

THE QUEST FOR NEW MUSLIM POLITICS: TURKEY SINCE  
THE 1990s

A Ph.D. Dissertation

by  
AYŞE SÖZEN USLUER

Department of  
Political Science and Public Administration  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University  
Ankara  
October 2016



*To my mother and father*

THE QUEST FOR NEW MUSLIM POLITICS: TURKEY SINCE  
THE 1990s

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

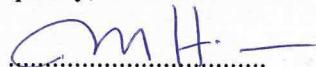
AYŞE SÖZEN USLUER

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN Political Science

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

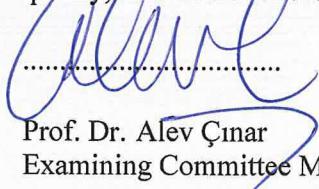
October 2016

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.



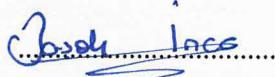
Prof. Dr. Metin Heper  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.



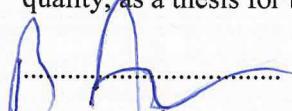
Prof. Dr. Alev Çınar  
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.



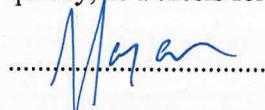
Assistant Prof. Dr. Başak İnce  
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.



Prof. Dr. Bülent Aras  
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.



Assistant Prof. Dr. Feyda Sayan Cengiz  
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences



Prof. Dr. Halime Demirkan

Director

## ABSTRACT

THE QUEST FOR NEW MUSLIM POLITICS: TURKEY SINCE THE 1990s

Sözen Usluer, Ayşe

Ph.D. Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Metin Heper

October 2016

This dissertation studies how modern Muslim individuals have changed the trajectory of political Islam in Turkey since the 1990s. This multi-case study, through a sample of students, entrepreneurs, and women, aims at exploring the daily agenda of Muslims and their unintentional role in shaping politics and society. The study examines critically that the literature on Islamist resurgence, and its transformation, is dominated by an emphasis on the struggle between seculars and Islamists. This study firstly problematizes how one assesses the many changes taking place in the Islamist trajectory, in the framework of secular/Islamic division, and then it disregards the tensions taking place within Islamic circles. Through focusing on inner circle debates, the study seeks to discover what is really changing in political Islam and what continues to be the same. The findings are twofold. First, we establish that the daily life practices of modern Muslims yield new understandings on the state, society, Islamic economy and the gender relations. Moreover, differentiating deeply from orthodox Islamist approach, these new configurations of concepts and contexts in Islamic circles result in the undermining of Islamist ‘authority’. Second, despite the new readings and interpretations of Islam, Islam still plays an important role in the (daily) life of Muslims—embedded in the capillaries of Muslim societies, it has capacity to influence

politics and society, while new designs in the public sphere, in accordance with the practice of Muslims' private lives, prevent not only the full secularization and liberalization of Muslim politics, but also cause the rise of conservatism in Muslim societies.

Keywords: Daily life, Islamist transformation, Modern Muslim individuals, Muslim politics, Turkey

## ÖZET

# MÜSLÜMAN POLİTİKALARINDA YENİ ARAYIŞLAR: 1990lardan BUGÜNE TÜRKİYE

Sözen Usluer, Ayşe

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Metin Heper

Ekim 2016

Bu tez, 1990lardan bugüne Türkiye'de modern Müslüman bireylerin siyasal İslam'ın yörungesini nasıl değiştirmiş olabileceklerini incelemektedir. Spesifik olarak öğrenciler, işadamları ve kadınlar üzerine yapılan bu çok örnekli araştırma, modern Müslüman bireylerin günlük yaşam tecrübeleri ile bu tecrübelerin farkında olmadan siyaset ve toplumu şekillendirmedeki rolünü keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma siyasal İslam'ın yörungesinde ortaya çıkmış İslamcı diriliş ve İslami dönüşüm süreçlerinin baskın bir seküler ve İslamcı bölünmesi karakteri ile okuyan literature eleştirel bir bakış getirmektedir. Bu tez İslamcı yöründede meydana gelen bütün değişimlerin sadece seküler-İslamcı çatışması üzerinden okunmasını ve İslamcı çevrelerde meydana gelen gerilimleri göz ardı etmesini eksik bulur. Böylece Müslüman bireyin günlük yaşam pratikleri ile ortaya çıkan iç halkadaki tartışmalara odaklanmak ve siyasal İslam'da gerçekten neyin değişip neyin değişmediğine bakmak bu tezin asıl hedeflerindendir. Araştırma sonuçlarının iki ana bulgusu vardır. Öncelikle, modern Müslüman bireylerin yaşam pratikleri ile birlikte devlet, toplum, İslami ekonomi ve cinsiyet ilişkileri üzerine yeni anlayışları ortaya çıkmıştır. Dahası, ortodoks İslamcı bakıştan oldukça

farklı olarak ortaya çıkan bu yeni kavram ve görüşler ile bağlamın oluşumu İslamcı otoritenin altını boşaltmaktadır. İkinci olarak ise, İslamın bütün bu yeni okumalarına ve yorumlamalarına rağmen, İslam Müslümanlar'ın hayatında halen çok önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. İslam'ın Müslüman toplumların kılcal damarlarına kadar yerleşik bir kültür olarak bu toplumlarda siyaset ve toplumu etkileme kapasitesi devam etmektedir. Buna parallel olarak, kamusal alanın yeni düzenlemeleri modern Müslüman bireylerin İslam'ı pratik etmelerine uygun olarak dizayn edilmekte böylece tam seküler ve tam liberal bir toplum yerine daha muhafazakâr bir toplum görüntüsü ortaya çıkmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Günlük yaşam, İslamcılığın dönüşümü, Modern Müslüman bireyler, Müslüman politikaları, Türkiye

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ÖZET .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1. The Problem.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2. Rationale and Significance .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.2.1. A Brief Outline of the Literature on Islamist Resurgence and Transformation....	11
1.2.1.1. Islamist Resurgence .....	11
1.2.1.2. Islamist Transformation .....	14
1.2.1.3. Contribution of This Thesis .....	17
<b>1.3. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions .....</b>	<b>19</b>
1.3.1. Research Approach .....	20
1.3.2. Assumptions.....	21
<b>1.4. Definitions for Key Terminologies Used in This Study.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.5. Organization of the Thesis .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.2. Rationale for the Qualitative Research Design .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.3. Selecting Research Sample .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.4. Data-Collection Methods.....</b>	<b>34</b>
2.4.1. In-depth Interviews Method.....	35
2.4.2. Document Analysis .....	37
<b>2.5. Data Analysis and Synthesis Methods.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2.6. Ethical Considerations .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.7. Issues of Trustworthiness .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.8. Limitations of the Study .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>3.1. Post-Islamism: The new phase of Islamism .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>3.2. An Alternative Account in Approaching New Muslim Politics.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.3. The Theory of the Collective Action of Non-collective Actors .....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.3.1. Collective Action as a Total Sum of Individual Practices .....	54
3.3.2. Revising the Turkish Islamist Trajectory in Light of the Collective Action of Non-collective Actors Theory.....	59
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE AGENTS OF MUSLIM POLITICS: MUSLIM STUDENTS UNDER SCRUTINY .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>4.1. Student profiles.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>4.2. Interviewing Muslim Students: Envisioning the Future .....</b>	<b>68</b>
4.2.1. Leisure Time: Sports, Entertainment, and Art .....	68

4.2.1.1. Differences Between the Literature and This Study in Approaching the Leisure Time Activities of Modern Muslim Individuals.....	68
4.2.1.2. Sports: How the Orthodox Islamist Perspective on Sports is Beyond the Visions of Young Muslims.....	69
4.2.1.3. Entertainment: Enjoying With ‘Others’ While Preserving Muslim Boundaries.....	76
4.2.1.4. Art: Is There An Alternative Islamic Art? .....	83
4.2.2. God Says, ‘We Created You Different in Order that you may know one another’: Plurality, Multiculturalism, and Equality.....	89
4.2.3. New Perceptions on the State, Secularism, and <i>Sharia</i> .....	102
<b>4.3. Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>114</b>

## **CHAPTER 5: MUSLIM ENTREPRENEURS IN TURKEY: THE EMERGENCE OF A HYBRID ECONOMY ..... 117**

<b>    5.1. Muslim Entrepreneurs’ Profiles .....</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>    5.2. Globalization and Restructuring through Neoliberalism in Turkey .....</b>	<b>121</b>
5.2.1. Neoliberal Restructuring in the Turkish Economy and Its Socioeconomic Impacts: The Emergence of Muslim Entrepreneurs.....	121
5.2.2. Pro-globalist Muslims .....	123
5.2.3. Globalization as a Process of Economic Emancipation and the Retreat of State.....	125
<b>    5.3. Interviewing Muslim Entrepreneurs: The Emergence of a <i>Hybrid Economy?</i> .....</b>	<b>126</b>
5.3.1. Interaction between Islamic Economic Values and Free Market Principles .....	127
5.3.2. New Interpretations of Islamic (Economic) Values .....	129
5.3.2.1. Homo Islamicus: A Morally Strong, Materially Rich Man.....	129
5.3.2.2. Consumerism and Individualism .....	135
5.3.3. New Islamic Business Practices.....	140
5.3.3.1. Islamic Banking.....	140
5.3.3.2. Labor Rights and Islamicus Sendicus.....	146
5.3.4. Leisure Time: Sports, Holidays, and Art .....	152
<b>    5.4. Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>158</b>

## **CHAPTER 6: THE ROLE OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN CHANGING GENDER RELATIONS ..... 162**

<b>    6.1. Women’s Profiles .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>    6.2. Background Information on the Perceptions, Facts, and Legal Status of Women in Turkey.....</b>	<b>167</b>
6.2.1. Beyond Veiling .....	168
6.2.2. Encountering Double-headed Authority: Muslim Women Pressed Between Seculars and Islamists During the 1990s.....	172
6.2.3. Muslim Women during the 1990s: Turkey and the International Nexus.....	177
<b>    6.3. Interviewing Muslim Women .....</b>	<b>181</b>
6.3.1. The Rise of Muslim Women Professionals.....	181
6.3.2. Shifts in Muslim Gender Relationships: Intimacy between Men and Women ..	188
6.3.3. Muslim Women and Fashion .....	200
6.3.4. Leisure Time Activities: Sports, Holidays, and Art.....	208
<b>    6.4. Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>211</b>

<b>CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>A. RESEARCH CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>B. QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>C. CODING LEGEND/ SCHEME.....</b>	<b>250</b>

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. The Problem**

This dissertation arose from the rough question “Has political Islam ended, or does it still continue?” Those who favor the end of political Islam argue that it lost all of its arguments within the homogenizing processes of modernization and secularization. The central argument from this perspective is that Islamists dropped the ideal of a *sharia* state (an Islamic law-based state model) and reduced the attributions of what they viewed as an ultimate form of administration to the moral values of virtues and honesty (Roy, 1994: 62). The election of moderate Islamic leaders or-parties by popular vote, is also regarded as a forerunner in the decline of Islamism since ceasing to be an alternative (Kepel, 2002: 13). Those who argue for the continuation of political Islam, on the other hand, claim that despite the routinisation and integration of Islamism into the politics and societies of their respective countries, it manifests itself in various typologies (Zubaida, 2000: 62).

The latter perspective has been advanced by the argument that Islamism is not only the expression of a political project, but also a strong referent in social and cultural spheres (Ismail, 2006: 2), which still makes it effective within the political and societal contexts in which it exists. Although the influence of Islam in the social and cultural spheres is commonly perceived as the shrinkage thereof and is labelled “cultural Islamism,” Ismail’s (Ismail, 2006: viii) emphasis is on the significance of

micro-level processes in the everyday lives of social actors in making changes to macro-level structures like the state or, I should add, party policies. With her distinctive contribution, Ismail argues that despite the rising number of debates in the dominant literature on the failure of Islam, the interaction between religion and the social and cultural sides of everyday life evidences the continuation of Islamist activism.

The argument surrounding the failure of Islam includes discussions on the failure of its ideology to reconcile itself with democracy, as well as the discontent of Muslim societies as a result of a lack of democracy (Bayat, 2009: 4-7). According to Bayat, although authoritarian regimes and poor governance were the original sources of disillusionment for the masses, Islamist state examples such as Iran and Pakistan, and Islamist movements like Jamaat-i Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood, were also considered as responsible forces for such discontent. Bayat argues that this dissatisfaction resulted in Muslim individuals demanding the fusion of faith and freedom, a secular democratic state and a religious society. More importantly, in Bayat's view, the new trend is achieved not through contentious politics but through the collectivities of disjointed and yet parallel practices of non-collective actors. Supporting Ismail's argument, the *practice* of ordinary people in everyday life is essential in this regard.

This thesis firstly assumes the stronger possibility of the second argument, which emphasizes the significance of the daily practices of Muslim people in determining macro-level politics in general, and the Islamist trajectory in particular. The central assumption is the determinative capability of individuals' daily practices and their unintentional collective actions in changing political and societal conditions and undermining 'authority'. The emphasis on daily practices in this assumption

does not proffer that Muslim people are no longer interested in participating in state politics—quite the opposite, in fact, as they continue to be fundamental actors not only in local politics, but also in world politics. However, this is rather a way in roasting a new type of politics, which it might be fair to argue involves not quitting politics but instead reinforcing politics. In this new approach, daily life operates as politics (Bayat, 2009: 13), but more importantly Islam is embedded in this daily life, and, as Bayat states, “it continues to serve as a mobilizing ideology and a social movement frame” (Bayat, 2009: 7).

Secondly, the thesis makes an original contribution to the literature by bringing Turkey into the discussion. Scholars who have argued about the importance of daily life practices and theorized the collective action of non-collective actors have studied the countries of Iran, Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Turkey is the exceptional example of this argument, as it has been more successful than the others after experiencing ‘Arab Spring.’<sup>2</sup>

Last but not the least; the thesis makes the most important contribution by examining inner circle discussions and negotiations within Islamic groups. Unlike the literature on Turkish Islamist resurgence and Islamist transformation, the current thesis views the dynamics of change not only within the framework of secular-Islamic division, but also in the deeper wave of Islamic movement. Discussions raised amongst Islamic groups, tensions, and negotiated consequences take the issue under scrutiny beyond the secular-Islamic division. This in turn leads to perceiving this change not as a surfaced transformation towards secularization and modernization but more as a substantive change, which does not always end up with

---

<sup>1</sup> Bayat examined, Egypt and Iran, Ismail studied Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia.

<sup>2</sup> The Arab Spring (2010-2012) started in Tunisia in December 2010 as a revolt by public masses against the country’s dictator and its autocratic government. It immediately had a domino effect in Arabic countries such as Egypt, UAE, Libya, and Syria. Despite the revolts and successful revolutions toppling the dictators of a few respective countries, they failed to establish strong democratic states.

a more secularized picture of the Islamic community but rather captures a more conservative snapshot of society.

Although this thesis is inspired significantly by Ismail and Bayat's argument, it launches new inputs into the debate. First of all, the abovementioned assumption hints at various shifts, changes, and transformations in the trajectory of Islamist politics. However, these changes might not be those that are expected in Bayat's argument. In other words, Muslims' demands for freedom, democracy, and a secular state might not reflect the 'change' in the trajectory of Islamism. No doubt, there is something 'new', but this 'new' needs to be clarified. In this thesis, I prefer to explain the changes taking place as 'new conditions' instead of transformation.

A 'new condition' started to be configured for Islamism in the 1990s and it can be best understood through inspecting new actors, processes, and outcomes. Before I started to write this thesis, I was greatly concerned about the discussions on Islamist transformation. Either debates at the academic level on the end of Islamism or the emergence of the Justice and Development Party (JDP)<sup>3</sup> on the Turkish political scene have made me wonder about the future of Islamist politics. Those who question its prospects particularly began to scrutinize the Turkish case when ex-Islamists—with a new moderate outlook—came to power in Turkey through democratic elections of 2002 under the name 'JDP'. The central question surrounding the *transformation of Islamism* has therefore become all the more important since that time.

---

<sup>4</sup> The JDP has been the single governing party of Turkey since November 2002. It is the offspring of the Islamist movement and a symbol of Islamist transformation, both in Turkey and across the region. The party has been commonly depicted as pro-Islamist or Islamic party in academic writings and media, although the party itself does not reference Islam in its political program and the declarations of election campaigns. The JDP itself declares its identity as "conservative democrat" (See Firat, D. M. 2004. International Symposium on Conservatism and Democracy. Ankara, 15). However, due to the core founding members and its leadership cadre's roots in the Islamist Party of Turkey, the JDP has continued to be referred as Islamist or pro-Islamist. Being practicing religious Muslims in their private lives also contributes to considering JDP politicians as Islamists.

Nevertheless, whenever the transformation moved from being discussed in academic to political circles, the common perception concerned the liberal, democratic, and secular evaluation of Islamism—a somewhat ‘ideal future’. However, for the time being it is understood that any ‘change’ has not lived up to expectations, and the secularization of Muslim societies is not the same as what has happened in the West. It is rather a particular change that I prefer to define as a ‘new condition’ instead of ‘transformation’<sup>4</sup> and which can be summarized as *the quest for new Muslim Politics*.

The central question is “What is new in the new condition?” The new condition is threefold in its nature: Actors, the way that the process leads, and (partly resulted) outcome. I will now explain this tripartite framework specific to the Turkish context.

Firstly, I basically hypothesize that the determinative role of political, intellectual, and religious actors in political Islam has been replaced by that of *modern Muslim individuals*, who are more decisive on private to public issues and in social to political life. Through their daily practices they undermine ‘authority’, but no doubt this is not the first time this has happened in history. In other words, the transformative power between structure and agency is not new to either the world or to Islamist history. Nonetheless, in the context of high-technology, speedy transportation, and accessibility to knowledge, i.e. the total interconnectedness of people, self-realization of the individual and the self-organization of society are particularly salient. These specific changes arose during the 1990s. It is this centralization of the individual that leads me to call the new condition of political Islam ‘Muslim politics’ from now on, due to the fact that ‘Muslim’ signifies a person

---

<sup>4</sup> Transformation will be used in this text from time to time as a synonym of ‘change’. However its subtext of secular, liberal and democratic transformation in Western lensed texts does not mean in this text unless it is stated.

who believes in the religion of Islam, hence underlining the singularity of the individual.

In this text, ‘modern Muslim individuals’ means those Muslims who are not in a position to authorize a group or movement but instead live ordinary lives and emphasize their individual identity rather than group identity. Inspired by Bayat, who uses the term “ordinary people” to represent the main actors in transformative processes specific to Muslim societies, I prefer to use modern Muslim individuals. This has the specific intention of differentiating the case of Turkey with its large middle class enclave, since the word ‘ordinary’ indicates the uneducated, unemployed, and slum-dwellers—essentially the lower classes. Modern Muslim individuals, on the other hand, recall rather modern, urbanized, middle-class Muslims who live in modern times without problematizing modernity. I decided to use this term once I had completed my research and when I realized that the most important thing for the participants in this research was their regular participation in modern life, without underlining their differences but emphasizing their personal particularity.

‘Authority’, on the other hand, implicates political, intellectual, and religious people who have a role in shaping political Islam and Islamist movements in Turkey. It is reasonable to label the representatives of authority as ‘orthodox Islamists’, as their approach conforms to the established doctrine of Islamism. The central concern of orthodox Islamism is the way in which it problematizes modernity with respect to its idioms, institutions, philosophy, homogenizing influence, and all-encompassing paradigm. An anti-Western stand is also salient in this ideology. The findings of this research showed that such concerns—interestingly—do not figure in the views of modern Muslim individuals, and so rather than problematizing modernity, they are

concerned with their equal participation in modern life. Anti-Westernism, on the other hand, criticizes Westerners' double standards in excluding non-Westerners from benefiting from a prosperous and democratic life.

Secondly, the process is a creation of subjectivity, albeit through the self-definitions and self-organization of individuals and of society. The process is configured through *practice*. However, practices work as a tool of 'negotiation', and modern Muslim individuals negotiate on topics relevant to both religion and modern daily life such as marriage, veiling, women's working life, the banking system, using credit and paying interest, living in a pluralistic society, etc. The negotiation through practices also demarcates the lines of society and state in which they would like to live. Negotiation takes place between modern Muslim individuals and the double-headed authority, where one is the *Kemalist*<sup>5</sup> and the second is Islamist authority. This study examines particularly the latter in order to observe inner circle discussions.

Thirdly, outcomes can be recognized not with 'do's' but with 'undo's'. The outcome is not full secularism, or Western-styled liberalism and democratization—it is certainly the modernization of Muslims in terms of rising individualization and compromising ways of thing on the cruxes of modernity. Islam is read more by individual interpretations and practiced by self-understanding and perceptions; however, it is still practiced strongly by Muslim individuals, and they are loyal to obeying *helals* and *harams* (permissions and bans commanded by Allah). This entails the organization of public life in accordance with Islamic rules and principles, which involves more than values. As practicing Islam is not only done in private places, i.e. prayers five times a day, fasting, and going to *haj*, it is visible in the

---

<sup>5</sup> *Kemalism* is the formal ideology that the modern Turkish Republic was based on it. The father of the ideology is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The most salient character of the ideology is its strong secularism.

public space. Thus, even if it is interpreted and practiced individually, social life and public space need to be adjusted in accordance with these new practices. As a consequence, change is not necessarily secular (worldly) but is apparently more religious and conservative. For instance, we observe Ramadan tents for fasting Muslims in city centers during the holy month or more mosques being built for practicing Muslims, as well as small mosques (*mescids*) for state-owned offices. These new designs in public places are based on the combined needs of Muslims' worldly and religious necessities.

Picking up a particular period is quite significant in terms of applying the theory of collective action of non-collective actors. Bayat argues that the collective action of non-collective actors is a special type of activism which cannot be developed "anytime and anywhere;" instead, it needs a political opportunity, he notes, but this is often a rather bitter pill to swallow. In Bayat's words, "in the absence of free activities, the political class is forced either to exit the political scene at least temporarily." Therefore, the concurrent processes of February 28 in the domestic politics of Turkey as the specific time period between 1997 and 2001<sup>6</sup> that heavy state suppression enforced by the *Kemalist* ideology and the process of globalization as an engine of sociocultural and socio economic transformations during the 1990s will constitute the background context of this research.

The process of February 28 is the best example of this theory, as Muslims in Turkey were excluded from all formal places, and Islamist politicians were banned from politics. As a result, Muslim people asserted their feelings on the streets. In fact

---

<sup>6</sup> Although it is hard to define the end of the February 28 process, I take the establishment of the JDP on August 14, 2001, as the end date. This is because the emergence of the JDP was followed by preparations for the next general elections on November 2, 2002. Afterwards, the political picture of Turkey changed in favor of religious people, who had faced undemocratic implementations during the process and excluded from the politics.

the cynical words of seculars, who said that “nobody interferes in lives in the streets,” pointed a kind of address for Muslims to do politics. Interestingly enough, this period of unrest continued as Muslims undermined not only *Kemalist* authority, but also Islamist authority. February 28th drove Muslim individuals to remove the expectations imposed on them, including those from the upper echelons of the Islamist ideology.

Given these assumptions, throughout the text I intend to observe the negotiating power of Muslim individuals between them and the authorities. I chose the participants in this research from those who were negatively affected by the process of February 28. Although the authority immediately recalls for the *Kemalist* ideology in the context of February 28, this study scrutinizes the encounter between modern Muslim individuals and Islamist political, intellectual, and religious authorities.

Until now, several studies have defined the *Kemalist* state as the sole authority and have only focused on the encounter between seculars and Islamists (Göle, 1996; Ozdalga, 1998; Arat 2005; Saktanber, 2000; Saktanber 2002; Cinar, 2005), by examining the daily practices of Muslim individuals and arguing that the use of Islamic symbolism in their daily life is evidence of their resistance against the seculars. Most studies have attempted to explicate the factors that changed the Islamist trajectory in Turkey, but none of them has paid special attention to the negotiations between Muslim individuals and Islamist political, intellectual, and religious authorities in this process. Nevertheless, authority in the country should be perceived double-headed: the *Kemalist* state on the one hand, and various Islamist authorities on the other. Since these studies have been only concerned with the dialogue between the secular state and the Muslim individual, they always run the

risk of overemphasizing secular hegemony. By examining the negotiations between modern Muslim individuals and Islamist authorities themselves, this study aims at analyzing the concealed and unelaborated part of the story, which has important implications for the furtherment of new Muslim politics. Yet, this is not to deny the essential role played by the *Kemalist* state, which after all did reinforce the dynamics of this negotiation.

In this regard, this dissertation takes into consideration three specific groups: Students, entrepreneurs, and women. Drawing on qualitative data consisting of 37 in-depth interviews, the respondents in those three groups were selected from amongst people who faced difficulty during the February 28 process. Talking with the respondents was highly important, as Ismail importantly reminds us: “Self-conception of [individuals] is a social production involving processes of constituting meaning and producing norms” (Ismail, 2006: 20). Hence, although the study is not able to offer an entirely all-encompassing view of new Muslim politics, by means of a range of examples it nevertheless attempts to draw a picture of how modern Muslim individuals used the streets as a place of free activity and at a specific time in history, and then unintentionally produced collective action as non-collective actors.

## **1.2. Rationale and Significance**

The rationale for this study emanates from my wish to contribute to the very fundamental question of whether Islamism has ended or if it still continues in various guises in Muslim society. This question was first asked by Oliver Roy in his pioneering 1994 study *The Failure of Political Islam*—an important piece of literature that has been built upon and passionately discussed in academic circles (Bayat, 1996; Zubaida 2000; Ismail 2006). The same question entailed debates on Islamist transformation in Turkey, though the literature on the transformation this

subject focuses on the compatibility between Islam and democracy (Heper, 1997: 32-45; Toprak, 2005: 167-186; Yavuz, 2009). The present study hypothesizes that there a new condition has been configured which can be best understood by looking at actors, processes, and (partly resulted) outcomes. Such a partly completed process can be summarized as *the quest for new Muslim politics*. Until now, the transformation of Turkish Islamism has been studied from the viewpoint of secularism, and Islamists' struggles and negotiations with the *Kemalist* authority have been the central research field in these studies. However, in order to best capture the new conditions and changes taking place; inner circle negotiations, debates, and tensions should be explored. The distinctive contribution of this thesis rests on the research focused on inner circle discussions. A compare-and-contrast technique is employed, in order to display the differences emerging between orthodox Islamists and modern Muslim individuals. However, the discussions raised among Islamist groups from time to time are also displayed, albeit without comparisons, in order to see what was discussed, what caused tensions, and finally what was negotiated.

Looking at new conceptual and contextual configurations may also help us to measure the authenticity of the transformations taking place in Islamist politics and shed light on the future of political Islam.

### **1.2.1. A Brief Outline of the Literature on Islamist Resurgence and Transformation**

#### **1.2.1.1. Islamist Resurgence**

A number of studies in the Turkish literature have focused on the rise of Islamic resurgence since the 1980s and the following decade. Scholarly interest in

the issue emerged from the rise of one particular Islamist political party, namely the Welfare Party, in 1987. Its growth, both in local and central governance, as well as its recruitment capacity in urban life, has been discussed from various perspectives. Similarly, general the mobilization of people around cultural and social issues framed by Islamic idioms attracted scholars when the relationship between religion and politics began to challenge secular progress in Turkish political, cultural, and social circles. The linear progressive expectation of the secularization process, which started with the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923, penetrated into the capillaries of society, but any expectations in this regard have withered away over time.

Studies instead focused on the role of Islam in providing a “common identity” for the masses that immigrated to big cities from small towns and villages and ultimately lost themselves in the bulk of the city (White, 2002; Saktanber, 2002). The predicaments these people face in urban life, thereby their stick to the Islamic identity in order to confront the challenges of modern-urban life, constituted the main argument of these studies. Identity provided by Islam for the new population in the urban place was additionally important in the context of “globalization.” According to Keyman, the speedy process of globalization in the 1990s, and its homogenizing influence on cultural life, paradoxically revived localization and made authentic identities more important than national identities (Keyman, 1999: 71-89) because of the intensifying need of people to define themselves in the melting pot of cultural transition.

Such an identity politics approach, based on the political economy, was accompanied by party politics analyses that focused on the egalitarian discourse used by the Islamist political party (White, 2002; Öniş, 2001:281-298; Toprak, 1991:147-

161). According to the party politics approach, Islamist discourse that emphasized solidarity and “equality”—read equality between the elites and the ordinary people of society, or seculars and the religious—and promised hope to the hopeless masses provided a perfect match for the expectations of the newly urbanized and marginalized population. Öniş (2001) argues that Islamism emerged as an ideology of the excluded: Excluded economically, culturally, and intellectually (282).

Furthermore, according to Öniş, the Welfare Party’s “just order” appealed directly to the poor and unprivileged in society (284). Toprak (1991), on the other hand, argued that the Islamist movement promised salvation not only in this world, but also for the next world for culturally and economically marginalized city dwellers (158).

Moreover, according to Toprak, Islamic resurgence was a certain type of conservative response to protecting community morality in the *metropolitan* cities. This new public life in the urban setting, as Toprak emphasized, designed to provide intimacy between men and women, or to promote ‘city-style’ dress codes for both sexes, was a threat to Islamic traditions in keeping with Islamist thought. Hence, Islamic ideology had a specific mission, as these arguments posited, to preserve the moral values of the new population in the metropolis, whose morality was under threat from both Westernization and urbanization (150).

The identity politics approach emerged as a result of the globalization process which dominated the political science literature during the 1990s (Keyman, 2000: 207-229). The literature on Islamist resurgence had also settled under this umbrella, though identity politics confines itself to analyzing issues from an instrumentalist perspective. In other words, if, for instance, one looks at the trajectory of the Islamist movement through the lens of identity politics, one may view Islam as an instrument and actually underestimate its real capacity. This tendency led to expectations of the

failure of political Islam, which actually started to be discussed in the literature by 1994.

Therefore, this study critically approaches studies on Islamist resurgence in the 1990s that assessed all Islamic tendencies in society as identity politics. The research results, indeed display that Islam plays an authentic and determinative role in Muslim societies which results in continuities in political Islam despite deep cleavages with its past.

#### **1.2.1.2. Islamist Transformation**

The focus, in the second half of the 1990s, later shifted towards investigating the transformation of the Islamist movement in Turkey especially, whereby cultural and sociological approaches dominated the field. In this vein, the central concern was not the resurgence of Islamism but rather its demise and its homogenization in the melting pot of modernity. The term “alternative modernities” has emphasized the modernization of Muslim societies, albeit through continued alignment with the distinctive codes of Islam (Azmeh, 1993). The subtext of alternative modernities is the unavoidable modernization of all societies alongside minor distinguishing contributions in the process. Göle, in her famous book of *The Forbidden Modern*, views Islamism as a product of modernity, and she emphasizes the impossibility of understanding contemporary Islamism isolated from the local constructs of Western modernity (Göle, 1996: 2). In order to back up her point of view, Göle focuses on the veiling of Muslim women and interprets this practice as a kind of quest to live a modern life in Muslim women’s dressings. Although Göle emphasizes that veiling is a symbol of difference and resistance against the homogenizing impacts of Western modernity, she nevertheless argues that veiling ultimately serves as a tool for living a modern life, such as gaining an education at universities, going outside and

socializing (Göle, 1996: 22; Göle, 2000: 101). Thus, Islamism's relationship with modernity—or rather its compatibility and harmonization—draw the streamline of those studies. Ismail criticizes the understanding of the relation between Islamism and modernity in the framework of meta-narrative readings of modernity asserting Western hegemony (Ismail, 2006: 3).

Further to Göle's argument, later studies underlined the increasing socioeconomic capital of Islamist groups, their changing lifestyles, and increasing consumerism running parallel to their socioeconomic development (Genel and Karaosmanoglu, 2006: 473-488; Gokariksel and Secor, 2009:6-18; Sandikci and Ger, 2001: 146-150). According to these studies, the rise of a new middle class in Turkey, mostly residing in the Anatolian part of the country,<sup>7</sup> resulted in a change in the socioeconomic conditions of these groups, defined by the Turkish political literature as existing on the periphery. The rise of the petit bourgeois brought forth the capitalization phase for Islamists, following on from the modernization phase.

As an offshoot of the Islamist Party, the emergence of the Justice and Development Party, on August 14, 2001, resulted in the opening of new phases in the debate (Heper, 2003: 157-185; Ozbudun, 2006: 543-557; Mecham, 2004: 339-358, Dağı, 2005: 21-39). The central concern of these studies was the compatibility between Islam and democracy. In this respect, JDP's frequent use of democracy, human rights, equality, women's rights, and the liberal economy tracked a significant transformation in the Islamist discourse. The party's covenant and manifesto, also framed by these notions, endorsed the idea that Islamism was passing through a serious transformation towards liberalization and democratization. Its pro-EU stand,

---

<sup>7</sup> Anatolia is the continental part of Turkey which is not including the coasts of Turkey.

for instance, became additionally promising for those who supported Islamist liberal-democratic transformation.

In fact, Islamist parties, parties established by Erbakan<sup>8</sup>, and the well-known National Outlook movement were remembered for their anti-Western, anti-liberal, anti-EU discourse, as they always tended to explain the notions “equality, human rights, and liberation” in line with Islamic connotations rather than their meanings in Western terminology. Only the Virtue Party, the successor to the WP, began to use democracy and liberalism more frequently than its predecessors, as it was established after the February 28 as a result of the closure of the Welfare Party following the decision made by the Constitutional Court.

The literature on Islamist transformation limited itself to considering changes taking place in the framework of secular-Islamist division, and most of the case studies examining the struggle between seculars and Islamists usually took place in state-monitored public places like universities. The visibility of Muslim people in public sphere-like residences, cafés, and holiday resorts also became signs of religious people’s negotiation of their participation in public life. These negotiations were held with *Kemalists* according to those studies. The use of democratic discourse on the political scale, particularly by the Virtue Party and the JDP after 2001, was also considered as an achievement of *Kemalist* ideology.

This study problematizes the domination of this perspective in the transformation literature, and it argues for the importance of examining inner circle discussions in order to understand the authenticity of transformation and to what

---

<sup>8</sup> Necmettin Erbakan is the founder of the National Order Party (1970), of the National Salvation Party (1972), of the Welfare Party (1987). He is also the leader of ‘National Outlook’ (*Milli Görüş*), which is known as the umbrella movement of these political parties and symbolizes mainstream political Islam in Turkey. The Welfare Party (WP) was very efficient in the 1990s. Therefore, it is frequently mentioned and always referred to as the ‘Islamist Party’ throughout this text.

extent it is limited. This may also eliminate the hegemony of secularism in the study of political Islam.

### **1.2.1.3. Contribution of This Thesis**

As is summarized above, the literature on Turkish Islamism is twofold: First, its central theme considers Islamist activism as a clash between seculars and Islamists in Turkish society. According to these studies, the Islamist trajectory after the 1980s was shaped by its struggle against secularist suppression by religious groups. According to dominant patterns in the literature, Islamist resurgence was a kind of challenge to secular authority through asserting the Islamic identity in politics, culture, and social life. Accordingly, despite its arguments on the modern, capitalist, and secular transformation of Muslims, the literature on the Islamist transformation mainly agreed on the endeavors of Muslims in undermining *Kemalist* authority by being visible in the public sphere. According to this view, Muslim individuals negotiated their religious identity in public places by being visible.<sup>9</sup>

Second, as Islam started to be seen as an instrument for placing people together from various backgrounds into big cities, its determinative capacity failed to be assessed accurately. Although there is abundant emphasis on the use of Islamic idioms in political, cultural and social life, it was seen as a tool for making Islamist ideology a part of achieving political ambitions.

This study argues that in order to assess properly all shifts taking place in the Islamist sphere, inner circle discussions require close examination, since negotiations between modern Muslim individuals and Islamist authority represent an essential part of the configuration of new Muslim politics. Examining the process only from the secular-Islamist division perspective, or to put it with in a larger framework as a

---

<sup>9</sup> A very important argument was developed by Çınar, A. in her book ‘Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey’ (2005), especially about the nonverbal negotiation techniques used by Islamists against seculars.

center-periphery cleavage, leaves the story only half told. This study therefore aims at analyzing the concealed and unelaborated part of the story, which has important implications for Islamist transformation.

It is this examination of inner circle negotiation that provides this thesis's original contribution. Figuring out the divergences and convergences between orthodox Islamists and modern Muslim individuals, underlying continuities and discontinuities, and finding tensions is the central task of this research.

Secondly, this study contends that Islam does not have an instrumentalist role for Muslims but is instead a fundamental element in all aspects of life. Therefore, the hegemony of the secular perspective should be eliminated when studying Muslim politics. The findings of this research suggest that despite its new interpretations, Islam still plays an important role in Muslim politics. Although, the respondents in this research differed from the orthodox Islamist way of thinking and living, they all continued to emphasize the determinative role of their religion in their lives.

By and large, the findings of this thesis acknowledge the arguments in the literature on the increasing modernization of Muslim societies. However, modern Muslim individuals emphasize participation and their own sameness rather than underline their distinctiveness from their contemporaneous encounters in both Turkey and the rest of the world. According to them, the politics of difference and resistance is no longer a legal way of protecting Muslim rights, and instead of excluding themselves from modern-day pursuits, they emphasize their need for inclusiveness. In this respect Islam does not play a differentiating but an essential role in their life.

In addition, modern Muslim individuals do not problematize modernity. They are not against modern thoughts, modern institutions, modern idioms, or modern

entertainment instruments, and in their view modernity is a tunnel through which they are passing. This notion, which emerges as the most salient difference between them and orthodox Islamists, will be discussed in the analysis chapters.

### **1.3. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore, through a sample of Muslim students, entrepreneurs, and women whose lives were negatively affected by the process of February 28, the changing perceptions of this cohort concerning the reconfiguration of state, society, and religious practices. It was my belief from the very outset of this research that the inquiry would yield fresh insights that would challenge the burgeoning orthodox understanding in the related literature, which promotes the end of political Islam, by underscoring the transformations taking place in people's perceptions and practices on the ground. The reason for choosing the February 28 process, in addition to the abovementioned theoretical reasons, as the background context of the research field was because it is considered as a watershed for the Islamist politics and transformations taking place in the Islamist movement in Turkey (Dağı et al, 2006; Atacan, 2005:187-199; Cinar, 2006: 469-486; Cizre and Cinar, 2003: 301-330). A number of studies have argued how February 28 forced Islamists to moderate both their political discourse and daily life radicalism as a result of the stressing conditions of the period that tight the people's life as girdle. According to this account, both the Islamist party and religious people in Turkey were forced to suspend "radical" ambitions to change the secular character of the state and instead opted for more democratic politics. The process also forced the Islamist party to change its discourse towards a more pro-democratic and human rights-based perspective. Following my readings on the literature, I picked up the time as the beginning of Islamist transformation. However, the findings of the

research revealed that the quest for new Muslim politics started long before February 28—and continues to this day.

The main research question of this thesis is “*What were the political, societal, and cultural factors that occurred during the February 28 process that led modern Muslim individuals to seek a new form of politics?*” Central to this question, during the research period, I inquired as to how members of the three aforementioned groups (students, entrepreneurs, and women) have respectively elaborated on the following questions: (a) How does one live in a pluralistic, democratic, and secular society as a contemporary Muslim, (b) how can one evaluate an Islamic economic model in a liberal world, and (c) how does one organize Muslim gender relations in contemporary life?

### **1.3.1. Research Approach**

I studied the perceptions and experiences of 12 students, 13 entrepreneurs, and 12 women with Islamic background in Turkey. The investigation, based on qualitative research methods, resulted in a multi-case study. In-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection. In addition, I analyzed relative documents such as newspaper articles, Islamic magazines, and civil society publications as secondary sources of data collection. Consequently, the study’s overall findings consisted of information gathered through 37 in-depth interviews.

I transcribed the interviews once they were concluded. Coding categories were developed and refined on an ongoing basis, and several other strategies were also employed, such as discrepant evidence and peer reviews, during the analysis stage of the study.

The research approach will be defined with full details in the next chapter, which explains the whole methodology.

### **1.3.2. Assumptions**

Before I started my field work, I held three basic assumptions based on the related literature and my ground-level experience gained over many years as a student and a woman working in a milieu full of people similar to the participants in this study.

Firstly, new Muslim politics can be defined by the daily practices/agendas of modern Muslim individuals since the 1990s as a result of specific circumstances caused by globalization and the February 28 process. Since then, political, intellectual, and religious actors who basically employed the discourse of organizing political and societal order in accordance with Islamic values and principles have had to contest with the daily agenda of modern Muslim individuals (Mandaville, 2007: 4). In this context, I assume that modern Muslim individuals play a key role in the quest for meaning and the determination of the trajectory of political Islam.

Secondly, I observed that Islamist experience in local governments during the 1990s promoted new daily life practices which ended up with changes in the political and social choices of Muslim individuals. I believe that urbanization and new designs for daily life in big cities, for instance social facilities (restaurants, sport halls, cultural centers, etc.) opened up to the public by local governments, provided the opportunity for city dwellers to accumulate symbolic capital. Tastes, habits, and behavioral patterns changed accordingly, and over time this made people become more self-centered while also to some extent reliant on each other in new social settings and political positions.

Thirdly, new practices and their domination may have implications in the new meanings and orders. In order to figure out such implications we need to observe negotiations between individuals and the ‘authority’. According to Mandaville,

‘authority’ is undermined by social processes in the global context in which various “Muslim public spheres” are configured by new followers discussing and re-interpreting Islam in diverse ways (Mandaville, 2007: 303) In fact, what Mandaville indicates is that “classical authority” is undermined in the absence of a central religion, but Islamic authorities proliferated as singulars raised as authorities. Acknowledging Mandaville, I assume that the individual becomes a significant agent, as s/he contributes to the processes *via* marginal utility.<sup>10</sup> Modern Muslim individuals undermine authority through their practices, and in the case of political Islam in Turkey, the ‘authority’ is commonly identified as the *Kemalist* regime to this point. However, I assume that the notion of authority is double-headed for Muslims, in that one is *Kemalist* and the second is Islamist with a variety of actors. The negotiation of the Muslim individual with Islamist authority needs to be unfolded in order to understand the authenticity of the transformation.

#### **1.4. Definitions for Key Terminologies Used in This Study**

**Political Islam:** Fuller, who uses Islamism and political Islam interchangeably, defines Islamists as “the ones who believe that Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion” (Fuller, 2003: XI).

After ex-/including some parts of this definition, I would like to proffer my definition of political Islam: political Islam is ordering politics and society in the light of Islamic rules, principles, and values.

In fact, without using the adjective “political,” Islam may mean the same as above, as everything in Islam is designed in accordance with its rules and values.

---

<sup>10</sup> In the discipline of economics, marginal utility means the contribution of one pieces of product into the whole process of production. Barrowing from the economics, I use the term in this context as the one single person’s contribution on the whole process of social changes.

Nevertheless, it has a specific meaning etymologically rooted in the word *esleme*, which has two basic meanings, namely peace and surrender (Baalbaki, 2007: 933). This denotes the very deep relationship between Muslims and Allah which necessitates being peaceful and surrendering to the commands of Allah wholeheartedly. Therefore, the use of political Islam particularly denotes the dimension of political and societal order, albeit this might be a very small droplet in the ocean of Islam.

In my use of the term ‘political Islam’, I see it as a general category that includes diversified groups such as fundamentalists, radical Islamists, conservative Islamists, moderates, extremists, etc. All may have fall into this category despite their various views, depending on how much Islam they want to use in the fusion of religion and politics. In this regard, either rules, principles or values may constitute the origins of such order.

In my view, ‘political Islam’ is a crystal-clear definition that immediately recalls the relationship between politics and Islam which actually needs to be examined in the literature as a whole.

**Islamism;** Piscatori defines Islamists as “Muslims who are committed to public action to implement what they regard as an Islamic agenda.” Based on this definition, Emmerson defines Islamism as “commitment to, and the content of, that agenda” (Emmerson, 2010: 27).

Acknowledging Emmerson’s emphasis on the commitment and the content of a certain agenda, I define Islamism as “a commitment to the revival of Islam in the contemporary world aligned with an anti-modernism, anti-Western, and anti-secular agenda.”

The definition is threefold: 1) The revival of Islam, 2) the contemporary world, and 3) an agenda specific to Islamism. The first part covers how Islamism first emerged in the period of Ottoman decline and how Muslims panicked to protect Islam and Caliphate, thus effecting the revival of the religion. The second part, ‘the contemporary world’, recalls the increasing secularization of every aspect of contemporary life; Islamism almost rows against the secular flow of the river. The third part emphasizes the specific agenda of Islamism, which is almost the same for all types of Islamist movement. The very essential attribution of Islamism is its problematizing of modernization and Westernization, and the secularization of Muslim societies.

Based on these definitions I exclude all connotations relating to violence and militancy which are used in the Western literature and the subliminal messages of Western media.

One more thing needs to be explained with regard to Islamism. Apart from what is mentioned above, the Islamist agenda varies from country to country, and from movement to movement. The ambition to establish an Islamic state based on *sharia* law is perceived as the normative political goal of Islamism, and it is the most common perception thereof; nevertheless, many Islamist movements and political parties do not have a specific agenda to establish an Islamic state.

**Muslim Politics:** Islamism (for various definitions and how it is perceived, particularly in the West, see Martin and Barzegar, 2010) as a political strategy emerged in modern times through political actors and Islamic intellectuals who tried to formulate ways in which Muslims should organize society and politics in the modern world. Particularly with the emergence of the modern nation state and the

abolition of a Caliphate, the political order has become all the more important for these actors.

Muslim politics, on the other hand, implies the unintentional construction of social and political orders by Muslim individuals. In other words, Muslim politics is the construction of a relationship between ordinary people and politics, without the deliberate goal of establishing an Islamic political order. By the means of their existence and preferences, other than political actors, a broad range of actors play a role in shaping social and political orders.

Muslim politics looks at the practices of Muslims in their daily life and the impact of those practices on a changing political system, and it grasps changes taking place in Muslim societies, which emerged especially during the 1990s.

**Authority:** Hanna Arendt defines ‘authority’ as a power that does not need to use force or persuasion [of its thoughts] through arguments. As a result, it is self-evident that it finds real power in hierarchy (Arendt, 2006: 91).

Arendt gives the traditional definition of authority and argues that it has vanished from the modern world as a result of the rise of political movements intent upon replacing the party system. Thus, Arendt problematizes the fall of traditional authorities as a result of modernization, which includes the centralization of the individual.

Remembering that Arendt wrote his thesis on authority in 1954, it is fair to argue that there are proliferations of various powers other than political movements that undermine traditional authority, but civil society and the rise of individual deserve to be mentioned in this respect.

Authority in this text is used in the way in which Arendt defined. Her

emphasis on the need to problematize authority became all the more important after the fast-paced establishment of globalization, the impact of which entailed the interconnectedness of individuals makes singulars' power stronger.

**February 28:** The February 28 process started on February 28, 1997, when the National Security Council (NSC) proclaimed a number of severe decisions, designed to protect the secular character of the state and containing *irtica*,<sup>11</sup> that would affect both the state and public spaces. This move was named a 'post-modern coup', since it was effectively an unprecedented military coup in which army officers did not actually undertake government office; however, the process was commanded by the military and allied by civil sector institutions such as universities, media outlets, business associations, and the judiciary.

The NSC's decisions forced the Refah-Yol government, which was led by Erbakan's Welfare Party and Tansu Çiller's True Path Party and had held power since the general elections in 1996, to resign. The basic motivation behind the coup was that Erbakan's party was a threat to the secular Turkish republic, in which case it would have to be removed from governing the country. However, it managed to put all kinds of Islamist activism under the control of the state and its civil allies.

### **1.5. Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis views new Muslim politics as a self-organizational construct in which independent actors negotiate their daily lives with Islamist political, intellectual, and religious authorities. The analysis is organized around three themes: 1) The daily practices of individuals is determinative in giving meaning to the whole, 2) 'negotiation' is the main principle for transformative processes, and 3) the

---

<sup>11</sup> *Irtica* is an Arabic word used in the Ottoman language and means literally "to turn back, to the old roots." It has, however, been used to implicate religious political activation in the modern *Kemalist* Turkey and is viewed as a threat to the secular state. Any kind of religious activation has been interpreted as *irtica* by *Kemalists* especially on the eve of military coups in Turkey.

outcome can be recognized through the impulsive collective actions of non-collective actors. The thesis draws these themes from the theory of practice and the collective action of non-collective actors. It is inspired significantly by Bayat's elaborations on post-Islamist movements in the Middle East, in which he views the daily lives of people as politics. The thesis suggests that changes taking place in the Islamist trajectory in Turkey are not the sudden result of the February 28 process but are the responses of people to the shifts in global, regional, and local politics—it is the practice of people in the public space incorporating daily life experiences into political events. However, its triggering impact is considerable in the decade of the 1990s in which the historical developments squeezed.

The study will mainly compare and contrast the notion of “secularism, state and society models; economic practices, and gender relations” that orthodox Islamists and modern Muslim individuals offer. Although the main argument of the thesis departs from the view that the general practices of modern Muslim individuals have become determinative in changing Islamist politics, focusing on those three specific fields will help us to discuss new Muslim politics within a framework.

The thesis will flow as follows. Chapter 2 will provide the methodological approach for the fieldwork undertaken for this research. The rationale and significance of qualitative research and the in-depth interview technique are explained in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 3 is organized in order to provide theoretical explanations on the research. Based on the arguments of Bayat, who theorized the collective action of non-collective actors for Middle Eastern politics, I expand the theoretical discussion in light of Bourdieu's *theory of practice* and Melluci's new collective action approach.

Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 outline the narratives in the fieldwork of this research. This thesis takes into consideration three specific groups, namely Muslim students, entrepreneurs, and women, and so the three chapters are organized respectively. The importance of these groups emerges first from their symbolic existence in the middle classes. In fact, the theory of collective action of non-collective actors is nonsense, as it gives priority to the share of common places and the accumulation of societal and cultural capital through similar instruments. Second, these groups were pre-eminent in a society facing the brutal pressures of the state during the February 28 process. The objective of these chapters is to penetrate into the daily life experiences of Muslim individuals and to examine their impulsive influence on the trajectory of Islamist politics. The chapters unfold inner circle negotiation processes within Islamic sectors.

Accordingly, Chapter 3 focuses on Muslim students who traveled abroad to study as a result of headscarf bans at universities, and the quotient problem at *İmam-Hatip* schools<sup>12</sup> that stood in the way of allowing them to pass university exams in Turkey. Their story tells what they experienced abroad and what kinds of new habits they gained. Moreover, we see how their perceptions and interpretations of practicing Islam changed in the light of new experiences. Their views on the organization of society and state, particularly the conceptualization of secularism, *sharia*, and the state, are the specific focus of the interviews.

Chapter 4 examines Muslim entrepreneurs and their daily economic activities. Muslim entrepreneurs faced state suppression during the February 28 process, and their businesses were affected negatively as a result of close state

---

<sup>12</sup> *İmam Hatip* schools are established in Turkey first in 1924 in order to train Islamic scholars and preachers both with Islamic and secular education. However, the schools are now well-known as the ones that political Islamists prefer to send their children even if they do not aim to grow them as Islamic scholars, whereas they want to grow religious generations in these schools.

inspections of their work and unfair decisions about their economic transactions.

Their assertion in continuing their businesses, despite the negative environment created during the process and their efforts to survive in free market economic conditions, are the central ideas examined in this chapter.

Chapter 5 focuses on Muslim women who had to deal with strong authority from both *Kemalists* and Islamist males during the process. Their story is vital in observing the double-headed authority faced by Muslim women. The central concern here is to see how gender relations changed as a result of Muslim women's changing habits, their insistence on participating in public life through professional life, and civil society activism. The narratives of Muslim women tell a lot about how one single story can make major changes in history.

This thesis attempts to discover the dynamics of the quest for new Muslim politics in Turkey during the 1990s, in order to shed light on the prospects of Islamist politics and its potential to continue to be an important political and social actor in the contemporary world. The narratives of this study reveal that Islam continues to be a pre-eminent source of shaping Muslim politics, and it also still holds superiority as a credible ideology over secular and nationalist movements in Muslim societies. On the other hand, based on the findings herein, I argue that Islamist authority fails to indoctrinate new concepts and orders, while modern Muslim individuals, who incorporate modern and religious practices in their daily life, have become highly significant actors. Hence, although Islamism is not exactly dead in the water as a political project, as deemed by some commentators, it is destined to be shaped by Muslim individuals. The emphasis of this thesis is therefore the rise of individual actors and their quest for new Muslim politics through their *practice*.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore, through a sample of students, entrepreneurs, and women, whose lives were negatively affected by the February 28 process, their daily life practices, their new quest for meaning concerning the state, society, economy, and gender relations, and their unintentional role in changing politics and society. It was my belief that the inquiry would yield fresh perspectives that would refute orthodox understanding in the related literature, which touts the end of political Islam by underscoring transformations to people's perceptions and practices on the ground. To understand alterations in the lives of the respondents, the study inquired into how members of these three groups respectively elaborated on the questions (a) how does one live in a plural and secular society as a contemporary Muslim, (b) how can one evaluate the Islamic economic model in a liberal world, and (c) how are Muslim gender relations organized in contemporary life?

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes discussions around the following issues: (a) Rationale for the research approach, (b) a description of the research sample, (c) an overview of the research design, (e) methods of data collection, (f) the analysis and synthesis of data, (g) ethical considerations (h) issues of trustworthiness,

the chapter culminates with a brief concluding summary.

## **2.2. Rationale for the Qualitative Research Design**

Qualitative research relies on a constructivist philosophical approach that mainly focuses on natural settings and is interested in meanings, perspectives, and understandings by emphasizing a process. The purpose of qualitative research is to examine a social phenomenon by helping the researcher grasp or understand it, “in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Ryan, 2007: 580). In other words, the researcher must be able to “discover the meanings that participants attach to their behavior, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues” (Woods, 1999: 3). In this regard, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008: 7-8) underscore the strength and suitability of qualitative research in the following way: “Qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants.”

Interested in understanding participants’ perceptions, and aimed at obtaining rich data necessary to answer the research questions satisfactorily, it was my idea that quantitative research may not meet my requirements. Therefore, I believed that the research questions associated with my prior assumptions could be understood better from a qualitative perspective, which fits well with the study.

## **2.3. Selecting Research Sample**

I used a purposeful sampling procedure, the rationale for which is the fact that the researcher selects cases which have the potential to yield a rich harvest of information that will help the researcher understand better the phenomenon under investigation. According to Guba & Lincoln (1981: 276), “Sampling is almost never representative or random but purposive, intended to exploit competing views and fresh perspectives as fully as possible.” Consequently, the researcher in the present

thesis employed a purposeful sampling strategy in order to solicit rich information about issues from the participants. More to the point, whilst selecting the participants, the primary criterion for sample size was the redundancy of information, termed by Lincoln & Guba (1985) as “data saturation.”

In this study, I sought to define three groups of participants: (a) Students, (b) entrepreneurs, and (c) women. The participants in all of these groups were negatively affected by the February 28 process. The reason for choosing February 28 is because it is seen in the literature as a watershed for Islamist transformation. In this context, on the other hand, the process was the impulsive time period that modern Muslim individuals’ daily practices turned to be a collective action of non-collective actors.

The first group, students, traveled abroad to study at different foreign universities because of the headscarf ban at Turkish institutions and the quotient problem of *Imam-Hatip* schools during the February 28 process. This cohort will be used to tackle the question ‘How can one live in a plural society as a contemporary Muslim?’ Analyzing the experiences of these students is critical, because they were exposed to an international environment for the first time and became acquainted unexpectedly with many other walks of life. Therefore, they had to renegotiate their Muslim identity and develop survival strategies as a Muslim individual living in a pluralistic society, which in turn forced them to formulate a new way of looking at the state and society. This is why analyzing how these students responded to these challenges provides important clues about the quest for new Muslim politics.

The students were also selected based on being the children of mostly Islamist activists, or rather only the progeny of parents describing themselves through their Islamic entity. This is important in terms of comparing and contrasting their views on the state and society with previous generations.

The second group, Muslim entrepreneurs, owned businesses that were directly affected by the February 28 process, during which time many lost up to half of their investment and capital as a result of unfair state inspections and enforcements. Acknowledging their religious identity, I inquired about their Islamic economic perspectives and daily economic practices. The central question was ‘How can one evaluate the Islamic economic model in a liberal world?’ Analyzing the experiences of these Muslim entrepreneurs is critical, because they emerged as a result of the neoliberal structuring of Turkey in the 1980s and interpreted neoliberal and global developments throughout the next decade as positive progress for Muslims. Therefore, they negotiated the Islamic economy along with particularly Islamist political and religious authorities. New interpretations of Islamic economic values and their daily business practices give important hints as to how modern Muslim individuals have been significant actors in the process of Islamists’ global integration.

Although this study has the principle goal of examining independent individuals who were not in a position to guide or lead a group or movement, participants in the chapter on Muslim entrepreneurs were mostly members of MUSIAD (Independent Industrialist and Businessmen Association), which was an important source for finding Muslim entrepreneurs. Despite its associating identity, MUSIAD was the umbrella organization for recruiting newly emerging entrepreneurs in Anatolia who inquired into new economic models at the beginning of 1990s. In this inquiry both the predicaments of the economic model of modern Turkey and the Islamic economic theory suggested by Islamist intellectuals and political actors were questioned.

The third group that I examined was made up entirely of women. Muslim

women represented one of the most important groups facing various difficulties during the February 28 process. Their veiling, educational life, professional life, role in the family and in society, and their relations with men have all been the subject of negotiation. The central question in my investigation was ‘How can one organize Muslim gender relations in contemporary life, and is women’s role in shaping new gender relation patterns’. This question is vital in helping understand the role of women in designing today’s society. No doubt, the story of religious women started long before February 28, and so I was careful to listen to comments about this point during my interviews.

Listening to these women was important for this study, as they had faced the double-headed authority the most during the February 28 process. Although their struggle against *Kemalists* shadowed the rest of their inner circle stories, I intended to examine this unexplored side of the story.

#### **2.4. Data-Collection Methods**

In this study, two different data collection methods, namely in-depth interviews and document analysis, were employed. Actually, this approach to data collection is what the relevant literature refers to as “triangulation” (Ary et al., 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Eisner, 1998; Giddens, 1989; Woods, 1999). As highlighted by Ary et al, (2006: 505), triangulation “increases the likelihood that the phenomenon under study is being understood from various points of view,” and thus it provides any research rigor, breadth, or depth thanks to corroborative evidence from the gathered data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Cohen & Manion, 2000; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In this regard, Denzin and Ryan (2007) draw attention to the necessity of applying different data collection

approaches because of the difficulty in understanding the perceptions of people in a qualitative study.

#### **2.4.1. In-depth Interviews Method**

I chose the in-depth interviews as the chief method for data collection. The interview method suited this study well due to its potential to yield intensive descriptions and analysis of the phenomenon under study. It also provided me with a thorough examination of the factors feeding the perceptions of my participants, and thus it allowed me to understand their observations in the context of their different environments.

Many argue that the interview is the main method of data collection in qualitative research thanks to its potential for enabling the researcher to capture participants' perspectives of an event or experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Blumer, 1969; Seidman, 2006; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Woods, 1999). As highlighted by Seidman (2006), the major benefit in this case is meeting "interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (9).

Thus, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) describe interviews as "excellent means of finding out how people think or feel in relation to a given topic" (50), thereby drawing attention to "opening up a world of experience that is not accessible via [other] methods" (1998: 50). Another scholar, Blumer (1969), joins the discussion by underscoring the "accessing to the context of people's behavior" and thus "understanding the meaning of that behavior" through interviewing. According to Blumer (1969), this understanding is of great value, as "the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience" (2). Given these considerations, the rationale for employing interviews as the primary data collection

method for this study was that a legitimate way to collect data regarding participants' thinking, feeling, and meaning-making in their own words would be to communicate with them. The choice of this method can be justified by the fact that exhaustive interviewing makes it possible to account for the details involved in personal histories. Through focusing on the individual in the research, the method assumes the unique and distinguished experiences of individuals as configurative factors in the making of the social world (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 1994: 119). In addition, in any study of Islamist politics one cannot avoid investigating the social conditions of global and local contexts as transforming the power of human experiences, while personal histories have the same impact in return (Atasoy 2005: 7).

In preparing the interview questions, the researcher used three research questions as a guide. Later, the questions were diversified. The questions in the interviews were semi-structured, in order not to confine or limit the interviewees to certain ends. Some questions were asked within the flow of conversation, hence putting the participant more at ease and helping extract more information. The final interview schedule is presented in Appendix B.

Facilitators from various sources, such as ÖNDER and MÜSİAD, helped the researcher to communicate with the participants. My personal communications were also very effective in this regard. Emails describing the purpose of the study, inviting their participation, and requesting a convenient date and place for interviews were sent out, and after having received a number of confirmations, the interviews were held in Istanbul, Ankara, Konya, and Kayseri between 2012 and 2013. These areas, which surround the researcher's place of residence, are populated mainly by modern, urbanized, middle-class, religious people.

Before the interview started, I assured the participants about the

confidentiality criteria as defined in the consent form (Appendix A). All interviews were conducted face to face, and they were tape-recorded in their entirety. After completing the interviews, the audio tape was transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were sent to each participant to be confirmed. All participants responded in positive terms.

Apart from the main samples in this study, I also interviewed four well-known Islamist intellectuals. These meetings were very inspiring. During the interviews that I conducted with those pre-eminent Islamist intellectuals the cruxes of Islamism raised in my mind, which finally helped me to formalize my interview questions with students, entrepreneurs, and women.

#### **2.4.2. Document Analysis**

Rather than relying on one data collection method, the researcher deemed document analysis as a legitimate way of generating supplementary data for the study. The researcher's interest in document analysis was being able to understand better the implications of spatial negotiations and practices on the perceptions of the participants.

Toward this end, the researcher first of all examined magazines published by pioneer Islamists, Tezkire, and Bilgi and Hikmet, in order to first and foremost understand what Islamists' concerns were during the 1990s.

Secondly, the researcher conducted document analysis at MUSIAD's headquarters in Istanbul. Its publications of research reports (*araştırma raporları*), Çerçeve magazine (*Çerçeve dergisi*) and MUSIAD special publications (*MUSIAD özel yayınlar*) were examined in order to capture the environment provided to Muslim entrepreneurs during the 1990s.

Thirdly, magazines, books, and conference materials published by women were also examined during the investigation, in order to comprehend what Muslim women discussed and focused on in the 1990s. Two magazines, *Izlenim* and *Kadin ve Aile*, were examined. Additionally conference materials used by Muslim women were included in the analysis in this research.

As a compare-and-contrast approach was taken to understanding the differences between modern Muslim individuals and orthodox Islamists, written material, i.e. mostly newspaper articles written by Islamist intellectuals, were read. I particularly attempted to uncover articles written on any topics that were viewed as important themes in my interviews.

## **2.5. Data Analysis and Synthesis Methods**

The challenge throughout the data analysis was to reduce and organize the data, to find any significant patterns, and to synthesize. Data analysis in qualitative research is a protracted and complex process, because the researcher has to deal with a wealth of field notes, interview transcripts, and audio recordings, as well as information obtained from documents, which need to be examined and interpreted. Therefore, scholars suggest researchers undertake data analysis concomitantly and concurrently with data collection through an iterative, recursive, and dynamic process (Ary et al., 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Eisner, 1998; Giddens, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Woods, 1999).

Upon a number of recommendations, I made transcriptions of all the interviews as soon as possible after they were conducted. This helped me to remember what my participants emphasized the most and which themes were raised more during the interviews. As the number of in-depth interviews was high in this study (37), early transcriptions were very helpful in helping recognize any

similarities and differences in the interviews. The recognition of pre-eminent themes was also quite important in the immediate transcription processes.

As Ary point outs, when a researcher familiarizes himself with data, he writes notes and memos, a process termed by some scholars as a “reflected log” (Ary et al., 2006), to capture his thoughts. These reflected logs provide the researcher with a preliminary framework upon which s/he can later develop a coding scheme by crosschecking the data, and so it serves as a complementary form of analysis. In organizing the large body of information in the current research, reflective logs were of great use to the researcher.

After becoming familiarized with the data and organizing it for easy retrieval, the researcher began the coding and recoding process. As highlighted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the aim was to produce a set of codes that would provide a practical reconstruction of the data. As a first step, the researcher read and reread all of the data, in order to identify differences and similarities. As the codes were placed together—and so clustered data emerged—the researcher was able to develop tentative categories. Once these preliminary categories emerged, the researcher reflected more on categories for the probable linkages between categories, in order to expand the themes.

In this multi-case study, the process was much more complex than expected. The reason for dealing with three different groups emerged from my interest in understanding what is changed in the Islamist understanding of the state and society (a plural or a single society), economic modality, and gender relations. As I intended to examine inner circle negotiations, my initial assumption was that real debates and tensions would have come to the fore in these three fields. Working on three different groups doubled the task involved in the analysis. Firstly, I had to figure out

convergent and divergent patterns within a group, and secondly, I then had to figure out the convergent and divergent patterns among these three groups. Although the second task was challenging, the findings explored commonalities among these groups, too. The capacity that Islam plays in the daily lives of modern Muslim individuals, for instance, is a commonality for these groups. Similarly, rereading and interpreting Islam through individual perception is a common tendency in these cohorts, whilst incompatibility between their daily practices and the Islamist project, their discontent with this incompatibility, and their efforts to find solutions to their daily problems are also prevailing issues.

The coding process provided me with the opportunity to separate the data according to the research questions, which was crucial for organizing the data correctly. In this regard, I made sure that the developed categories and themes were populated by coded data that were internally consistent and different from one another. This step helps a researcher in her/his cross-case analysis of the data (Ary et al., 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Marshall et al., 1985). In addition, to obtain inter-rater reliability (Ary et al., 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2009) and so to ensure the plausibility of these newly emerging categories and themes, the researcher sent the coded interviews to a colleague, with whom brainstorming and discussion helped to refine the categorization and themes. The coding schema appears in Appendix C.

After the coding process, in which all data were taken apart in detail and then fragmented into different categories, it was time to synthesize the data. The researcher expected to create a number of clusters, patterns, or themes that would describe and analyze the phenomenon under study. The challenge in this process was caused by the fact that there are no definite rules or procedures for interpretation.

Thus, the quality of the interpretation mostly depends on the background, perspective, knowledge, and intellectual skills of the researcher. In this process, the researcher applied a constant comparative method that coalesced inductive category coding with the simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained (Ary et al., 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Marshall et al., 1985). Firstly, I examined and compared threads and patterns within the categories, following which I compared connecting threads and patterns across categories. Lastly, I compared and contrasted the present study with prior research in the related literature. I fulfilled these steps recurrently throughout the synthesis process.

The researcher wished to reflect on the broader implications of this research, so she formulated various conclusions and developed practical and research-related recommendations based on analysis and synthesis. These findings are located in the concluding remarks of each analysis chapter, in addition to the conclusion chapter of the thesis.

## **2.6. Ethical Considerations**

It was the researcher's duty to take safety measures in relation to the respondents' rights and privacy throughout the study. Thus, the researcher firstly received approval from the participants proving their voluntary participation in this study. Second, the researcher used pseudonyms, to meet confidentiality criteria in transcribing the interviews. As such, the researcher and the participants agreed that the research would not abuse the privacy or the rights of the participants in any way.

## **2.7. Issues of Trustworthiness**

Krefting (1991: 215) notes that a qualitative study is considered credible when it "presents such accurate descriptions or interpretations of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the

description” (quoted by Ary et al., 2006: 504). Toward the end of ensuring the validity, Mason (1996) draws attention to a concern with both methodological and interpretive validity.

To enhance the methodological validity of the study, I triangulated data sources as well as the data collection methods. My assumption was that a mixture of data sources, and the use of different methods, would help in understanding the phenomenon under study from different angles.

To enhance the interpretive validity of this study, I employed various strategies. First, I was well aware of the danger of ‘researcher bias’, which is the main threat to the validity of a qualitative study. As discussed by some, researcher bias might result from a researcher’s expectations, orientations, preferences, and feelings, all of which can directly influence the understanding of data (Ary et al., 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Krefting, 1991; Marvasti, 2004). To overcome and control any potential bias, I identified in advance my assumptions about the possible explanations for the research questions posed at the outset of the study.

Second, peer review was another strategy that I employed to enhance the validity of the study. The advantage of the researcher in selecting a peer was that the person was cognizant of the themes of the study, as s/he was also studying a similar topic. Consequently, feedback from the peer was invaluable and aided me in the data analysis process.

Third, to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, I employed member checks, otherwise known as ‘respondent validation’ (Ary et al., 2008; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seidman, 2006; Stein, 2004; Woods, 1999). As Ary et al. (2006) note, “In member checks, the researcher solicits

feedback from the participants themselves about the study's findings" (506). In this regard, to clear up possible miscommunication, to identify inaccuracies, as well as to obtain additional useful data, I shared the findings of the study with the research participants. I referred to the participants' feedbacks in here interpretation of the phenomenon under study, and so increased the validity of the overall research.

## **2.8. Limitations of the Study**

This study has some limitations, as is the case for all qualitative studies. In this respect, I was conscious throughout the research processes of working to avoid elevating the possible influences of these limitations.

As the related literature illustrates, the researcher is the main instrument of any qualitative study, data collection, and analysis. Therefore, the subjectivity of researcher is an inevitable threat or limitation. Thus, being cognizant of her biases, and minimizing the influence of this limitation, I gave careful thought and significant effort in relation to the issue.

To minimize these limitations, I employed the following measures. First, I identified my assumptions honestly from the outset. The purpose in doing so was that these assumptions would remind me of my biases in the later stages of the research. Second, I assigned pseudonyms for coding the transcriptions immediately after the interviews, thus minimizing my biases, which might otherwise influence the analysis of the findings. Third, I openly discussed matters with colleagues who may have different perceptions on the problematic issues in this thesis.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the main objective is to explain the theoretical backbone of the discussion on new Muslim politics. As mentioned above, new Muslim politics started to be configured by the 1990s. This decade was an important time period not only for Turkish Islamism, but also for countries like Iran and Egypt, leading scholars to assess this particular time period as a transformative milestone in the trajectory of Islamism. Bayat<sup>13</sup>, who first introduced and framed the concept of ‘post-Islamism’ for this new Islamist condition, inspected the shifts taking place in Iranian politics and in Egypt specifically.

Therefore, before moving on to the theoretical underpinnings of this research, the new condition of Islamist politics should be considered through the eyes of Bayat.

#### **3.1. Post-Islamism: The new phase of Islamism**

The concept of ‘post-Islamism’ was first coined by Bayat in 1996, in order to clarify the emergence of more secular and democratic tendencies in the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 1990s, a decade after the Islamic revolution in 1979 (Bayat, 1996). Bayat defined post-Islamism as a new phase whereby

---

<sup>13</sup> The author of ‘*Making Islam Democratic*’ (2007) and ‘*Life as Politics*’ (2011). Bayat made a considerable contribution to the argument of Islamist transformation in these studies.

Muslims demanded the fusion of democracy, modernity, and Islam (45). In time, the concept has been diversified by various scholars. What has remained as an unchanged core, though, in spite of different definitions, has been its designation of Islamist transformation from revolutionary political activism to the evolutionary social mobilization of Muslims and the demands of Muslim individuals placed on political actors to fuse Islam with democracy, civil rights, and liberties. In other words, Islamism abandoned its ambition to establish an Islamic state through revolution and concentrated more on social activation in order to its protect values and principles in the modern world. Concomitantly, the demands for more democracy, freedom, and rights developed among Muslims.

Bayat formulates Islamist transformation via the questions *why*, *how*, and *what*. For him, the resentments and discontent of Muslims whose expectations could not be met by political Islam are the primary reasons for transformation. While, for instance, in Iran the Islamic Republic displayed deficiencies in providing to individuals liberties, gender equality, and participation in public life (Bayat, 2007: 49), in Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood failed to establish a political party and represent its supporters on the political stage. As a result of discontent, post-Islamism introduced a new vision of society and polity in which religion and democracy would coexist, relations with the state would be reformulated, and the demands of youth, women, and the middle class would be met (Bayat, 2007: 49). The reformist attempts in question were driven by groups such as students, women, religious intellectuals, professionals, and entrepreneurs. Thus, actors in post-Islamism consisted of almost all sectors of society, drawn mostly from the middle class. Through “strategy takings”<sup>14</sup> they drew up a new agenda and forced political agency to develop a new

---

<sup>14</sup> This term is borrowed from Bourdieu and will be explained in detail below.

kind of politics in accordance with their demands. But what finally emerged?

According to Bayat, it was the integration of Islamist politics with the existing—mostly secular—systems while protecting Islamic values in society, i.e. the administration of a secular state by pious Muslims<sup>15</sup> (Heper, 2006; Heper and Toktas, 2003).

The novel contribution of Bayat is his argument on the continuation of Islamist movements as pre-eminent political forces in Muslim countries. In fact, the literature on the transformation of Islamism started to accumulate in the mid-nineties when the ‘failure of political Islam’ was argued first and foremost by Oliver Roy. Although Roy’s concern was not ‘transformation’, the value and impact of his study on the literature cannot be denied. Roy argued that political Islam had failed as a revolutionary political project by proposing an alternative state to the Western nation state and elaborating institutions for a *sharia*-based state (Roy, 1994: 41-42).

Accordingly, in his account, by the 1990s Islamism had been subordinated to modernity in all aspects, without having any features distinctive from Western modernity. Islamists abandoned the ideals of early Islamist ideologies, such as *umma*-based identity, a *sharia*-based state system, and the non-pragmatic discourse of social justice. For Roy, by giving up its revolutionary discourse Islamism had become faceless; its activation in the social realm made it that same as others. The pragmatic voting of Muslims during the elections would also make Islamism unsuccessful, since Islamist political parties would prefer to prepare their agendas in line with people’s needs and interests. In short, breaking away from the ideals of the past, for Roy, was the failure of political Islam (Roy, 1994: 1-27).

Bayat, on the other hand, commented on Roy’s suggestion and said that what

---

<sup>15</sup> Heper also views Turkish Islamist Transformation as the governance of secular state by pious people under the example of the JDP.

Roy raised did not necessarily imply the end of Islamist activism; indeed, Islam and Islamist activism would be discussed more than at any time from that time on (Bayat, 1996: 43). With the advent of post-Islamist mobilization, for Bayat, Islam continues to have a significant impact in both Muslim countries and world politics. As it offers the combination of modern life and religious individuals, respects individual rights and freedoms, rejects total ‘Westernization’ in becoming modern, and introduces an alternative modernity, it has the potential to overcome deadlocks in a modern Muslim state so that it is more promising (Bayat, 2010: 7). In fact, this type of Islamist activism could be well-refuted by Roy, as its post-Islamist definition does not really differ from relevant Western practices. Therefore, Roy’s argument has important merits in discussing the end of political Islam.

Bayat elaborated on his argument by emphasizing the asserted daily activities of ordinary Muslim people on the streets and thus living life as politics. In this account the discontent of Muslim people, either as a result of existing regimes or Islamist movements and their inability to change conditions, resulted in making demands on the streets, albeit only through daily life activities, whereby they were supposed to be pacified by officials who saw themselves as the sole authority to control the public sphere (Bayat, 2010: 11). Daily life is designed in the interaction between religion and modernity.

According to Bayat, the phase that emerged in Muslim societies and politics needed to be theorized in some new way. He offered that new conditions in the Middle East can be explained only through analytical innovation that does not reject the exceptionalism of the region. Furthermore, he explains Middle Eastern exceptionalism as being the result of solidarity amongst people and the collectiveness of these people in politically closed but technologically limited settings. Parallel

practices of disjointed people in the urban space are also fundamental in these collectivities. According to Bayat, bitter feelings, discontents, and worries cannot be expressed in a place better than on the urban street, where similar daily life practices develop and solidarities extend (Bayat, 2010: 13). Hence, Bayat summarized his theory as collective action of non-collective actors, which is employed as the basic approach in this thesis.

Against this backdrop, I can move on to the theoretical framework of the thesis. Taking daily practices as the crux of new Muslim politics, I attempt to formalize the theory on Bourdieu's theory of practice. A new approach in collective action theory will also help comprehend the influence of individual practices on making the meaning of whole- and micro-level practices turn to unintentional collective action.

### **3.2. An Alternative Account in Approaching New Muslim Politics**

As the focus of this research is firmly on the daily practices of individuals, Bourdieu's account of the practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1997; Bourdieu, 1998) will be employed as the theoretical basis of my hypothesis. Islamism has been studied through theories of modernization, democratization, social movements, post-modernism, political economy, and the like up for a good number of years (Lerner, 1958; Keddie, 1994; Lipset, 1994; Lewis, 2002; Amineh, 2007; Zürcher, 2007; for linear modernization theory fashion see also Senghaas, 1985; for social movement theories see Moore, 1966 and Skocpol, 1994), and there is a lot to learn from these studies, which articulate a tremendous volume on Islamist literature. The common tendency, however, has been to depict Muslims within certain substantial structures, either as anti-modernist revolutionists or as civil activists, fundamentalists whose behaviors are predetermined by a static culture and religion. Accordingly, they are considered as an entity which evolves only through reactionary

reflexes, without developing integration in accordance with the changing space and time. This substantialist perspective, which eliminated various interior and exterior elements working in conjunction with each other in affecting Muslim identities, did not have the capacity to preview or assess any kind of Islamist transformation.

Yet, in reality, Muslim individuals are never monolithic, static, or even necessarily religious. They can be found from society to society, are dynamic, as are all other societies, and their understanding of religion works in conjunction with their social, economic, and political networking and the material surroundings. What is common among them is the *a priori* acceptance of the truth and oneness of the Islamic scriptural text, namely the Qur'an. Besides that, even the nature of Islam is open to discussion among Muslims<sup>16</sup> (Amineh, 2007), while religious or political structures of Muslim societies, as with all other societies, are matters of struggle and negotiation. They can be preserved or transformed by the means of agency. Human agency is found in structures that are configured by previous agents but are able to reconfigure them by ‘negotiation’ in their daily life. The central hypothesis of this study is therefore that modern Muslim individuals are the leading actors in the quest for new Muslim politics, in that they force religious and political structures to change in accordance with social facts and daily practices.

Bourdieu’s offer of a *generative* (Bourdieu, 1998: 13) reading leads us to deploy his method to discover the regeneration of Islamist politics by Muslim individuals’ daily practices, and hence the emergence of new Muslim politics in Turkey. For Bourdieu, as Jenkins explains, there is an ongoing accumulation in history with an uninterrupted series of moments that continue as a process of

---

<sup>16</sup> The difference between the debates about modernization or democracy among the scholars like Hasan AL-Banna, Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, Khomeini, Ali Seriati, who viewed Islam characteristically opposite to modernization, secularism, and democracy, and that of Muhammad Iqbal, Rachid Gannushi, Yusuf Qardawi, who argued for the compatibility of Islam with pluralism and democracy, favored human rights, civil society, and secularism.

production and reproduction in the practices of everyday life (Jenkins, 2002). It is this process of production and reproduction which causes the ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’ of social, cultural, and political structures. Unlike the substantialist mode of thought, the *logic of practice* teaches us that the activities and preferences of certain individuals and groups are not substantial properties or intrinsic to a certain group, whilst additionally they do not necessarily belong to the same group forever. Activities such as playing golf or the piano, and goods such as a luxury car and a summer house, may belong to one group at a given moment in time and to another group at another time (Bourdieu, 1998: 4); thus, the exchange of such activities and belongings in the daily lives of people may result in structural changes, or in Bourdieu’s terms a change of ‘social positions’.

Bourdieu argues for a dialectical relationship between structures and practice, and he does not refute structuralism. Even his theory of practice owes much to structuralism. People, for him, are born into circumstances that are not of their choice (Jenkins, 2002: 80), and so they are products of their circumstances. However, the practices of individuals and groups interplay between given ‘dispositions’ and their ‘position takings’ in time. Therefore, the configuration of the social, the cultural, and the political is not a one-way road but a reciprocal process of relations between structure and practice.

Bourdieu basically attempts to overcome the dualism between subjectivism and objectivism, structuralism and constructivism, by arguing that there is an ongoing process of generative analogy and homology which culminates in the familiar taxonomies that are ‘classes’ in the structuralist sense.

Bourdieu’s relational concepts of social space (field), *habitus*, and strategy may help us to express how single Muslim agents have pushed Islamist politicians,

ideologues, thinkers, and religious authority to mediate between their needs, interests, desires, lifestyles, and religious obligations. In Bourdieu's terms, social space operates as a field of both force and struggle in which agents are engaged and confront each other while they simultaneously conserve or transform the field (Bourdieu, 1998: 32). The boundaries of the field are vague, uncertain, and open to change. Social space is also a space of differences for Bourdieu, i.e. classes exist therein; however, they cannot be taken for granted (Bourdieu, 1998: 12).

Habitus, on the other hand, is a generative and unifying principle of his formula that unites the practices and goods of an agent. Habitus is crucial, as "they are differentiated but they are also differentiating" (Bourdieu, 1998: 8). It is briefly a lifestyle of eating, expressing, and behaving by people who possess similar capital. Literally the Latin word *habitus* originates from 'habits', which designates the ordinary inclinations of persons and people. Habitus (disposition) operates, in Bourdieu's terms, as a generative principle of distinctive practices in the social space.

Finally, strategy (or position-takings) involves the 'choices' of the human agent in various domains of practice (Bourdieu, 1998: 6). Furthermore, it is a basic concept that expresses the imprecise preferences of individuals in their daily life, such as food, sport, music, politics, entertainment, and the like. Strategy operates in Bourdieu's theory as a destructive force, namely a force challenging rules.

Hence, this study argues, the new condition of Islamist politics can be analyzed better through Bourdieu's 'logic of practice' by employing his concepts of social space, habitus, and strategy and emphasizing the centrality of the role of individuals and their personal choices in the quest for new Muslim politics. Through scrutinizing daily life tendencies in the 1990s and onwards, the thesis attempts to

explore how modern Muslim individuals negotiated with authority, either with the established state authority or with the political, intellectual, and religious authority of Islamic segments in the public space. Moreover, it assesses how they deployed new behavioral patterns in streets, schools, cafes, holiday resorts, and business life, and finally how they forced partly intellectual and religious, but mostly political authorities to change.

The concept of *capital*, which covers not only economic capital but also cultural, educational, and political capital—in sum, ‘symbolic capital’—will also be employed during the text in order to express socioeconomic changes and their influences on the daily lives of Muslims and their prevailing impact on Islamist politics. In other words, the impacts of articulated educational, cultural, and economic capital, as a consequence of the educational penetration, urbanization, and economic development of Muslim majorities, will be treated as deep roots of the Islamist shift.

In examining Islamism, Göle argues for the importance of the interaction between Islam and modernity (Göle, 2000: 94). For her, neither Islam nor modernity are static projects but rather ongoing processes that are constantly interpreted by human agency. Göle underlines that the minutes of life can give “the meaning of the whole” (94). In other words, one needs to look at the details in daily life while studying Islamism—in this case—instead of focusing on the whole ideology, discourse, and social movements.

While agreeing with Göle’s main argument, ideology, discourse, and religion do not lie within the remit of this thesis. They will be viewed instead as the structural contexts into which individuals are born. Everyday life is a matter of struggle in these structural contexts, and as with politics, religion is a significant structural

context to be considered in all Muslim societies. Religion, however, cannot be viewed independently from other factors in daily life.

### **3.3. The Theory of the Collective Action of Non-collective Actors**

In this thesis politics is embraced as being not solely equated to state and government but as a ‘*governmentality*’ of all aspects of life, both above and below state level. It is governance but not necessarily top-to-bottom or vice versa; rather it is, so to speak, *horizontal trust* whereby both the political society and civilians act simultaneously and reciprocally in the process of governance.

But how did individuals and their daily lives operate during the transformation process? Here, as we stress the importance of the collective actions of non-collective actors, the questions *how* and *why* need to be explained properly. The question of *why* may vary for conjectural reasons from country to country, society to society, and age to age. The classical theory of social movements developed, for instance, in the industrialization period that mobilized unified groups, such as youth, women, and workers, against their disadvantaged environment compared to that of the other classes. Today’s social mobilizations, on the other hand, emerge in the context of the global world in which individuals feel they are in a ‘melting pot’, even if they are economically advantaged. Therefore, they ask for self-realization in everyday life. Multiple processes relating to opportunities and constraints, e.g. urbanization and lack of access to better education or to politics, play a role in the demand for self-realization, which entails self-organized collective action. The question of *how*, on the other hand, may signify some patterns that are configured not necessarily intentionally but constructed depending on similar actions, choices, and decisions.

The following section will attempt to explain the question of *how* in detail.

### **3.3.1. Collective Action as a Total Sum of Individual Practices**

The theoretical point of departure of this thesis is represented by the practices of individuals and the genesis of unintentional collective action through these practices. It raises the question as to whether human agency in Turkey, defining the truths of their time and human practices—or details—in daily life, have the power to shift the whole meaning of life. How can individual and independent human practices have a total impact on structural changes? How do they matter in shaping long-term effects on individual, institutional, and cultural levels? The new approach on ‘collective action theory’ attempts to explain this total sum effect of micro practices on transition processes.

In social theory there is the legacy of tension between structure and action. The central question is ‘What dictates the whole meaning of the world: actions or institutions?’ Is the world what we choose to do or what we have to do? Abrams, who argues for the necessity of a historical perspective on sociological analysis, underlines the importance of the “two-sidedness” of the social world (Abrams, 1989: 2), by treating the social world as a process. In this case, a process is the interaction between action and structure—and it is necessarily historical. The historical perspective contributes to the idea that the social world is neither a matter of choice nor a matter of necessity; rather, it is both, in that every mature being has a process of growth which occurs in history. Furthermore, history is not necessarily a big phenomenon. From Abrams’ perspective, the state of childhood or being ill have a history, and in such processes the actions of human beings are bound by structures. During processes people struggle to assert their preferences, which may ultimately result in disappointment due to the requirements of structural factors. Abrams also emphasizes that the interaction occurs not only between the state and man, but also

among ordinary people in ordinary places like factories, families, firms, and friendships. He argues that even these micro social relationships play a role in changing the macro social relationships between structures and actions (Abrams, 1989: 6-7).

This dualistic legacy continues to be the case in the diverse components of human sciences. Given this particular legacy, collective action is assumed as the tension between structure and agency, i.e. between state institutions and non-state actors. Presupposition might involve thinking of collective action as a reaction of non-state actors against structural strata, and great ambiguity may thereby follow, such as deploying social movements and collective action synonymously, or thinking of collective action as a monolithic form of individuals' actions designed by an external power. Thinking of collective action as a factual unity, e.g. workers, youth, or women's actions, might be another misinterpretation in understanding contemporary collective action theory. In this sense, Marxist theory has made an important contribution to collective action theory through arguing for the voluntarist orientation of classes against the capitalist production of mode. However, new approaches to collective action theory separate class action from collective action. Bayat, for instance, explains new collective action theory as "everyday cosmopolitanism" (Bayat, 2010: 185), which basically underlines the variety of classes in such action.

There are legitimate bases for these ambiguities. First of all, movements, whether they are in the Marxist sense of class movements or new social movements (Giugni et al., 1999; Taror, 1998), are collective phenomena, actions of collectives of people who are gathered around a common purpose. Regardless of whether they are led by external powers or voluntarist motivations, they can still be referred to as

‘collective actions’ in a traditionalist sense. However, the traditional approach teaches us that collective action cannot be thought about without considering its relationship with a structural field of relationships, which determines the action’s limits (Melluci, 1996: 17). In other words, collective action is configured by human agency against structural hierarchies and authorities. Contemporary developments like globalization, information technology, and the fluency of cultural exchanges, on the other hand, necessitate a new approach to collective action, which argues that collective action does not always involve visible mobilizations against public authorities but is also present in the forms of aggregated behaviors (Melluci, 1996: 31).

Melluci, who elaborated on the collective action of individuals in everyday life, reminds us that after the writings of Bourdieu there appears to be a need for contemporary approach to collective action. The new paradigm emphasizes the capacity of human action in building meaning and making sense of reality (Melluci, 1996: 18); in fact, placing emphasis on the capacity of human action is not enough to clarify collective action. Therefore, Melluci gives us a brief insight into collective action as follows:

Collective actions as a set of social practices: i) involving simultaneously a number of individuals or groups, ii) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space, iii) implying a social field of relationships, and iv) the capacity of the people involved in making sense of what they are doing (Melluci, 1996: 20).

Taking Melluci’s definition as a departure point, this thesis will premise the quest for new Muslim politics in Turkey as a collective action of non-collective actors. Non-collective actors may give an opaque impression herein, but they are intrinsic to the new paradigm of collective action, since it is assumed as representing the multiple and heterogeneous social processes configured by plural social actors it

is an outcome of interaction in the social space. In the Bourdieuan sense, ‘social space’ is not bound by concrete sites of social praxis like associations, organizations, or unions but in places like schools, mosques, squares, city, and the like. Even the coincidences of interdependent relationships in the social space may take place in the process of collective action. Thus, unorganized ordinary people are non-collective actors in collective action.

Another dimension of collective action, added by Melluci, is that it is not an intentionally but a consequently unified mobilization. It is not a movement as such, since a movement may necessitate an intentional initiative, but it is a mobilization which necessitates only cognitive perception, i.e. actions induced by certain circumstances versus mobilization. “It is a result not a start; a fact that cannot be envisaged but to be made known” (Mellucci, 1989: 26). But how is it possible to recognize the actors of collective action? Melluci states that “the way in which a system affected by collective action responds to the conflictual impulse is a first indicator of the meaning of that action” (Mellucci, 1996: 38). This action exists within the system yet also against predicaments therein. In other words, the system is not replaced by another one but adjusts its deadlocks, he adds.

The concept of ‘negotiation’ is another important component of collective action. Negotiation is possible both through verbal and non-verbal actions. Çınar, who employs ‘negotiation’ as a central concept in her book ‘Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey’, in which she examines how Islamist politics have used the public sphere for negotiation with the secular establishment in Turkey, argues that the concept is more appropriate to be employed than the concepts of dialogue or debate in understanding transformative processes, since it not only includes verbal exchanges, but also performative acts (Çınar, 2005: 35-36). As Çınar puts it,

‘negotiation’ is not an act of sitting around a table and setting up a dialogue between the parties—a performative act like burning the American flag may be a way of negotiation (Çınar, 2005: 36). Bayat also talks about mockery in various societies as a challenging act against the hierarchy. A man dressing up like a woman, for instance, and playing the female role in a stage performance is a challenge to gender perceptions in a traditional society (Bayat, 2010: 153).

Taking transformation/change as a central concern of this thesis, ‘negotiation’ appears as the unintentional method of individuals utilized in daily life. As this thesis examines inner circle negotiations in the quest for new Muslim politics, parties in ‘negotiations’ are modern Muslim individuals—non-collective actors—and political, intellectual, and religious actors. In other words, it is a negotiation between newly emerging, modern-urbanized, middle-class Muslim individuals and Islamist authority. The daily life practices of modern Muslim individuals work as a tool for non-verbal negotiations.

Such negotiation is noticeable in the local and global contexts of the 1990s. Local governments, administered by the Islamist Welfare Party since 1992, for instance, enabled Muslims to benefit from municipalities’ facilities. Going to the municipal music halls to listen to operas, attending courses ranging from history to psychology in culture centers/halls (*kültür merkezleri*), entertaining at brunches and dinner in a mixed-gender environment at social facilities, and the opening up of sport halls provided opportunities to accumulate different types of symbolic capital. Active participation in public spaces enabled the configuration of a modern Muslim individual type who wanted to be ‘the participant’ of this era. These people developed similar behavioral patterns while being to some extent joined together in a new set of social positions.

The interconnectedness of the global world also had an important influence on the lives of Muslim individuals. Students who went abroad, in order to study at university, as a result of the February 28 process, for instance, unintentionally changed their eating and entertaining habits, dialogues between men and women, dress codes, etc., and so the changes taking place in their daily life practices began to be reflected in their thoughts on politics and society.

### **3.3.2. Revising the Turkish Islamist Trajectory in Light of the Collective Action of Non-collective Actors Theory**

The 1990s is particularly important in helping to understand the quest for new Muslim politics. The decade was marked by outstanding political developments taking place in Turkey and across the globe. First of all, the rapid globalization process increased the interconnectedness of independent individuals through the internet and social media, which resulted in changes to daily agendas. As Lubeck and Britts underline, globalization extended Muslims' networks from their homeland to the web of interconnected worldwide cities, which culminated in new urban structural processes that had an impact on discourses and movement (Lubeck and Britts, 2001: 309-310). In the context of interconnectedness and interdependence, the daily agendas of Muslims were influenced from one corner of the globe to the other. Orthodox Islamism, which aims at organizing political and societal orders in accordance with Islamic values and principles, has had to contest with the daily agendas of Muslim individuals since that time. Fluent uses of technology and a transnational economy, as well as increasing the movement of people, have had an inevitable impact on human practices, orientations, and inclinations. In this context, the self-realization of the individual has increased; information has become readily

available, not only to scholars but to anybody, and over time ‘authority’ has been undermined.

Secondly, Muslims regained the self-confidence they had lost in the secular *versus* religious constructed society following the establishment of the modern Turkey in 1923 (Dogan, 2005: 423). The politically and economically subordinated statuses of religious people were upgraded as a consequence of neo-liberal policies of the 1980s and their changing socioeconomic conditions. Neo-liberal restructuring and rapid urbanization provided the margins of society the chance to become stakeholders in the economy and to restore their social conditions (Insel, 2003: 297). Moreover, Islamist politics gained momentum at the beginning of the 1990s. In the local elections in 1992 (6) and 1994 (323), the Welfare Party obtained a total of 329 municipalities and entered the governmental arena at the local level. In the general election of 1995, the Welfare Party then received 21.3 percent of the votes, which resulted in 158 chairs in the Grand National Assembly and established a coalition with the center-right True Path Party. Erbakan, the party leader, was the Prime Minister of the coalition government until June 1997. Islamists’ increased presence in the local context overlapped with the rise of identity politics and liberal democracies in global politics from the beginning of the 1990s (Öniş, 2001: 282; Keyman, 2000: 208). Nevertheless, this positive momentum for political Islamists was interrupted by the February 28 process. Due to the tense events that took place in Turkey during the prime ministry of Necmettin Erbakan, the NSC proclaimed a number of severe recommendations with the purpose of protecting the secular character of the state and containing *irtica*<sup>17</sup> both from the state and public space. These decisions, and the heavy pressure coming not only from the military but also

---

<sup>17</sup> Meaning given in page 33.

from secular civilians, finally forced the Refah-Yol (Turkish abbreviations for the Welfare and the True Path parties) government to resign. The basic motivation behind the coup was that Erbakan's party was a threat to the secular Turkish Republic, so it had to be removed from government. However, the coup also put all kinds of religious groups and sectors under the control of the state and its civil allies.

Despite the efforts of the state and civil elites to passivize Islamic groups, the February 28 process engendered a new mobilization of Muslim activism in the public space, which has continued intensively since the beginning of the 1990s. Attempts by the *Kemalist* establishment to contain Islam and separate it from the state and state-monitored public spaces pushed religious people into being more active in civil life and organize their daily lives independently from state actors.

In the process, a number of veiled students left their schools because of the veiling ban at universities, a number of businesses were damaged financially by embargoes imposed by the state, and a number of veiled women lost their jobs, even if they worked in Islamic firms, since the managers of these organizations did not want to display any form of Islamism to the outside world. However, diverse religious groups continued their daily practices by rejecting pressures put on them by authoritarian powers and generating their own sphere of life.

Muslim individuals, who were excluded from all official public places, affirmed their presence in the public space, by participating in cultural, artistic, and intellectual activities, pursuing 'independent education' such as distance learning, appearing in cafés, cinemas, and holiday resorts, and so on. They self-organized through networks, platforms, initiatives, and unions. The same groups turned the constraints applied by the state authorities to their own advantage. Lists of newspapers, television stations, and businesses not to be read, watched, and

patronized, respectively, were declared by ‘seculars’ and had become extremely popular among the religious people. This mobilization emerged not under a political umbrella, particularly between 1997 and 2001; rather, it was free from being a political movement, a community (*cemaat*), a *sufi* order (*tarikat*), and similar constellations. Ultimately, modern Muslim individuals negotiated their new condition on the streets.

In this type of collectivity, Bayat explains, urban spaces, and particularly streets, work as operational grounds. According to him, those who spend their daily lives on the corners of streets, from children to housewives, students to businessmen, all challenge state prerogatives. The February 28 process in Turkey worked as such kind of a mobilizing time wherein people rejected all forms of authority through their practices. However, a close look at these public life practices shows that modern Muslim individuals’ self-realization goes back long before February 28.

Therefore, the 1990s, as a decade marked by globalization and its contextual impact of interconnectedness, including the specific time period of the February 28 process in Turkey, reveals very interesting empirical examples in relation to the collective action of non-collective actors theory. However, the major predicament in employing the theory involves drawing up a framework for empirical study. By and large, classical theory of collective action refers to the cooperation of several individuals with the purpose of same collective good (Smith, 2010: 231). However, non-collective actors’ collective action does not target a specific common good, and there is lack of apparent cooperation among them; instead, it emerges—albeit unintentionally—from the similar inquiries of independent individuals.

Individuals, independently, negotiate their requirements through verbal and non-verbal channels with the relative authorities. A veiled woman, for instance, starts

to wear tight dresses under her headscarf instead of the classical *pardesu* veiling garment. This then becomes a new way of veiling—*tesettür*—among young Muslim girls, thus creating a new condition and status for them. Bayat explains the distinctive features of these nontraditional types of collective action as follows:

First, they tend to be oriented, rather than ideologically driven; they are quite rather than audible since the claims are made largely individually rather than by united groups. Second, whereas social movements' leaders usually mobilize the constituencies to put pressure on authorities to meet their demands, in non-movements, actors directly practice what they claim, despite government sanctions. Thus, theirs is not politics of protests, but of practice. Third, unlike social movements, where actors are involved usually in extraordinary deeds of mobilization and protestation that go beyond the routine of daily life, the non-movements are made up of practices that are merged into, indeed are part and parcel of, the ordinary practices of everyday life. (Bayat, 2010: 19-20)

In line with Bayat's outline of the contours of the collective actions of non-collective actors, this thesis make a concrete contribution to the literature by highlighting three different groups that have had a vital role in shaping new Muslim politics, namely Muslim students, entrepreneurs, and women. Three major questions are formulated for in-depth interviews. These questions, which center on living in a plural society, secularism, and democracy; economic modality in Islamist politics; and gender relations among Muslims, will help to identify how in the past they negotiated with political, intellectual, and religious authorities unintentionally, albeit, as a consequence, collectively.

So far, scholarly writings have concentrated on Muslim individuals' negotiation with the secular state during the February 28 process. This study, on the other hand, will attempt to extract how negotiations between Muslim individuals and Muslim authorities were achieved.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE AGENTS OF MUSLIM POLITICS: MUSLIM STUDENTS UNDER SCRUTINY**

This and the following two chapters investigate the daily life practices of Muslim students, entrepreneurs, and women and their reproduction of meanings, depending on their experiences. Consequently, this chapter focuses specifically on students who went abroad to study as a result of the headscarf ban in universities and the quotient problem of *İmam-Hatip* schools during the February 28 process. Throughout the chapter, it is basically intended to examine the ways in which these students tackled the question ‘how does one live in a plural society as a contemporary Muslim other than the ways that are imposed on them by authority?’ The following questions were conducted with the students during the interviews: i) What sort of social life did you encounter abroad? How did you socialize, and did your daily habits change over time? ii) In what kind of atmosphere did you find yourself in a foreign country? How did you formulate new strategies to live in a plural and multi-cultural society? iii) How did you perceive the concepts of state, secularism, and *sharia* after your experience abroad?

Starting with the last question, it is my assumption that the expressions of the participants would reveal the way they problematized the concepts of state, secularism, and *sharia*, loaded by secular and Islamist ideologues. How did they

perceive these concepts? Did their experiences abroad change their understanding of the concepts of state, secularism, and *sharia*? Other than their verbal explanations, their daily life practices tell a lot about how they seek and reproduce the new meanings of these concepts.

I also expected to demonstrate the divergent strategies that the students developed to be able to cope with the requirements of an increasingly plural and multicultural world. Analyzing the experiences of these students is critical, because they were exposed to an international environment for the first time and unexpectedly became acquainted with people from other walks of life. Therefore, they had to renegotiate their Muslim identity and develop survival strategies as a Muslim individual living in a plural society, which in turn forced them to formulate a new understanding of the state and society. This is why analyzing how these students responded to the challenges of a plural society provides important clues about the new Muslim politics.

Leisure time activities are also essential in observing new habits, behavioral patterns, and tendencies in modern Muslims' lives, as they may help us to observe if there was unintentional collective action among these students as a result of sharing similar places and experiences. It is important to examine what they ultimately negotiated through leisure activities. Do they now enjoy new leisure time practices after their experience abroad? Are there now new behavioral patterns and new daily life practices? What is their central cleavage from the orthodox Islamist perspective regarding sporting, entertainment, and artistic activities?

Accordingly, the chapter is divided into three sections, in accordance with the research questions directed at the students. The sections are as follows:

- i) Leisure time: sports, entertainment, and art

- ii) Plurality, multiculturalism, and equality
- iii) Ideology: State, secularism, and *sharia*.

In each section, the responses of the interviewees are discussed together with the fundamental approaches developed by orthodox Islamists as well as growing discussions within Islamic circles. More important in this analysis is observing the rise of new actors and their negotiation of power. The findings reveal important cleavages between modern Muslim individuals and Islamist authority.

#### **4.1. Student profiles**

The respondents in this chapter were chosen based on two criteria. First, they went abroad to study university as a result of headscarf ban at universities and the quotient problem of *İmam-Hatip* schools during the February 28 process. Second, they were children of mostly Islamist activists, or rather children of parents who described themselves firstly through their Islamic identity.

The countries that the students went to were both in the East and in the West. This variant country selection helped us find important results in observing differences between students who went to Muslim or non-Muslim countries.

Wonder (ÖNDER) was a major source for finding students who went abroad during the February 28 process. As noted above, the post-modern coup of 1997 resulted in various restrictions on students in vocational schools, including *İmam-Hatip* high schools as well as universities. The first restriction placed on vocational schools was to decrease the points students could acquire from their studies which were added to the points from the university entrance exam, thereby limiting their access to university dramatically. The headscarf ban for female students further limited their attendance at university. So, in 1999, the Alumni Association of *İmam-Hatip* High Schools (ÖNDER) started a scholarship that would allow students to be

educated in private universities throughout Turkey. However, when the headscarf ban spread throughout the entire country's educational establishments, there needed to be an alternative abroad. Austria stood out among other foreign countries as a result of its proximity, security, and educational quality. Since the governments of Turkey and Austria also had a long-standing agreement not to charge tuition fees at their state universities, Vienna appeared to be one possible alternative. Hundreds of students from Turkey, studying various subjects from international relations to architecture, transferred to the University of Vienna, Vienna University of Technology and Vienna University of Economics and Business. These students also formed the Wonder in Vienna foundation, to support one another academically and socially. Over 1,200 students studied in Vienna, many of whom returned back to Turkey to serve in their homeland. Today, these students are now academicians, bureaucrats, civil servants, and business people.

Students who had gone to Vienna spent a great deal of time telling me about how they experienced great difficulty in harmonizing with European society and its values. They mostly expressed their contradictory feelings of finding themselves in a democratic context especially protected by law, while they felt deeply alienated through their Muslim identities, particularly in their daily lives on the streets.

Students who went to the East mostly preferred to go to the International Islamic University, Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, which was very welcoming to Turkish students in terms of easing their procedural processes. Those students who went to Malaysia faced a different Islam that they had seen in Turkey. From the way of *tesettür* to gender relations, Malaysia was an amazing experience—as my respondents describe. Its diverse practices pushed Turkish students to think more

about plurality, not only between non-Muslims and Muslims, but also among Muslims themselves.

Hence, the interviews with students from abovementioned background were conducted in a friendly and trustful atmosphere, and my respondents replied frankly to my questions, even when talking about ‘confidential’ issues such as sexuality and using sex in art.

In order to penetrate into the daily lives of the students, talking about leisure time activities was important. Apart from asking how they spent their leisure time, both abroad and in Turkey, I asked them for their fundamental perspective on partaking in sports and joining international events as a Muslim. The London Olympic Games 2012 was an inspiring and a popular topic in this regard, and the question held particular importance, as sports is essential as a means of socializing and participating in public life in the modern era. However, with regard to the ways in which Muslims conduct themselves in the public arena, it necessitates certain particularities such as dress codes or the design of sports halls, such as separate swimming pools, etc. The responses revealed highly different approach comparing to the orthodox Islamist perspective though. The following section will now focus on leisure time.

## **4.2. Interviewing Muslim Students: Envisioning the Future**

### **4.2.1. Leisure Time: Sports, Entertainment, and Art**

#### **4.2.1.1. Differences Between the Literature and This Study in Approaching the Leisure Time Activities of Modern Muslim Individuals**

The literature is replete with discussions about Turkish Islamist transformation, focused on leisure time and the daily lives of Muslims (Kılıçbay and Binark, 2002; Navaro-Yashin, 2002a; Navaro-Yashin, 2002b; Genel and

Karaosmanoglu, 2006). The contention of these studies is the changing *habitus* of Muslims with their new socioeconomic conditions since the 1990s. The general emphasis is that better social conditions have prevailed as a result of increasing economic standards. Residences, holiday resorts, department stores, cafes, and restaurants that religious people go to have been the landmarks of Islamist transformation in these studies. These conclusions usually end, however, in overconsumption in Muslim lives (Genel and Karaosmanoglu, 2006: 473; Navaro-Yashin, 2002: 221-223).

Assuming that inner circle debates concern different dimensions on the issue, I made my questions relevant to leisure time activities, including sports, entertainment, and art, i.e. those that may possibly cause tension among Muslims. In principle, the responses within the narratives are generally compared to and contrasted with the mainstream views of orthodox Islamists. Exceptionally, the discussions weave around the double-structured society specific to Turkey, depending on my respondents' answers.

The debates on sports, especially on the Olympic Games and art—primarily freedom in art—occupy a large part of this section, since the discussions provided a lot of data on these points.

#### **4.2.1.2. Sports: How the Orthodox Islamist Perspective on Sports is Beyond the Visions of Young Muslims**

Partaking in sports has been debated from various perspectives, from women's visibility to being in the public spotlight, privacy (*mahrem*) to modesty, the segregation of men and women to seduction, and from Islamic/Western dress codes to symbolization of modernization among Islamic sectors in various Muslim societies. (Sehlikoglu, 2012) Sports are also at the center of debates, especially in

Europe, where millions of Muslims reside and where sports are compulsory classes for primary school students. In such a context, identity and diversity enter the discussion. Therefore, the physical experiences of Muslims in various contexts reveal how sports have become a vital issue in creating identities and preserving plurality.

As a number of Muslim sportswomen nowadays compete in both national and international games, partaking in sports is becoming an ordinary component of daily life for Muslim women, though debates are escalating on the subject. Thus, it was greatly beneficial for this study to look closely at the Olympic Games, as it is the most famous sporting event in the world and was being held in London 2012 when I conducted the interviews for this research, thus making it a daily topic of conversation at the time.

Although Muslim women's participation in the 2012 London Olympic Games was open to the abovementioned debates, my respondents were not greatly aware of any issues in this respect. When I asked one of my participants, Şeyma, about Tahima Kohistani, an Afghani Muslim female athlete in the last Olympic Games, I had a number of debates on women's visibility, privacy, and dress codes in mind. Her response, however, was not concerned with the athlete's participation but rather with her performance.

Şeyma asked, "What's wrong with participating in the Olympics as a Muslim woman with your turban? Is there a debate about her performance?" (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 8, 2012).

Şeyma, who had an ideologically Islamic-oriented family background, thought that wearing tight trousers and t-shirts when you are running is not against Islamic *tesettür* (covering), since it is not seditious, depending on the context. Şeyma

continued: “This is her preference; if she wants to run she can run in whatever she is dressed up in.”

It was interesting to see that the respondents, who actively took part in sports such as badminton, kickboxing, skating, cycling etc., were not concerned with the visibility of the body, sexuality, or modesty. They were focused only on the freedom to participate in such international games. From this perspective, they all viewed the high number of veiled women in the Olympics as remarkable progress with regard to Muslim women’s liberation. They argued that if the games were part of normal social life, they should be taking part in such socialization, as they were the components of this era. Liberation is understood as a means of providing Muslim women with opportunities to participate in social life.

In parallel, participation and equal treatment in these games were the main concerns for the respondents, and being treated on equal terms in all layers of life was very central to their argument. Şeyma raised this notion when reminded of a case of a Turkish female athlete:

There was an athlete in Turkey—I can’t remember her town or where she came from. She won a local race in Turkey, but the governor of the town did not give her a reward in front of the public. Her trainer complained about the behavior of the governor, and so after a while she received the reward. That is the point! I am happy to see an Afghani athlete in the Olympics. I wish she could have won some medals.

The respondent was well aware of the ill-treatment that women face at all levels. The cases that Şeyma talked about, namely the Turkish and Afghani athletes, illustrated the respondent’s support of Muslim female Olympic athletes. Undoubtedly, seeing a woman in a different milieu made Şeyma feel proud and supportive of their full involvement in social life. While having equalitarian concerns for women, the respondent did not seem to have Islamist concerns or be aware of any issue in this regard. The respondents’ obliviousness to the modernization debates

from an Islamist perspective, which I will explain in detail below, pushed me to raise the question on the *tesettür* of the Afghani athlete, given the likelihood that they may have more to say on the matter. Nevertheless, the respondents were eager to talk about individual preferences. Şule voiced her support for the athlete in the following way:

If she prefers to cover herself in this way, and if she thinks it is enough to be in tesettür in the way she covers herself, then there is no need to talk about it anymore. We do not discuss how much a non-covered woman is non-covered. We do not discuss the limits of her cleavage. I think the limits of a Muslim woman's tesettür should not be the subject of debate. All in all, this is her decision. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 20, 2012).

For the new generation, partaking in sports in public places is not only a matter of freedom, but it is also a matter of conditions. Compared to older generations, they find themselves luckier in terms of having better conditions and facilities to do sports. The rise of improved facilities helps them in this respect; for instance, today, there are sport halls purely for women. Moreover, textile technology allows them to wear light and 'breathable' sportswear. Zülal, who studied in the United States and admired how much sport people do in the cities, explained as follows:

I view the participation of the Afghani woman athlete in the Olympics as very positive. Indeed, I find it strange to consider her as marginal. The headscarf is a fundamental item of clothing for a Muslim woman. She can do whatever she wants with it. She can wear it tight and made from good materials. The textile technology is very developed in this age. Nano technologies are used for sportswear production. They are light and breathable. There is nothing against Islam in running. Youth should be motivated to do sports. Sports help humans focus. A spinal board stands straight when you are riding horse, for instance. In short, it is healthy and in fact life is itself sports. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 19, 2012).

For Zülal, wearing a headscarf, running, or doing sports in general do not contradict Islamic rules. Rather, Zülal believes that, thanks to improvements in textile technology, more Islamic-friendly products help women in this regard.

I had some doubts as to whether they had gained this perspective from foreign countries, where people usually do more sports than do in Turkey. One of the respondents' expressions erased my doubt in this matter. Semih indicated that the idea of doing everything with *tesettür* was something new and the result of newly gained experiences abroad:

When we first went to Malaysia we saw Muslim girls in *tesettür* riding bicycles. We found it quite strange. It was new for us. It is becoming normal in Turkey now. But it was not before. In the beginning of the nineties you would not see such a picture in Turkey. But there was in Malaysia. Our girls got used to these habits abroad. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 20, 2012).

Thus, Semih argued that socializations with external practices had changed some daily practices of religious youth in their homeland.

In fact, doing sports in the daily life and such attendee in the Olympics could be viewed as a modernization endeavor in an ex-Taliban led country (as we talked more about the Afghani athlete) from an orthodox Islamist perspective 10-20 years ago. The debate is open, not only in the matter of sportswomen's *tesettür*, but also in regard to the concept and philosophy of the Olympic Games for orthodox Islamists (Emre, 2012 July 24). For them, international competitions, from Nobel prizes to beauty contests and to the Olympic Games, are not organized through objective criteria; instead, political and cultural factors play an important role.

The case of Keriman Halis Ece illustrates orthodox Islamists' concerns about such modern events. Ece was elected as the most beautiful woman in a contest in Istanbul, sponsored by the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in 1932. She was crowned 'Miss World' in Belgium in the same year. Keriman Halis was rewarded with the surname 'Ece', which means 'queen' in original Turkish, by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Halis Ece was a symbol of Westernization and modernization, for both *Kemalists* and Islamists, albeit from different perspectives. While she was a reason for pride for

*Kemalists* as a representative of Turkey's Westernization, for the Islamists she was a symbol of the decayed morality of national and religious values and submission to the West.

Seventy years after Halis Ece, criticism continued in the same vein from the Islamist perspective when Azra Akın was elected as Miss World, in London in 2002. "To be rewarded with the title of 'Miss World' implies the acceptance of transition to capitalism in terms of politics, and the acquisition of Western/capitalist moral values from cultural terms," says Emre, an Islamist writer, in his article in which he assessed Azra Akın's win (Emre, 2002 December 10).

A well-known Islamist intellectual Ali Bulac, touched on another dimension of the issue by emphasizing that Azra Akın's win was a prime example of acquiring a Western value in a Muslim country (Bulac, 2002 December 14). For Bulac, the election of a Muslim woman meant not only the modernization of a Muslim country, but also a deliberate effort by the West to modernize, or Westernize, the rest of the world. As is remembered the beauty contest was originally to be held in Nigeria in 2002 but was moved to London due to Muslim protests in the country. In the view of Bulac, by granting the award to a Turkish woman, the West wanted to underline the possibility of accepting Western values in a Muslim country while being rejected in another—possibly in a 'primitive' one. According to Bulac, Europe thus emphasized the uniqueness of the secular Turkish state and its Muslim population, as well as their co-existence.

Moreover, for orthodox Islamists, it was no coincidence that a Muslim Turkish woman had been crowned the most beautiful woman in the world in the very same year that ex-Islamists came to power in Turkey. In this vein, the above cases could imply the encouragement of a Muslim country to become more westernized.

Both Emre and Bulac criticized the newly elected ex-Islamist party government and the fledgling Prime Minister Abdullah Gul<sup>18</sup> for his eagerness to congratulate the new Miss World, particularly in view of his statement “her success has given honor and happiness not only to myself but also to the whole nation” (Emre, 2002 December 10; Bulac, 2002 December 14). As a result, criticism was directed at Muslims who were ignorant about the messages and intentions behind these competitions.

As a leading figure in recent Turkish politics, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan<sup>19</sup> also received his share of criticism. At his meeting with Turkish sportsmen at the 2012 London Olympics at an *iftar* dinner (a traditional and religious dinner in the month of Ramadan), he implied that the number of sportswomen participating in the Olympics was a distinguishing feature of Turkey and set it apart from the rest of the Muslim countries. However, it was the conviction of Emre that the Olympics had a symbolic meaning relating to the universality of European values, which he saw as a threat to other values in other parts of the world. To better demonstrate the detrimental nature of these values, Emre drew attention to one of the basic tenets of the philosophy of the Greek civilization, which was the original holder of the Olympic Games and glorified the human body and totally opposing the Islamic beliefs and values, which endeavoring the preservation of modesty and privacy of human body. Emre did not avoid emphasizing the paradox of celebrating a pagan culture at an *iftar* dinner (Emre, 2012 July 24).

During my long and numerous conversations on sports, which was quite fun for the young respondents, they mostly emphasized how sports are just an ordinary

---

<sup>18</sup> Abdullah Gul is the founding member and one of the leading figures of the JDP, he was the Prime Minister of Turkey between November 2002 and March 2003, Foreign Minister between March 2003 and June 2007, President between June 2007 and August 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the founder Chairman of the JDP; Prime Minister of Turkey between March 2003 and August 2014, and the President of Turkey since August 2014.

part of their daily lives. They complained instead about how sports are enjoyed and participated in far less in Turkey than in foreign countries. In order to highlight their argument, they stated that they had been more inclined to partake in sports after seeing people doing the same thing around them, which was encouraging, according to them. When I attempted to talk with them how Muslim students found it difficult to do sports at schools, they rather explained that European countries try to protect plurality and make serious efforts to provide convenient conditions for Muslim students. This was a vital point for my students, as they had all been victims of exclusion. ‘Participation’ was a key word for the respondents. They clearly reflected that they were exhausted from exclusion: exclusion from public life, exclusion from social life, exclusion from ‘normal life’.

In this sense, they exhibited some quite noticeable differences between them and Islamist intellectuals. As mentioned in detail above, Islamist intellectuals basically problematize the philosophy behind physical activation in European thought as well as its spread to other civilizations. In the views of my respondents, on the other hand, the Games are only instruments of international contingency, as sports are an ordinary component of daily life. In this sense, it was clear that sportive activities were part of modern life which they do not problematize to take part. The students did not problematize modernity through its thoughts, institutions, entertainment instruments, dress codes, etc., which is an essential *problematique* of orthodox Islamism. Instead, rather than problematize modernity, they wanted to be part of it.

#### **4.2.1.3. Entertainment: Enjoying With ‘Others’ While Preserving Muslim Boundaries**

Studying abroad might be most attractive in terms of providing opportunities

for spending leisure time. Predictably there might be a number of socialization possibilities in a foreign country for all students. Going outside, joining student parties, dancing at cultural nights, watching operas and musicals, new eating habits, socializing in gender-based heterogeneous groups, etc. are a few of these options. The student respondents of this research took advantage of such a stimulating environment and joined in accordingly.

With regard to entertainment activities, conversations I had with the respondents rather revolved around the restaurants and the parties they attended. Two things that they commonly mentioned as being ‘new’ in their life were eating habits and parties. The most interesting finding I uncovered during the dialogues on entertainment was the observation that students had had gone abroad to Muslim countries had returned to Turkey with more flexible ways of practicing Islam than those who had gone to Western countries. New habits were not questioned by them too much, as they were in a Muslim country—if an Egyptian Muslim did something slightly out of the ordinary, for example, what could be wrong in a Turkish Muslim doing the same thing? What they experienced were actually different interpretations and implementations of Islam, depending on geography and society.

Aslı, who studied in Egypt, told me how it was interesting to see Muslim counterparts practicing Islam so differently from the Turkish way of practicing. Even ordinary daily behaviors were surprising for Aslı when she first arrived in Cairo, though she continued to do the same things when she was back in Turkey. Aslı’s new practices were all the more surprising for her mother. Her new way of life was actually first negotiated within the inner circle of her domestic life. The dialogue below, between Aslı and her mother, illustrates this domestic negotiation:

I was used to going outside by myself in the late hours in Egypt. When I was back in Turkey I started going out and coming back late. One day my mum

asked me, ‘Where are you coming from at midnight?’ I said ‘What are you talking about, Mum?’ I did not even realize that my mother was annoyed with me coming home so late, as it became quite ordinary to me to go out at midnight. Actually it is just something normal for Muslim women to go out at midnight in Egypt. Another thing that Muslim Turks might find strange was entering homes whilst wearing shoes. Everybody wears shoes at home in Egypt. This is something quite normal for them. Before going to Egypt, I could not have imagined such a thing for a Muslim. Just like I could not imagine eating seafood. Yes, I got used to eating seafood in Egypt, which I could never do in Turkey. Both issues—the shoes and the seafood—made my mum upset. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 18, 2012).

Aslı told me how some of her new habits surprised her mother when she was back in Turkey, because practices such as wearing shoes at home, for instance, might be considered non-Muslim in the Turkish context. Both wearing shoes and eating seafood are also very important issues for Muslim women in Turkey in terms of hygiene and religious cleanliness (*necis*<sup>20</sup>), but she also pointed out that her mum eventually got used to them over time, after seeing that her daughter was still a good Muslim.

Another respondent, Neslihan, also mentioned how she became used to Far Eastern cuisine when she was abroad. She says she missed seafood, which was not that easy to find in Turkey in places other than luxury districts in big cities:

I love crab soup, for instance. My friends from Japan and Thailand used to cook it for me at sahur (special dining for Muslims at midnight in Ramadan, in order to prepare yourself for fasting). My friends used to get up with me at sahur time and we ate together. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 8, 2012).

The students’ habits started became a mixture of Islamic rules and new practices not exceeding the boundaries of the aforementioned Islamic rules. Seafood, for instance, is *halal* or *haram*, depending on the Islamic sect. *Hanefies*,<sup>21</sup> for

---

<sup>20</sup> *Necis* means considering something dirty based on the religious sources. Some seafood like mussels for instance is considered naturally dirty in the *Hanafi* sect of Islam.

<sup>21</sup> Ebu Hanife is the Imam (the founder) of *Hanafi* sect of Islam. He was from Bagdat, his path was followed commonly in Anatolia.

instance, living far away from the sea, ban eating seafood other than fish. *Malikis*,<sup>22</sup> on the other hand, who live by the sea are allowed to eat whatever they can extract from the ocean. Therefore, while Aslı's mother viewed eating seafood as something odd for Aslı, it became an ordinary undertaking, as she saw other Muslims' practices in a different way.

However, the respondents were more concerned about certain obligations, such as alcohol, and they usually preferred not to go to places where alcohol was being served. They found alternative venues such as cafés more normal than pubs, perhaps because they found these places more familiar to the ones in their homeland. Nevertheless, it was important for them to protect the boundaries of Islam. In other words, *helals* and *harams* determine their personal preferences. On the other hand, they did not want to interfere in other people's ways of life, and they all supported the existence of all kinds of places for all types of people—if one drinks, there should be restaurants for them, but if one does not drink there should also be places without alcohol.

Student parties, which are a very organic part of educational life, were zones in which they enjoyed being, but at the same time they were places where alcohol consumption was high.

Sule illustrated her experience of a student party in Hungary:

We had parties with our friends from Greece, Israel, Palestine, and South Cyprus. The one who invites the others used to prepare local food. They were very respectful; they did not drink alcohol when they were with us. When they came to our parties they did not drink, and when we went to their parties they drank but we did not drink. What we did is to learn about each other's way of lives and to respect each other.

---

<sup>22</sup> Imam Malik is the Imam (the founder) of Maliki sect of Islam. He was from Medina. His students who were from North Africa and Andalusia spread his school of thought in North Africa. Hence, he was followed commonly by North African and Mediterranean Muslims.

Şule argued that goodwill was dominant among her friends from different religions and social backgrounds. In addition, she expressed that this tolerant atmosphere witnessed abroad enriched and opened up her mind in terms of living respectfully in one's homeland. The dominance and importance of showing respect to different cultures and socializations also surfaced in Semih's interview. He voiced this notion as follows:

I was never comfortable in a restaurant with alcohol. At least its smell would disturb me. If I had an alternative I would definitely prefer a restaurant without alcohol. But after my educational years in Kuala Lumpur, my life changed when facing non-Muslim and non-religious partners closer than in the past. After I came back from Malaysia, I established a company in order to export oil from Kuala Lumpur. Last year I went to Kuala Lumpur with the purchase manager of the partner company of mine. He wanted to go out at night, and he said he would drink. I joined him—he drank his wine, whiskey, whatever, and my business partner and I drank coke.

Semih's education abroad provided him with the opportunity to learn the language of another country, which is mostly Muslim populated, and led him to trade with the country. As a result of his educational and business experience, Semih met various people from different religious backgrounds. Hence, he saw more places with them and harmonized his life with those of his foreign friends and business partners. During these encounters, he emphasized, his daily life practices might have been against Islamic rules, which he normally do not prefer to do, but if his job, for instance, necessitated doing it he agreed to be in a place serving alcohol. Semih said he had the high respect for different lives, but if there was no necessity he was in favor of alternative arrangements.

Along these lines, Ayşegül emphasized the necessities of current conditions, which were open to high interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. According to her, every Muslim should obey Islam, but after learning about the boundaries of

*helals* and *harams* one can decide her/his limits of implementing the rules. Put another way, one may measure where to enlarge or narrow these limits:

If I invite someone out I would prefer a restaurant without alcohol. If you invite me to a place with alcohol I may accept. To be honest, this was acceptable for me after I spent time in Austria. Before going to Austria, I was taught that it is haram to be somewhere with alcohol. I became deeply sad when I learned that. I thought ‘my bus-stop was in front of a market selling alcohol, so this was a sin for me’. Of course I find this funny now! Now, I do not prefer to shop at a market selling alcohol, but I do not say that I would never to do so. I am confident in deciding where to enlarge the boundaries, and the final responsibility of course belongs to me. You should know the basic criteria so that you enlarge the rules accordingly. There are many different implementations of our beloved Prophet Muhammad. His principle was to provide satisfaction and happiness to all sides. When it comes to yourself you have to think of your happiness, too. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 8, 2012).

Aysegül believed that personal choices and priorities define the boundaries of socialization. For her, the basic determinant of these boundaries was the extent of religious knowledge within a person, as there were different applications and interpretations of Islamic rules.

Notwithstanding this point, some respondents got used to different practices, and so they were deemed deviant, given the essence of Islamic rules. It was the justification of Aslı that practices such as going to places in foreign countries that sell alcohol was unavoidable. Aslı said: “Now I do not mind going. I am not annoyed. But I say to myself that I *should* be annoyed.” Aslı’s expression is a good display of the paradoxes that young Muslims experience between the teachings of Islam and their daily life practices. Yet, it is also evidence of the dominancy of her practice.

Not surprisingly, the primary concerns of students, on the other hand, continue to be the protection of *helals* and *harams*. For their personal preferences they are diligent in following *helals* and *harams*. However, their emphasis was on freedom of expression and experience. For them, one should have the right to

commit a sin, as religion gives this right to Muslims, but this does not mean that they can become both a Muslim and someone who does whatever he wants. Such an insight only helps an individual to discover his confusion and complexes rather than religious responsibilities.

The students also discovered new forms of entertainment abroad. These new habits, eating seafood for instance, may necessitate new interpretations and the permission of a religious authority in classical Islam. However, modern Muslim individuals do not seek permission, and depending on their experiences they change their eating habits. Socializing in a place where people drink alcohol was also more acceptable for the respondents, whilst it would have been a serious problem for an orthodox Islamist. Şişman, who was an Islamist writer, for instance, considered sitting in pub as an impossible form of socialization for a Muslim woman. According to her, if a woman chooses to be a Muslim, this necessitates the imposition of certain rules in her life, including refraining from what she saw as “worldly entertainment” (personal communication with Nazife Şişman, November 2012).

Entertainment for young modern Muslims started to differ from previous generations. Socializing, by going to restaurants and cafés, is the most popular pastime, which entails new eating preferences and encountering diversified ways of life. In fact, this is the engagement of Muslims with popular culture rather than creating an alternative culture. Previously, entertainment was a serious concern for Islamists, as *time* was seen as a source of spiritual capital for a Muslim. According to Islamists, spending time fruitfully was expected. For them, a Muslim could not have “spare” time, as s/he was always engaged with Allah. Therefore, they usually preferred to create their own sphere of influence and alternative “spare time” activities. Islamic cinema and theatre, Islamic book fairs, and culture and education

centers that delivered Islamic courses were founded based on this concern. However, young Muslims think living with alternatives make them isolated from time and space which they do not prefer to be in. According to my respondents, sports, eating habits, following popular cinematic films, and the like provided a sense of integrity. For them, these activities were part of urban life and necessary to activate their physically static lives in cities. Hence, new habits created a certain level of diversification between them and Islamists.

#### **4.2.1.4. Art: Is There An Alternative Islamic Art?**

As the respondents' emphasis was to escape from alternative 'Islamicness' with regard to spare time activities, the question as to whether there can be religious/conservative art was inevitable during our conversations. Art is discussed from two perspectives in Turkey. Firstly, it is a significant field of tension between seculars and Islamists in the country, because when the new Turkish Republic chose to be a modern nation state in 1923, its artistic references became more Western. However, it is also a new area of tension among religious people, too. Second, the limits of art are again discussed between seculars and Islamists or conservatives. Issues from drawing portraits to sexuality in cinema are the subjects of discussion for Muslims, so I asked, "What can be done in the name of art?" I also asked the respondents whether they were interested in art, if they had artistic interests, and whether they were aware of tensions about art in the country.

Opera, ballet, dances, and classical Western music have been the major art preferences in the Republic since 1923. The Directorate General of the State Opera and Ballet was established in 1949 with the purpose of promoting opera, operettas, music, and ballet to the Turkish public. Entirely foreign to authentic Turkish culture, the artistic imposition of the Republic was not embraced by society; rather, only

secular sections welcomed the initiative, thus proving their loyalty to the modern Western Turkish state, while the rest of the public avoided watching these performances.

Boundaries or limits in art were another dimension that drew a good deal of interest in the public eye. What makes these discussions interesting is how limits in art are viewed from a religious perspective, which is why sensibilities such as not portraying a body or a human face, or excluding sexuality from artistic products, became hot topics between secularists and religious groups. While the seculars supported the freedom of art and blessed the superiority of Western examples, religious conservatives claimed the importance of sticking to an authentic culture and protecting religious bans in art (Kaplan, 2012 April 13; Pala, 2012 February 14).

The debate on art should not be underestimated, as it is one of the fault lines in Turkish society which deepened the cleavage between the two sectors of society. It has been discussed on various platforms, but the recent dimension on the discussion surfaced after an announcement made by a top official of the Turkish Presidential Office. In 2012, Mustafa Isen, who was a conservative bureaucrat and the General Secretariat of the presidential office of President Abdullah Güл, stated “we have the responsibility to constitute the structure and norms of conservative art—as we did in respect to conservative democracy” (Isen, 2012 March 29).

Isen’s statement launched a deep discussion among the conservatives and Islamists on the question as to whether there might be conservative art or not. Moreover, they questioned whether art can be created or if it flourishes by itself.

Following on from the discussion launched by Mustafa Isen, Islamist novelist İskender Pala defined conservative art in his article titled *The Manifest of the Conservative Art*, which furthered the discussion: “It is the aesthetic dimension of

endeavoring to reconstruct the relations between its past and the present of a society that was broken traumatically during its recent history [modern Turkish history] (Pala, 2012 April 10). Pala's definition first and foremost underlined the need to reconstruct ties between the past and present, in order to develop art, rather than discussing its technical dimensions. From a conservative perspective, the inability to produce art and engage in artistic activities is caused by the rupture between the traditional and the modern, and so before all else happens, this connection should be constructed.

The prompt reaction by an Islamist writer displays how Muslims were quite concerned about the issue. Apart from concerns regarding connecting tradition and modernism, religious sensibilities are included in these discussions. Pala, for instance, pointed out that conservative art is not religious-based, though it takes into account religious sensibilities. Despite the popular compromise on this point, some have argued that art cannot be bounded in any sense. A well-known Islamist intellectual, Cündioğlu, brought an extraordinary dimension to the debate and argued that "there can be neither conservative art nor conservative artists, because there can be neither protection of imagination nor boundaries of imagination" (Cündioğlu, 2012 May 3). According to Cündioğlu, law, order, and morality cannot tolerate ambiguity (and imagination), whereas art is all about unlimited imagination and is indeed ambiguous. Therefore, it cannot be bounded and conserved. Cündioğlu as a well-known thinker, studying and teaching *tefsir* (interpretation of Kur'an), *mantık* (science of logic), *belagat* (linguistics), and philosophy, opposed any kind of structural imposition on art.

He also goes deep into the discussion by drawing attention to the relationships of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *Sufism* with art. As highlighted by,

while *fiqh* attempts to limit art and imagination as an infrastructure of order, *sufism* opens up room for imagination. Cündioğlu argues that *Sufism* challenges the rule makers and by tolerating faults enables imagination to progress. He also adds that science and art are not subject to *sharia*. Consequently, Cündioğlu argues for unlimited freedom in art, and so he rejects even the rules of religion when it comes to art and science.

Bearing in mind the debates circulating among state actors and Islamist intellectuals, I wanted to ask my respondents about this particular matter—they supported full freedom in making art. In fact, with regard to recent discussions, they drew attention to the anomaly of discussing art, after a statement made by a state bureaucrat. For them, such a statement could be perceived only as a state imposition, even if it came from an intellectual, conservative bureaucrat. They also refuted religious impositions and rather emphasized the importance of finding ‘personal’ traces in art. This meant that if a person is religious, s/he will naturally reflect her/his inner rules or imaginations in her/his art. Accordingly, they raised three points relevant to art: First, there should be freedom in art, and thus people will find the best through natural selection. Second, the state should not impose any kind of norms and rules on art. Third, a Muslim may produce her/his own art, depending on her/his religious concerns, but this is an entirely personal choice and responsibility. The combination of these three points culminates in their emphasis on ‘personal choice’. According to them, the boundaries of religion should be practiced through an individual’s preferences—not via an external power such as the state.

The distinction between the good and bad, *halal* and *haram*, or low quality and high quality on an artistic production can be recognized through natural

selection, according to Neslihan, who, with regard to Cündioğlu's views on free art, states:

I am open to all kinds of interpretations of religion. You may interpret a Quranic verse in thousands of ways. Islam is not a religion that sticks you in a cramped space. It gives you a large facility to interpret the religion in accordance with your society and time. When you listen to Cündioğlu you may say, 'Ohh! all these are against religion'. On the other hand, you may think, 'Yes, let's force our capacity and think in a different way'. Sexuality in religion is a field of privacy (mahrem). However, if one wants to use it in art, s/he should. At the end of the day, if society resists, it will be selected and elected.

Above, Neslihan emphasized that good pieces of art will be assessed naturally. Therefore, she did not support the idea of censoring art just because of the likelihood that some of its features would oppose religious rules and teachings.

Another respondent, Şeyma, who works in a film production company, explained her way of expressing sexuality in a film as follows:

I am not a film director. But if I were, I would prefer to express sexuality in a different way in my films, because I believe there are moments when you should express sexuality in a scenario. If you do not include it, you may only be telling half a story. But how do you do it? If you just want to make the audience watch a pornographic scene, that is another thing and something which I would never do.

For Şeyma, the extremes in a scenario make these discussions meaningless. Pornography, for her, is an extreme which she would never choose to include such scenes in with an artistic concerns rather than religious concerns. In other words, she does not find pornography artistic at all.

Hakan also thinks that before talking about topics such as 'limits in art, sexuality in art, and what is art and what is not art', we should look at where it is produced. According to him, art is a kind of superstructure produced in the framework of cultural and civilizational infrastructure. For him, culture first becomes mature through its beliefs, thoughts, philosophy, sociology, and so forth. Thereafter, art flourishes as the fruit of culture and civilization. Hakan argues that one may not

establish art without having a civilized culture. Accordingly, one cannot create its norms and rules. Hakan gave the Ottomans as an example and argued that the first Ottomans established a civilization and then developed incredible art forms, such as miniatures, architecture, and calligraphy, all of which reflected its culture. Hakan explained his views in detail as follows:

You may not produce conservative or religious art by saying, ‘Let’s have conservative art.’ You need infrastructure. You need a progressive and distinguished culture. The culture will then reflect your art. As a Muslim, if I produce a film it will reflect my personal, societal accumulation. A naked male sculpture may reflect Greek civilization. So let him do it. But if I do not produce a sculpture, does that mean that I am not making art? The West did not create calligraphy. Does that mean that the West does not have art? Of course, no! Look at the cinema sector in Iran. Can you say that Iran cannot make films? Of course, no! Iranian cinema is a phenomenon in the cinema sector. In Turkey, there is a group that admires Europe and views European art as the only art in the world. There is another group that rejects European art entirely, as they find it against our culture and religion. But our generation has a different perspective. We think Europe produced magnificent art as a reflection of its civilization. The East, on the other hand, has an ancient culture and civilization which has its own art, thereby reflecting its culture, including beliefs and tradition. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 10, 2012).

Hakan believed that national, cultural, and traditional idiosyncrasies define the forms and the quality of an art form, and thus no nation should be judged by them. Therefore, it can be argued that rather than refuting these differences or choices in the world of art, it is more reasonable to respect these differences for the sake of art itself.

When I attempted to ask my respondents whether they have any artistic talent, they almost all said no. Our dialogues on art displayed that they were rather interested in art at an intellectual level. The distance away from artistic activities, and the failure to produce art, means that discussions continue on the never-ending cycle between tradition and modern. Art, of course, has been a Western-occupied issue since the Renaissance, which means that Islamists prefer to stay far away from it.

Sports, entertainment, and art constituted the triangular dimension of our talks on leisure time activities with my student respondents. During the interviews, taking part in sports, dress codes, attendance at international games like the Olympics, sexuality in cinema, and the variety and limits of art were raised as the negotiating and contesting practices in the inner circle discussions.

#### **4.2.2. God Says, ‘We Created You Different in Order that you may know one another’: Plurality, Multiculturalism, and Equality**

In this section I focus on the personal stories of those respondents who went abroad to study after facing excessive pressure in Turkey during the February 28 process. They shared their stories of how they were forced to comply with the ambitions of the *Kemalist* ideology and how they became “world citizens” after studying abroad. How did their lives change? What kind of environment did they find themselves in? Who did they befriend? And how did their new life change their thoughts on envisioning society?

Friendships, marriages, and intimate relationships between men and women were the core focuses of our dialogues. The participants shared their experiences with friends from different countries, ethnic groups, religions, and genders. Almost all described their environment abroad as a ‘small United Nations’. The people from various nations, religions, and sexual backgrounds were their classmates, roommates, café-shop friends, camping friends, professors, and the like. The students talked about their life on campus and in dormitories, their relationships with men and women, and friendships with different minority groups, from Armenians to Kurds or homosexuals to atheists. The findings of the research displayed a picture of a modern Muslim individual who views her/himself as a citizen of a global world and demands to live in a democratic, plural society in which everybody lives on equal terms. I

would like to emphasize here that the young Muslims' views on living in a plural society do not imply that Islam does not envision a plural society. However, as we shall see from the discussions below, Islamic pluralism may have its own terms, while today's Muslims' understanding of plurality is more likely one of modern plurality, which includes not only religious people, but also non-religious and seculars. Therefore, their thoughts on plurality, multiculturalism, and equality differ from the orthodox Islamist approach, which as a result may escalate hot debate on the issue.

As emphasized above, one of the significant findings of this study was that the students who went to different Muslim countries returned to Turkey with a greater pluralistic perspective than the ones who went to Western countries. The former were introduced to new Muslim models and diverse ways of practicing Islam, for example Muslims who eat seafood, Muslims who wear their shoes at home, Muslims who wear headscarves with short-sleeved shirts, and Muslims who are lesbian or gay. Unlike Turkey, they saw multicultural Muslim societies populated with different nationalities, ethnic groups, and non-Muslims, and spending time in another Muslim country allowed them to gain a perspective in understanding diversity: Diversity no longer means different nationalities, ethnicities, and religions but differences within the same communities.

Moreover, being in a Muslim country made them more flexible than those who went to Europe in terms of interpreting Islam. Aysegül, Seyma, Neslihan, and İbrahim, who went to Europe for graduate or post-graduate studies, for instance, were more resistant about talking on the subjects of tolerance and multiculturalism. They did not believe in absolute harmony with other cultures in the West. According to them, the system is not under threat in the West. If it were so, Western

governments would immediately bound freedoms and liberties and take strict measures to control different groups, especially Muslims. Neslihan said:

I did not feel extra tolerance towards myself in Germany. In the University of Munich, for instance, there was no prayer room for Muslims, even though it has a big Muslim society on campus. The idea of multiculturalism is something like utopia. I lived for five years in Europe, I may say, and I had no close European friends. We could not become friends with a French person, for instance, while we were good friends with Far Easterners.

According to Neslihan, the non-existence of prayer rooms for Muslims, despite the existence of large Muslim community at the University of Munich, displayed an unwelcoming Western culture towards other religions and cultures.

Aysegül, who was in Leoben, a city populated purely by Austrians, told me how she faced intolerance:

We were only three students with headscarves in the university. I felt a kind of resistance against us. People did not even walk on the same sidewalk as us—they kept their dogs close to us when they were passing by. Once I was getting off a train, there was an old Austrian woman with heavy luggage. I attempted to help her when she was getting off, but she angrily pulled her bag away from my hands.

Corroborating Neslihan's account, Aysegül argued that there was no tolerance in Leoben towards people who did not look like the people of the city. No doubt, Aysegül differentiated her appearance from Westerns by wearing her headscarf. As our conversation continued, she also stated that she went to Leoben very soon after the 9/11 attacks, following which Islamophobia increased dramatically in Europe. İbrahim pointed out that although it was more difficult to distinguish such intolerance directly as a man, since there is no sign of being a Muslim male, they still had difficulties in daily life. He noted:

If one of us, for instance, found himself in a discussion about Theo van Gogh, murdered in Netherlands in 2004 due to the film he shot on Islam in which he showed Muslims to be very bad, our Austrian friends were entirely closed to

listening to a Muslim perspective.<sup>23</sup> (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 10, 2012).

Ibrahim argued that even though it was a bad example of talking about a murder, they at least expected enough respect to allow them to make their argument, but none was forthcoming.

Despite their bad memories of the West, the respondents emphasized the importance of tolerance and respect and their imagination of a Muslim country where everybody can live tolerantly. In fact, their bitter experiences made them think more about their society and to imagine a more respectful social order.

It is worth mentioning that the respondents' bitter memories were far fewer than the happy stories they recounted. Sule, for example, talked about the kind of atmosphere she found herself in at Zeget University in Hungary. She said it was very much the multiculturalism setting that she liked the most in Hungary. She also mentioned that she had always believed in a multicultural society but she had never been able to imagine it until she went to Hungary:

It was like the United Nations. There were Israelis, Greeks, and Arabs. We were good friends with the Israelis. At that time Turkey's relations with Israel were at their peak. We were trying to find out what the other nations were like. There were Greeks, Palestinians. Arabs hated the Israelis. South Cypriots were against the Turks. Palestinians were good with the Cypriots. We had to consider all these political backgrounds when balancing our relationships. So it was like balancing power in international relations. In order to tip the balance we exploited our good relations with the Israelis to bring them closer to the Arabs, and the Palestinians used their relations with the Cypriots to bring them closer to us. So I can say we learned a kind of diplomacy.

Sule's expression "... like the United Nations" implied how much she enjoyed living in a multicultural environment. According to Sule, although it necessitated great effort to balance these relationships, it was worthwhile in order to live together respectfully.

---

<sup>23</sup> Theo van Gogh was a Dutch film director. He shot a film called Submission, criticizing the "ill-treatment" of women by Islam in 2004. In the same year, he was murdered by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim due to his criticism of Islam in the film.

From my respondents' perspectives, multiculturalism is a lost cause in Muslim societies. They believed that a form of nostalgic multiculturalism existed in the times of the Ottomans, but this had been lost in the modern Turkish state. Zülal, who was impressed by American multiculturalism, thought Turkey exemplified magnificent multiculturalism in the times of Ottomans. Şule also had similar feelings:

At the time of Ottomans, Muslims celebrated Christmas with their Christian neighbors, while Christians celebrated Muslims' religious Eids. We did this in Hungary in the same way. When our Hungarian friends threw Christmas parties we joined them. Today, in Turkey, we treat Christians as the 'other'. There was no 'other' in Hungary. An Indian could come to the class wearing her local garments. Such a dress code made no difference in people's minds. Allah says in the Quran, 'We created you in colors'. It does not say that we created you as a single community. It says we created you different, in order to know each other. I want Turkey to be a country where Armenians, Kurds, Jews, etc. live in harmony—just like it was in the time of the Ottoman Empire. If one wants to speak Kurdish, let him speak in Kurdish. Who can say, 'You can go, if you want'? This country is for all of us.

Şule expressed her wish to live in a multicultural and multi-religious country in the same way as she had lived in Hungary. She complained about the evaporation of tolerance in Turkish society, implicitly stating that this was not intrinsic to Muslim culture until the modern Turkish nation-state was established.

The respondents in this research commonly accused the nation-state of not recognizing different religious, ethnic, and national groups in Turkey, and they did not agree on the idea that Islam was the reason for living as a single society.

In the countries they visited they met not only foreigners, but also different minorities from Turkey. It needs to be emphasized more that their relationships with people who had emigrated from Turkey had direct influences on their understanding and thinking about rights and equality in their home country. Armenians, Kurds, and Alevis were examples of groups with whom they had had little or no contact in Turkey.

Aslı told how she came to meet an Armenian community exiled from Turkey in Egypt:

There are many Armenian exiles in Egypt. One day, a friend of mine came to me and showed me a girl. She said, ‘That girl hates you.’ I asked with surprise, ‘Why?’ She said, ‘Because you are Turkish’. Another one came to me later and said, ‘You would dislike me, if you knew me’. I said, “Why?” She said, ‘Because I am half Greek and half Armenian’. I thought I did not hate them, so why did they think I did? Afterwards, I started to think about minority issues in Turkey for the first time in my life. I started to read on the subject. What I learned was that the Turkish state had pursued very bad policies towards minorities in its modern history. I think this is because the Turkish state forced different groups to define themselves as Turkish. When we go to school we are taught, ‘We are Turkish, righteous, hardworking’. Is everybody Turkish? No! But we recite the same wording. Why do we say, ‘Happy to be Turkish’? Are the others not happy, then? I disagree with all these endeavors of making people ‘the same’. Likewise, Armenians were ill-treated by the Turkish authorities during modern Turkish history.

As someone who did not know much about the conditions of minorities in Turkey, Aslı read up on the subject and started to understand the reasons for the hatred towards Turks and/or Turkey. However, her confrontation with minorities was not unique, since other respondents—particularly those who went to Europe—also felt similarly when they made friends with especially Kurds and Alevis. As my respondents noted, since many Kurdish citizens live in Europe under a refugee statute, they are quite free to declare their identity as Kurdish, to hang the map of Kurdistan on their walls, and to recount their unpleasant stories about Turkey. The Kurdish way of life, and the ways in which they identify themselves, makes distinguishes their “Kurdish” identity—a notion which the respondents in this study realized for the first time in their lives. However, such clarification did not distance them from each other; rather, they found commonalities in being so far from homeland. Neslihan’s story about her Alevi friend in Munich is as follows:

I did not know any Alevi in Turkey. I met one in Munich. He had an interesting story. He came to Germany as a refugee in the 1990s. He told me that he had suffered a lot in Turkey. It was the first time I heard from someone that an Alevi had been beaten by students oriented with nationalism or

religion at a university like the Middle East Technical University. It was shocking to hear such an event had happened in the 1990s, which is very close. His story made me think that there are stories other than mine about someone being beaten due to her religious practice. I believe if we met in Turkey we would not look at each other face to face or share our sufferings.

Neslihan expressed that she started to think about the Turkish state system and Turkish modern history after she met some Kurds in Germany. As she was a speech therapist student, she met with many Kurds living in Germany as refugees with a PKK (Kurdish Labor Party—a Turkish terrorist organization) background. She listened to their stories during her internship programs, ranging from military raids in their villages to torture in prison, exile from their homelands to being a refugee in a foreign country. It was her first exposure to the “excessive brutal face” of the state other than her own experience.

Aysegül also thought about not knowing people’s identities in Turkey, although identity is an important distinction. She says “We know an Alevi for instance as Fatma, Ali, Seher, but s/he has an identity that is important to her/him.” Aysegül continued as follows:

Just like my Muslim identity, her Alevi identity determines many things in her life. On my campus there were one hundred Turkish students that were the epitome of Turkey. There were Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, etc. We lived in a compact place with all Turkish minorities. This helped me to develop myself. I developed strategies on how to live with an Alevi in the same place. It was a learning process.

Apparently, one of Aysegül’s most important reactions to socializing with minorities was to search for ways to live together with them. More than that, however, their cognition of other people’s grievances, both in Turkey and across the world, was another important result of these interactions for the respondents.

Things started to seem different, though, as highlighted in the story of Şule and an Alevi Kurdish friend she met in America when attending a conference. The man was an intern in the UN who had been exiled to the US as a result of events that

took place in Tunceli in the 1980s. He escaped from Turkey and could not go back again. Şule expressed her feelings as follows:

I listened to his story. His story was no different to mine; we were the victims of the same fascism. I could feel his suffering. I shared my grievances with him. Maybe he had made a mistake when he was young. But is there no return from mistakes? He had been living abroad for 10-15 years. I could feel his homesickness.

Immediately after Şule listened to the story of her Alevi Kurdish friend she thought there are a lot of detrimental impacts of state's intolerance on a number of people living abroad. In fact, Şule's experience with her Alevi Kurdish friend made her understand fully the meaning of living together in peace.

When I asked the students how Islam and Muslim societies would treat other groups in society, the respondents repeated several times the importance of the guarantee of all others' rights. But the protection of others' rights was possible only through modern ways, according to my respondents. In other words, rather than pointing out Islamic rules to protect plurality, multi-culturalism, and equality in society, they talked about civil codes, the state of law, and democracy.

Actually, discussions between Islamist intellectuals on plurality used to revolve around original Islamic sources such as '*Medine Vesikası*'. This formal document was a treaty between Muslims, Jews, and pagans, and it was written by the leaders of these three communities, constituting the whole population of Medina. It was signed after Prophet Muhammad immigrated to Medina, in order to establish an Islamic society ruled by Islamic law. According to the document, Prophet Muhammad attempted to establish a peaceful society based on equal terms for all parties after maintaining Muslims' security in Medina. The treatment provided these mainstream groups in the city with a law-based society which had kinship or tribal relationships before. For the first time in history a 'city-state' was established

(Muhammed Hamidullah in Bulaç, 2005: 506) and the population counted according to their religious identities. Bulaç emphasized the most important feature of the document as its configuration process. As he explained, the final text of the treaty followed long negotiations between the groups, and it was endorsed as a result of mutual agreement. In this regard, Bulaç underlined, it was not a hegemonic imposition of one group over the others but a participatory compromise between all (Bulaç, 2005: 505-508).

However, the debates on *Medine Vesikası* could go no further than protecting the law of Jews and Christians in a Muslim society. According to my respondents, these debates remained insufficient to meet today's needs. There are diverse groups that need to be talked about, such as atheists, gays, and even seculars that need to be protected. One of the respondents, İbrahim, explained as follows:

I did not read much about Medine Vesikası, which should be a fundamental document for Muslim society. But as far as I understand, it commits to protecting the rights of others—in principle. At the time of Prophet Muhammad ‘the other’ was a Christian or a Jew. Today, there are diverse groups whose rights we need to improve, too. I believe the principle of respect and a democratic approach may help all of us.

İbrahim's central point was based on the diversity of people and the possibility of living with more diverse groups in our daily life in a global world. He emphasized that we needed to think about these various groups now. Rather than developing an Islamic source on the issue, he preferred to go with modern, democratic means.

Meeting with new identities other than non-Muslims led the respondents to think more about different ways of life and living with them in a country, in society, and in a family. For example, when I asked about multinational marriages, the respondents were open to getting married to a non-Muslim foreigner. Most of them thought it would be easier for them to marry a foreigner than a Turkish man (female

respondents). Although only one of my respondents was married to an Egyptian man, they all told me stories about their friends who had married a Bosnian, a Malay, an Arab, converted Muslims, and non-Muslims. Bearing in mind the difficulties of a multi-national marriage, they agreed on the idea that they were in a world where people meet with different people easier than in the past, and this produces not only multicultural societies but also multicultural families. Among the respondents, Aslı, who was married to an Egyptian man, said she met him and eventually got married after returning to Turkey from Egypt. Although she said she would not have married to him if they had met in Egypt, since she thought Egyptians were different Muslims than Turks, she accepted that her experience in Egypt made her more flexible about thinking of marrying a foreigner. Aslı voiced, “My friends in Turkey were against my marriage, but an Egyptian was not a stranger to me when I was back in Turkey.”

The respondents’ constant emphases were on how they had got used to diverse cultures, foods, tastes, and lifestyles. According to them, this type of rich experience should not be rejected. Although Semih was exceptional in emphasizing that he could not bear such diversity within a family, he would accept it in society, though he also reminded me that trend of multinational marriage had increased a great deal since the students who went abroad had exposed themselves to a multicultural environment.

Zülal told me how her experience in America made her go beyond the patterns that she was taught in Turkey with regard to foreign marriages:

I am not married, but I would marry a foreigner. Plenty of my friends have got married to foreigners. Most of them got married to Muslims, particularly Pakistanis. But I have friends who are married to non-Muslims, too.

After becoming familiar with multinational marriages, Zülal felt that she could marry someone who might not be from her nation or even from her religion.

Zülal's approach to a marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man was an entirely new interpretation of Islam and deconstructive of orthodox approaches:

You have chance to think (tefekkür ediyorsunuz) deeply when you are there. You are grown up in some respects. There is, on the other hand, another life outside which does not comply with these patterns. There are Muslims who live completely against the rules and values of our religion, whereas there are non-Muslims who have true morality. I have seen some Muslim marriages in which husbands commit violence against their wife. You witness a community, a 'Muslim community', where there is high capacity for violence against women. After that I started to rethink the rules of my religion that were taught to me. I returned to the real source, the Quran. I thought about the concept of a 'believer'. I thought about how many Muslims are real 'believers', how many of us constitute the 'believer' population of the world. Perhaps the concept of the 'believer' points to some non-Muslims, too. We need this concept, and I know in Europe there are some Muslim scholars who allow Muslims to marry in accordance with this concept. And I know many Muslims who marry someone who is a 'believer'.

Zülal's approach did not reflect many others' ideas on marriage to a non-Muslim. Some were strict about certain rules, such as marrying a non-Muslim being forbidden for a Muslim woman in the Quran. However, the perspective that Zülal brought was not something rarely met by Muslims, especially those living in Europe or America. Living closely with non-Muslim communities leads not only ordinary people, but also religious scholars to develop new interpretations about hybrid marriages. Khaled Abou El Fadl, Professor at UCLA in the States, who studied in Egypt and Kuwait, for instance, has declared his sympathy for marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, as long as the groom is a believer in Christianity or Judaism. (Abou El Fadl, 2015)

The respondents' experiences were distinguished in terms of observing their new approaches to developing relationships as well as assessing Muslim women's position in Turkish culture. They pointed out that they had developed healthier relationships with male or female friends when they were abroad. Expectedly, they

also thought more about the common assumption that Muslim women were excluded from social life, due to the Turkish culture rather than Islamic culture. Aysegül explained as follows:

When we went to Vienna the conditions for men and women students were prepared in accordance with haremlik-selamlık, as they were in Turkey. We were fussy about protecting the isolated environments between men and women. Dormitories, prayer rooms, and study rooms were all separated. The same culture of men and women's isolation was carried to Austria, too. But this changed in time. Nowadays, male and female students go to the same mosques, they study together, and they interact more. When I first went to Wonder, men ran from us when they saw us on the stairs. It is completely the opposite now. They sit together, chat together, and share their problems. Of course, when we went there most of the students had been in Europe for the first time—many hadn't even been to Istanbul before.

For Aysegül, the physical separation of men and women was broken through well-established relations between the two cohorts. However, it is interesting to remind ourselves that Aysegül attributed the separation she witnessed in Austria among Turkish students to the Turkish tradition, as they viewed Turkish culture as being more male-dominant.

To demonstrate their similar perspectives, the respondents shared their experiences and examples witnessed in other countries. In this regard, believing in the maternalistic make-up of the Malaysian culture, Şeyma proposed the existence of more flexible relationships between men and women. Women are dominant in some cultures, and this influences their interpretation of how they practice Islam. They are comfortable in their communication with men, and their body language is freer than Muslim cultures in Middle Eastern countries, for instance. Nonetheless, in their view, Turks are the most conservative in terms of male and female relations, and they think that in Turkey a veiled women is expected to be *hanımefendi* (well-mannered and lady-like) and supposed not to speak with men. However, in Egypt, for instance, there is no prejudice about whether or not one should speak to a veiled woman. Aslı

mentioned that women have had easygoing relations with their male friends, unlike Turkish women in Turkey. They exchanged class notes, studied together, and socialized outside school. Although Aslı did not shake hands with men, she nevertheless found it normal to communicate with them; yet, she pointed out that if a woman avoids shaking hands, then Turkish men avoid speaking with her. This is what Aslı found strange in terms of communication.

According to my respondents, besides relationships, the position of women in the eyes of men is problematic in Turkey. Most complained about the ill-treatment of Muslim women, especially at mosques. On the other hand, they were surprised with the freedom provided to women in mosques in other Muslim countries. Yasemin gave an example from Bosnia:

I never liked to pray with cemaat (the group of people praying together) in Turkish mosques. It is something always too serious and isolated. In fact, the purpose of being in cemaat is to get closer. You should pray shoulder to shoulder. You should enjoy your prayer when you are with other Muslims. In Turkey, women are always pushed back into the dirtier parts of mosques. In the summer time I want to pray outside in the fresh air, but I am not allowed to do so. We are forced to pray behind fences (kafesler). In Bosnia, there is a warm atmosphere in the mosques. People greet each other. Women can pray right behind men, without hiding themselves. Imams (leaders of the community in the mosque) are kind. There was a mosque that I used to go to, and its imam had a sense of humor. It was a pleasure to listen to him. In Turkey, we are only warned seriously. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 20, 2012).

Yasemin argued that the atmosphere in the Bosnian mosques was friendlier and more peaceful compared to those in Turkey. Finding no pleasure in praying at Turkish mosques, she seemed to find a good deal of peace in Bosnia. It needs to be stated that the feeling Yasemin had also came from the better conditions she saw in Bosnian mosques compared to her homeland.

The respondents' narratives depicted the multicultural environment they experienced abroad and in which they enjoyed living. As such, they complained of

the intolerant and conservative culture hindering the blossoming of a friendly atmosphere in Turkey in terms of progressing a multicultural society, the equal treatment of genres, minority rights, and men and women's relationships. In their perception, intolerance towards different ethnic and religious groups emerges from the ambitions of creating a single nation state according to *Kemalist* ideology. Therefore, they focus on hindering the role of *Kemalist* authority on the question of plurality more than Islamist authority. However, Islamist intellectuals' explanations on and efforts to establish a plural society were also criticized by my respondents. In fact, their vision on how to organize a plural society goes beyond the debates revolving around *Medine Vesikası* raised by orthodox Islamists, depending on their experiences and new perceptions gained abroad. Different from the times of the Prophet, they defined new subjects of the state, such as atheists, gays, and seculars, whose rights need to be protected in a Muslim society. Moreover, they believed the Prophet would do the same.

#### **4.2.3. New Perceptions on the State, Secularism, and *Sharia***

Since the end of the 1990s and onwards, the concepts of an Islamic state, secularism, and *sharia* have encouraged and grown a semantic transformation in Islamist terminology. Therefore, it is critical to understand what these concepts mean to different Muslim groups. What are their perceptions of Islamic state with regard to its limits and capacity? What do they mean to orthodox Islamists? And how do they differentiate between the understandings of young Muslims? This section will therefore revolve around the meanings and connotations of state, secularism, and *sharia* for both orthodox Islamists and modern Muslim individuals. I will first define what constitutes a *sharia* state in modern Turkish history and the difficulties in proclaiming its preferred status in the Turkish context.

Despite Islamism being marked by its aim of pursuing an ‘Islamic state’, the ideal *sharia*-based state has not been a subject of debate between Islamists in Turkey since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although Tunaya pinpoints *sharia* as being the legal codes of the Islamic state, and emphasizes the impossibility of imagining a secular Islamic state, diversified conceptualizations and perceptions of an Islamic state have emerged in modern Turkish history<sup>24</sup> (Tunaya, 1972: 24; Rosenthal, 1965:42). There are three basic reasons why Islamists do not have a homogenized conceptualization of an ‘Islamic state’ in Turkey. Firstly, as Kara argues, after the abolition of the caliphate, the Islamic state concept remained ‘de-territorial’. According to Kara, since then the pre-eminent Islamist discourse has not set up a connection between the collapse of Islamic state, or its imagination, and the disappearance of *iman* (belief in God) (Kara, 2005: 37). In other words, as the Ottoman Empire was in decline and the caliphate was about to be lost, the fundamental problem for the first generation of Islamists was to rescue the caliphate, namely the Islamic state. Nevertheless, after the abolition of the caliphate, ensuing generations were concerned with rescuing the *iman* (see Nursi, 2009: 46).

Secondly, Islamists have not been able to agree on the meaning, limits, and sustainability of an Islamic state. It has been difficult to draw both territorial and judicial limits (*sharia*) since the emergence of a secular nation state. According to the modern nation-state model, each country has had certain territorial boundaries defined by national identities. In the twentieth century the boundaries were fixed and unchangeable, as no country had the right to intervene in the boundaries of another country, according to the new world order established after the two world wars. An Islamic state, on the other hand, is the land of Muslims for which it is not possible to

---

<sup>24</sup> Rosenthal supports Tunaya and emphasizes that Islamists in the modern era have adhered to the classical theory of Islamic theory in which the unity of religion and politics is prescribed.

decide where it starts and finishes. The territory is defined as *dar-ul Islam*, land where the divine rules of Islam are the essential source of political, economic, legal, and administrative order. The rest of the world is *dar-ul Harb*, which is the land of non-Muslims and is ultimately aimed at being transformed into the land of Muslims (Islam Ansiklopedisi, 1993). Since the end of Ottoman rule, Islamic land has been volatile, as ethnically diversified Muslims have established separate nation states.

In addition to the territorial issue, scholarly contributions to contemporary topics failed to be maintained as a result of the secular education system. This lack of religious education culminated in the disappearance of *ulema* (religious scholars), resulting in a lack of knowledge on, learning about, and the development of *sharia* and its maintenance. Thus, intellectual progress on religious law related to daily needs failed to be succeeded.

Thirdly, it has been taboo to discuss *sharia* in its all aspects, as the modern Turkish state perceives it as an alternative regime that premises against its secular character. From intellectuals to politicians, ordinary people to scholars, the state and secularism have been sphere of penalty to discuss. Therefore, as Emre states, “both *sharia* and *laiklik* have been a Pandora’s box in Muslims’ minds in Turkey,” since they were not allowed to be debated freely or objectively (personal communication with Akif Emre on February 11, 2012). Consequently, everybody avoided talking about it, as its various explanations may threaten secular Turkey.

After the 1960s, influenced by the ideals of Mewdudi and Seyyid Qutb in Pakistan and Egypt, ‘revolution’ and an abstract ideal of the ‘Islamic state’ were transferred into the Turkish Islamist discourse. According to these two pre-eminent scholars of Islamist ideology, Islam is a religion that has to be practiced as a social system; it is not a utopia. In their view, Islamic state is an ideological state that is to

be administered by Divine law (Mewdudi, 1985:31). Islamic law and values are the prevailing source of societal management and no other law can direct Muslims or non-Muslims in the land of Islam. Accordingly, secularism—*laicism*—is a polytheist system that attributes sovereignty to any power other than Allah.

The two pre-eminent scholars mentioned above underlined the differences between Muslim lives and secular lives. Unlike secularist rules, the daily lives of Muslims have to be designed in accordance with *sharia* of the Quran, which is not a human but a divine source, as Prophet Muhammad established it in Medina (Mewdudi, 1959; 9; Qutb, 1992: 38, 102, 103, 158, 160). These ideals, framed by Seyyid Qutub and Mewdudi, spread between Islamist intellectuals and activists in other Muslim countries, including Turkey, after the 1960s.

No one can underestimate the crucial role and place of these spiritual figures amongst Muslim countries' political and social formations. In this regard, Mewdudi has a special place amongst 20<sup>th</sup>-century Islamist thinkers, as he was the founder of the Jamaat-i Islami in British India in 1941. In accordance with the ideology formed by Mewdudi, Jamaat-i Islami had been one of the most influential revivalist movement that embraced the Islamic ideology, which ultimately aimed at establishing an Islamic state governed by *sharia* law (Nasr, 1994: 8). It rejected all modernisms—like capitalism, socialism, and secularism—and only approved of the traditional divine law of Quran for governing a society. Mewdudi's ideals and endeavors resulted in the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which was a form of modern nation state with its Islamic constitution.<sup>25</sup>

According to Bulaç, the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in 1947, was a milestone in Islamist history, as it cultivated the re-emergence of the

---

<sup>25</sup> In fact Mewdudi was not in favor of the division of India but it was his ideal to govern Muslim society with Quranic law. Thus, his ideals have been fundamental in the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

ideal of establishing an Islamic state. Bulaç argues that the emergence of Pakistan inspired Muslims regarding the possibility of an Islamic state in the sense of a modern nation state (Bulaç, 2005: 49).

The influence of transformations in other Muslim countries found reflections in Turkish politics, too. Turkey's transition to a multiparty system and the triumph of Democratic Party in the first democratic election in 1950 resulted in the flourishing of various Islamic movements and groups such as Büyük Doğu, Diriliş, Milli Görüş, *Selefis*, and *Sufis* (*Nur hareketi*, *Süleymançilar*, and the like). The emergence of new groups contributed to the ideal of establishing either an Islamic state or an Islamic society, despite their insightful diversities in terms of the meaning and formulation of Islamic state and society.

It is also worth mentioning that the period known as the 'translation movement' (*tercüme hareketleri*), from the 1960s to the second half of the 1970s, was of great importance in terms of influencing Turkish Islamism to improve the Islamic state ideal. The books of Seyyid Qutb, Abul A'la el Mewdudi, Ali Şeriatî, and Hasan el-Benna were translated into the Turkish language during these years and circulated amongst intellectual Muslims.

The most substantial implication of this political and intellectual atmosphere was that Muslims had the idea that an Islamic state might be established through politics in a democracy rather than in the shadows of secularism. Put another way, it was the hope of Islamic thinkers that a new Islamic state could be alive fully in different mechanisms of the secular nation-state of Turkey. Likewise, this early generation of Islamists thought that the components of democracy could borrow corresponding concepts in Islamic thought, such as *meşveret*/consultancy, *kanun-nizam*/legislation, *rey*/elections, and *ehliyet*/qualifications (Rosenthal, 1965: 43-44).

However, for Turkish Islamists, *Laiklik* stood in the way to enjoying an Islamic state. It was caused by the fact that *laiklik* signified a *la-dini* (unreligious) system, which was not necessarily complementary to democracy as argued in *Kemalism*. Additionally, according to this account, democracy and Islam could co-exist, whereas secularism was ontologically contradictory to Islam. It was the main threat that in a secular—*laik, la dini*—state and society, for instance, it was hardly possible to be a practicing Muslim. Karaman<sup>26</sup> exemplifies that how to pray five times a day, if official life is not designed accordingly, how to teach religious education, if the whole educational system is secular and aims at secularization, and how to do business in an economy based on interest (Karaman, 1997: 196).

However, growing up in a secular system and within secular education circles in Turkey, new generations' perceptions, meaning, and understanding are shaped by the dual secular and religious structure of the Turkish state system. The *genealogy* of state, secularism, and *sharia* for religious people has been stuck merely in the personal stories of Muslim individuals. Consequently, understanding modern Muslim individuals' perceptions of the abovementioned topics was of great importance in this section.

To begin with, the respondents described *sharia* as a rule of law, the observance of rights and freedoms, the avoidance of corruption, and clientelism. For them, if a state confines freedom, albeit through its Islamic constitution, it is not an Islamic state. Iran, for instance, is not a good example of an Islamic state by no means. Accordingly, the respondents argued that no matter whether the source of law is divine or human, in order to secure freedom, rights and justice must be the

---

<sup>26</sup> Hayrettin Karaman is a well-known and respectful scholar of *fikih* (Islamic jurisprudence). Apart from his knowledge of Islamic theology, he is known for his books and articles on Islamism, and ideas on how to manage contemporary Muslim society in accordance with Islamic law. See Aktay, Y, p. 349-350 (2005).

signifiers of an Islamic environment. In this regard, the respondents' main concerns were with Islamic society, Islamic sensitivity, and the Islamic sphere, and they felt a great need to discuss them in the context of an "Islamic state."

Most of the respondents believed that the state was not supposed to be Islamic or to be attributed with a specific title. They did not have any ideas on what form an 'Islamic state' would take, but they imagined a nation in which they would like to live: Free, just, and plural. The rule of law was the main principle of the state in which they would like to live, but the law would not necessarily be Islamic law extracted from the Quran. According to the respondents, regardless of any civil codes borrowed from the Swedish, French, Turkish or Arabic constitutions, as long as they maintained order and justice, they would maintain fundamental Islam, too. Thus, the respondents gave credence to the state securing human rights and freedoms in all senses.

Finally, the respondents paid special attention to the notion that secularism should contribute to the preservation of freedoms, most notably religious ones. However, most of them expressed their frustration due to the negative implications and implementation of secularism in Turkey. Given these considerations, they rather discussed how secularism was exploited as an apparatus of operation on religious people in Turkey.

In explaining all three concepts, the participants in this research underlined freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and practicing religion as the central dilemmas of contemporary Muslims. For them, from Egypt to Pakistan, Syria to Iran, and Turkey to Tunisia, Muslims are under many different forms of suppression. As the respondents expressed, Muslims suffer either from dictatorships or from radical secularism, while others struggle against the misinterpretation of Islam. Therefore,

they argue that their generation is kicking against suppressive regimes with the aim of establishing free democratic states.

In this regard, among the respondents, Yasemin said, “My greatest demand from the state is to maintain freedoms. Maybe it is because I have been hurt very much by pressures and bans.” Yasemin further recalled her dislike of the Iranian regime due to the pressures its applies to people.

Along these lines, Şule, who still wears a *pardesu*, talked vindictively about state oppression:

I am forced to take out my headscarf; my encounters in Iran force me to put on a headscarf. What is the difference? We are all repressed. When I was in Hungary, I had friends from Iran. They were secular Iranians and we became very good friends, because we had so much in common about repressive state models, whether one was radical secular or the other was radical Islamist.

Şule expressed her discontent with state pressure bearing down on all sides. Forcing women to wear or to take off their headscarf in Turkey and Iran was the embodiment of this pressure—and something Şule regretted the most.

While the respondents’ main concern was to have freedom for all, Sena, who studied in Malaysia, expanded the frames of freedom beyond putting on or taking off a headscarf. She thought that people should be not only free to do this, but also be free concerning how to wear it:

I went to Iran. When I was there, I visited a palace. There was a woman in front of me in the queue with a headscarf, displaying her hair from the back of her head. A policeman came close to us and warned her to cover herself properly. The woman hid her hair entirely following the warning. This was irritating for me. I would neither want to be covered by compulsory reasons nor to be told how I am supposed to be covered. (In depth interview in İstanbul, September 18, 2012).

For Sena, who disliked any sort of external force on wearing a headscarf, Malaysia was a good model of a Muslim state. She continued to say that what she liked in Malaysia was the freedom to practice religions as well as in different ways:

“In Malaysia, non-Muslims are entirely free to exercise their religion, while Islam is practiced in various ways in daily life.” As she exemplifies, a young Malay girl may put on headscarf and wear short-sleeved shirts with tight trousers, while a middle-aged Muslim woman may be covered from head to toe in Malaysia. Even if Sena had not supported *tesettür*, with tight trousers and short sleeves, she still wanted the freedom of choice to be afforded to any woman in this regard.

As was the case for the headscarf, the respondents expressed their negative perceptions of interference or pressure on how they prayed. Such pressures come from Islamic circles, and almost all of them complained about how people interfered in their *namaz* (the daily prayers of Muslims) when praying in mosques. Aslı’s expression of how she dislikes being told how she should pray, how she should cover herself, and how she should be dressed up when she is in mosques, both in Egypt and Turkey, crystallizes the common view of my informants on their desire to be free from interference in their life from all sectors of society.

In addition to freedoms, the respondents were more concerned with ‘sincerity’. If *tesettür* has to be practiced, as a result of direct instruction by external powers, there is no sincerity in doing so. Between the respondents, Ayşegül expressed her feelings by emphasizing that it was meaningless to force a woman to cover herself according to Islam:

The responsibility has to be implemented by a sincere belief. Otherwise, there is no meaning in doing so. You are supposed to submit to Allah, but not to your governors. Other than headscarf issue there are many problematic limitations in the daily lives of Iranians. Opposition is suppressed, Internet use is limited, music and cinema producers are banned. Controversially, Iran displays the fact that there is no meaning to these bans, as Iranians are the best producers of music, and the cinema sector competes very well with their counterparts in Europe.

Ayşegül believed that any religious responsibility should be taken individually. Therefore, people should be free to fulfill their religious responsibilities

rather than being forced by an external force, particularly by the state. Apart from mandatory headscarf rules, Aysegül and others underlined prohibitions in other fields in Iran, such as the censorship of the press and cinema. Their replies displayed how their view of freedom widened from their own personal concerns to other groups in the country, in that they valued opposition and oppositional groups, different ways of living, and different ways of expressing thoughts.

For example, Zülal praised the United States while she criticized Iran. For her, America might be the best model, as all nations, religions, and ethnic groups live in harmony and independently in America. Devoting a happy-life in homeland to the maintenance of all freedoms, she highlighted that she wanted freedom for Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, Jews, etc. in Turkey, and in doing so she recounted the motto of the American people—“God bless America”—and added how nice it was that people bless their country and live freely and happily. Just like Zülal, Şule wanted all kinds of freedoms for all kinds of believers and non-believers in Turkey. To demonstrate her desires, she provided the example of debates on Meral Okay’s funeral, who was a famous film producer, director, and actress in Turkey:

Meral Okay wanted to be burned after she passed away. But a big debate started as to whether we should bury her or burn her. What nonsense this is! If she wants to be burned, let her be burned. She is a non-believer or she has her own beliefs. The treatment even after she passed away was suppressive. And interestingly, such suppression did not come from an Islamic state but from a secular state. Her family was forced to bury her by the secular Turkish state. We should think deeply on these kinds of debates.

As Şule mentioned a non-believer, I widened my conversation with her about the rights of atheists, non-believers, and converts from Islam in a Muslim society. Şule thought the debates about a multi-judiciary system (*çok hukukluluk*) were useful and should have been progressed further in accordance with the needs of today.

Apart from Şule, who was unique in remembering the multi-judiciary system

suggested by Islamists, my respondents commonly agreed on the idea that freedom of thought and freedom of belief are the fundamentals of today's societies and if it is provided by any type of state, it is satisfactory for Muslims. For them, Turkey is a good example in this respect in terms of its principle system, if its implementation is done correctly. Neslihan was one of the respondents who I felt had strong rules and principles in her daily life and had a disciplined personality. Her parents were Islamist activists during their youth and had sought the establishment of an Islamic state. I asked Neslihan whether she had an ideal picture of an Islamic state and whether she had observed differences between herself and her parents. Neslihan said:

As the children of a previous Islamist generation, we do not have to dream of an Islamic state, because my security is not under threat. I can walk outside safely in Turkey. If I was a Lebanese, I might have had an ideal of an Islamic revolution or a Sunni/Shia revolution, depending on my sect. Because if I am Sunni I am beaten by the Shias, and if I am Shia I am beaten by the Sunnis. In Turkey now, Muslims do not feel insecure, so we observe the evaporation of the ideal of an Islamic state. Moreover, with recent developments we are freer to work in state offices, and we are not banned from studying at universities.

Compared to their parents, the new generation views itself as being luckier than the previous one in terms of freedoms and welfare standards. They are not children of deep frustration and dedication. They do not need to sacrifice their life to an ideal. Semih compares himself with his elder brother:

My brother was an activist; he published Islamist magazines with his friends. I am quite different from my brother, though he has also slightly changed to be more liberal recently. But still, when something happens in a Muslim land, he thinks about going there and fighting. Syria, for instance: Nowadays my brother and his friends are planning to go to Syria. Leave your family behind yourself and go to fight in a foreign country and name it 'jihad'! I am against such an ideal. You have a daughter 2 years old, your wife is pregnant and you are supposed to go for jihad? That's not possible. Who will look after them if something happens to you? Yes, I am different from previous generations with regard to these issues of jihad and other Islamic ideals.

When I first talked about *jihad* with Semih, I realized my other respondents had concerns about the notion of *jihad* in Islam. "The meaning of *jihad* is 'to contend

with yourself insightfully,’,” said Aslı while she explained how her generation was quite different from the previous generations in understanding the term. For their generation, *jihad* does not involve going out and waging war against non-Muslims or spreading Islam around non-Muslim lands. Despite how it is imposed in global terminology, *jihad*—for my respondents—does not mean fighting; rather, it is something passive which is to be realized personally. Aslı cynically heralded the likelihood that *jihad* might lose its meaning completely for future generations. She confided, “I am afraid there will be no meaning of *jihad* to the coming generation, as they are quite materialistic.”

The expressions of the respondents displayed how their understanding of Islam and Islamic idioms had developed parallel to the *zeitgeist*, their practical experiences, and the dominant structures surrounding them, such as secularism, liberalism, globalization, and Islam. As Kentel argues, in the context of the 1990s, ‘meanings’ were re-distributed throughout Islamic thought, while religion was constructed as an integral structure for fragmented identities (Kentel, 2005: 725). The old-fashioned mentality in the Turkish military, which exercised a post-modern coup on February 28 in 1997, provided Muslim individuals with the opportunity to catch up with changes taking place all over the world. They had sat, eaten, entertained, studied, and read with the ‘other’, side by side, and exchanged their thoughts as part of an intertwining process.

The respondents in this research had great experience of finding commonalities with others during the time they spent abroad. Şule’s expression of how she was impressed by Edward Said, when she read his book ‘Out of Place’, in which Said recounts living in exile, crystallized how Muslim individuals started to find commonalities with the ‘other’ in their new lives. Şule stated that she found

many commonalities with a Christian man, who was forced into exile just like herself as a Muslim woman forced to leave her country and to study in Hungary. Kentel explained that the global context of the 1990s led Muslim intellectuals to transcend shallow Turkish politics and begin to see that there were liberal-minded people who were prepared to criticize the establishment (Kentel, 2005: 727). These new conditions enabled Islamism to take on a universal perspective, which was different from the universalism of the 1960s marked by '*ummetcililik*.' Universalism no longer means the unity of Muslims; instead, it is the global integration of all kinds of religious, ethnic, and national groups of people in the eyes of young Muslims. This, of course, leads to the question on the fundamental principles of Islamist discourse and finally undermines Islamic terminology and Islamic authority that envision the unity of Muslim societies. The concepts of state, secularism, and *sharia* also took on new meanings other than those defined by the Islamist literature.

#### **4.3. Concluding Remarks**

The February 28 process mobilized Islamist activism in the public sphere in contrast to the aims of the NSC to pacify Islamic sectors of society. The military's attempt to contain Islam and practicing Muslims from the public sphere was reversed by the Muslim individuals through activating their civil life and self-organizing the society.

During the process, a number of veiled students left their schools because of the headscarf ban at universities, and a number of male students were unsuccessful in university entrance exams due to the quotient problem of *İmam-Hatip* schools. However, such endeavors to pacify the youth of the country did not stop them from pursuing their education, if not in Turkey then in other parts of the world.

In this chapter, I focused on those students who went to abroad as a result of the headscarf ban at universities and the quotient problem of *Imam-Hatip* schools during the February 28 process. The primary aim was to observe the experiences of students who had been in an international environment, perhaps for the first time in their life. Their experience is important, because religious students who were exposed to an international environment developed strategies as a Muslim individual living in a plural society while it was being debated in Turkey at the theoretical level during the 1990s and onwards. Their experience led them to formulate a new understanding of state and society, independent from written texts. This gives an academic value to the experiences of students to be examined closely.

As the goal of this thesis is to penetrate into the daily practices of modern Muslim individuals, thereby observing their negotiating power between them and authority, the students were addressed as the empirical data of this negotiation process specific to this chapter.

Throughout the text, the perceptions of the students, molded by their experiences abroad, were scrutinized through three salient categories: i) Leisure time: Sports, entertainment, and art ii) Plurality, multiculturalism, and equality, and iii) Ideology: State, secularism, and *sharia*.

The most salient finding of the research is in the form of the students' positive perceptions of modernity, in that they did not problematize it or modern thoughts, modern institutions, modern entertainment instruments, etc. Rather, they viewed modernity as a tunnel through which they were passing. And they would like to be part of it. Participation is more important than anything else. Modern Muslim individuals would like to be participants in this era, without emphasizing their differences. They believe there is no need to underline differences, but living in a

plural society may make any variances in daily living acceptable. For example, the attendance of a Muslim woman at the Olympic Games, replete with her Muslim dress code, will make people indifferent to this distinction in time—after seeing more than one Muslim woman at the Games, it will not be questioned, in the same way, for instance, that an Indian woman can dress in traditional clothing and walk along the streets of London without anyone thinking it is out of place.

Apart from that, the main findings can be summarized as follows. Firstly, students who went to Muslim countries integrated far better with other societies and were more tolerant of different practices of Islam. Secondly, Islam still has a strong influence on the youth, even though they may have experienced full freedom abroad. This is seen in the fact that although they are open to new interpretations, they are still very careful about certain boundaries of Islam, such as drinking alcohol or exceeding the boundaries of *tesettür*. Thirdly, they are against all kinds of state oppression, regardless of whether the state is Islamic or secular. Therefore, rather than idealizing a state as ‘Islamic’ or ‘secular’, they idealize principles that protect human rights, the rule of law, and social justice. Fourthly, their perception of an Islamic state is not necessarily based on *sharia* law but on one that warrants and provides security and freedom for all. The meaning of *sharia* is ‘order’ for them. And if order is sustainable by laws such as French or Swedish, then the Islamic atmosphere is fulfilled for them. Lastly, a plural society is unavoidable in the global context for my respondents. Therefore, a Muslim society has to be plural. To this end, Muslims should envision new state and society models other than those described in texts written by Islamist thinkers and intellectuals until now.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MUSLIM ENTREPRENEURS IN TURKEY: THE EMERGENCE OF A HYBRID ECONOMY**

This chapter focuses on Muslim entrepreneurs in Turkey as one of the fundamental actors in changes taking place on the economic, social, and political stages of Turkey since the beginning of the 1980s, but particularly after the 1990s. The central concern is to observe the approaches Muslim entrepreneurs take in tackling the question of how to evaluate the Islamic economic model in the neo-liberal restructuring of local and global economies. Questions in the interviews that were conducted specifically for this chapter were assigned to three categories: i) What is the fundamental motivation behind Muslim entrepreneurs increasing their economic activation since the 1990s? And what shifted their paradigm of Islamic asceticism to Islamic dynamism in their business interests? ii) How did they localize the rules and norms of the global liberal economy? And what was the role of Islam in this localization? iii) How did their enrichment change their daily lives? And how did they spend their spare time and money?

The purpose of the questions is to reveal the way Muslim entrepreneurs combined their religious values and norms with market economic rules, and then to uncover the mechanisms they developed in order to sustain Islamic responsibilities in the given economic conditions. What kind of strategies did they develop in order to

survive in the global liberal context? Did they theorize a contemporary Islamic economy, or did they solely continue with their daily economic activities, albeit in a free market economy? In fact, all of these questions could be asked now, but actually the entire process is the unintentional configuration of new Muslim politics.

The world has seen the significant participation of Islamic capital in global capital since the 1970s. Exploring oil reserves in Middle Eastern countries, and the unexpected enrichment of these ex-tribal countries, resulted in the establishment of Islamic banks and the transition of money accumulated in these countries into the global capital market. Such unprecedented development in Muslim economies had a domino effect on other Muslim countries which did not have oil reserves but nevertheless had other valuable resources. This process sped up as a result of the neoliberal structuring of the world and the globalization process. Today, the World Economic Forum has held a specific conference on Islamic finance (2013), which is also on the agenda for the G20 Summit in 2015.

The Turkish case holds an important place in these developments, as the rise of Muslim entrepreneurs—specifically known as Anatolian tigers<sup>27</sup>—occurred simultaneously with developments in the region and across the globe. Despite widespread agreement in the literature on the smooth transformation of the Islamic economic agenda to a neo-liberal market economy (Atasoy, 2009; Nasr, 2009; Tugal, 2012; Karaman, 2013), I assume herein that this transition was a painful one. The results of this chapter reveal that the compatibility between Islamic economic values and market economy rules still poses a critical question within Islamic society which needs to be looked into deeply. Tense discussions are still being held between those

---

<sup>27</sup> A group of businessmen and entrepreneurs emerged in the Anatolian part of Turkey in the 1980s. The notion of tigers symbolizes their sudden emergence and their efficiency in shaping Turkish the economy since the 1980s. They are rather small- and medium-sized businesses.

who support these developments and those who critically reproach the speed of the capitalization of Muslim economies.

Understanding the perceptions of Muslim entrepreneurs is therefore vitally important, as their economic activity increased considerably following the neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish economy, especially after the 1990s, which resulted in new interpretations of Islamic economic values, its definitions, and the emergence of certain financial mechanisms. The economic growth of Muslim entrepreneurs and their changing socioeconomic conditions are not only relevant to the relation between the economy and religion, but also to religion, economic behaviors, and political standing that constantly interplayed with each other and eventually resulted in changes in Islamist ideology. The crucial consequence of such interplay was the rise of the middle class, the deepening of Turkish modernization (Özdemir, 2006), and, finally, Islamist integration into the global economy. Consequently, it is of great importance to understand entrepreneurs' interpretations of Islamic values and economic practices, based on ground-level experience.

The chapter is based on the findings of face-to-face, in-depth interviews conducted with 13 Muslim entrepreneurs in Turkey. The entrepreneurs were selected from Istanbul, Konya, and Kayseri. Their common background was that they were owners of firms and factories established during the 1980s, which rapidly developed during the 1990s as a result of neoliberal policies. The cultural and religious bounds connecting these people, which eventually made all of them members of MUSIAD (Independent Industrial and Businessman Association), is another commonality. Yet, all the more importantly, they were all victims of the February 28 process, which affected their businesses and trade negatively.

The chapter is divided into the following parts:

- I. Globalization and restructuring through neoliberalism in Turkey.
- II. Interviewing Muslim entrepreneurs: A hybrid economy?
  - i. New interpretations of Islam.
  - ii. New business practices.
- III. Leisure times: Sports, entertainment, and art.

Within the chapter, the roles of Muslim entrepreneurs in evaluating the new conditions of the Islamic economy are examined in the context of the concurrent February 28 process in Turkey and worldwide globalization. The neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish economy during the 1980s is an intrinsic part of this study. Before moving on to the research question analyses, I will first profile the Islamic entrepreneur participants in this research, and time-specific conjectural information will be given.

### **5.1. Muslim Entrepreneurs' Profiles**

The participants in this research were chosen based on two criteria. Firstly, their business and trade were directly affected by policies imposed during the February 28 process. The NSC's decisions declared on February 28 aimed at narrowing down the rising economic dynamism enjoyed by Islamic groups since the 1980s. Rigid state inspections and unfair court trials of these entrepreneurs discouraged any development from taking place during the process. Most businesses were negatively affected by the process, and some businessmen lost their investments whilst others lost their capital. However, the most important impact of the process was its spiritual demotivation, which discouraged many entrepreneurs from investing any further in their enterprises.

Secondly, their Muslim identity is important in this regard, as the ultimate aim of the research is to observe how the entrepreneurs developed similar economic

behaviors to combine their Islamic values with market economy rules. The respondents did not avoid expressing their religious identity; in fact, quite contrarily, they emphasized the importance of practicing Islam in their daily lives. One of the respondents clearly put it: “The difference between us and the economic elites of the country is our religious identity.”

MUSIAD was an important source for finding the entrepreneurs, as it was the umbrella organization that actually configured the common Islamic spirit between the entrepreneurs. Although my initial intention was to speak with independent entrepreneurs, depending on the criteria indicated above, it was unavoidable speaking with members of MUSIAD.

As a consequence I met 13 Muslim entrepreneurs from Istanbul, Kayseri, and Konya. Unfortunately they were all male respondents. I was not able to find a female one despite I sought for one.

## **5.2. Globalization and Restructuring through Neoliberalism in Turkey**

### **5.2.1. Neoliberal Restructuring in the Turkish Economy and Its Socioeconomic Impacts: The Emergence of Muslim Entrepreneurs**

The socioeconomic structuring of Turkish society between the center and was periphery, following the establishment of the modern Turkey in 1923 as a result of a top-down transformation project, produced a “dualist social structuring” between the two camps (Demiralp, 2009: 318). Modern Turkey created a new urban élite endowed with secular, Western, and modern values on the west coast of the country, while the rest of the nation was left with their Islamic, traditional, and eastern traditions. The former were granted political and economic privileges, which ultimately ensured better socioeconomic conditions under state protection (Demiralp,

2009: 318; Uygur: 2009: 213). Urban élite entrepreneurs emerged from this small population and continued to monopolize the Turkish economy until the 1980s.

Within this tense dualist social and economic structure, Muslim entrepreneurs were unable to release their potential. The beginning of the export-led economy in Turkey under the administration of Prime Minister Turgut Özal, whose period in the office was marked by the persistence of neoliberal policies, resulted in the shrinking of the political and economic hegemony of the founding elites<sup>28</sup>. As one of the leading figures in Turkish politics, Özal introduced an open-economy model based on the rules of a free market economy, in parallel to the political liberalization of the country (Öniş et al., 2007: 149; Boratav et al., 2000: 3; Cizre et al., 2000: 484, 498). To this end, Özal also pursued economic policies such as privatization, state incentives for SMSB, and special tax exemptions for SMSB investors in the 1980s, all of which paved the way for the rise of a new entrepreneurial class all around Anatolia, particularly in pre-eminent cities in trade and industry such as Kayseri, Konya, Antep, Denizli, and Bursa.

It is safe to say at this juncture that the economy started to lose its protectionist aspect and turn into a free market economy. Nevertheless, one cannot argue that this economic transformation came easily to Turkey. Military intervention was exercised on February 28, 1997, the political and economic implications of which—mostly believed to be detrimental—took place during the second half of the 1990s. Despite the tight economic pressures on the religious people owned factories and companies, the rise of the new entrepreneurial class continued and is still in progress today. The upshot of these developments was the fact that dialogue between the economic and political power holders shifted positively in a way that benefited

---

<sup>28</sup> Turgut Özal was the leader of the Motherland Party (1983-1989), the nineteenth Prime Minister of Turkey (1983-1989), and the eighth President of Turkey (1989-1993).

religious groups, who started to enjoy the better socioeconomic advantages of a new Turkey. These developments took place against the backdrop of neoliberal and global shifts throughout the world.

### **5.2.2. Pro-globalist Muslims**

The 1990s, in the grip of the highly complex process of globalization, involved the reconfiguration of political structures, world and domestic economies, and social order (Atasoy, 2009: 18; Özkan, 2012: 9). Many considered this as the triumph of capitalism and the market economy (Kellner, 2002: 285) and the spread of neoliberal policies throughout the world. This triumph was the byproduct of three major steps, namely the liberalization of domestic economies and markets, the privatization of state property, and free trade opportunities, all of which were deemed as the stepping back of the state from the economic sphere (Evans, 1997). Not surprisingly, the impact of globalization was not an exception for Turkey, as it was felt as a wind of change across all countries.

Unquestionably, globalization is a multidimensional process involving cultural and technological aspects. It is the flow of technology, innovation, and frenzied consumerism, particularly technological consumerism. This includes transportation and communication, both of which entail a techno-society networked with technological innovations (Kellner, 2002: 287). Given this notion, for some, it is the hegemony of Western culture, the homogenization of diverse cultures guided by capitalist values (Bauman: 1998; Giddens: 2000; Waters: 1995). That is to say, it is both Western cultural and material hegemony and the homogenization of diverse cultures. In both cases, it is certain that globalization has been streaming into societies and has changed a number of basic social and economic practices.

Corroborating the transformative power of globalization, Kellner draws attention to the conflict-ridden sides of the issue at hand. All of these developments, Kellner believes, signify the multilayered characteristic of globalization, which is viewed positively by some and negatively by others (Kellner, 2002: 288). According to the positivists, globalization is a way of building the wealth of nations through economic development and technological progress. On the other hand, for negativists, it is truly the destruction of nature and the imposition of capitalism and neoliberalism on all parts of the world, thence the homogenization of societies and cultures. In the latter respect, Kellner argues, globalization is a process of top-down transformation of global society and its indigenous cultures.

From this perspective, globalization cannot be immune to criticism opposing or, more specifically, refuting its impacts on indigenous societies and on the individual. As highlighted by Adas, discussions around globalization are often framed by dualism between dominance and resistance, whereby the global discourse is associated with the dominance of Western culture, the market economy, and liberal values, and local refers to resistance as a realm of culture and tradition (Adas, 2006: 114). In this sense, Islamic culture and movements have been assumed as pre-eminent forces of resistance and opposition.

The attacks on 9/11 particularly advocated the view that Islam is a resistant power against globalization. In fact, 9/11 has almost gained a symbolic meaning in scholarly writings by implicating antagonism between the West and Islam. The contemporary writings of authors such as Barber, Friedman, and Ritzer indicate the homogenizing culture of the West through ‘McDonaldization’ (Ritzer, 1996), for instance, and the resistant culture of Islam and its conflictual features in Barber’s phrase ‘*Jihad* against McWorld’ (Barber, 1996) and in Friedman’s symbolization

‘Lexus and the Olive Tree’ (Friedman, 2000). Briefly, religion, notably Islam, has been labeled as the reactionary course set against globalization.

Notwithstanding this notion, some scholars refute the belief that Islamist groups are in total opposition to globalization. For example, Vertigans and Sutton believe that a great amount of Muslims understand the irrevocable process of globalization and have merely surrendered to it, thus attempting actively to shape the process instead (Vertigans and Sutton, 2002: 36; Gülpalp, 2001: 435). Interestingly, before Islamist politicians, some scholars argue, ordinary people in Muslim societies perceived the changes taking place in the world and began to adjust their praxis accordingly.

Muslim entrepreneurs represent a significant amount of those who immediately embraced and adjusted themselves and their businesses to the conditions of globalization. The upshot of this was the fact that rather than opting out of globalization, Muslim entrepreneurs took on a crucial role in the calibration of politics and the transformation of the orthodox understanding of the economy in the eyes of Islamists in Turkey. Put another way, they constituted a significant group of people in Turkey that changed the whole picture of Turkish politics over two decades.

### **5.2.3. Globalization as a Process of Economic Emancipation and the Retreat of State**

Globalization also resulted in the “retreat of the state” (Strange in Atasoy, 2009: 22) and the creation of the “market society” (Strange in Atasoy, 2009: 19) so that the freedom of economic sphere from state involvements. Such advancement meant reconfiguring the state, the withdrawal of its role in institutionalizing, controlling, and dominating the market, and finally the shrinking of the public sector

as well as the enlargement of the private sector. In a way, it was equilibrium between the state and the social, the loss of state supremacy, and the diminishing of state intervention in all sectors of life—in general and in the economy in particular. If it was not the evaporation of the state, it was the rise of the social and inevitable cooperation of the state with the social.

With regard to Turkey, as Atasoy underlines, this was finally the cooperation of Islamic sectors in Turkey with global dynamics, in order to change the “trajectory of the state” (Strange in Atasoy, 2009: 19) and thereby the emancipation of the social. Those segments of society once externalized from the state structure and economic sphere considered globalization as an opportunity for liberalizing the state system and thus the democratization of the country, which was expected to lead to more participation in political and economic circles on the part of Muslim entrepreneurs.

However, such a trajectory was not an easy task for Islamic groups, in that it necessitated fundamental changes in the economic modality of Islamism, and it actually caused deep divides between Islamic groups. The compatibility of Islamic economic values and market rules, operating in an interest-based economy, the dilemma between being rich or poor/humble and living a luxurious life, were tense issues that fueled many discussions.

I attempt to examine these inner circle discussions and the practices of Muslim entrepreneurs, which ultimately became determinative in the economic perspectives and policies of Muslims.

### **5.3. Interviewing Muslim Entrepreneurs: The Emergence of a *Hybrid Economy*?**

### **5.3.1. Interaction between Islamic Economic Values and Free Market Principles**

The literature on Muslim entrepreneurs, or their more common label ‘Anatolian tigers’, usually focuses on the neoliberal transformation of the Islamist perspective on the economy. Such neoliberalization is rather interpreted as the brutal capitalist transformations of Islamists, which is also pragmatist turn.

No doubt, Muslim entrepreneurs benefited from the neoliberal restructuring of Turkey and adjusted their economic perspectives along the lines of the free market economy. In this process they challenged the existing Islamist perspective, which was commonly propagandized by the Islamist party’s ‘Just Order’ (*Adil Düzen*) program. Just Order basically suggested an interest-free economic model as well as state intervention in the economy, and it was entirely against speculative money trading and the overconsumption of society through luxurious lifestyles, such as entertaining in five stars hotels (Refah Partisi, 1991: 36,38). The fundamental suggestion behind Just Order was an interest-free economic system, which involved the assertion of a completely alternative system and opting out of the international economy (Erbakan, 1991: 17). Moral development was also important for the Just Order initiative as an alternative to economic development.

Newly emerging Muslim entrepreneurs challenged Just Order’s economic model, as they found it utopist and not probable to be applicable. They believed that unless they became materially rich they would not be able to move forward. This essential belief encouraged them to develop their businesses within the given conditions. Neoliberal openings in the economy simultaneously provided them with the opportunity to increase their material wealth. The central belief for Muslim

entrepreneurs was that economic development would not hinder moral development, thus providing impetus for new interpretations of Islamic values.

In this process, while Islamic values and norms were reinterpreted and reconstructed, Islamic ethics constituted the embedded dimension of their daily economic activities. Avoiding interest was always their premier concern despite agreeing to operate in an interest-based economy. The emergence of the Islamic banking system is a very concrete example of such sensibility.

Assuming the important role Islam plays in their economic activities, I interviewed a number of Muslim entrepreneurs and asked my questions by being respectful of their Islamic sensibilities. I also attempted to avoid the use of language dominating the literature that argues for their fully capitalist transformation.

Acknowledging my assumptions, the interview results reveal that Muslim entrepreneurs in Turkey developed an economy in which Islamic values and market economy rules interacted with and influenced each other. This resulted in the emergence of *a hybrid economy* in which Islam still plays a key role. *A hybrid economy* cannot of course become an alternative theory but is a mixture of other theories—the free market and the Islamic economy in this case.

‘New interpretations of Islamic values’ and ‘new business practices of Muslim entrepreneurs’ may represent the main attributes of the *hybrid economy*. Therefore, I will first discuss and analyze how Islamic values have been reinterpreted by Muslim entrepreneurs since the 1990s and which finally transformed their economic and political behaviors. In this regard, Muslim entrepreneurs’ views on wealth, consumerism, and individualism will be examined and analyzed through their answers to the interview questions. Second, I will examine their new business practices as the consequences of the new *hybrid economy*.

My interviews show that ‘accumulation of capital’ is a central theme, both for new interpretations and new practices, because the process that started with the neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish economy and provided new opportunities for Anatolian entrepreneurs continued with the rise of better living conditions for the lower class. This consequently led to the emergence of a new middle class, new savings and new ways of managing these savings, and new consumption patterns.

The interview results validate our contention that explicating the role of agency is critical for comprehending the complex picture of the new Muslim politics.

### **5.3.2. New Interpretations of Islamic (Economic) Values**

#### **5.3.2.1. Homo Islamicus: A Morally Strong, Materially Rich Man**

In this section, I will observe how new interpretations of Islam result in the enrichment of the lives of modern Muslim individuals. The interviews reveal that enrichment provided not only prosperity, but also new living standards and new ways of life.

Quite common Anatolian sayings, such as “Man cannot become rich, rich cannot become man” (*adam zengin olmaz, zengin adam olmaz*) (Ozel, 1994), and the philosophy of living with “a bite of bread and a garment” (*bir lokma, bir hirka*), are in fact guidelines for Muslims showing them ‘how to earn’ and ‘how to behave’ in this world. According to this belief, if a man is rich, it is not possible for him to be a righteous man, whilst conversely a man, if he is a righteous man, cannot become rich. The implicit meaning behind this belief is that if one has money, it necessarily involves some form of *haram* (illegal money). Furthermore, it is enough for a Muslim to live with a bite of bread that will keep him alive and with a garment that will cover him. This is one way to be a good Muslim.

Muslim entrepreneurs contested this belief by reconstructing a new Muslim

identity. The new model suggests an opposite stereotype, that is to say a rich Muslim who obtains his property through entirely *halal* (legal) ways and never violates others' rights. The entrepreneurs argued that as the followers of a prophet who was once a tradesman and married to a trader Muslim woman, they had been taught a false interpretation of their religion.

To define the main characteristics of newly born middle-class individuals, the well-known MUSIAD published a report entitled ‘Islamic Human in Business World (*Homo Islamicus*).’ The report depicted a role model for Muslim individuals, according to which, “a Muslim should be morally strong and materially rich.” Although its audience was mostly businessmen, the report addressed both producers and consumers. In other words, it taught ‘how to earn’ and ‘how to spend’, if one wished to become a rich Muslim.

Muslim entrepreneurs evidenced their new perspective through the new reading of sources of religion, namely from the words of the Prophet and verses from the Quran. They also forwarded their personal interpretations on the issue. One of my respondents, Keskin, expressed why he viewed “Islam as a religion of richness” as follows:

We are responsible for distributing *zakat*, we need money; we are supposed to go to *haj* (pilgrimage), we need money; we are expected to establish *vaqf* (charity unions) in society, we need money. So why are we supposed to be poor and patient? (In depth interview in Istanbul, October 25, 2013).

He supported his argument with some examples taken from the time of the Prophet Muhammad. He says *Khalife Osman* was a perfect example of a rich Muslim. He was rich and lived as such. He distributed his property and always dressed in proper clothes, thus displaying his richness. We, on the other hand, always heard in *Khalife Omer*’s stories about how just he was, how humble he was to wear old garments when walking among the people, even though he was the leader of the

*umma* (the Muslim community). According to Keskin, if Osman rather than Omer was the model for Muslims in teachings, Muslims would have chosen to be rich and prospered during their life.

This was the conviction of Keskin, namely that Muslims were taught an Islam that wanted Muslims to live poor and humble. However, labeling this understanding as ‘misteaching’, the respondents believed that Muslims should be rich and powerful, in order to give them the opportunity to be able to fulfill their religious responsibilities, such as *haj* or *zakat*. This, in fact, would provide a more independent life for Muslims, as richness is equivalent to independence in the eyes of Keskin.

Without hesitation, almost all of my respondents gave their consent to the notion that a Muslim should be rich, since it was their belief that they could be wealthy and a good Muslim at the same time. What was important for them was knowing how to be a good rich Muslim. Osmanbeyoğlu said:

The hand that gives is superior to the one that takes. So why are we supposed to be the one that takes? However, we need to know how to be superior, too. The superior is only superior if s/he does not underline her/his superiority or richness. If you ask me whether Muslims have reached this ideal in Turkey, I believe yes. We started with the principle to be honest in our business, and we still keep it so. There are always exceptions among us, though, and we try to warn others, as this is also our task. (In depth interview in Konya, August 26, 2013).

The respondent above emphasized the probability of being a good Muslim and a rich one at the same time. The respondent stipulated that a person should abstain from showing off his richness in public. In fact, my observation during the interviews was that although the entrepreneurs were some of the richest people of their city, they were very ‘ordinary’ and humble. It was even difficult to differentiate the boss from the workers in their workplace. However, there were slight differences between the interviewees in Istanbul and those in Kayseri and Konya, in that those in

Istanbul were less modest in terms of their outlook and standing. Therefore, it is fair to argue that modesty might be somewhat cultural.

To my respondents, being rich was nothing to do with the otherworldly wellness of a Muslim, because a Muslim will not be a good Muslim if he does not fulfill his responsibilities in exactly the same way as a poor Muslim through praying, fasting, paying attention to *helals* and *harams*, and so on in the next world.

According to Islam, man will not be asked whether he achieved wealth in the world, but by contrast he will pay the account of his money in the next world. Depending on knowing otherworldly responsibility, the respondents' emphasis on the question of being a rich and good Muslim displayed a deep sensibility and their fear of God.

Although new interpretations started to emerge at the beginning of the 1990s, conditions during the February 28 process triggered Muslim entrepreneurs to improve their economic situation. The suppressive practices of the state and the efforts of a small business class to eliminate them from the economic arena encouraged them to be more active. The central aim was to be free from all blockages and inhibitions. The narratives from the interviews suggested that 'the proposition of being a rich Muslim' designates the idea of being 'independent' too: Independence from the 'state' and independence from 'bosses'. Briefly it is autonomy of entrepreneurs.

Keskin elaborated on this point as follows:

If one is poor, you can order him: Say come, he comes; say go, he goes. What else can he do?! He has to take bread home in the evening. But if a man is rich, even if you are the state you cannot order him.

Muslim entrepreneurs often emphasized that secular élites of the country wanted Muslims to be uneducated and poor servants. One of the respondents, Şahin, elaborated on this idea as follows:

A woman with a headscarf could be a hademe (maid) in a school, but she could not become a teacher in Turkey. Similarly, a man from Anatolia is expected to be a laborer in a factory but not the boss. (In depth interview in Kayseri, September 6, 2013).

Therefore, becoming wealthier meant being released from a historically subordinate position in society and in the eyes of the state.

In his article entitled “Adam Zengin Olmaz,” Özel explains in detail the coterie created by the Turkish state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Özel, in order to imitate the ‘Bourgeoisie’ in Europe, the Turkish state established an artificial coterie without foundation, i.e. an economically privileged group of people whose material wellness did not actually have roots in the past. The emergence of these artificial economic elites never received legitimacy in the eyes of the Muslim community. Özel highlights that, besides *sufi* influence, belief in the dirtiness of money in Anatolia emerged from the people’s reaction against this “artificial and illegitimate enrichment” (Özel, 1994: 12). In other words, according to Özel, if being wealthy is something evil in the eyes of Muslims, this is not because Islam discredits wealth but because of the provision of a special statute for a small cohort and the subordination of the rest of Turkey’s citizens, particularly after the establishment of the Republic.

Although there were rich Muslims in Turkey, they kept their wealth secret due to the philosophy that being a poor Muslim is a better way to becoming a good Muslim. The reconstruction of *homo Islamicus* by new Muslim entrepreneurs resulted in a radical shift in this philosophy. Thanks to the reinterpretation of Islamic values, Muslim entrepreneurs removed their savings from under the pillow and put them into circulation. Keskin explained this change as follows: “We made Anatolian people find their lost property” (*anadolu insanına yitik malını buldurduk*).

Muslim entrepreneurs in Anatolia are now proud of their money and wealth as a result of new interpretations of Islamic values. Accumulating their capital

without shame, the entrepreneurs sought to increase their economic activism and to enjoy prosperity in all senses of the word.

The new interpretations of Islamic values were not entirely welcomed by all Islamic groups. According to orthodox Islamists the new interpretations were complete reflections of the capitalist evolution of Muslim entrepreneurs and their disenchantment from traditional Islam. Abdurrahman Arslan explained this as follows:

The relationship between production and consumption in capitalism changed Muslims' mentality. They enjoyed greatly the profitable power of capitalist economic activation. Worse than that, though, they are confused by the brutal capitalist way of trading and the highly regarded but entirely different Islamic trade (Personal communication with Abdurrahman Arslan on 4 February 2012).

Arslan thought that Islamic value of high regard in trade had nothing to do with the free market economic principle of high-volume trading. Moreover, he thought there were serious differences in the relationships between individuals and property ownership in Islam, according to which, as Arslan explained, the consumption of property does not belong to the owner; it can be owned and consumed in accordance with Islamic principles. However, it cannot be internalized, and it was this paradigm that regarded the intrinsic value of poorness in Anatolia and never envisioned the real ownership of property. This was the same paradigm that the Muslim entrepreneurs changed in Turkey.

A clear shift was displayed in the explanations of Arslan, who interpreted the material richness of Muslims as "internal poorness." According to him, although Muslims can become materially richer, they become poor qualitatively. He also criticized this new Muslim fashion as the homogenization of Muslims in the modernization process.

Apparently, Arslan's views do not reflect the dominant paradigm in this era. Moreover, economic practices of Muslim entrepreneurs and their accordingly changing lifestyles undermine the ideals of Islamist intellectuals.

### **5.3.2.2. Consumerism and Individualism**

Along with the enrichment of Muslims, the entrepreneurs and their families' consuming patterns changed, too. This is obvious in their social practices and new habits, such as going to holiday resorts, driving luxury cars, eating out, owning credit cards, etc. A shift from secrecy to visibility and from humility to vanity increased to a certain extent between Muslim individuals. Their new consumerism patterns often exposed them to critics of capitalist transformation, according to whom the contemporary Islamic faith was being articulated in the consumption culture of a capitalist economy. This induced a change in the meaning of Islamic rules. In their study, Kılıçbay and Binark illustrated this change by arguing the "fashion of veiling," for instance, caused the disappearance of modesty and a way of protecting women from the male gaze (Kılıçbay and Binark, 2002).

Despite severe criticism from all sides, the respondents held the belief that consuming within the boundaries of *helals* and *harams*, after delivering one's basic Islamic duty of *zakat*, depended on his will. According to the respondents, after maintaining the rules and protecting the boundaries, a Muslim could decide on what s/he did and how much he spent, as it would be her/his individual decision.

It is worth mentioning that although my respondents did not hesitate to express their discontent in relation to excessively showing off one's wealth, they all agreed with the above notion, by emphasizing the individualistic view on spending. In this regard, one of them said, "Yes, it is quite common that we see our friends'

behavior change after becoming richer—their way of life changes.” They all agreed on changing habits after becoming wealthier. Sarı explained:

In Kayseri, we used not go on holiday on religious festival days (bayram). But now we go! If it is nine days’ holiday, we lock the doors and leave the city. This was very unusual for Kayseri before. It is in fact quite against our traditions. (In depth interview in Kayseri, September 6, 2013).

Luxury hotels and holidays were something new in their life due to the traditional tendency of ‘spend less’ and ‘save more’. Remembering the old days, one of the respondents, Yılmaz, illustrated the concrete changes in lifestyle in the following way:

I remember when we first stayed at the Hilton, our friends were staring at the taps in the bathrooms. They surprisingly got around and were shocked by the luxury in the sport halls and spas. Now, all these are daily occurrences (vakia-1 adiye). (In depth interview in Kayseri, September 6, 2013).

According to my interviewees, their increasing spending and changing patterns of consumption were acceptable as long as they spent only on legitimate things. In other words, as long as they spent it on *helals*, it was not problem in Islam. The point that Kılıçbay and Binark underlined, namely shifts in meaning and spirit, was of no concern to the entrepreneurs.

When it comes to criticism concerning the consumption styles of newly rich Muslim entrepreneurs, the respondents approached the issue as an individual responsibility. Even if they did accept the existence of decadence, to a certain extent, among Muslims, they did not change their belief that “Muslims should be rich.” According to them, there was no direct connection between decay and enrichment. They believed there was a danger of decay in all conditions. Keskin explained this point as follows:

There is danger in anything. You may suddenly become an atheist when you were a strong believer. You may become a capitalist when you are rich or you may not be. Two options are available in all conditions. One is the way of the

devil, the other way is the way of Hak (truth/Allah). Muslims are always in between and are expected to choose the correct way.

What Keskin actually underlined was the unnecessary discouragement of Muslims being rich. If there is a danger of diverting from the Islamic way, he emphasized, there is danger in everything.

Another respondent, Kara, stated that decadence was the responsibility of the individual. He stated, “It is about his self-control. When people reach a certain economic standard, they like to spend accordingly. What is critical is to earn and spend in legitimate ways.” Another one, Kara, argued:

Boundaries are drawn by God. We cannot spend excessively (israf haramdır), and we have to share it with the needy, poor, orphans, the hungry, the homeless—we are responsible for paying our taxes and struggle for the development of our nation. And to be frank, religious businessmen have been more sensitive to these issues, as they are not only about their humanitarian side, but also about their duty before God. (In depth interview in Konya, August 26, 2013).

Kara’s emphasis was although the responsibility belonged with individuals, there are always limits in Islam that they try to obey. According to Kara, entrepreneurs held onto the rules ordered by Islam and still felt it necessary to spend and work for the betterment of the society in which they lived. Briefly, as the respondents expressed, they had some concerns relative to religious and humanitarian duties. This was a point they wanted to underline, in order to show that they were not excessive and brutal capitalists.

Sandıkoglu gave credence to this perspective:

In Kayseri, religious businessmen do know how to be charitable. They separate their zakat and charity. Apart from their religious responsibility of zakat, they spend a large amount of money on charity. And in Kayseri this has recently usually gone to education. (In depth interview in Kayseri, September 6, 2013).

Apparently, humanitarian charity and religious responsibilities that go hand in hand encourage the entrepreneurs to spend accordingly, quite opposite to the idea

that such a person is free to spend as much as he wishes.

In summary, the respondents displayed concern about spending within the legal boundaries that Islam draws for Muslims, and those that exceed these boundaries have to take personal responsibility for any overspending.

According to the narratives, the shift in Muslims' consuming patterns implies freedom and equality, too. To demonstrate this notion, most of the respondents talked about driving a jeep. According to them, perhaps particular to the Turkish context, driving a jeep is not a question of consumerism but rather the freedom of Muslims and equality between the secular élites and religious people of the country. In fact, 'driving a jeep' is a kind of symbol of consumerism and escalating luxury lifestyles amongst Muslims in Turkey. As such, when criticizing the capitalist evaluation of religious people, driving a jeep comes to people's minds as a legitimate example. In this regard, Gümüş explained this symbolic reference as follows:

We discuss in Turkey whether a woman with a headscarf can drive a jeep or not. Such a ridiculous debate! Why not to drive a jeep, go to a holiday resort, or board a plane? The mentality behind that is the desire of some to hide Muslims in their houses and wipe them from the streets. Prevent their visibility, thence protect their distinctive statute in society. (In depth interview in Konya, August 26, 2013).

As an embodiment of luxury and prestige, which only belong to a small group of élites, the image of a Muslim driving a jeep seemingly worked well for the discursive subordination of sects which are both religious and rich. Under this purposive subordination, according to the respondent, were the vindictive feelings of that same elite, who were clearly sick of seeing Muslim people around.

As mentioned above, one of the respondents, Şahin, compared a covered and an uncovered woman being seen as a maid and a teacher, respectively, by seculars in Turkey. Through the maid and teacher analogy, he argued that Muslims did not want to be in better economic conditions in Turkey. According to Şahin, the debate on

consumerism was not about Islam. He explained that in Islam there is nothing wrong in benefiting from the good things that Allah had created, because all humans are allowed to use the facilities of life created by God. However, he highlighted the conditions for using these good facilities as follows:

Yet, while we are enjoying being in such places, we have to protect the privacy (mahremiyet) of men and women. The secular state wanted to regulate our relationships, forced us to be mixed men and women. We were asked to dance man and woman, we were forced to drink alcohol and even listen to Western music. These are things that do not belong to me. Now the conditions provide us with these facilities, but without violating our religious rules. This is the question! There is nothing against Islam in driving a jeep.

Şahin's emphasis was that they would have enjoyed worldly activities before if they had been introduced to them in an authentic way rather than imposing Westernized styles. The enforcements by the secular elites have had a dynamic impact on the social participation of the periphery. According to Şahin, thanks to the new conditions configured by religious people themselves, they had the opportunity to enjoy material blessings, too.

Although the respondents defended being rich and spending within the boundaries of *helals* and *harams*, they vented some self-criticism regarding overconsumption. They were also annoyed by changing habits which may be seen as showing-off. However, as Keskin explained, they saw the roots of the problem in the teachings of false Islam. In other words, as Keskin noted:

Muslims have always been taught to be poor but not to be rich—until now. They know how to behave when they are poor. They have to be patient, contented with what he has, surrendered, and merciful. But they do not know “how to be a rich Muslim?”

Keskin argued that the correct way to live as a wealthy man would be learned after becoming wealthy. Keskin was keen to repeat that religious people should not abandon the aim of being wealthy just because of the false attitudes of some, because if Muslims are rich, all the society is rich. He stated:

Look at Turkey! After Muslim entrepreneurs made a revolution in their life, the whole of society started to become richer. Economic indicators explicitly display that reality.

For my respondents poverty does not help anyone. For instance, many Muslim countries suffer from poverty, and sometimes they are even lack the very basic of amenities, such as access to clean water. According to the respondent this does not make Muslims better; they are only herded and controlled by foreigners when they are poor. Therefore, Muslims are not supposed to become poor only because of concerns about excessive consumerism—consumerism should be what they start to think about it after they have become rich.

This section has displayed how economic enrichment and accordingly changing consuming patterns are discussed among religious people. Their strong belief in the need to improve their economic conditions, and increase their material power, is a milestone that they legitimize. The specific dualist structure of Turkish society that subordinates the position of religious people is the central reason for the birth of Muslim enrichment. Furthermore, poverty in Muslim countries made my respondents think about living a poor life and ultimately encouraged them to grow their businesses.

### **5.3.3. New Islamic Business Practices**

#### **5.3.3.1. Islamic Banking**

The Islamic banking system was developed in the 1970s after a series of scholarly conferences held in Saudi Arabia and the surrendering region. Apart from the quest for a general Islamic economic system, the huge amount of oil revenues accumulated in Arabic countries prompted Muslims to search for an alternative Islamic financial system. The compromised view of Islamic scholars on the prohibition of interest led Muslim entrepreneurs, businessmen, and money owners to

withhold their money and invest it instead in conventional banks. Consequently, the alternative Islamic banking system emerged.

However, the banking system had its own critics, too. As is known, the very basic function of banks is to “sell money.” In other words, it provides credit at a certain price. The Islamic economy, however, bans selling money, because it has no commodity value. Therefore, the Islamic banking system does not provide credit for its clients but undertakes an intermediary role in buying and selling in the name of its clients. This system is called *murabaha*. As important as murabaha may be, there is also another Islamic banking transaction known as *mudaraba*, which involves profit-sharing between the bank and its client. In both types of transaction Islamic banks employ a certain percentage increment as their profit margin. In most countries such margins are almost the same percentage as the interest rates deployed by conventional banks. This incremental charge has attracted a great deal of criticism from certain quarters that it is no different to charging interest (Kuran, 2002: 27-28)

However, despite the all criticisms, Islamic banking constitutes the unique mechanism developed during the endeavors to theorize an Islamic economy. Indeed, all suggestions to set up an Islamic economy failed progressing any alternative to the Western model, except for the Islamic banking. Islamic banking, as today has a major place in global finance. On 29-32 October 2013, the World Islamic Economic Forum was held in London with the theme “Changing world, new relationships.” Moreover, Islamic finance was on the agenda of the G20 summit held in Turkey in November 2015. These developments highlight that the Islamic banking system has been instrumental for Muslim entrepreneurs to integrate into the global finance system.

The respondents in this research were indeed proud of such a system, as they saw it as being compatible with Islamic rules while operating in contemporary economic conditions. As the advocates of uniformity between a ‘free market economy’ and an ‘Islamic economy’, the Muslim entrepreneurs solved the most separatist problem between the two, namely interest, through the Islamic banking system. Therefore, they openheartedly expressed their trust in the system. One of them, Ayan, explained this trust as follows:

I do not agree that Islamic banking, which is called a ‘joint banking’ system in Turkey, is no different from conventional banks. Their argument is the proximity of profit margins and interest rates. Moreover, they ask for high profit-sharing from funds. First of all, the proximity between interest rates and profit margins emerges from the fact that both banking systems operate under the same economic conditions. Therefore, calculations indicate almost the same numbers at the end of the day. Secondly, with regard to funds, customers funding the banks declare that they do not want any interest on their money. The bank, on the other hand, commits not to reach a certain profit margin. However, it states that it will take the money, invest it in this economic circumstances, and subtract any expenditures if a profit is made, before sharing the rest with the client: ‘I will get 20% percent and you will obtain 80%’. In this frankly agreed contract both parties commit not to work through interest mechanisms. There is no problem from an Islamic perspective here. (In depth interview in İstanbul, August 14, 2013).

Thus, according to Ayan, the need to deploy similar profit margin and interest rate percentages emerges from operating in the same economic conditions. Moreover, mutual declarations are critical in economic contracts.

Another respondent, Kaya, believed that the Islamic banking system was quite functional for Muslims. As Muslims live in this era and trade in this economy they need to transfer their money, keep it somewhere other than in their coffers, wire transfer payments for export and import, etc. However, they have a problem with interest. In this case, Islamic banks constitute a serious alternative solution.

However, the respondents did not deny that Islamic banking failed to meet their needs as their businesses grew over time. As they invested more, they needed to

extend their financial resources. A survey on Islamic finance conducted in November 2013 proved this notion. According to the survey results, 45.4% (26.3% mostly+19.1% only) of religious businessmen worked with conventional banks for their finance, and 33.9% (19.2%mostly+14.7%only) worked with Islamic banks. The survey also indicated that while the percentage of larger businesses working with conventional banks was 43%, the percentage for small- and medium-sized businesses was 26% (Savaşan et al., 2013: 31).

Behind this gap between the preferences of conventional banks were both religious concerns and monetary rationale. From this perspective, it was of great importance to find out the Muslim entrepreneurs' motivations in overcoming the tension between the Islamic prohibition of interest and economic rationality. One of the respondents who commented on how he tackled this dilemma, Osmanbeyoğlu, illustrated this tension in this way:

With Özal's administration, a great economic transformation started in the country. In 1988, my brother and I decided to enlarge the company. We heard that state inducements were being granted for new enterprises. Ozal ordered the State Planning Organization (STO) that no one would leave from there empty-handed. So we went to the STO and asked for financial support. We were first recommended to take credit from Halkbank (a statebank). As soon as we heard that, we decided to leave. We said we were not going to use a drop of interest in our factory. Just as we were about to leave, though, we were told to stay and get our inducement following the command of Özal.

The main concern of the respondent was to show how he was fussy about not using interest in his business. However, after 1988, his company expanded and eventually became one of the top 500 factories in Turkey. Nowadays, it invests a great amount in producing not only *helva* (a sweet made of cereals) but also herbal medicine, and it competes with famous companies across the world in the same field. This success, however, has made his business more difficult to finance. He said that they had started working with state banks, but they still had certain rules around

using credit. First and foremost, they would always ask for permission from an Islamic authority:

I have some theology alims (scholars) that I fully trust in. Like Hayrettin Karaman, Mehmet Kulu, Orhan Şeker. I take all the documents to them, tell them what is involved in the investment and how to use credit. After they have examined the situation and given permission, we withdraw the credit. Am I fully satisfied? Let's say 99.99%. But I trust them. Because I cannot even stand a drop of interest in my job. I tell my son that Allah will not ask you whether you became rich or not in the world. He will ask whether we earned through halal or haram.

Osmanbeyoğlu explained that *fetwas* for bank credits are only given in the case of investment or operational needs. Compensating for budget deficiencies or for daily needs, businessmen are not allowed to withdraw credit. Osmanbeyoğlu's example of getting permission from Islamic scholars is vitally important in displaying how the needs and practices of agency led to new interpretations of Islamic principles by Islamic scholars. Osmanbeyoğlu's reference to Karaman was particularly important since Karaman is a well-known and respected Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence) scholar among Islamists in Turkey. As Aktay emphasizes, "Karaman... can be counted as one of the most important figures of Islamist discourse as a scholar who is consulted by Islamists seeking to know the Islamic approach on modern issues." Aktay highlights that Karaman is known for his endeavors to reinterpret Islamic tradition in accordance with modern conditions. Due to his struggles, his reputation as a 'reformist' and a 'non-sectarian' (*mezhepsiz*) are both perceived or used negatively by traditionalists (Aktay, 2005: 349-350) I should note that this does not have to be perceived as the deformation of Islam but as a way that opens up new interpretations—something which was blocked for many centuries.

Another respondent, Kara, on the other hand, pointed out how commonplace using credit and working with conventional banks had become between Muslim

entrepreneurs. However, for him, this was entirely an individual decision, basically because practicing religion is something individual. According to Kara, Muslim entrepreneurs are not responsible for developing Islamic mechanisms or theorizing about the Islamic economy—this is the business of academic scholars. The best thing they can do to produce practical solutions and decide on whether they are Islamic or not is through their conscience.

Yılmaz still thought about the subject in traditional terms. According to Yılmaz, those who work with conventional banks are too ambitious. In fact, they already enjoy success and do not need to get bigger. He was in favor of keeping a certain percentage of his profit as savings. In short, he favored working with his own capital. In his mind, a person who contaminated his work with interest was destined to lose. Unlike Yılmaz, though, two other respondents, Şahin and Sandıkoglu, thought that it was too hard to grow a business by using your own capital only. The banking preferences of the Muslim entrepreneurs back up this statement, as their companies were bigger than before they borrowed capital.

Controversial ideas on this issue portray how using bank credit, working with conventional banks, and paying interest are still causes of deep concern between Muslims. In my opinion, if they could improve the transactions of Islamic banks they would still prefer to work with Islamic banks despite their businesses growing.

Keskin raised another problem with Islamic banks. According to Keskin, they have only just learned to walk, if at all, and are still in their infancy, because they do not operate through all vehicles available to Islamic trade, and they limit transactions with *mudaraba* and *murabaha*, which are actually intermediates of trade. Essentially, the fundamental role of an Islamic bank should be to supply ‘venture capital’: “What is venture capital?” he asks and continues:

It is the thing that they have in Silicon Valley? There are big financers and small entrepreneurs. Venture capital provides finance for true entrepreneurs. The financers pave the way for entrepreneurs to realize their inventions and discoveries while at the same time taking big risks.

Islamic banks in Muslim countries work absolutely 100% of guarantee, according to Keskin, and so they do not take risks and expand their transaction fields. Keskin's statement signals that Islamic banking is on its way to progressing further in the near future. As the only mechanism developed in the Islamic economy, Islamic banks still hold great hope for Muslim entrepreneurs. Even though the tendency towards working with conventional banks increases, the importance of Islamic banking cannot be subordinated in the respect of Muslim entrepreneurs. The survey results mentioned above show that religious businessmen still prefer to use their own capital and work with Islamic banks at the expense of higher financial costs.

### **5.3.3.2. Labor Rights and *Islamicus Sendicus***

Labor rights and the relationships between employers and workers were the subject of criticism against the Muslim entrepreneurs. To most, there was a considerable amount of injustice and abuse of labor within Muslim enterprises (Kose and Oncu, 1998; Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Yeldan, 2000: 500; Durak, 2011). According to their accounts, Muslim entrepreneurs misused their religious ties and the rhetoric of Islamic brotherhood, and this was proved by the remuneration and insurance policies that were not fairly employed in their enterprises. Yıldırım looks at the issue from a wider perspective and argues that Islamic political movements see society as corporate bodies within which all groups work with mutual respect and responsibility within the spirit of corporatism. In this context, relationships between workers and employers are established on the basis of mutual duties and rights of brotherhood. Therefore, Yıldırım argues, the labor rights issue will be the Achilles' heel in the democratization process for the JDP as a political party representing the new Islamic

middle class (Yıldırım, 2006: 236-237). The results of this research also support Yıldırım's argument.

The interview results revealed that three critical points should be highlighted when considering employer-worker relationships in Islamic enterprises. First of all, low salaries and lack of insurance emerge from being small- and medium-sized family enterprises. In such structures, relationships are based entirely on reliability and brotherhood. This was an expectation of both parties, namely the employer and the employee. As enterprises grew and professionalization increased, relationships were reconstructed in more formal ways and based on legal frameworks. Secondly, the Muslim entrepreneurs do not trust labor unions, because these labor unions were nothing more than centers set up to exploit workers. Their leaders were more like tyrants than bosses, and last but not least, the unions were based on Western values in terms of both their organizational structures and values. For them, it was time to talk about '*Islamicus Sendicus*' (Islamic labor unions) which may pursue more human policies for workers.

Talking about humanitarian relationships in the workplace, the respondents meant in general a kind of relationship that was family-like. Such type of relationship was because of cultural and traditional values in Anatolia, wherein workers were treated like family members, by eating, working, entertaining, and spending spare time together. Employers join their workers' weddings and funerals, and they visit and help them when they are in need. In short, according to my respondents, they share something much more valuable than money, namely humanity.

However, the respondents affirmed that this kind of relationship, which might be said to be traditional or cultural, had become obsolete in today's business. In this regard, they acknowledged that traditional and cultural patterns of relationships

between the employer and the worker were not necessarily being unfair on the part of workers. To put it more clearly, the respondents expressed that not only themselves but also the workers were used to a family-like relationship in the workplace and preferred to continue in the same manner. Likewise, up until recently the workers also favored in remaining in traditional organizational structures.

In any case, this was the conviction of all the respondents, i.e. that traditional or cultural relationships cannot be maintained in today's workplace. In other words, ignoring the concerns of labor rights, they believed that family-like relationships between workers and employers did not overlap with today's patterns. The critical point they highlighted was that because they did not employ modern labor organizational models, or traditional or cultural patterns of relationships between employers and workers, did not mean their attitude was unfair towards their workers. Maybe it would even have been much fairer but it does not overlap with today's patterns. Yılmaz explained this notion as follows:

The relationships between employers and workers in Anatolia are never like those in the West. The workers are the sources that enable us to earn together and eat together. What we earn is shared fairly between us. We never think in a way that the workers are energy and power resources used for employers' profits. This is too mechanical a way of thinking for us.

According to the respondent, humanity comes before rules and material benefits in their relationships, which is why he believed that this kind of relationship would be more justifiable than Western examples.

Describing it as traditional, Kara highlighted the reason behind traditional relationships between workers and employers:

It is because all these small-sized enterprises are family companies. Most members belong to families, but even those from outside become just like family members due to the small sizes of the companies. Hence, relationships are based on humanity. However, this has to be on a legal basis. Professionalization is very important. Without professionalization

relationships are not based on law, and without relationships based on law the business is not professional. They are intertwined and interdependent.

Complementary to Kara's statement, Osmanbeyoğlu noticed that as Anatolian traders they realized the importance of insurance and legal payments over time:

We made many mistakes with our workers until we got bigger and more professionalized. My workers worked for minimum wages. This helped us to pay less tax to the state. However, in order to compensate we paid a lot extra to the workers—maybe more than we would be expected to pay legally. However, in our opinion it was also a tradition to treat your employees as your family. To pass money other than his salary was something more human according to this tradition. This is actually about the size of your income and culture. I mean, when you earn more, you think more professional. Those who get bigger but who do not meet the necessities of being 'big' lose in the long run. To pay professionally and legally is a necessity of being big. We declare to the state exactly what we have paid our workers in my factory for a long time. Their insurances are paid, too. On the other hand, we still try to keep our traditional relationships. Nothing else would make me happier than joining in with a worker's wedding, for instance.

Although the respondents believed in professionalizing the relationships between employers and workers, they trusted in their traditional settings. It was the belief of the respondents that warm bounds between a boss and his workers might make the business more human and therefore more efficient.

Therefore, they still did not believe in the mediatory role of labor unions and held the belief that labor unions exploit workers' rights much more than any employer. They backed up this notion by claiming that labor union leaders live a prosperous life and are wealthier than most small entrepreneurs in Anatolia, which is why they considered the labor unions wholly unreliable. Furthermore, labor unions do not operate on the basis of efficiency.

One of the respondents, Saygin, explained these family-like relationships between workers and employers:

In the 1990s, we called the labor unions and discussed working conditions. We told them, 'We believe in an organized society. Therefore, we would like to work with you in cooperation.' However, they told us that they were not interested in what we earned or what we might lose. His sole criterion was

what the worker earned for this company. If this is the only criterion, the employer and the worker start on confrontational sides from the very beginning. I think this is a loss to both sides at the beginning. In my view, we are one, in that I cannot exist without my workers, and my workers cannot exist without me. I am the worker, the worker is me. We are servants to each other. (In depth interview in Konya, October 4, 2013).

The one-sided interests of the labor unions seemingly distanced the respondent above from appreciating the likely mutual benefits for both workers and employers. To be clearer, pursuing only workers' rights and acquisitions, the respondent expressed his displeasure with the unions in Turkey, as he also believed that the main concern should be to seek a win-win situation.

Saygın continued in the same vein:

Labor unions in Turkey are ideological. They do not operate based on productivity. If one is unproductive in a sector, this may be because of its machinery, raw materials, or human resources. But labor unions do not take into consideration any factors other than workers.

Saygın believed that the unions should also take their share of the blame and accusations on the part of the workers, not just provide them with support unconditionally, because the assumption that workers work hard might be deceptive, as not *all* workers work adequately. Thus, without perpetuating mutual benefits, as Saygın hinted, it was meaningless to ask only for workers' benefits. In other words, for the respondent, the unions had lost their credibility, as they generally did not give credence to the optimization of a business.

Given these considerations, some of the respondents were ready to find an alternative to the present labor unions. The best alternative, for the respondents, might be to develop *Islamicus sendicus* (Islamic labor unions). The ideal of *Islamicus sendicus* is inspired by the nostalgia of *ahi* organizations established in Anatolia during the time of Seljukids. *Ahilik* was an organizational model aimed at growing professionals in specific occupations and indoctrinating Anatolian artisans,

tradesmen, craftsmen, etc. with certain moral values. In addition, it was a brotherhood organization aimed at establishing a socioeconomic order based on honesty, solidarity, modesty, and professionalism.

According to Keskin, the problems with labor unions and their role in Muslim societies could be overcome, albeit as long as an authentic model is developed. Otherwise, the current labor unions are too ideological and alien to the nature of employer-worker relationships in Anatolia, which makes it virtually impossible to embrace.

*Islamicus sendicus* was mentioned by the Muslim entrepreneurs in my interviews purely as a pipedream. There was no preparation for its foundation. This is perhaps due to the fact that labor rights are still not on the primary agenda of Muslim entrepreneurs. However, *Islamicus sendicus* apparently will emerge as a new business life practice to be embodied through workers and employers sensitive to Islam.

Given the fact that Islamic banking reached its goal and was able to be part of the global economy, I see the emergence of *Islamicus sendicus* as a genuine possibility. This prospect also proves that Islam can join in the free market economy interactively through its visions and instruments.

The discussion on labor rights in Islamic businesses uncovered another economic practice other than earning and spending money. Examining employer and workers relationships helped observe their broader economic activities and the possibility of the emergence of new mechanisms compatible with both Islam and the free market economy. The subject of labor rights, therefore, is more relevant to the emergence of a *hybrid economy* than to inner circle negotiations within Islamist circles. However, in terms making a contribution to the examination of the new

economic practices of Muslim entrepreneurs, it was necessary to actually talk about it in the interviews.

#### **5.3.4. Leisure Time: Sports, Holidays, and Art**

The final focus of this chapter concerns the leisure time activities of Muslim entrepreneurs. Throughout the section, it was my concern to understand thoroughly the implications of economic enrichment on the lifestyles and daily activities of the entrepreneurs. Likewise, the way they spent their spare time and money, as well as whether there was attrition in terms of their once-precious Islamic concerns after economic enrichment and enlargement, were the topics I was keen to investigate.

The entrepreneurs were not as keen to talk about sports compared to the student respondents in this thesis. This is possibly because partaking in sports is not a question for Islamic or modern life for the entrepreneur respondents. It was not even a question of freedom, as the student respondents thought; rather, it was something they thought was *alien*. The entrepreneurs, who were mostly over 40, were not used to doing any kind of sporting activity, and so they were not interested in talking about it.

Apart from Keskin, who came from an élite family, none of them mentioned any form of sport, though they did say that they had taken part in volleyball, boxing, or wrestling when they were in high school. Some of them also told me that they enjoyed walking, while another told me he did professional swimming.

It is fair to say that the respondents indicated similar feelings when asked about art. They indicated that they did not inherit much from their families in terms of sportive or artistic acquisition and joy. In this regard, one of the participants who commented on the topic, Sari, highlighted the importance of familial background in doing sports and enjoying art. He stated:

I think sports and art are the things that are found readily in the culture that you are born into. We are not grown up in this culture. Playing an instrument was, for instance, something shameful in our culture. Going on holidays, too.

Another respondent complemented Sarı when commenting on sports.

Sandikoğlu said, “if you are in a community doing sports, you also do them.

Otherwise, you are not used to doing so.”

Family, tradition, and culture are crucial for an individual in partaking in sports or appreciating an artistic work. Indeed, this rationale also explains the main reason behind the early disinterest of the entrepreneurs talking about sports.

Although my central concern when discussing sports was to observe and measure the continuity of Islamic sensibilities in their daily lives, my respondents did not realize that my questions on this subject had an Islamic dimension. They were often concerned with how sports were external to their culture and that they had not trained in any particular pastime. When I asked if they would prefer Islamically sensitive places to partake in sports they were rather surprised by the question, but except for two they all said yes, they would prefer it.

Two of the respondents told me that they had done some sport in the sports hall of a hotel or university. When I asked whether being in a mixed gender environment irritated them, they said no. One voiced:

I will tell you a story. When I was young I did not even walk on the same pavement as a woman. If a woman passed by me, I used to hold my breath in order not to smell her perfume. Look, now I go for cardio in a sports hall where men and women are together. Should I be ashamed? Yes, I should be. But I don't know, somehow I am not. But I know I struggle with my nef [ambitions]. I try not to look anywhere around myself.

It was the respondent's belief that being in a place and partaking in sport in a place with women was not as easy as one might think, because as a person who had grown up in a conservative family, the participant abstained from cohabitating with

women. Nevertheless, he confessed that partaking in sports in a mixed gender situation had diminished his feelings of shame day by day.

The respondent who swam in the university's swimming pool emphasized that he would go quite early in the morning, when there were not a lot of people around. But still he saw women in the pool from time to time. He did not mind being with them, though, since he was addicted to swimming and totally concerned with his swimming speed.

Although my respondents indicated that sports and art were something new in their life, one cannot ignore the transformative power and milieu of new places such as hotels, universities, pools, parks, etc. To illustrate this point, when I visited Kayseri in order to do my interviews, I witnessed men in tracksuits and women mostly in their daily dress, complete with headscarf, partaking in sports together in parks. Moreover, just through the entrance of the city a big sports hall welcomes you. A lot of sport events and competitions took place here, and I was told that people were becoming increasingly more interested in having a go.

The experiences of the respondents at holiday resorts had a good deal in common, as these locations introduced them to new sporting activities, from swimming to ping pong, tennis, and others. Given this consideration, one could argue that the abundance of new places has resulted in the formation of similar leisure time activities and the transformation of Islamic living styles through cultural inculcation.

Keskin told me that when they first went to an Islamic type of holiday resort, sporting activities were foreign to his entrepreneur friends. As a person who used to do sports, he was encouraged to motivate them to join in, and so they set up volleyball and football teams, played ping pong, and swam with their holiday friends. This created a huge amount of synergy and dynamism between them. During team

games, the families also came and watched their husbands. Hence, they all merged together. Women also had private halls in these resorts for the same purpose. Keskin told me how he saw Islamic holiday resorts:

I find them very useful. Comfortable and a good opportunity to come together for Muslims. It was first my project to build a ‘green hotel series’. My imagination was to build five star hotels, without alcohol. There have to be prayer rooms that the customers can pray as part of a cemaat (community), because we need to come together and merge. There is culture of cocktails in the West. They go to cocktails and receptions, take their drinks, and hang around. They see each other and chat about various topics. This was what we need. In the modern world, we, as Muslims, do not have many places for socialization, so prayer rooms and restaurants are our socialization places in hotels. I delivered speeches during the holidays, too. There are conference halls in these hotels. We go and meet each other in these halls. If there is someone who can talk, he talks. I now hear that Hatipoğlu Hoca (a famous Islamic preacher in Turkey) goes these hotels and delivers vaaz (religious speech). I really like that. This was what we aimed at first. In the holiday resorts we made a revolution, I may say.

Keskin mentioned his personal contribution in the establishment of five star holiday resorts and the changing leisure time activities of Muslim individuals. His example of Hatipoğlu delivering speeches in these resorts displays how their changing daily practices persuaded even the preachers to come and use the buildings as places to deliver Islamic speeches.

When we talked about holiday resorts the respondents stated that these locations provided full comfort for their Islamic sensibilities, as they included separate swimming pools as well as separate beaches and sports halls.

The respondents were quite convinced that the places provided them with the ability to practice their religion and to enjoy the opportunities afforded to modern lifestyles. The critical Islamist view of five star hotels is entirely redundant from their perspective. The proliferation of holiday resorts and the comfort Muslims find there have resulted in the naturalization of such places in their life and, of course, resulted in a change of mentality.

As mentioned above, just like sports and holidays, art was a question of ‘high culture’ for the entrepreneurs. According to the respondents, if one did not grow up in such a culture of music, painting, and photography, he would not unfortunately be familiar with such forms. The respondents hinted that they had grown up in a familial milieu totally disinterested in the artistic world and its products.

However, the disinterest of the respondents towards the art cannot be attributed only to family makeup. Rather, it is worth mentioning here that, according to Islam, certain artistic performances are forbidden, such as dance, painting portraits, sculptures, as well as the controversial issue of music. These limitations cause Muslims to step away from certain areas of art. No doubt, the Islamic civilization approved of its own authentic art forms, such as calligraphy, marbling, decorative designs, and architecture; however, modern art retained a great deal of reservation in their minds.

Apart from family makeup and religious teachings as two legitimate justifications for the disinterest in art, some respondents indicated that art was something new for religious groups in Turkey. In this vein, Yılmaz expressed, “We first started to learn how to earn. Secondly we learned how to spend. And third, we tried to refine our tastes. Slowly, we are learning about art and culture and spending in art and culture.”

One of the respondents, Şahin, expressed his interest in art, which had led him to collect various works such as copper pieces, traditionally carved Turkish walking sticks, prayer beats, and imitations of famous paintings: “I cannot buy the originals of famous paintings. But I buy their imitations, hang them on my wall, and it is my greatest pleasure to sit in front of them and drink my Turkish coffee.”

Given this statement, an introduction to the art world will not take too much time for the entrepreneurs, as they were in search of a more diverse milieu to satisfy their zeal other than their old practices. The recent debate about art, for instance, relevant to business world, started when the owner of a very famous chocolate and biscuit factory—also known as religious—in Turkey first bought a painting from a very famous Turkish painter, Doğançay, and paid a huge amount of money for the privilege. Second, the same person bought another artistic piece—not even a painting this time but only a frame. Moreover, this second purchase was made from a radical secular artist who always uses hostile language against religious people in Turkey.

When I asked my respondents about such a hot debate on art and Muslims, they did not avoid emphasizing the class struggle in explaining their new interest in artistic merchandise. This class struggle is of course being waged between two rival groups, namely secular and religious elites. According to my respondents, the abovementioned Muslim businessmen's interest in buying excessively expensive paintings is evidence of his enthusiasm to “upgrade his class.” They defined this cynically, as secular elitism is seen as a higher culture and art is seen as the inherited social capital of seculars in Turkey.

The same issue has been discussed in the religious media by a religious columnist, Ayse Bohurler, who approached the issue with the same worries. Bohurler argued that it would be better if this businessman, whose family women wore the *hijab* and did not like to be seen publicly, took his wife with him and gave us the honor of seeing “the power of money in purchasing hatred” (Bohurler, April, 06 2013). What Bohurler meant was actually her preference would be to see the religious people's revenge rather than seeing a religious businessman's class struggle. In the following lines of her article, Bohurler argued that modern art does

not belong to a certain class in Turkey. There is an artist, Hulya Yazıcı Aktaş, for instance, who creates modern paintings, but unfortunately her artistic works are not valuable, as she belongs to a religious class in the country. Bohurler ended her article with her wish to one day see the same businessman doing another ‘image making’ and buying one of Aktaş’s paintings.

The discussions recounted above highlight that art has various dimensions to be considered and discussed in Islamic circles. My respondents viewed art as a partly new, partly alien area of dealing, investing, and discussing. Although they were starting slowly to appreciate its value, it was still a question of culture for them, due to the fact that exposure to art was one of the trademarks of class in society.

#### **5.4. Concluding Remarks**

Globalization and the neoliberal restructuring of the economy since the 1980s have resulted in a shift in the socioeconomic structuring of Turkish society. The upshot is that Muslim entrepreneurs took over the prestigious positions and roles of the urban business elite, who for so long had dominated both the political and economic calibration of Turkish society. The rupture in these political and economic spheres was mainly attributed to new conditions in the economy, marked by the perpetuation of a free market instead of decades-long state protectionist policies.

Although globalization and neoliberalism have commonly been considered as a threat to the homogenization of all societies in the world, Islamic sectors in Turkish society accepted the process as the ‘retreat of state’, the emergence of a free market society, the freedom of the economic sphere from the monopolies, and the emergence of new social actors. Thence, Islamic actors preferred to treat globalization as an opportunity and attempted to reshape the process actively.

Given these local and global contexts, Muslim entrepreneurs raised in the economic, social, and political stage of the country were examined in this chapter. The central concern was to view how they compromised Islamic values and norms with the principles of a free market economy and how their daily economic activities changed the Islamic economic model proposed by political, intellectual, and religious authorities. Furthermore, I aimed at observing whether the definitions of the Islamic economy and of the market economy have been reconstructed as a result of the economic dynamism of Muslim entrepreneurs in a neoliberal era.

In contrast to previous studies, Muslim entrepreneurs are not defined as new capitalists in this text. In other words, their growth and the dynamism of religious businessmen are not necessarily defined as being the result of the neoliberal or capitalist transformation of the Islamic economy and Muslim societies. The interview results revealed that the experience of Muslim entrepreneurs in Turkey provided a significant amount of information with regard to the question of how religion as a source of ethical norms still has an effect on economic activities in Muslim societies. Accordingly, their experiences demonstrate that ethics and religious rules are not outdone by a rational economy but are transformed and integrated into the modern market economy, while rationality has become part of religious—or normative—judgments. Therefore, such interactions have resulted in the development of *a new hybrid economy* which combines Islamic values with free market rules.

The main findings of this chapter can be framed as follows. Firstly, Islamic dynamism in economy is motivated not only by economic ambition, but also by the desire for ‘autonomy’. In the Turkish context, autonomy involves the enthusiastic desire of Muslim entrepreneurs both from the ‘state’ and the ‘bosses’ who were the urban business élites. Secondly, my respondents did not theorize an Islamic

economy. Nor did they expect the foundation of an ideal Islamic economic system. Rather, they actively participated in the economic life and thereby continued to fulfill their religious obligations in the market place. Thirdly, they had formed new interpretations of Islamic values and new business practices, especially after the 1990s. The accumulation of capital constituted the significant theme of these processes. Fourthly, they succeeded in localizing global liberal economic rules and norms through introducing new agents, values, and mechanisms, such as *homo islamicus* versus *homo economicus*, Islamic banks versus conventional banks, and workers unions versus *Islamicus sendicus*. Given this, it is safe to argue that Islam still plays an important role in the respondents' daily life despite its new interpretations. Fifthly, their leisure time activities had homogenized with those of all other modern individuals. However, their Islamic codes were still determinative in gender arrangements for public places, from holiday resorts to sports halls.

Besides these, three major conclusions of this chapter are as follows:

- i. A new middle class has emerged in Anatolia as a result of the neoliberal restructuring of Turkish economy since the 1980s and of the new interpretations of Islam which contributed to the further accumulation of capital particularly after the 1990s.
- ii. The top-down revolution in modern Turkey and the state protectionist approach blocked modernization endeavors to spread throughout society. The economic developments of the 1990s and the emergence of Muslim entrepreneurs, and thus distribution of wealth between larger groups in society, led to broader Turkish modernization.
- iii. The new business practices of Muslim entrepreneurs enabled them to integrate into the global economy. Practices such as Islamic banking and

their high ability to take risks tempted Muslim entrepreneurs to invest in other economies.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE ROLE OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN CHANGING GENDER RELATIONS**

As discussed in the previous chapters, the task of uncovering the ideology and ideologues of Muslim politics has turned scholarly focus on the agent. Rather than defining and conceptualizing the new condition, changes taking place in the social process configure the core of analysis. Such change occurs through the ‘individual’, who negotiates this new condition between her/him and the ‘authority’. With regard to new Muslim politics, women have risen to be salient negotiators who develop invisible negotiation techniques through their practice.

The previous chapters attempted to delineate the quest for new Muslim politics by salient actors in the process, namely religious students and entrepreneurs, and their negotiation with authority to adjust their specific concerns. Women make up the last group and are the focus of this final chapter. The central concern is to portray their role in shifting the new conditions of Muslim gender relations in the Turkish context.

If the problem of Islamism is ‘how to live in modern times as a Muslim and how to organize Muslim life in the secular context’, a sub-question may be ‘how can we organize Muslim gender relationships in contemporary life?’ particularly in the twenty-first century. When I talked to Muslim women in Turkey on this question, they were easygoing and open in their discussions. The questions for the interviews,

which were conducted specifically for this chapter, were placed into three categories:

- i) What are Muslim women's perceptions of gender relationships between religious people? And what is the role of women in the changing patterns of gender relationships?
- ii) How do they assess the relationship between women and fashion? How do fashion or the way in which they dress affect their relationships with men?
- iii) How do they spend their leisure time? Have they found new pastimes or behaviors since actively joining the public sphere?

The purpose of the questions was to reveal the ways in which Muslim women negotiate their status in society and how they strategize, in order to change existing behavioral patterns between men and women. I also attempted to talk with them on how they dress and their relationship with fashion, as it is frequently examined in the literature. However, I tried to approach the question from the perspective that the way in which they dress affects their relationships with men. In other words, I tried to figure out if there was any link between dress codes and behavioral patterns.

According to the respondents in this research, although Islamic principles laid out in the Quran and the verses of Prophet Muhammad draw lines for how men and women interact, they have been exposed to reinterpretation and new adjustments. The respondents, as well as women in general in the Muslim world, considered their status as being much more independent than that of Western women. This status, as stipulated by the Quran, provides them with substantial freedom and equality; however, such freedom has been spoiled and shifted in favor of men throughout history, particularly in modern times, according to Muslim women (Mernissi, 1985: 19-20). The respondents of this section commonly joined in this argument.

Therefore, throughout the text the “reinterpretation of Islamic principles” should not be perceived in the sense of reforming or changing the fundamental tenets of Islam but rather as an attempt to fix historical deformations.

The rationale for adjusting women’s status and role is an obligatory task in the state’s mechanisms and might be traced back to the long-held practices of the nation-state. From this perspective, questions surrounding issues such as inheritance law, polygamy, women versus men witnessing in courts according to Islamic law and women’s invisibility in society relate have been discussed in the framework of the need for changing Islamic code with that of secular. However, from the perspective that emphasizes historical deformation, these questions are also open to adjustments within Islam. Moreover, in this account it is emphasized that changing conditions also necessitate new interpretations of Islamic principles. As an example, it is argued that as women’s status is dependent on men and how they interpret Islamic law, there is a need to reinterpret women’s status, which will increase their independence in line with the declining responsibility of men.

To better understand this point, it is of great help to remember the upheaval that men have gone through in relation to social and economic roles and responsibilities with regard to the family, because of the state’s overt presence in the public and private lives of its people since the birth of the modern state. Mernissi supports this notion by arguing that as the state undertakes the traditional functions of men in the family, from education to economic security for members of the household, it tacitly destroys the father’s authority (Mernissi, 1985: 171-172). Furthermore, men are not accountable for the wellbeing of their mothers, sisters, and sometimes even their wives according to modern civil code, in that Islamic inheritance law, for Muslim women, is open to debate. Kandiyoti argues that as men

abandoned their responsibility, women sought more freedom and independence, thus leading to an exchange of male responsibility for female freedom (Kandiyoti, 1997: 116-117).

The Muslim women's narratives outlined a number of changing gender relationships in Muslim society, and they set their new status according to new conditions, where both male and religious authority is undermined. This is because the status of women has shifted mainly at the expense of the shrinking status of men. They have negotiated this status, both in social life and in the eyes of the law, and they have done so by developing new strategies and changing *intimacy*<sup>29</sup> between the genders. The personal stories of Muslim women are therefore essential in understanding new gender relationships in a Muslim society.

To this end, this chapter is based on the findings of face-to-face, in-depth interviews conducted with 12 Muslim women, who are professionals and civil activists. I discussed three crucial topics with them. The first was related directly to 'changing gender relationships'. As the second concern, the popular topic 'women and fashion' came under scrutiny, beyond veiling. In this section, I suggest that the relationship between Muslim women and fashion is not only significant in terms of the veiling issue, but it is also a subtle look at women's visibility in the public sphere and of gender relationships if it is analyzed through the lens of the body language of Muslim women in the public sphere. Therefore, fashion is taken as a way of communicating in this context. Lastly, as in the case of the previous chapters in this research, the 'leisure time activities' of the respondents will be touched upon in a context shedding light on the new conditions witnessed in Turkey.

---

<sup>29</sup> Italics belong to the author. Intimacy means: 1. Close familiarity and friendship 2. A cozy and relaxed atmosphere 3. Sexual intimacy according to The Oxford Dictionary. During this text 'intimacy' will be used to mean close familiarity, friendship, and cozy atmosphere between men and women. I prefer to use the word 'intimacy', in order to imply the increasing closeness between religious men and women, instead of the neutral word 'relationship'.

Accordingly, the chapter is organized as follows. Before all else, the profiles of the interviewees are delineated. After that, firstly, the veiling issue is overviewed, as it holds a central place in the lives of Muslim women. However, this research aims at penetrating into the lives of Muslim women beyond veiling, and so it only touches on this subject briefly. Secondly, the political backdrop of the national and international nexus is examined, in order to understand the sequence of events that provoked Muslim women to change their position and conditions. Thirdly, the interview results are analyzed in four main sections:

- i. The rise of Muslim women professionals
- ii. Shifts in Muslim gender relationships: Intimacy
- iii. Women and fashion
- iv. Leisure time activities: Sports, holidays, and art

### **6.1. Women's Profiles**

The participants in this research were chosen based on two criteria. Firstly, they should be professionals and civil activists mostly, but not necessarily university graduates.<sup>30</sup> Focusing on professionals has a specific meaning in terms of the literature. During the 1980s and 1990s, religious female university students were scrutinized by scholars as a symbol of Islamist resurgence (Göle, 1996; Ozdalga: 1998). From veiling to Islamic ideals, family life to maternity, many features were examined in order to analyze the role of women in Islamist movements. Their ideals, ambitions, and principles were delineated in these studies. Education was a central concern of these studies, as Muslim women were commonly stigmatized as the new intellectual elite of the country. The data provided by the present research will establish whether the ideals of the young Muslim women in this research succeeded

---

<sup>30</sup> Among my respondents, there were women that were professionals despite not studying at university.

or reached a dead end. The narratives of this study are a sort of crosscheck the ideals of the ones mentioned in the literature.

The second criterion is their commonality in facing double-headed authority during the February 28 process. Muslim women encountered both the brutal face of state and Islamist male authority during the process. First and foremost, their lives were blocked by state impositions preventing them from studying with their headscarf and working in official and private workplaces, as well as humiliating them through running fake stories about veiling on TV channels, etc. However, Islamist male authority wanted to overcome the predicament of the time by hiding Muslim women behind closed doors. Despite all of these inhibitions, during the process and going forward, Muslim women asserted themselves in their professional lives. They struggled against both seculars and Islamists in order to rebuild their status in accordance with their new understanding of Islam.

I contacted these religious women professionals and concentrated firstly on those who were quite well known in the media. As a result of their fame, I use pseudonyms throughout this chapter. Secondly there was a facilitator who introduced me to some professionals and civil activists. I had known the facilitator from my personal network, and she knew plenty of women who had been caught up in the aggressive environment of February 28.

As a consequence I met with 12 Muslim women professionals and civil activists, mostly in Istanbul and Ankara. They were extremely generous in their contribution to this study.

## **6.2. Background Information on the Perceptions, Facts, and Legal Status of Women in Turkey**

### **6.2.1. Beyond Veiling**

This section explains how Muslim women were depicted in the literature in the 1980s and 1990s and how they succeeded in going beyond these delineations that were fused with veiling. Beyond veiling, Muslim women's studies are in need of further examination.

After the second half of the 1990s and onwards, Muslim women undermined the 'Islamist woman with a headscarf' image. This image was depicted first by Nilüfer Göle, in her famous book of *The Forbidden Modern*, published in 1996. The headscarf was the most salient differentiating factor for Göle's women and made them "the other" against modern/Western women. For Göle, veiling helped Muslim women participation in the public sphere and politics while it engendered a 'collective identity' for them. Such a collective identity, according to the author, contributed to the radicalization of Islamist movements, while veiling functioned as a vehicle that carried Muslim women outside of the home and produced a hybrid form of modernization, in other words an alternative modernity (17).

Göle problematized how a modern woman, educated in a secular system in which individualism formed the mindset, could at the same time align itself with Islamic communalism. It is the understanding of Göle that this duality gave birth to an Islamist female intellectual who acquired university education and participated in Islamist movements while distancing herself from her traditional predecessors dressed in a folkloric type of veil. Thus, Göle believed that veiled Islamic women became urbanized and modern and protected their Islamic positions through collective identity and politicization under the banner of the headscarf (21).

Göle's contribution to the literature shed a great amount of light on the issue in the first half of the 1990s. Nevertheless, Muslim women's struggles have become

the emancipation from that stigmatized identity since then. Moreover, the ‘collective identity’ definition resulted in several assumptions that are worth mentioning herein. For example, it was assumed that veiled women all had the same political allegiances, just because they are veiled. In addition, due to the monopolizing impact of the collective identity veiled women were assumed to talk with a veil-related issue, as if veiled women were not capable of talking about from politics, sociology, sports, cinema, etc. Aktaş touched on the amorphous prevalence of negative perceptions in academic or media outlets in relation to veiled women. She noted, “Whenever a veiled woman speaks, she is not treated as an author, artist, sociologist, or doctor but as a veiled author, a veiled painter, a veiled sociologist, and a veiled doctor” (Aktaş, 2001: 10).

Quite contrary to these assumptions, Muslim women had a busy agenda apart from the headscarf in their daily lives, and so the aforementioned prejudices drove them to underline their personal differences and, parallel to these differences, their different occupational interests, private lives, specific knowledge on various subjects, etc. from the 1990s as a result of prismatic conjuncture of the decade. Thereafter, it is the story of the articulation of these differences, without paying attention to ideological and social enforcement.

Unlike the imaginations and the mission loaded on it, veiling no longer makes the modern Muslim women ‘the other’ but makes her *another* amongst all others. Particularly through the diverse ways that it is covered, it blurs between modern and Islamic way of dressing as it becomes a piece of the whole dressing like trousers, blouses, shirts, and skirts. Veiling is a way of dressing that can be adjusted to all types of modern dress, with a small touch, and sometimes not even that is required. Veiling sometimes appears in mystic-ethnic forms, such as circling it behind the

neck, and sometimes it is a fashionable accessory like a shawl, whilst on other occasions it disappears under a hat. It is a fashion in its own right, backed up and promoted by fashion designers, fashion shows, and fashion magazines. It has also made great inroads into the capitalist economy through a number of famous brands. ‘Modesty’, which is the “soul of veiling” for orthodox Islamists, on the other hand, has fallen into oblivion; it is a subtitle read as “personal responsibility” if it is remembered in any sense at all<sup>31</sup>. It is, moreover, a question of freedom rather than a principle of Islam when it comes to defending it. It is nourished by the international nexus and defended through international mechanisms such as The European Court of Human Rights<sup>32</sup> and various sub-organizations of the United Nations<sup>33</sup>.

The changing meanings of veiling, and Muslim women’s concern in underlining their varied identities, have led scholarly interest to divert its focus in studies on ‘women and Islam’. These studies now cover a Muslim woman’s status, from her education to employment, marital status to maternity, her roles in the family to professional life, etc. However, studying women in the context of a Muslim society or of Islam/Islamism still jeopardizes objectivity, because the dichotomy of East *versus* West overshadows the question, and because of the fact Western sources handle the question with a biased “inherited patriarchal” notion that Islam treats women unequally. Eastern or Islamic sources, on the other hand, approach with anti-Western reflexes, which causes debating the issue freely with the authentic sources of Islam. Mernissi argues that Muslims appropriate many anachronistic institutions just through anti-Western reactions (Mernissi, 1985: 7). According to Mernissi, for instance, a legal code or an institution that gives women secondary status is not

---

<sup>31</sup> It is fair to emphasize that there are still a large number of Muslim women who protect their modesty and the spiritual meaning of veiling in their hearts and minds in Turkey. Most of my respondents were of this opinion, though they stressed there should be changes in this regard.

<sup>32</sup> Lamia Bulut and Şenay Karaduman cases in 1993, and Leyla Şahin case in 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Pekin+5 UN Women’s Conference and the like.

deemed necessary for reform, but only because any reformation would implicate Westernization.

Although theoretical predicaments are beyond the scope of this chapter, the experiences of Muslim women in Turkey after the 1990s hint at the way that they succeeded in changing their status through undermining the state, religion, and male authority through their practice.

Thus, this chapter includes an analysis of the narratives of Turkish Muslim women. What was the agenda of Muslim women during the 1990s? What was the social and political backdrop for the national and international nexus in the 1990s? And how did it influence Muslim women? How did Muslim women experiences affect Islamist discourse and policies? Did their participation in the public space shift intimacy between men and women? Do Muslim women look to fashion as a way of communicating? And what do Muslim women do in their leisure time?

Before going deep into the analysis, it is safe to say that Muslim women have succeeded well in terms of shifting their legal status—for both seculars and the religious—*per se*. It would be unfair not to mention here that the JDP, with its leadership cadre of ex-Islamists, paved the political way and reformed the status of women in the country, particularly through reforms passed by the Turkish National Assembly between 2003 and 2007. This, of course, leads us to seek another dimension on the question, namely how did Islamist discourse transform policies on women so quickly? And what were the roles of Muslim women in this transformation?

I will outline the answers to all of these questions in the ensuing subsections.

## **6.2.2. Encountering Double-headed Authority: Muslim Women Pressed Between Seculars and Islamists During the 1990s**

This section gives the political and legal background to women's status in Turkish society. The significance of providing this background is twofold: First, the progress succeeded during the trajectory of modern Turkey on the status of women and the role that they played in this trajectory. Second, the double-headed authority that Muslim women faced, specific to the Turkish context, can be recognized.

The earliest reform undertaken at the beginning of the move toward a modern Turkey was to erase Islamically inherited laws from legal codes, thereby strengthening the Westernization of Turkey. One of the earliest reforms of the new Turkey, established in 1923, was to provide equal education in schools for both boys and girls in 1924. In 1926, Islamic legal codes concerning women's rights, such as polygamy, unilateral divorce, and inheritance rights, as well as the inequality between men and women in court proceedings (one man as a witness was equal to two women witnesses in Islamic codes), were replaced by secular codes, and women were granted Western-style equal rights in these respects. According to Berkes, such movement on the status of women was one of the most important actions of seculars in their struggle against pro-Islamists<sup>34</sup> (Berkes in Kandiyoti, 1991: 29).

Accordingly, Turkish women acquired the right to vote in local government elections in 1930, and in 1934 they won the right to vote and stand for elections on the national stage. Compared with many European countries, such as France (1944), Italy (1945), and Greece (1952), Turkey's eagerness to grant the voting right to women can be attributed to the prevailing aim of the policymakers of that time to portray a modernized image of the country. Therefore, one could argue that these

---

<sup>34</sup> Pro-Islamists, like Ziya Gokalp, supported the synthesis of Turkish nationalism and Islam at the time of republican establishment. Berkes also paid attention to these groups.

changes to women's statuses were a kind of indicator of the success of the modern Turkish project for the founding fathers of the Turkish Republic (Arat, 2005: 15) and the representation of an ideological break from the past for *Kemalism* (Kandiyoti, 1991: 40).

Despite the modernization critiques of their early Republican actions, Turkish women were not allowed to assume greater rights or higher positions in the public realm as the growth of the Republic progressed, and there were only a few minor legal changes in women's status in the ensuing decades. 'Equal pay for equal work', or the 'endorsements of some international conventions' such as the Committee on Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), are examples of a few of the changes that took place in the 1980s. Even women's representation in the Turkish Parliament did not exceed the 4.6% level of 1935 until 2007.

Since 2003, on the other hand, an abundant number of amendments on women's rights in the Turkish Constitution and Civil Code were passed by the Turkish Parliament. Articles 41, 66, 10, and 90 in the Constitution were amended. Article 10 now reads as follows: "Women and men have equal rights. The state is obliged to watch these rights." Also, clauses like "The head of the family is the husband," "the custody of the children belongs to both spouses, but the husband's rights fall heavier when there is a dispute between the parents," and "the responsibility of acquisition of inheritance belongs to the husband" were either amended or lifted from the new Civil Code in accordance with gender equality policies. Plenty of sexual discrimination in the Criminal Code was also removed, such as "the distinction of being a women or a girl," "lower punishments of sexual attack if it is for honor killings," "the definitions of forced rape or forced sexual attack," etc. Women's labor law also recovered somewhat, especially for maternity

leave. All in all, Turkey increased her adherence to the international system through signing a number of conventions proposed by European institutions and the UN. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was, for instance, endorsed first by the Turkish Parliament in 2011.

But what was the role of Muslim women in this trajectory? And what kinds of inhibitions did they face in paving way for other women in Turkey?

Although the answers to these questions takes up a substantial part of this chapter, there are difficulties of examining Muslim women. First of all, the question of women has been discussed in the axes of progress and modernity in Muslim societies since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Şişman, 2005: 48; Kandiyoti, 1991: 3; Aktaş, 2001: 8). In fact, all newly emerging nation states which were populated by Muslims at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were handicapped with the same concern. Likewise, the question of women's status in modern Turkey became a symbol of modernization and a controversial issue between Islamists and seculars. The duality that started in the *Tanzimat* period, and then crystallized, delayed the development of productive debates on the issue, because it was immune to the peculiarities and the secular principles of the Republic and its founding philosophy, *Kemalism*, which considers Islam backward and against Westernization in all senses.

The findings satisfactorily revealed that veiled Muslim women found themselves stuck in the middle of the struggle between *Kemalists*, who held most of the authority in the newly emerged nation-state, and Islamists, who viewed any reform as a form of Westernization. According to the respondents in this research, Islamic women in Turkey were the victims of the *Kemalist* state and the *false consciousness* of Islam. First of all, they faced extreme secularism by the *Kemalist*

authority, which aimed to limit the participation of practicing Muslim women in the public space. Extreme secularists also stigmatized religious women as a symbol of backwardness and humiliated them for being unable to be ‘contemporary’ (*çağdaş*). Hence, the respondents in this chapter argue that they were both subject to the expectations of *Kemalist* Turkey and were the symbols of backwardness in the new Republic. Secondly, Muslim women faced Islamist male authority in every aspect of their life. Their roles in the family, education, professional life, and in how they interacted with men were all delineated by religious men, according to my respondents. For them, Islam was interpreted by male scholars mostly in a way that would favor male interests. According to my respondents, situating women in the Islamist movement did not diverge greatly from the *Kemalist* model in terms of hindering Muslim women’s career. For instance, despite the political activation of women in the Islamist Welfare Party in the 1990s, they were not allowed to hold high positions in the party organization (Arat, 1999: 39). According to the respondents, what lies behind the Islamist failure to situate women accurately is a false consciousness of the religion caused by the mixture of culture and religion and patriarchal interpretations thereof. One of my respondents, Zeynep explained it as follows:

I believe this false consciousness started when the Ottoman Empire changed the sect of fundamental belief (*itikadi mezhep*) from Maturidi to *Eş'ari*<sup>35</sup>. With this change of fundamental beliefs, wisdom was ignored and women’s statuses were degraded to secondary status. Can you imagine, Hz. Aisha has a stone statue in the mosque of the Prophet that signed the place where she prayed? Now, how can you separate men and women in society if men and

---

<sup>35</sup> *Maturidi* and *Eş'ari* are two fundamental belief systems of Islam. *Maturidi* takes the Qur'an and human wisdom as sources of understanding the creature, while *Eş'ari* has more sufi tendencies for understanding the creature and Allah. Ottoman emperor Fatih Sultan Mehmet preferred to go with *Eş'ari* in the 15th century, and *Eş'ari* was the formal sect of the Ottoman Empire until the end. According to some, this was the reason for the fall of the Ottoman Empire, since it stopped teaching science as a result of changing its *itikadi* sect. Later, the Turkish Republic preferred *Maturidi* as a *itikadi* sect whose founder was originally a Turk, Imam Maturidi.

women were together in the mosque of the Prophet? These are all historical pollutions. (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 10, 2014).

The fundamental religious beliefs of the Ottomans seemingly resulted in the degrading of women in society. Considering it pollution, the respondents believed the separation of man and woman had resulted in their present secondary status.

However, it is not admissible to argue that the degradation of women was caused only by diverting away from fundamental beliefs. In this vein, Mernissi's abovementioned point, which discussed the prevalence of anachronistic institutions in Muslim societies as a direct reaction to Westernization, might be another factor. As highlighted by Mernissi, the false consciousness of Islam was born because of the protection of anachronistic institutions as a result of anti-Western reactions. The upshot implication, Mernissi argued, was the failure to establish true legal codes and institutions that would preserve women's rights.

Resisting anti-Western reactions for the sake of rebuilding their status, Islamist women accordingly renewed their relationships with men, at least at the legal level, in Turkey through undermining the authority of state and patriarchal structures in Islamist circles. The peculiar conditions of the February 28 process were substantial in helping Islamist women fight against the state and Islamist male authority. Prohibitions forced on women by the state and by the Islamist patriarchy were challenged implicitly by these females' daily life practices. Despite the state preventing Muslim women from studying at universities and state institutions, and the employment of veiled women in 'invisible jobs' in the Islamic sector, Muslim women succeeded in becoming visible and influential in society.

Before moving to the interview analysis, we need to take a quick glance at the international nexus in the 1990s. The quest for new Muslim politics did not develop independently from the global context. Somehow, Islamists who positioned their

religion as the alternative to modernization at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became the active constructors of globalization at the end of the same century. The case for Muslim women was, in essence, the same. The Muslim women language, for instance, in protecting their rights is not different from the discourse on women started to be used globally since 1975.

### **6.2.3. Muslim Women during the 1990s: Turkey and the International Nexus**

At the beginning of the 1990s, veiled women were comparatively more comfortable as a result of liberal policies inherited from Özal's prime ministry. The headscarf ban at universities, for instance, started in the early 1980s, was resolved to some extent by the endeavors of Özal, who offered the '*turban*'<sup>36</sup> solution in the 1990s. With the veiling problem resolved, a number of Islamic women graduated from further studies and took up professional positions.

In addition, in the political arena, there appeared to be a noticeable mobilization of women as a result of the rise of Islamic politics and its inclusive policies of women and youth in its organizational structure. Particularly the Islamist party (WP) launched a massive women's movement for its election campaigns, held in 1994 and 1995. The WP Women's Branch provided a safe zone for religious and conservative women to actively join in with public life, and thanks to its egalitarian policies, the WP addressed particularly the demands of Islamic women and thereby increased its popularity and subsequent growth.

The strength and importance of new women's roles, and their presence in

---

<sup>36</sup> In fact, in 1984, İhsan Doğramacı, the Head of the High Education Committee of the time, discovered the formulation of 'turban' for headscarved girls at the universities in order to mediate the dispute between the Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, who wanted to solve the problem, and *Kemalists* in Turkey. The dispute continued during the 1980s, but resolved to some extent by the beginning of the 1990s. The turban is a different way of veiling, a kind of hat which totally covers the hair while leaving the neck open. It is preferred by elderly people in Turkey. And it does not connote a political symbol, as it is seen among seculars and Europeans.

these arenas, was proven in the local elections of 1994, when the WP gained a landslide victory together in the Istanbul and Ankara municipalities. In this process, the role of the WP Women's Branch was indispensable, as the campaign was mostly operated by women. Female members of the party visited all of the streets in the city and knocked doors one by one during the election campaign. Therefore, many attributed the party's success to this effort in a way that demonstrated women's undeniable presence and role in politics.

During the same period, the rise of identity politics, multiculturalism, and civil society as a dominant discourse throughout the world led Turkish Muslim women to establish a number of NGOs, in both the east and the west of the country. The Gökkuşağı Platform gathered 40 different unions and organizations under its wing, i.e. AKDER, Hazar, and the Başkent Women's Platform to name a few. The upshot of these developments was the increasing realization of civil society and the influence of civil activism by Islamic women.

Besides mobilizing in political, civil, and professional life, the daily lives of religious women shifted in other ways. The most salient progress by the middle of 1990s that affected the daily lives of Islamic women was seen in the facilities provided by the municipalities. WP municipalities, particularly the Istanbul metropolis, opened up their social facilities to the public in 1994 after having served only certain groups such as the bureaucracy and military previously. Religious families began to socialize openly in municipalities, go for dinner in mixed groups, and join in with leisure time activities like sports, art exhibitions, and concerts in cultural halls. Separate swimming pools for males and females, big gardens in which to gather together to play tennis, volleyball, and basketball, old Ottoman kiosks that provided the opportunity to have high-standard meals in a traditional ambiance were

just some of the many pastimes that Islamic people started to enjoy. Hence, municipalities managed by the Islamist party provided large facilities for Islamic women to enjoy their free time. These places, which ‘modern man’ appreciates in order to spend his time away from an urban life, started to serve to Islamic sectors of society and ultimately have a homogenizing impact.

Women and women’s policies also gained considerable support at the international level. The UN, which announced “the women’s decade,” starting from 1975, consolidated its policies in the 1990s. In a political conjecture in which identity politics like feminism, women raised their voice in local and global politics. In this context, Muslim women joined the Pekin + 5 UN Women’s Conference as representatives of the Gökkuşağı Platform, for the first time in their civil society experience. Nazife Şişman, who is a famous female Muslim author and one of the attendees at the Conference, pointed out that Turkey was represented by four veiled women for the first time in an international arena beside the image of “contemporary Turkish women—*çağdaş Türk kadını*” (Şişman, 1996: 8, 20). Şişman and her friends not only defended ‘veiling’ as a fundamental human right, but they also drew attention to the abuses of women’s rights in Turkey, ranging from violation of their right to education to religious freedom. Similarly, on June 3-4, 1996, Muslim women actively joined in the International Conference of Habitat II, held in Istanbul. The theme of the conference was ‘civil society and local governments’ as an alternative power to central politics. In having a strong hand in the area of local government, Islamic groups, particularly women, were active participants at the conference. With the support of the municipality of Istanbul metropolis behind them, they joined in forums, workshops, and workshops, and they took the opportunity to discuss the veiling problem in Turkey in an international environment. They were also able to

discuss and share many other questions on civil society and women's organizations. They also established new networks. Such a multicultural occasion enabled them to progress their agenda. While they were able to put veiling on the human rights agenda of international organizations, their own agenda grew from domestic violence to female trafficking, honor killings to illiteracy.

Participation in the conferences resulted in their use of international discourse on human rights and freedoms. Believing the rising value of rights and freedoms would assist them in overcoming veiling prohibition in Turkey, they abandoned their original stance that veiling was a principle of Islam. From now on, it was a question of human rights. This discursive shift was accompanied simultaneously by international mechanisms that functioned as a platform to defend veiling. Lamia Bulut, Şenay Karaduman, and Leyla Şahin took the issue to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for the first time in 1993. Although the three cases ended up in disappointment following the decision of ECHR, the experience worked as a learning process for Muslim women and increased their efforts to talk about European double standards, too.

The positive momentum attained by the beginning of the 1990s was interrupted by the post-modern coup in 1997. The February 28 process not only brought back the veiling ban, but it also aimed at preventing religious people from living in the public domain, from trade to education, politics to civil society. However, for Muslim women the process involved not only state intervention in their civil and political life, but also restrictions enforced by their Islamist male companions in professional life. As a result of suppressive policies of the state, Islamic traders hid their religious leanings from state intelligence and security forces that were monitoring their companies. Such fear led them to eject veiled women

from their jobs or employ them behind the scenes. Developments within inner circles, nevertheless, assured Muslim women of their right to be in public places and to maintain their career, thus consolidating their belief that they should be economically independent from men.

At this particular juncture, three sets of important consequences emerged for Muslim women. First, the number of professionals increased. Secondly, Muslim gender relationships went through a substantial change, whereby the majority of Muslim families first discarded gender segregation and then *haremlik-selamlık* (the segregation of men and women in a domestic setting) in the household. As Aktaş put it, Muslim men shifted their relationships with Muslim women from “bacı” (sister) to “bayan” (lady), thereby connoting sexual differences in public life. Lastly, women’s participation in the public life altered dressing preferences of Muslim women. A life which necessitates more practical as well as chic and presentable ways of dressing caused the emergence of new fashion for Muslim women, and this contributed to a new way for them to communicate with the outside world. The following subsections will focus on the results from the Muslim women’s narratives.

### **6.3. Interviewing Muslim Women**

#### **6.3.1. The Rise of Muslim Women Professionals**

This section focuses on the rise of Muslim women professionals and their changing perceptions of the role of women, in both domestic and public life. The narratives of the respondents will be displayed and compared with orthodox Islamist opinions.

The formal participation of Muslim women in state-monitored public space

was primarily possible through university education since 1960s.<sup>37</sup> The number of veiled students at universities increased considerably by the 1980s as a result of orthodox Islamist support for higher education, as Prophet Muhammad encouraged the practice, saying, “Education is a must for all Muslims, including men and women.” By legitimizing females in Muslims’ eyes, Islamists aimed at increasing the number of girls attending school in the secular education system. Religious people, in fact, had refrained from sending their girls to schools in the modern education system of Turkey, since the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923, due to its exclusion of religious teachings like the Quran and Islamic sciences, in addition to the mixed male and female school system. However, the education of women started to be necessary for Islamists against the political backdrop of Turkish absurdity in which religious women were stigmatized as being backward in the general context of modern Turkey, and veiled women were banned from studying at universities in the 1980s.

In this context, Islamists argued for the education of Muslim women because it resulted in “good motherhood,” which is the ultimate aim of a good society (Göle, 1996: 99; Arat, 1999: 50). According to this view, women who are taught natural sciences, linguistics, social sciences, mathematics, physics, etc. will give birth to a genius generation, as their modern education will align perfectly with their religious knowledge, too. The new generation would be one step higher than others, as they would have been educated through both secular and religious teaching in the household. Hence, the discourse of ‘education for good motherhood’ was perfectly legitimized in the eyes of Muslim women, and many of them embraced the role wholeheartedly.

---

<sup>37</sup> The first participation of a veiled student, Hatice Babacan, at Ankara University in 1966. She is also a symbol of launching veiling resistance at universities in Turkey.

The surprising aspect of this view was the inability to see a causal relationship between professional life and university education (Göle, 1996: 99-101).<sup>38</sup> Training children and women's domestic duties were primary not only for Muslim men but also for Muslim women at the beginning. For Göle's respondents, for instance, professional life was not a goal in itself; the main issue was the family, raising a child properly, and serving a Muslim society.

Nevertheless, the 1990s onwards witnessed a change in the understanding of having a university education in order to be an equally good mother. As a result, university graduates started to think that diplomas were for specialization and they were now able to take up professional roles. The idea of a 'diploma for motherhood' was no longer valid—motherhood was something instinctive for them. In this regard, one of the respondents, Selma, voiced, "What does it mean to be a good mother? Is it teaching geography, biology, physics, or mathematics to your children?" (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 10, 2014)

Corroborating Selma's point of view, Handan said:

Motherhood is nothing to do with high education. Raising children necessitates another kind of vision. Our mothers are not university graduates. Were they unable to bring up children? No doubt, education may provide a larger scope of vision. However, it is not necessary to get a diploma for it. Motherhood is something instinctive. (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 13, 2014).

For the respondents, there was no causal relationship between motherhood and high education, and some were even surprised by the question. Instead, all of the respondents described university education as a phase of educational life where people learn and obtain occupational knowledge and then prepare for professional life. Only one of them, Nermin, had a frank view on the matter:

---

<sup>38</sup> See Göle on how Islamic magazines underlined the domestic roles of women while they encouraged the education of Muslim girls.

Yes, when we were studying at imam-hatip high school we were brought up with the mentality that we should study at university in order to be a good mother. I also believed that ideal. Nevertheless, things did not go according to plan. I wanted to be a medical doctor, but I studied agricultural engineering. When I finished school we first needed money, and that motivated me to work. Second, I started to think that if I did not work it would be a waste of energy and human resources. (In depth interview in Ankara, January 22, 2014).

Nermin's experience displays a radical break from the past. This might be attributed to new experiences at university and their effect of offering choices and new avenues to the respondent.

Contrary to the beliefs of my respondents, a professional life and working outside of the home was something considered dirty for Muslim women in the 1970s. Sule Yüksel Şenler expressed this point aptly, saying, “there was a dirty battle in our country, operated by the enemies of our moral and spiritual life; this battle was undertaken to force women to work together with men, to take women from their pure and elegant family life, and to put them into an immoral public life” (Şenler, 1975: 20). Şenler is an important figure for religious women in Turkey, as she once became a fashion *idol* with her headscarf style—*Sulebaş*—in the 1970s and delivered hundreds of conferences in order to convince women to wear the headscarf. During her life, her central concern was to teach Muslim women how to live a modern life as a real Muslim woman, without “degenerating.”

To this end, in her book, Şenler touched on issues such as professional life, family life, intimacy between men and women, the role in the family, and social life. For her, education was very important for Muslim women, though they were worried about the “highly decayed” modern education system which was entirely opposite to Islamic teaching and Turkish traditions (Şenler, 1975: 68). As the existing education system was untrusted, it was vitally important to educate women in order to be good

mother. Unfortunately, Şenler failed to suggest how to achieve this goal; rather, she complained about existing conditions for women in her writings.

Quite opposite to Şenler's views, the respondents believed that professionalism<sup>39</sup> and working life were no longer classed as dirty or being against Islamic principles. Muslim women placed importance on their occupation. Moreover, undertaking an educational or professional life was not necessarily for the public good but was rather more for self-satisfaction and personal career development. Selma's expression best illustrated this notion: "A career is almost the absolute and unique aim of university education and that of professional life today."

Selma underlined that even if her generation had been keen on starting a career after their graduation; their ideal was to serve Muslim society. For instance, when she wanted to work in the media and communication sector, she first noted that very few Muslims were employed. She believed that in the future the sector would be very popular and one in which Muslims would need a large number of educated staff. Hence, her ultimate career goal would still serve the general good of Muslim society. However, she believes that it is for sure this is not the case for the next generations, the new generations are locked with their personal career.

Studying in different areas also shifted the paradigm and made training for certain occupations, such as doctor, teacher, nurse, pharmacist, etc., more convenient for women. In this regard, it is noteworthy here that Muslim women who graduated from faculties of law, engineering, literature, economics, media and communication, etc. varied in what careers they chose ultimately. Against the mentality that view certain areas suitable for women, the respondents, five out of my ten of whom were graduates of media and communication, understood the rise of the media and

---

<sup>39</sup> I would like to emphasize that the respondents meant professionalism in all sectors, since orthodox Islamists blessed some occupations for women like teacher, doctor and nurse but did not view the rest as being appropriate for working women.

communication sector and tended to study in that field while drawing up a career plan for themselves. Among the respondents, Hale argued that, “there should be no gender-based occupations.” (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 11, 2014). Another respondent, Serap, said, “I do not think professions can be divided according to gender. Who can decide whether a nursery is convenient for me or whether engineering will fit my character?”

Corroborating the abovementioned two respondents, Handan emphasized the necessity of coherence between personal attributes and occupation:

I think there are occupations suitable for women and suitable for men. I mean, the debate about a convenient job is not only about women but also men. According to physical features, intelligence, power working choices may vary both for men and women. A man may become unsuccessful as a manager or vice versa. I believe a woman can decide on the most suitable job for herself.

Indeed, two to three decades ago, when Islamists discussed women’s status in Islam, “suitable occupations for women” was an important issue. In a conference titled “Women in the East, West, and Islam,” Necmettin Erbakan, the chairman of the National Order Party, supported women having a carrier, as long as it was in a certain sector. He once stated:

A Muslim woman can work; her working life is even encouraged if she works in certain sectors like nursery, medicine, elderly care, etc. Women are particularly encouraged to work in these jobs... Islam expects women to work in jobs suitable to her. Muslim women do not have to work in hard-working conditions, and she is not forced to work like Western women... A woman in the Muslim world is respectable; she is the representative of cleanliness and good morality (Erbakan, 1971: 25-29).

The borders of working for a Muslim woman were drawn at the crossroads of jobs assumed to be feminine, such as nursery or elderly care, and jobs where their Western counterparts worked hard.

My respondents, on the other hand, argued that it was a prejudicial to think that women could only do certain jobs. In other words, they were against delineating the work choices of women by an authority. In this regard, Hale said:

I am against these kinds of prejudices: One occupation is for women, one is for men. No! But there are realities. According to the realities we can make our preferences. Everybody can choose her/his occupation according to her/his personal features. One may prefer to have a high career, another to spend more time with her family. This should be left entirely to the preference of the woman.

Hale's emphasis was that although physical attributes may vary from person to person, including men, it might be unfair to purpose that women are physically weak and therefore cannot work in some types of jobs. Instead, it was the conviction of Hale that whatever the job, the authority and preferences of choice should rest with the person.

Tülay, who was a news director for a TV channel, drew attention to these physical attributes and argued that they do not necessarily apply today. When asked about gender-based occupations, she noted:

Yes, women can work in all kinds of jobs apart from those that may be physically dangerous. Night security man, for instance. But now it's even possible to overcome these physical conditions. Last month we had in our news agency a story of a women truck driver from Anatolia. (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 25, 2014).

For Tülay, working conditions should not be considered barriers to women. She also mentioned the recovery of conditions for both men and women and how it helped women to work in better places. Tülay did not avoid underlining certain jobs that were definitely prohibited for Muslim women, such as being a barmaid or a singer. These two examples related to what Islam blocks, e.g. alcohol, singing and stage style dressing of a woman. However, when Tülay mentioned these jobs she added that there were certain unworkable jobs for men, too; for instance, serving alcohol is forbidden for both men and women.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the strong personalities of my respondents. As far as I observed, they had characteristically determined and strong-willed personalities. They managed to resist the pressures imposed on them by the authorities, and some came from very traditional and conservative families that did not even send their daughters to school. They had been able to develop life strategies in order to be successful. Esma, for instance, studied for only two years at primary school; she did not even have a primary school diploma. Yet, she became a famous fashion designer who participated in the New York fashion week. Some others, on the other hand, came from families that resisted even the most traditional pressures surrounding them. Zeynep, for instance, was from Siirt<sup>40</sup>, where even brothers and sisters do not eat at the same table. Inheriting these traits from their families, these girls managed to go beyond barriers in relation to schools, jobs, and public places. They struggled to study in the fields in which they ultimately wanted to emerge as professionals. They also struggled in their professional life, where they were alienated as religious, veiled women. Given this, it is safe to argue that partly their strong personality, ambition, and reasoning, and partly their social capital, helped them in their fight against certain hurdles in life.

### **6.3.2. Shifts in Muslim Gender Relationships: Intimacy between Men and Women**

The increasing participation of Muslim women in public life resulted in a significant shift in intimacy between religious men and women. Such a shift was observable in the way they greeted each other, communicated, worked together, socialized in restaurants, cafés, resorts, and parks, and shared a private life. Shaking women's hands and the implications of *haremlıkselamlık* (men and women

---

<sup>40</sup> Siirt is located in the very south of Turkey, with strong traditions.

separated, both in domestic and public life) were out of the question for a long time. Yet, going out for dinner with a male colleague or friend, working on a project together, or working under a female director as a male employee were more acceptable between religious people, especially after the 2000s.

The findings of this study revealed that Muslim women's increasing participation in public life had a considerable impact on gender relationships. For decades of 1980 and 1990, a chain of events increased the number of Muslim women participating in an outdoor life, and eventually in gender relationships. Three links in the chain were particularly important in the process. First, increasing the number of university graduates. Second, municipalities administrated mainly by Islamists since 1994 and the facilities provided by these administrations that changed the daily life activities of Muslim women. Thirdly, the February 28 process and how it was experienced by Muslim women, who faced pressure from both inner and external circle authorities.

University education plus professional life enabled religious males and females to share common domains, which ultimately changed how they communicated. Furthermore, the municipalities that started to be administered by Islamists after 1994 provided facilities in which Muslim women could socialize more. From its restaurants to sports halls, culture centers to book fairs, municipality facilities were important places for Muslim women to meet and congregate outside of the home. Veiled women also gained an opportunity to work in public offices for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic. However, their career plans were interrupted by the unprecedented February 28 process. Muslim women were the first victims of the process, as they were prevented from having a career by seculars and Islamists alike. According to my respondents, the whole process was run over the

topics of headscarf and veiled women both for *Kemalists* and Islamists. Nevertheless, such interventions did not stop Muslim women from chasing a good career but ultimately changed the old form of the relationships between men and women, thus resulting in new behavioral patterns and forms between Muslims.

The experiences of Muslim women who started careers in the 1990s displays explicit differences in how these relationships changed.

Among the respondents, Zeynep's statement illustrated this change:

When I first went to university, my male friends, who were Imam-Hatip graduates, did not even know how to speak with a women. They could not even say 'hello' to us. In order to start a conversation one had to say to the other, "May I have a look at your book?" even though he also had the same book in front of him. I mean, they looked for an excuse in order to communicate with a female friend. I met this type of recessive behavior in my professional life, too. Conservative people were not used to working with women. Therefore, they could hardly work on the same project for instance. When I first started work they did not communicate with me at all. I remember they started to say, 'Welcome our female colleagues', long after I started in the office.

Although Zeynep wore a headscarf during her university years, she found the relationships between Muslim men and women strange in Istanbul. She came from Siirt. She said that despite coming from a tribal family, she was more flexible in her relationships with men. She thought this was because modern life alienated Muslim people more in the cities and discouraged them from establishing the sort of relationships they were used to at home. Zeynep thought that urbanization caused a kind of ghetto impact on religious people in which they created, so to speak, a parallel universe. According to her, Muslims lived with "alternatives" during the 1980s. They had alternative books, alternative cinemas, alternative magazines, etc.:

They even had alternative New Year celebrations. Instead of celebrating New Year, they celebrated the conquest of Makah (the holy city of Muslims). It was indeed an excuse. The real reason was to socialize, to get together and to make themselves feel alive. It was a struggle of existence. Yet, in time, they found alternatives for their alternatives. When they went to the cinema they watched films that they had not originally wanted to see. When they went to

restaurants in municipalities they went to other places to eat and drink. Hence communication started not only between religious men and women, but also between different groups in society.

Another respondent, Güл, who married to her boyfriend from university, recalled that relationships between religious people were too recessive when she was studying at Eskişehir Anadolu University. She depicted the environment as follows:

We were friends with Ahmet [her husband] in the university corridors, but we could not go to the canteen together and we could not eat together. If we realized that someone was watching us when we were in conversation we used to try to deal with something else and tried to look around as if we were not talking to each other. It was like paparazzi catching a film star. (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 11, 2014).

Going out, either with the excuse of studying or joining a social group, shifted the abovementioned gender relationships between Muslims. Güл and all the other respondents in this research argued for the importance of the administration of İstanbul by Islamists in changing such relationships. Güл said:

If it is not false to make an analogy, I can say the period of the municipalities under Islamist administrations in the developing process of Muslims in public life looks like the age of adolescence in the life of man. I mean, relationships between men and women are supposed to be constructed during their teenage years. This happened for Muslim people in the public place through the experience of municipalities.

When I asked what did cause that construction of new relationship patterns between Muslim men and women, Güл said:

We did not even greet each other outside. For instance, if I met a close friend of my husband on the street, I would not greet him. This was abnormal behavior in terms of human relationships—you know someone very well but you do not greet him. This is not in Islam at all. With the experience of municipalities and its facilities, like restaurants, we started to get together. We started eating together, and sharing the same social domains helped us to communicate with each other in a way new to us.

Gathering away from home and sharing the same spaces created an atmosphere between religious men and women and brought them together more than anything and at any time.

Esma raised this perspective in the following way:

Before the '90s, women did not even go out and eat outside. When the Welfare Party came into power in the municipalities and opened up these social facilities, there was the feeling of ownership of these facilities. Like my father and brother are the owners of the restaurant. This helped women to go out and socialize in these places. (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 10, 2014).

Esma's example of her father and brother's restaurant hints at how religious people used to feel strange and alien in modern Turkish society.

Despite their emphasis on Muslim people's increasing participation in public life, Hale was more objective in relation to religious people and underlined that more outside socialization was not particular to Muslim women but rather a natural result of the liberal environment of the country. According to Hale, apart from religious people, Turkish people in general went out more to drink and socialize. She added:

Our society did not go out entertaining or dining until the '90s. Ten or 15 years ago we used to have house meetings, tea parties at our homes. Now even housewives meet outside in restaurants, for instance. On the other hand, the youth are more conservative compared to the past. Naturally, young people socialize more. The rise of prosperity was also effective in this socialization.

Hale's point could not be easily ignored. Socializing outside is something new in our society and prosperity is highly related to a change of lifestyles. Nevertheless, as Handan stressed, even if many developments were new to the whole of Turkish society after the 1980s as a result of the rise of prosperity and welfare, Muslim women had particular experience in that context. The experience of Muslims was not only seen in changes in practice but a change of paradigm as a consequence

of changing practices. It was a new reading of religion and new interpretations of Islam. Handan noted:

As a Muslim woman, after I started to do a series of readings I learned that separating men and women in daily life was not the command of Islam. That practice came into Muslim societies from Byzantine. Moreover, my experience in public places taught me that segregating men and women does not overlap with the practice of life. It is against the nature of creation, as half of society is men and the rest is women.

Handan's emphasis was tremendously important in explaining many aspects of this research, too. She contributed to the findings of this research by clearly illustrating a number of differences between old opinions and the new ones, depending on new practices.

As the link wheel of the chain that we mentioned above, the role of municipalities cannot be underestimated in changing gender relationships. One of the respondents, Selma, explained the reasons:

It was very difficult to participate in public places and official jobs before the municipalities. Except for the municipalities, everywhere was under the control of the state. Hospitals, schools, universities, etc., and of course veiled women were not allowed to be in these places officially. In this context, municipalities opened up a significant domain for religious women to work in a public office, therefore providing a career plan for many Muslim women, to a certain extent.

Selma attributed the importance of municipalities not only to the social facilities they provided, but also to the career opportunities they offered to Muslim women. Connecting to our central concern, Selma stated the influences entailed in working outside to the changing relationships between men and women.

However, the February 28 process made a serious dent in the development of Muslim women's careers. Although the process was a very oppressive time period applied by the state and seculars, the same period was a distinguished time for religious people and highlighted the pressures within the religious circles.

Selma, who worked for a TV channel owned by Muslims, recalled her experience as follows:

The TV channel that I worked for provided an unbelievable opportunity for Muslim female professionals in media and communication. We could not imagine working in any other media groups before this TV channel was established. Veiled women were employed by the channel immediately after it was opened and worked as presenters. However, they were withdrawn from the screens as soon as the February 28 process started, and then veiled women started to be employed in the invisible sections of the station. I used to work behind the screen, but although I was a director I was paid an office boy's salary.

Due to pressures from both the state and insider circles, Muslim women felt alone in their struggle, which ultimately led them to stick to their career even more. Despite the low salaries, inconvenient job opportunities, and positions incompatible with their level of education, they continued their careers. The respondent, Güл, expressed a similar notion when she talked about her work experience in Istanbul:

I worked for the Department of Culture in the municipality. But I was never able to work at full capacity. Neither my education nor my vision was applied by our religious male directors. We were always in the kitchen at work. To be honest, I am a person of backfront. I was always happy to work behind the eyes. However, we, as Muslim women, were always classed as being at secretary level despite our high education in different fields. We were always someone from the inside of the house who did not necessarily deserve respect or to hold a high position at work.

The respondent attributed the subordination of veiled women at work to the conservative makeup of the inner circles, where religious men dominated.

The reactions and endurance of the women differed greatly. To put it simply, while some could endure pressure from both the state and inner circles, as the respondents expressed regrettably, some could not. Among the latter group, there were many who went back to their hometown, to escape the pressure being exerted on them. Güл talked more about one worrying outcome: "Some of our friends got married to someone with whom they could not even share their dreams. Most of

them later divorced. Most others did not even get married, work or continue their career.”

Yet, the majority of them put great effort into resisting any form of authority, namely state to religion, and male to family. This resistance was hidden in the details of their daily life practices. Selma told me what sort of authoritarian impositions they faced in the early days of their career:

In my occupation, the male/female hierarchy was quite important. The director was in charge of his cameraman. If the director was a female and the cameraman a male, this would cause a serious problem in my job. When I first started at the channel, I was warned not to talk in the way that I did with the men. Some of my female colleagues warned me that some things should not be dictated to men. What they meant was that even if I was the director of a program, I was not supposed to command my cameraman if he was a male. Actually, the 1990s was an interesting time period. We were the “bacı” of Muslim men at the university, whereas we were in management positions in our professional life. Especially in journalism men preferred more technical positions. Hence in the hierarchy they were in the lower positions. This was highly traumatic when they realized it.

The cultural makeup of society, which might be characterized by the man’s superiority over woman, functioned as a barrier at work for woman’s productivity and job satisfaction regardless of her career. According to Selma, this issue was caused by the fact that man used to think of the woman as bacı (sister), which reproduced cultural capital, as Bourdieu argued, to the detriment of women.

When I asked how they struggled with these impositions, Selma told me another story from her university years:

I am a veiled woman. I always thought that Allah allowed us to participate in the public place with our tesettür (veiling). So it is the ‘precaution’ to be in the public place. We do not need any precaution other than what Allah enforces on us. There is no need to isolate men and women, because tesettür is due to sharing the same places. When I was at the university our Muslim brothers warned us not to go to the school canteen. The reason was that the canteen was too crowded. I asked, ‘How do they know that the canteen is too crowded? If they knew that means they go to the canteen. Why can’t we also go?’

Selma insisted on hanging out in public spaces whilst wearing her veil. She did not let anyone withdraw her from either educational life or from her professional or social life as long as she could wear the headscarf.

Handan, who was a high school graduate and the president of a famous NGO for 25 years, talked about how she resisted various authorities, from state to male and religion:

We faced up to the authorities of state, religion, and men in various ways. First of all, the state was disturbed by the rise of civil society, especially among conservative people, during the 1990s. The state elites were annoyed by our headscarves and civil society activities. As we started our activities with reading books and discussing them with related experts, we invited university professors, authors, journalists, and the like. The state was irritated by our activities, even if we invited academicians from state universities. ‘The high state wise’ was trying to understand what we were doing. For the state, reading books and arranging seminars were suspicious (*sakıncalı*) activities for ordinary citizens.

Handan was one of the respondents who felt the breath of the state behind her neck during the February 28 process. Her civil society activities were monitored closely and tried to be stopped. As Handan stated, there were often foreign faces in their meetings that they did not know, but they thought they were state spies. However, as she and her friends knew they were doing nothing wrong continued their activities.

Nevertheless, apart from the state, the same group encountered religious authority and received many objections with regard to their studies. Handan continued to tell me:

I believed there is no single religious perception, therefore my aim was to take a look at various ideas on various topics relevant to Islam. But when I invited someone, for instance, to present a different view to the orthodox Hanafi fiqh (an Islamic school of law), I was accused of being a non-sect (*mezhepsiz*) person. I was accused of confusing people’s minds. I was open to listening to all views from both inside and outside. I even invited Alevis, communists, liberals, and atheists. This was met by heavy criticism from a religious perspective.

The religious authority was another crucial barrier blocking religious women on the way up in the public sphere. For Handan, long-held practices and interpretations, of men in particular, should be altered if women were to break free from cultural and religious handcuffs. She continued as follows:

Finally, I have experiences that may make me smile one day with regard to male authority. It was 1994 or '95, and we arranged a boat tour along the Bosphorus. We invited Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Melih Gökçek to the event. They were respectively the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara at that time. Our members, who were all women, were invited with their husbands to this event. We did not separate the tables for men and women. It was a mixed arrangement. Some of our friends' husbands wanted to prevent this and questioned why we were holding a meeting with mixed men and women. Some well-known men whose names would surprise you today joined a mixed meeting for the first time in our organization and confessed that 'ladies exceed us and they do much better work than us.' I struggled a lot before I ended up with such confessions. I should tell you when we had our meetings in hotel hallways, it was criticized even then. Yet I believe these endeavors opened up avenues for the changes we observe today.

What made Handan smile was the very different practices of men today.

What Handan and her friends actually offered to do replicated the ordinary practices of men today. She therefore emphasized their concrete role in changing many patterns with regard to men and women's intimacy. Handan thought that there was no command within her religion that stipulated the isolation of men and women, because, according to her, the command to wear the headscarf in Islam allows for men and women to come together. Furthermore, if a woman were supposed to stay at home there would be no need for *tesettür*. Moreover, there are examples in the life of the Prophet where female figures led certain movements. Hz Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, for instance, commanded the Camel War.

Handan said she started to reread the history of Islam after she established her NGO. Following which she found many misinterpretations and practices of Islam. She thought that the isolation of men and women flowed into Muslim cultures from Byzantine. She said, "My attempts were brave when I look back at the 1990s, but if I

had not been brave we, as the Muslim women, would still be sitting at home and reading our books with each other.”

In fact, rereading Islamic history was not confined to Handan. Many Muslim women who were subjugated in their social and professional life by male authority started to review their understanding of religion and religious teachings that had been taught up to that point. All of my respondents agreed with the notion that interpretations of Islam were dominated by men, even though there was no male dominance in the essential Islam. Handan said:

Yes, there are male-dominant interpretations of Islam. But it is dangerous to see all Islam from this perspective. Otherwise we all have a false consciousness of Islam, which is not true. Islam has been conveyed with its protected principles and pillars for one thousand four hundred years. Islam, or let's say more in general religion, on the other hand, is the thing that what we understand from it. We comprehend religion depending on our culture, traditions, educational level, perceptual level, etc. There are certainly unchanged principles of Islam. But other than these, Islam is what we perceive. Therefore, there are patriarchal interpretations and implementations in Islam, too.

Some argued that if one makes a meticulous reading of the life of Prophet Muhammad, s/he may distinguish plenty of differences in his life from her/his. Serap said:

When Hz. Khadija, the first wife of Prophet Muhammad, died, our Prophet did not marry for five years and he looked after his children. Which man could do this today? Our prophet washed his garments and repaired them. If a man today does it so, we call him a *kılıbik* (a man who has surrendered to his wife). I think there are male-dominant interpretations of Islam, but this is changing. (In depth interview in İstanbul, January 10, 2014).

Zeynep also noted, “There is a huge difference between the practices of our Prophet and today’s Muslim men. In some Muslim countries these practices are much heavier for women.”

She thought that Islamic sources were full of traditional beliefs instead of real Islamic principles. She recalled, “I remember my grandmother told me hundreds of

stories about how nice to be a slave of man as a Muslim woman.” She commented on that such a belief cannot be in Islam at all, it is all traditional.

Zeynep believes that ridding Islam of this type of mis-teaching should be the primary duty of a Muslim. She pointed out that there are certain boundaries for women in Islam, but over the centuries these boundaries have been eroded more and more by interpretations of interpretations. And interestingly, these boundaries are considered only for women. For instance, men are subject to *tesettür*, too, but this is never mentioned, according to Zeynep.

Some of my respondents, on the other hand, emphasized the universal face of male dominancy. They argued that male dominancy is a universal problem and Islam takes its lead in this regard. In this respect, Muslim women accept the influence of feminism and their communication with the feminists in changing their view of men. Nermin said:

We, as Muslim women, cannot reject how much we learned from feminists. With their impact, new topics appeared on our agenda, from violence against women, honor killings, women employment, etc. International conferences were platforms on which we came together and discussed all of these issues.

The contribution of a feminist worldview opened up new ground for subordinated Muslim women in their struggle against male dominancy. However, there was also a sharp distinction between the feminist worldview and that of the religious woman, notably about the Islamic principles my respondents highlighted. While feminists, for instance, considered veiling as a male-dominant interpretation of Islam, for Muslim women it was a command made by Allah to Muslim women that they should wholeheartedly obey. Handan, who recalled the importance of exchanging ideas between feminist women and Muslim women, explained their divergences as follows:

We cannot consider our body as being the same as feminists. According to a Muslim our body does not belong to us. It is borrowed from Allah. We cannot spend on it in any way that we like. Same as our children. Our children are not our property. They belong to Allah. We view them as our exam. Husbands! Our husbands are not our opposites; they are those who sit next to us. Hence, from various perspectives we are different from feminists. It is true that we speak with their jargon. Ali Seriati [an Islamist Iranian sociologist] said that ‘Whoever describes it, draws the lines.’ Today, feminists describe the field of women, so they draw the lines of the woman question.

Handan believed that although Muslim women have exchanged many ideas, including male dominancy, and have shared their agenda with feminists, they have fundamental differences in their overall paradigm. She emphasized that the way that Muslim women follow in changing the men and women relationships is one moderate and not confrontational like the feminists’.

The new approach of male-dominant readings of Islamic texts has consequently had a significant impact on men and women’s intimacy. The respondents in this research rejected segregation and started to design their life together with men. The responds of interviewees display that new paradigms are possible through new interpretations of Islam, which undermines the impositions of authorities.

### **6.3.3. Muslim Women and Fashion**

The central hypothesis of this research is how social actors in a Muslim society determine their new conditions and social status through nonverbal negotiation, or in other words through their *practice*. In this sense, this subsection examines the relationship between Muslim women and fashion and more importantly the role of fashion in such nonverbal communication and the negotiations of Muslim women.

Indeed, the literature gives credence to this notion by emphasizing the undeniable effects of fashion on social practice and values. As Barnard nicely puts it,

fashion and clothing are forms of nonverbal communication in which people do not need to use spoken or written words (Barnard, 2008: 29). According to Barnard even a dress labeled with a brand name sends various messages to the receivers other than the brand name itself. Barnard argues that fashion has a cultural function of sending a message about one's social status, economic prosperity, religious leaning, social rituals, and individualistic expressions, from gender identity to occupational positions (Barnard, 2008: 59). According to this view, fashion and clothing are some of the ways in which an individual's position is experienced and communicated in a social order (Barnard, 2008: 59).

The increasing interest in fashion among Muslim women in the Turkish context raises the same question as to how Muslim women communicate with the outside world, and what messages they transmit through their newly fashionable clothing. It is noteworthy to add that Muslim women's way of dressing has changed particularly during the last two decades—in parallel to their changing social, economic, and educational status.

Urbanization has also had a symbolic effect on the style of young Muslim women, who like to distinguish themselves from their traditional grandmothers. Loose and more covered clothing like *pardessus* is not greatly preferred by Muslim women anymore, but *deux-pièces* for professionals, sportswear for young girls, and relaxing and practical clothing for daily life have become more trendy.

The relationship between Muslim women and fashion has had an immediate influence on how the *hijab* is worn. Yet its long-run and deep affects are observed in the changing meanings of the *hijab*. As an Islamic principle, the *hijab* rule commands Muslim women to cover their body from head to foot, albeit not the face

and hands.<sup>41</sup> Despite a variety of applications in its use and the lack of consensus on the form of the *hijab*, there is almost a common view on its spiritual meaning: Modesty.

The literature suggests that there are two opposing theories on the material function of clothing: One is modesty (see Flügel and Rouse in Barnard, 2008: 53), inspired by the Christian belief that one should hide shameful parts of body, and the other is immodesty and attraction (Rudofsky in Barnard, 2008: 57). Contrary to the religious meaning of clothing, as Barnard argues, the target of clothing is immodesty and exhibition to draw attention to human beauty rather than hiding the beauty of the body. This perspective can be interpreted fairly as the more modern perception of clothing and is related to the consumption culture of capitalist societies. It is also an understanding of modern times which places great importance on visibility compared to the culture of hiding that was prevalent in older societies.

Accordingly, today, the way a Muslim woman dresses seems to have lost a great degree of modesty. Although it still covers the body to an extent, more than this, clothing sends out a message: Muslim woman is powerful, active in life, and her dress is a form of exhibition. With regard to her communication with the outside world, it gives the message that she is in social and professional life just like her male and secular counterparts. She is active and wants to participate in modern life, ignoring the details of clothing, since she prefers to wear practical attire.

In this line of thought, trousers<sup>42</sup> are not only for men anymore, but also for women. The practicality of dressing like men means that even Muslim women no longer question whether it is convenient to *tesettür*. Behind the ignorance of

---

<sup>41</sup> Buhari Kitabul Kader 8. Bab, Müslim 5. Bab, Ebu Davud Nikah 4. Bab, [www.ak-der.org/kadinin-ortunmesinin-dini-boyutu-bolum2-.gbt](http://www.ak-der.org/kadinin-ortunmesinin-dini-boyutu-bolum2-.gbt)

<sup>42</sup> Trousers are embraced as menswear in classical approaches, and according to orthodox Islam, if a woman dressed up in menswear she would be damned by Allah.

questioning the boundaries of *tesettür* is the wish of Muslim women to be as chic and presentable as an urban woman and not to be perceived as a villager due to old-fashioned clothes.

Given the above considerations, one can understandably argue that “women and fashion” would be discussed in the light of modesty, attraction, visibility, seduction, and in the dichotomy of Eastern and Western codes of dressing for orthodox Islamists. Yet, it is more about needs and necessities for Muslim women today. Moreover, it is a way of reflecting taste and identity as well as level of religiosity for Muslim women. It is an area in which Muslim women want neither seculars nor Islamists to interfere.

One of the respondents, Handan, highlighted her perspective in the following way:

There is no authority to speak for *tesettür* today. And I think there should not be! We should avoid what would make us one single type. Authority can only remind us of principles from now on, because the world is not the same world anymore. People learn and implement by themselves rather than via the teachings of authority.

Not rejecting Islamic principles and rules, the participant underlined external interferences into ways of dressing and wearing the headscarf. The participant displayed her objection to the seculars who would frowned at Muslim women, even though they had no knowledge concerning *tesettür* and religious rituals. In addition, Handan was critical of the fact that *tesettür* was claimed to be a political symbol or a measure of religiosity among Islamists. According to her, *tesettür* can neither be on the agenda of seculars nor can it be a question for Islamist men. Rather, *tesettür* should be deemed as a question for the Muslim women who use it.

Another participant, Hale, elaborated as follows:

Everybody has a way of presenting herself. Everybody tries to obey religion as far as she can do. Veiling is discussed a lot. Because it is in the forefront. It

is visible. We do not discuss namaz (praying five times a day), for instance. I do not say we should discuss, I say we should not. But why is *tesettür* discussed but not the practicing of the other responsibilities of Muslims in general. The younger generation especially is criticized a lot. Why do they wear tight blue jeans and the headscarf together? Why not? We do not know about these girls. Maybe she has been forced to do it. Maybe it is the only way that she can do it. In the future, when they are totally free, I believe they will find their way and the most suitable thing for themselves. When I look at someone I do not look at her/his shape. I am against all kinds of intervention.

*Tesettür* does not appear in the same shapes due to time and space. For this reason, according to Hale, one should not expect a young girl to cover herself like her grandmother. Handan also reminds us that the way of *tesettür* is always different in different times and spaces. In Yemen, Egypt, Iran or Turkey, there are different types of *tesettür*: “In Africa we may not even find an African way of *tesettür* convenient to Islamic rules, for instance,” she says. “But it is still *tesettür*,” she adds.

Esma, who is a fashion designer, told her story about the reasons for this change of clothing in the Turkish context:

I first started with designing and sewing my own clothes. When I went out with my dresses I was stopped by veiled women and asked where I got my dress from. I said I made it. This started to happen quite often, and then I said, ‘Wait a minute!’ There was a real need for urbanized veiled women. Muslim women wanted to be dressed in clothes suitable with Islamic boundaries, but at the same time they wanted to be chic and elegant. I first arranged a fashion show in a Fenerbahce club in Kadikoy in 1996. It was Saturday. The following Wednesday my workshop was crowded like the Wednesday Bazaar at Fatih.<sup>43</sup>

Esma continued as follows:

There is a class of religious people in Istanbul who are rich, urbanized, and educated, but they are not satisfied with the supply of clothing. I noticed a gap in the market. It is not an easy job, as you need to dress a woman and make sure she is chic and elegant while you protect her religious sensitivities. Moreover, you must somehow present her femininity. This is so difficult.

It was very interesting to hear from Esma that Muslim women’s femininity should be reflected in the way they dress, since this notion is normally against the

---

<sup>43</sup> The Wednesday Bazaar is a famous public bazaar in one of the districts of Istanbul, Fatih; opened on Wednesdays and always too crowded.

general message of *tesettür* and would be entirely denied by Islamists that view fashion as a market—and thus women as a commodity. Esma's comment on femininity might be particular to her and may not be shared by other veiled women in verbal communication. However, such femininity is observable with most veiled women and can be traced to well-known women's magazines such as *Aisha*, *Ala*, and many other publications.

In fact, I discussed the abovementioned magazines with my respondents, to understand their view on these journals, their style, and their way of presenting Muslim women. Despite factors such as consumption and losing the soul of *tesettür* underlined by the participants, they also emphasized the need for the fashionable diversification of daily clothing. Tülay stated this view in the following way:

I think there have been enormous developments in the relationship between fashion and religious women. Women want to follow fashion, but supply does not meet this demand. Those items promoted as *tesettür* fashion are archaic, démodé, or exaggerated. If a Muslim woman is a lawyer, she should be able to find a suit with long skirts and long sleeves which is at the same time fashionable. Or young girls should find sport suits suitable with her *tesettür*. There is a serious gap in this regard.

Tülay's emphasis was on the lack of supply in the market, but at the same time she drew our attention to the professional life of Muslim women and their needs. She combined the expectations of Muslim women from the points of view of fashion, suitability for *tesettür* and suitability for their occupation.

Visibility is something essential in fashion. Fashion shows, the models used in displaying cloths and dresses, and the use of the body in exhibitions are all issues from a religious perspective. However, according to my respondents, depending on the needs of Muslim women, fashion shows should be considered as commercial undertakings, as promotion is fundamental in meeting customer tastes because

preferences diversify. Hale, who used to be the editor of one of these magazines, noted:

Should we use veiled models or unveiled models in the fashion shows? This was discussed a lot between the magazine directors and our readers, too. If it is wrong to present women in this way, then it is wrong for unveiled women, too. Then you should withdraw from the sector. But if you are in the sector, you have to do it. This is the way to promote your production. When I look at the women on the podium I do not see the body; I see what she's dressed in and how she's dressed. Fashion shows cannot be avoided today. In order to sell your product you have to put it on a woman, do her makeup and then put a photo in a catalogue. There is no alternative way at the moment. With regard to using models it is the same. We are just promoting our product. That's it!

As a professional, the participant did not see a body modeling dresses as seductive. Hale considered the view that sees woman as a commodity as sheer nonsense—for her, women's clothing cannot be displayed on a man's body. She added that there are male fashion shows, too. She then explained her perspective on professionalism. According to her, professionalism should be at the forefront of the discussion and should have the primary position to comment on the debate. As she states, discussing the issue from a religious or traditional perspective, by focusing only on women's visibility or sexuality, did not solve the problems surrounding dress code.

Thus, my respondents were keener to concentrate on their occupational necessities. Whatever necessitated being seen as professional, it was acceptable to my respondents. Hale mentioned women's make-up for photography, and Selma also mentioned about the compulsory use of make-up in her sector. As a television program director Selma talked about strong make-up for women on television because of studio lights. However, she also remembered that she had been criticized in Islamic circles, since she had allowed this practice to happen. Selma explained that as a director she had to put make-up on women because she had no other choice in the matter.

The younger professionals were not even aware of the discussions about women's visibility and the sensitivities about using bodies in fashion shows. According to Tülay, for instance, the real problem in *tesettür* fashion shows was démodé: "Women who participate in the public sphere, either through their working life or social life, have to dress up. *Tesettür* fashion shows are problematic due to their démodé fashion. They are not presentable."

Besides all the discussions about the visibility and religious nature of clothes, the respondents emphasized the importance of practicality. Zeynep explained as follows:

Dressing has a function of communication. The perception of Muslim woman should be easy going in communication. In order to establish strong communication with the outside world, she needs to reflect herself in the way she dresses. I also think that as *tesettür* is essentially an item that allows women to go out, it also allows Muslim women to communicate more with men. Its ways are naturally important in establishing such communication with men.

In fact, my respondents were unable to make a decision on what kind of *tesettür* should be used for communicating with men, because they avoided indicating one type as being better than another type. However, their overall message in relation to dress code, especially in their professional life, implied their participation was on an equal footing with men.

Consequently, my conversations with my informants established that it is essential to be chic and presentable, practical and relaxed, as these feelings ultimately affect how they communicate in their daily lives. Muslim women's clothing is a means of sending a message to the outside world that they are active members in society and in the workplace. The findings also hinted that as rising social actors, Muslim women are holding on tight to their newly gained conditions and have decided not to lose them.

#### **6.3.4. Leisure Time Activities: Sports, Holidays, and Art**

Leisure time activities give a hint about how women communicate externally, and they also determine their social condition.

The participants viewed sporting activities as being necessary for a healthy life and a fit body—just like all modern women. When I asked about sports they were concerned less about religious rules and laws and more about the lack of enough sports halls and holiday resorts for Muslim women. From my perspective, talking about sports was important, so that I may understand to what extent they felt free to use their body, and how much they were concerned about visibility. Whether physical moves in a *tesettür* were limited or not stood at the core of my questioning, since the way in which the body is used, i.e. body language is a way of communicating with the outside world.

In general, women who are in *tesettür* are expected to display slow and modest behaviours in society, without moving the body much. This is not only because it reduces attention, but it also promotes modesty according to orthodox thoughts. Therefore, the questions on riding a bicycle or running in a park may display how Muslim women feel free about using their body. The questions of where to do sports were also among the squeeze of my interview questions. The general respond that I received said that cardio workouts can be done with men in the same places, but sports such as swimming, gymnastics, pilates, etc. necessitate certain suits that are not compatible with *tesettür*. Therefore, they prefer to do these sports in sports halls that are used only by women. Moreover, some also stated that it would be more comfortable to do all sports in sports halls where there are only women, since they would not have to use *tesettür* in such a place.

Hale stated:

I do sports. I do not mind if a veiled woman rides a bicycle in the street, because I also do it. I do my sports in a hall for women. I could do it in a mixed hall, too, but in this case I need to cover myself properly. For my own personal comfort I prefer sport halls for females only.

Nermin felt that there was no need to go to mixed halls, as it may only distress women, as they have to cover their bodies: "Sport is basically about developing the body and is done by and for the body. So why should I force myself to be in clothes when I am working my body? I prefer not to go to mixed halls."

Serap made an ironic remark when I asked about riding a bicycle:

If I see a veiled woman riding a bicycle I'm quite surprised, but if I see a women without a veil I am also surprised. Is it possible to ride a bicycle on Turkish streets? No! Unfortunately the conditions are not convenient in Turkey. Partaking in sports is also related to facilities. I can only ride a bicycle when I go to the Princess Islands. It is easy to ride a bicycle on the streets of the island, but in addition I don't feel like I'm being watched. I am far more comfortable.

Serap's point was how they are still disturbed by glances when they partake in sporting activities publicly. When they go on holiday they also encounter the same disturbing glances unless they are in alternative holiday resorts: "We can go to all other beaches, but when I wear my *hasema* (Islamic swimming suit) and dive into the sea, other people find it strange. And I get irritated by the glances," said Hale. Therefore, they would rather go to alternative holiday resorts, although even these locations present another type of problem for Muslim women, namely a lack of aesthetics or good services in these resorts.

Esma stated:

As an artist I always like to spend my time in an aesthetic place. Even if I go to a café, I like to see beauty around me. Therefore, I do not go to alternative holiday resorts. I believe they do not spend much money for women; there is lack of beauty in these places.

Going to alternative places did not alleviate the pain of the Muslim women, because they lacked a general aesthetic and good services. The response of Esma

implied more than her needs; in fact, expectations developed depending on their socioeconomic changes.

Parallel to their increasing aesthetic expectations, the Muslim women were quite interested in art, and some of them even dealt with art actively by joining calligraphy, marbling, and painting courses. However, they found these classes relatively unsatisfactory, and their ties with art were therefore very weak.

Esma said:

Our relationship with art is weak. In our society, paying for art and doctors is a waste of money. People feel it is a loss. Our vision is quite backward about art. One may say about an antique that it is ‘someone else’s old’.

Handan agreed with Esma and elaborated on how art and aesthetics are fields that urban religious find themselves shorted:

Art is something about prosperity. If someone is hungry, s/he cannot paint a picture. As Ibn Haldun defines, when primary needs have been met, civilization is then established. Now our tie with art is weak. But I believe it is increasing. Both art and sports are in the interest of new generations.

Hale touched upon this increasing interest amongst Muslim women:

Muslim women rather limit themselves to traditional art such as water marbling, calligraphy, and tezhib (decorative calligraphy), but it is changing today. Today, it is possible to do everything within the boundaries of halal. You can be a painter without expecting to have to paint a nude. My daughters are learning to play the violin and guitar. If they like it they can continue, but if they don’t they can drop it.

Most of the respondents see the reason for the shortage of Muslim interest in art as being the result of the traumatic break with their past, due to the modernization endeavors of the Turkish state and efforts to keep all artistic assets in the hands of elites. According to Oya, Muslim women’s interest in traditional art emerges from broken ties with the past. Oya argued that as long as Turkish people’s ties resonate with tradition, s/he will develop a better relationship with art: “When the

relationships with tradition are established better, I believe religious people will develop in other types of art, too," she added.

#### **6.4. Concluding Remarks**

The rise of Islamism in domestic politics and the consolidation of women's policies on the global agenda have enabled a positive environment for Muslim women to participate in since the 1990s. The rise of Muslim women's participation in public places has been examined in the post-1990 literature on women and Islam from a secular perspective essentially concerned with the visibility of veiling.

The analyses herein rather addressed nonverbal negotiations between Muslim women and the *Kemalist* state on the new status of Muslim women. With their public visibility, they have restored their status in a modern, secular Turkey as urban, educated, professional and economically and socially powerful. This is of course entirely in contrast to the 'backward' image of veiled women in the modern Turkish context. Hence, the studies underline the struggle between Islamists and *Kemalists* by assuming a single-headed authority for Muslim women, namely the *Kemalist* state.

This thesis, on the other hand, has attempted to observe the negotiation of Muslim agency with inner circle authority. In this chapter, I argued that Muslim women have negotiated their new status not only with the *Kemalist* state, but also with Islamist male authority. Such negotiations have had a considerable impact on gender relationships, and so, education, professional life, fashion, eating, changing patterns of consumption, and leisure time activities should be scrutinized not only from the perspective of attaining higher social status in society, but also how they affect intimacy between the sexes.

The findings of this chapter establish that Muslim gender relationships were influenced by what took place during the February 28 process. Their unfortunate

experience being dismissed by Islamist companies and factories, and their withdrawal from prestigious jobs during the process, provoked women to revise their relationships with men and change their domestic and social roles. Hence, they first of all shifted their occupational preferences and career planning and then their patterns of behaviors in how they conducted relationships with men.

The main findings of this chapter can be concluded as follows: Firstly, unlike the prevailing belief among orthodox Islamists, university education is not designed to acquire “good motherhood and a good society” but should be deemed as a means for Muslim women to progress their careers. The participants raised this perspective when they considered women with a university degree being unemployed and therefore representing a waste of human resources. Secondly, they dismissed the notion that there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ occupations for women. They believed that a woman can choose their occupation according to her abilities, intelligence, and knowledge. Personal features and rising sectors play an important role in their occupational choices. Thirdly, Muslim women want to go beyond the identity of the ‘veiled woman’ and focus instead on an image of professionalism. Fourthly, participation in the public arena provided Muslim women with suitable grounds to argue that isolating men and women is impractical, since women constitute half of the society. Moreover, the headscarf is a vehicle for Muslim women to be with men other than their father, husband, brother, or son in certain places. Fifthly, the participants in this research felt free to recognize the existence of male-dominated interpretations of Islam. They argued that Muslim male and female relationships had degenerated throughout the history of Islam. According to them, in essential Islam, important female figures in the golden age, for instance, participated in the public sphere and traded or battled shoulder to shoulder with men. Sixthly, the relationship

between Muslim women and fashion can be read from their changing patterns of communication with the outside world. Muslim women express themselves in society by dressing in a way that is, in their words, chic and presentable, easy and practical, smart and feminine.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

This research was carried out in order to explore how the daily practices of modern Muslim individuals determine their political and social conditions. The discussion, starting in the mid-1990s, sought to determine whether Islamism had ended as a political project, which encouraged scholarly interest in examining Muslim societies and their new political inclinations. Although not everybody agreed on the idea that Islamism had entirely failed and ended, the general consensus was that significant changes, shifts, and transformations had taken place in the Islamist trajectory. To most, a new term, new phase, or a new condition had begun for Islamism, which had deep cleavages with its past.

One difficulty in these scholarly examinations was identifying the ‘ideology’ and ‘ideologues’ behind the new condition. Up to the beginning of the 1990s, Islamism had operated through a precise system of definitions, ideology and ideologues. Concepts from *sharia* to *jihad*, an Islamic state to an Islamic economy, *umma* to Islamic territory (*darul Islam*) were described, prescribed, and indoctrinated, though they varied within a diverse range of contexts. This was achieved through the discourse established by intellectuals, religious authorities (from scholars of Islamic law to sufi order leaders), role models, and political actors.

Against the backdrop of major global changes taking place, i.e. the Cold War ended, liberal democracy attained an overwhelming victory against other political

systems, and ideologies started to fade away, the future of Islamism was in danger. As with all other ideologies, the old guard withered, to be replaced by new conditions in Muslim politics. During this transformative period, the definitions of secularism, liberty, equality, *sharia*, *umma*, *jihad*, etc. started to be learned, perceived, and interpreted at the individual level. In the absence of ideology and ideologues, the daily lives of ordinary people helped scholars to grasp this change.

In examining this new condition, I put myself in the shoes of Muslim social actors and saw that this new phase in the Islamist trajectory is not an entirely fully rounded process which can be easily conceptualized. Instead, it is a kind of search and pursuit that I briefly define as ‘the quest for new Muslim politics’, which emerged as a projection of the collective action of non-collective Muslim actors, whereby they started to nurture similar behaviors in the social arena and in their reactions against authority. Such non-collective action is unintentional, but it nevertheless has its consequences. The daily practices of Muslim actors as a way of negotiating technique constitute the core of the analysis of non-collective action.

Therefore, inspired by the discussions started first and foremost by Oliver Roy, whose book was entitled ‘The Failure of Political Islam’, and Asef Bayat, who coined the term ‘post-Islamism’, this thesis based its theoretical backbone on Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which suggests the regeneration of meanings through the practices of everyday life. For Bourdieu, as Jenkins explains, there is an ongoing accumulation in history with an uninterrupted series of moments that continues as a process of production and reproduction in the practices of everyday life. It is that process of production and reproduction which causes the ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’ of social, cultural, and political structures. Hence, Bourdieu’s theory of practice constituted the theoretical backbone for discovering the regeneration of

Islamist politics through Muslim individuals' daily practices, and hence the emergence of new Muslim politics in Turkey.

Melluci's new approach to collective actions has been complementary in understanding how individuals' personal actions turn into collective actions. According to Melluci, after the writings of Bourdieu there appears to be a need for a contemporary approach to collective action. The new paradigm emphasizes the capacity of human action in configuring meaning. Melluci delineates the collective action of non-collective actors as being not an intentionally but consequently a unified form of mobilization. It is not a movement, as a movement may necessitate an intentional initiative, but it is a mobilization which necessitates cognitive perception only. Actions induced by certain circumstances *versus* mobilization. It is a result, not a start—a fact that cannot be envisaged but to be made known. Melluci underlines another feature of the new paradigm of collective action as its emergence within the system yet against predicaments in the system. In other words, the system is not replaced by another but it adjusts its deadlocks.

Bayat, who underlined the importance of deploying collective action by non-collective actors, emphasized the importance of elaborating new approaches in understanding Middle Eastern societies. According to Bayat, this collective action of non-collective actors helps grasp the changes recently taking place in Muslim politics and societies. In fact, the theory has been very explanatory in understanding the Islamist trajectory in Turkey, especially the specific time period of the February 28 process. This is because, as Bayat explains, the collective action of non-collective actors is a special type of activism which cannot be developed “anytime and anywhere,” while commonly, in “the absence of free activities, the political class is forced either to exit the political scene at least temporarily.” The February 28 process

is the best example of this theory, as Muslims in Turkey were excluded from all forms of public life, and Islamist politicians were banned from being involved in politics. Nonetheless, Muslim people continued to assert themselves on the streets.

Given this theoretical backdrop, the February 28 process was taken as the specific time period of this thesis, and the main research question was asked accordingly as follows: ‘How did the political, societal, and cultural factors that occurred during the February 28 process cause modern Muslim individuals to search for a new form of politics?’ This central question addressed three specific groups, namely Islamic students, entrepreneurs, and women, as the people whose lives were directly affected by the process.

Unlike the literature, which rather examined the process from a secular *vs.* Islamist perspective, this thesis brought inner circle negotiations into the discussion. In doing so, I deployed a qualitative research method which relies on a constructivist philosophical formation that proposes examining a social phenomenon by helping the researcher grasp or understand it “in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” The most important method—in-depth interviews—was deployed in order to deepen our understanding of the new condition in Muslim politics. The major benefit of data collection through in-depth interviews in this thesis was that it allowed me to penetrate into the daily lives of Muslim individuals and attempt to acquire knowledge on the meaning they take from life experiences.

As a complementary technique, I also carried out a document analysis, in order to provide background knowledge for my research, through examining what questions and discussions were in the interests of Islamist intellectual authorities during the 1990s. What kinds of debates arose in Islamic circles during this decade? In this respect, the major academic journals, such as *Tezkire*, *Bilgi* and *Hikmet* were

scanned. MUSIAD's research reports, and its publications such as *Çerçeve* magazine, were examined. Lastly, magazines such as *Izlenim* and *Kadin ve Aile*, wherein female Islamic intellectuals frequently wrote, were inspected.

As indicated above, three specific groups were in the interest of this research: Islamic students, entrepreneurs, and women. Their common thread was that they had encountered excessive state intervention in their private and public life during the February 28 process. The period witnessed an era in which a selected number of students, who could not study in Turkey due to the headscarf ban at universities and the quota problem for *İmam-Hatip* school students in entering university exams, chose to study abroad. So in Chapter 4, I focused on the students' experiences abroad, and specifically where they lived and what environment they inhabited. From the experiences they gained as a result of living in a pluralistic society, I uncovered their views on what kind of a Muslim society they imagined and what kind of state system they envisioned. Their views reflected a different trend compared to those seen in orthodox Islamism. With the effect of living in a plural society, these youths were concerned with wider societal problems such as minority rights, namely the rights of people other than Muslims and non-Muslims, such as atheists and seculars. They emphasized the need to protect all rights other than religious identities. These rights had not actually been discussed within Islamic circles before the 1990s. The hottest debates on others' rights were relevant to *Medine Vesikası* (see Chapter 4), which remained insufficient to meet today's needs, at least according to the student respondents.

The interview results with the students also revealed the following consequences. Aside from being against *Kemalist* pressure on the headscarf issue, these young people also displayed an opposing stand against Islamist impositions

that stipulated a particular way of wearing the headscarf in public. Furthermore, apart from the headscarf issue, the students were against general impositions on their daily life with regard to practicing Islam. Hence, we can conclude in this study that based on the premise of Islamic students' views, young people took a stance on promoting an individualist style of Islam that can be practiced freely. However, in this regard they kept emphasizing how important it is to obey *helfals* and *harams*, in other words the fundamental requirements of Islam. In this sense, it is not Islamist authority but Islam itself which still plays an important role in their life practices and has the capacity to determine certain behavioral patterns. In this regard they sought a kind of balance between Islamic rules and new practices. This happens through new interpretations.

The students also described themselves contemporary participants of the global world; they said that just like their counterparts they read the same books, saw the same films, drank and socialized in the same cafes. Their emphasis was on living a modern life in an ordinary way. The way of living prescribed to them by orthodox Islamists seemed like a parallel universe to them with their alternative Islamic books, alternative Islamic cinema, and alternative Islamic entertainment. In this sense, partaking in sports and participating in international games and competitions as a Muslim was also internalized as the ordinary continuation of life for Muslims, which previously would have been considered by orthodox Islamists as a form of Westernization and the degeneration of Muslim lives.

Among the students who went to Eastern countries, we can highlight a different direction in their views separate from their counterparts in Western countries. Especially with regard to students who travelled to Muslim-populated countries, we found that the Islam they practiced in these particular countries allowed

them to be more integrative and tolerant towards other cultures. This was because they witnessed different ways in which their religion could be practiced. Hence, they returned back to Turkey with the view that they should be more open and pluralistic when it comes to the practice of Islam. Those who travelled to Western, non-Muslim countries, on the other hand, harbored views that were more defensive. My observation from a series of interviews was that this situation arose because in non-Muslim societies their tendency was to protect their identity.

The students' vision of what constituted a state was also different than that of orthodox Islamists. They accepted *sharia* as a form of rule and described a state completely compatible with an Islamic state, wherein they could enjoy their life in a free and secure environment. This corresponded to all people, regardless of their belief system, in their minds. According to the students, guaranteeing freedom in a society results in intellectual and artistic productivity, which are the forerunners of progress. Secularism, on the other hand, was a subject they avoided talking about, because all meanings of secularism are loaded by the secular vs. Islamist context of Turkey.

The second research group in this study helped to answer the question 'How can one evaluate the Islamic economic model through the neo-liberal restructuring of local and global economies?' Muslim entrepreneurs were greatly affected by the unjust legal procedures of the February 28th coup. During the process the businessmen found themselves barred from business life, and they faced unjust trials alongside the closure of their businesses and the prevention of making investments. I selected the respondents from the cities of Kayseri, Konya, and Istanbul, since the first two are symbolic cities wherein Islamist capital had risen since the 1980s, and

Istanbul was also populated by the same type of businessmen and is a metropolis in Western Turkey.

Up until the 1980s, Turkey experienced a closed economy that functioned through state-centered economic policies. In this period, the state-sponsored economy resulted in the emergence of economic elites, and so other members of society that represented the lower and middle income classes were held back from participating in business and the economic world. However, under the leadership of Özal, this slowly began to change. With the onset of economic liberalization there came full support for small- and medium-sized enterprises. The support that was given by the state, and the initiatives taken in foreign trade, created a competitive environment for many groups across diverse sectors.

This enabled these Islamist businessmen to create a space of their own in which they freely conducted and grew their businesses. What quickly came to be termed as “Green capitalism” led religious entrepreneurs to mobilize in popular cities like Kayseri, Konya and Istanbul. In the pool of interviews we conducted with these newly emerged actors, we came to the following conclusions.

In the transition from a state-centered economy to a neo-liberal economy, Islamists began to view this change through a critical lens. The scrutinization came about particularly from the Islamist political party, the Welfare Party, who severely criticized the capitalist evaluation of the Turkish economy. Additionally, they were far more critical of the government conducting trade relations with Western countries and developing economic and military relations with Israel. Among other criticisms, interest-based economies and the willingness to foster positive relations with the European Union also sparked dismay among Islamists.

Muslim entrepreneurs in Anatolia, on the other hand, expanded alongside the window of opportunity provided by the neo-liberal economic reforms. What the Islamic business sector realized, or more accurately interpreted, is that the free market did not actually go head to head with the Islamic economic mode; rather, they feed off each other. Islamic practices such as giving *zakah*, *sadaqa*, and enjoining good acts were quickly integrated into this model, and Muslim entrepreneurs actively joined a thriving economy. They developed trade agreements, increased imports and exports, and grew their businesses accordingly. With the newly emerging interest-free (or *la riba*) banking system, which was first established in Arabic countries, they participated in the financial sector as well as protected their religious concerns with regard to interest. Hence, Muslim entrepreneurs put distance between their economic activities and the Islamic economic model suggested by Islamic political authorities, and they abandoned efforts that theorized an Islamic economy.

With this change of direction, the Muslim entrepreneurs also experienced a transformation in their value systems. Up until the 1990s, modesty was exercised as complementary part of their religious value system and was considered as virtue among religious groups. Yet, what emerged as a result of increased prosperity was a new trend of Islamists who began to openly and freely display their riches against the backdrop of a belief that dictated that “Muslims must be poor and patient”. MUSIAD is a crucial example of this shift in view and practice, because this organization created a new model for the Islamist entrepreneurs to adopt in the socio-economic and political sphere. This model is known as *homo-Islamicus*. What the modern Muslim individual sees in this new term is an embodiment of the ideal to be strong in spirit and rich materially (*animo et corpore*), which does not require the individual to

hide his or her riches. As a result, people across the entire spectrum of religion now internalized this new model of Islamic material strength.

In this framework of evolution in the value system, luxurious cars, hotels, and consumption witnessed a dramatic rise in popularity. And this evolution went hand in hand with the transformation of the Islamic values as mentioned above.

In line with new practices in the Islamic economy came the rise of Islamic banking in the capitalist economy. Despite the increasing needs for bank credits, Muslim entrepreneurs were still keen to work with Islamic banking, as it overcame their concerns regarding ‘interest’. As a part of their daily economic activity, employers’ relations with workers were crucial in understanding larger Islamic economic approaches. In this regard, the interview results revealed that Muslim entrepreneurs preferred family-like relationships with their workers, because they believed that this would provide more justice in work place, as they thought employers were more concerned about labor rights than the labor unions. Among the Muslim entrepreneurs there was a kind of scepticism towards labor unions. Therefore, they envisioned a more localized type of relationship and moderate organizations in Muslim economies, which they referred to as *Islamicus sendicus*.

In the transition to a neo-liberal economy there emerged a new class of Muslim, resulting in the deepening of Turkish modernization. This became true via the enrichment and the accumulation of the social capital of a larger sector of society, in which modern values and lifestyles dominated. Since then, the wider part of society exercised the sort of transformations that only a small group of elites had achieved during the first 80 years of Turkish modernization.

This new middle class developed similar economic behaviors as a result of new interpretations of Islamic values. However, their new practices did not

necessarily result in the capitalist transformation of the Islamist economy but instead caused the emergence of a hybrid economy in which the interaction between Islamic economic values and free market rules resulted in the integration of Islamic ethics in a rational economy, whereas rationality became part of religious judgements.

Last but not the least for this research, Muslim women were the third critical group of actors analyzed in this study. Those interviewed constituted a particular cohort of women who had completed their education and entered the workplace before February 28. These women worked under secular employers as well as Islamist employers, and in the interviews they discussed how their lives had been influenced by the February 28th procedure, their expectations from education, and relations between men and women in the workplace. Beyond that, how they dressed was discussed as an issue highly scrutinized in academic writings.

The results we obtained from this research are based on the following. Islamist women's professional lives were highly affected by the process. However, pressure came not only from secular sectors of society, but also from Islamist sectors. As already known, Islamic women were banned from studying at university and working in public offices. Nevertheless, their careers were also damaged by Islamist male authority through putting them in lower class jobs and withdrawing them from prestigious jobs. Due to pressures from the *Kemalist* authority on Islamic sectors, Islamist company owners tended to hide their Islamic identity, which included hiding veiled women.

Nevertheless, such pacifying endeavors from both sides were resisted by the Muslim women, and they continued to participate actively in public life despite the fact that most of the time they had to make alternative arrangements.

With regard to their perspective on education and occupation, I uncovered dramatic changes. Up until the 1990s, the Islamist ideology that saw the role of women as child-rearers, particularly university education as a means of growing a better generation, shifted during the decade. Islamist women were eager to work in their professions rather than stay at home and nurture children. This was a radical shift in values, which was ensured through women. The rhetoric frequently used by orthodox Islamists on “convenient jobs for women” or “inconvenient jobs for women” was no longer creditable among Muslim women, as they realized that they were able to work in all kinds of jobs. The interview results displayed that Muslim women run after the works compatible with their graduation and specialization rather than the ones as imposed on them as the convenient jobs for Muslim women e.g. teacher, doctor, pharmacist. Hence, they increased the range of occupational choices that they can work in.

This resulted in a more liberal approach to not only the lifestyle of these Muslim women but also their role as an equal competitor in the socioeconomic sphere of society. And this also drastically changed male-female relations in the workplace as well as in social life. Since then, Muslim women have enjoyed far more confident relations with men. They see their status in society as being equal to men, and they resist all the impositions that see women only in domestic roles. They assert their professional life. More interestingly, they see nothing against Islam in this way of living. Rather, they believe, with this shift in Islamic gender relations, that they turned back to factory settings, in other words the origins of Islam.

With regard to the relationship between women and fashion, the interview results are also encouraging in this respect. Muslim women have seen a major change in their views on fashion. The whole purpose of *tesettur* was modesty, which

dictated values such as humility, but this was put on the backburner and transformed the meaning of modesty into a modern standard that has put beauty and aesthetics at the forefront of Muslim women's clothing. However, this is not always relevant to 'consuming culture' for them but it is a necessity for Muslim women living an urban life. Shifts in the way they dress also communicate to the outside world that Muslim women are equal participants in modern life.

The interview questions were directed at these three separate groups in relation to their experiences and possible specific interests. The questions on leisure time activities, on the other hand, were addressed to all the groups. In this regard, the students were more eager to respond to the questions about sports, art, and entertainment than the entrepreneurs and the women. Apart from their age differences, the interview results display that this was because the young people felt more integrated into modern social life than their predecessors. Although the questions on sports and entertainment as well as art had the dimension of questioning these areas together with the Islamic concerns of visibility, sexuality, modesty, men and women's segregation, and dress codes (*Islamic versus western*), the students did not show any tendency to relate Islamic values and leisure time activities. They rather emphasized their participation in social activities in the era in which they now live. The Muslim entrepreneurs and women, on the other hand, were far more restrained when talking about sports and art. They explained that this was because they considered sporting and artistic activities as cultural capital. They thought that for a long time in modern Turkish history, a certain class of people had not been able to enjoy such activities, as elites had monopolized this kind of socialization. However, they also emphasized a number of Islamist impositions that had

problematised such activities as being overtly westernized and therefore against the more traditional notions found in Islam.

Despite their different levels of interest in talking about leisure time activities, they all mentioned their involvement in similar types of sporting activities, the importance of artistic works for society, and the comfort involved in going to Islamic holiday resorts. Enjoying cinema, cafes, and bestseller books also displayed the engagement of the modern Muslim individual with popular culture. In this sense, they emphasized their sameness with their contemporary counterparts.

The interview results show that the common emphases on individualism, freedom, plurality, more liberal relations between men and women, a free market economy, and the evaporation of Islamic ideals by modern Muslim individuals were all negotiated with the Islamist authority through their practices. Many principles, such as women's status in society, participating in an interest-based economy, and the ways in which Muslim dress are by no means the concerns of modern Muslim individuals in their daily life. The political, intellectual, and religious authorities do not even see themselves as having a voice on these issues now. As a result practice dominates the field and undermines authority.

This is, in fact, an unintentional result of developing similar behavioral patterns and lifestyles, particularly in the form of resistance against the repressive implementations of the February 28 process. It is a kind of development of non-collective action whereby people do not come together to protest or demonstrate but instead resist all the pressures imposed upon them. According to my respondents, such pressures derived not only from the *Kemalist* state during the process, but also from Islamist authority. The latter had been felt for a long time, but it was finally

resisted during that specific time period and resulted in a change in Islamist discourse, politics, and the general paradigm.

During the process, modern Muslim individuals sought a new Muslim politics which would meet their needs in daily life and help them to operate in such an environment. In this context, they gave up problematizing modernity and began to see some of the values introduced as Western values in the meta-narrative of modernity as their authentic values (Ismail, 2006: 3-4). According to modern Muslims, modernity does not offer a system entirely different to anything that humanity has never discovered before. This view, embraced by modern Muslim individuals and liberal democratic values, was internalized by them in the new phase of the Islamist trajectory.

The 1990s are therefore important, as the Islamist trajectory took a new turn. Beforehand, modernity had been discussed and criticized across every domain of thought, institutions, lifestyles, etc. My interview results revealed that modern Muslim individuals no longer problematize modernity but rather want to be a part thereof. They resist living in a parallel world suggesting alternative books, alternative entertainments, and alternative cinema, which of course indicates a radical break from the past.

To sum up, political, religious, and intellectual actors in Islamism, who held sway over religious groups for a long time, were sidelined and replaced by new actors. The orthodox Islamist paradigm ceased with the onset of new religious actors that demanded a new Muslim politics. Ismail summarizes the division between orthodox Islamists and new generations as “the old guard and a new vanguard” (Ismail, 2006: 29). According to Ismail, this division brings about serious differences

in procedures and ways of thinking. The quest for new Muslim politics is the name given to this division.

The first assumption of this thesis was the determinative capacity of the daily life practices of Muslim individuals in changing the Islamist trajectory. In fact, this was a reflection of the dichotomy between structure and agency in classical theory. The central question is what is decisive in our lives—the structure into which we are born or human will? Which option transforms the other? In fact, despite the thesis hypothesized that the practice has been quite determinative in changing Islamist politics, the research results revealed that structure has also had a great impact on the daily lives of individuals, and there is always an ongoing dialectic between structure and agency. Depending on this revelation from the research, I argue that the constructivist approach, which prioritizes agency, is the most influential in understanding the quest for new Muslim politics, since there are no ideologues or ideologies in this new phase. However, the impact of structure cannot be disregarded in this examination.

My research into Muslim entrepreneurs particularly displays the impact of the neoliberal restructuring of Turkish economy on their daily economic practices and ultimately on their new perceptions and interpretations of Islamic values and principles. Their practices, on the other hand, resulted in major shifts in the Islamic economic model offered by Islamist authorities.

Furthermore, the influence of modernity in the perceptions of Muslims, and its homogenizing impact on their lifestyles, was apparent in my interviews. Islam has also had a similar impact. However, no one can argue that agency has no influence on these structures in return. This thesis therefore emphasizes the importance of the

influence of the latter and the individual's contribution to the whole process of modernization.

My second assumption was urbanization and new designs for daily life in big cities, for instance that social facilities (restaurants, sport halls, culture centers, etc.) provided opportunity for city dwellers to accumulate symbolic capital. Tastes, habits, and behavioral patterns changed in accordance. In time, this made people more self-centered while they were to some extent joined with each other in new social settings and political positions that finally led to a more secular and liberal society. However, the research results revealed that the evaporation of Islamist ideals does not necessarily lead to the secularization of personal lives. Conversely, my respondents emphasized the importance of Islam and the significance of freedom in practicing it in their private and public lives. Their insistence on practicing Islam brought about new designs in public life, as the religion consists of plenty of visible practices such as praying five times a day, fasting in Ramadan, veiling for women, etc. Therefore, I argue ultimately that the quest for new Muslim politics will not necessarily end with full secularization of life and politics, but rather it may result in more conservatism in society.

Consequently, this thesis argues for the domination of daily life practices in the configuration of new meanings and perceptions in the Islamist trajectory. This results in the replacement of pioneering actors in the long run, which ends up with the undermining of ‘authority’. According to Mandaville, ‘authority’ is undermined by the social processes in the global context in which various “Muslim public spheres” are configured by new followers who discuss and reinterpret Islam in a diverse way (Mandaville, 2007: 303). In fact, what Mandaville indicates is that “classical authority” is undermined in the absence of the center of religion, but

Islamic authorities proliferate as singulards rose as authorities. The research results acknowledged Mandaville, and accordingly I argue that the individual becomes a significant agent when s/he contributes to the process via a marginal utility. Modern Muslim individuals undermine authority through their practices. In the case of political Islam in Turkey, ‘authority’ has been commonly identified as the *Kemalist* authority up to this point. However, I draw attentions to the double-headed authority over Muslim individuals: One is *Kemalist* and second is the Islamist authority managed through a variety of actors. I also contribute to the literature by examining Muslim individuals’ negotiations with Islamist authority, in other words I bring inner circle discussions into the debate on Islamist transformation.

Finally, I theorize that there is an ongoing negotiation process between modern Muslim individuals and Islamist authority which can be recognized through the collective action of non-collective actors in the context of interconnectedness and the self-organization of individuals, wherein habits, behaviors, and intellectual leanings turn out to be similar. The practices of modern Muslim individuals work as a tool in this negotiation. As Bayat (2010; 19-20) explains, the distinctive features of these nontraditional types of collective action include their silence rather than being audible, the self-organized mobilization of people to meet the demands placed on them by authorities, and not being a politics of protest but of *practice*.

## **SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Abrams, Philip. 1982. *Historical Sociology*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Abou El Fadl, Khaled. 2012. ‘On Christian Men Marrying Muslim Women’, viewed 12 December 2015, <http://www.scholarofthehouse.org/oninma.html>.
- Adaş, Emin B. 2006. ‘The Making of Entrepreneurial Islam and the Islamic Spirit of Capitalism.’ *Journal for Cultural Research* 10(2): 113-137.
- Aktaş, Cihan. 2001. *Baci'dan Bayan'a*. Pınar Yayıncıları: İstanbul.
- Aktay, Yasin. 2005. ‘Modernleşme Ve Gelenek Bağlamında Dini Bilgi ve Otoritenin Dönüşümü; Hayrettin Karaman’, Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 6, İslamlık, İletişim Yayıncıları, İstanbul, 348-376.
- Amineh, Mehdi P. 2007. ‘The Challenges of Modernity: The Case of Political Islam’, *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 6: 215-228.
- Arat, Yeşim. 2005. *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Arendt, Hanna. 2006. ‘What Is Authority?’ in *Between Past and Future*. New York: Penguin.
- Ary, Donald, Jacobs, Lucy C. and Razavieh, Ashgar. 2006. *Introduction to research in Education* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) Belmont, CA: Thomson & Wadsworth.
- Atakan, Fulya. 2005. ‘Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroads: AKP-SP’, *Turkish Studies* 6(2): 187-199.
- Atasoy, Yıldız. 2005. *Turkey, Islamists, and Democracy*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris&Co Ltd.
- Atasoy, Yıldız. 2009. *Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Azmeh, Aziz Al. 1993. Islam and Modernities. London and New York: Verso.
- Barber, Benjamin R. 1996. *Jihad vs. Mcworld*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Barnard, Malcolm. 2008. *Fashion As Communication*. Routledge: New York.

- Bauman, Zygmunt. 1998. *Globalization: the human consequences*. Cambridge: Colombia University Press.
- Bayat, Asef. Fall 1996. 'The coming of a post-Islamist society', in *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 5(9): 43-52.
- Bayat, Asef. 2007. *Making Islam Democratic*. California: Stanford University.
- Bayat, Asef. 2009. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change The Middle East*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Bloomberg, Linda D. and Volpe, Marie. 2008. *Completing your qualitative dissertation, A roadmap from beginning to end*. Los Angeles and London: SAGE.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bogdan, Robert C. and Biklen, Sari K. 2006. *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Böhürler, Ayşe. April 06, 2013 retrieved in 15 November 2013 from  
<http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/AyseBohurler/mevsimlik-olmayan-baris-icin/37111>
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1997. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Practical Reasons*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Bulaç, Ali. December 14, 2002. "Dünya Güzeli Türk Kızı," Zaman.
- Bulaç, Ali. 2005. 'Medine Vesikası ve Yeni Bir Toplum Projesi', *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 6, İslamcılık. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncıları.
- Bulaç, Ali. 2005. 'İslam'ın Üç Siyaset Tarzı veya İslâmçıların Üç Nesli'. *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 6, İslamcılık. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncıları.
- Cizre-Sakallioğlu, Ümit and Yeldan, Erinc. 2000. Politics, Society and Financial Liberalization: Turkey in the 1990s. *Development and Change* 31: 481–508.
- Cizre, Ümit and Çınar, Menderes. 2003. 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102(2/3): 310-331.

- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. 2000. *Research methods in education* (5<sup>th</sup> ed). London and New York: Routledge.
- Creswell, J. 2009. *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. London: Sage.
- Cündioğlu, Dükane. 'Zer ile Zor Arasında', 3 May 2012, retrieved from <http://ducanecundioglusimurggrubu.blogspot.com.tr/2012/05/zer-ile-zor-arasinda-i.html>
- Çınar, Alev. 2005. *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Pres.
- Çınar, Menderes. July 2006. 'Turkey's Transformation Under the AKP Rule', *The Muslim World*, Volume 96(3): 469-486.
- Dağı, İhsan. March 2005. Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization, *Turkish Studies* 6(1): 21-39.
- Dağı, İhsan. 2006. 'The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics, and Human Rights Discourse in the Search for Security and Legitimacy' in Yavuz, H. (ed.). *The Emergence of A New Turkey*. Utah: The University of Utah Press, 88-107.
- Demiralp, Seda. 2009. 'The rise of Islamic Capital and the Decline of Islamic Radicalism in Turkey'. *Comparative Politics* 41(3): 315-335.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.) 1994. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.). 1998. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*.California: Sage, 195-220.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.) 2000. *Handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) California: Sage.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.) 2003. *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, Norman K. and Ryan, Katherine E. 2007. Qualitative methodology (including focus groups), In W. Outhwaite & S. P. Turner (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of social science methodology*. Los Angeles and London: SAGE, 578-594.
- Doğan, Erhan. 2005. 'The Historical and Discursive Roots of the Justice and Development Party's EU Stance'. *Turkish Studies*, 6(3): 421-437.
- Durak, Yasin. 2011. *Emeğin Tevekkülü*. İletişim Yayıncılı: İstanbul.

- Eisner, Elliot W. 1998. *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New Jersey: Merril-Prentice Hall.
- Emmerson, Donald K. 2010. 'Inclusive Islamism: The Utility of Diversity' in *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* (ed. By Martin, C. R. and Barzegar, A.) California: Stanford University Press.
- Emre, Akif. December, 10, 2002. "Müslüman bir Miss World," Yeni Şafak.
- Emre, Akif. July, 24, 2012. "Olimpiyat Ateşinde İftar," Yeni Şafak.
- Erbakan, Necmettin. 1971. *Doğu'da-Batı'da ve İslam'da Kadın, Konferans*. Konya: Anadolu Matbaası.
- Erbakan, Necmettin. 1991. *Adil Ekonomik Düzen*. Ankara: Semih Ofset.
- Evans, Peter. 1997. 'The Eclipse of the State? Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalization', *World Politics* 50(1): 62-87.
- Fırat, Dengir M. 2004. *International Symposium on Conservatism and Democracy*. Ankara: Ajans 5.
- Friedman, Thomas L. 2000. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
- Fuller, Graham. 2003. *The Future of Political Islam*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Genel, Sema and Karaosmanoğlu, Kerem. 2006. 'A New Islamic Individualism in Turkey: Headscarved Women in the City' *Turkish Studies* 7(3): 473– 488.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1989. *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 2000. *Runaway world: How globalization is reshaping our lives*. New York: Routledge.
- Giddens, Anthony. 2001. *Sociology* (4th ed) Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giugni, Marco, McAdam, Doug and Tilly, Charles (eds) 1999. 'Citizenship and Political Participation in Comparative Perspective', *How Social Movements Matter*. University of Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis, 225-252.
- Gökarıksel, Banu and Secor, Anna J. 2009. 'New Transnational Geographies of Islamism, Capitalism and Subjectivity: The Veiling-Fashion Industry in Turkey' 41(1): 6-18.
- Göle, Nilüfer. 1996. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

- Göle, Nilüfer. 2000. 'Snapshots of Islamic Modernities'. *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 129(1): 91-117.
- Guba, Egon G. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. 1981. *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gülalp, Haldun. 2001. 'Globalization and Political Islam: The social bases of Turkey's Welfare Party.' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33(3): 433-448.
- Heper, Metin. 1997. 'Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a reconciliation?' *Middle East Journal* 51(1): 32-45.
- Heper, Metin and Toktaş, Şule. 2003. 'Islam, Modernity, and Democracy in Contemporary Turkey: The Case of Recep Tayyip, Erdogan'. *The Muslim World* 93(2): 157-187.
- Heper, Metin. 2006. 'A "Democratic-Conservative" Government by Pious People: the Justice and Development Party in Turkey', *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought* (eds) Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, Blackwell Publishing, 345-361.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. and Leavy, Patricia. 2006. *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- İnsel, Ahmet. 2003. 'The AKP and Normalizing Democracy in Turkey', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102(2-3): 293-308.
- İsen, Mustafa. March 29, 2012. "Muhabazakar sanatin yapısını oluşturmamızı." retrieved from <http://www.haberturk.com/polemik/haber/728209-muhafazakar-sanatin-yapisini-olusturmaliyiz>
- İslam Ansiklopedisi. 1993. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.
- Ismail, Selwa. 2006. *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, The State, and Islamism*. London-New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Jenkins, Gareth. 2006. 'Symbols and Shadow Play: Military-JDP Relations, 2002-2004.' in Yavuz, H. (ed.). *The Emergence of A New Turkey*. Utah: The University of Utah Press, 185-207.
- Jenkins, Richard. 2002. *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.
- Kalın, İbrahim. 2011-2012. " Turkish Foreign Policy: Framework, Values and Mechanisms", *International Journal*, 67(1): 7-21.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz (Ed.) 1991. *Women, Islam, and the State*. London: McMillan Press.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1997. *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar*. İstanbul: Metis Yayıncılığı.

- Kandiyoti, Deniz. and Saktanber, Ayşe. 2000. *Fragments of Culture: Everyday of Modern Turkey*. London-New York I.B. Tauris.
- Kaplan, Yusuf. April 13, 2012. ‘İrfan’ın Çocukları ve Kültür/ün Canavarları’. *Yeni Şafak*.
- Kara, İsmail. 2005. ‘İslamcı Söylemin Kaynakları ve Gerçeklik Değeri’. *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 6, İslamcılık. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncıları.
- Karaman, Hayrettin. 1997. Laik Düzende Dini Yaşamak. İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık.
- Karaman, Ozan. 2013. ‘Urban Neoliberalism with Islamic Characteristics’, *Urban Studies* 50(16): 3412–27.
- Keddie, Nikky. July 1994. ‘The Revolt of Islam, 1700 to 1993: Comparative Considerations and Relations to Imperialism’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36(3): 463-487.
- Kenkinsoy, Abdi. (trans) 2003. *Seyyid Kutup: Yoldaki İşaretler*. İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları.
- Kentel, Ferhat. 2005. ‘1990ların İslami Düşünce Dergileri ve Yeni Müslüman Entellektüeller.’ *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, Cilt 6, İslamcılık. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncıları.
- Krefting, Laura. 1991. Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 45(3): 214-222.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2002. ‘Theorizing Globalization’. *Sociological Theory*. 20(3): 285-305.
- Kepel, Gilles. 2002. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Keyman, Fuat. 1999. ‘Globalleşme Söylemleri ve Kimlik Talepleri: Türban Sorununu Anlamak’. *Düşünen Siyaset* 3: 71-89.
- Keyman, Fuat. 2000. ‘Globalization, Civil Society, and Islam: The Question of Democracy in Turkey’, in *Globalizing Institutions* (ed.) Jane Jenson and Boaventura de Sausa Sondos, Ashgate: Aldershot, 207-229.
- Kılıçbay, Barış and Binark, Mutlu. 2002. ‘Consumer Culture, Islam and the Politics of Lifestyle: Fashion for Veiling in Contemporary Turkey’, *European Journal of Communication* 17(4): 495-511.
- Kuran, Timur. 2002. *İslam’ın Ekonomik Yüzleri*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncıları.
- Köse, Ahmet H. and Öncü, Ahmet. 1998. ‘Dünya ve Türkiye Ekonomisinde Anadolu İmalat Sanayi: Zenginleşmenin mi yoksa yoksullaşmanın mı eşiğindeyiz?’ *Toplum ve Bilim* 77: 135-159.

- Lerner, Daniel. 1958. *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernising the Middle East*. New York: Free Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 2002. *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lincoln, Yvonna and Guba, Egon. 1985. But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. In D. Williams (Ed.), *Naturalistic evaluation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 73-84.
- Lipset, Seymour M. 1994. 'The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address', *American Sociological Review* 59(1): 1-22.
- Lubeck, Paul and Britts, Bryana. 2001. 'Muslim Civil Society in Urban Public Spaces: Globalization, Discursive Shifts, and Social Movements', in Eade, J. And Mele, C (eds) *Urban Studies: Contemporary and Future Perspectives*, Blackwell, 305-336.
- Mandaville, Peter. 2007. *Global Political Islam*. London: Routledge.
- Marshall, Catherine. Mitchell D. E. & Wirt F. 1985. Assumptive worlds of education policy makers. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 62 (4): 90-115.
- Martin, Richard C. and Barzegar. Abbas. (eds.) 2010. *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Marvasti, Amit B. 2004. *Qualitative research in sociology: Introducing qualitative methods series*. London: Sage.
- Mason, Jennifer. 1996. *Qualitative researching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mewdudi, Abu Ala. 1959. *İslam İnkılabi*. Ankara: Hilal.
- Mewdudi, Abu Ala. 1985. *Political Theory of Islam*. Lahore: Islamic Publications.
- Mewdudi, Abu Ala. 1997. *Towards Understanding Islam*. Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami.
- Mewdudi, Abu Ala. 1997. A short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam. Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami.
- Mecham, Quinn. 2004. "From the ashes of virtue, a promise of light: the transformation of political Islam in Turkey. *Third World Quarterly* 25(2): 339-358.
- Mellucci, A. 1989. *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individuals needs in Contemporary Society*. London: Hutchinson Radius.

- Melluci, Alberto. 1996. *Challenging Codes*. New York: University of Cambridge Press.
- Mernissi, Fatima. 1985. *Beyond The Veil*. London: Al Saqi Books.
- Merriam, Sharan B. 1998. *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nasr, Vali. 2010. *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism: Why the New Muslim Middle Class Is the Key to Defeating Extremism*. New York: Free Press.
- Nasr, Vali R. S. 1994. *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-I Islami of Pakistan*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002a. ‘The market for identities: secularism, Islamism, commodities’ in Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayse Saktanber (eds), *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002b. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Nursi, Said. 2009. *Tarihçe-i Hayat*, İstanbul: Şahdamar Yayınları.
- Öniş, Ziya. 2001. ‘Political Islam at the crossroads: from hegemony to co-existence’. *Contemporary Politics* 7(4): 281-298.
- Özbudun, Ergun. 2006. From Political Islam to Conservative Democracy: The case of Justice and Development Party, *South European Society and Politics* 11(3-4): 543-557.
- Özdalga, Elisabeth. 1998. *The Veiling Issue, Official Secularism, and Popular Islam in Modern Turkey*, Richmond, UK: Curzon.
- Özdalga, Elisabeth. 2008. *Modern Türkiye'de Başörtüsü Sorunu*. İstanbul: Ufuk Kitapları.
- Özdemir, Şennur. 2006. *MÜSİAD, Anadolu Sermayesinin Dönüşümü ve Türk Modernleşmesinin Derinleşmesi*. Ankara: Vadi Yayınları.
- Özel, Mustafa, 1994. ‘Adam zengin olur mu?’ in Şencan, H., ‘İş Hayatında İslam İnsanı: Homo Islamicus’, MUSIAD Report, İstanbul, 3-15.
- Savaşan, Fatih, Sarac, Mehmet, Gürdal, Temel. 2013. “Islamic economy and Joint Banking system (Islamic banking) from the perspective of Islamic Businessmen” retrieved from <http://www.pesar.org/dindarmuhafazakar-isadamlari-perspektifinden-islam-ekonomisi-ve-katilim-bankalari>
- Pala, İskender. February 14, 2012. ‘Günlük Müstehcen Sırlar’. *Zaman*.
- Pala, İskender. April, 10, 2012. ‘Muhabafazakar Sanatın Manifestosu’, *Zaman*.

- Patton, Michael Quinn. 1990. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Refah Partisi, 1991. *Türkiye'nin Gerçek Durumu: Sebepleri teşhis*. Ankara: Semih Ofset.
- Ritzer, George. 1996. *McDonalization*. California: Pine Forge Press.
- Rosenthal, Erwin I. J. 1965. *Islam in the Modern National State*. London-New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Roy, Oliver. 1994. *The Failure of Political Islam*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Saktanber, Ayşe. 2002. *Living Islam: Women, Politics, and The Politicization of Culture in Turkey*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Sandıkçı, Özlem and Ger, Gülistan. 2001. "Fundamental Fashions: The Cultural Politics of the Turban and the Levi's," *Advances in Consumer Research* 28(1): 146–150.
- Şehlikoğlu, Sertaç. 2012. 'Islamic reflections on Women's Sporting: Bodies in Relation to Sexuality, Modesty, Privacy' retrieved from: <http://muslimwomeninsports.blogspot.com/2012/09/islamic-reflections-on-womens-sporting.html>
- Seidman, Irving. 2006. *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Senghaas, Dieter. 1985. *The European Experience: a historical critique of development theory*. Leamington Spa, Warwickshire; Dover, NH, USA: Berg Publishers.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1994. "Rentier State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution," *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 240-258.
- Smith, Eric A. 2010. "Communication and Collective Action: Language and The Evaluation of Human Cooperation." *Evaluation and Human Behavior* 31(4): 231-245.
- Stein, Sandra J. 2004. *The culture of education policy*. New York and London: Teachers College.
- Şenler, Şule Yüksel. 1975. *İslam'da ve günümüzde Kadın*. Ankara: Nur Yayınları.
- Şışman, Nazife. 1996. *Global Konferanslarda Kadın Politikaları*. İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık.

- Şişman, Nazife. 2005. *Küreselleşmenin Pençesi İslam'ın Peçesi*. İstanbul: Küre Yayıncıları.
- Taror, Sidney G. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Steven J. and Bogdan, Robert. 1998. *Introduction to qualitative research methods* (3rd ed.) New York: John Wiley & Son.
- Tepe, Sultan. 2006. ‘A Pro-Islamic Party? Promises and Limits of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party’ in Yavuz, H. (ed.). *The Emergence of A New Turkey*. Utah: The University of Utah Press, 107-136.
- Toprak, Binnaz. 1991. ‘Surviving modernisation: Islam as communal means of adaptation’, *II Politico* 56(1): 147-161.
- Toprak, Binnaz. 2009. ‘Islam and Democracy in Turkey’, *Turkish Studies* 6(2): 167-186.
- Tugal, Cihan. 2012. ‘Fight or Acquiesce? Religion and Political Process in Turkey’s and Egypt’s Neoliberalizations’, *Development and Change* 43(1): 23–51.
- Tunaya, Tarık Z. 1972. *İslamcılık Cereyanı*. İstanbul: Baha Matbaası.
- Uygur, Selçuk. 2009. ‘The Islamic Work Ethic and The Emergence of Turkish SME Owner Managers’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88(1): 211-225.
- Vertigans, Stephan and Sutton, Philip W. 2002. ‘Globalization Theory and Islamic Praxis’. *Global Society* 16(1): 31-46.
- Waters, Malcom. 1995. *Globalization*. London: Routledge.
- White, Jenny. 2002. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
- Woods, Peter. 1999. *Successful writing for qualitative researchers*. London: Routledge.
- Yavuz, Hakan. 2009. *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*. Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press.
- Yıldırım, Engin. 2006. ‘Labor rights and Achilles’ Heel: JDP and Labor’ in the Emergence of New Turkey (ed) by Yavuz, H. The University of Utah Press, Utah, 236-237.
- Zubaida, Sami. 2000. ‘Trajectories of Political Islam: Egypt, Iran, and Turkey’, *The Political Quarterly* 71(1): 60-78.

Zürcher, Eric J. 1993. *Turkey. A Modern History*. London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

## **APPENDICES**

### **A. RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

**İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University**

#### **PART 1: Research Description**

Principal Researcher: AYSE SOZEN USLUER

Research Title: The Quest for New Muslim Politics: Turkey since the 1990s

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores the Doctoral experience. Your participation in this study requires an interview during which you will be asked questions about your opinions and attitudes relative to your experience as one of individuals who suffered from the February 28 process. The duration of interview will be appropriately 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed, the purpose thereof being to capture and maintain an accurate record of the discussion. Your name will not be used at all. On all transcripts and data collected you will be referred to only by way of pseudonym.

The researcher AYSE SOZEN USLUER, a doctoral candidate at İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, will conduct this study. The interview will be undertaken at a time and location that is mutually suitable.

Risk and Benefits:

This research will hopefully contribute to understanding the implications of

February 28 period on the social practices of individuals and so open a new debate relative to the argument that accepts in advance the changes taking place in the trajectory of political Islam. Participation in this study carries no risk to the individuals. Further, there is no financial remuneration for your participation in this study.

**Data Storage to Protect Confidentiality:**

Under no circumstances, whatsoever will you be identified by name in the course of this research study, or in any publication thereof. Every effort will be made that all information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential. All data will be coded and securely stored, and will be used for professional purposes only.

**How the Results Will Be Used:**

This research study is to be submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Politics at İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. The results of this study will be published as a dissertation. In addition, information may be used for academic purposes in professional presentations and/or educational publications.

**PART 2: Participant's Rights**

- I. I have read and discussed the research description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- II. My participation in this research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without harm in any sense.
- III. The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his professional discretion.

- IV. Any information derived from the research that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent.
- V. If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the researcher, AYSE SOZEN USLUER who will answer my questions. The researcher phone number is 0533 470 15 55.
- VI. Audiotaping is part of this research. Only the researcher and his advisors will have access to written and taped materials.

## **B. QUESTIONS**

To students:

1. When and where did you go to study? What was the cause?
2. Could you please tell me about your ‘February 28’ experience?
3. What do you do on your free time? Have you made new habits? Have you taken up new hobbies or interests?
4. Have you socialized with your foreign friends? Have passed time in cafes and bars?
5. Did you get married there? Do you have friends who did? Any of them married to a foreigner?
6. Did you have male student friends? Did you socialize with them?
7. Did you have gay, atheist or non-Muslim friends? Do you think they could live freely in a Muslim society?
8. What authors and intellectuals did you read while you were abroad?
9. Do you do sports like cycling, swimming or tennis? Where do you do such sports?
10. Do you go to cinema? What kind of films do you like?
11. Do you think there could be sexuality in cinema? Do you think there exists alternative Islamic cinema?
12. Would you eat at a place where alcohol is served? Would you do shopping in a store where alcohol is sold?
13. Where do you go for summer holidays?

14. What TV channels do you watch? (3 favorite channels)
15. Do you think Europe / Malaysia /other is different from Turkey? Life style, the way they practice their beliefs, the attitude towards different views and beliefs as tolerance or reaction?
16. Have you witnessed debates of multiculturalism in the country you stayed ? It is a hot topic in today's world. What do you think about multiculturalism?
17. Is wearing headscarf an individual freedom or a religious duty?
18. How is your imagination of state and society? What does Islamic State mean to you?
19. Do you do sports? What sports do you do?
20. Are you involved in an artistic activity?
21. Do you go on holidays? What sort of holidays do you enjoy?
22. How do you spend your leisure time? What are the entertainment instruments for you?

To entrepreneurs:

1. What sector do you work in and how long have you been working in this sector?
2. Do you have moments in your business life that you think are milestones?
3. How did Özal era economy policies affect the business world here?
4. Could you please tell me about your 'February 28' experiences?
5. What does globalization mean to Anatolian capital?
6. Should a Muslim be rich?
7. Do you inquire the compliance to Islamic principles when you are starting certain kind of businesses?

8. What do you think about the criticism that claims Muslims are becoming capitalists?
9. Do you think your consumption habits have changed?
10. Do you work with Special Finance Establishments?
11. Do you work with conventional banks?
12. How is the employee - employer relationship in Anatolian capital?
13. Do you do sports? What sports do you do? and where?
14. Are you involved in an artistic activity? How do you like art?
15. What kind of a relationship do you imagine between art and business World?  
For instance, what do you think about the expensive paintings those were purchased recently by an excessively rich and religious businessman?
16. Do you go on holidays? What sort of holidays do you enjoy?

To women:

1. What is your educational background?
2. Did you go to university in a different city from where your parents live?  
If so what kind of place did you live in? House /dorm?
3. Did you have an objective of studying in higher education? Why did you have such an objective?
4. Is there a meaning of a mother being a university graduate?
5. Do you work? If you do, do you work on your profession?
6. Have you ever encountered a drawback in your professional life as a religious woman?
7. Could you please tell me about your 'February 28' experiences?
8. Are you involved in a social activity? NGO, association, foundation?
9. Can a Muslim woman work in all sorts of professions?

10. Can men and women work in the same environment? Are there inconveniences of this situation from the perspective of religious susceptibility?
11. What is the role of woman in the family?
12. Do men and women sit separately in your home?
13. It looks like the participation of religious women in public space and social activities have considerably advanced especially after 1990s. What do you think are reasons of this progress?
14. What kind of clothes do you prefer and why?
15. How do you consider the relationship between Muslim women and fashion? Where do you think it is heading in terms of consumption patterns?
16. Do you follow fashion?
17. Where do you place the debates of the visibility of woman body in the context of *Tesettür* / fashion / fashion shows?
18. There are new fashion magazines for religious women. Do you follow such magazines? What do you think about them?
19. Do you think women face an authority in professional an social life? Could you elaborate in the context of State/religion/men?
20. Do you agree that there are male-dominant interpretations of Islam?
21. Do you do sports? What sports do you do and where?
22. Do you go on holidays? What sort of holidays do you enjoy?
23. Are you involved in an artistic activity? What do you think about the relation between art and woman?

## C. CODING LEGEND/ SCHEME

### Students

#### 1. Leisure times: sports, entertainment and art

SL1: Sports as an essence of their life

SL2: Entertainment in the boundaries of basic Islamic rules (*halals* and *harams*)

SL3: Freedom in artistic works

SL4: Regular participation of Muslims in social activities

SL5: The balance between Islamic rules and new practices

SL6: Engagement with popular culture

#### 2. Plurality, multiculturalism and equality

SPME1: Personal choice vs. state-driven obligations

SPME2: Personal choices vs. orthodox Islamic practices and interpretations

SPME3: Interaction with minority

SPME4: Recognizing the other.

SPME5: Melting orthodox patterns: marriage etc.

SPME6: Presuming a new Turkey: tolerance crowned

SPME7: Divergent from orthodox Islamic interpretations and practices

SPME8: Blockage: nation state of Turkey

#### 3. Ideology: state, secularism and sharia: New perceptions on State, secularism and

#### Sharia

SI1: *Sharia* as a rule of law

SI2: Secularism in Turkey: suppression of religiosity

SI3: New understanding of state and society

SI4: Secure and free state

**Enterpreneurs**

1. Hybrid economy: New interpretations of Islamic values

EHEni1: From modesty to power

EHEni2: Rich Muslims

EHEni3: Morally strong businessmen

EHEni4: Consuming in the balance of *halals* and *harams*

EHEni5: The balance between new interpretations of Islamic values and economic practices

EHEni6: Leaving consumption to the choices of individuals

2. Hybrid Economy: New practices of Islamic economics

EHEnp1: Islamic banking

EHEnp2: Growing business and new challenges for Islamic minds: bank credits

EHEnp3: Labor rights: reproduction of labor abuse

EHEnp4: Sceptism towards labor unions

EHEnp5: The upshot: *Islamicus Sendicus*

3. Leisure time activities

EL1: Sports as a new Daily practices of modern Muslims

EL2: Changing practices: losing conservatism

EL2: Holiday resorts: safe entertainment

EL3: Art as a field of class struggles

**Women**

1. The rise of Muslim professionalism among Muslim women

WP1: Education no more for good motherhood

WP2: Looking upward: better jobs for women

WP3: All occupations for all women and men

## 2. Muslim gender relations

WG1: Participation in public life through education and Professional life

WG2: Increasing presence of Muslim women among men

WG3: New opportunities for interaction between men and women

WG4: The impact of urbanization on women visibility and relations between genders

WG5: Changing socialization changing paradigms : the impact of municipalities social facilities

WG6: Muslim women struggle against Muslim male authority

WG7: Rereadings and reinterpretations of Islamic practices

WG8: Veiling as a device for women participation in public life

WG9: Changing responsibilities changing roles between men and women

## 3. Women and Fashion

WF1: Fashion as a means of nonverbal communication tool

WF2: Prosperity changed clothing

WF3: Urbanization changed clothing

WF4: Meanings attached to clothing: power, activity, equality and rapture from the tradition

WF5: Chic and visible Muslim women

## 4. Leisure time activities

WL1: Despite of interest, the shortage of suitable sport facilities for Muslim women

WL2: Holiday resorts: safe entertainment for Muslim women

WL3: Art as a reflection of civilization