: He was “carrying the Turkish blood”. He belonged to a displaced group of Diaspora, which has been repressed and discriminated under Soviet rule. He spoke Turkish with a heavy accent (different than Kazakh dialect) to which I had to listen carefully in order to understand. He had brought his written memories in a big file, suggested by Husamettin Bey, as a valuable material for publication. Some vocabulary was not familiar to me but neither was the Kazakh language. For a while they discussed his text to be published and decided only to translate the words in the footnotes in order not to ruin the authenticity of the narrative. His life story was an illustration of the painful repression of the Turks under the rule of Soviet Union, an experience which had suppressed all kinds of nationalist and religious sentiments. His poems were about the Turkish Diaspora in Central Asia and cruel memories of continuous expulsion and exile and forced rootlessness. The man looked old, exhausted and sounded sad but his hopes from KATEV were keeping him alive since he was finally able to see the “voice of a Turkish people”. He could not stop thanking KATEV and Husamettin Bey for the coming publication and for accepting his grandson into one of the Kazakh-Turk schools even though he had not shown a sufficient level of adaptation during the adaptation week. “We owe this much of favour to each other” said Husamettin Bey, being able to demonstrate his power to his fellow. More importantly, he felt good of being use for the Turkish fellows in Central Asia. Trust was established on the basis of personalized bonds and reciprocity.

Moreover, he proudly expressed his closeness to the president of the Kazak state. Gülen does, indeed, embrace different faces of nationalism.

What, then, was the meaning attached to KATEV's international undertakings, based as they are on an effective ethnic politics? What did KATEV's international education and curriculum symbolize? Nairn brilliantly questions the meaning of internationalism as a higher platform in the age of increasing ethnic consciousness:

Internationalist philosophy asserts that between ('inter')national or ethno-state realities there lies a common higher ground, and our most sacred duty is to struggle on to it. But this terrain is -obviously- difficult to access. Some historical events may be carrying us to it, others may bloc the route, ever more threateningly. Since relatively few actually arrive there, it is legitimate to ask what the function of the belief is for the rest. What does internationalism actually stand for in this world where the center never seems to hold long in the face of ethnic anarchy (Nairn, 1997, p. 28)

Despite the initial suspicions that Turks may be replacing Soviet hegemony, Gülen's schools smoothly established the image of the agencies of a "dialogue between civilizations." This humanist goal was the higher platform on which Gülen convinced the Kazaks to cooperate with the formation of the principles of international peace, mutual recognition and the faith in the universality of science and knowledge. These objectives were presented as higher goals, which were to transcend local concerns and ethnic differences. In this sense, the international arena was a higher platform over which the state's interest was extended and was co-constructed with the good of both the Gülen Community and the host country.

Moreover, Fethullahists had pride in representing the nation at a "higher" level, i.e. the international level.⁶⁹ The Gülen Community is distinct from other Islamist movements and communities in Turkey in its particular conformist, pro-state attitudes, which developed hand in hand and in relation with their internationalist aspirations and undertakings. Fethullah Gülen (the leader of the Community-movement) adopts the premises of the state's official ideology: He often highlights in his books.

Turkey is the candidate to be a super power on the basis of its past and present situation. Many Muslim countries, including the ones in Central Asia, do trust and seem to have hopes and expectations from Turkey. We do not want to lose this [international] credibility (Gülen, 1997, p. 282- 283).

⁶⁹ Gellner (1995); McCrone (1998).

Gülen established international alliances with the state at different levels and forms, i. e. cultural, symbolic, political, policy-oriented and economic. As several businessmen admitted, there was an explicit economic incentive involved in the international undertakings. A huge territorial as well as international network enabled Fethullahists to follow their cultural agenda as well as economic interest. While they were participating in the construction of national sentiments and interest in the everyday, their options, world-view and undertakings were simultaneously shaped by state-framed agendas and ideologies. Beissinger brilliantly highlights the extent of state's capacities to shape the competing notions of nationhood and boundaries:

There is a strong tendency for individuals to adjust their beliefs to the limits of the possible, accepting a given institutional arrangement as unalterable, natural and even necessary precisely because it cannot be changed.... Economic interaction also exercises a powerful effect on the modern state. Within a functioning capitalist (less so socialist) context there are powerful material incentives for individuals (even members of ethnic or racial underclasses) to accept dominant notions of nationhood and to work within the given parameters of the state... States also shape imaginations about boundaries directly through their ability to inculcate ideas and shape expectations. Here, it is not only the role played by education and the universalization of high culture in the consolidation of conceptions of nationhood that is important. States also naturalize their preferred conceptions of nationhood through their ability to dominate the public discourse. They establish and enforce international norms (such as the norm of state sovereignty) that are intended to shape expectations and fend off challenges to boundary regimes. And they establish and manipulate symbols in an attempt to generate identification with them (Beissinger, 1998, p 176-177).

Briefly, Gülen becomes an international actor through its capacity not only to engage the Turkish state domestically but especially its alliances with the state outside the national boundaries. Functioning as a product of the Republican era within the institutional limits of the state, the Gülen Community has undertaken a considerable degree of social engineering and project management at the international level. It enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy on the basis of its congruence with the nation, national interest and the nation-state. Therefore, the Community's sites and organizations remained autonomous from but cooperative with the state.⁷⁰ This facilitated its recognition and legitimization as a civil society organization.

However, the question remains: what kinds of nationalism(s) and its twin concept internationalism(s) are nourished by the congruence of Gülen and the nation? Nairn

⁷⁰See the chapter, Chapter 6 with regard to the debate on civil society.

brilliantly distinguishes different sorts of nationalisms and their counter-parts, namely internationalisms. Instead of an abstract approach to internationalism, he suggests an alternative, deeper understanding of it. Accordingly, nationalism needs to be explicated and analyzed critically in order to understand “its alter ego, internationalism” (Nairn, 1997, p. 46). Hence, the seemingly contradictory Fethullahist claims for nationalism and internationalism are complementary tenets of the same promulgation. Their nature has to be analyzed and explained as twin concepts of the same cultural and political agenda.⁷¹

KATEV attracts and accommodates various faces of nationalisms and their related internationalisms. The Turkish community in and around KATEV displays a diversity of nationalist identities (several Fethullahists, secular, non-religious and/or Islamist businessmen, liberal intellectuals, education specialists, fascist activists etc.). Depending on the kind of nationalism, their internationalist aspirations differed. However, they all associated with the nationalist cause that was mobilized and coordinated by KATEV. Hence, KATEV effectuates a nationalist/internationalist front. Its mobilizational capacity is high in turning different kinds and degrees of national(ist) feelings to common goals, i.e. educational projects.

In addition to the Turks, KATEV manages to attract a variety of local ethnic identities. Although Gülen operated on the basis of unquestioned and discernible borders of Turkish nationhood, it displayed a readiness to welcome Kazak people by inviting and encouraging them to cooperate at different levels of the educational projects and business outlets.⁷² This practical incorporation of the Kazak to the Turkish community is accompanied with encouragement to recall their roots, i.e. the common past with the Turks. The (imagined and/or real) associations ranged from the less pronounced dispositions (such as race, blood) to explicitly emphasized and celebrated qualities (such as culture, linguistic). Moreover, a political discourse accompanied the ethno-cultural aspects of their nationalism and internationalism. There is a consensus that international alliances between Kazak and Turkish states and a prospective regional front is in the interest of both societies. However, the political agendas also display multiple faces, which range from peaceful cooperation

⁷¹ See also Hedetoft (1995).

⁷² The best graduates of Gülen’s schools are offered jobs in KATEV or other Turkish companies with relatively better salaries compared to the jobs offered by the locals.

between Turkic countries to the extremist *ülkâ* of consolidating all of the Turkic races under the same state.

The future of the Turkish faith and agenda in Central Asia may widely depend on the characteristics of this blending. Hence, it is of a great importance to detect how the homogenizing national official ideology of the Turkish state accommodates Gülen's discourse in capturing the wide-ranging diversity of national identities in Almati. Interestingly, we are witnessing that an Islamic community turns a variety of national affiliations to a common goal. It manages the moral, cultural and implicitly political approximation of Turkic countries, and eventually the homogenization of Central Asia.

To the extent it employs civil means (such as education) and civilizational goals (such as dialogue between civilizations, international peace and progress of science), Gülen legitimizes itself as a civil society organizing. This is extremely important in the face of the yearnings for civil society in Kazakhstan. Paradoxically, the Kazak state allies with Gülen while discouraging local religious organizations and associations through strict policies. Any religious organization with less than one hundred members is illegal. This makes the formation of the religious organization extremely difficult.⁷³ Post-Soviet Central Asian countries suffered not only many years of suppression of Islam but also the destruction of all civic initiative. After many years of isolation, their primary goal seems to be "real ties ... to the outside world" and international connections. (Ruffin, 1999, p.4). Kazak society calls for the international community to be involved in its first experimentation with the rule of law, citizenship and the development of civil society.⁷⁴ Gülen is answering this all assisting in the realization of this aspiration.

Conclusion

An Islamic Community, one which would be expected to be anti-state (according to the premises of the compatibility debate), is facilitating the achievement of the Turkist aspirations in Middle Asia of Republican Kemalists and Islamist and fascist nationalists. I discussed how these putatively opposing identities in Turkey seem to become one cohesive

⁷³ M. H. Ruffin and D. Waugh(1999) *Civil Society in Central Asia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, p.13.

⁷⁴ E. A. Zhovtis (1999) "Freedom of Association and the Question of Its Realization in Kazakhstan" M. H. Ruffin and D. Waugh(1999) *Civil Society in Central Asia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

collectivity in the name of the "Nation as State."⁷⁵ This finding largely explained how the fuzzy boundaries of the Gülen Community are symbolically transposed to real boundaries of nation-state on the basis of the fellow feeling, i.e. "we" versus the others. The 'elective affinities' between Gülen and the Republic become clearer on the basis of evidence from Almati. Findings strongly challenge the popular discourses of globalization and the putatively diminishing efficacy of the state. The interactions between Islam and the state are the key to understanding the prospects of Islam for civil society as well as the attainability of civil society in a non-Western context. In this respect, it is important to capture and explain emergent Islamic sensibilities of nationhood as well as internationalist agendas. The alliances between Islamic and secular Turkish nationalism invite further thinking about the Turkist political agenda in Central Asia.

Bringing the presumably abstract and universalistic concepts, that is the nation-state, nationhood, civil society and Islam, down to the level of everyday life, extensive ethnographic evidence of the present study speaks to larger concerns: First, it rejects the problematic focus of the debate, that is the compatibility of civil society and Islam. Gülen's engagements with the state take the form of overt alliances in the international domain. This has important implications for the Community's capacities as a civil society organization.⁷⁶ The very nature and forms of these international cooperations in Central Asia recently started to have an effect on the domestic interaction between Islam and the state. This is a post-Soviet phenomenon. Its novelty and importance require further research for the understanding of the prospects of Turkish Islam and civil society. Put more specifically, the influence of Turkish Islam (Gülen's organizations in particular) in Central Asia on the development of civil society in the Turkic world is still to be explored. The relationship between nationalism, Turkish Islam and civil society becomes increasingly important in the Turkic world in the Post-Soviet era.

In order to think further and critically on this issue of nationalism and civil society, another flaw of the compatibility debate has to be handled. The debate imposes boundaries between the realms of culture and politics, as well as macro and micro level of analysis.

⁷⁵ Gellner (1995); Hall (1998); McCrone (1998).

The present study blurs the boundaries between culture and politics by showing how identities and ways of life and national culture are central to the study of civil society-state interaction.⁷⁷ The diverse manifestations of Turkish nationalism in Gülen's international domain at both identity and institutional level,⁷⁸ refutes the separation between purely cultural and political approaches to nationhood. Ignatieff was right in claiming that "The cosmopolitans ... are not beyond the nation; and a cosmopolitan ... will always depend, in the end, on the capacity of nation-states to provide security and civility for their citizens"(1994, p. 9). However, he was wrong in dichotomizing ethnic and civic nationalism: his dislike for the former (the cultural ideal of primary form of belonging and identity) and promotion of the latter (the political doctrine of self-determination) is misleading, as modern nationalism embraces both of them.⁷⁹ The from-below and top-down constructions of fellow-feelings are not mutually exclusive or distinctly separate. Modern forms of nationalism successfully integrate political and cultural identities and thereby naturalizes *hizmet* (the religiously-motivated service to the Community) as a voluntary and taken-for-granted service to the nation-state.⁸⁰

Moreover, Gülen qualifies as a bridge between West and Islamic and Turkic ways of lives, especially by its emphasis on English instruction, universality of science, progress, and secular education. On the basis of these civilizational accomplishments, its civilizational claim for developing civil society is regarded with less suspicion and mistrust. In contrast to the predictions of clash between civilizations,⁸¹ it volunteers to create dialogue between civilizations, not only between the West and Islam but also among various Turkic cultures. Evidently, the findings challenge the pessimistic theories of the incompatibility of Islam with nationalism, secular nation-state and civil society and the West.

⁷⁶ Interestingly, although there is a substantial literature which highlights the importance of the penetrations between the state and the civil society such as Hall (1995) and Mann (1993) this idea is properly traced in contemporary Muslim countries. This is largely due to the prevalence of the compatibility debate.

⁷⁷Yack (2000).

⁷⁸ Brubaker (1998). See also Calhoun (1997) where he argues that nationalism is too complex to be explained by only one factor, such as state formation or ethnicity.

⁷⁹ M. Ignatieff (1993) *Blood and Belonging*. Toronto: Viking.

⁸⁰ Hall (1998b); Beissinger (1998).

⁸¹Huntington (1996).

This challenge may seem to provide support for the optimists of Islam and civil society, since Gülen's self-organizations, voluntary and charity-based foundations do indeed resemble civil society in the West. However, the present study revealed that the issue is more complex than the optimistic advocates of civil society and Islam argue. The festive diagnosis that Islam is one of the multiple modernities and which redefines modernity in authentic ways is incomplete and not exploratory. It is problematic to assume a correlation between diversity, self-organization and civil society. If we assume this, we would dismiss the incivil ultra-nationalist potential of the ethnic politics in Kazakhstan. Gülen's mobilization of a huge diversity may not always attract differences that are civil. Hence, the key to understanding civil society and Islam is the nature and the implications of the shifting linkages (emerging cooperations) between the state and Islam. At the international level, state-society interaction includes the relations of Gülen with the host state as well. Concretely put, the contribution of the Kazak state is immense; it offers the buildings and infrastructural facilities for Gülen's schools. Hence, the structural proceedings behind the ethnic politics –the inner propellants beyond the public faces-- are to be revealed in order to understand the inner dynamics of the civil society. It is these processes which do underlie the various public faces. Unfortunately, optimists celebrate merely the latter. By confining their interest to the apparent super-diversified public faces of Islam and the related diversity they create in the public sphere, the optimists are missing the complicated ways this seeming diversity is structured. They conveniently neglect that these public presentations may hide a real or potential homogeneity beyond their fashionable public faces. Hence, urgent questions are neglected: what kind of diversity and what kind of homogeneity?⁸² It is this neglect which backs up the happy picture of peaceful coexistence of differences.

To conclude, the state-framed nationalisms sheltered by Gülen do not entail an inherent quality of being civil, democratic or anti-democratic. As Brubaker argues, state-framed nationalism simply designates the "congruence" of the nation with the state.⁸³ This congruence became more striking outside the national borders and transformed the negotiations and uneasy engagements to smooth cooperations. This is perhaps because the

⁸² This issue is already discussed in length in Chapter 4.

⁸³ Brubaker (1998).

state's control was more "natural" and taken-for-granted at the level of international world order. However, the intended and/or unintended consequences of these nationalist alliances will depend on how this particularly modern Community, Gülen, will reconcile and organize several types of nationalism and internationalism with modern versions of Turkish Islam. For the present time, it is important to catch the shifting linkages between Islam and the state, i.e. the emerging alliances between them, since it invites further thinking about the Turkist political agenda in Central Asia as well as the prospects of civil society and Islam.

CHAPTER 8 :PATRIARCHY “CIVILIZED”

Introduction

In Turkey, women's public visibility and participation has been historically mistaken as women's empowerment and emancipation. This is largely due to the gender strategies of the enlightened male elite, who have been using women's visibility to legitimize and complement their “civilizing” reforms. This chapter describes how Gülen plays a part in the gendered political culture of the secular Republic. The women-friendly sites and the pro-women attitudes of Gülen have facilitated the Community's claim that Turkish Islam is developing civil society in Turkey. The seemingly “progressive” attitudes of Fethullahist men in welcoming women to their communal sites and events will be critically analyzed. Indeed, women do participate in Gülen's activities and organizations. However, it is important to capture who exactly these women in the window sites are and to explore what the actual situation of Fethullahist women is. The findings reveal the characteristics of patriarchal structures and practices, as well as Republican masculinities, which are obscured behind the striking public visibility and participation of women in the Community. I will also explore how and in which ways different sources of power are exclusively monopolized by the Fethullahist male elite.

Is there an inherent source of women's subordination, such as women's biological disadvantages, as F. Gülen argues, or the essence of Islam, as liberal feminists claim? Or is it the interaction between various male-dominated power structures, i.e., separate but interpenetrating patriarchies, which exclude women from power networks? The findings reveal a good deal of overlap and consistency between the gender strategies of Fethullahist and the Republicans' nation-building elite. This chapter is an attempt to disclose another congruence between the Republic and the Gülen Community: Are we perhaps witnessing the inheritance of patriarchal gender strategies from secularist to Islamist social engineers? What role does women's public visibility play in their “civilizing” projects? Are these male reformers genuine pro-feminists, struggling for gender equality? It is extremely important to question and problematize this belief, since it is widely shared by Kemalist women, who think of Atatürk as a feminist, as well as by Fethullahist women, who see F.

Gülen as an enlightened reformer of Islam. Can emancipation and empowerment be a gift to Turkish and Fethullahist women from an enlightened male elite?

The gender order is of a great importance as it reveals another level of Gülen's engagements with the state.

Patriarchy as an Analytical Tool: Revealing Further Congruence between the Republic and Gülen

I will employ patriarchy as a tool to assist in revealing further congruence between the Republic and Gülen. Both groups are analytically distinct, however, they do interact. This chapter conceptualizes patriarchy as a system of institutionalized structures--placed in historical context--social relations and practices. The analysis of patriarchal institutions, sites and practices will be combined with an examination of gender discourses. In addition, it will be linked with the formation of gendered subjectivities.¹ For practical reasons, I will call this multi-dimensional nature of patriarchy the "gender order". This present study focuses on the micro-borders, where the spheres of influence of Gülen and the state interact and sometimes interpenetrate each other, which, in the end, reinforces male-domination and female subordination. It is particularly important to capture the relation--similarities, tension or contestations--between different manifestations of patriarchy, i.e., private, public and communal sites.²

The concept and theories of patriarchy were attacked on the basis of their essentialist and ahistorical accounts of gender orders. Many critiques suggested abandoning the concept, since it was regarded as inherently defective.³ The most important criticism was that the concept was too universalistic and thus blind to differences of culture, ethnicity, class and historical background.⁴ Domination takes different forms in various social

¹ B. Fox (1988) "Conceptualizing Patriarchy", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol.25, no.2, p.177; D. Kandiyoti(1998) "Afterword", to Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.) *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press.

² S. Walby (1990) *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

³ See S. Rowbotham (1981), The Trouble with "Patriarchy", in *No Turning Back: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement 1975-1980*, ed. Feminist Anthology Collective, London: Women's Press.

⁴ Millett's approach to the power difference in gender relations as unchanging throughout history is an example to the ahistorical accounts of patriarchy. K. Millett (1969) *Sexual Politics*, New York: Bantam Books.

formations and social institutions within a society.⁵ Moreover, patriarchy defined as fixed relations of power fails to incorporate the concept of social change since it disregards women's potential power and agency to transform social reality. This static definition of patriarchy essentializes women as an ultimately oppressed category. "Within this framework, the power of the subjugator is emphasized while the power of the subjugated is underplayed" (Arat, 1989, p. 18). Within this theoretical framework, a long history of feminist movement, its accomplishments and future prospects for progress would be left out of place and untheorized.⁶ Similarly, it essentializes men as inherent oppressors regardless of their social sources of power and the nature of the social structure, which privileges them for domination. However, these critiques apply only to a few earlier theories of patriarchy.

Walby's definition of patriarchy is useful as an analytical tool and concept since it enables us to approach and to understand a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The usage of the term social structure is important here, since it clearly implies the rejection of both biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one" (Walby, 1990, p. 20). In other words, patriarchy is an important analytical tool that enables the social scientist to problematize the fact that gender inequality lies in the way that power is organized and structured at different levels, such as within the family, in social groups and movements, religious associations, voluntary organizations, the state and other political institutions.⁷

More recent use of the term overcomes the initial defects and problems associated with the concept.⁸ The more recent literature had incorporated an historical dimension, and thereby social change, into the analysis of institutionalized gender inequality.⁹ Unlike most liberal feminists' assumptions, acquisition of women's civil and political rights has not led to the "declining significance" of patriarchies (Walby, 1996). On the contrary, the forms

⁵ V. Beechey (1979) "On Patriarchy", *Feminist Review*, vol. 3.

⁶ With regard to the challenges of women's groups and feminist movement to the formal legal framework and women's experiences of citizenship, see Y. Arat (2000a).

⁷ See K. Millett (1969) *Sexual Politics*. New York: Bantam Books.

⁸ For attempts to synthesize the useful aspects of theories of patriarchy, see Walby (1990); V. Beechey (1980) *Women's Oppression Today*. London: Verso.

and intensities of patriarchy have changed over time. These changes require a differentiation between progress and social change with regard to gender equality. In the face of explicit continuities between the patriarchies of early Republicans and contemporary Gülen, can we talk about genuine progress toward gender equality? Or have there just been changes in the forms and intensity of subordination?

In addition to the historical sensitivity of the redefined concept, the present study brings in culture and identity. Accordingly, it illustrates the paradox of patriarchal masculinities, which were formed initially in the nation-building period. The chapter will trace the persistence of several characteristics of these masculinities to the contemporary Gülen Community. The recently emerging emphasis on masculinities is useful in complementing feminist literature and its focus on women and femininities.¹⁰

However, a simple illustration of patriarchal identities and institutions is not sufficient. “[D]iscussions of power or systems of power, must involve an explanation of the source of the power; and arguments that rest on assumptions of innate male desire for power are invalid” (Fox, 1988, p. 165, italics added). Hence, the present study aims to trace the culturally and historically specific roots of the gender order, patriarchal practices and structures as well as gender sensibilities, which disable Fethullahist women from engaging the sources of communal power. Hence, it is particularly important to have a closer and critical look at Fethullahist women’s experiences--the subordinated situation of women in the Gülen Community.¹¹ How can we explain Fethullahist women’s disadvantaged status in the face of the Community’s claims to be developing “civil society”? Is their subordination perhaps related to a paradoxical concept of progress through social engineering and top-down, civilizing projects of the male elite?

⁹ Fox (1988).

¹⁰ R. W. Connel (1995) *Masculinities*. Cambridge, UK : Polity Press.

¹¹ See C. Calhoun (1994). I am using women as a category for practical, analytical and theoretical reasons. By doing so, I am risking critiques for essentializing women and their experiences. However, my findings revealed and acknowledged both the differences and the commonalities and shared experiences (practices, reflections, choices and aspirations) of the women in and around the Community. Hence, I strongly believe my usage of the label “Fethullahist women”, and sometimes “women in Turkey” during the nation-building process, is helpful in highlighting the similar disadvantaged situation of those women and to illustrate the exclusionary and subordinating male discourses, networks and institutionalized structures, in that particular socio-cultural context and time.

Some feminist critiques have attacked the use of "women" as a category, finding it not only essentializing but also reductionist, as it reduces the diversity of women to a common denominator.¹² However, refusal to use women as a category is also problematic. As in the analysis of collective action, women's collective interests or disadvantaged positions need to be theorized.¹³ If social research were deprived of social collectivities, such as Fethullahist and Republican women and men, political analysis would be severely undermined¹⁴:

(I)t may not be helpful to allow the critique of essentialism to become a prohibition against all general categories of identity (p.18)...(t)he point is to see that under certain circumstances, mainly identified as political but I think arguably also intellectual, self-critical claims to strong, basic and shared identity may be useful. At its simplest, the argument suggests that where a particular category of identity has been repressed, delegitimated or devalued in dominant discourses, a vital response may be to claim value for all those labeled by that category, thus implicitly invoking it in an essentialist way ... to appeal to the presumed commonalities in the embodied experience of women. (Calhoun, 1994, p. 17-18)

A wide range of definitions of patriarchy has been used in social theory. However, rather than creating chaos, this seemingly vague variety can be turned to the strength of the term by revealing and exploring its various manifestations across time and different collectivities. The implicit relationship between the nature of patriarchy in a community or social movement and the national culture (of the nation-state) can be revealed only by recognizing commonalities between the experiences of collective identities. Hence, Fethullahist (Islamic) women and Republican Turkish (secular) women as collective identities cannot be dismissed too soon, since it is extremely important to reveal the continuities and similarities in their experiences. Similarly, Fethullahist men and the Republican nation-building Kemalists are important categories, the comparison of which may reveal persistent patriarchal practices and order behind the polished images and discourse of progress toward gender equality. A critical reading of the historical background of the gender order in Turkey will help to situate my gender analysis of the Community in the larger context.

¹² D. Smith (1987) *Everyday Word as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press; J. Butler (1990) *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge

¹³ B. Laslett, J. Brenner and Y. Arat (1995) *Rethinking the Political: Gender, Resistance and the State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.3.

¹⁴ I. M. Young (1995) "Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective", in Laslett et al., p. 99-124.

Islam: Just a Different Form of Patriarchy?

History of social theory on patriarchy suffers from an excessive and obsessive focus on Islam as a monolithic, ultra-oppressive system that imprisons Muslim women in the private sphere, where the male head of the household or harem appears as a despotic patriarch. There is a good amount of work, which exoticizes the nature of the exclusion of Muslim women from the non-private sphere¹⁵, either by taking their freedom of mobility away and caging them in the harem or household, or by rendering them invisible behind the veil and fences.¹⁶ In contrast to this exoticizing view, the counter-argument has claimed that women have participated in the public sphere in different contexts and at different times within the Muslim world. Despite the contrasting views about women's presence and participation in the public sphere, both approaches share the dichotomy between public-private sphere as the basis of their argument. Put differently, they have maintained the separation of the public and private spheres by centering on the former in understanding women's emancipation. Accordingly, these two views clashed: The first one claimed that women were absent from the public sphere. The second one argued, on the contrary, that women's public presence took culturally specific forms such as participation in healing, charity, trade, financing the construction of mosques, hospitals, bridges etc.¹⁷; taking part in embroidering, tailoring, money-lending, investment in land¹⁸; acquiring social power through the religio-spiritual sphere as in the case of female mystics.¹⁹

The second approach aimed to rescue Islam from the so-called orientalist position that essentialized Islam as an inherently oppressive entity where women were represented as the passive victims of an inherently arbitrary, totalitarian male hegemony at home. Although some of the literature from both perspectives made contributions to our understanding of women's situation in Muslim societies, they suffered from the same problem of reducing the gender problem and its solution to women's visibility in the public sphere. Women's emancipation and equality has been equated with stepping out of the

¹⁵ See Montesquieu (1973) *Persian Letters*; J. Dengler (1978) "Turkish Women in the Ottoman Empire" in L. Beck and N. Keddie (ed.) *Women in the Muslim World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹⁶ See the examples given from the Islamic world, Connell (1995) *Masculinities*.

¹⁷ F. Davis (1986) *The Ottoman Lady*. New York, London: Greenwood Press.

¹⁸ L.A and M.C Fallers (1976) "Sex Roles in Edremit", in J.G. Peristiany (ed.) *Mediterranean Family Structures*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁹ L. Garnett (1990) *The Dervishes in Turkey*. London: Octagon.

imposed domicile, namely the private sphere--whether it is in the form of a harem, a large household embracing the extended kin, or a nuclear family. Although the importance of this matter is not to be denied, a narrow focus on the issue led to blindness and insensitivity to the nature and different forms of women's oppression in both private and non-private spheres. More importantly, it downplayed, if not neglected, a good deal of gender discrimination and subordination in the public sphere, where women's presence was made a "progressive" end in itself. In other words, women's entrance into the public realm has been naively evaluated and taken-for-granted as progress toward gender equality rather than a change in the form and intensity of the patriarchy. Below, I will illustrate how women's public visibility may be just a facade disguising new forms of patriarchy.

This is not to deny the potential advantages that entrance into the public sphere may endow, but they should not be accepted as bestowed equality and empowerment. The origin of this seemingly pro-woman attitude was the nation-building male elite. The historically specific masculinities of Atatürk's followers will be assessed critically with regard to their equation of gender equality with public visibility. In this chapter, I will argue that the Fethullahist male elite willingly inherited this paradoxical attitude toward gender order from the secularist, Republican Kemalists. Fethullahist and Republican male elite are Islamist and secularist reformers. By revealing the continuities between these nation-building and Fethullahist male elite, the chapter will differentiate between progress and mere social change throughout history.

As Mernissi correctly argues, progress toward equal rights in several Muslim countries did not lead to liberation or equality for women. But the reason she provides for this observation is not satisfactory. She argues that liberation did not come because Muslim societies chose to subject or subordinate their modern code to the Qur'an, particularly with regard to the issues concerning marriage, family and divorce.²⁰ However, the problem is not just the favoring of Qur'anic law over modern code. Turkey is a good example, having replaced Islamic law with Swiss civil code. The reason the gender issues could not be resolved by granting human and political rights is due to the persistence of historical,

²⁰ G. Karmi (1996) "Woman, Islam and Patriarchalism", in Mai Yamani (ed.) *Feminism and Islam*, London: Ithaca Press. Karmi backs up her argument with Fatima Mernissi's example of Morocco, which keeps respect

cultural legacy. In other words, we need to understand the gendered nature of the national culture, which is neither merely Islamic nor secular. The chapter will reveal Gülen as a striking example of how Islam “as practices and ways of lives” is a product of the secular Republic.

Şeriat (Islamic law) is argued to dictate that women were not equals to men and therefore that they had to be protected and kept within the private sphere.²¹ Qur’anic regulations on matters of the private sphere--which affect women the most--subordinate and discriminate against women. This stereotype of Islam has contributed further to a shallow understanding of gender order that equates women’s liberation only with women’s entrance into the public sphere. Hence, it is important to consider the Qur’an in its historical and social context in order to explain its different manifestations and interpretations, such as Said Nursi’s and Fethullah Gülen’s versions. As the type and intensity of domination varies widely across the Muslim world, the “social and practical questions [need to be] understood as a specific response to the contemporary socio-political situation” (Karmi, 1996, p. 81). Therefore, the gender order in the Community needs to be located in the broader context of the Turkish Republic.

In addition to rescuing Islam from essentializing arguments, the presumed “moral universal message of Islam” needs to be de-essentialized. This is not to deny that this moral message ensures male supremacy. However, it is important to examine critically whether oppression and inequality originates from and is maintained purely by the essence of Islam and the all-encompassing morality it imposes, or from persistent patriarchal practices, discourses and institutions which embraced and predated Islam. Although Islam and patriarchy are extremely interwoven and reinforce each other, the patriarchal systems which have dominated the world for thousands of years need to be dissociated from their Islamic allies for conceptual clarity. This analytical separation of Islam and other forms of patriarchy (Fethullahist and Republican patriarchies) is important in order to reveal the similarities and linkages between them.

[I]t is clear that Islam has been exploited by patriarchal society to legitimize its discrimination against women.... In this context, the actual role of the Qur’an in

and devotion to Islamic law together with the application of a modern code. Mernissi (1975) *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Muslim Society*. Cambridge, Mass: Shenkman Publishing Company, p. ix-x, 82.

²¹ Y. Arat (1986) *The Patriarchal Paradox*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson, p. 23.

patriarchalism is of secondary importance, for the real problem for woman is patriarchalism itself which will exploit any opportunity it perceives to legitimize its objectives. (Karmi, 1996, p. 82-83)

As I will elucidate below, women's entrance into the communal sites of Gülen does not solve gender inequality as "[s]eparation and subordination are embodied in the institutions" (Karmi, 1996, p. 69). Public sphere and communal sites maintained patriarchies through strong commitment to masculinist discourses and practices. As this present study regards Islamic collectivities and Muslim societies as different manifestations of patriarchal societal arrangements, I will analyze the gender issue in the Gülen Community in its historical and socio-political context. An analysis that isolates the Islamic community from the highly secular, yet patriarchal social context into which it was born would be defective and biased. The aim of the chapter is to underline where and how the Republican state and the national culture overlaps and co-operates with the nationalist Islamist agenda of the Gülen Community with regard to the gender order. Before discussing the situation of women in the Gülen Community, I will investigate the historical background of the gender issue in Turkey focusing on the period of nation-building and early years of the Republic. An examination of the conception of gender equality of Republican men and women will help to shed light on gender strategies in the Gülen Community.

The Insertion of Turkish Women into Politics by the Male Nation-building Elites: Patriarchy "Modernized"

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the goal of the nation-building elite led by Atatürk was to dissociate the new Turkish state from the Sultanate and the Caliphate tradition in a radical way. The Turkish nation had to catch up with the contemporary West by all means possible. During the 1920s and 1930s, Turkey went through an intense and all-encompassing secularization, which was socially engineered after the Western model. Since Tanzimat reforms at the end of the 19th Century, bifurcation and continuous tension between tradition and modernity²²--Islam and secularism--has never been absent from the scene. Women's rights and equality have been strongly seen and conceptualized in relation

²² See Berkes (1999), with regard to the historical and socio-cultural roots of the pendulum between Islam and secularization in Turkey.

to these tensions. Stated more specifically, gender equality has been one of the *arac* (means) to the formation of the modern nation-state.²³ Tekeli correctly argues:

Women in the Western world struggled fiercely for their emancipation and their political rights. This lasted in some countries for a century and in others even longer... In Turkey, however, women's emancipation was embedded in a process of change that could be rightly called the process of "secularization" and "Westernization." (Tekeli, 1981, p. 293)

Leading the War of Independence and putting an end to the Ottoman Empire, a minority group of revolutionary Westernizers, namely the Kemalists, had to confront the religious, conservative circles in order to grant women their political and civil rights:

If the basis of the Ottoman Empire was the religious authority and if, on the other hand, women were "the" social category which was most deeply oppressed by this authority, then the importance of the role that the women's rights movement would play within the struggle of the revolutionaries against the hegemony of the religious authorities was quite evident. We can see a clear formulation of this strategy in a speech in Inebolu that Mustafa Kemal made in 1925. He said, "Let women see the world with their own eyes and let the whole world see their faces." (Tekeli, 1981, p. 297)

Atatürk underlined his goal: "Turkish women shall be free, enjoy education and occupy a position equal to that of men as they are entitled to."²⁴ According to this modernizing mentality, women had to be freed from the cages of Islam and, thereby, participate in the public sphere. This mentality manifested itself as the central concern in Atatürk's discourse. Women had to be freed from the "*mahrem*" (sacred and forbidden) sphere into the public arena.²⁵ Accordingly, women's equality and emancipation has been rendered as their visibility in the public sphere. Rather than entailing a genuinely feminist drive to empower women, Kemalists' immediate intention was to enable them to step out of their homes into public life. This was regarded as proof of the radical "democratization" of the regime.²⁶ Indeed, Kemalist reforms in the 1920s and early 1930s promoted women's rights dramatically: equal educational opportunities, equal rights of marriage, divorce, inheritance, property ownership (adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926), compulsory replacement of the veil and headscarf by Western styles of clothing, and political rights for

²³ S. Tekeli (1998) "Türk Aydınlanması Kadınlara Nasıl Baktı?" (How did the Turkish enlightenment look at women?) in *Türkiye'de Aydınlanma* (Enlightenment in Turkey), İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, p.178-179; See also D. Kandiyoti (1991) *Women, Islam and the State*, with regard to women and nation-building.

²⁴ Cited from Abadan-Unat (1981), *Atatürk'un Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Speeches of Atatürk), January 21, 1923, p.147-148.

²⁵ *Atatürk'un Söylev ve Demeçleri* (1961), p. 216.

²⁶ Tekeli(1981) "Women in Turkish Politics" in Abadan-Unat (ed) *Women in Turkish Society*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 298.

women in 1934, which was an earlier acquisition by Turkish women compared to many other countries. In short, the public sphere was made clearly and explicitly more open and inviting to women than ever before, especially for employment and career opportunities.²⁷ Indeed, Turkish women's participation in the labour force, including in high prestige jobs, is higher than in many Western countries.²⁸

This optimistic depiction of women's situation in the early years of the Republic misses two important points: Firstly, the official ideology, which identifies the Kemalist male elite as the initiator, i.e., the motor, of women's liberalization, is false. Women were emancipated but "unliberated".²⁹ Kemalists like to promote the argument that their leader Atatürk "emancipated women just as he reorganized the Turkish feudal society into one of modernism but", as Sirin Tekeli (a leading feminist activist and highly respected feminist scholar) argues,

It is not true...because our women's movement, even what we might call today a feminist movement, goes back to 1869...It is the oldest in the area...Since the Ottoman Empire extended into Eastern Europe at that time, we were part of those developments—intellectual, social...and then of course in the Tanzimat Period it took off...³⁰

In addition to the earliest women's movement originating from and influenced by the encounters of Turkish women with European societies, there is another important argument which seeks to highlight and explain the sources of women's social and political power in the Imperial Harem of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries³¹:

Indeed, this period in the empire's history is often referred to, in both popular and scholarly literature, as "the sultanate of women". The women of the Imperial Harem, especially the mother of the reigning sultan and his leading concubines, were considerably more active than their predecessors in the direct exercise of power: in creating and manipulating the domestic political factions, in negotiating with foreign powers, and in acting as regents for their sons. Furthermore, they played a central role in what we might call the public culture of sovereignty: public rituals of imperial legitimization and royal patronage of monumental building and artistic production. (L. Peirce, 1993, p. vii)

²⁷ B. (Sayari) Toprak (1981) "Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey" in Abadan-Unat (ed.)

²⁸ A. Oncu (1981) "Turkish Women in the Professions. Why so many?" in Abadan-Unat (ed.)

²⁹ Kandiyoti (1987) "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case", in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no.2, p.317-38.

³⁰ See E. W. Fernea (1998) *In Search of Islamic Feminism*. New York, London: Doubleday. A quote from Ferneas's conversations with Sirin tekeli who is the founder of the Women's Library in İstanbul. See also Serpil Cakir (1994), *Osmanlı'da Kadın Hareketi* (Women's movement in the Ottomans).İstanbul: Metis yayınları.

³¹ L. Peirce (1993) *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Harem*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

As these critical feminist approaches illustrate, women's empowerment and liberation has to be traced to the structural and political forces in the Ottoman Empire and thereby, to women's own endeavor and action, rather than to Kemalists' male-initiated social engineering.³² Western women stand up for their own rights whereas Turkish women in the Republic have been granted their rights by male elite. In other words, while Western women formed their own feminist discourse along other modern social movements from below and under an already existing modern state, Turkish women have been introduced to politics by Westernizing men whose primary aim was to set up a "modern, liberal Turkish Republic" and to create a modern national spirit.³³ Interestingly, we have a picture of "modernized" women who were welcomed to Turkish politics by male elite rather than by their self-longing, action and endeavor. The modern and civilized Turkish nation had to be accomplished with a non-segregated and more egalitarian public image and political sphere where women's would be present, unlike in other Muslim countries. Accordingly, "[w]omen's rights issues were used by the political authorities of the new republic for their symbolic value" (Tekeli, 1981, p. 299).

However, through the radical social engineering of the nation-building elite, some dramatic changes in the patriarchy took place. Women acquired relatively equal civic and political rights to men as the concept of citizenship was established. They received formal equality by the legal framework, although the Constitution itself continued to discriminate against women in explicit and implicit ways.³⁴ Beginning with the early years of the Republic, the ratio of women, even in the most prestigious spheres such as academia, began to increase.³⁵ In 1934, men's suffrage was extended to women and Atatürk encouraged women to participate in the elections of 1935. Turkish women entered government and the parliament. However, their entrance was dependent on male invitation and devices and thereby the male-initiative for gender equality and emancipation. In other words, gender equality was engineered at the mercy of a "progressive" reformer male elite.

³² S. Cakir (1994) *Osmanlı'da Kadın Hareketi* (Women's Movement in the Ottomans). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

³³ See D. Kandiyoti (1991)

³⁴ Y. Arat (2000a), p. 275-287.

³⁵ A. Oncu (1981); Abadan-Unat (1986) *Women in the Developing World: Evidence From Turkey*, p.143.

Not surprisingly, women's celebrated place in politics remained marginal.³⁶ "A study of the effective mode of participation of women in political life shows that, in reality, women's role in the political system has remained a 'symbolic one' " (Abadan-Unat, 1981, p. 19).³⁷ Very few women are politically active and they seldom play any politically significant role.

In other words, gender reforms, which aimed at women's participation in the public sphere, served the modern image of Turkish society and not a genuine empowerment and liberation for women. "The image of emancipated women [had to be] in line with 'true' identity of the collectivity--the new Turkish nation" (Moghadam, 1993, p. 81). Thus, the male-initiated project for women's public visibility was an integral part of Turkey's commitment to Westernization, secularization and democracy, as well as to nation-building.³⁸

But after radical reforms and encouragement for women to enter into and participate in the sphere of politics, why did Turkish women remain at the margin of politics? The argument that they were less inclined to work in political parties and organizations and that they were inherently less willing to become organized and participate actively is false. Essentializing women as a lesser gender, it underestimates the gendered nature of the social structure which strongly discouraged women from competing for power in politics, but it also overlooks the persistence of patriarchal practices which disabled women from gaining power and authority. This is the paradox of women in Turkey. As Yesim Arat argues, the social structure and gender mentality that pushed women into the political arena disarmed them from competition for and engagement with power structures.³⁹ Indeed, the legal system has been reformed only to recognize the basic equality of men and women, although it does slightly discriminate against women. Not surprisingly, the further promises of the Westernization project for women's equality and empowerment were not kept because of the persistence of patriarchal structures and discourse in a different,

³⁶ Arat (1989)

³⁷ Abadan-Unat (1981) refers to S. Tekeli's thesis.

³⁸ See Kandiyoti (1991); Moghadam (1993).

³⁹ Arat (1989) for a detailed account of the dilemma and Tekeli (1981), pp. 299-302, for the statistical account of how and why women's proportion in the parliament decreased in the following periods and reached the lowest number in 1946 elections.

modernized and polished way. "In this male-dominated society, women representatives benefited from men's power until they competed for office" (Arat, 1989, p. 116-117). "Once in politics, women confronted many problems because of their gender" (Arat, 1989, p. 119). The women who were initiated into this completely male-dominated realm needed "supportive husbands and fathers" at home in order to survive in politics where the unequal distribution of power and discrimination against women is very explicit and persistent. The gendered nature of the public spheres which seemingly opened their arms to women were indeed privileging elite women, since only those women could afford to participate in those male-dominated realms.

It is extremely important to note the voices of the Kemalist women of the early Republican period. They express their gratefulness to Atatürk. Calling themselves "Women of the Enlightenment", their self-definitions are of emancipated, liberated and equal women.⁴⁰ Putting aside the feminist critique of the Republican male elite, there is a strong consensus among this older generation that they were much more equal than the contemporary generation: The current Islamization is seen as a betrayal of Atatürk's pro-women reforms. They disagree with contemporary feminist critiques of Atatürk's pro-women reforms. Moreover, they express their disappointment with the new generation's lack of appreciation for those reforms.⁴¹ Necla Arat finds Tekeli's approach offensive to the Women of the Enlightenment. She despised Tekeli's claim that the Women of the Enlightenment had an identity crisis, since they did not have a chance to figure out what they wanted to.⁴² As a response she provides evidence by quoting Abadan-Unat, one of the leading enlightenment women: "All the progress I accomplished in my life was realized thanks to the civilizing reforms of Atatürk. That is why I call my self Kemalist" (N. Arat, 1998, p. 33).⁴³ Unfortunately, in her quotes N. Arat completely disregards the fact that these women were the privileged elite, most of them being professors.

Although unrecognized by Kemalist women of the early Republican Period, Turkey experienced an imperfect structural transformation of patriarchy from traditional Ottoman-

⁴⁰ Ibid.,

⁴¹ N. Arat (1998), p.32.

⁴² S. Tekeli (1988) *Kadınlar İçin* (For Women) , İstanbul: Alan Yayınları, p.316.

⁴³ Abadan-Unat (1996) *Kum Saatini İzlerken*. (While Watching the Hour Glass) İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, cited in N. Arat (1998).

type to “modern Turkish-Republican-type.” However, although it was not an abolition of patriarchy, nor a genuine pro-women movement for the sake of gender equality and empowerment, the reforms did ameliorate women’s situation in many ways. The degree and form of subordination and discrimination changed as unintended consequences of the reforms. But this was largely due to the accomplishments of a flourishing feminist movement, especially after the 1960s.⁴⁴ Turkish women took advantage of the male-initiated reforms and turned them to their ends as separate from the good of the Nation.

The relationship between the state and women in Republican Turkey has changed substantively since the early decades of the Republic... By the 1980s, and thereafter the defiant daughters of the older generation demanded liberation; they sought autonomy from tradition and the right to speak up as individuals (Y. Arat, 2000b, p. 107). Women have developed a language with which they can now redefine their relationship to the state as individual women who want to articulate their needs and priorities, independent of the state (Ibid., p. 122).

In the following section, I will illustrate extensive findings on how the Gülen Community inherited gender strategies that resembled those of the secularist Republican, nation-building male elite. It is extremely important to note the implications of an all-encompassing social engineering of human souls. The grateful Kemalist women of the early Republican period can be compared to the submissive Fethullahist women in several ways. As the cornerstones of a political and cultural revolution, they both seem to be deprived of an autonomous sphere, which is independent from national social engineering. In other words, they have internalized the identification of their own well-being with the nation’s (in the former case) and the Community’s (in the latter case). The identification with the good of the nation and/or Community is so deep, that there is almost no resistance and challenge among these women, but only appreciation and gratefulness.

Women’s Visibility in Islamic Civil Society Projects

Women’s presence in the communal sites: A “civilized” image for Islam

“Women take part actively everywhere. Being surrounded by them, I feel comfortable in the communal sites.” This was my first observation about the gender order in the popular sites of the Community. Coming from secular circles, I was surprised: How could

⁴⁴ Arat (2000b) “From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Woman in Turkey’s Public Realm”, *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 54, no.1, p. 107-123.

Gülen be so pro-women and tolerant? I told my Atatürkist mother that the Community looked very progressive towards women and that I did not feel any pressure, repression or discrimination in the field. On the contrary, what I sensed was respect, openness, and being very welcomed despite my gender identity, or my religious and political orientation. This first impression was significant and not an illusion; but the meaning behind this picture--a deeper understanding of the Community's patriarchal structure and practices--occurred to me later, as I gradually gained access to the back-stages of the Community.

They treated and made me feel like their *bacı* (sister).⁴⁵ They said they valued science and would give me any support I needed for my thesis because they were proud of young Turkish women who "represent the Turkish nation successfully abroad." Besides, they were fond of the fact that the Gülen Community was going to be [presented] by a secular woman. This mission which was put on my shoulders sounded almost similar to the Kemalist vision of Turkish women whose interest could not be regarded as separate from the good of society, namely the Turkish nation. There was an explicit Fethullahist claim of knowing the real interest of the Turkish nation and how Turkish women had a role to play in attaining civil society.⁴⁶ Thus, in their eyes, my function and responsibility in this project was predetermined and fixed: For them, I was the "scientist woman" who was promoting the civilized image of Turkey, but more importantly Turkish Islam, abroad. Similar to the Turkish women in the nation-building period, women in Gülen's communal sites were still fitting and complementing a certain "civilized image." My presence in Gülen's sites as well as my study of the Community put me automatically to these status as a "means" to the goal of civilizational social engineering.

Fethullahists indeed supported and helped me in many ways, such as supplying me with a large collection of books, journals and media news stories about the Community. They connected me with several key persons in Turkey and abroad, and they helped me in

⁴⁵ A purposely asexual term for women who are seen by men almost as a sister.

⁴⁶ The similarity between the Republican nationalist and Fethullahist discourse is striking: Arat (1998) discussed how Republican nation-builders claimed authority to know the ultimate truth, namely the interest of the Turkish nation and how they equated that with the interest of the Turkish women. Y. Arat (1998) "Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar" (Modernization Project and Women in Turkey) in *Türk Modernleşmesi ve Milli Kimlik* (Modernity and National identity in Turkey) (ed.) R. Kasaba and S. Bozdoğan. Türk Tarih Vakfı. p. 87.

arranging my trip to Kazakhstan and finding my way there. I took advantage of being a young female researcher. The role of *bacı* enabled me to overcome the potential tensions of hierarchy and power between the researcher and the informants. Taking advantage of gendered practices enabled me to be seen as a non-threat.⁴⁷ Contrary to my male colleagues' experiences⁴⁸, I was treated very attentively and respectfully.⁴⁹ The Community seemed to open its arms to women who would be active and involved in the communal sphere.⁵⁰ During my fieldwork, I felt very welcome in the communal sites in which I participated. It was only later that I became self-conscious of the function assigned to me in the [picture-image].

Similar to the Republican attitude toward women's situation as part of the modernization project, Fethullahists regard and treat gender issues as one central aspect of their "civilizing project." Moreover, similar to the Turkish Republic's break from the Islamic Ottoman Empire, the Community feels the immediate need to dissociate from the non-egalitarian, oppressive image of Islam toward women. This is especially evident in Gülen's desire to dissociate from Nur's widely known reputation for severe gender inequality and segregation. Hence, the Gülen Community put effort into ensuring women's public visibility, another attitude akin to the Kemalist Republicans.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁸ A young male Ph.D. fellow complained about hostility, barriers of access and disclosure of information, especially during his Kazakhstan trip. He said that he could not escape from being identified as a journalist. I experienced similar problems of association with journalism, but the way I was treated was far from hostile. On the contrary, I was welcomed despite the fact that they believed I was sent from the West to collect news for the media.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 8. This caring attitude became more visible in Kazakhstan where I was remote from both my country and family, which were two basic identifications for a woman's security, according to Fethullahists.

⁵⁰ For practical reasons, I will refer to this sphere as the communal sphere. My usage of this term highlights Gülen as a collectivity with permeated boundaries and a set of institutionalized organizations that maintain solidarity on the basis of their project-based, common goals. These goals are the core of every event, practice or get together. They ensure a pluralistic platform for people from different backgrounds and create a mosaic of people who are only present in the communal sphere to pursue those goals. Thus, Gülen is slightly different from the classical definition of a "community" with a set of collective representations. The only common activity which keeps people who are not in *hizmet* in the communal sites are the numerous projects and charities around these projects. People in the *hizmet* and/or other insiders should be considered separately with regard to their status in the communal sphere and collective representation. I have already explained their particular status in the chapter of permeated boundaries. Accordingly, my usage of the term "communal sphere" embraces a more dispersed sphere but with fuzzy boundaries, and does not imply a communalism in the Marxist or communitarian sense.

The women in the communal sites displayed a wide range of diversity.⁵¹ In almost all of the social activities I attended, there was a considerable number of women who were from different social backgrounds and had different life stories.⁵² I met career women, academicians, intellectual women who were giving speeches, at dinners, at ceremonies to allocate different awards, in seminars and conferences arranged by the Community, as well as celebrities such as actresses and singers with their striking and extravagant outfits. Some women were wearing scarves (in different styles), and some were uncovered. They were all contributing to the making of a public sphere of peaceful cohabitation. They were the public faces of the Gülen Community, which served their celebrations of diversity.

Most of the women I interviewed or chatted with informally at those “window sites”⁵³, expressed their appreciation of the Community’s egalitarian attitudes toward themselves and stated that they were impressed by the tolerance and open-mindedness of the Community. This was challenging and even eliminating “all [their] prejudices about Islam.” They were conveniently invited to think that they had never been taught or exposed to “real Islam, which may be the opposite of what has been mistaken, feared and looked down upon.”⁵⁴

During my participation at those sites, the Community seemed to be successful in establishing a humanitarian and moderate image of Islam. This was promising to overcome an historically-formed negative image of Islam, especially with regard to women’s situation. Some passionate female defenders of Gülen from secularist circles, have started to defend Gülen in the public sphere and the media. One of the most vocal promoters of Gülen is Nevval Sevindi, a self-identified anthropologist and a journalist.⁵⁵ Her support has

⁵¹ See Chapter 5. The women who were present at the events such as charity dinners or cultural activities had different relationships to the Community, ranging from curious outsiders, to sympathizers, to beneficiaries. The fuzzy boundaries created a more tolerant look and felt more welcoming to an increasing variety of women.

⁵² Most of the life histories I collected display a wide range of diversity among women.

⁵³ I use this term to refer to the most visible and publicized sites of Gülen.

⁵⁴ Quotes from my interviews with women at the communal events of Gülen.

⁵⁵ As a self-identified anthropologist, Sevindi became a public defender and omnipresent sympathizer of F. Gülen. She wrote a book about his visit to New York and several columns in newspapers. After the release of F. Gülen’s cassette on TV, she attacked the opponents of the community by yelling at them and swearing, in a TV show. Her highly dramatized devotion and exaggerated aggression in the name of the Community has been the object of humour for some time.

ironically amounted to heavy insults and swears against anybody who would attack or criticize the Community.

Similar to other Community activities at the window sites, there was no pressure on the women with regard to their clothing, social or political orientation or life-style. I was surprised at the way I was welcomed at the different sites of the community--both by men and women--without feeling obliged to disguise my lack of enthusiasm toward religious issues. Each time I would ask if a scarf would be necessary to participate, the answer was, "No, no, not at all. You should be as you feel and as you are. Covering is just a visual detail which may or may not follow the faith." I also hesitated before shaking hands with men since interpretations of Islam disagreed on forbidding touching the other sex. Many other Islamists in Turkey would refuse to shake hands with members of the opposite sex. I shockingly found out after a while that some Fethullahists would even give friendly hugs to female colleagues, friends, or guests. A few of the leading male Fethullahists explained to me that "all these limitations are not genuine," but are misinterpretations of Islam.

The apparent absence of segregation and exclusion continued to astonish me for quite some time even after I started warming up in my explorations. Was there a gap between the religious text they were reading, Gülen's books and the communal practices? For a short time, I preferred to free-float in the field without any further thought.

My mother, a loyal Atatürkist lawyer, accompanied me to one of the charity dinners in Polat Ronesans Hotel. She strongly believes that Kemalist reforms enabled her to be what she is now. She would often say that, "The dignity of Turkish women is Atatürk's masterpiece and gift to us. Without him, women's condition in Turkey would be a serious humiliation because of Islam." Thus, she initially was very unwilling to go with me partly because of her dislike for any Islamic encounter, but also because she takes the scarf and veil as insults and betrayals to Atatürk's legacy to the future. When we entered the huge ballroom in the five star hotel where people--both women and men--were having dinner, she immediately noticed the big picture of Atatürk projected on a screen. The documentary they showed about the undertakings of the Community was backed up with sayings and quotes from Atatürk and expressed loyalty to his tradition and the laicist state. As my mother's resistance decreased due to the frequent use of Atatürk as a symbol of their

national loyalties, she started to show curiosity about the women sitting at the same table with us. She was very happily surprised to find out that two of the covered women at our table were practicing physicians. Evidently, women in science were the most convincing proof that they were successors of Atatürk's reforms. She was also impressed by the mixture of people at the event. She listened to the speeches, comments and critiques by several women about the community. She tried to understand why all these people were admiring Fethullah Gülen. She told me after the dinner that she was impressed by the tolerant way her questions were answered by the people she had met. Moreover, her suspicion and critical curiosity was nicely handled and even respected. She said with great surprise that "they seem like open-minded people." However, after the dinner she was still mentioning that she hates the veil since it is "so unaesthetic and visually disturbing and awkward." Why would career women wear this "symbol of bigotry?" Moreover, she was still questioning why and how so many people were financially supporting the schools established by an Islamic Community. "Why Islam in a modern age?"

Elite women in window sites

My initial amazement, which grew in the window sites, i.e., the most visible frontstages of Gülen, was strong: Were we observing an Islamist community that tries to preserve the Islamist characteristics of their identity and traditions while attempting to reform women's situation in Islam as well as the gender order in Turkey? But more importantly, were they an Islamist pro-feminist community trying to overcome patriarchy by abolishing gender segregation and promoting gender equality? My fascination did not last long. I soon discovered that their welcoming attitudes and encouragement was mostly for outsiders and especially for elite women (either on a class or status basis) and not for their own wives and daughters.

During one of my interviews with an entrepreneur in the textile industry, I was invited to one of the charity dinners. As I had asked a few minutes earlier about my informant's wife, her religious and political orientation and about her orientation with regard to the Community, I wondered if I would meet her at the charity dinner. The answer was prompt and expressed a subtle tone of sarcasm: "Who...?? Filiz...? Oh no, Filiz does not go out at night," he replied with a smile on his face. I was confused because I had been told a few

minutes earlier that she was “equal” to him and independent in her ideas and choices. Trying to hide my astonishment, I asked if she ever attends communal events during the day. Apparently, she was busy with the children and besides that, she did not want to participate in those events, either. “What would she have to do with that ‘business’ anyway?” At that time, I was not quite sure what business we were talking about and how her absence was justified by the Community. Digging further into this issue for a while, I soon discovered paradoxes, arguments and issues along this line.

The business was the affairs of the Community, which took place in the non-private sphere where the wives and daughters of the Fethullahists did not belong and were not needed. Indeed, they were regarded as irrelevant to the worldly pursuits of the Community and to the decision-making and power relations. Most of the women I interviewed about this problematic division of labour replied that they were “not interested in men’s business” and justified their responsibility for the private sphere as a sacred duty of womanhood and motherhood. As I had been told by Fethullahist men, there was no coercion and I could hardly find any complaints or negative reaction on the part of Fethullahist women. Most of them seemed to be happy with the status quo of the segregated gender order. They seemed to be content with their female circles and separate activities with other Fethullahist women and their children.

I observed another instance of severe gender segregation a few days later. I started to note a contradiction between the pro-women image of the community and their everyday life experiences. Since I had already started to question this point, I arranged an interview with Osman, who, after many years of service for the Community, had ended up in one of the foundations as a coordinator of arts and cultural events. I chose him because he was one of the most socially active men in the Community. Thus, he was organizing and was present at almost all the events. He was networking with artists, singers, actors, and the like. He was very much into the extravagant nightlife of Istanbul, certainly as a “clean” Muslim man “without being involved the dark side of nightlife.” Certainly, he was not supposed to drink and he reported that he usually does not with perhaps “a few undercover exceptions” which should definitely be kept a secret. Running into him without his wife--but with other female company--in several nightclubs and bars, I was very curious whether he ever had his wife’s company at those activities. The moment I asked this question, he

became defensive and felt the need to account to me the “good” qualities of his marriage and wife:

My wife is more beautiful than all those celebrities that I work or socialize with. Her qualities, her virtue, her moral standards, do not compare to any of my friends in the extravagant worlds of fame. You would be amazed if you met her...

I had to interrupt after a while, reminding him of my question that he had avoided answering. “Does she accompany you anywhere? Can I meet her at one of the Community’s events? I am really interested in meeting her,” I insisted. I knew and was told that the crowd he was socializing with practiced no gender segregation. We were talking about the wild nightlife of İstanbul where a practicing Community member was claiming to reconcile his Islamic moralist identity with a milieu of “anything goes.” As I insisted further, he felt obliged to come to the issue I was concerned with:

Ayse does not like nightlife and anything attached to it. Indeed, she hates everything about this artificial world. We prefer not to talk about it, as she does not want to hear about them. Besides, we have two little children. They take all her time. Thus, it does not make sense for her to come to the Community’s activities either.

His cellular phone rang and he started an extremely “informal” conversation with a famous singer who, I understood, was going to sing at an upcoming event where the Community would be trying to attract benefactors for students and schools. It was very obvious that Osman was very good friends with this circle of people and indeed, he was saying so. After 5 or 10 minutes of loose chatting, joking and teasing with the female singer on the phone, he said he was going to call her back as he was in the midst of an interview. Then, he continued to tell me that his wife detested that “immoral” milieu because it was full of sin. He thought she was right about it, but he did not seem to feel any discomfort with the life he was being constantly exposed, to if not involved with. Surprisingly, several Fethullahist men made similar statements about gender segregation. Interestingly, they did not even attempt to justify their contradictory statements since their participation in that public life was a service to the Community.

Were the vices of this immoral world considered less harmful to the Fethullahist men and some elite women than to their wives and daughters? As the Community associates women’s public visibility with women’s emancipation and equality, would the argument follow that their project of civil society would apply only to men and some elite women?

As I discussed earlier, they aim for a more civilized life through permeating boundaries and the creation of a platform of societal compromise where differences would peacefully coexist. How would these sites of “civil society” be more useful and relevant for men, but potentially harmful and/or irrelevant for some women? More importantly, how would they reconcile the contradiction between their argument and the fact that women are to be exposed only to some forms and realms of “civilized” life with some reservation? I asked Osman how his wife thinks of him being alone out there in the non-private sphere, very often until late in the morning:

This is my job. I do it for the Community. I am incredibly connected. If I did not do this, who would? There are so many celebrities who would never ever refuse when I ask for something. Ayse should be, and indeed is, just proud of it. She just does not want to be a part of that world. This is perfectly understandable. That is her choice, too. She is a great wife and raises two great children. That is the most important, uniquely precious thing in the world. Aren't you yourself going to experience this sacred duty of being a mother?

It is extremely important to note how I was perceived by the male-elite of the Community, since this perception provides insights about their separation of their wives, daughters and sisters from “other” privileged women. As I realized the differences between front and back-stages, i.e., differences between the tacky shows in the window sites and other less visible sites of everyday life, I could situate myself to the broader picture with ease. As I highlighted in the previous section, women and science were the key combination for Gülen to promote a civilized image. As a Ph.D. student who is writing a thesis, I was already categorized as one of the privileged women in the Fethullahists' eyes. But moreover, I was doing my Ph.D. abroad, which meant “connections with the West” for Fethullahists. My journey from the most front-stages towards the depths of the back-stages in Gülen enabled me to realize that the respect, interest and attentiveness shown to me by Fethullahists was due to their perception of me as an elite woman. This striking comfort, flexibility and tolerance could not be generalized to the women's situation and gender order in Gülen. Interestingly however, although I was exempted from gender segregation in Gülen on the basis of their perception and categorization of me as an elite woman, I was not excused from domestic responsibilities, such as marriage and motherhood. Even the “privileged women of the secular Republic” are expected to fulfill their sacred “female duties.” Perhaps, this is the most obvious destiny that Fethullahist women and secular

women in Turkey share. The organization of the private realm and related domestic issues seem to be immune from any exemptions.

Female participation: an efficient road to empowerment or a fake symbol of gender equality?

Were only the privileged women participating in the communal sites, then? Were the Fethullahist women strictly confined to the domestic sphere? Were all the women of the Community destined to be housewives? Was the communal sphere open only to women with lesser ties to the Community? Were the wives or even the “girls” in *hizmet* excluded literally from the communal sites, which were under continuous public gaze? The answer to these questions is a clear and obvious, “No.” Thus, my initial fascination with the seeming gender order in the Community had a reason. Fethullahist women do participate in the communal and public sites and organizations, too. In this section, I will illustrate how Fethullahist men welcome and even encourage female participation in various ways (service-voluntary work, cheap labour). Women possessed supposedly inherent female qualities to convince and attract charity. Traditional conceptions of female innocence were more appropriate to collecting charity, as they were seen to be opposite to marketing strategies. As women were non-threatening and could enter various sites, their participation in the public sphere was a valuable asset to the Community. However, I will show that female participation is a tricky concept. While it may appear as a progressive step towards female emancipation and empowerment, in reality it disguises female exclusion from power relations and networks in Gülen. Hence, participation should not be mistaken as engagement with the power structures.

As my interviews and life stories revealed, and as some Fethullahist friends’ decisions confirmed, the entrance to as well as the exit from the Community was one’s choice regardless of sex and gender identity formation, political orientation and ideas. I observed a considerable amount of freedom of mobility for the people who were wandering around the fuzzy boundaries of the Community. Even for the designated insiders, such as the people in *hizmet*, crossing the boundaries was a personal matter. Oya, who was the head of a *yurt* (dormitory) at one of the high schools in Kazakhstan, received an acceptance from a masters program in Germany and immediately decided that she was more interested in a

career in mathematics than in service to the Community. “They would rather have me here because they like me and appreciate my work, but they also respect my decision,” she said to explain the liberal and understanding responses she received from the Community. Oya quit her job and service in the Community’s dorm and her participation in the Community, immediately after she received the acceptance letter.

It is true that women were identified with and confined to the private sphere as much as possible. However, not all of the women were housewives. The young women and the single girls, especially the university students or graduates, were participating in service in different fields. As already mentioned in different chapters, some were *ablas* (older sisters) who were supervising and helping the high school students, particularly the ones who were preparing for the university exam. This supervision was undertaken in dormitories, in *Işık Evler* and in *dershanes*.⁵⁶ Some were working in the associations and institutions of the Community to fulfil particular duties for the good of the Community. One of these duties was to promote the Community, its accomplishments and projects in order to find benefactors. These young women (they are called girls in the Community) were extremely adept at convincing people of the importance and efficiency of the organizations and the schools of the Community. Their abilities were used to acquire and accumulate an enormous source of economic and social power for the Community, but never for themselves as Fethullahist women. It seemed social sources of power were not meant for women in the Community. The femininity of Fethullahist women appeared as a non-threatening and also innocent tool to impress potential newcomers and to attract power for the Community. Attaining or claiming power as a woman was not a part of gender discourse and practices.

The young Fethullahist girls, most of whom were students in Gülen’s schools, seemed to be working actively in the private sphere as well as communal sites. Their easy access to the private home atmosphere was useful for charity work, as their presumed innocence facilitated their access to the private and communal sites. Interestingly, this particular assumption about femininity facilitated my own multi-sited research and access to various

⁵⁶ *Işık Evler* are where four or five university students share the same apartment. *Dershane* is a place where students are offered special courses to prepare for the university exam. Because of the higher scores of the students who go to the Community’s *dershanes*, they have become widely popular in the society in general.

sites in similar ways.⁵⁷ The girls visit people's homes and host people in different sites to show videotapes or to distribute textual documents that display the services of the Community. In this respect, the Community is advertised almost like a replacement for the social services that the state fails to offer to its citizens. Thanks to the purity associated with the young women, their promotions did not seem like marketing tactics of the Community, but merely as genuine displays of Gülen's usefulness to the nation.

It is important to note that the Fethullahist girls' labour is appropriated either for free or for a very low wage, as there was no utilitarian expectation from the *hizmet*. The service that the young females provide is usually voluntary work such as undertaking small surveys in the households to find out who buys the Community's newspaper, journal, magazine, etc. It is labour-intensive in the sense that they manage to enter people's private lives and intimacies and deal with them in "delicate" ways and are expected to use their politeness, "female intuition," and other so-called "inherent female qualities" in asking people for charity. They wander from place to place, from site to site, without receiving any material return. Everything is done for the good of the Community and in the name of God. Evidently, complete devotion and self-sacrifice of these girls is taken for granted. This is how females participate in the non-private sphere of the Community.

Therefore, the strict gender segregation is not sufficient to describe the gender order of the Community. Women's participation serves the good of the Community. Active participation in the public sphere did not liberate or empower women, since they were strictly excluded not only from economic power--as a result of their low-wage, voluntary work or unpaid housework--but also from intellectual power. They do not take part in decision-making or in the development of the Fethullahist school of thought.

Although women are active in intellectual activities and in the ideational world, their ideas and interpretations of the Risales are not taken into consideration in Fethullahist agendas and schools of thought. Women--usually several housewives and their daughters, but rarely working women--gather to read and discuss religious texts, especially the Risales. During my participation in the Risale readings, I observed a high level awareness and sensitivity to the text among several Risale groups. These women learn, discuss,

⁵⁷ See Chapter 3.

explain, and teach each other and the younger students without any claim for power of knowledge. Interestingly, there is a certain level of indifference to the texts among certain male circles, especially those engaged primarily in trade and business and busy accumulating economic power. Women specialize in the texts, whereas their husbands or other male relatives deal with worldly jobs, and economic, organizational, educational, political and philosophical issues. Put differently, while men concentrate on the formation of power networks, women develop expertise on Risales as a daily activity.

Some informal group interviews and participant observation among other Fethullahist men uncovered the fact that they prefer to regard women's Risale readings as a sort of leisure activity along with tea, cookies and pastry as opposed to the so-called serious business undertaken by men, namely economic, scientific, intellectual, educational, and organizational activities with substantial returns. These worldly affairs established the public face of the Community. Women's religio-spiritual activities were underrepresented and downplayed in this image as if they were a secondary issue, or a "subtitle" in Latif Bey's terms.

It was exclusively the male intellectuals, particularly the circle around Fethullah Gülen and his best friends, who were the founders and developers of the Fethullahist school of thought. Some of the privileged women who happened to marry the leading figures of the community were permitted to watch the meetings of their husbands on a huge screen in the studios at Samanyolu (the Community's television station). They told me that, "It was the same thing as being there...even better..." because they feel more comfortable among women. Besides, Hoca Efendi is present in the meetings. This makes their attendance even more unlikely for "they were doing serious stuff there." In general, women expressed content and consent about the segregation. My insistent questions as to why there were no women in the production of ideas and projects was answered by men in similar ways:

It is not because women are excluded or anything like that... Why can't you see that women may not be interested in this business of ideas? Aren't we yet tired of the imposition of Western feminist discourse on our women? Can't they choose to be different? ⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Quoted in an interview with Latif Erdogan in 1998 in Istanbul.

Were the Fethullahist women making their own choices, or were they conforming to predetermined roles and structures? L. Erdogan's argument sounds fair enough but embraces a contradiction: the Gülen Community and its claims for civil society are evidently and heavily grounded in a Western discourse of civility and civil society. Hence, the Community appears to follow Republican tradition and its adoption of Western civility. The major indicator of the imitation is their reductionist approach, which equates women's equality and liberation with women's public visibility. Instead of creating culturally specific channels to women's equality and emancipation, Gülen seems to be more concerned with looking civilized and Western. Apparently, the Western image of "civility" was made a goal. Yet, this partial imitation created "the patriarchal paradox"⁵⁹, which they inherited from the nation-building elite.

In a few cases, I met and talked with men who recognized the problem with women's exclusion, but even in those instances, the response was not satisfactory. An intellectual figure, who is known as the cornerstone of the Fethullahist school of thought, discussed the issue with me for hours. His moderate orientation to women's participation was a part of the already developed image and representation of the Gülen Community. In other words, it was a nice and neat presentation of the Community's discourse on civility:

We know that we have long roads to walk in this issue. But we are not indifferent, nor ignorant. There are many problems to overcome but women's situation is important to us. There is already much progress compared to the past. But change comes slowly and gradually. All we need is patience...

Unfortunately, the patience he was mentioning implied mostly patience on the part of women. When asked for concrete examples of progress in women's equality and emancipation, there was no answer except hope and promises. Just as the Kemalist male-elite had done before them, they were strategically using women's visibility and participation in the communal sphere as proof of progress and civility in the gender order.

In addition to the wide spread use of female labour in the communal sites, there were some career and working women in the Gülen Community. Most of them were single and therefore not yet bound by the sacred duty of motherhood. Their wages were strikingly low

⁵⁹ Arat (1989).

due to their unprivileged status in society as Islamist women--the visibility of their headscarves, the fact that they prayed five times a day, and other restrictions on their daily lives. In my interviews, these working Fethullahist women reported deep discomfort in the workplace, including exclusion from high-ranking offices and jobs of status, lack of trust, discrimination, and under-appreciation for the work they undertook. It was mainly because these women were regarded as temporary labour who would soon leave for permanent, maternal duties.

Most of the Fethullahist women in the labour force worked in the organizations of the Community, where they were also discriminated against and were made to feel as if they did not belong there. Nalan, an intellectual woman, was writing a column in one of the weekly periodicals of the Community, thanks to her husband's tolerance and support. She defined her husband as a liberal Islamist doctor and her marriage as extraordinarily liberal. Therefore, she was entitled to share some of the privileges that other elite women enjoyed. Despite her privileged situation, she expressed her despair for her career and work conditions:

We are only a few women at the periodical. And it is only me who struggles with the oppressive and unequal working conditions for women. Other women comply because it is the only way they know. I have been confronting the managerial board for quite a long time for freedom of thought and expression. I want to write about women's situation in the community. My years-long struggle has been futile whereas men can write about anything they wish. There is strikingly less supervision and censorship on what they research and write. It is so sickening that I very often think of resigning so that they will be rid of me, "the trouble-maker woman." My husband is a very liberal, practicing Muslim who has nothing against my career... But his positive support does not change the reality that I will not be promoted nor appreciated because of the sexist attitudes and prejudice of my colleagues at the periodical. And also, I am tired of fighting alone without any ends. Indeed, you are the only woman who listens to me when I start to talk about these issues. There is no move toward awareness among women. I feel like I am coming from outer space and thus all alone, even among women. It is not their fault, though.⁶⁰

During my fieldwork and interviews with women, complaints, reactions or even awareness of the nature of the gender order in the Community was rare. Most of the time, women refused to problematize the segregation. Gender exclusion was even legitimized as women seemed to agree with the status quo. Moreover, the Community's good was seen and represented as equal to women's good. In other words, women's issues could not be

⁶⁰ Quoted from an interview with Nalan, in 1999, in İstanbul.

conceptualized as separate and independent of the collective good, which was defined purely by men.

Women who expressed uneasiness about their conditions reported that they had no female support or empathy, especially in cases where the woman's interests explicitly contradicted with the Community's. In these rare cases in which women acknowledged that the situation was not fair or was causing tension, they stated that they eventually gave up as it was too hard to face the disapproval coming from both men and women.

Meral, a young medical student graduate, told me about the job proposals she was receiving from several private hospitals. She had undertaken this demanding program because of her desire to be helpful to people. However, the Community was putting enormous pressure on her to continue with her service to the Community. In one of our meetings over coffee, she opened up and said that she really likes her profession and that her professors find her future career very promising. However, she has also been one of the most successful and hard-working women in the service. Other women in the group stated that her contributions to the Community were irreplaceable and that she should not leave the service. "Indeed, it would be a sin if she pushed the Community away for her own career ambitions." The pressure coming from her female friends was in line with the Community's patriarchal practices, customs and male-dominated discourses.⁶¹ Her career plans were disregarded in the name of the Community's good, and she was expected to continue voluntary work. After months of thinking about this dilemma, Meral tried to come up with a middle ground solution and decided to work part-time in the hospital and to continue her voluntary work on a part-time basis. But she told me that it was creating a lot of tension in her life because both the hospital and the Community were expecting and asking for more. She was one among other women who reported that her love for the Community and her need for space and for individuation severely contradicted with the mundane gender order of the Community.

In general, service seems to be a voluntary job, a devotion, a kind of worship for both men and women in an assumedly equal way. There is no escape from it unless one chooses

⁶¹ D. Kandiyoti (1988) "Bargaining with Patriarchy", in *Gender and Society*, vol.2, no.3, p. 274-287. Note how women in "classical" patriarchies participate in the male-dominated culture and social structure that subordinates them (p.280-281).

to leave the Community. If there is a need for a teacher in one of the schools abroad, one must go without any hesitation regardless of the conditions in that country. But my interviews and particularly oral histories revealed that service is a gendered practice that disadvantages women. It is important to notice that the men of the Community did not report any tension between the Community's demands and their business mainly because men were expected to deal with worldly matters and "serious business" whereas women's work outside the home is not recognized as essential. On the contrary, it was discouraged on the basis of the sexual division of labour.

Briefly, if women are doing anything outside of the domestic sphere, it is expected to be altruistic service for the Community, mostly in the form of voluntary work or low-paid, low-ranked jobs in the Community's organizations. Certainly, these jobs were regarded as temporary until the woman was married. The lives of the women who are discouraged from pursuing professional career paths (as in the case of female medical doctors, lawyers or professors) illustrate and confirm my argument that, regardless of their participation in the non-private sphere, women are excluded from networks of power. One explicit method of exclusion is the encouraging and arranging of marriages for girls at relatively young ages.

Preserving the traditional organization of the private sphere: the sacredness of motherhood

Besides the curious respect for a female researcher and protective attitudes for a young girl, I received private questions and caring advice from both male and female Fethullahists with regard to marriage and family. Some strongly suggested I should make the time and effort to have children since a career was not primary for a woman's happiness and that the real thing was motherhood.⁶² I was told often that it was the most fulfilling feeling for a woman, and that I would even forget about my research on the

⁶² One of the most popular sayings of Atatürk about Turkish woman is that paradise lies under the feet of mothers. There is heavy emphasis in Gülen's texts and everyday discourse of the Community on the primary value and function of motherhood for a woman. The sacredness of motherhood is shared and imposed by both the Atatürkist and Fethullahist projects.

Gülen Community “if I tasted the sweetness of child-bearing and rearing”.⁶³ I even found myself being invited and encouraged for marriage through match-making.

Despite the resemblance between Kemalist nation-building elite and Fethullahists attitudes toward gender issues, the basis of their patriarchal practices and social engineering differs. The Community conveniently justifies them by the religious texts, either by Qur'an, Risales, or Gülen's books, “*Kadın evin dahili işlerini, erkek de harici işlerini deruhte etmekle mükelleftir*” (Gülen 1996b, p.125).⁶⁴ However, similarities between the Fethullahist and the nation-building elite are less explicit than their differences. Gender segregation was overt in the social structure of the society during the nation-building period, especially in Atatürk's discourse in Nutuk and his speeches where he always addressed a male audience and thus referred to the audience as “*Efendiler*” (Gentlemen). Similar to the Fethullahist male elite, Atatürk and his friends were the leading cadre, implementing the serious project with which women had nothing to do. His militarist identity and militarist/nationalist discourse is explicit proof of his argument which requires further analysis that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Despite effective image-making, thanks to the presence of elite women in the window sites, as well as large-scale female participation in the communal sites, gender segregation and the sexual division of labour was explicit in Gülen, too. It only took me a few more steps out of the window sites to reveal the nature of the patriarchal gender order and its corner-stone, that is a particular organization of the domestic sphere. Home was a woman's sphere where she would undertake the most sacred contribution to the Community, namely the reproduction of new generations. It became very clear after my ongoing visits to households that housework, nurturing, and child-raising were givens, the only inevitable responsibility and job of women. The Gülen Community is not that different from the society at large which whole-heartedly believes that “Heaven lies under the feet of the

⁶³ Arat (1998), p. 87. Arat highlights both aspects of the modernization project: Firstly, the entrance of the women into the public sphere and secondly the redefinition of traditional roles of women within the private sphere. In this sense, Kemalist women were not expected less than the Fethullahist women to be housewives and homemakers. See also Kandiyoti (1998) “Afterword” to Leila Ahmed ed. *Remaking Women* with regard to the function of educated and modern women as mothers and housewives.

⁶⁴ “Women's responsibility is to fulfill the domestic works whereas men is responsible to undertake the work in the non-private domain.” F. Gülen(1996) *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler*, vol.3 (The Questions and Hesitation of the Contemporary Century), İzmir: T.O.V Yayınları

mother.” Gülen confirms this by praising motherhood and highlighting the virtue and sacredness attached to it:

Kadın nesil yetiştiriyor Cihangirleri anneler yetiştirir. Büyük insanları, insanlığın iftihar tablolarını hep anneler şekillendirir. Kadın kendine ait bu meziyetlerle, erkek de yine kendine ait kabiliyetlerle örfaneye iştirak ederse, bu bütünleşmeden cennet ikliminin yaşandığı bir aile ve fazilet topluluğu cemiyet vücuda gelir. (Gülen 1996b, p.125)⁶⁵

Faith in the holiness of motherhood maintains the segregated gender order: women socialize among themselves, raise children and nurture their families, while men deal with worldly issues. It is important to emphasize that a very important distinction of the Gülen Community among other Islamist groups is that they are extremely this-worldly and pragmatic and that they strategically blur the boundaries between religion and science, faith and reason, Islamic and secular life spheres, etc. Ironically, however, Fethullahist men were permeating the boundaries of this-worldly realms, whereas the boundaries of the women’s realm, i.e., the home, were maintained. The segregation in the Community is justified on the basis of the sacredness of motherhood and also from a functionalist view that women’s domestic role is necessary and valuable for the good of the Community.

Interestingly, similar to the Republican Atatürkists’ mentality, Fethullahists value girl’s education. Fethullahist and Republican male-elite share and promote the idea that new generations were to be raised by educated mothers and, thereby, modern homemakers.⁶⁶ The approach to marriage is functionalist and strategic. It is mostly arranged in a way that is best for the Community’s or the nation’s interest. According to the Fethullahist worldview, marriage should not be made the goal of life. The real goal is faith, and real love is love for God. Marriage is more of a duty for the collectivity to share life under a secure roof, to have “companionship for a lifetime” and certainly for “*nesillerin devamı*” (the continuity of next generations), namely reproduction (Gülen, 1997, p. 25). F. Gülen argues that there is a contemporary trend of romantic marriages in society which end up in frustration and divorce. He claims that marriage has to be based on reason and ration and not on emotions (p. 25). Moreover, the idea of *hizmet* has to be primary and this primacy has to be fixed in order that it not become a secondary aim after

⁶⁵ Ibid., “The woman raises new generations. She raises all the big shuts, the prides of humanities. If the woman contributes with these capabilities and the man with his abilities, this togetherness would create a family and virtuous society in a heavenly climate.”

the worldly passions such as the physical demands of the body (Gülen, 1997, p.26). In other words, Gülen demands a fixation to *hizmet* and the Community in the name of the love for God. Hence, marriage would only be a functional tool to serve this goal.

While marriage is regarded as a natural destiny and duty for every woman, the Community reserves empathy and reverence for the men of Islamic knowledge and of extra-ordinary Islamic qualities who choose not to marry. Fethullah Gülen and Said Nursi avoided marriage purposely and rationally--certainly in accordance with Islam, they avoided any romantic or sexual relationship. Their rational choice is very highly respected as they both justify this decision by indicating that their love for Islam and for their nation would not leave any space for "the other sex." Thus, it would be a sin to make a woman suffer by a husband whose whole life is devoted to a sacred mission. However, it would be beyond imagination that a woman might choose a similar path, namely refusing to marry, for the same or other reasons. Given women's trivial, occasional and temporary position in the labour market, it is not difficult to conclude that they are dependent on their marriages for survival and for having children.⁶⁷

There is no strict age for marriage for girls, but if they do not go to university, it is likely to take place any time after high school graduation. If the girl continues to study after high school, it is very likely that an *abla*--either alone or with the collaboration of other *ablas* or *ağabey*s⁶⁸ will try to match her to someone from the community. Because the conjugal unit is conceived as a functional and useful unit for the good of the community, exogamy is discouraged so that one of the partners would not wish or try to give secondary importance to service or the good of the community. It is for the Community's advantage that there is unity and harmony in the family with regard to goals, division of labour and faith. There is no formal or informal rule preventing people from marrying outside of the Community, however endogamy is encouraged, preferred and valued more. Usually, it is an honor for a young woman to marry respected or active Fethullahist men in the Community. The most striking example was a young woman,

⁶⁶ See Kandiyoti (1998) about Atatürkists' insistence to be with "modernized" women.

⁶⁷ But see Fox (1988) with regard to the appropriation of women's labour and how and why women's increasing involvement in wage labour may not indicate decreasing dependence on their husbands.

⁶⁸ The female or male supervisor (sister or brother) who is responsible for the students of Gülen Community in dormitories, *Isik Evler* or *dershanes*.

Fatma, I met at one of the Risale readings. I saw her only once because, at the age of 18, she was always busy with her three babies. She told me proudly that she was married to Imam Hasan, who supposedly is known and respected by everyone.

Hasan was the Imam of a very large geographical area and thus responsible for never-ending sacred duties. Fatma told me that her husband was so busy that she might see him only once a week, if not less frequently. He was travelling very often and thus could very rarely sleep at home. Knowing about the age difference between her and her husband, I was curious why she would choose this kind of marriage at this age. She was surprised by my question. She felt embarrassed and blushed. Her silence was accompanied by the smiles of other women at the Risale reading. Tolerating my ignorance as an outsider, they commented on my question: "He is a holy man of great importance for the Community. It is a great honor to be chosen as a wife for him"... "Everybody would like to be in her place." Women in the Community are controlled and assumedly protected through marriage arrangements⁶⁹, although it is not without their consent.

In addition to the Community's good, the ultimate superiority of men (on the basis of sheer biological reductionism and crude functionalism) is used by F. Gülen to justify gender segregation:

Erkek bütün bir senesini faaliyet içinde geçirebilir. Bazen en ağır işlerde çalışır. Fiziki ve psikolojik yönden daima daha kuvvetlidir. Batı dünyası dahi en ağır işlerde erkeği kullanır.... Kadın ise ayın bazı günlerinde devre dışı kalmak zorundadır. Lohusalık halinde bazan iki aya yakın aktif olamaz. İrade ve fiziki yönden zayıftır. Her zaman cemiyetin her kesiminin içinde bulunamaz. Bazi durumlarda en mukaddes emanetini kaybedip cemiyet içinde kimsenin yüzüne bakamaz hale gelebilir, onun için çok dikkatli olmak mecburiyetindedir. Mahremi olmadan uzak yerlere yolculuk yapamaz.... [E]rkeğin kadına karşı üstünlüğü inkar kabul etmez şekilde ortaya çıkar. (Gülen, 1996b, p. 124)⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See R. McDonough and R. Harrison (1978) "Patriarchy and Relations of Production" in A. Kuhn and A. Wolpe (eds.), *Feminism and Materialism*, p. 11-42. They analyze how women's sexuality and fertility was controlled through marriage and how the labour of non-bourgeois women is controlled in patriarchal society.

⁷⁰ "A man can spend the whole year actively. Sometimes he works difficult and heavy jobs. Physiologically and psychologically, he is always stronger. The man is used for heavier jobs even in the West But woman must be excluded on certain days during the month. After giving birth, she sometimes cannot be active for 2 months. She cannot take part in different segments of the society, all the time. In some cases, she may lose her most sacred property (he means virginity here) and cannot take part in societal life because of this embarrassing situation. Thus, she has to be very careful. She cannot travel without her husband, father or brother... The superiority of men compared to women cannot be denied." quoted from Gülen (1996b) vol. 3, p.124. See also F. Gülen (1997), *Prizma* vol.I, İstanbul: Nil Yayıncılık, p. 177-179.

Essentializing women's inferior situation as a result of their biological dispositions, their "inherent and natural" (as opposed to socially constructed) responsibility to save their virginity and their functional reproductive and nurturing duties, he continues praising motherhood as a sacred status for raising future generations.⁷¹ Obviously, this sacred status does not provide them with any kind of access of power or liberty, nor does it count as a job compared to a man's "heavy" mission outside the home. According to this perspective, there is nothing to problematize about gender segregation and the sexual division of labour. It is a given fact and result of the Truth of Creation: Women reproduce, nurture and do mothering whereas men deal with worldly matters and earn money (Gülen, 1996b, p.125). Gülen attacks the contemporary feminist movement and most of the Fethullahist women seem to agree with his critique. He claims that the rights feminists demand would only degrade women because it would only serve as masculinization of a delicate femininity: "*Kadın yerinde kaldığı sürece sultandır, büyüktür ve kadın efendidir*" (Gülen, 1996b, p.126).⁷² (The woman is a sultan and big and high, as long as she stays where she is). The claim shows how convenient and preferable it is to keep women where they are, namely at home and/or in service.⁷³

Prescriptively, however, the fact that Fethullahist women have conformed to this world view and communal gender order so far is not a guarantee that they will not make use of male-imposed strategies for their own advantage in the future. As mentioned previously, women who step out the domestic and communal duties to the labour market report tensions between the Community and their jobs. Most women seem not to be aware of the power (or the potential power) of their knowledge of religious texts and the power of their enormous abilities to establish networks of charity and by their irreplaceable *hizmet*.

⁷¹ He repeats the same essentialist argument in Gülen (1997) vol.1, p.179 where he argues that men are inherently powerful and women are inherently tender, fragile and emotional. According to him, these innate differences explain the different duties and rights of men and women. He calls this genuine justice.

⁷² See also F. Gülen (1997) vol.1, p.176-181, with regard to his milder and relatively more politically correct critique of the idea of gender equality.

⁷³ Kemalist discourse is different in its insistence to create a seemingly asexual woman in the public sphere who dresses up, behaves, socializes and interacts "like a man". Gole (1993). However, this imposed invitation to men's domain did not entail any intentions of endowing women with power or authority. As I have already discussed, it was part of the grand project of creating a modern Turkish Republic. See Kandiyoti (1991). Gülen did not need such a strategy because there were already several elite women to complete a "civilized" picture. In other words, the community inherited an already established image without paying the price of having to push their own wives into the streets if not necessary.

Moreover, they do not perceive homemaking--housework, nurturing, emotional labour, education of children etc.--as a "job". Finally, the communal life among women, the micro-level organization of communal events, and the strength of female bonding is another yet-to-be recognized source of power among Fethullahist women.⁷⁴ As already discussed, secularist women of the Republic turned the male-initiated gender reforms to their own advantage, thanks to the feminist movement and consciousness from below.

Keeping women ultra-conscious about their domestic responsibilities and encouraging early marriage is an efficient way to keep them away from engagement with the power structures. This is particularly true for a society, where the head of the household is, by law, the husband or father (Turkish Civil Code, Article 152). Was the Fethullahist yearning for a "civil society" a call to "civilize" patriarchy?

Civilizing Projects of Republican and Fethullahist Men: "Civilizing" Patriarchies?

The nation-building elite endowed Turkish women with citizenship, and civil and political rights, and thereby public and political participation. In 1934, the pro-women breakthrough initiated by the male elite was radical and dramatic, as it advanced women's situation in Turkey further than in many Western liberal democracies. Although "equality before the law" did not lead to equal experiences of citizenship between men and women, Atatürk and his followers initiated the best imitation of Western liberal gender equality in the Muslim world. Interestingly, almost three-quarters of a century after Atatürk's reforms, another path-breaking statement came again from another male social engineer and charismatic leader in Turkey. This time, an Islamist reformer, Fethullah Gülen, popularized the idea that the headscarf was not the primary requirement of religion, and thus not mandatory in Islam. He justified his interpretation of Qur'an by explaining that the most important issue is faith, and there are many ways of expressing faith besides veiling. By the flexibility of his interpretation of Qur'an, he not only made uncovered and/or secular women in and around the Community comfortable but also discouraged an inevitable clash between the state and Fethullahist women. In the context of a democratic republic with a predominantly Muslim population and a contemporary Islamic revival, Gülen's orientation

⁷⁴ White (1996).

to the veil seems radically “progressive” and “liberating” for Muslim and Islamist women. This is mainly because in the Turkish Republic:

Covering the hair was prohibited in public office or educational institutions because it was deemed to stand for and propagate a religious ideology perceived to be inimical to the secular ideology of the republic. Until the mid-1980s, this particular definition of rights remained uncontested. When women began attending universities with covered heads during the 1980s, it was duly interpreted as an act of protest that triggered a tug of war between the secular state and Islamist women concerning their alternative definition of citizenship rights. These women, supported by Islamist men, engaged an ongoing fight, engaging in demonstrations and boycotts. (Y. Arat, 2000a, p. 285)

The Gülen Community withdraws from this picture of clash and war between the state and Islamist women, which was largely supported by *Refah*. Unlike other Islamist men, Fethullahist men seem to compromise on the veil issue in the public sphere. As long as their wives are veiled and at home, they did not mind (even welcomed) islamically unacceptable female dress among outsiders at their communal sites and events. Hence, from a secularist view, Gülen appeared as a progressive relief to release Islamist women from this “handicap” and to enable them to participate in the institutional milieu. This compromise was in line with their attitudes and strategies toward the gender order. Similar to the nation-building male elite, they render gender issues a strategic part of their overarching civilizing project. F. Gülen’s statement is strategically important because it opened the way for compromises on the issue of the headscarf, which had become a major barrier to Islamic women’s participation in the public sphere. Once more, women’s public visibility and participation became central to the civilizing project. This time, the public faces of Islam were revised and reformed to fit a Western liberal image. Women’s perspectives, feelings, interests, rights, and identities are explicitly irrelevant in this putatively pro-women and liberal opening in Turkish Islam.

The male-initiated, pro-woman act was easily internalized by Fethullahist women. I was told by the women at one of the Risale readings: “True faith is inside, in the soul and mind, and it is intimate.” Hence, a scarf or veil was just one form of expression of faith among many others. For married Fethullahist women whose responsibilities reside at home, the veil was not an issue, since they were segregated and secluded from the public sphere. However, for the young Fethullahist female population, especially for the students, the veil could be a site of conflict with the state. I interviewed several female Fethullahist students who compromised by not wearing their scarves in university buildings and even a

few who convinced themselves not to cover until after university graduation. Their attitudes were different from the Islamist feminists, who identify themselves with the religious party. Gunseli, a Fethullahist 4th year psychology student, told me that she felt badly when she was forced to take her scarf off by the authorities in the university:

You cannot understand. Nobody can...it feels naked but it feels silly too because you are aggressively forced to do so. They were looking down on us. They were checking us, our most intimate details, in front of the main gates. You are not given any other alternative but to give your scarf up. I find it very embarrassing especially because they do it in public, in front of other friends and students. I sometimes think that the politicians have nothing to entertain themselves, and they create some excitement and amusement by dealing with us.

I reminded Gunseli of other students who had protested the state's acts and/or left school. She indeed had a choice between quitting and protesting or conforming to the system. She expressed her sadness for many of her friends who did not have the flexible and "humanist" Fethullahist perspective on the issue or who did not have suitable conditions at home or in their families to compromise "rationally". She said:

I was lucky. My family is enlightened by Hoca Efendi's open-mindedness. We are able to understand that the faith is not in the appearance but in the soul and mind. As Hoca Efendi would also agree, it is just one of many other expressions of faith and love for God. But some students had to give up their education just because they did not have this vision of the Community.

Gunseli told me other stories of her friends who immediately quit after the regulation was strictly enforced. I also met with some of the students who refused to take their scarves off. They were critical of the compromising attitudes of Fethullahist students. One of them who was going through a very hard time in accepting the fact that her education had come to an end because of her religious orientation expressed her despair:

We have been treated like terrorists. I feel like I have been humiliated in the most degrading way. The state does not care about education, about women's equality or conditions. All they care about is how nice Turkish society looks to the eyes of the West... It is very hard for me to understand the students who easily gave up their scarves. They did not even protest. This is what we have been taught by this society. When it is about women's rights, we are told we should be patient and quiet. But when it is about the rights of the Islamist women, we'd better conform to everything imposed from above. That is so embedded in our lives...a kind of inferiority complex.

The Turkish state with the co-operation of the Turkish army has been trying to clean the public sphere of veiled women who are seen as the most striking symbol of Islamism. Hence, the public appearance of women had to fulfill a minimum Western criterion that

was selectively visual. This put pressure on Islamist women and turned their Islamic identities into objects of compromise between the state and Gülen. In the fall term of 1998, threats of a ban on the veil turned into severe enforcement at all universities, although in varying intensities. These acts discriminated against Islamist women whereas they conveniently continued to tolerate Islamist men of the same orientation. This prohibition was a part of Atatürkist relegation of religious issues to the private sphere and a cleansing of the public sphere of Islamic symbols. Unfortunately, this cleansing forced Islamic women to make a difficult choice between giving up an important part of their identity, i.e., their scarves, or giving up their university degrees and being relegated to the private realm as any other symbol of Islam.⁷⁵

Gülen's schools survive as long as they are in accordance with the constitutional law and the principle of secularism. The female students and teachers are not covered. The Fethullahist schools abroad are more careful in this respect "in order not to frighten the local people." As the officers of KATEV (Foundation of Kazak-Turkish Education) in Kazakhstan stated, they do not want "to give a wrong, uncivilized image." Hence, female staff, including the heads of the dormitories, are uncovered. Consequently, Fethullahist women were deprived of their freedom to express their identities, while fulfilling the requirements of "civilized" images of Turkish Islam. Ironically, the cost of a more "civilized" societal appearance happens to be either exclusion of veiled women or the stripping of Islamic women of important parts of their identities, which both Gülen and the state would not have minded.

As a continuation of the social engineering, which essentializes women's public appearance as the ultimate symbol of emancipation, women were made subject to the male-initiated regulations, which discriminated against veiled women in the non-private sphere. Women in the Community became an essential part of the reform projects and contributed to the colorful diversity of the public sphere. Paradoxically, however, this "civilized" presentation of Turkish Islam does not amend their situation as women. Their presence in public offices, universities, and communal sites does not empower them.

⁷⁵ For a comprehensive and critical discussion on the headscarf and Islamist women, see Gole (1993).

Engagements between the state and Gülen are strictly male, which is extremely difficult to capture from the liberal, women-friendly attitudes and scenes of the communal sites.

Conclusion

The reductionist assumptions, which took the secular state for granted as a promoter of women's equality and emancipation against the Islamic patriarchy, are naive and false. In sharp contrast to these reductionist juxtapositions of Islam and the secular state, Gülen seems to be the most successful and efficient inheritor of the gender paradox of the Republican nation-building male elite. Gülen's inheritance of state-invented gender strategies facilitated its contemporary engagements with the state and thereby strengthened its linkages. Different forms of patriarchies (Islamic and secularist) which are taken-for-granted as oppositional actually overlap and reinforce patriarchal practices and processes. This is mainly because the Gülen Community was born into and grew within a national culture, which enforced women's public visibility as a strategy to promote Westernization.⁷⁶ This enforcement has complemented a particular civilizing social engineering. Obviously, Gülen has a lot more to share with the secular Republican patriarchies than with many other Islamic patriarchies, which have overtly undermined--if not overruled--women's political participation and public visibility.

Genuine gender equality requires power-sharing between women and men. Stated more specifically, gender equality necessitates women's engagement with structures, networks and relations of power. Therefore, women's participation (in the public sphere) is to be replaced with a better concept, that is empowerment. Access to and sharing in different sources and structures of power (rather than the right to participate merely as a subordinated agency) is the primary condition of gender equality. Gülen's engagements with the state exclude women.

Along with the structural characteristics of the gender order in the Community, it is also important to note particular Fethullahist masculinities and femininities. The consensus among them maintains the congruence between the patriarchies of the state and the Gülen Community. In other words, Fethullahist women participate in a gender order, which

⁷⁶ See Y. Arat (2000a), p. 281, with regard to her application of Michael Mann's "ruling class strategy" to the Turkish case.

disadvantages them on the basis of their sex and gender and thereby subordinates and secludes them. Unlike the Islamist women who associate with the Welfare Party, Fethullahist women seem not to be calling for amendment of their situation within the Community. Neither do they protest the patriarchy, which disables them from engaging (contesting, resisting, clashing or cooperating) with the state. While Islamist feminists in radical circles criticize and attack the “secular republican concept of women’s citizenship” (Arat, 2000a, p. 285) and ask for redefinitions of women’s rights, Fethullahist women reproduce and nurture Fethullahist men, the reformers of Turkish Islam, who engage the state in their place.

These particular manifestations of patriarchy could not have developed without women’s systematic consent, conformism and faithful devotion.⁷⁷ Women’s consent plays an important role in the persistence of certain characteristics of the early republican patriarchal paradox. Although its form has changed over time and across various Islamic and secular collectivities, continuities disprove the “declining significance” of patriarchy.⁷⁸ However, a genuine prospect of progress toward gender equality--rather than change in the form and intensity of patriarchy--is by no means out of the question. Since the mid-1980s, striking progress has been achieved through the campaigns of secularist women’s groups and movements in Turkey.⁷⁹ Many Islamist women are in the process of demanding redefinition of women’s citizenship. Similarly, a genuine empowerment and equality for Fethullahist women can be realized through a critical understanding of the nature of contemporary patriarchy and the development of self-awareness, and not by male-initiated favors as strategic parts of “civilizing” projects. As in the case of the development of feminist movements and their claims for power (rather than just participation), Fethullahist women may take advantage of male-initiated openings in the public sphere and use them for their own empowerment.

Not surprisingly, women pay the costs of these fashionably “civilizing” projects, which ended up civilizing and modernizing different forms of patriarchies. Contrary to the promoted image of the Fethullahist or the Republican projects as pro-women, women’s

⁷⁷ G. Lerner (1986), *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

⁷⁸ S. Walby (1996) The “Declining Significance” or “Changing Forms” of Patriarchy? in V. Moghadam (ed.) *Patriarchy and Development*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

subordination is implicitly organized and institutionalized in both of them, though in different forms and intensities.⁸⁰ It is not the essence of one or the other (Islam or secularism) which disadvantages women but the overlap and engagement between them. Although there may be certain conflicts of interest between these patriarchies, in general the patriarchal continuities between them facilitate engagements, which are often manifest in the form of male-bonding, such as between F. Gülen and T. Ozal. In other words, they share not only agendas and power, but they also share the way they exclude women from power-sharing. The common success of these separate but interpenetrating patriarchies resides in their ability to present themselves as the basis for pro-women, liberating reforms.

⁷⁹ Arat (2000a), p. 278.

⁸⁰ The adoption of state-invented forms of gender strategies, i.e., public visibility of women in communal sites, may or may not anticipate genuine pro-women awakening in Gülen. Depending on the women's willingness and potential initiative, it may or may not lead to progress in Fethullahist women's situation. The flexibility around the headscarf and the opening of the communal sites to women may eventually may lead to women's advantage, although most of the female contribution is only non-paid, poorly paid or realized by elite women at the moment. The feminist movement in the Turkish Republic has found creative and radical ways of taking the advantage of (and manipulating the opportunities) of the initially male-imposed openings for women in the public sphere. A similar awakening may gradually fuel some form of genuine feminist organization by Fethullahist women. Instead of relying on the male social engineers to reform their situation, Fethullahist women may realize that they have the potential initiative for grass-root movements against gender segregation, exclusion and subordination. However, there are hardly any such signs so far.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Summary and Conclusions

Compatibility is not a prerequisite for the decency of social life.¹ Similar to the way that opposites attract, contestation and conflicts may find their way towards cooperation (ranging from loyal opposition and negotiations to alliances). In the face of constant transformations, mutual adaptation to standards other than one's own is inevitable.² Decency of social life does not reside in the congruence of the intrinsic qualities of Islam and civil society. Civility resides in the quality of the social world and political setting,³ where Islam and civil society experiment alternative ways to accommodate and readjust to each other. Yet, civility is an open-ended project, partly imitative (development) and partly creative (alternative paths). Hence, it is irrelevant to question whether or not "Islam" is compatible with "civil society". However, compatibility has been the focus of the extensive and ongoing debates on Islam. Risking cultural essentialism and historical determinism,⁴ this focus creates arid categories.

Pessimists of the compatibility debate have wrongly judged Islam as an inherent enemy of civil society and the source of clash and problem.⁵ In sharp contrast to these claims, extensive evidence illustrated that Gülen is a propellant of a trust culture. In line with its *dava* (reconciliation of faith with the secular milieu), it displays secularization-friendly attitudes. In this way, the Community produces new outlets and channels for societal compromise as well as cooperation with the state. The thesis illustrated that the interest of Gülen and the state may oppose (as in the domestic contestations over the education) or overlap (as in the international alliances). However, it is extremely important to recognize that Islam ceases to be perceived as an enemy of civil society, when it starts to develop the culture and politics of trust and cooperation at various levels of the society. This transformation is of a great importance for theories of civil society, mainly because

¹ I borrowed the idea of civility and decency of social life (as a cornerstone of civil society) from John A. Hall.

² Hall (2000), p.47.

³ Hall (1995).

⁴ Zubaida (1989).

after the death of communism, Islam has been identified as the greatest remaining enemy of civil society.⁶

Gülen provides strong evidence against the theories, which juxtapose civil society against the state.⁷ It provides support for the Tocquevillean approach to civil society, which prioritizes the capacities for loyal opposition and/or cooperation.⁸ This culture is fundamentally important for the states in the Muslim world, which experience problems and failures of democracy in accommodating Islam. Turkey is an extremely good example, where democracy needs to be sheltered by a civil society. Civil society can only breathe and develop in a political culture of trust.⁹ Although this culture is largely based on the historical heritage of the society, the development of infrastructural capacities of cooperation can shape and transform the national culture.¹⁰

The thesis analyzed the wide-ranging activities and public events of the Gülen Community, some of which are image-making in the window sites, educational projects (schools), international undertakings (business networks) as well as the encouragement of women's visibility in the public sphere: Gülen strategically attracts a diversity of people to work together for certain project-based goals. However, this was not the major finding of the thesis. While aiming at the development of civil society through its project-based social engineering, Gülen unintentionally creates a public spirit for the attainment of its *dava*. My argument is that the emergence of a genuine civil society takes place beyond these planned projects. The sites of the Community primarily serve as platforms of "engagements" with the state. In these sites Gülen not only accommodates differences but also creates new Islamic sensibilities, capacities and consciousness within the system and not against the system. Unlike the educational projects of the Community, this is not a self-conscious program.

⁵ Huntington (1996); Gellner (1994).

⁶ Gellner (1993).

⁷ Keane (1988b); Arato and Cohen (1992).

⁸ Hall (1995); Mann (1993).

⁹ Hall (1992); Tocqueville (1955); For a literature review on trust, see also B. A. Myszal (1996) *Trust in Modern Societies: the Search for the Bases of Social Order*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.

¹⁰ Hall (1986); Mann (1993).

On the basis of extensive evidence, I claimed that the engagements are realized due to the “elective affinities” between the Republic and Gülen. The interaction between Gülen and the state, in turn, transformed the conventional linkages between the secular state and Islam. It is exactly these transformations, which contribute to the development of civil society, regardless of the goals and efficiency of Gülen’s projects. In this sense, Gülen is a community-movement, which brings about “fluid outcomes”¹¹, which are smooth and gradual changes in the political culture at large. Its impact on the political agendas, public opinion as well as practices, beliefs and visions transcend the task-oriented nature of the organization. Hence, Gülen is a movement entity, of which the impact goes beyond the boundaries of its organization and sites (Chapter 5). However, these emergent transformations are still very young and fragile. First, they need to be acknowledged, since they are widely obscured by the optimist and pessimist premises of the compatibility theories. Second, they need to be sheltered, so that they will not be temporary.

As stated above, Gülen is striking among other Islamic groups, in attracting various moderate people from secularist, nationalist, ultra-nationalist and social democratic circles. The capitalist character of Gülen and its open-market-friendly attitudes led to a considerable organizational diversity.¹² The enormous economic power accumulated in the Community is widely due to this diversity (Chapter 6). However, in contrast to the optimists’ celebration of diversity, findings also revealed striking homogeneity among Fethullahists, particularly the ones in *hizmet*. This suggested that I should closely explore the nature of social organization. I found that Gülen reconciles striking degrees of diversity (in *Cemiyet*) and homogeneity (in *Cemaat*) (Chapter 5). Gellner rightly reminds us that many forms of diversity such as kinship groups, tribal and anarchistic pluralism may be as repressive as the state.¹³ This insight places individualism at the core of civil society, as individualism is a protection against social cages.¹⁴ Hence, given the communitarian cultural heritage of Islam, diversity is more of an accomplishment in Islam than in the

¹¹ I owe this insight, “fluid outcomes” of the “community-movement”, to S. Staggenborg, who theorizes feminism as a community-movement. See S. Staggenborg (1995), in M. M. Ferre and P. Yancey Martin (eds.) *Feminist Organizations*, p. 342, 345 and 347.

¹² See Weber, with regard to the influence of economic factors in the formation of organizations. Weber (1968), p.201.

¹³ Gellner (1994).

¹⁴ Hall (1995), p.15; Gellner (1994).

individualist West. Thus, the accommodation of differences in Islam is not to be underestimated, yet also not to be taken as a guarantee, of civil society.

The Gülen Community seemed to fulfill broad –or “elastic” in Kumar’s terms– definitions of civil society, qualified by diversity and cohabitation of differences as well as active participation in the public. However, the thesis showed that these qualifications are not only insufficient but may also be easily misleading, since they may disguise some dark sides of civil society. Findings revealed that Gülen has homogenizing drives (behind the scenes and sites of diversity). These could have the potential to cage individuals (Chapter 5). Evidence was also provided to illustrate another incivil potential of civil society: Absence of civility in domestic public debates and contestations (Chapter 6), ultra-nationalistic and turkishizing agendas and drives in Central Asia (Chapter 7) and severe gender segregation and seclusion of women from power relations and structures. In other words, this ethnography is an account of why things were not exactly what they seemed in the public discourses, faces and sites of the public sphere.

From the analysis in Chapter 6, it is clear that Gülen’s schools have become the major subject of public debates. I analyzed in Chapter 6, Gülen’s schools has become the most important manifestations of this participation. However, the nature of the contestations over education does not affirm the optimists’ accounts of peaceful cohabitation of differences. On the contrary, contestations display deeply rooted distrust and crude clashes, which sometimes amounted to overt insults. Gülen and the secularist civil society organizations confronted each other in hostile manners, which surfaced in the dark sides of the so-called civil society. Disagreements are not handled with civility in the public debates. I highlighted the irony in the contestations: Both sides attempted to “monopolize” civil society, while identifying the other as inept for civility. Fethullahists and secularists displayed not only incompatibility but also have talked past each other in unrefined ways. They were unable to cooperate. They lacked the means, the manners and even the vocabulary to disagree civilly.

In the face of the observations of the dark sides of civil society, evidence on the interaction between Gülen and the state presented itself. This required a shift in my focus. While Gülen’s clash with secularist civil society organizations was apparent, Gülen

displayed capacities to engage the state. Over the same issue, Gülen interacted with the state through symbolic politics and negotiated loyalty. Gülen's negotiations with the state are important steps toward the attainment of civil society. Unfortunately, they are obscured behind the societal clash between Fethullahists and radical Kemalists, and also by the taken-for-granted assumptions of clash and distrust between the state and Islam. Data suggests that these stereotypical juxtapositions may be in transition at this particular historical moment.

Ethnographic research revealed that the domestically uneasy interactions and negotiations between Gülen and the state take the form of overt alliances at the international level. I argued that Gülen's strong identification with the "nation as the state" facilitates its engagements with the Republic. Accordingly, cooperation became comforting on the basis of national loyalties. The overlapping agendas of Gülen and the state in Central Asia are manifested in state-framed ethnic politics and educational policy-making in Kazakhstan. This is widely realized through an effective ethnic politics, which celebrates the common roots and culture between Turks and the Turkic nations in Central Asia. These cooperations in the educational projects and ethnic politics, in turn, reinforce Gülen's claim of being a civil society organization.

Extensive findings illustrated that one of the most important basis of the congruence between Gülen and the state is their seemingly pro-women attitudes. I analyzed the attitudes and the related institutionalized arrangements, which render gender equality to women's public visible. My analysis disclosed the resemblance of the gender strategies between the secular and Islamic male elite. The thesis critically questioned their "modernizing/civilizing" projects, which at the same time "civilize" patriarchies. The women-friendly sites are socially engineered. These sites conceal female subordination and segregation, while creating the impression of a "civilized image". Although these projects exclude women from engaging in power structures and decision-making, Fethullahist women may end up taking advantage of the male-imposed public visibility and succeed in attaining genuine empowerment and liberation in the future. An unintended consequence of the male-initiated gender reforms has already occurred in the Republican context. A genuine feminist movement has developed under the secular liberal feminists. This is an unintended consequence of the gender reforms of the founding fathers.

In brief, the first parts of the topical chapters concentrated on Fethullahists' self-conscious efforts and projects to develop civil society. They all showed how Fethullahists created the fashionable images of diversity in their communal sites; the fuzzy boundaries, strong participation in public debates, contestations with secular civil society organizations over education, Gülen's ethnic politics in Kazakhstan, the women-friendly public scenes and window sites in the Community. However, civil society has to be qualified more rigorously than the optimists qualify it. This endeavor entails unraveling why Gülen remains unique among other Islamic organizations, while sharing the uncivil potentials.

If the project-based accomplishments stated above are not the only explanation of Gülen's unique success among other Islamic groups and organizations, then what is? *Refah* was similarly successful in managing diversity, local mobilization and networking, and autonomous organization. In other words, if civil society is defined merely as horizontal social associations¹⁵ and self-organization, *Refah* was even more striking than Gülen. Unfortunately, *Refah* failed to transfer the vivid local participation, and networking to the broader institutional context.¹⁶ In this sense, *Refah* fit the conventional identification of Islam in the literature: Egalitarian civic culture and inability for stable politics. Put differently, although it was a formal political organization, it failed to carry its local success to the level of the state. This is exactly what Gülen succeeds at. Accordingly, the second parts of the topical chapters surpassed the snapshots of the public sphere and revealed the institutional linkages and elective affinities between the state and Gülen. The congruence and overlapping agendas between Gülen and the state facilitated their cooperations. More specifically, trust relations in Gülen are not confined to the local level. They extend to multiple levels and facilitate cooperation with the state.

Briefly, I argued that the shifting linkages between Islam and the state can be largely explained by the elective affinities between Gülen and the nation(-state) into which it was born. I identified the most striking -yet by no means exhaustive- affinities as the following: The conception of ethnicity, nation and nation-state; the conception of social change through social engineering, patriarchalist practices and structures, which claim to be pro-woman and the international agendas in Central Asia. In the face of the increasing

¹⁵Tocqueville (1945).

influence of Turkish Islam in Turkic countries in the post-Soviet era, it is extremely important to explore Gülen's effective activities in Central Asia.

The Gülen Community resembles the Republican nation-building elites in its endeavors to undertake project-based social change. Both Fethullahists and Republicans deserve attention in creating "civilized" public sphere and faces. As the Republican Turks became the legendary examples of modernizers and nation-builders in the developing world, Fethullahists are in the process of becoming the representatives of a non-threatening, nationalist, civilized Islam. They do not hesitate to import Western patterns self-consciously. Furthermore, both Fethullahists and Republicans have been successful in initiating top-down social change through "civilizational" projects. Atatürk and his followers adopted a Western nation-making, (i.e. the making of a secular democratic Republic). F. Gülen and his followers are working on the making of civil society. Indeed, their foundations, charity-based projects, local mobilization and networking, and especially the emphasis on education to shape the future of the society, strongly resemble civil society organizations in the West.

As much as Gülen seems like an exception or radical change in state-Islam relations, it is a product of political culture and socio-political conditions (i.e. the secular Republican era in Turkey). Like Kemalists, Fethullahists do not deny the influence of the West. Fethullahist intellectuals are perfectly aware that civil society, like liberal democracy and secularism, did not originate in the Muslim world. However, their efforts for its attainment and their adoption of the ideal are more radical and difficult than the Western forerunners. This is mainly because the endeavor for the development of civil society in Turkish Islam tries to readjust the tradition of Islamic ways of lives in order to reconcile the community and individual, as well as personal and impersonal, informal and contractual relations. There is a good deal of tension between these seemingly contradictory social patterns and relations. Yet, Gülen's successful accomplishments show that Islam is in the process of continuous reformulation and readaptation. Although Gülen's social engineering has self-consciously recognized the West as a reference point, the unintended consequences of their projects have been more genuine than simple imitations. In the eyes of the pessimists, it

¹⁶ Lindholm (1996).

may still be debatable whether or not Gülen offers an alternative to the secularization in the West. However, evidence on its secularization-friendly attitudes cannot be disregarded easily, mainly because they indicate two emergent sensibilities and capacities in Islam: Cooperation with the state and, thereby trust for politics.

Consequently, evidence suggests that a fresh outlook in the theoretical focus is necessary in order to capture the emergent Islamic sensibilities and capacities. The existent theoretical framework is not sufficient to comprehend the shifting linkages between Islam and the state. On the contrary, the compatibility debate and its optimist or pessimist premises, which juxtapose Islam against the state, obscure transformations in state-Islam interaction.

On the one hand, findings suggest that the incorporation of the state to studies of Islam and civil society is essential. On the other hand, extensive evidence suggests a broader understanding of the “political”, which does not exclude Islam as ways of life, identities, voices and discourses. Accordingly, this study bridged “real politics” with politics of identity, symbols and political culture¹⁷. In other words, it observed Islam as ways of lives and informal organizations, while exploring their interaction with the state and its agents. An analysis of everyday life proved a useful source to capture these multi-dimensional aspects of Islam. Accordingly, I followed the *dava* at three levels: Identity, state and the international world order. This also helped to capture and explain broader implications (macro processes and institutions etc.) of the emergent sensibilities and capacities of Islam (identities, culture, discourse etc.)

Discussion

Discussing the congruence between Islam and civil society is counter-productive, unless the state is brought into the analysis. This is mainly because the state’s interaction with both Islam and civil society largely shapes the cultural and political processes in Turkey. The state’s predominance is not a surprise in a country where social change and progress has historically been experienced as top-down, project-based social engineering.¹⁸

¹⁷For a good example of this sort studies, see T. Wilson and H. Donnan (1998), “Nation, state and identity at international borders in Border Identities in Wilson and Donnan (ed.), *Border identities, nation and the state at international Frontiers*, Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸ Berkes (1999) [1964]; Mardin (1997).

Yet, these massive imports from the West are by no means a guarantee for civil society, and could even be a handicap.¹⁹ This seems to assign a good deal of adjustments and reconciliation to Islam at home.

Theorists of the state strongly argue that the attitudes of the state widely shape political culture,²⁰ as well as the nature and the type of social struggle and even resistance.²¹ More specifically stated, there is a clear relationship between the type of state and civil society.²² However, the implications of this literature in studying Islam have been extremely limited. This was mainly due to the historical fusion between the state and the religious community in Islam. Moreover, the anti-state positioning of contemporary Islamic movements, and the repressive attitudes of the authoritarian states towards Islam, contributed to the undertheorization of state-Islam interaction. Hence, attention has been deflected away from the state, since the authoritarian states in the Islamic Middle East have been identified as obstacles to the development of civil society.²³ The anti-statist overtone in the literature on Islam and civil society lead to a counter-productive focus on compatibility on Islam and civil society.²⁴

As a product of the Republican era, Gülen was born into a national culture, through which it inherited many characteristics of the secular Republic. Deviating from the classical Islamic fusion of Islamic community and state, the Turkish Republic not only separated Islam and politics but also controlled and regulated Islam. The acts and choices of the enlightened social engineers have been the motor of political reforms as well as cultural change in the Turkish Republic.²⁵ In this sense, the Turkish case seems to fit more radically with the Western theories, which brings the state back in. However, for a number

¹⁹Hall (2000).

²⁰ Tocqueville (1955); T. Skocpol (1979) *States and Social Revolutions: a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.; P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (1985) *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press; Mann (1993).

²¹ C. Tilly (1990) *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, Massc.: Blackwell.

²² Hall (1986); Hall (1995); Hall (1998); J. A. Hall and J. Ikenberry (1989) *The State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

²³ Norton (1996); Gole (1996).

²⁴ H. Yavuz (2000b) "Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere", *Journal of International Affairs*, Fall, 54, no.1. Yavuz (2000a) Being Modern in the Nurist Way, in ISIM.

²⁵ Arat (2000a), p.275; See also Berkes (1999) [1964].

of reasons, we need to be careful not to make hasty conclusions about the interaction between the state and society.

First, data on the cooperation between the state and Islam clearly informs us about the extension of civil society. However, the possibility of uncivil alliances between the state and fascist groups and the Mafia should not to be ignored. Thus, the nature of the interaction has to be strictly qualified. Second, some scholars assume that the Turkish state is a strong state²⁶ because it controls the society (*toplumu yönetmek*)²⁷. However, the power of the state needs to be qualified, since control over the society does not designate the development of civil society but most often the repression of it. Usually, it indicates authoritarian or despotic power.²⁸ As an extension of this debate, it has also been argued that the Turkish state equates the good of the country as a general good²⁹. This suggests that the state fails to recognize the separate interests of societal groups and the autonomous sphere of civil society.³⁰

The more radical pessimists argued that the spheres of civil society and the state are permeated in Turkey,³¹ and the Turkish state has the potential and inclination to co-opt civic initiative. It is not to be denied that the attempts for cooperation between Islam and the authoritarian states in the Middle East often turns out to be co-optation of Islamic groups.³² This happens most often –yet not always- through the state’s funding. However, the findings of the thesis provide a strong challenge to these patterns: Gülen’s autonomous sphere is secure enough. As opposed to being funded by the state, it accumulates enormous sources of power (including economic). Moreover, its *dava* is distinct from, but not against the state. Its interactions with the state are not without tension and contradiction.

²⁶ M. Heper (1985) *The State Tradition in Turkey*. Beverly: Eothen Press.

²⁷ For a critical analysis of the state’s control, see Mardin (1994) “‘Kontrol Felsefesi’ ve Geleceğimiz, (‘Philosophy of Control’ and Our Future), in *Siyasal ve Sosyal Bilimler Makaleleri 2* (Political and social Sciences, Essays 2). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları. As a solution, he suggests that space for societal organizations are necessary, p.133-138.

²⁸ Hall (1986); Mann (1993).

²⁹ Heper (1985).

³⁰ A. Y Sarıbay (2000) *Global Bir Bakışla Politik Sosyoloji*. İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, p.124.

³¹ Y. Navaro-Yashin (1998) “The Uses and Abuses of Civil Society”, *New Perspectives*, vol.18, p.1-22.

³² T. Moustafa (2000) “Conflict and Cooperation Between the State and Religious Institutions in Contemporary Egypt”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 32, p.3-22. See T. Moustafa, with regard to the subtle line between cooperation and cooption between the state and religious institutions, particularly Al –Azhar (traditionally the most respected center of Islamic studies) in Egypt.

Penetrations between the state and community-movements may also have a depoliticizing effect on the movement.³³ However, it is very important not to confuse cooperations/alliances with cooption. It is even more important to differentiate elective affinities between the state and society from the authoritarian disciplinary power of the states, which homogenizes society through repression. Accordingly, although cooperations between the state and autonomous self-organizations are strong indicators of civil society, the congruence between them are not an ultimate guarantee of civil society.³⁴ Hence, the conclusions of this study lead to further questions and research.

Emerging Questions for Further Research

My doctoral project is an empirically based analysis of the interaction between the state and Islam. Further research needs to build upon the current findings and theoretical contribution. The same issue needs to be analyzed, but instead of focusing on the Islamic movement, the relation between the state and Islam needs to be approached from the perspective of the state. The broader goal of future research is to contribute to an understanding of whether the Turkish state is in the process of creating a non-threatening, nationalist form of Islam, and thereby constructing a particular type of civil society in the Turkic Muslim world. This issue is of increasing importance in the post-Soviet period: Gülen's alliances with the Turkish state in creating agendas and policies over Central Asia shows the increasing role and influence of Turkish Islam in the Turkic Central Asian countries.

To date, little has been written about the Turkish state, since it is still a taboo topic. Stated differently, the Turkish state is an object of reverence and high authority, and has not been a subject matter of critical analysis.³⁵ More importantly, state literature in the West has generally been the focal point of political scientists and historical sociologists, having a particular popularity among institutionalist theoreticians. There exists no

³³ This point came up often in my interviews with radical Islamists, who criticize Fethullahists of "fading away" and losing the spirit of Islamism. See Chapter 4, especially the section on fragmentations and Chapter 5.

³⁴ Brubaker (1998).

³⁵ There are a few works which are in line with the state's ideology. M. Heper (1991) *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups*. Berlin, NY: Walter de Gruyter; Heper (1985).

empirical fieldwork, let alone ethnography, which investigates the type of state and its attitudes toward contemporary modern Islam in Turkey.

Importantly, questions emerge from the findings and conclusions of the current thesis which necessitate further field research on the state. What kind of a state is Gülen engaging in? What is the nature of the state's attitudes toward the Gülen Community? How, and on which issues, does the state interact with Gülen? What are the institutional strengths and weaknesses of the Turkish state that allow it to penetrate Islamic organizations? My doctoral research revealed alliances between Gülen and the state at the international level in creating educational policies for Gülen's schools in Kazakhstan. Is the putatively authoritarian secular state making compromises in its secularist official ideology in order to extend its sphere of influence into Central Asia, in the post-Soviet era? These questions are extremely important, since they deal with the state's abilities to adapt to and shape emerging domestic and international conditions. The answer will shed light on the nature of the state's power, investigating whether its power and authority originates from its despotic attitudes or its institutional capacities to penetrate Islamic organizations³⁶ Are we witnessing a transition in the state's behavior toward Islam in the face of post-Soviet transitions in the world order?³⁷ Is there a shift from arbitrary "control over society" to a responsive "control through society"? How do the overlapping agendas of Gülen and the state in Central Asia affect the nature of the state's power? Are they united in their aim to turkicize Central Asia and/or islamize the Turkic people in Central Asia? My field research in Almati revealed cooperative attitudes of the Kazak state toward Gülen in creating curriculum and offering buildings for Gülen's twenty seven schools and one university. How can we explain this collaboration in the face of the Kazak state's discouraging policies against Islamic organizations?³⁸ It is extremely important to explore the parameters of the interaction between the Kazak and Turkish states in order to understand the role of Gülen's organizations in this strategic interaction

³⁶ See especially Tocqueville's piece on the despotism of the Old Regime and its remnants, which did not have infrastructural power. Tocqueville (1955).

³⁷ Mann (1993).

³⁸ H. Ruffin and D. C. Waugh (1999); G. Gregory (1997).

In the final analysis, the current thesis calls for further research, which will examine the state's capacity to transform itself according to the emergent sensibilities and capacities of Islam as an agent of transformation in the state-society interaction.

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